From Modernity back to the 'present future'
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Abstract

Is there place for 'religion' in post modernity? This question emerges with the secularization of the society, but also with the increase of 'spirituality' in everyday life. What was managed by the society with the 'official' religions, is no more a reality as the traditional society has changed into a melting pot where different cultures and ethos mix. There is no more an uncontested authority that guarantees the stability of beliefs. Religion is therefore relegated to certain times and sectors of our lives in the process known as privatization. On the other hand fundamentalism and nationalist movements try to renew some shared identity.

For Durkheim, the origin of present religious phenomena is in society. But what changes the society? Most of the historical periods are delimited by cultural exchanges in term of war or discovery. Very few however stress the importance of invention in the process of social development. This is the goal of this study to locate modernity between the invention of printing in the fifteenth century and the advent of cybernetics in the twentieth century. These technologies explain the enlightenment project during modernity on one hand and the virtuality of post-modernity on the other hand. Image and live information have replaced reading and history, changing the diachronic study of the world during modernity to a more synchronic view in post-modernity with the simultaneity and ubiquity of the virtual village.

Introduction

If as Durkheim says "Society is the soul of religion", then religion follows the evolution of society, and one of the aims of this essay is to show the influence of modernity on religion, then through the study of post-modern society, to try to evaluate the impact of this new social era on religion.

But what factors influence societies? We claim that invention and cultural exchanges play a role of first importance in the evolution of societies. Therefore, we have chosen to consider modernity between the (re)invention of printing by Gutenberg in 1450 and the advent of cybernetics in the mid-twentieth Century.

The thread of this paper is, starting from the preconditions of modernity which lies in literacy and the effect on the mind and the structure of knowledge, to draw a picture of modernity from different sources of authors who have studied this period of history, and show its influence on the condition of religions in modern societies, and then to analyze post-modernity with the impact of mass media and cybernetics. The compression of

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space time that results from these new technologies leads to a new virtual society reducing the world into a global village parallel to the real world.

Pre-modernity was characterized by the strength of tradition, modernity brought knowledge, the search for universals and a culture of domination through colonialism mainly by Christian societies and a tendency to paranoia. Post-modernity is characterized by information, relativism and schizophrenia due to the new means of communication, the mixing of population and ethos, and the more and more use of machines for communication and entertainment

What do we understand by religion and spirituality?

The Oxford reference dictionary defines religion as
- a belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship; the expression of this in worship.
- A particular system of faiths
The word religion comes from then Latin *religio* which means obligation, bond, reverence

For Bryan Turner and Emil Durkheim, religion is a social cement binding individuals and social groups into a communal order [Turner1991], and Marx and Engels in 1844 say that religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of people. So we could define religion as the social cement of the total society while being the social opium of the class structure.
For [Bruce], religion consists of actions, beliefs and institutions predicated upon the assumption of the existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in human affairs.

Emil Durkheim considers that religion is merely a form of custom, like law and morality, but it asserts itself not only over conduct but over the conscience [Durkheim1975]. In short, religion starts with faith, that is to say, with any belief accepted or experienced without argument. So long as men live together, they will hold some belief in common. What we cannot foresee and what only the future will be able to decide, is the particular form in which "faith" will be symbolized. There are no religions which are false, all are true in their own fashions. All answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence. Law, morality and religion are the three great regulatory functions of society. He adds: what is happening to religions today? Their dogma are disappearing. In its positive and constructive part, science on certain points is already in position to replace it.

Weber thought of religions in term of a continuum, with apolitical Buddhism at one extreme and Islam as a « warrior religion » at the other [Turner1991,208]. Daniele Hervieu Leger sees religion as an ideological, practical and symbolic system through which consciousness both individual and collective, of belonging to a particular chain of belief is constituted, maintained, developed and controlled [Leger1993]. The shortest definition comes from Hubert who says that religion is the administration of the sacred, and the role of religion in society is defined by Meredith B Mc Guire as one of the foremost forces speaking to issues of legitimation of power and moral order at the global level [McGuire1992], as for Daniele Hervieu Leger, religion works ad intra (through incorporation into a believing community) and ad extra (through differentiation from those who are not of this lineage) [Leger1993]. In modern societies, sport fulfills the social functions of self-affirmation which in traditional societies belonged to religion, and [Bruce] defines secularization as a process of moving from organized religion to politics, football or other.

Now that we have compared different definitions of religion, let us try to define shortly the notion of spirituality. The Oxford reference dictionary defines spiritual as of or concerned with the spirit, not physical or worldly; of the Church or religions. This word

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comes from the Latin *spiritus* which means breath.

After having defined what we understand by "religion" and "spirituality", we introduce in the next sections the notion and characteristics of modernity in order to see its impact on religion.

The preconditions of modernity

As we place Modernity from Gutenberg to Turing in the following of this paper, one precondition is the use of writing which fed the printing industry.

Plato affirmed that writing destroys memory. Those who use writing will become forgetful, relying on an external source for what they lack in internal resources. Writing weakens the mind, writing is passive. It is an unreal, unnatural world. Plato's objection against writing are essentially the very same objections commonly urged today against computers by those who object to them. Writing is inhuman, pretending to establish outside the mind what in orality can only be in the mind. Writing is simply a thing, something to be manipulated, something inhuman, artificial, a manufactured product. The same complain is made against computers: they are artificial contrivances, foreign to human life.

Marshall Mc Luhan argues that among the Greeks the regular method of publication was by public recitation, at first significantly by the author himself, and then by professional readers or actors. As the market society defined itself, literature moved into the role of consumer commodity. The public became patron [McLuhan1962].

Walter Ong states that yet it would appear that the technological inventions of writing, print and electronic verbalization, in their historical effects, are connected with and have helped bring about a certain kind of alienation within the human lifeworld. This is not at all to say that these inventions have been simply destructive, but rather that they have restructured consciousness, affecting men's and women's presence to the world and to themselves and creating new interior distances within the people. He adds that direct communication by script is impossible [Ong1977]. For Ong, writing is a technology that restructures thought. He stressed differences between the oral and the literate mind. Oral culture keeps its thinking close to the human lifeworld storing knowledge into stories. Writing was an intrusion into the early human lifeworld, much as the computers are today. If a book states an untruth, 10.000 printed refutations will do nothing to the printed text. The untruth is there forever. This is why books have been burnt. The same question applies with computer, with the value of information that they contain.
Although we take writing so much for granted as to forget that it is a technology, writing is in a way the most drastic of the three technologies of the world. It initiated what printing and electronics only continued, the physical reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the world from the living present, where alone real spoken words exist. Writing separates the known from the knower, it distances the source of the communication (the writer) from the recipient (the reader) both in time and space. In oral intercommunication the source (speaker) and the recipient (hearer) are necessarily present to one another. The software of the computer interposes even another consciousness or other consciousnesses – the programmer or programmers – between the knower and the known [Ong1999].

As we have seen from different authors quoted in this section, writing and reading build a new way of communication but also another vision of the world which is disconnected from reality. Books and now computers are means of mass storage of knowledge and information that gave birth respectively to modernity and post-modernity. We will see in the next section the conditions that have triggered the advent of modernity.

Origin of Modernity

For Gustavo Benavides the term 'modern' and its equivalent in other European

languages derive from the Latin *modernus*, a term that since fifth century was equivalent to *nunc* : now. Pope Gelasius used the term *novus* to refer to that which differed from what is regular and expected, and *modernus* to allude to recent events. Four centuries later, in Carolingian times, some authors, aware that they lived in an age different from that of early Christianity, used *modernus* in a way that emphasized the difference between their own and other historical periods. In the eleventh century, *modernitas* was derived from *modernus*, and around 1705 Berthold of Regensburg referred to our modernity. Since signification takes place in a system of oppositions, *moderni* distinguished itself from *antiqui*.

Where does one place the beginning of modernity then? Koselleck (1977,1987) has proposed the mid-eighteenth century during the period of Enlightenment. But he recognized that the changes began taking place in the sixteenth century and even during the late fifteenth century [Benavides1998].

Two important keywords are Christianity and the late fifteenth century. We find the first element of modernity in the (re)invention of printing by Gutenberg in 1450. This new tool which was first used to print great quantities of exemplars of the Bible and was prefiguring the Enlightenment project which aim was to understand the world and gather and organize the collected information into books. The great impact of this new technology in term of memorization and transmission of knowledge in the society and to the future, but also the constraints of organization and rationalization of information have largely influenced the structure of modern knowledge. Printing industry has replaced the oral tradition by a reference to a book, allowing as it developed through the age, people to learn by themselves in reading. We can already begin, from these facts, to understand the impact of this technology on the society.

An other point of importance is the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492, and the Cape route to Asia by Vasco de Gama in 1498 because they opened a huge field of investigation with the inauguration of great voyages all around the world.

After having defined a starting point of modernity from the point of view of invention and technology, we shall analyze the effects of the printing industry and gathering of knowledge.

Characteristics of Modernity

According to Lester Kurtz, modernity can be defined as the emergence of a global, scientific technological culture since the Industrial Revolution, and especially during the latter half of the twentieth century [Kurtz1995]. The perception among many European intellectuals in the nineteenth century that religion was dying was the result of two interrelated social movements: the scientific and democratic revolutions. Western science itself was parented by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which put a high premium on cognitive development and scholarship. The scientific movement took on a life of its own, and scientists soon came into direct conflict with church authorities because of their questions about particular claims made especially by the Vatican. The conflict began in the seventeenth century, when church authorities charged the famous scientist Galileo with heresy because he contended that the earth revolved around the sun, and not vice versa. The second challenge to the church occurred when the democratic revolution emerged in the late eighteenth century (especially in France), its major opponent included not just the monarchy, but also the church. When the monarchy of France was challenged by the French revolution, the crown and the church stood side by side to defend the *ancien regime*. Positions tended to solidify in nineteenth-century Europe: either one was pro-democratic, in favor of the development of science, and anti-Christian, or one was in favor of retaining the monarch and traditional Christianity, and restricting the development of science. Advocates of science also came into direct conflict with

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church officials over the growing development of textual criticism, that is, the scientific study of texts, including scriptures. Scholars examined such questions as the authorship, historical development, and recomposition of biblical writings and concluded that many of the church's claims about these texts were untrue.

By the nineteenth century new rifts emerged between theorists of the burgeoning social sciences and orthodox Christian belief. Auguste Comte (1853) contended that human thought develops through three historical stages: first, the theological or superstitious; second, the metaphysical; and finally, the positive, or scientific. His developmental positivism provided a scientific basis for colonial expansionism and a general euphoria about progress and the future of humanity. The controversy that Comte's framework generated exploded with the theory of evolution that spread throughout Europe, especially in Charles Darwin's Origin of Species. Many church leaders claimed that his theory contradicted the genesis creation account. In 1865, The American Church Review contended that if Darwin's hypothesis is true « then is the Bible an unbearable fiction... then have the Christians for nearly two thousand years been duped by a monstrous lie... Darwin requires us to disbelieve the authoritative word of the Creator » .

Benavides states that in terms of religion, modernity has generally been identified with the resolute rejection of a sacramental view of reality and of anthropomorphic conceptions of the divinity, as well as even more radically with an outright rejection of any notion of transcendence [Benavides1998]. In general, Western modernity has involved the first kind of distancing: from the organic to the mechanic, from the corporate to the individual, from hierarchy to equality; from an understanding of reality in which everything resonates with everything else, to one built around precision and the increasing of differentiation of domains.

We see that the diffusion of knowledge by books, allowing people to learn by themselves independently, without having to obey any authority gave way to self reflection and criticism. So on one hand the growing amount of knowledge available induced a strong acceleration of the development of science. On the other hand, the Industrial revolution and especially the development of railway gave more opportunities of traveling and fed the book industry with scientific observations and novels.
The result of these factors were that:
– The quest for understanding the world defined in the Enlightenment project, but also the will of the Church to disseminate Christianity all around the world were the basis of colonialism mainly by France and Great Britain. However, it was also a way to find big quantities of raw material at low price in order to feed the more and more demanding industry.
– The great advances in Western science, the increasing possibilities of technology and the cultural supremacy of Western societies over the rest of the world increased the ego of the rulers and traders of western countries, who started to use their power in order to dominate the world. This gave birth to the sharing of the world between France and England, where America, Africa, India, and Asia where belongings of the compared tiny countries of Western Europe. Even China which was described as the sleeping giant by Napoleon, was invaded, its people addicted to opium imported from India with the result after the reaction of the Emperor, of the domination of China. In Africa a single man, Rhodes, was able to buy one fifth of a continent from natives who did not know even the meaning of property. South African natives suffered then the most abject organization of a society, namely apartheid. All these actions belong to the abuse of power which is the logical result of a temporary unlimited superiority.

David Harvey stresses that the logic that hides behind Enlightenment rationality is a logic of domination and oppression [Harvey1990]. The culminating point of modernity can be placed in the nineteenth century during the Victorian reign as witness the number

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of places that have been renamed into the name of the Queen in many parts of the world.

Religion which was the prime purpose of the printing industry in the time of Gutenberg, allowing the diffusion of the Bible declined during the twentieth century, mainly because of the concurrence of scientific views but also the huge migrations that took place in the world, transforming the modern societies into melting pots of different cultures and traditions. The next section deals with the effect of modernity on religion because of the emergence of scientific explanation of the world on one hand, and the concurrence between religions on the other hand.

Religion in modern societies

As Durkheim considered that society is the soul of religion and that it continues to be that the idea of the sacred is of social origin and can be explained only in sociological terms, it is clear that society has a key role in the condition of religion. So religion like society is influenced by the cultural exchanges and evolution of technology [Durkheim1975].

Tylor, Frazer, Marx, Freud predicted the decline of religion in modern society. Comte invented a new religion based upon a new rational and scientific foundation: sociology. Durkheim saw the beginnings of a new functional equivalent to religion emerging in the values of the French revolution. Malcolm Hamilton claims that the churches decline would give way to the emergence of revived religions groups (sects) or new innovative development (cults) in non formal organizations [Malcolm]. Weber 1961 argued that the realities of modern existence precluded heroic religion and virtuoso prophecy; the religious styles had to be performed « in pianissimo »

Lester Kurtz on the problem of relativism said that although some religions are more exclusivist in their formulations than others, virtually all of them either assert or imply that their own version of the world is true, thereby rendering competing worldviews inferior [Kurtz1995]. Although this position may obtain some legitimacy in isolated cultures, it obviously becomes problematic in a multicultural context. This brings us to a major problem of modernism, and a central theological issue of the contemporary religions – the issue of relativism. On the historical outcomes of the modernist crisis, some of the consequences to the modernist challenge to traditional religions were:

– **The substitution of religious traditions with rationalism, scientism and individualism**
Most of the enlightenment philosophers emphasized a rationalism that insisted on reason as a source of knowledge superior to religious tradition. The German idealists exposed the « illusions » of religious thoughts in the West, which would be replaced with the rationality of Kant, the socialist revolutions of Marx, and the psychotherapeutic treatment of Freud. In its most extreme form, this approach resulted in the development of scientism, a quasi-religious belief in the scientific method. A major feature of the Enlightenment was an individualism that maintains the independence of the human individual as the source of all values, rights and duties.
– **the secularization of public life and the privatization of the religious, so that people from different faiths can share a common social life.**
As a response to modernism, secularization is closely linked to the scientific ethos, which insists that it is possible to adopt an objective view-point that stands above cultural biases; it lies at the heart of the Enlightenment project that would substitute religion with scientific rationality. But a religious perspective by definition involves itself in the ethical standards that apply to all other spheres of life. For most people historically, and in most cultures, religion is diffused throughout everyday life. The compartmentalization of religion, however, represents one solution to the problem of multicultural social reality. Here, each of many religious perspective takes its place in cultural marketplace alongside secular worldviews and ethical standards. The result is signing the explicitly religious to certain times and sectors of life in the process known

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as privatization.
- **The revitalization of traditional forms.**
  On the revolt against modernism, when absolutism is threatened, people often respond with fanatism. If one facet of a tradition seems at risk, people often believe that the entire system is. Most Fundamentalist movements lie in the reaction of traditional religions against modernity.
- **the construction of quasi-religious forms that fulfill many of the social and psychological functions of traditional religions, such as civil religion and nationalism**
- **The creation of new forms of religious belief and practice created through processes of syncretism.**

The first two of these consequences were logical outgrowth of the Enlightenment worldview that precipitated the modernist crisis in the first place. the latter three represent attempts to reshape, rather than replace, the world's religious traditions.

The main idea in secularization is doubt about religion. But all societies don't evolute the same way at present time. In cosmopolitan societies the organization used to be in ghettos in which communities lived separately. We can still find this kind of organization with the Chinese towns in megalopoles. Present African societies are in some way divided into different communities that don't mix, for example in Tanzania, Uganda or Zambia, the Christians, Muslim, Sikhs and Hindus live together but do not mix, there are for instance few inter-community marriage. This kind of social organization is stable and is the result of centuries of cohabitation. They do not match the pattern of modern societies although they continue in present time.

So what we consider as modern societies are those which follow the pattern of Western societies. The modern society is mainly Christian, industrialized, regrouping different communities in the way of assimilation, following somehow the principle of laicity inherited from the French revolution. The two images associated with the traditional and modern society are the cohabitation on one hand, and the melting pot on the other hand. The traditional multicultural societies don't have too many problems of secularization because the different communities do not interact very much, and thus society remains stable in its structure.

The modern society is in crisis because of the doubt on what is right and what is wrong, as it is a concurrence between different, sometimes opposed cultures and ethos. Concerning the religion in modern societies, we can analyze its projection on the two aspects of the society namely the social and the individual or psychological aspect.
- The body of population is more and more controlled by a bureaucracy and globalization. Opinions are expressed in the frame of the politically correctness expression of ideas. These expressions are characterized by their emptiness in order to avoid conflicts with other groups of the society. The masters of the society are the rulers and the traders in the frame of modern capitalism which is based on competition and capital.
- The body of individuals, which represent the psychological side of society is then the only place where spirituality can be expressed. As there is no more absolute religious authority due to the diversity of doctrines and beliefs in the public sphere, many people have a pick and mix attitude over religions. Other strongly affirm their belonging to a traditional religion, but they are in fact closer to the traditional society in the modern society itself. These facts express doubt, questioning and a search for an individual way to religion, a personal way back to the essence of religion, or rather to an expression of faith.

Durkheim said that the only religion ideal possible is religious anomy, that is to say the emancipation of the individual, and the suppression of all dogmatic faith [Durkheim1975].

Now that we have analyzed the modernity and its effects on religions, we try in the next section to find an element that marks the end of modernity and the beginning of

post-modernity. Richard Roberts sees in pre-modernity Christendom, tradition and the *ancien regime*, in modernity the dialectic of Enlightenment, communism, instrumental reason and the European integration, and in post-modernity the progressive triumph of the market, fluidity of identities, the collapse of communism and the 'End of History' [Roberts2002,222].

We have chosen the advent of cybernetics in the mid-twentieth century as the starting point of post-modernity, because we see in this new technology the end of the traditional printing industry and the passage from knowledge to information and from history or diachrony to simultaneity or synchrony. Modernity stressed the importance of history, claiming in positivism that we are the result of the past, with the theories of the Big Bang and evolution of species. Post-modernity which was inaugurated by the advent of cybernetic and info-tech is more directed toward global and instant communication, building a new parallel virtual world that disconnects individuals from reality, leading to schizophrenic attitudes and self made religion. The next paragraph deals with the impact of new technologies on post-modern way of life, the new vision of time and the need for a vision of the world and the sacred adapted to the huge amount, sometimes contradictory, of knowledge and information, in order to build a global culture, but also the risk of schizophrenic attitudes from individual who get lost in the incoherences of the social melting pot, or absorbed by the logic of machines.

Characteristics of Post-modernity

Alain Touraine describes post modernity as postindustrial, technocratic, programmed societies. In the mass society living standards replace ways of life because of urban exclusion, the idea of social class has been losing importance and the obsolescence of techniques is accompanied by the obsolescence of skills [Touraine1974]. The dominant classes dispose of knowledge and control information. Military decision making grows. The extreme form of this social pathology is totalitarism, the subjection of the whole society to the instruments of economic development and social progress, sacrificing its proper goals for the sake of power. Mass production is more strongly bound than before to mass consumption and the social « passivity » is connected with the commercialization of leisure. He stresses the importance of cinema as a mechanism of projection and identification and the increasing technicity of leisure activities.

For McLuhan, instead of tending toward a vast Alexandrian library the world has become a computer, an electronic brain, exactly as an infantile piece of science fiction. And as our senses have gone outside us, Big Brother goes inside [McLuhan1962].

All the authors who reflect about the post-modern society stress the great impact of new technologies and globalization. This globalization does not mean only the economical inter-dependence between the markets, and the production/consumption system, but also the nature of time which has become a common value articulated around the Greenwich meridian.

Time as a unique value related with an other one has been expressed by the famous slogan of Benjamin Franklin: time is money. An other relation can be made with the notion of man-hours for the measure of work. But the most important impact on the notion of time in post-modern societies comes from science and technology, as many systems are now synchronized around a reference time. Therefore, we can argue that mass media and cybernetics have transformed the diachrony or history of modern societies into synchrony or simultaneity. The new possibilities of direct communication through television and Internet built a virtual Global Village all over the world, that gives a feeling of ubiquity.

Helga Nowotny states that a present geared to accelerated innovation is beginning to devour the future. Problems which could formerly be deferred into the future

reach into the present for their part, press for solutions which admittedly may not be on the agenda until tomorrow but demand to be dealt with today. The process of continual « creative destruction », leads to another problem of civilization: that of obsolescence, the aging of technologies, the production of waste. She adds: we are about to abolish the category of the future and replace it with that of the extended present. The category of the future is shrinking towards becoming a mere extension of the present because science and technology have successfully reduced the distance that is needed to accommodate their own products [Nowotny1994,11].

Scott Lash argues that time in modern societies is much more based on clock-time than is the case in many pre-modern societies [Lash1996]. Clock-time is central to the organization of modern societies and of their constitutive social activities. The first characteristic of modern machine civilization was temporal regularity organized via the clock, an invention that was in many ways more important than the steam engine. People shifted from having an orientation to task to having an orientation to time. Disputes have focused on duration, intervals, sequencing, synchronization and pace. A new measure of work appeared with the « man-hours ». He speaks of the time-space compression and the global character of the relationships affecting the various domains of human practice.

The distance between social time and individual time is described by Lircea Eliade who argues that one can understand this better if one looks more closely at the two principal ways of « escape » in use by modern people – visual entertainment, and reading [Eliade1977,34..38]. We need not go into all the mythical precedent for our public spectacles; it is enough to recall the ritual origins of bull-fighting, racing and athletic contests; they all have this point in common, that they take place in a « concentrated time », time of a heightened intensity; a residuum of, or substitute for, magico-religious time. This « concentrated time » is also the specific dimension of the theater and the cinema. Even if we take no account of the ritual origin and mythological structure of the drama or the film, there is still the important fact that these are two kinds of spectacle that make us live in time of a quality quite other than that of « secular duration », in a temporal rhythm, at once concentrated and articulated, which, apart from all aesthetic implications, evokes a profound echo in the spectator.
The true « fall into Time » begins with the secularisation of work. It is only in modern societies that man feels himself to be the prisoner of his daily work, in which he can never escape from Time. And since he can no longer « kill » time during his working hours – that is while he is expressing his real social identity – he strives to get away from Time in his hours of leisure: hence the bewildering number of distractions invented by modern civilization. He concludes with the myths as part and parcel of the human condition, that express the anxiety of man living in Time.

So this progressive shrinking of space time through info-tech toward a single Global Village can be seen as a return to the origin of the world, back to the Big Bang or, as Eliade describes: The Yogi witnesses the inverse of the process of Creation, he « goes back » until he reaches the « origin ». This yogic exercise may be compared with the Taoist technique for « returning to the egg » and the primordial Great-One [Eliade1975,87].

This last point gives the transition to religion in the post-modern society as for individuals, modern myths tend to replace what was previously managed by religion. An other way of investing the spirituality that lies in individuals is the pick and mix attitude on religion. But this personalization or derivation of religion induces a break with society. This isolation from the real world is emphasized by the virtuality of communication and leisure in the present world, leading to more and more schizophrenic attitudes.

On the level of society, the main difficulty is to interpret the sacred texts, in order to understand them in the light of the present context, but also the information which is

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provided by mass media. Walter Ong gives importance to hermeneutics (reflective or scientific interpretation) which first addressed itself largely to biblical and other sacred texts. Hermeneutics (interpretation) remains a major concern and will so remain for the foreseeable future, because of the felt need to interpret in depth what the information is around and in us and to realize what it all does or can mean [Ong1999].

This brings us back to the importance of a teacher, a guru or a master who is able to synthesize and extract rules and values, but also to transmit them in order to guide the individuals. We can see this need in the collective life with the considerable force of political myth.

An other characteristic of post-modernity in comparison with modernity is the acceleration of its impact. Modernity from Gutenberg to Turing lasted five centuries and its effects started to appear clearly after four centuries. The period between discoveries and their impact on societies and individuals diminishes drastically in the present context. We can make a parallel between the of expansion of the world after the Big Bang and the speed of evolution of the virtual world which erases with increasing speed the time and space. Along with the passing from Pisces to Aquarius in the western astrology and the foreseen return to the Golden Age in the wheel of time, this evolution of condition of life and representation of the world through technology explains in great part the millennialism that prevails in post-modernity.

Conclusion

Our aim through this paper was to show the impact of invention and technology on society and thus on religion and the constant acceleration of impact of new tools on the human condition.

Civilization in commonly thought to have started with the mastering of fire, and its influence on food with the advent of cuisine, but also in housing clothing and the ability to fashion new tools and material.

Printing has brought shared and structured knowledge which gave birth to science in modern societies, that replaced the previous teaching through tradition and myths. The development of technology brought people to escape progressively but temporarily from the dependence on nature and allowed a new vision of the world, namely Orientalism and colonialism by societies which used their new means of travels and weapons to dominate the pre-modern societies. But on one hand, the huge amount of knowledge gathered during centuries in books brought contradiction from the different truths and ethos coming, often deformed, throughout the world. On the other hand the displacement of populations though slavery, trade and work mixed different cultures in modern societies. The development of capitalism replaced progressively the values of religions and even the notion of time by the laws of the market in a melting pot of different populations and cultures.

But the civilization of leisure does not fill the natural search of humanity for answers to its quest for a meaning of life which was previously managed by traditional religions. This trend explains the pick and mix attitude due to the decline of traditional religions on one hand but also the emergence of Fundamentalism, especially in Abrahamic religions which try to find their roots in their scriptures, rejecting modernity and striving to live in accordance with frozen text written during another socio temporal context.

The advent of mass media and cybernetics increased the influence of machines in societies, bringing new constraints in everyday life of mankind but also ways of escaping the real world by a virtual one made of cinema, television and video games. This new era which we call post-modernity stressed the mixing of ethos and cultures in replacing knowledge by contradictory information without context. This explains the various movements working at more economical equality in the world and ecology to eliminate the domination of societies on other and the negative effect of the domination of humanity on nature throughout modernity.

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But the system of domination which has put in place an elite and a mechanization of control of individuals is backed by the use of techniques of human sciences and thus very difficult to overcome. We are witnessing the struggle of post-modernity driven by values of co-operation and solidarity against modernity based on domination. On the level of individuals this struggle according to their position in the scale of social power pushes them respectively toward schizophrenia or paranoia. In term of religions, the search of individuals for investing their spirituality gives birth to new religious rites in term of leisure through sport and show business idols, in political myths, sects and gurus.

Many researchers wandered why the very advanced Maya civilization never used iron or even the wheel, and why China went to sleep although very developed and having made many inventions, one of them, printing which was discovered ten centuries before Gutenberg. One could find and answer from the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu who said: "whoever uses machines does all his work like a machine. he who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries a heart like a machine in his heart loses his simplicity. He who has lost his simplicity becomes unsure in the striving of his soul. It is not that I don't know of such things, I am ashamed to use them".

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Keywords

	Pre modern	*modern societies*	*post modern*
ideas	Orality myths teacher	Literacy knowledge books	hypertextuality Information TV Internet
support	social meeting	printing	image
	classicism	positivism	virtuality
tools	handcraft	industry, transport	Info-tech
values	tradition	universals	relativism
society	cohabitation	melting pot	global village
social control	church & monarchy	bureaucracy	Cyber & technocracy
religion	myths local community	Science Church	Spirituality pick & mix
trade	money	bank	credit card
travels	explorers, travelers	colonialism	immigration, tourism
environment	nature	progress	ecology
conflicts	crusades	world war	terrorism
weapons	sword	gun	mass destruction
movement	Nature driven	speed	acceleration
time	Immanence present	diachrony past	synchrony,ubiquity past, present, future