CULTURE AND RELIGION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

RELIGION, SOCIAL PRACTICE, AND CONTESTED HEGEMONIES

RECONSTRUCTING THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN MUSLIM MAJORITY SOCIETIES

EDITED BY ARMANDO SALVATORE AND MARK LEVINE

Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies

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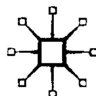

RELIGION, SOCIAL PRACTICE, AND CONTESTED HEGEMONIES

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For Yasmin, Alessandro,
and
Francesca Bianca

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Introduction

Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies

Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine

The collection of essays in this volume examines how modern public spheres reflect and mask—often simultaneously—discourses of order, contests for hegemony, and techniques of power in the Muslim world. Although the contributors examine various time periods and locations, each views modern and contemporary public spheres as crucial to the functioning, and thus understanding, of political and societal power in Muslim majority countries. Part I of this volume analyzes the various discourses and technologies operating within Muslim public spheres; part II investigates how they impact and interact with the construction of moral and legal arguments within Muslim societies.

The chapters that follow seek to open new horizons for the study of how public spheres are conceptualized, produced, and deployed, not just in the Muslim majority world but in all modern societies. Such a step forward is made possible by our examinations of how discourses and techniques of hegemony are deployed by socio-religious movements, and of how their expression transforms the manner in which public spheres are constructed, and their borders and norms contested. The contributions here explore the impact of such conceptualizations on the very notion of "civil society" and the practices it authorizes, on the ensuing dynamics of hegemony, and on the way secularity, as a set of practices, norms, and discourse, binds together hegemonic discourses.

Our engagement with the public sphere focuses on the horizontal ties that bind together participants in social movements and public communication, rather than on the more often discussed vertical, segmented ties mediated by the institutions and identities of the supposedly modern and secular nation-state. At the same time, however, we interrogate the disciplinary and governmental practices of political elites that constrict and shape the activities of these movements and the horizons of action of their members. In so doing we address Nancy Fraser's simple yet important critique of Habermas's seminal discussion of the public sphere, which in her view "stops short of developing a post-bourgeois model while leaving

unproblematized the dubious assumptions of the original liberal/bourgeois model" (Fraser 1997: 71). We do so by delineating such post- (and sometimes non-) bourgeois public spheres as they have emerged and continue to develop in the Muslim majority world. We explore not only their capacity to relativize crucial norms such as those defining "normal" trajectories of secularization, privatization, and/or "progress," but also the extent to which their genealogies and functioning challenge the dominant narratives surrounding the etiology and configuration of modern public spheres more broadly.

Yet in seeking to expand the definition of the public sphere, we are cautious not to adopt either a liberal or a republican-Jacobin norm. For *shari'a* notions such as *istislah* that are at the heart of Muslim understandings of the public sphere operate from a different orientation than the liberal or Jacobin European frameworks. *Istislah* is a crucial notion of method of Islamic legal philosophy that is geared toward finding good in each situation, by mediating between contending positions, and shepherding the larger process of achieving balanced solutions that constitute the common good for the involved parties. The resulting public sphere can potentially be seen as a positive-sum game, one that reflects a logic quite distinct from the scarcely plastic—if not zero-sum—notions of social justice based on standards of "pure reason," or, at least, from the zeroing formal culture—that is, the elision of specific cultural and even legal traditions—that often accompanies Western discourses of "the public." Such a singular kind of public reason silences other kinds of reason embodied by autonomous social actors, especially those grounded in a religious identity.

As the contribution by Masud reveals (chapter 7), legal and political reforms can often be justified as implementations of *shari'a* when in fact they comprise new notions of equity and cooperation that force people to formulate new claims in the name of the good of the larger society. As important is the dynamic of cooperation and often tension between mechanisms of Islamic mediation and those of supposedly "secular" political systems and "modern" courts (which pose as the incarnation of civil justice and state power), in which both represent attempts to control people's bodies and disperse power within a secularized political landscape.

Given such a plural, contingent, and open understanding of the public sphere, our exploration of these phenomena seeks to accomplish several goals. The first is to develop a "praxiological" conception of the public sphere—that is, one oriented toward uncovering the logic of actual practice—according to which the "public" and the "private" are understood to be contingent categorizations, reposing on specific cultural traditions. From the perspective of ordinary people, these predicates are characterizing procedures that are always particular and contextualized. Second, as Dupret and Ferrié (chapter 6) demonstrate, we ground analyses of public spheres in accounts of "ordinary situations," or daily exchanges, that create moral characterizations that cumulatively work to delineate a complex spectrum ranging from domesticity to publicity, and where

the latter crystallize by virtue of the consolidation of border-enforcing norms. We cannot grasp the public sphere without a background knowledge of these processes of interaction, and without accepting that, before being—under certain conditions—a space of freedom and fairness of reasoned exchange, the public sphere is always a space strictly delimited by moral norms that, however fluctuating, emerge from concrete patterns of interaction that can be replicated but not generalized. Third, as will become clear from our chapter 1, we hope to clarify the need for greater attention to the historical relationship between the evolution of the notions of "civil society" and the "public sphere" as being of a contingent and not of a necessary nature. It is clear that these terms are intimately related yet reflect specific and sometimes competing ways of coming to grips with the relationship among individuals, societies, and the governing structures that rule both. Finally, we believe that in order to accomplish the above goals, the dominant understanding of both secularity *and* the dynamics of hegemony needs to be challenged and reexamined, and that a fresh understanding of both needs to be developed and redeployed within the sociology of modernity and the societies it has engaged worldwide. We consider hegemony a particularly important concept because it cuts through the overlapping but distinct realms of civil society and the public sphere. Therefore, broadening the base for an analysis of hegemony as well as its relationship to the defining of the secular in political practice will facilitate a more accurate understanding of the functioning of, and possibilities of strengthening, public spheres and democratic cultures in the Middle East and the larger Muslim majority world.

To achieve these goals, the chapters making up part I examine the role of discourses and techniques of hegemony and related interpretive and practical struggles. The public sphere is considered by the authors here to be an arena where official, state-sponsored discourses are both challenged and carried to the wider public by social and more specifically socio-religious actors, particularly as linked to fields delimited by the notions of voluntary and legal action. And it is through the legal field that we move to part II, which focuses on examinations of the role of law as linked to everyday social practices and to the construction of public argument. In this half of the book the tension among Islamic notions of custom (*'urf* and *'adat*), diverse concepts of common sense, and the wider search for fairness and justice is investigated as essential to the reconstruction of the public sphere in Muslim majority societies during the last century.

The Leap from Civil Society to the Public Sphere

If one opens a book examining contemporary Middle Eastern societies written during the 1990s, the chances are fairly good that one of the primary means of investigating them will be through the lens of civil society, one of the most important methodological innovations for studying the

Middle East and the larger Muslim (and indeed, third) world to emerge in the post–Cold War era.[1] In introducing his seminal two volumes *Civil Society in the Middle East* (1995–1996), Norton defines civil society as the "icon" of democracy: "If democracy has a home, it is in civil society, where a mélange of associations, clubs, guilds, syndicates, federations, unions, parties and groups come together to provide a buffer between state and citizen . . . The functioning of civil society is literally and plainly at the heart of participant political systems" (1995: 7).

In the latter part of the 1990s, and especially in the new decade, explorations of the public sphere have achieved similar importance as a framework for exploring the modern histories and contemporary dynamics of Muslim societies. Whether it is articulated or not, there would seem to be an emerging consensus among scholars of Islam and the Middle East that the "public sphere" offers a problematic field for investigating the thematic area of democratic development in the region that possesses greater analytical clarity and depth than has been achieved utilizing the civil society framework.[2] Significant research has already been undertaken demonstrating the productiveness of a reflective and theoretically conscious use of the public sphere as an explanatory paradigm for analyzing social processes in the Muslim majority world and Muslim diaspora communities (cf. Salvatore 1997, 2001; Hefner 1998; Stauth 1998; Schulze 2000 [1994]; Werbner 2002; Burgat and Esposito 2003; Eickelman and Anderson 2003 [1999]; Salvatore and Eickelman 2004).

Although the notion of the public sphere is better able to catch the intersection between the problematic and the thematic dimensions of democratic development in the region, it runs the risk of suffering the same fate as civil society: overenthusiasm, a lack of the circumspection warranted by its historical trajectory and problematic character, cynical use (as in the vocabulary of giving and receiving NGOs), and the concomitant loss of an analytic grasp of empirical phenomena. But let us assume that the concept of the public sphere will have a better fate. It is indeed the purpose of this volume to help engender one.

As Nancy Fraser describes it:

> The idea of the public sphere designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. The public sphere in Habermas's sense is also conceptually distinct from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling. (Fraser 1997: 70)

The goal of the supposedly "rational" and "open" deliberations taking place in the public sphere was the shaping of a public opinion approximating a rational consensus about the common good (Fraser 1997: 72). Yet as

the work of feminist scholarship has well documented, the idealized bourgeois public sphere explored by Habermas was in fact characterized—indeed, to a significant extent, made possible—by several types of exclusion, particularly gender (and class as well). Thus the postrevolutionary republican public sphere in France was constructed in deliberate opposition to that of the more woman-friendly salon culture that was now deemed "unmanly" and "irrational" (Fraser 1997: 73). This feminization of alternative discursive patterns and sites, as is well known, was repeated precisely in the emasculating colonialist/Orientalist discourses deployed by European powers in the Middle East (cf. inter alia, Said 1978, 1993; Badran 1996; Mir-Hosseini 1999).

And, indeed, we can imagine that in the same way as the public sphere from the start was gendered masculine, it was also "nationalized"—better, "civilized"—as European. Yet we also know that however powerful the normative discourses within Europe or in the colonies, there were always innumerable "counter-civil societies" that attempted to work around the irony of a public sphere based on accessibility and rationality, but factually deployed as a primary strategy of distinction and exclusion (cf. Fraser 1997). And so to give voice to—and at the same time, properly contextualize—these politically and socially marginalized public spheres, we recognize that even where certain categories of people such as women, minorities, or colonized populations were excluded from the dominant public sphere they did not sit idly by, but rather they created alternative parallel public spheres that must be uncovered and investigated. Having recognized these larger dialectics, we must focus on yet another, even more complex phenomenon of the emergence of public spheres, namely on the "public Islam" that cuts across, challenges, and shapes governmental *and* oppositional public spheres in Muslim majority societies as part of the same process of producing and reproducing a sense of publicness and its norms (cf. Salvatore 2001; Salvatore and Eickelman 2004).

The reason "public Islam" cannot be reduced to Habermas's "public sphere" becomes apparent when analyzing his famous definition of the latter "above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public" (Habermas 1989 [1962]: 27). The prior constitution of bourgeois private individuals as a condition for access and contribution to the constitution of the public sphere cannot be universalized historically or culturally; nor did it function in practice as described (in its admittedly idealized state) by Habermas. At least one reason for this is that "the idea of the individual as unconditionality . . . was too demanding a principle, one that carried too much baggage" to be universalized across time and geography (Seligman 1997: 172). Habermas's *Öffentlichkeit* is therefore conceptually too limited to explain trajectories of formation of and access to public spheres—not only for the non-Western world, but for large parts of Europe as well. At the very least it cannot capture the actions for reclaiming the common good performed by various social (including socio-religious) movements that do not reflect or endorse the kind of secularity produced by the modern state by any variant of liberal, republican, or socialist (and, not to

forget, fascist) ideologies. The public sphere does not operate on the basis of primarily functionalist reasons dictated by power or economic interest in the framework of a capitalist liberal democracy. However, even in abandoning its bourgeois prototypical model of the public sphere in favor of a non-bourgeois notion there is still the risk of universalizing—however surreptitiously—this distinctive and historically situated kind of subject imagined by Habermas.

Habermas's theorizing met with a similar shortcoming when, answering some of his critics,[3] he conceded the possibility of "plebeian," alternative or counterpublics that, according to him, are basically "the periodically recurring violent revolt or a counterproject to the hierarchical world of domination with its official celebrations and everyday disciplines" (Habermas 1992: 427). We agree that there are popular movements that attempt to reformulate and implement discourses of common good aspiring to represent a politically legitimized public reason. However, we stress the importance of examining the extent to which they remain unbound by the strictures of liberal conceptions and norms of publicness. There is the risk—though this is not endorsed by Habermas—that counterpublics are conceived as mere resistance movements, challenging bourgeois hegemony but lacking an alternative notion of the political glue of society (cf. Castells 1996). Indeed, the notion of "counterpublic" itself incorporates this theoretical bias.

When not limited to modern secular settings, the public sphere can be understood as the site where contests take place over the definition of the obligations, rights, and especially notions of justice that members of society require for the common good to be realized (Eickelman and Salvatore 2004 [2002]: 5). The idea of the public sphere is thus a wider and at the same time more specific notion than that of civil society. As put by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt,

> Civil society entails a public sphere, but not every public sphere entails a civil society, whether of the economic or political variety, as defined in the contemporary discourse, or as it has developed in early modern Europe through direct participation in the political process of corporate bodies or a more or less restricted body of citizens in which private interests play a very important role. We do indeed expect that in every civilization of some complexity and literacy a public sphere will emerge, though not necessarily of the civil society type. (Eisenstadt 2002: 141)

Habermasian definitions of the public sphere are too rigidly premised on a notion of a civil society of private citizens. This limitation becomes a particular handicap to contemporary theorization when we confront two other problems inherent in the way the public sphere is often described: first, such definitions do not sufficiently consider the modalities through which modern states introduce disciplining and legitimizing projects into public sphere dynamics, and the tension between such activities and the public sphere's specific role as a site for solidarities against the

discursive power of the state; second, public spheres interact continuously with popular cultures in a manner that allows nonelites to challenge and shape hegemonic public discourses (LeVine 2004). As we see in reconstructing a partial genealogy of the liberal view of the public sphere (chapter 1), the grounding of the latter in the interests, rights, and duties of the "private citizen" is just one—albeit historically powerful and largely hegemonic—practiced and theorized approach to the public sphere.

This book, then, marks an attempt to bring to the attention of the scholarly community some of these heretofore little analyzed configurations of the public sphere as they emerged and continue to take shape and function in the Muslim majority world. But although we argue that public spheres must be explored in a much broader and more complex framework than is normally utilized by scholars, our deployment of the concept, not surprisingly, remains rooted in a critical reading of Habermas's seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989 [1962]). That is, we recognize the unique contribution of his work, yet understand the importance of filling fundamental lacunae in his account of what constitutes the public sphere, who participates in it, and most important, what is the genealogy of the specific notions of the common good underlying distinctive configurations of the public sphere.

A central problem is that most conceptions of the public sphere, including that of Habermas, consider secularly oriented rationality to be the normative terrain on which public life thrives. Therefore, it is critical to explore the different means through which social practices inspired by Islam interact and sometimes clash with different forms of secularity as incorporated in the ideologies and practices of most states within Muslim majority societies.

In other words, the idea of the public is culturally embedded. The way a sense of the public is built into social interactions varies considerably depending on modalities of transaction over the definition of the common good, of equitable solutions to collective problems, and of shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, as well as on background notions of personality, responsibility, and justice (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004). It is inevitable, therefore, to compare examples of public Islam with notions of public sphere developed within Western social theory. In so doing, the contributions that follow reveal the public sphere to be more than just the prerogative of "modern," "Western" societies, or of democratic political systems based on formalized templates of individual rights and their attendant forms of civil society. We demonstrate that semiformal and informal articulations of Muslim traditions and identities can also trigger the emergence of public spheres; moreover, that the coercive and institutional power of the modern state may both further and limit this potential. However, in order to introduce adequately this exploration of contested hegemonies and reconstructions of the public sphere in the Muslim majority world, we need to evidence the layers of tension inherent in the Western notions themselves that provide the background to concrete, historic articulations of the public sphere and related hegemonic forms.

The Overlapping Dimensions of the Civic and the Public

The public sphere and civil society are clearly overlapping concepts, but in good measure because of a clear transformation—bordering on misunderstanding—in the use of the latter term by scholars during the 20th century. Both terms owe their origins to Greek concepts but then more specifically to Roman notions of the *societas civilis*, civic virtue (with both terms emerging out of the Latin *civitas*, or people united in a city), *res publica*, and the concomitant development of the common good—that, as we explore, circumscribes a family of notions that also developed, in parallel, in the Muslim majority world, and largely through Islamic legal discourse. However overlapping in covering fields and meanings of social action, the "civil" and "public" do not coincide, and indeed, if viewed from within concrete genealogies of religious, political, and legal traditions, as also shown by chapter 1, they often create a field of tension.

If we return to the classical Greek use of these terms, Aristotle's focus on civic responsibility, or virtue, saw it as central to the perfection of human nature; a sentiment that was later picked up by Machiavelli and his contemporaries as they attempted to defend the independence of the postmedieval Italian city-states. For Machiavelli, the survival of these mini-republics depended upon the civic virtue of their citizens; however, like the Jacobins centuries later, he believed that only the institutions of the republic—and not any mediating institutions or individuals—had the right to act for the public good (Machiavelli 1991 [1517], III: 28; Foley and Hodgkinson 2003).

However, another strand took Aristotle in a different direction. Through Aquinas and other scholastics Aristotle's notion of the *polis*, or city state, was refashioned as a *societas civilis* (as Aquinas describes it in the *Summa theologiae*), founded on the dictates of reason and oriented, above all, toward ensuring peace and the development of virtue. Such a transformation was made possible through the reconsideration of human beings from being "political animals" in Aristotle's terminology to being "social" beings whose primary goal in life was communion with God, yet at the same time retaining the notion of that participation in the political community. Unlike the Greek *polis*, the *societas civilis* acquires in Aquinas a potentially universal scope, going well beyond a definite polity, and the concomitant communitarian ethos of civic virtue.

In such a context the highest priority of the state would be ensuring the peace that people needed to pursue this primary goal (Foley and Hodgkinson 2003). Yet Aristotle also argued—in a manner foreshadowing Foucault, if viewed from a certain angle—that the good citizen "must possess the knowledge and the capacity requisite for ruling as well as being ruled" (Aristotle 1958: 105). And in the process of ruling and being ruled happiness or perfection is achieved not by the exercise of virtue in private but rather through participating in the governing of society—"Hence, a person

who acts for his or her own good must also act for the good of all fellow citizens" (ibid.; cf. Halper 1998).

At the same time, however, the *polis* whose government was the responsibility of free citizens was not considered by Aristotle (as it was for Plato) a singularly or unitary entity, but rather a "plurality" of segmented units or associations, with "an essential difference between these persons, and between the associations with which they are concerned" (Aristotle 1958: 1252, 1261). Thus we see a tension inherent in the earliest conceptions of political community and the various arenas and mechanisms for its proper functioning that would continually inform—and problematize—modern discussions of civil society or the public sphere: Is the *polis*/political society fundamentally unitary (in a Jacobin sense) or a conglomeration of diverse and potentially competing interests? How do its members interact with their political leaders: directly or through mediating mechanisms? What are the mechanisms of such interaction, pressure or informed consent when they occur? Such questions would be central to debates on the nature of modern politics throughout Eurasia in the modern period.

What is clear is that in the modern era the basis for establishing both civil society and the public sphere emerges through the Rousseauian social contract, which considered the common good the highest priority of citizens, who are supposed to place their right for the individual pursuit of happiness after that of the community's collective well-being. Yet if for Rousseau (still under the influence of Machiavelli) the state was the arena for defining the nature of the common good, with Adam Smith we see the turn toward what would become classic political and economic liberalism through the foregrounding of private morality predicated on public recognition by one's peers as the best method for achieving the common good.

Smith's "liberal" turn, the concomitant atomistic focus on the individual ego–alter relationship, was foregrounded by Adam Ferguson, whose *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* published in 1767 can perhaps be credited as the first deployment of the term "civil society" in English in a proto-sociological sense (Locke in fact used the term earlier, but with a connotation much more restricted to political theory). In this essay Ferguson describes civil society as developing specifically out of the dynamics of the emergent industrial capitalism in Scotland and England, in which the new division of labor made possible the establishment of social institutions independent of the state and allowed for the idea and possibility of a truly "free society" (Ferguson 1995 [1767]). Ferguson's civil society, derived from *societas civilis*, referred literally to a *civil* society, that is a well-ordered and peaceful society governed by laws. Ferguson believed that the wealth and refinement of a truly civil—that is, civilized—society would undermine its sense of civic virtue; in good measure because the essence of a civil society was not the holistic order of a *polis*, but a society that, though constituting the foundation of the state, is also, inevitably, in tension with it (Foley and Hodgkinson 2003: xiii), due to an irreducible pluralism grounded in a certain primacy of the private sphere (see chapter 1). Therefore, the emergence of civil society

heralds a separation of public and private functions and spheres of a new, modern type.

Ferguson's separation of the public and private functions of society through civil society greatly influenced Kant through his translation into German, providing a basis for the argument that civil society was a foundation for the emerging notion of a liberal republic. With this goal in mind, Kant attempted to move beyond Smith's belief that self-interested or even selfish actions lead to general prosperity through an "invisible hand," arguing instead that people must treat other people as ends in themselves rather than means to the ends of others. Moreover, Kant argued that the ethics and morals that derived from the private sphere would also shape a public arena of rational, critical discourse, which in turn was crucial to shaping the political sphere.

In chapter 1, we trace this genealogy of the public sphere via the Scottish Enlightenment by linking it to the contributions of an author like Giambattista Vico who was more sensible toward the transformations of religious traditions. We highlight the importance of their arguments for analyzing not just the subsequent theorizing about civil society and the public sphere in Scotland, England, France, and Germany, but also for the much more recent interventions of Gramsci and Foucault. But for the purposes of introducing the reader to the main themes and debates surrounding these two concepts, Kant's contribution remains essential. By picking up where Ferguson leaves off, he conceived of the public arena of civil society as separate from the state while remaining crucial to its proper function. As he describes it in propositions 5–7 of his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* and in the argument in *An Answer to the Question What is Enlightenment*, the relation and tension between civil society and the state led him to conclude that the realization of a proper civil society constituted both the "greatest problem of the human species" and yet also the culmination of human history (Kant 1970 [1784]: 45–49). That is, with Kant the development of a problematic of public sphere overlaying the thematic notion of civil society develops directly from his argument for the "freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters" (cf. Chatterjee 1993 for this reading of Kant).[4]

It is at this point in the development of the conceptual pair that civil society begins to be understood more as a problem than a solution for issues of good governance. Hegel certainly understood it thus, and tried to solve it by putting the State back in the center of the equation via the claim that only it could both provide societal unity and the mooring necessary for the realization of Spirit in history (as opposed to civil society's potential for insurmountable particularistic divisions). The importance of the State becomes clear when we understand that with Hegel we see the beginnings of a use of the term civil society in which far from excluding self-interested activities, the term refers *only* to them. In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel noted that "individuals in their capacity as burghers in this state are private persons whose end is their own interest"; moreover, he characterized civil

society as "the battleground where everyone's individual private interest meets everyone else's" (Hegel 1991 [1821]: 224–26).

The notion of civil society as a battle ground, of course, would differentiate it from the emerging notion of a public sphere, in Habermas's terminology, as a body of private persons assembling to discuss matters of public concern or common interest and whose public opinions would serve as a counterweight to the still absolutist state (a dynamic that, following Habermas and his teachers, Adorno and Horkheimer, we can describe as being equally relevant in combating the power of the mass culture economy generated by late capitalism and now globalization). The tension in Hegel between two understandings of civil society—first as a realm of divisions and inequalities, and second as a realm in which human beings shape themselves through ethical norms to master their environment and work together—anticipates the problematic dynamics of the bourgeois public sphere explored by Habermas.

It is important to note for the purposes of relating discussions of civil society and the public sphere to Middle Eastern and other Muslim majority societies that the contemporary interest in these concepts is tied to their reappropriation, often via Gramsci, by activists and scholars in places such as Latin America and Eastern Europe as a way to find space to resist powerful and oppressive states when a direct assault (i.e., "wars of manovre" in the Gramscian terminology) on the state was not feasible. It is well known that for Gramsci, in the context of states functioning through hegemony—consent backed by coercion—rather than pure domination, civil society was the arena in which the struggle for hegemony and the potential for achieving state power by the working class unfold. More specifically, Gramsci's focus on civil society highlights the importance of culture as an arena for struggle, as opposed to just economic or political strategies. In other words, Gramsci can be used to open up the public sphere not just to contestations of interests and identities, but of the concepts themselves—inevitably culturally embedded—that delimit and define the public sphere.

This is clear in his discussion of the "ethical state" that "educates consent" by "raising the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, the level which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development and hence to the interests of the ruling class. These initiatives and activities form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling class" (Gramsci 1971: 258). Gramsci's notion of hegemony and the role of the citizen in its sustenance reminds us that the public sphere can never be as free as in Habermas's bourgeois model. Yet while Habermas misses Gramsci's understanding of the superstructural, that is, cultural dimension of civil society when he defines it via Hegel as a primarily economic sphere (in fact, he doesn't engage Gramsci at all on this issue) he seemingly understands the importance of the state's educative function within society when he argues that in the contemporary period the state and corporate economy have undermined the ability

of citizens to frame independent judgments, assert their authority over their lives, and reconstruct community among themselves (Habermas 1989 [1962]).

Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony is interesting in that it incorporates a tension or a paradox: that the hegemonized classes who follow the discourses and conceptions of the dominant classes despite the unjust social relations they mask, have a largely autonomous, embryonic conception of a just world (Kantner 1998: 58). This is a motive that goes back to Vico's prototypical account of the conflict between patricians and plebeians (as we explain in more detail in chapter 1). There is in this idea a tension between the Gramscian "good sense" as the sole way to rationally transcend given social situations and power relations, and a more optimistic outlook on the reflexive capacities of the subaltern and the "common sense" of survival philosophies, including religion. In a Gramscian perspective, this can only happen through the role of intellectuals and their communication with the subaltern, in order to trigger off a collective learning process. But if we read Gramsci through such authors like Connolly and Benhabib injustice can only be fought through participation in hegemonic struggles for the *definition* of what is just (Kantner 1998: 58).

Beyond both Gramsci and Habermas, the contributions to this volume point to a new notion of hegemony, one which transcends the overpoliticized concept developed by Gramsci as being engineered through the "education of consent" described above. Rather we see how, depending on the situation, the state and/or nongovernmental and noneconomic organizations take the lead in shaping the attitudes and actions of citizens toward their larger society and their perspective of their role and obligations in achieving the "common good." And, among those organizations, socio-religious actors, groups, and movements often play a major role.

In this framework we articulate an idea of contestation that departs from a notion of hegemony conceived of as still based primarily on class struggle and the capture of state power (though we still believe that class factors and the capturing of the state power build the "wings" of hegemonic games). At the same time we distance our analysis from the inflexible view of history and progress that often accompanies such a perspective. Instead, we move toward an idea of hegemony that places it in the center of the contested cultural understandings of the associational bond underlying society, which better reflects "cultural" issues than does Gramsci's discussion.

More specifically, we see as crucial the contest between notions of secularity versus religiously grounded public reason; and even more basically, we observe how secularity seems to clash with the "common sense" in Muslim majority societies (where there is often no consideration of the possibility of a secular "good sense," as Gramsci terms it—see our chapter 1 for a fuller discussion of this issue) according to which secularity is ultimately oppressive and alien rather than emancipatory and adaptable. As important, our revised notion of hegemony no longer limits the direction and scope of human and social creativity as it does in Marxist and Gramscian notions of history and society. We base this argument