

RELIGION AS A FACTOR

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1. Introduction

We have had, for a long time, a materialist approach to social analysis, at the individual, societal and global levels, dominated by thinking about social and economic factors. Does the title of this paper mean that the author is advocating a switch to idealist thinking? Not at all, the word "factor" stands both for rejection of religion as the factor, and for rejection of the thesis that religion plays no direct role at all, is merely a result among others of the more material factors in the infrastructure. Religion is seen as one factor among many, probably one of the major ones, but before any more definite stand is taken on that point, considered so important by many, more has to be known about religion.

More particularly: religions have to be analysed in such a way that their social implications are clearly seen. Put differently, religion has to be taken somewhat down from the transcendental and put closer to the mundane level, and religion has to be compared with what is found on earth. I cannot conceive of any better way of doing this than simply by asking the question: with which structures and processes in very concrete, material and human reality, would certain religious thought figures, idea structures, be most compatible? From compatibility to a certain tendency or predisposition, a certain bias, the step is not quite obvious, except in a negative sense: religions might tend to impede certain types of structures and processes rather than determine very specific and concrete structures positively. Religions may proscribe, but not prescribe in an unambiguous manner. But that is already enough for social analysis, and even rather important. Religion facilitates the compatible and impedes, even proscribes the incompatible.

In saying that it is necessary to put religion closer to our material existence to see what religion implies is not the same as stripping religion of its true nature, which I take to be transpersonal, even transcendental. Religion means re-ligio, to relink. Relink with what? - Not necessarily with a personal god; that would be characteristic of, among others, occidental religions. Rather, it would be with the transpersonal, something beyond the individual

human being or the concrete set of individual human beings. It is "what is", "that out there", dao, tad. That "something", however conceived, that gives meaning to existence. It structures the universe, all spaces, natural, global, social, individual - at least to some extent. It guides human behaviour, including speech and thought. Evidently it relates to this thing called "development". In saying so one certainly would not discard the hypothesis that religion is also determined by socio-economic formation, at least as long as one is open to the opposite hypothesis: that religions codetermine these formations. Or, perhaps an even more mature view of looking at it: that both religions and the socio-economic formations may be expressions of still deeper lying factors, else-where referred to as cosmology.

2. A Religion Map of the World

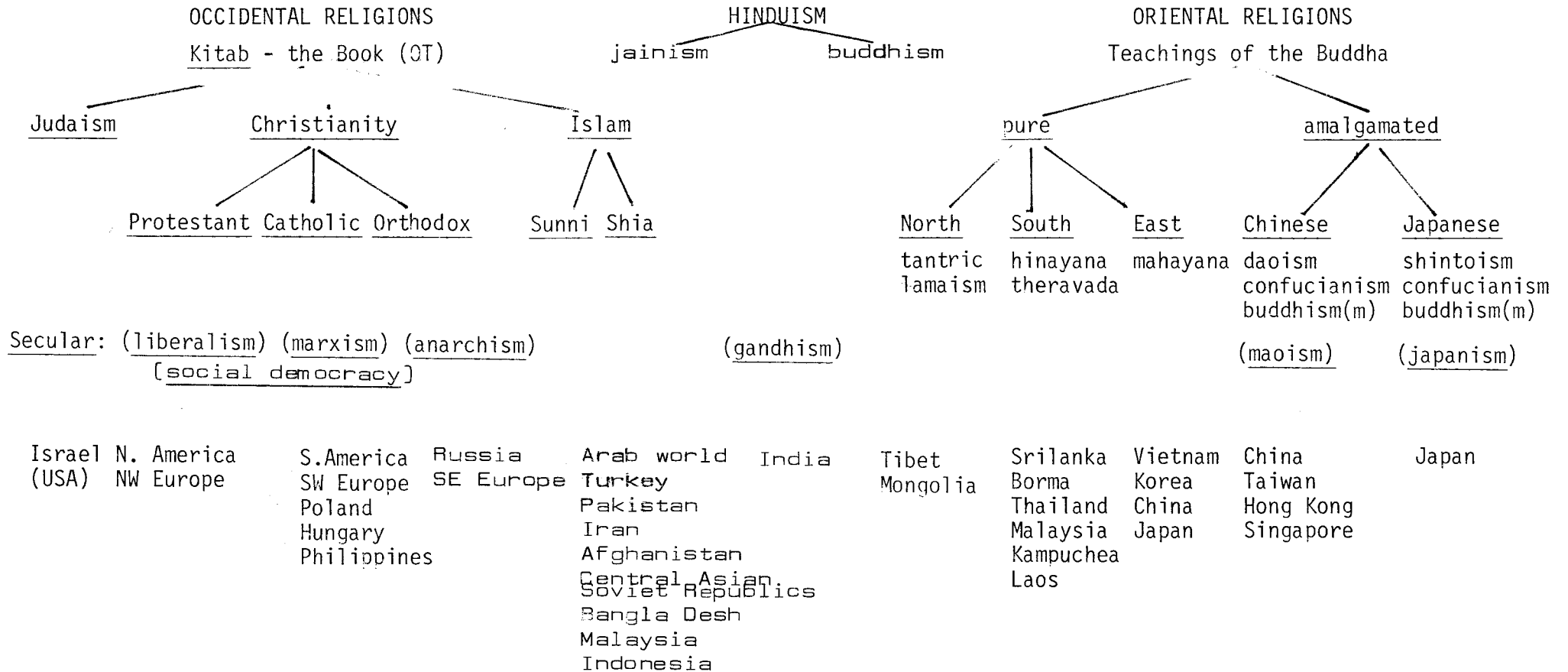
The following is very far from an effort to make a comprehensive survey of the religions of the world; it concentrates on major religions leaving out Amerindian, African and Pacific region (Polynesian, Melanesian, Micronesian), except for some remarks towards the end. This means that the focus is on the so-called "world religions", in itself a dangerous point of departure because of the biases of "higher civilization" that might be a consequence of that approach. Efforts will be made to correct for this later.

As is evident from the overview on the next page the major organizing dimension is from Occident to Orient, with Hinduism as an in-between category. In saying so Hinduism is seen not in terms of "neither-nor" but in terms of "both-and", both occidental and oriental, embodying in its incredible complexity most of the religious figures of thought that can be found in Occident and Orient as here conceived of.

These two concepts are defined in terms of religious content. The Occident is seen as the geographical region dominated by the religions of the kitab, the Book, meaning the Old Testament (part of the Bible from a Christian point of view). The Orient is the part of the world where the teachings of the Buddha are influential

Figure 1. A Religion Map of the World

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|
| (1) personal god | no god | (1) |
| (2) singularist | pluralist | (2) |
| (3) universalist | particularist | (3) |
| (4) personal soul | no soul | (4) |
| (5) eternal life | <u>nibbana</u> | (5) |



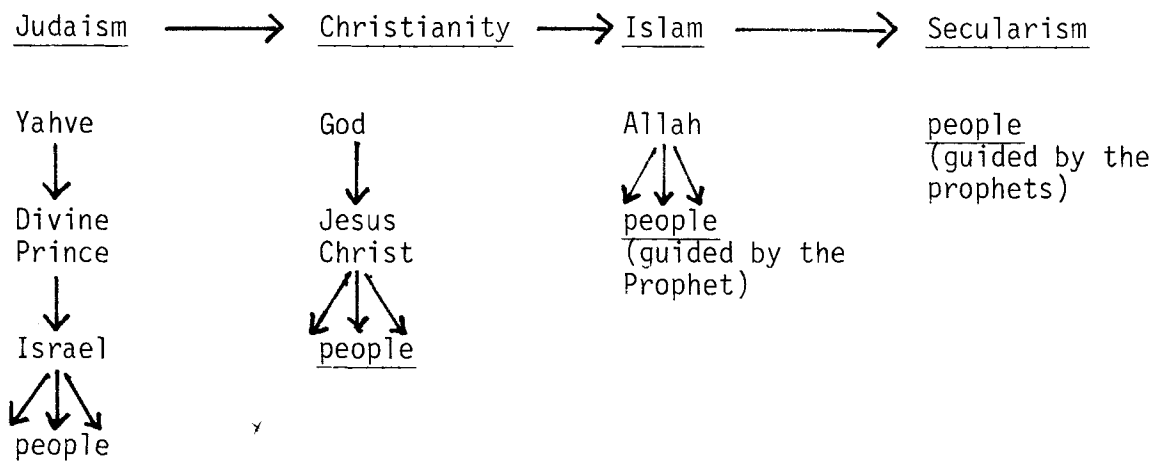
This means that the concepts, although geographical, are not contiguously geographical, and certainly not in any simplistic West-East sense. Thus, in what is geographically often seen as the Orient, Southeast Asia, one finds in the ASEAN countries alone an interesting combination of Occidental and Oriental religions: the Philippines is a Catholic country with a strong Muslim minority, Indonesia is a Muslim country, Singapore is dominated by Chinese - with an amalgam of Daoist, Confucian and Buddhist thinking - with minorities of Muslim Malays and Hindu Tamils; Malaysia has in addition to Chinese, Malays and Tamils as described for Singapore also considerable Christian influence; and finally there is Thailand, purely Buddhist of the Theravada variety, with a Muslim minority. Many of the perplexing differences between the countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia derive, in my view, from religious differences, not denying that there might be other differences underlying this one, meaning that such categories as "Occident" and "Orient" will only mystify relationships if they are taken in a simplistic geographical sense, as is so often done.

Reading the "map" from left to right one starts with the basic message of the Occidental religions. I take the message to be divided into five parts:

- (1) There is a personal god. That god has human features, in general compatible with those of a tall, old male, white race, possibly aristocratic looking, overpowering in behaviour.
- (2) That god does not tolerate any body on his side; he is the only one. The religion is singular, excluding other faiths; nothing is permitted to contradict it. God is jealous.
- (3) The religion in general, and the personal god in particular, is for the whole world, all of human-kind, even for the universe. God is universal.
- (4) Every human being (but originally men more than women) are equipped with a personal soul which is individual, and constitutes a linkage point with the personal god, through prayer and right behaviour, including speech and thought.
- (5) That soul is given eternal life, either in heaven or in hell, depending on behaviour during this life in general and the relationship between the personal soul and the personal god in particular.

So much for the basic points that occidental religions have in common. That there are important differences goes without saying, and the following is an effort to sketch some of these differences historically, over time:

Figure 2: Occidental Faith: A Historical Sketch



The point of departure is Judaism, with a relatively complex structure where Yahve is clearly on the top, then the Divine Prince (the Messiah), then the Chosen People, Israel, and only at this point: people in general. Concretely, this means that people in general have to be in one way or the other subservient to Israel, if via Israel and the Divine Prince and His messages they want to establish a link to Yahve. Clearly, over time this can only last as long as Israel had some type of command over the surrounding peoples - with this condition no longer obtaining, Judaism becomes precisely that, the religion for Judaea, for the Jews. In other words, universalism is given up, particularism is ushered in, Yahve becomes a tribal god. Judaism then ceases being a missionary religion since it is for the Jews only, and in that sense no longer is a fully fledged Occidental religion as here defined. But originally it was, and the doctrine of Chosen People carries over into its successors in the notion that it is not by chance that Truth was revealed to somebody before somebody else, and to some people before others.

The Christian Revolution in this image of relationship between humans and God was a rather profound one. What Jesus Christ did was simply to announce himself as the Divine Prince, the Messiah, filling the status expectations for that vacant position (in his own view, and that of some others), dismissing Israel as the Chosen People and declaring himself as the Way between people in general and God. Thus the relationship was simplified: no people was explicitly more chosen than others. Moreover, the Divine Prince, was here, now, both human and God, actualizing the visions of the Prophets, opening a window for a humanity struck by original sin: salvation can be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour. That the reaction among the Jews was less than enthusiastic, in general, cannot possibly be a surprise, nor should it be a surprise 2000 years later. Any joy at having the Messiah here and now must have been tempered by the teachings denying any particular status to the people of Israel. Thus the total message was ambiguous and deeply emotional to put it mildly, leading both to submission and hopes for salvation, and to crucifixion, and the latter not only at the hands of the Roman occupiers.

Islam goes one step further according to this line of thinking, even by abolishing the figure of the Divine Prince. Allah becomes pure god and the Prophet, whose teaching serves as a guide, is a pure human being; thereby differing sharply from a Christianity where God has human features and Christ has god-features, even to the point of a Father-Son relationship. In so doing it is easily seen how much more purely spiritual Islam is than Christianity, devoid of highly complicating dogmas about complex family relationships, immaculate conception, resurrection after death not only of the soul but in carnis (the grave was empty, there was no corpse there). A Muslim does not have to believe in any such thing, one additional factor explaining why Islam today seems to spread much more quickly than Christianity, the latter rather being in decline (there are also other factors).

It makes no sense to trace a history of Occidental faith without adding to this Secularism, religion without God, often also referred to as ideology. One might also have used the word "humanism" for here people come out on top. They become an end of, and by themselves; maybe together with Capital in liberalism and History in marxism.

God is no longer sacred since there is no God, homo res sacra hominibus. But prophets remain, the most famous ones in recent times being Adam Smith and his successors (John Maynard Keynes, Wassily Leontief, Walt Rostow, Friedman) and Karl Marx with successors (Engels, Lenin and Stalin). In this connection anarchism should also be mentioned, in coming out of Occidental reality with the most important "prophets" one group of French authors, Rousseau, Proudhon, St. Simon and Fourier; and one group of Russian authors headed by Bakunin and Kropotkin.

In these secular faiths man is alone, in the sense of being without a god, in the sense of being totally alone, competing with others in individualist liberalism, in the sense of being together with members of his own class, competing with other classes in class-oriented Marxism, and in the sense of being together with others in cooperative communities, possibly competing with other communities, in communal anarchism. But he is his own justification, deriving nothing from transcendental forces. Homo mensura, Protagoras said.

But even if the personal god has been abolished the next two points on the list of occidental faith remain. All three ideologies are singular; alternative to others, not supplementing others. Of the three one can at most pick one; the others are then excluded, at least according to the more dogmatic formulations. No contradictions are to be permitted. In practise there may be contradictions, on the surface, but they will (a) dissolve upon closer scrutiny and interpretation, or (b) serve as signals that the ideological work has not been completed. Under any circumstance contradictions are to be pursued unrelentlessly until they dissolve and the ideological body, cleaned from such impurities, can continue the march forward.

The last two points on the five point list of occidental faith also remain, but are in need of some reinterpretation. The personal "soul" retains its individual characteristics, a depository of personality traits, but is transformed into a "mind", the subject of psychological scrutiny. As such it may actually not differ much from the religious soul concept except that the latter, as "spirit"

may attain an existence separate from the body. Secular ideology, particularly liberalism, also needs a seat of individualism and the "soul" may serve as a bridging concept. For there is an "eternal life", that of surviving in the memory of others, even immortalized in materialized form, in concrete things and structures (books, paintings, monuments, architectural/urban/social designs, etc.). But just as for eternal life in paradise: many may be called, only few are selected; if for no other reason simply because there is a limit to how much memory can be stored and not simply relegated to cemeteries and the documents. And there is also a paradise on earth: Utopia, here and soon; with an equally necessary promise of hell, Dystopia, here and quite soon if the prescriptions given by the prophets are not followed. The concrete contents of the Utopias and Dystopias, in secular ideology, must necessarily be heavily influenced by transcendently oriented religions in the same geographical space, and this must also be the case for visions of apocalyptic happenings, for the plastic period when basic choices can still be made, with individuals and peoples heading for heaven or hell (but never both at the same time). Religion matters, visions of the future are not that discontinuous.

Keeping this presentation general no effort would be made at this point to go into the subdivisions of Christianity and Islam. With some justification it can be said that there is a continuum at work here, from heavily individualized and thought (faith)-oriented Protestant Christianity towards more action-oriented and collectivity-organized forms of religious dedication. And as one proceeds eastwards, and picks up Eastern Buddhism, mahāyāna Buddhism, this becomes very clear. In fact, as indicated in the Figure 1, one may even say that mahāyāna Buddhism is the exact opposite of Protestant Christianity. There is no personal god, hence no something that can be jealous of competing faiths and whose jealousy has to be respected, no something that can claim universality for His teachings, being above human beings. Of course, the point made about occidental ideologies already serves to indicate that no personal god is necessary in order to proclaim singularism and universalism for a system of beliefs; it may only help in convincing the adherents. However,

there simply is no such assumption in mahāyāna Buddhism. It does not exclude other faiths, as already evidenced by the Chinese and Japanese amalgams where māhāyana Buddhism is seen as combinable with daoism and confucianism in the Chinese case, and shintoism and confucianism in the Japanese case. One may even go further and add to this amalgam occidental components, such as Christianity or Islam, and then one, or both, or perhaps all three of the secular faiths indicated. And this may be a major thesis no. 1: Oriental thought tends to be additive, Occidental thought tends to be alternative. Oriental thought not only expects contradictions but even seems to cherish them. They seem to be seen as a source of enrichment, and also to be a more honest reflection of what is held to be the contradictory nature of the real world, as opposed to a possibly contradiction-free existence in some other world, including some future world different from the real one.

It follows that this type of faith cannot possibly be universal as it is up to anybody to make his own personal amalgam. Nor it is assumed that Buddhism should be present in all these combinations. The teachings of the Buddha are there for everybody to know. Those who believe in them think people do well learning from them, but that is something different from being impelled to spread the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20) backing up the teaching with rewards and even punishments.

Then, it is a basic tenet of Buddhist faith that there is no soul. There is a mind, capable of working on itself or engaging in right behaviour, and transforming itself to higher levels of consciousness. But that mind does not exist separate from the body, capable of migration to the transcendental, up or down, or in this world, into other human beings- a process of trans-migration.

These are points the various sects of Buddhism seem to have in common. They differ in many other regards. The difference between hinayana and māhāyana ("small vehicle" and "big vehicle") may perhaps be interpreted as a difference in the nature of the unit of human beings that through unrelentless work is trying to realize the Buddha nature in itself: the individual human being or much larger groups, perhaps even nations as a whole (the human atom vs. the human molecule).

This distinction, however, has a tendency to overshadow the collective nature of the process of attaining enlightenment. Thus, even in a theravada country like Malaysia the process would involve groups, both in the ritual chanting of texts in pali, in the exchange of merits and demerits, and in the group discussion focusing on a Buddhist theme. What I do of good accrues to my sisters and brothers in the group; what I do of bad also detracts from them - in the first case because they helped, in the second case because they did not prevent me from doing what was bad. Hence, Buddhism tends to engender collectivism, always at the level of the small group, sometimes also at the level of much bigger units.

An other difference has to do with the basic perspective on human existence. The message of the Buddha, as it comes through to most people, would be that life is suffering (dukkha) because of all the attachments, and that the road to happiness (sukha) goes through detachment. To some Buddhist this is an incomplete message, the real one being that life is joy and happiness. If that is combined with the māhāyana inclination towards larger units it becomes compatible with buoyant national optimism of the kind one can find in Japan, particularly as expressed by the soka gakkai.

The five points that have been made about Buddhism in Figure 1 above also apply to confucianism, with some reinterpretations. Thus, there is no god and no soul. References to such entities would be metaphorical and should be understood more in the same way as people in general and children in particular learn to understand fairy-tales in Western countries: these are stories with a morale, but metaphors rather than exact maps of any kind of reality. Confucianism comes through as the idealized codification of feudalism, defining rights and duties of high and low in highly vertical relationships, placing the old, the males and those with non-manual occupation (in general, and intellectuals in particular) on top, the young and the middle-aged, women and those with manual occupations at the bottom. In this way it also structures life inside the family with the eldest grandfather or great-grandfather on top, and the youngest sister at the bottom, and the others rather neatly ordered in the hierarchy. As an ethical code it comes out as non-transcendental,

regulating vertical relations in a manner reminiscent of idealized feudalism in European societies, not of the reality, like Russian feudalism, where the focus was on rights at the top and the duties, only, at the bottom. It is by living according to these precepts that human fulfillment comes about; an ethical code that does not exclude a religious faith or an ideology of the types already mentioned, nor claims universality. There is no promise of heaven or threat of hell, only the hypothesis, verified in social reality according to the adherents, that by following these rules a decent, stable society will ensue.

Can the same be said about daoism and shintoism? In daoism everything is more besouled, but with nothing reminiscent of the steep hierarchy in "soulfulness" found in Occidental religions, from heavily besouled deity, via human beings that are settings for the eternal battle between soul and body (das Über-ich und das Es), to a heavily desouled nature. Daoism is a natural philosophy, highly holistic and highly dialectic, and with very deep roots in Chinese thought. Again it is combinable with other images of reality, and there seems to be no claim of a missionary nature to universalism. To the extent there is an image of eternal life it is on this earth, in a way that will bring human beings closer to nature, meaning in small communities, selfsufficient.

Shintoism, however, is very different from all of this. Here there is a clear doctrine of the Chosen People with the Sun Goddess finding her abode in Japan/Japanese Emperor; setting the Japanese apart from other peoples of the world. However, there is no claim at universalism as far as one can understand; not the idea that other peoples have to reach the Goddess through Japan. To be chosen may instill some Japanese at some time with some measure of the type of arrogance that was underlying "Great East-Asian Co-prosperity Hemisphere" (dai-tō-ā kyōeken). But that is not the same as the legitimation for such adventures given by the notion of being the only viable bridge between lesser peoples in the world and the supreme deity. In other words, shintoism is seen here as particularistic in the same way as Judaism has become. At the same time it cannot really be said to be singularist given the relative ease with which so many Japanese seem

to be able to combine it with, for instance, Christianity. This may or may not be due to the lack of concrete imagery surrounding the Supreme Being; probably the Japanese Emperor took Her place for the simple reason that She took place in the Japanese Emperor. But in all of this there are still elements that are different from what is found in Buddhism and Confucianism, more similar to Judaism and hence to Occidentalism - all more similar to some African systems of faith. Incidentally, if one is looking for something more reminiscent of Christianity in Japanese religions the answer might be found in Amida Buddhism where "salvation" is seen as coming as a consequence less of one's deliberate strivings than by the grace of Amida.

There seems to be no example of a purely māhāyana Buddhist country, as this type of Buddhism is found to prevail only in the Sinitic space where it tends to be combined with Confucianism, and perhaps with other elements. But for the other two types of Buddhism, Northern and Southern, it may be said that where they were strong enough they tended and tend to become the system of faith, for instance in Mongolia, Tibet, Burma and Thailand. In the former two it stood in the way of Soviet Marxism and Chinese Maoism respectively, and suffered the consequences of that type of secular onslaught (in my view that decline will be for a short period only, the strength of Buddhist faith with its tremendous flexibility being far superior to the rigidity of Marxist, even Maoist thought). It may very well have to suffer the consequences also in countries like Burma and Thailand, yielding either to secular, "liberal" economic growth materialism of the Western kind, or Marxist materialism of the Eastern branch of the Occident. The latter is, perhaps, what is currently happening in the former Indochinese territories. But nothing of this kind had to happen in the Sino-Japanese space, for here there was already an amalgam totally capable of handling the challenge of growth-oriented economism from the West, in the case of Japan even surpassing it. Few things, in fact could be more easily explained: how could a country with shintoism defining obedience to a national cause, Confucianism organizing discipline along vertical lines and buddhism organizing organic solidarity along horizontal lines

fail to be a success in the running of a modern economy once it sets its mind to do so? And is it not also rather likely that other countries with the same basic orientation will be able to follow it?

It remains to say something about the vast space in the middle, hinduism. Of this one may say everything: there is a personal god, even many if one wants to see it that way; and there is no god if one wants to conceive of them metaphorically. They may be said to exclude other faiths, but they are also so rich and complex that they can easily be said to include others, through some little act of redefinition. They may be said to be for the hindu space only, but on the other hand, because of that richness easily comprise the whole of the world, because any religion should be able to recognize its basic figures and thought structures somewhere in the tremendous variety of hindu thought. Hence it is difficult to describe hinduism in terms of any particular religious specificity. There are elements reminiscent of Occidental religions, and elements reminiscent of Oriental faith.

But, if one should try to characterize Hinduism the caste nature of the social structure legitimized by it is inescapable. The system is cruel, and not only in the sense of distributing power and privilege in this world in a flagrantly unequal and inequitable manner, with power and privilege accruing to the higher castes (the brahmins and the kshatriyas) and not at all to the untouchables (pariahs) and the shudras, with the vaishyas in-between (the traders, etc.) The caste system also has strong transcendental implications with soul highly symmetrically distributed along caste lines. The untouchables and the shudras have no chance of being reborn. Rather they can be seen as the depositories of the soul of somebody else who merited nothing better because of his karma ("what you think and do, comes back to you"). A highly unenviable state of affairs, a prime target of both Buddha's and Gandhi's efforts to reform hinduism by making everybody equal both in this life, and when it comes to chances of improving oneself - to the stage of enlightenment and eternal rest, nibbana, whether the metaphor is through transmigration or rebirth. An obvious way out for the "soul-less" is to convert, eg. to Islam, thereby gaining an immortal soul, leaving the cruel game of hinduism.

Equally obviously the upper castes react strongly and were able, practically speaking, to expel Buddhism just as they may be able to do the same with Gandhism. Whether they will be able to stem the tide to Islam is still to be seen.

It remains now to be said that not only the Occidental world has produced secularism; that also goes for the others. Gandhism certainly has its metaphysics, but of such a kind that it would also be acceptable to the agnostic and atheist, as Gandhi himself points out. Personally I would tend to see Gandhism as so similar to Buddhism that the substantive classification might be under Buddhism, not under Hinduism, for historical reasons.

The particular amalgams associated with contemporary China and contemporary Japan have been referred to here as "Maoism" and "Japanism" respectively, but only in so far as it is understood that in both of them there is a heavy admixture of Occidental faiths; Christianity in both cases, liberalism in both of them, and then Marxism in the case of Maoism. Characteristically there is no name of any individual that could be attached to what is here referred to as "Japanism". In a truly collectivist country there should be no such name either.

In conclusion let it only be pointed out that neither Islam nor pure Buddhism have given rise to major secular ideologies. This is certainly not because they are incompatible with social teachings, probably rather because they are so compatible with them (as will be pointed out later) that there is less need for a secular ideology. That need may come up later because of certain tensions to be explored; it may also take the form that it takes today of simply importing Occidental or amalgamated Oriental ideologies. But so far one may perhaps pay some attention to the circumstance that it is the most and the least "religious" (in the classical sense of being "personal god" and "individual salvation" oriented) religions that give rise to secular ideologies; the former because of contradictions, the latter because of compatibilities. I would sustain the thesis that Maoism and Japanism grew out of Chinese and Japanese soil with considerable ease philosophically (if not socially), whereas the Occidental ideologies had to fight their way through, and at the expense of retaining, the singularism and universalism of Occidental religions. And that marks them till this very day, as seen in the East-West conflict between two mutually exclusive ideologies claiming universal validity.

3. Religions as Carriers of Political Messages

Deliberately I have formulated this section in terms of "political messages", not merely "social messages". By the former I mean something more than the latter: there is a message about what to do and why one should do it which would be characteristic of a social message with its image of the future and its analysis of present and past. But there is also a message of how to do it, who should do it, when and where - more or less explicit, more or less concrete. It is these last four components that define the difference between political and social analysis, because actors are designated, it is made space and time specific, and in addition there is something about the methodology, the tactics, the "how". With seven major religious systems (Judaism, Christianity and Islam, then Hinduism, and then pure Buddhism, and the Chinese and Japanese amalgams) and six dimensions to what is here referred to as a "political message" we could in principle develop a table with 42 entries. However, there are simpler ways than that somewhat laborious exercise.

Thus, one very key difference would be between religions with transcendental utopias and religions without. It is inevitable, inescapable that conceptualizations of paradise will have some political carry-over effects on utopian political thought: utopias will tend to be mundane reflections of heaven, dystopias to be reflections of hell - only that the latter may surpass the most wicked imagination of what hell could be like and the former not quite live up to the most eloquent description of paradisiac delights. But this has one very important consequence: both utopia and dystopia will tend to become extreme, inspired by images of the transcendental they will tend to be distant from usual empirical reality. And that again has a consequence: in order to attain utopia a basic change is needed, some type of discontinuity, a quantum jump, a revolution.

That revolution, however, does not have to be a collective revolt, like in marxist eschatology of one class against another. It can also be an individual revolting against his or her

own past, as in the Christian paradigm for conversion; assuming that if a sufficiently high number of individuals do so then there would be a cumulative effect also in this world. The gap between the empirical and the potential can only be bridged through a highly dramatic time cosmology with a crisis (apocalyptic) that will usher in either the final Endzustand (catharsis) or hell on earth, Vernichtung. And that already gives the answer to the question of when: when time is ripe, when the final judgment is about to come. Seen this way marxism is so fundamentally christian!

There will also be a fairly clear conceptualization of who will be the carriers of the new times: not all those who are called upon, only those who are selected. And they will have to fight against those who were and are on the other side, the non-repenting sinners. Where does this take place? All over the world. And how? Through the fight between good and evil on earth, but also through the intervention of higher forces. But it is all worth it, for on the other side is an utopia, quite concrete as it is described in the Bible and in the Koran: a society of, for and by the saved, with no discrepancy between needs and the means available for their satisfaction - in the Christian paradise because the needs seem to be non-material and there are plenty of spiritual resources around; in the Muslim paradise because needs are also material but with ample means of satisfaction easily available.

Not so for the religions with no transcendental utopias and dystopias, except as metaphors. To the extent they are inspired by buddhism they will all embody the idea of selfperfection by working on oneself so as to develop right belief, right thought, right speech, and right conduct. But since these are not specified in a very concrete manner in buddhism, and do not refer to obedience to a higher being, this leaves much ground for interpretation. For what has been said so far there is only one conclusion that perhaps can be drawn, tentatively: the good society would be the society where this is possible, and more particularly the society where it is possible for small groups to work together, inspiring and helping each other on the Path of right behavior. One conclusion to be drawn

from this would be relatively small communities that are self-sufficient enough to leave the members with sufficient time for this type of spiritual pursuit. Obviously there are mahāyāna countries that have not drawn this conclusion: Japan is not particularly small in terms of the group with which it requires the Japanese to identify, Japan itself China is not particularly small either, although it is not necessarily true that all Chinese are requested to identify with China as a whole.

So much about the normative content of the religious teachings, the ideas and visions. Such visions command, they are expressions of normative power. But there are also the other basic kinds of power: remunerative power and coercive power; the power of the carrot and the power of the stick. Put in very simple terms: goods and services on the one hand, their production and distribution; the various types of violence on the other. Whether they are seen as an end or seen as a means towards an end the level of economic growth and of distribution are important factors in any social ideology and reality, and so are the levels of direct violence and of structural violence, built into the society. The question is how the religions relate to this four: (material) growth, distribution, direct violence and structural violence. In very limited usages of the terms "growth" is identified with development, and "absence of direct violence" with peace - thereby bringing in the two key words of contemporary concerns, the two pillars on which the United Nations construction, ideologically speaking, rests. But in a somewhat more extended usage of these two words "development" would also include some measure of distribution, and "peace" would also include ideas of absence of structural violence, particularly when it refers to the suppression of ethnic and/or racial minorities, or groups defined by age, gender and class. Hence these would be four key dimensions to explore in search for the explicit or implicit social teachings of the key religions. Ideally the religions should be rated on a scale from minus 10 to plus 10 on all four dimensions, or something like that. Clearly this is impossible. All that will be done here is to divide religions in two groups, those that favor the idea and those that do not favor it, or favor it less; "high" and "low".

When it comes to growth I would be inclined to put both Hinduism and Buddhism in the latter category, as being less in favor of material growth; Hinduism because of the strong influence of the notion of karma and the general rigidity of the social structure sanctioned by the religious thought, Buddhism because of the avowed low level of concern with mundane matters beyond that which is needed for reproduction, so as to be able to engage fully in the pursuit of higher levels of consciousness. I would also tend to place Islam in this category because of its famous doctrine against interest. Like for Hinduism there is a clear place for traders or, if one wants, for commercial capitalism, in the system - the Koran even being seen by many as a codification of rules of conduct, rights and duties, for decent exercise of the trading profession. But industrial capitalism would tend to require for investment larger amounts of capital than the amounts merchants could make available through trading - the alternative being loans to be obtained at a price, the price also being known as interest.

It may be objected that this can easily be circumvented, either by conceiving of the interest as a "service fee", or by accumulating capital through trading (for instance in oil) to the point where this investment can be undertaken. This is what is happening today in several Muslim countries. However, it only touches the point at the surface. There is probably a much deeper reluctance against industrialism in Islam, expressing itself, among other places, in the doctrine against interest. And it may well be that this is what is currently being observed in Muslim countries: not that factories are not coming up, but that they are bought whole-sale, with the key in the door, and not built up by an eager body of risk-taking entrepreneurs, and technicians, and skilled workers, anxious to get to the work. Thus, to the extent that economic growth is based on industrialism I would tend to be sceptical and not put Islam in the upper category where growth is concerned. And I would tend to believe that the factories in the Muslim/OPEC region would be of minor significance in the world economy.

In that upper category one would obviously have both Judaism and Christianity, and for the latter both the Protestant and Catholic variety. Three famous books exist to prove, at least to the satisfaction of the authors, that one or the other of these three provides the basic background for economic growth: Max Weber for Protestantism, Amintore Fanfani for Catholicism and Kurt Samuelsson for Judaism. The arguments are fascinating, it is an intra-Occidental battle among giants. In this connection, however, the focus is on placing them in the upper category on the world scale, being less concerned with who should have the first prize.

More interesting, however, is that in the upper category one would also have to place the oriental amalgams, the Chinese and Japanese systems of faith. Some of the implicit reasoning has been given above, particularly for the Japanese system, so it will not be repeated here. In a sense those arguments might sound much more convincing than the type of argumentation Weber puts together for the position of Protestantism, particularly for the puritan sects within Protestantism: that it is related to the basic anxiety about salvation and the idea that success in this world is a pointer to success in the other world, hence a relief for the anxious. That God should express his inclinations about salvations for certain individuals on earth through the stock market is strange. It seems to me deeply unchristian, but then there is no reason why Christians should necessarily only harbor Christian faith. However, that may be, there is one very basic point missing in Weber's reasoning: it may give some motivation to the entrepreneurs but not to the workers who would read their misery as a sign of God's utter dissatisfaction with them, and thereby be even more unmotivated to contribute to any kind of economic growth. The Oriental amalgams avoid or at least alleviate such problems, not by cutting out misery or relative deprivation of the working class, but by at least not making capitalist, entrepreneurial activity something close to a sacred act, and honest ordinary work a meaningless activity. In māhāyana buddhism individuals are coupled ethically together in such a way that it is the collectivity, not the individual that is rewarded or punished because of the acts of individuals - the ethical collective budget.

What then about the distribution dimension? Distribution is a question of a floor and a ceiling where goods and services are concerned; of avoiding the extremes in distribution, of guaranteeing a certain minimum and trying to institutionalize a maximum. In the modern welfare state this is done, in principle, by taxing the rich and establishing subvention mechanisms for the satisfaction of basic needs for those in misery, so as to end up with a population between floor and ceiling, in the home of the people, like in a family.

I think it is fair to say that the doctrine of the Middle Way in Buddhism is a doctrine of ceiling and floor. It was not only directed against the excesses in accumulation of riches found in Hindu society, but also against the misery, including the self-imposed misery through extreme asceticism. In Hinduism there were and are no clear minimum or maximum. In this regard Hinduism is not in-between and not similar to Buddhism, the two are each other's extreme opposite. This characteristic of Buddhism, then, is felt to penetrate the whole Orient, but certainly more or less so depending on religious and other contexts. Its concrete expression would be in low and relatively constant indicators for income distribution.

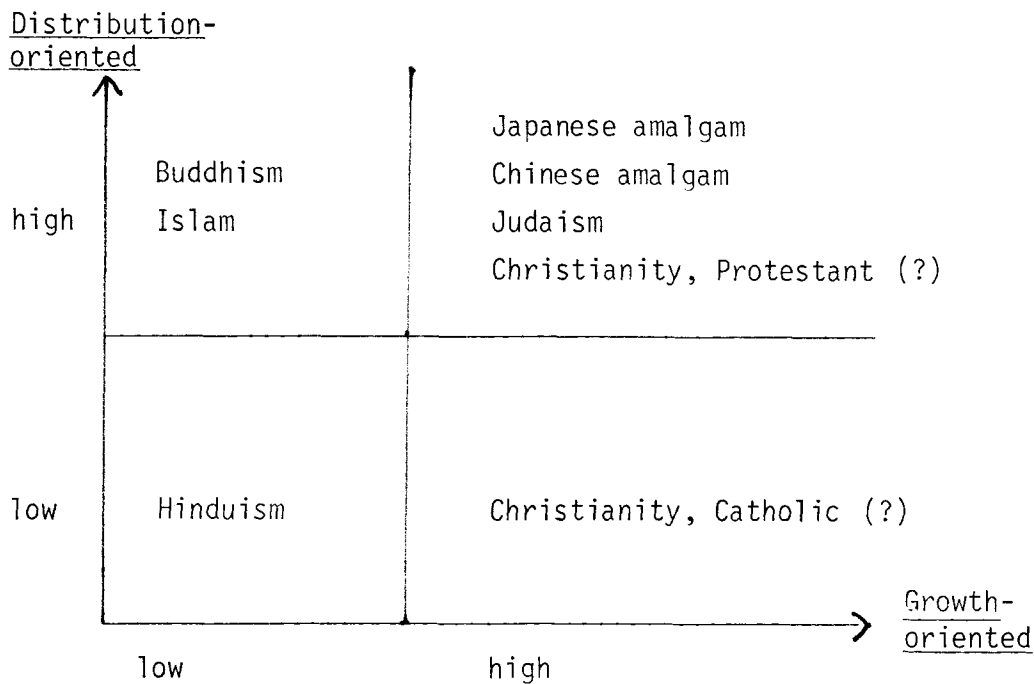
What about the Occidental religions? The accumulation of riches at the top of society, and at the disposal of individuals and individual families rather than at the disposal of organizations and communities (like Japanese capital) would be telling evidence that whatever dictum there might be against such accumulation ("not on earth where moth and rust----") they are not necessarily adhered to in practice. But there may be concrete rules establishing floors. In Islam, for instance, there is the rule to the effect that one should not sit down and eat if one is not assured that the 12 to the left and to the right of one's own house have sufficient to eat - a doctrine that, if practised, would abolish hunger. In Judaism there are similar doctrines. And in Christianity there is the tale of the Good Samaritan, alleviating pain and misery. Of course, the Islamic doctrine is more easily practised in a local community, one reason why "Khomeinism" also seems to be localism.

But that tale, in my view, is ambiguous. Why should Christians engage in good deeds if they are not meritorious, bringing that samaritan closer to salvation? And if that is the case, then why should one abolish misery? Would it not be much more rational to institutionalize misery so that there would always be a sufficient number of sufficiently poor people among us whose misery could become the raw material to be processed into salvation by others? And would that not point in favor of an implicit or explicit alliance between Christianity and capitalism since the latter is based on inequalities, and through the joint working of center-periphery formation and class formation is guaranteed to produce misery at the bottom? In other words, a clear case of symbiosis?

The answer might seem to be yes, at least so far as Christian doctrine acknowledges good deeds as meritorious. This is less true for Protestantism where, according to doctrine, salvation is by faith alone, not by acts. The question is whether Protestants less theologically trained really believe in this and do not think that in God's book up in heaven there will nevertheless be plusses and minuses for what one does, not only for what one thinks. But to the extent that Catholicism/Protestantism is related to the salvation-through-deeds/salvation-through-faith dilemma in theology Catholic countries might see the problem of a floor in economic distribution more related to caritas, Good Samaritans, where Protestant countries might be less interested in this perspective and more concerned with spreading the gospel. This, then, could lead either way: both to Protestant acceptance of much more misery, and to the institutionalization of its abolition through welfare state constructions. As usual it should be noted that I am not suggesting that religion plays the key causal role here, I am only in search of compatibilities.

Grossly simplified, only as a rule of thumb, the reflections above would lead to the following characterization of religions in terms of economical variables:

Figure 3. Religion as a factor for the economic system



A corresponding exploration can now be made for the violence system. To start with direct violence: there seem to be two factors that would predispose for violence when built into the very nucleus of the system of religious faith. First, there is the idea of being a Chosen People which could instill in believers a very high level of self-righteousness. This does not mean that it has to be practised, or enacted, or, if enacted, necessarily in the form of direct violence. It could also take the form of withdrawal from the rest of the world simply because one is too good for the world, simply because the rest of the world is too barbarian to be even worthy of an attack. In what has been said above two clearly Chosen People emerge: the Jews and the Japanese, with some carry-over effects from Judaism into Christianity and Islam, and with the Chinese having at least a superiority complex relative to others, to barbarians, although less clearly aggressive, at least in the sense of being universally, for the whole world, aggressive. It may, perhaps, more be of the withdrawal variety, leading to defensive rather than offensive strategies politically and militarily in what the Chinese historically seem to consider their pocket in the world.

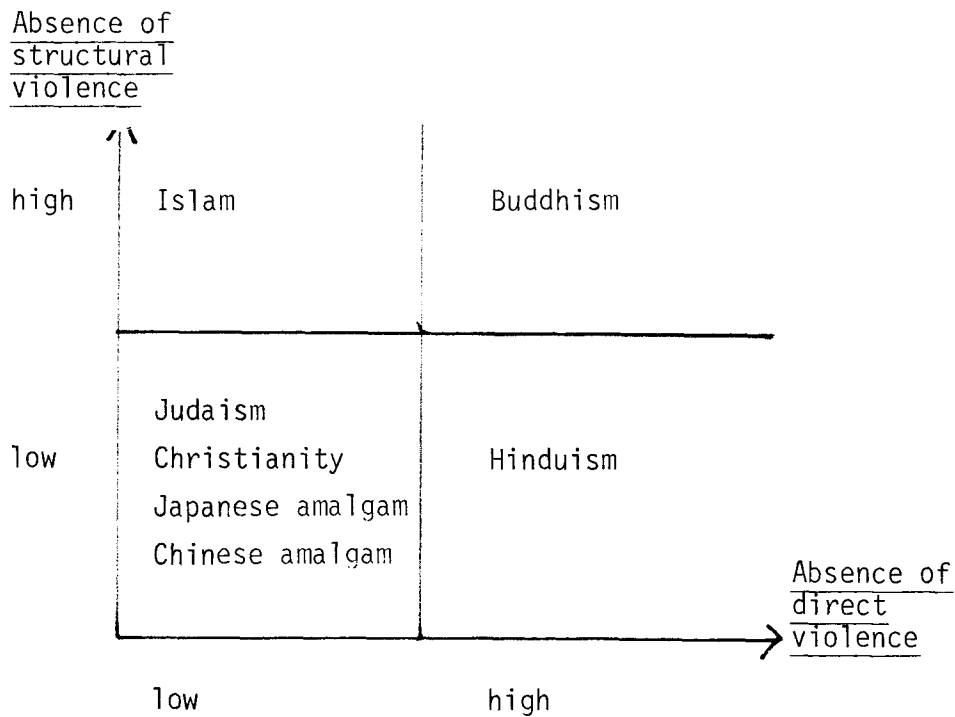
The second dimension would be that of aggressive missionaryism. There is a difference between being adherent of a faith which one considers right and worthy of spreading to others, and that of living under a divine command to spread the faith, if necessary by packing up the message through the skillful use of coercive (force) and remunerative coercive power, the carrot and the stick again. The Occidental religions Christianity and Islam clearly fall in this category; Judaism less so for the reasons mentioned. The missionary command is the logical consequence of singularism cum universalism - as expressed in Mathew, 28:18-20. That those religions also are monotheistic is in my view of secondary significance - but their uniqueness is possibly strengthened by there being only one god (which is not true, strictu sensu, for Christianity).

Structural violence is so much related to distribution in the economic sense that the division of the religions would tend to be the same. At the bottom, of course, is Hinduism with its religiously sanctioned caste system. Buddhism and the systems related to it come out much more clearly against structural violence; and it is not clear that slavery at the hands of the Arabs was religiously legitimized in the same way as slavery at the hands of the Europeans.

But what about Christianity and its predecessor, Judaism? It may be argued that in both of them there is an element of imperialism, clearly seen in Judaism as originally conceived of, and in Christianity as it became not only in the "modern period" with the Catholic Kings establishing their empires and the Protestants following very quickly, but also when Christianity was the state religion of the Roman Empire. That other peoples are "pagan" would in itself be sufficient reason to colonize them, legitimized by the idea of being better able to carry out missionary activities. Liberation could then be granted proportionate to the extent to which adherence to Christianity was reported; if not it had to be fought through direct violence directed against the structural violence of imperialist colonialism. At this point it is difficult to discover any great difference between Catholics and Protestants except that the latter came later so colonial decline and disintegration also came later (except for the Portugese). In both we find religious legitimation for being "people-holder" (colonialist) not only slave-holder; on top of the horrors of inquisition (Catholic) and witch processes (Catholic/Protestant).

If we now summarize all of this we arrive at a picture, again grossly simplified:

Figure 4. Religion as a factor for the violence system



We can now summarize what has been said in this section about the eight religions (we split Christianity into two) and the four dimensions, in Table 5: (see next page)

Figure 5. Religion as a factor: A Summary

	Growth	Distribution	Absence of direct violence	Absence of structural violence	No. of "high"
Judaism	high	high	low	low	2
Christianity, Protestant	high	high	low	low	2
Christianity, Catholic	high	low	low	low	1
Islam	low	high	low	high	2
Hinduism	low	low	high	low	1
Buddhism, pure	low	high	high	high	3
Chinese amalgam	high	high	low	low	2
Japanese amalgam	high	high	low	low	2

Quite clearly the characterizations are too gross to reflect the tremendous variation in the real world. However, of the 16 possible patterns in terms of high and low only five have been used - possibly because the variety is not that high in the empirical world, at least not when one is forced to paint with a broad brush. It should be noted that the extreme patterns are not present: there is no religion known for both aspects of economic development and both aspects of peaceful development. Nor, of course, is there any religion that would denounce all these four efforts. Religion has to be positive in some regard, at least, has to express what people want in this world at least at some point. And people work at least in most places most of the time, for welfare and survival, "economic development" and "peaceful development" as it is called here.

If one now looks at Figure 5, simply reading it off, it is at least compatible with what one finds in the real world. On the one hand there are the big spaces of the world focussing on growth: the Judaic-christian and the sino-japanese spaces; on the other hand the Islamic-hindu-buddhist spaces where this focus is much less prominent. And that would also apply to the religions left out of this exploration: the amerindian, african and pacific spaces. So here is already a first major division, within what until recently has often been referred to as the "modern/traditional" distinction.

The moment one then introduces distribution the images change. In the growth-oriented spaces Catholic Christianity stands out as less distribution oriented than the others. And in the less growth oriented spaces there clearly is a distinction between Hinduism which in addition does not emphasize distribution and Islam and Buddhism that do. Growth may be important as a means of abolishing poverty, but distribution is much more important as a means of abolishing misery. According to this the most pronounced misery in the world should be found in the catholic and hindu regions, particularly the latter - when explorations are limited to the religions here considered. Under Islam and Buddhism misery should be much less pronounced; on the other hand, due to the general lack of growth orientation poverty might nevertheless abound.

Again, the picture changes when one introduces the dimension of violence. It sounds so positive when a system of faith is "high" on both growth and distribution; it becomes less applaudible when this combination is accompanied by direct and even structural violence, i.e. exploitation/repression in one form or the other. It has been mentioned that in the Chinese case such attempts tend to be limited to what might be called "sinic space", but recent excursions into Korean, Vietnamese and Tibetan territory makes one at least wonder exactly where the limits of that space are located. Possibly Tibet is included, Korean and Vietnamese territories not. Japanese militarism

had the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Hemisphere as its "domain", and again it is unclear where the borderlines would be located. Great portions of the Pacific were included, so was all of Southeast Asia and not only East Asia. Australia and New Zealand might have been had they not been more difficult to conquer.

However that may be the Chinese and Japanese domains are clearly not universal; universality applies to Christianity and Islam only and no longer to Judaism. In the Table that important distinction does not appear. It should also be pointed out how Catholic Christianity might build systems somewhat different from Protestant Christianity because of the lower emphasis on distribution in the former. In Catholic empires there might be as much misery at the bottom of the Centre country as at the bottom of the Periphery country; under Protestant colonialism there might be more distribution on the top - the colonized peoples, the pagans, not being equally included in the distribution exercise.

Islam is seen as different: less growth oriented and often also less exploitative although there are exceptions to this rule, such as Southern Sudan in contemporary Africa. In general one might perhaps assume that less emphasis on economic growth also leads to less emphasis on structural violence as the consequence of, or protected by, direct violence. There certainly may be direct violence as such, belligerence, but not just in order to establish economic exploitation. And there may be structural violence unaccompanied by direct violence (or as the result of direct violence in the distant past (the case of Hinduism) where exploitation certainly takes places but inside the community itself, so well institutionalized that it is combinable even with rejection of direct violence (shanti).

That rejection one also finds in Buddhism where rejection also applies to structural violence and combines in a way that makes for the least aggressive combination. That combination, on the other hand, is not "modern": it is low on economic growth. And it is vulnerable unless it is protected by a very strong faith.

I think it is difficult to conclude this section without some explicit evaluation. Most objectionable, according to this scheme of thinking, are Christianity (both versions) and Hinduism; the former because of its universally applied direct and structural violence, the latter because of the massive structural violence directed against its own members, accompanied by flagrant inequalities (as is also the case in much of Christianity). The Christian countries stand out as "progressive" relative to India only because they have managed to export inequality and inequity through imperial practises, and because they have managed to make the nation state itself the accounting unit of economic and social achievement, not the whole system, the whole web of which the nation state may be a centre. But this does not exonerate Hinduism: its victims in that colossal part of human-kind are so many, both in absolute and relative terms that it is not strange if pariahs and shudras resort to the obvious way out: converting away from Hinduism. On that sub-continent the competitors would be Christianity (particularly Catholic) and Islam, and particularly, the latter seems now to receive a high number of converts seeking religio through faiths less destructive of their life on earth, and more promising for their life afterwards.

At the other end I would argue in favor of Buddhism, pure version, as the faith most compatible with the ideas and ideals implicit in Figure 5. It becomes modest in combining low concern with growth and high concern with absence of direct violence; it becomes decent in combining a relatively high level of equality with a relative high level of equity, except in perverted Buddhism. But can not this be said about all faiths, that there are the pure versions and the perverted versions, and the latter considerably less beautiful than the former? I would argue against that position, maintaining that Christianity and Islam, for instance, have built into them certain attitudes to the non-believer that can be used to justify both direct and structural violence, and that this is not found in Buddhism; just as it can be argued that Hinduism has built into it

certain patterns directed against those at the bottom of the hierarchy, and that that is not found in Buddhism either.

I end up with the conclusion in the right hand column of Figure 5. It should only be added that if "pure" Buddhism should somehow assimilate an ideology of economic growth (easily done in the Chinese and Japanese amalgams), then that might change the relationship to violence, ushering in a much lower level of rejection of both direct and structural violence.

4. Conclusion: Some Remarks on Secularism

The conclusion of the preceding section is that it would be hard to argue that religion is not a rather important factor in connection with economic and social development, almost regardless of how these two are conceived of. Some of that relation has to do with compatibility and incompatibility between religious structures and the processes associated with the economic and social development; it is a quite direct relationship. But there is also an indirect relationship: as indicated in Figure 1 above there is a relation between religious and secular ideologies. Seven such secularisms are indicated in the figure, including the intellectually less developed social democracy locating it somewhere after Liberalism and Marxism. Let us then try to repeat the exercise of Figure 5, in Figure 6:

Figure 6. Secularism as a factor. A summary

	Growth	Distribution	Absence of direct violence	Absence of structural violence	No. of "high"
Liberalism	high	low	low	low	1
Marxism	high	high	low	(high)/low	2
Social democracy	high	high	high	low	3
Anarchism	low	high	(low)/high	high	3
Gandhism	low	high	high	high	3
Maoism	high	high	low	high	3
Japanism	high	high	low	low	2

One can now approach this Figure in at least two ways: comparing the secular off-spring with the religious basis, and comparing the various secularisms with each other. I shall try to do both in the following exploration. Liberalism is seen as taking off with a high note on just one point: economic growth, I think that is a fair judgement. It was simply not concerned with distribution, absence of direct or structural violence but saw inequality, inequity and violence as somehow "natural", as expressions of the law of the jungle, in its extreme form as social darwinism. In that sense Liberalism was lagging behind certain Christian teachings, and it could be argued that the relationship between capitalism and Christianity would be more filled with friction in Protestant than in Catholic countries, for that reason.

Marxism was a reaction against Liberalism, but only up to a certain point. Basic to the doctrine was a rejection of a special kind of structural violence, relating to the ownership of means of production. That led to transformation of societies, and was compatible with a higher level of distribution, to the point of abolishing misery. But three comments immediately have to be added: that precise abolition of structural violence was so precise that new inequitable structures could easily emerge to the left and to the right; the revolution held necessary was at the expense of applying direct violence, which then becomes an acceptable phenomenon; and the ideology of growth was not challenged. As a net result the differences are not that big between Liberalism and Marxism. Distribution is better, structural violence not; except in that very particular sense mentioned.

Social democracy, although a very poorly developed ideology - among other reasons because it has no metaphysics, no Geist - can be seen as reaction to both Liberalism and Marxism. It retains the concern with economic growth, is a corrective to Liberalism by being much more concerned with distribution, and a corrective to Marxism by rejecting direct violence as a social instrument while

at the same time remaining very unsophisticated in connection with structural violence. Negotiations, backed up with strikes, social partnership between sellers and buyers of labor, and technocratic rule become the major formulas. The three are then, together, adding up to the profile indicated in Figure 6, reflecting also the rejection of violence by social democracy. In fact, no country ruled by social democrats ever engaged in aggressive warfare.

If we now jump in Figure 6 to Maoism and Japanism they are simply the completely secularized expressions of the Chinese and Japanese amalgams respectively, themselves rather secularized; but with one notable exception. I think it is correct to say that Maoism has a very strong stand against structural violence in general, not only in the narrow marxist sense. The whole Maoist conception of contradictions, of each social formation giving rise to some new type of class formation that in turn has to be fought through a permanent (or "intermittent") revolution, is an expression of this.

In the middle, then, are two secularisms that are quite similar, one of them with Occidental, the other with Oriental (and Hindu) roots. They differ from all the others in being much less growth-oriented and, very much related to this, small scale oriented. They both reject inequality and inequity within and between these small units. In addition to this gandhism rejects direct violence as a means to establish and maintain these self-reliant units, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya becoming inseparable. But anarchism came last century in two versions, one non-violent and one highly violent - the latter is the one used by some journalists when contemporary terrorism is branded as "anarchist", although their ideology may be more marxist. At this point there may actually be some interesting connections between the Western branch of anarchism and catholic Christianity on the one hand and the Eastern branch of anarchism and the milder Christianity on the other. Both Liberalism and Marxism seem to be much more ecumenical in their relations to the various branches of Christianity, being compatible with all three of them. The particular marxism found in the Soviet Union, however, can hardly be understood without reference to orthodox Christianity.

Thus, it seems relatively clear that there is a linkage between religion and secular ideology, and that there is a linkage between secular ideology and processes of economic and social development. Hence, once more the thesis that religion is a rather relevant factor seems not only confirmed, but obvious, trivial. And one could now conclude with the same exercise as at the end of the last section: which of these ideologies are better, which ones are worse? Four of them have actually been marked "3" in Figure 6; what does this mean?

In a sense not very much since there are important problems relating to all four of them, all of them of the same kind: a certain lack of social context. Anarchism not only preaches social islands, it is itself an island in an ocean of growth and expansionism. It should be remembered that Marxism and Liberalism became non-transcendental but retained both the singularism and the universalism of Occidental religions. The world state is the logical structural expression of these two major pillars of Occidentalism, not a world federation of relatively self-reliant, potentially highly pluralistic communities. Anarchism stands very alone in this tradition of secular, Occidental thought.

Social democracy accepts growth and expansionism, but has probably gone too far in becoming secular, to the point of being totally non-transcendental, without any mystique. Precisely because social democratic utopia is so attainable (vide the Nordic countries) it is rejected: it holds no transcendental promise at all. There is no metaphysical context; paradise is too obtainable. There is nothing beyond on the other side - hence the beating Sweden - as Prügelknabe for this tradition - is exposed to.

This is not the problem of Gandhism, nor is it bothered by a context of singularism and universalism. But it remains without roots for another reason: it has sprung of Hindu soil, but been rejected by Hinduism presumably because of its concerns with equality and equity. As a profile it matches Buddhism perfectly and may one day become the social doctrine of Buddhism, after many modifications adapting to local circumstances have been made that process has probably come furthest in Sri Lanka. But this means that it has to go abroad, which in itself is a difficult operation because the roots to the golden past, Gandhi here, on this earth, are no longer there.

And precisely the opposite obtains for Maoism: it cannot go abroad, it is closely linked to the particular Chinese amalgam out of which it came, with some Occidental admixtures. It may be a source of inspiration but perhaps nothing more, for no other place in the world does one find the particular cosmological blend that has been produced within the sinic space.

This may sound like a pessimistic conclusion but is not necessarily so. What it says is mainly that there is very much work to be done, and much of this work is ideological. The present surveys the field. The task is to go beyond it.