Chapter 15

Multiculturalism, Morality, and Secondary Secularisation: CoSA or Common Good in Practice

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ABSTRACT

Starting from secularisation and its social counterpart, namely the institutional roles and functions of religious bodies being replaced by scientific disciplines or rationales, this chapter aims at providing an analytical approach of restorative justice, focusing on chaplaincy interventions in prison and probation settings. A case study of the Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) following a structural and moral analysis is provided. CoSA origin and expansion are developed to understand how a religious initiative became within less than two decades a standardised intervention. This process is described as secondary secularisation to illustrate how secular and religious morals find a common ground by building common good through practices.

INTRODUCTION

The obviousness of God’s existence (monotheist faith), the obviousness of superior instance(s) (theism, polytheism), agnosticism and the obviousness of God’s non-existence (atheism) coexist in modern countries. Religious beliefs (or their absence) are not just personal but are part of beliefs and social systems bonding communities. Belief systems are not just theoretical, they have a practical counterpart in daily life, the enactment and promotion of values and morality, which means guiding behaviours and social interactions. While assimilative models expect individuals to find or create the common area between their beliefs and the system and its values, multiculturalism tends to negotiate common goals within communities.

This contribution aims at a comprehensive description and analysis of religious groups’ initiatives in secular multiculturalist countries with a specific focus on prison and probation settings. Prison (as an institution) and offenders (as a socially labelled group) condense social and moral views, defining implicitly or explicitly an ontology, an idea of what a human being is. Furthermore, religious groups had to work out a framework of intervention following both their principles and social rules. To illustrate and understand religious groups’ social contributions, chaplaincies’ organisations in prisons and probation settings in UK are presented. This first section discusses the socio-legal treatment of sex offences, as well as legal structures and theoretical arguments justifying chaplains’ presence in prison. British chaplaincies’ organisation and missions are briefly presented to emphasise how the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) initiative fit within this framework.

The second section focuses on CoSA origin in Canada, as a prototype of innovative social justice intervention, practical common sense and an ideal of justice. This initiative originally came from a chaplain who decided to support, on a daily basis, a sex offender when he had finished his detention. This led to a systematic setting to provide offenders with a supportive social environment. Here lies the encounter between legitimate social preoccupations (recidivism) as a secular movement and a religious morality with a common goal.

The third section suggests a structural analysis according to which secularisation left vacant a common good and a common possibility of transcendence. This collective vacancy, while leaving an open ground for both a diversity of religious faith and new forms of spirituality, also allows other social processes to reincorporate and re-secularise religious initiatives.

**SOCIETY, SEX OFFENDERS, AND THE REHABILITATION CHALLENGE**

The prison population consists of more than 400,000 people in Europe and around 85,000 in the UK (Walmsley, 2015). Prison is a singular environment and national penal policies have to address issues as diverse as the population’s feeling of insecurity, the need for justice, sentencing options, and routes to rehabilitation. The abolition of the death penalty led to new policies, legal apparatus and sentences to control offenders population, such as national registration (and in several countries public disclosure), or new form of life sentence (under specified conditions, see section 225 Criminal Justice Act 2003). Sex offenders are a particular type of such offenders, given the nature of their act and social perception (Frost, 2010). How can a society compromise between safety, security (maintaining social cohesion) and the human rights of (sex) offenders (Bouellier, 2011)? Does the oscillation between rehabilitation, desistance process (Farral and Caverley, 2006) and risk management (Bonta, 2002) rely on facts, science or beliefs (Harcourt, 2007, 2010)?

**Socio-Legal Treatment and Public Notification**

The increasingly widespread burden of sex offences across the world has led to raised public concerns over the past few decades. This, in turn, has led to advances in both legal practices and social consideration for victims. Sex offences statistics highly depend on criteria used to describe them. If national statistics in the UK report more than five thousand convictions per year, the number increases to more than ten thousand prosecutions and fifty thousand police recorded crimes. Statistical estimations point to a worrying level of sex offences – cca five hundred thousand per year (Ministry of Justice, 2013). This
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