

Are religious people intolerant?

An empirical study of the perceptions of committed religious and humanist youth in the Netherlands and Flanders

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NTT 74 (1): 39–65

DOI: 10.5117/NTT2020.1.003,JANS

Abstract

The central question in this article is: 'Are committed young Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders intolerant towards other groups?' To answer this question, we analyse survey data and interviews collected in this research population. We first look at intergroup attitudes, which mainly show a pluralist approach towards the plurality of worldviews. Subsequently, we discuss the levels of religiocentrism and perceived intergroup threat among these young people. Finally, we search the interviews for practical examples concerning interviewees' willingness to accept a plurality of worldviews in the public square. Although liberal values are dominant, much depends on the specific topic and how it is presented in the media. Generally, interviewees are tolerant towards other worldviews.

Keywords: religion, humanism, state, youth, pluralism, intolerance, empirical studies

Introduction

Religion and intolerance often go hand in hand. It is hard not to be confronted with conflicts that are ascribed to religion when reading the newspaper or watching the news. When one types the word 'religion' in the search engines of online news agencies, the number of articles related to violence, extremism, terrorism, war, suppression, discrimination and abuses is overwhelming. In the Netherlands and Flanders, Islam regularly stirs

arguments, with Muslim migration to these regions probably contributing to negative attitudes.

The media's influence on public perception regarding these issues is hard to overestimate. In their book *Media Framing of the Muslim World* (2014), Rane, Ewart and Martinkus argue:

The news media, in particular, tell people *what* to think about by way of the issues and events they decide to cover. The way these issues and events are framed in terms of the images and information that are included or excluded influences *how* people think about these issues and events. (...) The power of the media stems from an ability to reach mass audiences and to become a primary source of information about people, places and events that the audience has not directly experienced. Such is the case in respect to the media's coverage of Muslims.¹

Rane et alii further clarify that the way in which media information is processed by people depends on factors such as prior knowledge, education, interests and experiences. The problem, Rane et alii argue, is not so much that reports of the media are inaccurate, but that a narrow and radical strand of Islam is given most coverage. The Muslim world is far more diverse than the media show. Another aspect at play is the presentation of a supposed opposition between religions, particularly Islam, and the modern values of the Enlightenment.²

In this sense, the media mainly cover extremist forms of Islam and not so much mainstream Muslims. A study in the United States found that people who watch television news frequently express higher levels of fear towards Islam and consider a terrorist attack to be more likely.³ In a similar vein, Muslim asylum seekers have been depicted by the media as potential terrorists. In recent years, public opinion towards migration is hardening and causes concern among citizens of the receiving society.⁴ In line with these findings in the United States, the Social and Cultural Planning Agency

1 H. Rane, J. Ewart, J. Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World: Conflicts, Crises and Contexts*, Basingstoke 2014, 2.

2 Rane, Ewart, Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World*, 2-4; see also: E. Said, *Covering Islam*, New York 1997, x-xi; B. Nacos, O. Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans*, Lanham 2007; P. Morey, A. Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation After 9/11*, Cambridge 2011, 1.

3 Rane, Ewart, Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World*, 33-36; see also: Nacos, Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears*, 2.

4 Rane, Ewart, Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World*, 73.

in the Netherlands (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, SCP) found that Islam is perceived as the second most threatening factor in the Netherlands.⁵

Governments have a responsibility to inform citizens: ‘the public often lack the ability to form independent opinions that do not take cues from government officials or elites. These findings are consistent with those dating back to the early 1990s on “policy feedback”, which found that government policy tends to shape public opinion.’⁶ In the most recent federal and regional elections in Flanders (May 2019), *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest), a political party that presents Islam as a threat to society, made a big leap forward and became the second largest party in Flanders.

As for religious groups, they might feel under siege in a secularizing society. The earlier mentioned SCP report shows that religion is not experienced as a distinctive characteristic of the Netherlands and is not seen as a source of cohesion.⁷ In Belgium there is debate about the relationship between religion and state, and whether ‘laicity’ (*laïciteit*) should be written into the Constitution. In an open letter that was signed by people from multiple religions and professions, the fear was expressed that not neutrality, but a humanistic worldview would be leading for the Constitution, and that freedom of religion would herewith be at stake. According to some humanist commentators, Catholics just fear to lose their privileges. The election memorandum of the Belgian Humanists, *deMens.nu*, asks for equal and transparent financial support for different worldviews (of which religions and humanism are part) and for a regular review of decisions concerning this support.⁸

Looking deeper into the causes of intolerance regarding worldview, Martha Nussbaum argues that two convictions in particular foster intolerance between groups. The first opinion is that the own religious belief is the

5 Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Denkend aan Nederland, Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport, 2019: https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2019/Denkend_aan_Nederland (accessed 11 July 2019).

6 Rane, Ewart, Martinkus, *Media Framing of the Muslim World*, 76; see also: P. Pierson, ‘When Effects Become Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change’, *World Politics* 45 (1993), 595-628; N. Klocker, K. Dunn, ‘Who’s Driving the Asylum Debate? Newspaper and Government Representations of Asylum Seekers’, in *Media International Australia: Incorporating Culture and Policy* 109 (2003), 71-92; A. Pedersen, S. Hansen, S. Watt, ‘The Role of False Beliefs in the Community’s and the Federal Government’s Attitudes Toward Australian Asylum Seekers’, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 41 (2006), 105-124.

7 Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Denkend aan Nederland, 11-12.

8 deMens.nu, Memorandum: Voorstellen naar aanleiding van de regionale, nationale en Europese verkiezingen, 2019: <https://demens.nu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Memorandum-verkiezingen-2019.pdf> (accessed 11 July 2019).

only true belief and others are false or even morally wrong. This conviction can be related with tolerance for other peoples' beliefs 'as long as they do no harm'. The second, and according to Nussbaum, more dangerous conviction is that people should be forced by the state or private groups to adhere to supposedly exclusively truthful religious beliefs for the benefit of societal cohesion. Nussbaum argues that this second conviction is also found in Western democracies. It can lead to forcing people to adhere to one specific religion or to ban religious symbols altogether.⁹ Eisinga, Felling and Peters confirm empirically that exclusive views induce intolerance, but from the perspective of religious groups: when believers claim to have the only truth, they are less favourable to other religious groups.¹⁰

All this brings us to the following questions: Are religious groups really intolerant or is this a matter of perception? What is the role of the media in how people perceive the (in)tolerance of religions, especially Islam? And is there a difference in this regard between religious believers and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders? The answers to these questions are relevant, because the way in which religious and humanist groups relate sets essential conditions for a peaceful and cohesive multicultural society.

In this article we discuss inter-group attitudes concerning worldview among committed religious and humanist youth in the Netherlands and Flanders. We focus on committed youth because they are the potential policy makers of their respective religious or humanist organisations and, more broadly, the potential opinion makers on the role of religion and worldview in society. This article aims to present perceptions of the young people who are likely to become the frontrunners in the debate on the relationship between religion and public governance. We start by describing the research methods and research population, followed by sections dedicated to the attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews, religiocentrism, perceived group threat and specific cases involving religion and/or humanism. We conclude with a discussion on whether or not religious believers and humanists are intolerant, and pay special attention to the public perception of Islam.

9 M. Nussbaum, 'Religious Intolerance', *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004), 44-45.

10 R. Eisinga, A. Felling, J. Peters, 'Religious Belief: Church Involvement and Ethnocentrism in the Netherlands', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (1990), 54-75; R. Eisinga, A. Felling, J. Peters, 'Church Involvement, Prejudice and Nationalism: A Research Note on the Curvilinear Relationship between Church Involvement and Ethnocentrism in the Netherlands', *Review of Religious Research* 31 (1990), 417-433; D. Capuacao, *Religion and Ethnocentrism: An Empirical Theological Study*, Leiden 2010, 12.

Methods and population

This article is based on cross-method research, including quantitative and qualitative empirical analyses among committed religious and humanist youth in the Netherlands and Flanders. By 'committed' we mean those people who are either member of a religious or humanist (youth) association, train to become a religious or humanist professional or attend a gathering of their community (church, mosque or humanist lecture) at least once a month. 'Youth' refers to people who are between 15 and 26 years old.¹¹

For the quantitative empirical research, a survey¹² was distributed via the method of purposeful sampling, which implies that cooperation was established with national and local youth organizations, local churches and mosques, individuals with a wide network among religious or humanist youth and schools that offer a training to become a religious and/or humanist paid professional. This resulted in 643 respondents of whom 260 are Dutch and 383 are Flemish. Concerning their worldview, the distribution is as follows: 202 Catholics, 158 Protestants, 158 Muslims and 125 humanists. The 51 respondents who belong to none of these worldviews are not considered in further analysis.

For the qualitative empirical research, a semi-structured interview¹³ was taken among members (or students) of the same or similar organizations (or schools). This resulted in 16 interviewees of whom 9 are Dutch and 7 are Flemish. Concerning their worldview, the distribution is as follows: 4 Catholics, 3 Protestants, 4 Muslims and 5 humanists. Because the proportion of Protestants is very low in Flanders, we only included Dutch Protestants in the qualitative empirical research.

The central question in this article is: *Are committed young Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders intolerant towards other groups?* For the discussion on intolerance, we focus on: (1) attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews, (2) religiocentrism,

11 The demarcation for the quantitative study is 15-25 years and for the qualitative study 15-26 years. The data of the qualitative study were collected a year after the quantitative study, and interviewees were partly selected from the same organizations whose members filled in the questionnaires. By raising the maximum age to 26 years, we sought to increase the chance of having respondents who filled in the questionnaire among the interviewees.

12 The measuring instruments behind this survey that are relevant to this article are added in appendix 1.

13 The questions asked during this interview that are relevant to this article are added in appendix 2.

(3) perceived group threat, and (4) specific cases involving religion and/or humanism. In addressing these topics, we briefly introduce the results of the quantitative analyses, before we move to a more detailed discussion based on the interviews of the qualitative research. We start with the attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews.

Attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews

For the attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews, we differentiate between monism and pluralism. These two attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews is a simple distinction referring to more elaborated distinctions in the so-called theology of religions. Many empirical studies, however, only observe distinctions between monistic and pluralistic attitudes among its research populations. This is also the case in our study.

Monism entails the conviction that the own worldview contains most truth and other worldviews can only find their true fulfilment in the own worldview. Some scholars differentiate between replacement monism (or exclusivism) and fulfilment monism (or inclusivism). Exclusivism is described by Knitter as a conviction that one particular worldview is looked at as the only true belief that should replace all others. This line of thought can be found in the theological expression *'extra ecclesiam nulla salus'* (no salvation outside the church). In exclusivist religions, the idea is that God can only be fully discovered within the own religion or holy scripture. The inclusivist line of thought can be noticed in the works of Rahner and Tillich. Inclusivism implies that people acknowledge partial truths in other beliefs but claim that the full truth can only be found in their own worldview. In this sense, the other worldviews are perceived as only being capable of finding their true fulfilment in one's own worldview.¹⁴

14 F.V. Anthony, C.A.M. Hermans, C. Sterkens, 'Interpreting Religious Pluralism: Comparative Research among Christian, Muslim and Hindu Students in Tamil Nadu, India', *Journal of Empirical Theology* 18 (2005), 154-186, especially 157-161; F.V. Anthony, C.A.M. Hermans, C. Sterkens, *Religion and Conflict Attribution: An Empirical Study of the Religious Meaning System of Christian, Muslim and Hindu Students in Tamil Nadu, India*, Leiden/Boston 2015, 118-121; M. Yusuf, *Religious Education in Indonesia: An Empirical Study of Religious Education Models in Islamic, Christian and Hindu Affiliated Schools*, Zürich 2016, 110. For replacement monism, see: J. Auer, J. Ratzinger, *Kleine Katholische Dogmatik: Eschatologie, Tod und ewiges Leben*, Regensburg 1990; K. Barth, 'The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion', in R.J. Plantinga (ed.), *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford 1999, 223-242; P.F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, New York

Pluralism entails an openness towards other beliefs, because one worldview cannot be rationally preferred over the other. Some scholars differentiate between commonality pluralism and differential pluralism. In the commonality pluralism of Hick and Samartha different worldviews are perceived as different paths towards the same truth. The similarities between worldviews can be a basis for a universal worldview. In the differential pluralism of Cobb and Knitter every worldview is considered a valid way to the ultimate truth. All worldviews are thus equal but different and these differences are opportunities for reciprocal enrichment, since one can learn to know the own tradition better by encountering other worldviews. Differential pluralism is close to comparative theology, which starts from the own tradition but recognizes the opportunities to learn by comparing different religions. Because of the focus on the learning process, comparative theology requires a willingness to take the time to understand other worldviews in depth.¹⁵

Monism¹⁶ is neither agreed nor disagreed with by survey respondents (m 3.06).¹⁷ When comparing the groups, we find that Protestants score highest on monism (m 3.84), followed by Muslims (m 3.55), humanists (m 2.68) and Catholics (m 2.31).¹⁸ The four groups differ significantly in their approval or disapproval of monism. Monism is also referred at by eleven out of sixteen interviewees.¹⁹ Although this seems relatively many

2002; for fulfilment monism, see: K. Rahner, *Grace in Freedom, Burns and Oates*, New York 1969; P. Tillich, 'Christianity Judging Itself in the Light of Its encounter with the World Religions', in Plantinga (ed.), *Christianity and Plurality*, 279-287.

15 C. Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education*, Leiden 2001, 73; Anthony, Hermans, Sterkens, 'Interpreting Religious Pluralism', 157-16; Anthony, Hermans, Sterkens, *Religion and Conflict Attribution*, 118-121. For commonality pluralism, see: S. Samartha, 'The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in Multireligious Culture', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Asian Faces of Jesus*, Maryknoll 1995, 104-123; J. Hick, *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, New York 2001. For differential pluralism, see: J.B. Cobb, *Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way Beyond Absolutism and Relativism*, Maryknoll 1999; Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*; J.M. Vigil, *Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Zurich 2008. For comparative theology, see: P.S. Chung, *Comparative Theology among Multiple Modernities: Cultivating Phenomenological Imagination*, Chicago 2017; F.X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders*, Malden 2010.

16 The measurement of monism, as well as other measurements mentioned in this study (pluralism, religiocentrism, perceived group threat) can be found in the Appendix.

17 Scale: 1 = fully disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = fully agree.

18 Catholics also show quite differing opinions towards monism within their own group (sd. = .97).

19 2 out of 4 Catholics, 3/3 Protestants, 2/4 Muslims and 4/5 humanists.

compared to the low levels of agreement with monism in the survey, most monist arguments in the interviews are not exclusivist or explicitly agreed with. Youssef, a Dutch Muslim, does have a more exclusivist view in that he believes that his religion is the path to truth, but he recognizes that other religions believe the same. He is also unwilling to contradict them in their beliefs, because he holds that we will see who is right in the end. In his view, this will be Islam. A more exclusivist monism is present in five interviews.²⁰ Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, says: ‘I just think that we, the Dutch, are a bit Christian. And I’m fine with other people, with other religions, coming to live here. But I do think they just need to adapt to us, because if we were to live in their country, we would also have to adapt to them.’ Noah, a Dutch Protestant, puts it straightforward: ‘I believe only my worldview is the truth. That the Christian God is the only God.’

Another finding from the interviews is that humanist monism is different from religious monism. Humanists do not necessarily experience their own worldview as superior, but qualify the acceptance of ‘scientific truths’ as a criterion to determine how close a religion is to truth. Max, a Dutch humanist, for instance states: ‘I don’t think every worldview has its own way of discovering the truth. I think the best way to discover the truth to be via the scientific method. And this is available to everyone, whether he or she is humanist or Hindu or Muslim or Christian.’ The reason we categorize this

Table 1 Average scores and standard deviations for monism and pluralism by worldview and significant inter-group differences

| | n | mean | s.d. | Protestant | Muslim | Humanist |
|------------------|-----|------|------|------------|--------|----------|
| <i>Monism</i> | | | | | | |
| Catholic | 202 | 2.31 | .97 | ** | ** | ** |
| Protestant | 156 | 3.84 | .84 | | * | ** |
| Muslim | 157 | 3.55 | .79 | * | | ** |
| Humanist | 124 | 2.68 | .95 | ** | ** | |
| <i>Pluralism</i> | | | | | | |
| Catholic | 201 | 3.58 | .73 | ** | * | ** |
| Protestant | 156 | 2.46 | .79 | | ** | ** |
| Muslim | 157 | 3.34 | .73 | ** | | |
| Humanist | 124 | 3.14 | .80 | ** | | |

Scale: 1 = fully disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = fully agree
 Differences are significant at p < .01 (**) or p < .05 level (*)
 F-value for monism = 110.83; f-value for pluralism = 68.02

20 1 out of 4 Catholics, 3/3 Protestants, 1/4 Muslims and 0/5 humanists.

quote as monism is because Max does not believe that religions can discover truth in their own ways, the only way is via the scientific method. He thus subjects both religions and humanism to the scientific criterion.

Pluralism is weakly agreed with by survey respondents (m 3.16). When we compare the groups, Catholics (m 3.58) are most pluralist, followed by Muslims (m 3.34), humanists (m 3.14) and Protestants (m 2.46). Muslims and humanists are the only groups who do not significantly differ from each other, in that both groups are slightly pluralist. In the interviews, a pluralist argument is made by seven out of sixteen interviewees in the context of the attitude towards the plurality of worldviews.²¹ The existence of different religious and humanist groups as a contribution to truth seeking is mentioned by six of them, experiencing the presence of different groups as an enrichment by two and different ways to look at ethics by one. The answer of Zeynep, a Flemish Muslim, illustrates the pluralist position: 'Christianity, among other things, coheres, but humanists think totally different. And in some way I approve of this, because if I would linger in the Islamic thought, it seems there would never be progress in life. All this ethics and scientific progress, I don't think it would happen that way.'

Nevertheless, most interviewees do not get much further than mentioning exteriorities or pointing at differences between groups without attaching any value to this observation. Observing differences between religions and mentioning that these differences do not reflect differences in truth, is a normative viewpoint that can be called pluralistic. Jean, a Flemish humanist, for example says: 'I don't think that better or more correct apply here. In any case just different'. Monica, a Dutch Catholic, argues: 'religion assumes there is a God and there is a higher power, while humanism starts from the human being itself. That doesn't mean that there can be no similarities, because some values and norms are pretty similar. And, eventually, everyone strives for the good. But there are also differences because humanism, for example, doesn't believe in that higher power and in this God.'

Religiocentrism

Religiocentrism implies that positive characteristics are attributed to the own group and negative characteristics are associated with other groups. In religiocentrism, other worldviews are (negatively) evaluated against the

21 3 out of 4 Catholics, 0/3 Protestants, 3/4 Muslims and 1/5 humanists.

own criteria, while the own worldview is seen as superior. Other groups can even be perceived as a threat to one's own values. Especially religions sometimes make a sharp distinction between believers and non-believers.²² The members of the own religion are then perceived as the true believers, while others are considered non-believers.

Positive in-group perceptions are slightly agreed with by survey respondents (m 3.28). Protestants (m 3.65) have the most positive perception of their own group, followed by Muslims (m 3.49), Catholics (m 3.13) and humanists (m 2.80). Protestants and Muslims are the only groups that do not significantly differ from each other. Both groups have a more positive perception of their own faith community than others. In the interviews, positive in-group perceptions are only noticed among three out of sixteen interviewees.²³ Of these three, Lidwina (a Dutch Catholic) and Youssef (a Dutch Muslim) claim that their worldview leads towards a better life, while Max (a Dutch humanist) argues that his humanist belief makes people happier. Most interviewees, however, do not evaluate their own group more positively, and even those who do, do not do so in strong wordings. Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, argues: 'I think that if you have been raised as a Christian, then you obviously have some rules that you need to respect. And I think that this, if you also truly believe and really want to do good, just like Jesus in principle as your example, then I think you really pursue a very good example and do as much your best in society as possible. So I think that is really good.' But when specifically asked about people with a different worldview, she continues: 'They also have an example, I think. And that's also written in their religious book, or something else, they also have as an example. Buddha, for example. Also a very beautiful example. Or Gandhi, for example, are also really beautiful people, who also live a good life. These are also fine examples that you can follow.'

22 W.G. Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores and Morals*, Boston 1906, 12; Anthony, Hermans, Sterkens, *Religion and Conflict Attribution*, 143-144; H. Hadiwitanto, *Religion and Generalised Trust: An Empirical-Theological Study among University Students in Indonesia*, Zürich 2016, 115-121; Yusuf, *Religious Education in Indonesia*, 110; M. Sherif, *Group Conflict and Cooperation, Their Social Psychology*, London 1966; B. Altemeyer, 'Why Do Religious Fundamentalists Tend to Be Prejudiced?', *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 13 (2003), 17-28; D.L. Hall, D.C. Matz, W. Wood, 'Why Don't We Practice What We Preach? A Meta-Analytic Review of Religious Racism', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14:1 (2010), 126-139; Capuacao, *Religion and Ethnocentrism*.

23 1 out of 4 Catholics, 0/3 Protestants, 1/4 Muslims and 1/5 humanists.

Table 2 Average score and standard deviation for religiocentrism by worldview and significant inter-group differences

| | n | mean | s.d. | Protestant | Muslim | Humanist |
|---|-----|------|------|------------|--------|----------|
| <i>Positive in-group</i> | | | | | | |
| Catholic | 202 | 3.13 | .60 | ** | ** | ** |
| Protestant | 156 | 3.49 | .65 | | | ** |
| Muslim | 158 | 3.65 | .66 | | | ** |
| Humanist | 125 | 2.80 | .68 | ** | ** | |
| <i>Negative out-group</i> | | | | | | |
| Catholic | 202 | 1.83 | .67 | | | ** |
| Protestant | 156 | 1.99 | .63 | | | |
| Muslim | 158 | 1.83 | .72 | | | ** |
| Humanist | 125 | 2.17 | .80 | | ** | |
| Scale: 1 = fully disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = fully agree | | | | | | |
| Differences are significant at $p < .01$ (**) or $p < .05$ level (*) | | | | | | |
| F-value for positive in-group = 50.40; f-value for negative out-group = 7.89 | | | | | | |

Negative out-group perceptions are disagreed with by survey respondents (m 1.93). When comparing the different worldviews, we notice that humanists (m 2.17) least disagree with negative out-group perceptions, followed by Protestants (m 1.99), Catholics (m 1.83) and Muslims (m 1.83). Humanists significantly differ with Catholics and Muslims. In the interviews, a negative out-group perception is found among only four out of sixteen interviewees.²⁴ The claim that other groups cause conflicts is mentioned twice and that they are less reliable, intolerant or show less love towards their neighbour once each. Three of the interviewees, Monica (a Dutch Catholic) and Bertrand and Jean (both Flemish humanists) explicitly make a distinction between religions and humanism. This explains why the surveys only show a significant difference between the humanist group and the religious groups. Monica for instance argues:

I notice that some religious (groups) strive more for the love of their neighbour and highly value an eye for the other after all then, for example, atheists, who are more focussed on themselves or so after all and much less on. Well that's expressed really black and white, but that there is just a little extra among religious people about doing good for the other. Sometimes. There are also people who don't believe who possess this. But I have the impression that religious people carry this out just a little bit more.

²⁴ 1 out of 4 Catholics, 0/3 Protestants, 0/4 Muslims and 3/5 humanists.

Bertrand and Jean believe (some) religions are more likely to cause conflicts than humanism, although they are hesitant in their answer.

Perceived group threat

Perceived group threat implies that the other group's views are perceived as a threat to the interests or the wellbeing of the own group. One possible issue is related to conflicting beliefs and values, with majority group members perceiving the minority group(s) as a threat to the beliefs, values and norms of the majority group. Perceived group threat can also include the belief that achievements of immigrants are at the expense of the own group.²⁵ Based on this description, one could expect that perceived group threat in the Netherlands and Flanders is mainly related to Muslims.

Perceived group threat is low among survey respondents (m 2.05). Protestants (m 2.32) perceive most group threat, followed by Catholics (m 2.15), humanists (m 2.05) and Muslims (m 1.68). Muslims are the only group who significantly differ from other groups, which affirms our expectation. The high standard deviations show however that the levels of perceived threat are rather different between individuals in each group. In the interviews, group threat is perceived by six out of sixteen interviewees.²⁶ Violence, a risk for security and a threat to 'our way of life' are all mentioned three times. All six interviewees mention the threat posed by extremism, mostly Islamist extremism. Maartje, a Dutch Protestant, for instance argues: 'I do occasionally worry about extremist Muslims. That is something of which I'm afraid that it threatens our way of life, yes. Certainly when it's about: what if a big political party would rise to power? What would that mean for the Dutch society and what we can and can't do?' Youssef, a Dutch Muslim, adds the

25 M. Sherif, C.W. Sherif, 'Ingroup and Intergroup Relations: Experimental Analysis', in M. Sherif, C.W. Sherif (ed.), *Social Psychology*, New York 1969, 221-266; V.M. Esses, L.M. Jackson, T.L. Armstrong, 'Intergroup Competition and Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration: An Instrumental Model of Group Conflict', *Journal of Social Issues* 54 (1998), 699-724; M. Riek, E.W. Mania, S.L. Gaertner, 'Intergroup Threat and Outgroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10 (2006), 336-353, especially 336-338.

26 1 out of 4 Catholics, 2/3 Protestants, 1/4 Muslims and 2/5 humanists.

risk of politics abusing religion. Francis, a Dutch humanist, perceives a more general threat stemming from religions:

I think there are indeed worldviews that are a threat to us. In that case, I think of particular ideas that you can find in some worldviews. For example on sexuality. I then think: 'let people live just live their own lives.' But if homosexuality is not allowed and suppressed because of a worldview, that is a problem. If animals are tortured or butchered or sacrificed in a particular way, I also find that a problem. Or if people are not allowed to drink [alcohol], I also find that a problem. Or if on religious grounds is said that a man should beat his wife if she doesn't bring dinner on the table, I also find that a problem. So I look a little bit liberal at what worldviews are allowed to do. As soon as damage is caused [by religious views], then I think our way of life is threatened.

Table 3 Average of and standard deviation for perceived group threat by worldview and significant inter-group differences

| | n | mean | s.d. | Protestant | Muslim | Humanist |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|------|------------|--------|----------|
| <i>Perceived group threat</i> | | | | | | |
| Catholic | 202 | 2.15 | .94 | | ** | |
| Protestant | 156 | 2.32 | .89 | | ** | |
| Muslim | 158 | 1.68 | .76 | ** | | ** |
| Humanist | 125 | 2.05 | .93 | | ** | |

Scale: 1 = fully disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = fully agree
Differences are significant at $p < .01$ (**) or $p < .05$ level (*)
F-value = 15.12

Now that we have discussed the committed religious and humanist youth's attitude towards the plurality of worldviews, religiocentrism and perceived group threat, we address their stance towards specific cases involving religion and the state.

Specific cases involving religion and the state

Before we address the opinion of the committed religious and humanist youth concerning specific cases involving religion and the state, we introduce some general values concerning religion-state relations that were noted while analysing the interviews. In what follows, we thus limit the discussion to the interviews.

Liberal values are at the forefront in most interviewees' descriptions of their ideal relation between religion and state. Especially individual

freedom and equality appear regularly in their reflections. Many interviewees state that doing no harm to others is an important criterion in the interaction with others, a boundary that was already set by the liberal thinker John Stuart Mill.²⁷ This also includes the rejection of coercion by interviewees. Zeynep, a Flemish Muslim, for instance argues: 'I hold that they [i.e. worldviews] can execute their rights of what they can do. But I don't think they should, for example, say: "because all of us eat halal, we should make a law for it"'. Strikingly, pluralism is found in more arguments relating to religion-state relations (11/16) than in the context of attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews (7/16). The most likely reason is that pluralism in the context of religion-state relations also includes the own worldview, whereas pluralism in the context of attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews only refers to other worldviews. The liberal value neutrality is used in the arguments of all humanists and half of each religious group.

Another popular value is group autonomy (11/16), especially among religious interviewees. Group autonomy limits the extent to which the state can intervene in organizations. Arguments in favour of allowing particularism in public debate are often made (13/16). Particularist arguments differ from pluralist arguments in that group values are not only tolerated, but are seen as essential to the public debate and indispensable for the viability of society. Half of the interviewees also leave space for limited state preferences. Youssef, a Dutch Muslim, for example says that financing groups like the church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster would go too far.

A strict separation between religion and state is least preferred, followed by a far-reaching state control and/or a theocracy. The extreme ends of the role of a state are thus not very popular among interviewees. Four interviewees come close to what Nussbaum describes as the position in which religions (or humanist groups) demand that people accept the correct religious or humanist belief. Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, for example prefers a Christian over a neutral state, because Christianity is at the foundations of our society. Noah, a Dutch Protestant, says: 'I myself, for example, am opposed to abortion and euthanasia, and I would think it really great if worldviews or a religion would say: "no, we don't want that" and that it enforces this on the state, because I believe that this [abortion and euthanasia] are really wrong. So yes, I definitely believe this [i.e. enforcing religious morals by the state] is possible.' He also argues: 'In principle you then have one established church, which doesn't mean that Muslims aren't allowed to

27 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, London 1859, reprint 2010, 18-21, 110.

believe what they want. You can never reign the conscience, but I would no longer have any mosques in the Netherlands. In a very theoretical case.' Noah thus makes a distinction between his ideal in theory and that what is possible in the contemporary society. In his theoretical ideal, the state would enforce Protestant values and only Protestant churches would be allowed. Maryam, a Dutch Muslim, says:

I try to start from that what Islam says. (...) So how Muhammed (...) did this in his time. In his time, he was a religious leader, but he also was a statesman. (...) He also was a political individual, actually. Now that is actually already a good example of how religion and state where combined. Actually, it was just one. But the state he led, was also a state in which there was space for people of others faiths.

However, she thinks the union of religion and state governance is hard to achieve in the contemporary Netherlands. Bertrand, a Flemish humanist, is willing to grant the state the authority to outlaw some religious practices like ritual slaughter and circumcision.

The short presentation of some viewpoints of our interviewees concerning religion-state relations, raises the question what their views are on specific cases involving religion and/or humanism. More precisely, the interviewees' stance was asked on the wearing of headscarves by counter assistants at the local council house, the hanging of crosses at the walls inside the local council house and the financing of humanist buildings by the state. We also gave interviewees the opportunity to discuss cases they found important, which included freedom of education, ritual slaughter, Sunday shopping, a candidate for local council elections refusing to shake hands on religious grounds, the broadcasting of religious services and faith in politics.

Wearing a headscarf at the counter of the local council house is unopposed by eleven out of fifteen interviewees.²⁸ The idea that it should be allowed based on the liberal argument that it is a strict individual choice, is made by two Flemish Catholics, Catharina and Bernard, and two Dutch Protestants, Lucas and Noah. Bernard adds that the state should not interfere, because everyone should be free to show their identity. Catharina argues that no one has the right to forbid this. Another argument is that people should be able to express their (group) identity. Ismail, a Flemish Muslim, argues that Muslim counter assistants may feel more at ease when

²⁸ 3 out of 4 Catholics, 3/3 Protestants, 2/3 Muslims and 3/5 humanists.

they are allowed to wear a headscarf. He also argues that there should be a visible mix reflecting society's plurality. Some interviewees compare the headscarf to other types of clothing. Jean, a Flemish humanist, says that a headscarf is a piece of clothing, just like shoes. Bernard compares the group identification to that of Gothics, while Ismail argues that a woman wearing a headscarf should not be looked at differently than a Punk.

Some conditions are set to counter assistance wearing a headscarf by five out of eleven interviewees. Catharina, a Flemish Catholic, says that these women should not actively try to convince others of their faith. Noah, a Dutch Protestant, is only willing to accept the headscarf in the contemporary pluralist society. His theoretical ideal is a theocracy. He also argues that people should remain reasonable when, for example, safety is concerned. Ismail, a Flemish Muslim, holds that members of other worldviews should also be able to show their symbols. Simone, a Flemish humanist, argues that it should not influence the work done. She states: 'I don't think the quality of my new passport changes because the girl that gave it to me wears a headscarf. Some people will find it a problem, but I don't think this to be the problem of the people who wear it.' Jean, another Flemish humanist, argues that no hate should be preached.

Opposition to a headscarf worn by counter assistants is found among four interviewees. Of those four, three use the neutrality argument: two of them, the Dutch Max and the Flemish Bertrand, are humanist and one, the Flemish Zeynep, is Muslim. Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, argues that people have to adapt to the Dutch ways, and those ways are Christian.

Hanging crosses at the walls of the local council house is far less supported than the wearing of the headscarf. Only six out of thirteen interviewees support it.²⁹ None of them set any conditions. Francis, a Dutch humanist, argues that the presence of the cross does not cause any harm and this matter should be an individual decision. Monica, a Dutch Catholic, argues that crosses should be allowed in local council houses, because the Netherlands is, she (wrongfully) says, 'by origin a Catholic society and a majority is still Catholic'. However, she adds that she would also allow other religious symbols. Bernard, a Flemish Catholic, says:

I think that if you are a member of another community, you need to accept some of the historical value or even stimulate it. This is for instance a Catholic village. So I think it is kind of normal that there is a cross in this particular

29 2 out of 4 Catholics, 1/3 Protestants, 2/2 Muslims and 1/4 humanists.

council house. And, for me, there can be an Islamic sign or a Star of David. All of this matters little to me. It's only from the moment a cross would have to give way to a Star of David, for example, that I would find it difficult.

Maartje (a Dutch Protestant) and Maryam (a Dutch Muslim) argue that the decision to have crosses on the wall of the local council house should be left to the local council. Maryam adds that it does not matter to her whether or not there is a cross inside the local council house.

Opposition to the presence of the cross has mainly to do with neutrality. This view is taken by Lucas and Maartje (both Dutch Protestants), Zeynep (a Flemish Muslim), Max (a Dutch humanist) and Bertrand and Simone (both Flemish humanists). Lucas recognizes the historic origins of Christian symbols and their value, but is concerned about potential conflicts. Both Lucas and Maartje add that they do not have an outspoken view on this topic. Simone holds stronger views on the subject. She argues that it would appear as if the local council is speaking on behalf of all its employees. On the matter of having a cross on the wall, she adds:

But at local council house: no [i.e. having a cross on the wall of the local council house]. You see? It's weird, it's not OK. For me, it gives me strange vibes, when I enter somewhere, like a school, and there's such a cross. Then I'm really like: 'uw!'. Everything is suddenly so tainted. This changes the entire context of the situation. This [i.e. religious symbols on the walls of a local council house] is completely unnecessary for me.

Equality between groups and equal rights for these groups are also used as practical arguments against crosses in the local council house. Catharina, a Flemish Catholic, argues that others may feel the cross is imposed on them. Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, says that if we ban headscarves among counter assistants, the cross should also not be allowed. Catharina is willing to allow the symbols of all worldviews in the local council house but thinks it would be strange to have all those symbols on the wall. She therefore argues that is better not to have a cross on the wall of the local council house with the argument that you can still wear a cross as a necklace.

The financing of humanist buildings is supported by twelve out of sixteen interviewees, although seven of them add conditions.³⁰ Bertrand, one of the Flemish humanists, supports the financing of religious and humanist

30 4 out of 4 Catholics, 2/3 Protestants, 3/3 Muslims and 2/5 humanists.

organisations, because believers and (atheist) humanists are part of society and should not be put aside. Catharina, a Flemish Catholic, is in favour of financing religious and humanist organisations because it is a good way to stimulate individual people's meaningful contribution to society. Monica and Lidwina (both Dutch Catholics), Maartje (a Dutch Protestant), Youssef (a Dutch Muslim) and Bertrand (a Flemish humanist) are convinced that if one religion or humanist organisation is financed, all should be. Bertrand and Maartje further argue that membership numbers can be taken into account. They also prefer the system of recognized religions as in Belgium, in which the state recognizes some worldviews and gives funding to them. Simone, a Flemish humanist, is only willing to allow financial support when all state-recognized religious and humanist organisations are part of the dialogue with the state and the state's population. The essence of this dialogue is to communicate with each other, to try to understand each other and to grow together. Youssef and Zeynep (a Dutch and a Flemish Muslim) are in favour of granting the state the authority to set demands for religious and humanist organisations to be met before they can get finances from the state.

There is also some opposition to financial support for religious or humanist groups. Lucas (a Dutch Protestant) and Francis (a Dutch humanist) are opposed to the state financing religious or humanist groups for the sake of neutrality. Lucas adds that worldviews can be financed by the state if financial support relates to social activities. Max and Simone (a Dutch and a Flemish humanist) prefer a strict separation between religion and state regarding this matter. Maryam, a Dutch Muslim, is only willing to allow financial state support for humanist buildings in the Dutch society and the regulations as they are today, while her ideal is a state in which the political and religious leadership are performed by the same person.

Freedom of education is also discussed by some interviewees. Max, a Dutch humanist, says that pretending to have a Christian identity in order to do an internship in a Christian school is unacceptable. Maartje, a Dutch Protestant, argues the other way round in saying that a school can demand that prospective teachers teach Christian subjects to students. She further argues that, when a teacher decides to work for such a school, it is a mutual agreement. Lucas, another Dutch Protestant, argues that there should be a lot of freedom for religiously affiliated schools in their teaching on, for example, the evolution theory. However, religious schools have to explain the different positions of society objectively and teachers should not enforce their opinions on students, neither should the school strive to transfer particular opinions which are not acceptable from a scientific point of view.

Ismail, a Flemish Muslim, argues that girls should respect the rules of the school concerning the wearing of headscarves. Here the freedom of education thus has the opposite effect: the freedom as envisioned by Maartje and Lucas leads to more religious exteriorities at school, while Ismail's idea of freedom leads to less. On students getting a day off to celebrate their religious feast days, Zeynep, another Flemish Muslim, argues that it should apply to all worldviews or to none.

Ritual slaughter is discussed by three interviewees. Bertrand, a Flemish humanist, argues that the state should intervene on ritual slaughter. He believes that sanctions should be in place when religions continue to perform forbidden practices secretly. Such a state intervention would not violate the freedom of religion, he argues. Ritual slaughter is also rejected by Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, because it is not in accordance with the Dutch way of life and because these animals are living creatures. Zeynep, a Flemish Muslim, disagrees and argues that the media has a big influence. She states that shocking images are used to portray ritual slaughter. She adds: 'all those factories that butcher all those animals, that's also not a beautiful image to watch'.

Sunday shopping is mentioned by two interviewees. Lidwina, a Dutch Catholic, argues that the Christian idea of Sunday rest that resulted in closed shops, sport clubs and associations should apply to everyone. Although a continuous dialogue between groups in society should be stimulated, a fixed set of rules should be the starting point for all. According to Lucas, a Dutch Protestant, the question whether or not Sunday shopping is allowed should be decided by the local council.

A religiously committed candidate for local council elections refusing to shake hands after solemnizing a civil marriage is used as an example by two interviewees. Their example involves a member of the Orthodox Jewish community. Bertrand, a Flemish humanist, holds that a civil servant refusing to shake someone's hand on religious grounds is unacceptable. Bernard, a Flemish Catholic, argues that the strong emotions related to this discussion is partly to blame to a lack of knowledge.

The broadcasting of religious services is mentioned by Simone, a Flemish humanist. She is in favour to allow public broadcasting with government support as long as there is no hate speech and this possibility is offered or permitted to all religious traditions and humanism on equal grounds.

On the matter of *faith in politics*, Youssef, a Dutch Muslim, thinks that political parties connected to a religion or humanism, lobby groups and dialogues with individuals should all be allowed. He argues:

Because in the Netherlands, we have, I believe, some Christian parties, SGP, CDA, Christen Unie³¹, and I believe in the last local election in Rotterdam NIDA³² [a Muslim political party] participated. That is also a party that says of itself that it is also driven by Islam. And as far as I know these parties don't act in a way that is in opposition with the law. Yes, a couple of years ago it was the SGP that did not allow women in their group, but that was dealt with back then. But beyond that, as long as nothing crazy happens, which, again, is in contravention with the law, I don't find it a problem.

When asked whether a state can intervene on matters like a political party not allowing women as their representatives in Parliament, Youssef responds:

Yes, in that case I think you can intervene as a state. But, again, this is different depending on the country. We now live in the Netherlands, and in the West, and there, there simply just are different values and norms. But if you look at the Middle East, for example, where you are likely to take a country that is 95% Islamic, then I can understand that government and religion are closely entangled over there, that I understand, and I have no problems at all with that. Or if a country is really Christian, then I get that too.

Youssef is also in favour of mosques opening their doors to non-Muslims on busy days. He believes that some misunderstandings could be resolved if members of the state would go in and see for themselves.

Discussion

In this article, we addressed the question whether committed young Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders are intolerant towards other groups. To answer this question, we looked at their attitude towards the plurality of worldviews, and their levels of religiocentrism and perceived group threat, as well as their opinions on specific cases related to the relationship between religion and state.

31 SGP (Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij) and Christen Unie are Protestant political parties. CDA (Christen-Democratisch Appèl) is a mainstream Christian political party, the product of a merger between both Protestant and Catholic parties.

32 NIDA is a concept from the Quran that means 'call'.

Our respondents' attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews is not outspoken monist in the surveys, and only occasionally in the interviews. Protestants and Muslims tend to be more monist than Catholics, with humanists rejecting monism most clearly. The interviews show that the committed religious and humanist young people we interviewed do not hold strong views on this matter. But here too, there is a difference between religious and humanist interviewees. Humanists do not point to a truth in their particular non-religious worldview as such, but in science. Pluralism means that differences between religions and worldviews are experienced as enriching. Other worldviews are thus equal but different than the own worldview. Catholic survey respondents show most agreement with pluralism, while Protestants tend to disagree. Both Muslims and humanists agree more than they disagree. In the interviews, pluralism is very popular as a general idea, but less so when interviewees are asked to relate it specifically to the groups they do not belong to. This does not imply that monism is the dominant attitude among the committed religious and humanist youth. The interviews show that particularly differential pluralism, far more than communality pluralism, is the dominant approach towards the plurality of worldviews among Dutch and Flemish religiously active youth.

Religiocentrism levels are low, as shown both in the quantitative data and the interview material. Survey respondents show some signs of positive in-group attitudes, especially among Protestants and Muslims. Negative out-group attitudes are rejected by all four groups, but surprisingly least so by humanists. In the interviews, negative out-group attitudes mainly come in the form of comparing religions with humanism. When there is a negative attitude towards outgroup members, the tensions seem to take place between religious opinions on the one hand, and humanism on the other.

Perceived group threat is very low among survey respondents, and neither do the interviews give indication of perceived threat. Survey results indicate that all four groups reject the idea of being threatened by outgroups. Protestants reject this idea of threat the least, while Muslims do so the most. Analysis of the interviews shows that perceived group threat is often a fear of extremist Islam. Since Islam is mainly associated with migrants, it affirms our assumption that negative feelings are mainly directed towards Islamic (migrant) groups.

The opinion on specific cases involving religion and/or humanism shows opinions that are mainly in line with the more theoretical perceptions. Arguments related to equality and neutrality are used in the examples of headscarves, crosses, financing of humanist buildings and broadcasting of religious services. The group autonomy argument is

mainly made concerning religious schools, although with different outcomes. However, there are also exceptions. The cross at the wall of the local council house does not find much support. Ritual slaughter is also negatively evaluated. Opinions deferred on whether or not civil servants can refuse to shake hands on religious grounds. Nussbaum's 'respecting other peoples' beliefs "as long as they do no harm" is thus often affirmed in theory, but is less straightforward when interviewees think of 'harm' in practice.

In the end, most committed religious and humanist youth prefer a society in which all worldviews are treated equally, in which there is limited state intervention and in which a respectful dialogue is prioritized. A relation between religion and state is tolerated by nearly all. Individual freedom and equality matter most, as long as no hate speech or violence is involved. Most of the committed youth take a 'live and let live' approach towards others and do not attach much meaning to inter-group differences. This answers our main research question: committed young Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders are not intolerant towards other groups.

This is not to say that there are no potential conflicts. It is clear that specific topics can stir up arguments. In our interviews this is mainly the case for crosses at the wall of the local council house, religious schools, ritual slaughter and the shaking of hands by religious civil servants. It is apparent that all these topics got a lot of media coverage recently, as well as attention in political debates. During the interviews, a number of interviewees did confirm that they believe the media to influence people's perception of religion-state relations. The examples given also show that a lot of stereotypes are used (mainly concerning Islam) and perceived group threat is also largely directed towards extremist Islam, although the Muslims in our sample are mainly liberal and pluralist. These findings support the often heard complaint that politicians' public statements and selective media coverage contribute to negative attitudes towards Islam and even feed Islamophobia. It is therefore worthwhile for future research to further explore whether and to what extent media coverage contains religious stereotypes³³ and in how far such stereotypes influence intergroup intolerance among religious

33 Cf. H. Kojaste, A. Kalantari, 'The Media Rituals: The Relationship between Media and Religion', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37 (2009), 284-304; H.A. Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, London 2013; L.G. Chakvetadze, R.V. Dautova, A.R. Shakurova, 'Gender Stereotypes, Mass Media and Migrants', *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict* 20 (2016), 39-45.

and humanist groups.³⁴ Further, the fact that negative out-group perceptions are mainly present between religious groups and humanism may point at an ideological gap between them. However, since this finding is only based on the interviews, further research is required to answer this question in a more straightforward way. We thus conclude that committed young Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and humanists in the Netherlands and Flanders are generally more pluralist than intolerant towards other groups, but the negativity that is present is mainly directed towards Islam. It seems that this perception is more based on media framing than the actual reality.

Theologically speaking, our findings also shed a new light on what can be expected from committed religious and humanist youngsters. Monism remains a cornerstone in the religious views of a vocal minority. But the majority has a far more pluralist perspective. One could be inclined to conclude from this finding that pluralistic forms of theology are the way forward. However, the fact that most pluralist interviewees do not attach much, if any, meaning to the differences between worldviews, poses a challenge to theologies that require any form of religious commitment or the willingness to show interest in and learn from other worldviews. Still, this is not the full story. Most interviews show that dialogue between worldviews is considered to be important, while there is no desire whatsoever to unify worldviews and erase distinctions. Not a single interviewee mentions an overarching worldview as the ultimate goal of dialogue. Differential pluralism is thus more popular among religious and humanist youth than communality pluralism. We can conclude that one of the challenges for theology is to ensure that (young) people are properly informed about the other worldviews before they enter into a debate.

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34 J.H. Evans, *Morals not knowledge: Recasting the Contemporary U.S. Conflict between Religion and Science*, Oakland 2018.



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Appendix 1: Quantitative empirical measuring

Below follow the measuring instruments that were used in the questionnaire. All statements in the items could be agreed upon on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (fully disagree) to 5 (fully agree). The measuring instruments are taken from Hadiwitanto (2016) and, if necessary, adapted for our Dutch-Flemish research population. The word “religion” is replaced in most items by the word “worldview”.³⁵

Attitudes towards the plurality of worldviews

Monism ($\alpha = .75$)

- Compared with my worldview, other worldviews only contain partial truths.
- Compared with other worldviews, my worldview offers the surest way to liberation.
- Eventually my worldview will replace all other worldviews.

Pluralism ($\alpha = .79$)

- Differences between worldviews are an opportunity for discovering the truth.
- All worldviews contain their own truth.
- Different worldviews present different paths to liberation.
- All worldviews are equally valid paths to liberation.
- Differences between worldviews are a basis for mutual enrichment and growth.
- Although there are many worldviews, there are no real differences at their core.

Religiocentrism

Positive in-group attitudes ($\alpha = .61$)

- Most adherents of my worldview are good people.
- The beliefs of members of my worldview prompts them to live better lives.
- The beliefs of members of my worldview gives them a strong virtuous character.
- Members of my worldview are most capable in capturing the meaning of life.

³⁵ Readers who are interested may contact the first author for details on factor analysis and scale construction

Negative out-group attitudes ($\alpha = .71$)

- Members of other worldviews treat other people without respect.
- Members of other worldviews cannot be trusted.
- Other worldviews are intolerant.
- Other worldviews are often the cause of conflicts.

Perceived group threat ($\alpha = .88$)

- The religious practices of people from other religious groups threaten our own way of life.
- The migration of people of different religious groups to our society is a threat to my group.
- I am worried that the security in my neighbourhood will decline due to the presence of other religious groups.
- I am afraid of increasing violence in my neighbourhood due to the presence of other religious groups.

Appendix 2: Qualitative empirical semi-structured interview protocol

In this part, we present the questions that were asked by Jans during an interview on religion-state relations and that are relevant to this article. The questions are based on the validated measuring instruments used in our research on religion-state relations.

Attitudes towards plurality

- Can, according to you, all worldviews discover the truth in their own way, or is this only possible in your worldview?
- Is there a difference between worldviews?
- If so: wherein are these differences to be found?

Religiocentrism

- Would you describe the adherents of your own worldview as good people? And the people of other worldviews?
- Do all worldviews encourage their members to lead better lives, or do the others cause conflicts?
- Do you trust members of other worldviews?

Perceived group threat

- Do you think the practices of (other) religious groups threaten our way of life?
- Does the presence of (other) religious groups in your neighbourhood make you feel unsafe?

Religion-state relations

General questions

- Do you think there should be a relation between worldviews and the state, or should they be entirely separated?
- Does the state, according to you, have the right to exercise influence on worldviews?
- Do worldviews, according to you, have the right to exercise influence on the state?
- How does, according to you, the ideal relation between worldviews and the state look like?
- What does, according to you, determine how people think about the relation between worldviews and the state?

Practical questions

- Does the state, according to you, have the right to finance humanist organizations?
- Should, according to you, employees be allowed to wear a headscarf during their working day in the local council house?
- Should it, according to you, be allowed to have crosses on the wall in the local council house?

