Religion and the theoretical implications of 'globalizing modernity'

Religião e as implicações teóricas da "modernidade globalizante"

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Abstract: This article engages the interface of religion and globalization through the concept of 'globalizing modernity'. An introductory section offers an overview of recent treatments of religion and globalization and identifies a number of key themes prevalent in academic discussions. The introduction then gives way to a more detailed treatment of globalizing modernity as constituted by transnational networks and border-transcending flows. The next section treats religion and globalizing modernity by engaging a number of scholars who reject the relevance of purportedly exogenous theories of modernity for understanding the Latin American context. The same section then identifies a growing number of academics who argue that the transnational networks and border-transcending flows of the contemporary globalizing world both necessitate and make possible a kind of 'world' or 'cosmopolitan' social science that transcends the hermeneutical limitations of unqualified claims to regional particularism. The article then concludes by revisiting its key points and outlining their implications for contemporary understandings of religion and globalization.

Keywords: Globalization. Globalizing modernity. Religion.

Resumo: Este artigo trata da interface entre religião e globalização através do conceito de "modernidade globalizante". Uma seção introdutória oferece uma visão geral dos tratamentos recentes do tema religião e globalização e identifica uma série de temas-chave prevalentes nas discussões acadêmicas. A introdução, em seguida, dá lugar a um tratamento mais detalhado da modernidade globalizante como constituída por redes transnacionais e fluxos transfronteiriços. A próxima seção trata de religião e modernidade globalizante, envolvendo um número de estudiosos que rejeitam a relevância de teorias supostamente exógenos da modernidade para a compreensão do contexto latino-americano. A mesma seção, em seguida, identifica um crescente número de acadêmicos que argumentam que as redes transnacionais e os fluxos transfronteiriços do mundo globalizado contemporâneo tanto necessitam como tornam

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possível uma espécie de ciência social "mundial" ou "cosmopolita" que transcende as limitações hermenêuticas das reivindicações não qualificadas de um particularismo regional. O artigo conclui revisitando seus pontos-chave e delineando suas implicações para a compreensão contemporânea de religião e globalização.

Palavras-chave: Globalização. Modernidade globalizante. Religião.

Introduction

According to Thomas Csordas (2009, p. 11), "the relationship between religion and globalization has rapidly become a central concern for the social sciences and religious studies". A far cry from James Beckford's (2003, p. 104) earlier complaint about its 'under-investigated' nature, recent years have indeed witnessed a relatively rapid upsurge in academic treatments of the interface between globalization and religion (e.g. Altglas, 2011; Beyer and Beaman, 2007; Esposito, Fasching and Lewis, 2008; Geertz and Warburg, 2008). Perhaps the most popular theme of academic interest pertaining to religion has been the intensification of socio-cultural mobility enabled by the transnational networks and flows of contemporary globalization. Among the topics treated in relation to globalization's intensification of socio-cultural mobility, those of migration, mission and virtual mediation stand to the fore. In respect of migration, for example, much has been written in recent years upon the global diaspora of Brazilian religiosity and its ongoing impact upon the religious traditions involved and the host nations impacted (e.g. Dawson, 2013; Labate and Jungaberle, 2011; Rocha and Vásquez, 2013; Sheringham, 2013). Such internationally minded approaches complement an already well established concern with the dynamics of de-territorialization and identity re-formation as they concern inward migration and its impact upon the politico-economic and socio-cultural domains of Brazilian society (e.g. Lesser, 1999; Castro, 2013; Fritz, 2011).

Similar concerns in respect of globalized mobility and its impact upon organizational dynamics and domestic contexts are explored in relation to missionary activity and the transnational spread of conservative forms of Christianity (e.g. neo-Pentecostalism) and nonmainstream religiosities (e.g. Japanese new religions) (see Dawson, 2007; Freston, 2008; Matsue, 2011). In the same vein, the enhanced global mobility facilitated by virtual media such as the world-wide-web is increasingly subject to academic scrutiny in respect of its impact and implications both for society in general and religion in particular (e.g. Aupers and Houtman, 2010; Larsson, 2007). In combination, the globalizing dynamics of migration, mission and virtual mediation furnish

religion with a highly intensified mobility which is impacting and transforming the macro-structural context, mid-range institutional arrangements and micro-social dimensions of contemporary religiosity wherever it occurs.

Having identified globalization's radicalization of socio-cultural mobility through reference to migration, mission and virtual mediation, the following treatment of religion and globalization goes in a somewhat different direction. The direction taken focuses upon the issue of 'modernity' and its implications for the contemporary character and ongoing transformation of religious belief and practice in a progressively globalized world. When treated in conjunction with the theme of religion and globalization, the issue of modernity has been primarily engaged in connection with both the rise of religious fundamentalism and the relevance, or otherwise, of secularization theory. As Altglas (2011, p. 14) maintains,

> Fundamentalism appears to be at the heart of the analysis of religious responses to globalization. Fundamentalism has increasingly been understood as a defensive reaction to globalization, an attempt to return to cultural or religious purity in response to what is perceived as a universalizing global culture.

Beckford (2003, p. 136) also notes that academic preoccupations with fundamentalism have tended 'to exercise a disproportionately heavy influence over theoretical writings about religion and globalization'. Whether treating conservative Christianity in the West or the rise of Islamic traditionalism in the Middle-East, for example, scholars tend to regard religious fundamentalism as a reactionary response to the transformations and uncertainties implicit within the processes of modernization (e.g. Ammerman, 1987; Bruce 2000; Lawrence, 1989). In respect of secularization theory, scholars informed by transnational developments occurring beyond the traditional heartlands of Western social science increasingly problematize conventional associations of modernity and religious decline. According to Csordas (2009, p. 1), for example,

> the present global situation calls into question an understanding that the world is undergoing a progressive and irreversible secularization [...]. The sleeping giant of religion [...] has never died, and it is now in the process of at least rolling over and at most leaping to its feet.

In the same vein, Peter Berger (1999, p. 23) rejects traditional theories of secularization as unduly focussed on Western contexts and thereby locked into the erroneous assumption that 'modernization necessarily leads to a decline of

religion'. Only by taking a comprehensively global view of the contemporary state of affairs, Berger maintains, will the academy appreciate that 'the world today [...] is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some cases more so than ever'.

In combination, treatments of fundamentalism and secularization do much to highlight the many important implications associated with the radicalization and spread of modernity engendered by the processes and dynamics of globalization. The radicalization of modernity by globalization forms the central concern of this article which explores this process of radicalization by employing the concept of 'globalizing modernity'. The notion of globalizing modernity has been central to my research in recent years upon Brazilian new religious movements both in their domestic national context and as transnational phenomena spread to other parts of the world (e.g. Dawson, 2007; Dawson, 2013). Throughout my time working on Brazilian new religious movements, I have sought to make theoretical connections between dynamics and forces constitutive of late-modern societies in the North (e.g. Europe and the USA) and ongoing processes and emerging trends in the South (principally, but not solely, Brazil). Though mindful of the differences and variations between (and, indeed, within each of) these two contexts, I nevertheless believe that sufficient similarities exist to make possible both a significant number of trans-contextual comparisons and a highly fruitful, and mutually enlightening, exchange of academic insight. As the following discussion makes clear, these trans-contextual comparisons and exchange of academic insight are ultimately grounded in the border-transcending processes and transnational dynamics constitutive of globalizing modernity.

By way of exploring the implications of globalizing modernity for academic understandings of contemporary religion, what unfolds below begins by engaging the radicalization of modernity in relation to globalization and its transnational networks and border-transcending flows. Globalizing modernity is then further treated in relation to three scholars of religion who stress the regional particularity of the Latin American context to the extent of dismissing the relevance of purportedly exogenous ('foreign' and 'alien') theories of modernity developed in other socio-cultural contexts. This emphasis upon the regional particularity of the Latin American context is further understood against the backdrop of classical modernization theory and its assumptions in respect of political-economic convergence and socio-cultural homogenization. The same section then moves on to engage the perspective of a growing number of academics who reject the claims to difference and incommensurability grounded in arguments for regional particularity. According to these scholars,

the transnational networks and border-transcending flows of the contemporary globalizing world both necessitate and make possible a kind of 'world' or 'cosmopolitan' social science that transcends the hermeneutical limitations of unqualified claims to regional particularism. The article then concludes by revisiting its key points and outlining their implications for contemporary understandings of religion and globalization.

Globalizing modernity

According to Anthony Giddens, the 'inherently globalizing' nature of modernity involves the progressive transnationalization of a historically unique way of relating time and space which he labels 'time-space distanciation'. 'In the modern era', Giddens argues (1990, p. 64),

> the level of time-space distanciation is much higher than in any previous period, and the relations between local and distant social forms and events become correspondingly 'stretched'. Globalization refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole.

Globalization stretches the distance between time and space because where one is (and what time it is) in the globalized world becomes increasingly irrelevant to one's ability to interact with other parts (and time zones) across the globe. Known also as 'delocalization', 'deterritorialization' or 'supraterritoriality', the stretching of time-space relations engendered by globalization decouples the 'here' from the 'now' in a way which fundamentally relativises the traditional limitations of humankind's spatio-temporal existence. Underwritten by a network of advanced technologies, maintains Giddens (1990, p. 64), contemporary existence involves the globalization of causal relations such that 'local happenings' in any one part of the world 'are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'.

The 'vice versa' is important here. It is important because Giddens stresses the reciprocal nature of globalized relations in that globalization involves a structural reciprocity in which the duality of 'local' and 'global' are locked in a 'recursive' relationship of mutual causation (1990, p. 2). Consequently, any 'local transformation' wrought by globalization is best conceptualized as resulting from the intermingling of regional and transnational dynamics whose outcomes may well comprise local developments at variance with globalizing trends (1990, p. 64). The processes of globalization, then, are neither all one-way nor uniform in outcome. A similar point is made by Roland

Robertson (1995, p. 25-44) who coined the term 'glocalization' by combining the words 'global' and 'local'. For Robertson, whereas globalization entails a progressively 'concrete global interdependence' born of the 'increasing unicity' of contemporary existence, regional variation (i.e. glocalization) nevertheless arises through the local appropriation and subsequent modification of prevailing global phenomena. As with Giddens, Robertson rejects the view that globalization necessarily entails the wholesale homogenization of formerly different (because separate) socio-cultural systems. Understood as a two-way process, globalization comprises both the 'universalization' of the particular and the 'particularization' of the universal (Robertson, 1992, p. 97-114).

Dear to many globalization theories, the notion of connectedness articulated by the themes of 'unicity' (Robertson) and 'network' (Giddens) is further developed through reference to an exponential increase in transnational 'flows' of material goods and immaterial commodities (e.g. Appadurai, 1996; Waters, 2001). Waters, for example, complements his analysis of the economic and political trends stimulated by globalization by treating the cultural arena which, he believes, is 'becoming more activated and energetic' as a result of the now 'continuous flow of ideas, information, commitment, values and tastes mediated through mobile individuals, symbolic tokens and electronic simulations' (2001, p. 196). For Waters, globalization's rapid and large-scale transnational transfer of practices, values, concepts and tastes makes it a significant contributor to ongoing processes of political-economic transformation and socio-cultural diversity. Bringing these observations together, globalizing modernity can thereby be understood, on the one hand, to unfold through the establishment of economic, political, legal, ethical, and aesthetic networks which connect localities and regions to a seemingly limitless number of otherwise disparate locations. On the other hand, globalizing modernity comprises flows of people, goods, information, power, tastes, and values whose transmission occurs at an increasingly vertiginous scale and speed. Characterized by global connectedness and exponential transnational flows, globalizing modernity comprises practical and symbolic consequences impacting macro-structural, mid-range institutional and micro-social dimensions of human existence in virtually every part of the contemporary world.

Religion and globalizing modernity

The notions of 'glocalization' (Robertson) and 'recursivity' (Giddens) identified above offer significant resistance to established assumptions in respect of globalization which ally globalizing modernity with macro-structural

convergence and socio-cultural homogenization. Most closely associated with classical theories of modernization, these assumptions causally relate the globalization of modernity with the eventual establishment, irrespective of context, of 'a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism) and a certain type of institutional order (popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy)' (Gaonkar, 2001, p. 16). By way of rejecting the once dominant homogenizing assumptions of modernization theory, scholars have progressively taken to qualifying their variegated understandings of modernity through the addition of prefixes such as 'alternative' (Goankar, 2001), 'later' (Kaya, 2004), 'local' (Rosati, 2012), 'multiple' (Eisenstadt, 2000), 'organised' (Carleheden, 2007), 'successive' (Wagner, 2012) and 'varied' (Schmidt, 2006). As regards Latin America, scholars such as Néstor Canclini (1995) and Renato Ortiz (1994), for example, have respectively used the prefixes 'hybrid' and 'mixed' to articulate understandings of their continent as a multifaceted socio-cultural terrain characterized by a mixture of the modern and the traditional. As Canclini (1995, p. 9) notes, 'we conceive of Latin America as a more complex articulation of traditions and modernities (diverse and unequal), a heterogeneous continent consisting of countries in each of which coexist multiple logics of development'. Both in comparison with the North and in respect of its internal variegation, Latin American modernity comprises multiple dimensions which contrast both across continental national boundaries and from region to region within a single country. Theoretically speaking, then, the specificity of Latin American modernity 'prevents the mechanical importation of explanatory schemes elaborated in response to other processes such as those of Europe' (Wanderley, 2007, p. 65).

Resistance to the uncritical application of explanatory schemes articulated out with the Latin American continent is expressed also by sociologists of religion. Treating the relationship between neo-Pentecostalism and modernity in Brazil, for example, João Passos argues that the 'historical contradictions and cultural peculiarities' of the Brazilian context render irrelevant northern hemispheric debates pertaining to the secularization or re-enchantment of urban-industrial society. Passos rejects the relevance of this debate on the grounds that Brazil is an ex-colonial nation whose particular historical trajectory gives rise to a 'dependent modernization' characterized by different dynamics and processes than those experienced by the more powerful countries of the North. As a result of its peculiar modernizing trajectory, Brazil experienced the transition from pre-modernity to contemporary modernity in a fundamentally different way than the USA or Europe. In contrast to the

'rupture' between traditional and modern society experienced by the North, Passos maintains, Brazilian modernization exhibits a greater degree of continuity and overlap between pre-modern and contemporary societal forms. Consequently, sociological theories of religious development formulated in light of the northern hemispheric experience of modernity fail adequately to address a Brazilian context born of a different set of modernizing dynamics. For Passos (2006), then, the rise and spread of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism should not be understood through the application of an 'extrinsic' analytical process of enchantment → disenchantment → re-enchantment. Rather than being seen as a revitalization of waning religious influence, the rise of neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil is more fruitfully viewed as a modern expression of traditional religious dynamics.

Likewise engaging Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism, Roger Roca rejects the naive application of 'foreign' models which attempt to explicate the relationship of money and religion within this historically novel religious phenomenon. Formulated in view of the dominant neo-liberal economic paradigm and ongoing commodification of modern Western society, Roca argues, foreign explanatory models dismiss the 'health and wealth' prosperity gospel of neo-Pentecostal groups such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God as a form of 'commodity fetishism' engendered by the capitalistic processes of globalization. In contrast, however, Roca maintains that alien models such as these fail adequately to appreciate the actual processes at play in neo-Pentecostalism's attitude to wealth. Such is the case because these models do not pay attention to the role traditionally played by money in the internal dynamics of the Brazilian religious landscape. Were this role to be properly appreciated, organizations such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God would not be dismissed as 'simply practising money fetishism' à la Western neo-liberal commodification. Viewed instead as recapitulating longstanding dynamics intrinsic to the Brazilian religious field, the prosperity-orientated activities of groups like the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God can be regarded as re-appropriating money in a way which transforms it 'into an instrument of Divine agency'. Rather than exemplifying Western notions of 'money fetishism', argues Roca (2007, p. 319-339), when situated relative to the established dynamics of the Brazilian religious landscape, such practices are best understood as a modern form of domestic 'money-magic'.

Along similar lines, the Mexican sociologist of religion Roberto Blancarte highlights the limitations of the 'modernity paradigm' for understanding the place of Protestant Christianity across the Latin American continent as a whole.

Blancarte argues that any 'analysis of the religious life of Latin America' must engage the relationship between 'popular religion, Catholicism and religious dissent' (here, Protestantism). In respect of Protestantism, however, Blancarte (2000, p. 593) asserts that 'there is nothing to prove the existence of something similar to what Weber talked about, a social group imbued by "worldly asceticism" and economic development, or the emergence of a middle class influenced by religious individualism'. Consequently, notions of the 'Protestant ethic' and understandings of 'religious evolution [...] utlined by Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch' respectively articulate a Eurocentric perspective which simply does not apply to Latin America. Rejecting established associations between 'classic Protestantism' and 'the secularization process' (here, 'the individualization of beliefs' and 'the separation of the political and religious spheres'), Blancarte instead calls for a 'geography of religious dissent' which does justice to the particularities of the Latin American context. In so doing, Blancarte (2000, p. 591-603) analyses Protestant dissent by understanding it relative to longstanding 'deficiencies in the Catholic ecclesiastic structure' across the continent and the peculiar nature of Latin American popular religiosity.

The resistance shown by Roca, Passos and Blancarte to the uncritical transposition of purportedly exogenous theories of modernity to the Latin American context is echoed by those working in other disciplines such as Walter Mignolo. Espousing a 'geopolitics of knowledge', Mignolo (2000, p. 305) rejects the 'colonial imaginary' underwriting Western theories of modernity in favour of the 'reinstitution of *location* as a geopolitical and epistemological configuration of knowledge production'. As 'there is no modernity without coloniality', he argues, there can be no 'critique of modernity from the perspective of modernity itself'. Forged through the 'desubalternization of local knowledge', the reconstruction of 'local histories' as 'pluritopic' critiques of modernity offers the only viable means of escaping the 'coloniality of power' implicit within the 'overarching metaphor' of 'Occidentalism' (Mignolo, 2000, p. 13, 43, 87). Mignolo's critique of Occidentalism and his call for a reconstruction of local histories is likewise paralleled by the now fashionable 'multiple modernities' paradigm (e.g. Eisenstadt, 2000; Arnason, 2002). The multiple modernities paradigm rejects classical modernization theory and its homogenizing assumptions in favour of a 'growing diversification of the understanding of modernity'. As such, the multiple modernities approach champions 'the basic cultural agendas of different modern societies' and their distinctive contribution to the continued diversity of globalizing modernity. 'While the common starting point was once

the cultural program of modernity as it developed in the West', Eisenstadt maintains, 'more recent developments have seen a multiplicity of cultural and social formations going far beyond the very homogenizing aspects of the original version'. In contrast to classical modernization theory's expectation of transnational convergence, what we are actually witnessing, argues Eisenstadt (2000, p. 24), is 'the continual development of multiple modernities, or of multiple interpretations of modernity' which ultimately deprive 'the West of its monopoly on modernity'.

Whether treating religion or working with other disciplinary concerns, the articulation of regional difference plays an important role in resisting the uncritical transposition of models and theories from one context to another. Such displays of resistance remain a vital part in preserving the analytical appreciation of globalizing modernity's multifaceted character. As vital as it is, however, a growing number of scholars (myself included) believe that the assertion of local difference has gone too far and, as a result, now embodies an analytically naive regional particularism (see Dawson, 2014). In effect, the theoretical pendulum has swung to such an extent that the uncritical homogenization of classical modernization theory has now given way to an equally unsatisfactory regional incommensurability. Peter Wagner (2012, p. 25, 120), for example, argues that analytical paradigms that unduly limit 'the possibility of comparison' are wholly unsuited to supporting the kind of sufficiently inclusive 'world sociology' that the contemporary 'global social configuration' requires. Although mindful of regional diversity, Volker Schmidt (2006, p. 8-9) also believes that the now 'genuinely global phenomenon' of modernity demands a theoretical approach capable of understanding the 'substantial similarities that exist among modern societies' in different parts of the world. In the same vein, Elsje Fourie (2012, p. 62) emphases the contemporary need of 'cross-cultural theorizing' capable of offering 'a clearer understanding of the [...] collective values and cultural practices of people affected by modernity around the world'. Arguing along the same lines, and while rejecting the 'universalist idioms' and 'convergence' narratives of traditional modernization theory, Gaonkar (2001, p. 1-23) asserts that the fact 'modernity has gone global' demands due consideration being given to the 'strings of similarities' (e.g. 'cultural forms, social practices, and institutional arrangements') which 'surface in most places in the wake of [...] global modernity'. Responding to the challenge of a 'new, entangled Modernity', the 'cosmopolitan sociology' of Ulrich Beck and his collaborators likewise rejects the 'naive universalism' of classical modernisation theory while, at the same time, refusing to be limited by a

regional particularism it labels 'methodological nationalism'. According to cosmopolitan sociology, the 'global transformation of modernity' has constituted a radically new 'cosmopolitan constellation' of 'border-transcending dynamics, dependencies, interdependencies and intermingling' which requires 'a new conceptual architecture' better suited to understanding the contemporary 'growth of many transnational forms of life', along with 'the emergence of corresponding supra- and transnational organizations and regimes' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Beck and Grande, 2010).

In combination, approaches such as these underline the importance of avoiding both uncritical homogenization and naive particularism if a balanced and efficacious conceptualization of globalizing modernity is to be achieved. On the one hand, the efficacy of contemporary understandings of globalizing modernity rests squarely upon its ability to furnish an analytically robust appreciation of the processes and dynamics which combine to characterize a particular context or mode of being in the world as typically 'modern'. On the other hand, a balanced understanding of globalizing modernity requires a necessary degree of hermeneutical nuance through which the variegations wrought by and the multifaceted nature of modernity's globalizing trajectory might best be appreciated. When suitably combined, a robust analytical approach to and hermeneutically nuanced treatment of globalizing modernity allow its appreciation in three key respects. First, globalizing modernity is understood as a historically novel and relatively recent phenomenon forged through the emergence and complex alliance of transnational networks (e.g. economic, political, legal and aesthetic) and border-transcending flows of goods, people, practices, ideas, values and tastes. Second, globalizing modernity's transnational networks and border-transcending flows are seen to mediate and channel a range of epochally-distinctive processes and dynamics such as rapid, widespread and ongoing societal transformation, structural differentiation, detraditionalization, socio-cultural pluralization, individualization, and marketization. Third, globalizing modernity's characteristic processes and dynamics are understood to be only ever concretely realized through regional instantiations (at macro-structural, mid-range institutional and micro-social levels) of a localizing nature and variegating kind. While aforementioned characteristic dynamics (structural differentiation, detraditionalization, socio-cultural pluralization, etc.) comprise the typological core of globalizing modernity (thereby providing its analytical robustness), their regional variegation through localizing inflections furnishes a hermeneutically nuanced appreciation of globalizing modernity's ineluctably multifaceted character.

Conclusion

In view of the preceding treatment of globalizing modernity, academic appreciation of the relationship between religion and globalization necessarily involves elements of continuity and discontinuity. Because the dynamics of globalization are embroiled with the progressive spread of globalizing modernity, macro-structural parallels, mid-range institutional continuities and micro-social equivalences are in evidence between otherwise disparate geographical and socio-cultural contexts. The proper analytical grasp of these parallels, continuities and equivalences is, however, conditional upon a contextual sensitivity which remains alive to empirical and theoretical discontinuities in view of local conditions on the ground. Irrespective of the kind or location of the dynamics at play, globalizing modernity does not unfold in a vacuum, just as its constitutive processes do not take shape independently of a locality's established patterns of political-economic and socio-cultural reproduction. Inherited structures and traditional ways of life supply a vibrant and, at times, resistant set of ingredients which impact upon the local character ultimately assumed by the processes and dynamics constitutive of globalizing modernity. Given the inherent resistance or localizing character of empirical conditions on the ground, aforementioned articulations of regional difference play an important role in avoiding the uncritical transposition of models and theories from one context to another. Ultimately, however, and if they are to be of any analytical use at all, assertions of regional difference must also articulate the kinds and extent of difference in evidence, the empirical grounds on which this difference rests, along with its theoretical significance in respect of both the locale in question and its overarching global context. When articulated in a manner like this, such displays of hermeneutical suspicion play a vital role in preserving a theoretical appreciation of globalizing modernity's multifaceted character.

At the same time, however, treatments of a particular regional context must remain open to identifying and accounting for the similarities, comparisons, continuities and homologies engendered by globalizing modernity's transnational networks and border-transcending flows. The principal emphasis of this article rests upon the implications of globalizing modernity and the theoretical possibilities opened up by the supra-regional dynamics, processes and forces of contemporary globalization. In view of modernity's progressively globalizing trajectory, the unqualified assertion of a region's political-economic or socio-cultural difference is no longer enough to support treating that region as if it were a singular context hermetically

sealed from all else around it. Such unqualified regional particularism is now as analytically bankrupt and hermeneutically insensitive as the uncritical homogenization embodied by classical theories of modernization. Rather than the unqualified assertion of regional particularity, had this latter task been undertaken by aforementioned works treating religion and modernity in Latin America, a more nuanced and analytically fruitful set of treatments might well have been provided. On the one hand, greater nuance would have been achieved by recognizing and accounting for Latin America's historical experience of and ongoing entanglement with typically modern processes and dynamics such as, for example, rapid and widespread societal transformation, structural differentiation, socio-cultural pluralization, secularization, individualization, and marketization. The simple assertion that 'foreign' or purportedly exogenous theories of religious change have little or no relevance to the Latin American continent does scant justice to the historical mark and ongoing impact of characteristically modern processes and dynamics upon the region as a whole or specific parts thereof. On the other hand, a more fruitful analysis may well have been achieved by exploring the manner in and extent to which, the processes and dynamics of modernity prevailing in Latin America are the same as, similar to or variations upon those at play in other parts of the world. Had a greater degree of openness been shown to the existence and impact of transnational similarities, comparisons and continuities, then each of the pieces by Passos (2006), Roca (2007) and Blancarte (2007) would have contributed to a much wider conversation in respect of globalizing modernity and its implications for religion here, there and elsewhere. Though valuable in highlighting certain regional particularities, the simple assertion of difference both ignores the border-transcending realities of globalizing modernity and undermines an otherwise invaluable and distinctive contribution to ongoing conversations in respect of religion and globalization.

The rapidity and scale of political-economic and socio-cultural transformation characteristic of globalizing modernity brings with it the constant possibility that religious change on the ground outruns our theoretical grasp of events. Ongoing debates about the relevance or otherwise of existing theories to one context or another should not, then, blind us to the continued need for openness to new ways of understanding our rapidly changing world. From micro-social interactions, through mid-range institutional processes to macro-structural dynamics, the rapid and far reaching transformation inherent to globalizing modernity challenges the academic community to innovative theorizing upon every dimension of contemporary belief and practice. If undertaken appropriately, the concepts forged within such

rapidly transformative contexts will arise as analytical abstractions from existing empirical processes and, as such, be capable of capturing the creative interactions of local processes and transnational dynamics. The same requirement applies no less to the notion of globalizing modernity and its theoretical responsibility to provide an analytically robust conceptualization of characteristically modern features and processes while offering a hermeneutically nuanced appreciation of their regional inflection through localizing dynamics and trends. If so conceptualised, globalizing modernity functions not as an exogenous imposition from one region to another, but as an inductive, comprehensive and balanced appreciation of the impact and implications of the transnational networks and border-transcending flows constitutive of contemporary globalization.

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