**Conscience and Religion in European Politics, and the Case of Cyprus**

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**Abstract**

This essay’s first part offers an original interpretation of the impact of religion on European integration, which it defines as a “turn to conscience” (Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt). This interpretation complements the fast developing theoretical studies on religion and European integration usefully, by offering an account of individual and collective self-transformations motivated by conscience rather than adherence to a specific faith. It shows also how Ernst Haas’ early work took into account “psychological changes,” which other theoretical models shed later on.

The second part discusses two overlooked but important pieces of empirical evidence, the contributions of agnostics and Socialist political leaders and administrators, and of peace-motivated grassroots movements to the founding of the first European Communities in the 1940s and 1950s. It argues that scholarly neglect is due partly to the lack of models and theory to account for these two phenomena. The definition offered in part I, helps mitigate this gap in our knowledge.

The third part consists of a case study, which shows the relevance of this interpretation for current dilemmas. It discusses the lived experience of the turn to conscience of ethnically diverse Cypriots academics, officials and grassroots movements; and it ponders to what extent religion understood as self-transformation contributes to maintaining a non-violent *status quo* politics in spite of the lack of a political resolution to the island’s division. The research relies on anthropological observation and interviews in Cyprus (2018 and 2020), as well as the scholarship on Cyprus’ politics and society.

**Introduction**

The notion of peace making is allegedly one of the original motivations for the project of European integration (Fontaine, 2000). Moreover, reconciliation has become a leitmotiv in public rhetoric in recent years. Both these notions have religious connotations. Meanwhile theological precepts and practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all stress radical personal and collective change based on self-reflection, forgiveness, and mutual respect, although the three religions of the Book also include sacred scriptures, which encourage war and revenge. Therefore it is surprising that whereas European integration scholarship begun to take the concept of religion much more seriously as a topic of research and an explanatory variable at the turn of the 21st century, the notion of personal and self-transformation, so present in the rhetoric of some European leaders and activists in the post WWII years, is almost entirely absent from this literature. It is true that the notion of “reconciliation” remains suspect for many scholars who fear its “homogenizing impact” (Mink 2007; Rosoux 2007). The field of conflict resolution is vast, and empirically minded scholars have drawn from it to examine the Cyprus case (Tocci, 2004; Diez and Tocci, 2009), but conflict resolution theory on the relationship between self-transformation and peace-making, does not feature in these works (Montville 1991; Volkan 2013). Admittedly political science has offered few resources to theorize and assess self-transformation in politics, except as the result of democratic practices rather than religion (Warren 1992; Mansbridge 1980).

Thus this essay aims at filling one major gap in our knowledge of European integration and religion, both theoretically, and through an empirical case study, the still divided island of Cyprus. It offers a complement, not a substitute for the many excellent studies on religion and European integration by discussing religion as a process of self-reflection and self-transformation. This is a trans-religious notion, which exists in most if not all religious traditions, albeit under different names and with different rites. Moreover, this notion is compatible with secular strands of theorizing, which are not theological, yet concerned with self-transformation. In order to explain this, the essay draws from Hannah Arendt’s political theory on thinking and political judgment, and more briefly from Karl Jaspers. Arendt and Jaspers did not discuss whether they believed in a transcendental God in their writings, but both were equally sensitive to ethical questions and the political actor’s responsibilities, in part as a result of their painful encounters with Nazism. I name their call to self-reflection the “turn to conscience.” More on this in the next section.

Why should this matter? I indicate three reasons here. First, knowledge is important. The notion of “turn to conscience” helps make visible the political involvement of secular actors, based on conscience rather than religion. Countless known and lesser-known political actors, religiously minded in the traditional sense or not, took action on behalf of trans-European reconciliations and peace-making after WWII. Especially in the case of grassroots movements they deserve more attention. Second, in the last decade excellent studies on European Union (EU) as an external agent of peace have appeared (Diez, Albert and Stetter 2008; Tocci 2007; Whitman and Wolff 2012), but much less attention has been paid to the internal processes of reconciliation before and within the first European Communities. Greater awareness in both the scholarship and public rhetoric could enhance the effectiveness of the EU organization as a mediator and reconciler between other parties still mired into conflict. Third, because early reconciliatory practices geared toward European peace-making are under examined, they are absent from collective memory also. Peace is “quiet” and therefore taken for granted (Gardner Feldman 1999, 66), and there are few “lessons” learned.

This essay’s first part discusses the “turn to conscience” by drawing from Jaspers and Arendt’s reflections. Its second part discusses two overlooked but important pieces of empirical evidence, the contributions of agnostics and Socialist political leaders and administrators, and of peace-motivated grassroots movements to the founding of the first European Communities in the 1940s and 1950s. It offers a short but critical literature review to argue that this neglect is due partly to the lack of models and theory to account for these two phenomena. The definition offered in part I, helps mitigate this gap in our knowledge.

This essay’s third part constitutes a case study of the processes of conflict resolution in Cyprus today, theorized and researched on the cross-disciplinary basis expounded in part I and II. It notes that religious factors do not feature prominently either as empirical evidence or explanatory factors in political science research devoted to Cyprus in the last 15 years; and it will draw from this essay’s core argument to examine the impact of the “turn to conscience” for actors on both sides of the Green Line dividing the island of Cyprus. Contrary to the early European integration processes, the many attempts at reconciliation in Cyprus have not produced a formal agreement ending the conflict. However, this essay’s conclusion will argue that the situation in Cyprus rather than being labeled as a “frozen conflict,” should be interpreted as a case of “uneasy peace in everyday life”. Everyday life does matter, as recent studies on the EU political culture and on Cyprus confirm (MacNamara 2015; De Waal 2018).

**Part I. The “turn to conscience”**

***Defining the “turn to conscience”***

This essay argues for a reconceptualization of religion in politics into a set of practices, which it calls the “turn to conscience”. It draws from the three religions of the Books (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), albeit briefly, to review traditions of self-reflections meant to help the faithful “convert” practices of hate into love, of greed into generosity, etc. It explains then the concept in secular terms by drawing from Karl Jaspers’ *Reflections on the German Guilt* and Arendt’s Li*fe of the Mind*.

Judaism and Islam like Christianity are religious traditions hospitable, at best, to diverse and multiple practices of self-reflection and of self-transformation, which are meant to impact the community as well as the individual believer. I focus here on the three religions of the Book, because they are the most influential in contemporary Europe, which need not mean that other traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, do not offer similar resources. Thus Judaism offers many forms of meditation, or *Hitbodedut/Hisbodedus*(literally self "seclusion"); Christians developed monastic traditions early on, and the Orthodox tradition of *Nipsis* or Watchfulness is well known, as is Sufism in the Muslim tradition (Gershom 1995; Smith 1991). [To the reader: more discussion/references needed here). But these traditions might be of little theoretical or practical relevance in a European Union, whose citizens and residents have grown increasingly secular since WWII (Foret 2015b, 37; Haynes 2017, 51). Yet some agnostics demonstrated similar aptitudes for self-reflection and self-transformation in the founding years for European integration and it mattered politically. How to conceptualize and understand such phenomena? Jaspers and Arendt offer precious interpretative resources.

Jaspers gave much thought to the links between personal consciousness, communication and the formation of a democratic community. He discovered an empirically given axis, linked to the appearance between 800 and 200 BC of great religious innovators from China to Greece, which gave all nations “a common framework of historical self-understanding.” During this long historical transition, “man becomes conscious of consciousness” and great personalities appeared who designed self-reflective ways of life: the life of the wise man or the prophet (Jaspers 1953, 1 and 262; Arendt 1995, 88-89). For Jaspers communication with oneself is intimately linked with communication with others. In *The Question of German Guilt*, he called his German fellow citizens to recreate community by engaging into communication with one another and within about four kinds of guilt under Nazism, which he labeled criminal, political, personal and metaphysical guilt (Jaspers 1978). Only by treading on a radical path of collective and personal transformation could Germans found a new Germany. He did not feel listened to and moved with his wife to Switzerland. Regardless, Jaspers’ daring call to his students, most of whom were German veterans returning from battle, remains a thought-provoking discussion of how to confront the intricate relationship between individual and political self-transformation; it remains relevant for other places and other times.

Jaspers’ friend and former student Hannah Arendt offers a more elaborate and strictly philosophical treatment of what I call the “turn to conscience”. She was a theorist of action in the public sphere, and totalitarianism had taught her to mistrust both the morality of “good Christians,” easily shed in time of crisis, and the a-worldliness of philosophers. Indeed, their disconnection with factual reality led philosophers to think, write and occasionally even act with a complete lack of political judgment; such was the case during the Nazi years. Therefore Arendt made of public engagement the hallmark of the human condition, and of courage the foremost political virtue (Arendt 1958).[[1]](#footnote-1) Yet throughout her life she revisited the process of the inner dialogue of conscience, which led to political judgment and she called it by other names also: the “understanding heart,” which she detected in King Solomon (Arendt 2005a, 322-3); and the “enlarged mentality” (Arendt 1993, 241-3)

The “enlarged mentality,” a crucial mental exercise for politics, enables sound judgment by taking in the perspective of others thoughtfully. It differs from other forms of political engagement in that it is conditioned by the capacity to withdraw from the public sphere in order to think. The Socratic solitary dialogue of self with self, which Arendt also named the “two-in-one activity,” can act as a kind of lie detector as well as an antidote to the social conformism, which morphed into criminality under totalitarian conditions. It brings to light the implications of unexamined opinions, and challenges the actor to confront her perhaps virtuous, yet all too theoretical commitments with actual involvement in the world (Arendt 2005b, 19-24). In her last unfinished work The *Life of the Mind* Arendt adopted the Kantian distinction between *Vernunft* (reason), which is done of its own sake, and *Verstand* (the intellect), the activity reserved to scientists who engage in the pursuit of truth based on factual or rational evidence in order to acquire knowledge. She stressed quite categorically that *Vernunft* did not require any special intellectual training or expertise, and should be required from “any sane person no matter how erudite or ignorant, intelligent or stupid” (Arendt 1978, vol.1, 214). Why so? Because this kind of thinking helped solve the unavoidable conflicts of conscience arising during political interactions. Here is how Arendt planned to pursue her discussion of political judgment when death interrupted her:

We shall be in search of the ‘silent sense,’ which – when it was dealt with at all – has always, even in Kant, been thought of as a ‘taste’ and therefore as belonging to the realm of aesthetics. In practical and moral matters it was called ‘conscience,’ and conscience did not judge; it told you, as the divine voice of either God or reason, what to do, what not to do, and what to repent of.… In Kant judgment emerges as a ‘peculiar talent which can be practiced only and cannot be taught’ (Arendt 1978 vol. 1, 215-16).

Of course, “conscience” did not constitute politics by itself either for Arendt or Jaspers. It is merely a capacity, which all humans are born with, and which can guide political as well as personal action. It matters especially under conditions of emergency when everything is changing, and time lacking to rethink traditional values and *mores* in light of radical newness.

***Scholarly research on European integration, religion and the “turn to conscience***

Ernst Haas, one of the first political scientists to study the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), dismissed “the existence of a doctrine useful for the study of the integration process” (Haas 1958, 28), so new was the phenomenon under observation. He probed how, “as it were under laboratory conditions” (Haas 1958, xi), old nations decomposed within the framework of the evolution of the ECSC, which redirected the loyalties and expectation of political actors. His European actors, be they politicians, business executives or trade union leaders, were rational-choice actors, driven by calculation of self-interest (ibid. xiv); but in contrast to other rational choice theorists he described their interactions as a positive-sum game rather than a zero sum game (Niemann with Schmitter 2009, 48). More importantly for my argument, Haas was sensitive to needed changes in mindsets if neo-functionalism, as he theorized it, was to proceed in the concrete world of European politics. Boldly he predicted a “spill over” impact of group pressure into a federal sphere (Haas 1958, 311), as he recorded the emergence of a new form of collective consciousness in the ECSC, which could be described as “supranational loyalty” (Haas 1958, 9). In this respect, Haas’ painstaking collection of interviews and his focus on the link between changes in ideologies and behaviors, and policies, announced much later European integration studies on political culture *(inter alia* Calligaro 2013; McNamara 2015; Nelsen and Guth 2015; Guisan 2011; Sierp 2014).

Yet David Mitrany, who was a major intellectual influence on Haas, had little time for any “European spirit”; what was needed were organizations that served *universal* and concrete interests, and might eventually lead to an world government whose form remained unspecified (Mitrany 1965). Mitrany aspired to supranational unity and peace rather than a European government, because the latter would exclude too many nations (Mitrany 1965, 145). But Mitrany had few illusions that such constitutional ties could develop, and recommended instead in *A Working Peace System* (1943) the setting up of a a web of international agencies and activities that satisfied functional interests, or “specific ends and needs.” He acknowledged that this “pragmatic approach… may seem a spiritless solution- and so it is in the sense that it detaches from the spirit the thing which are of the body.” But it was important to steer away from ideologies, which Mitrany compared to “religious movements.” And he asserted confidently that in the case of “things, which are truly of the spirit… they would be no less winged for being freed in their turn from that worldly ballast” (Mitrany in Nelsen and Guth 1998, 93 and 113).

Thus, for neo-functionalists and those who followed, the course of European integration studies was set for decades to come, as scholars remained focused on institutions, policies and rational choice explanations (Keohane and Hoffmann 1993; Milward 1992; Moravcsik 1998). There is no space here for a more in depth review of the rich theoretical developments in the study of European integration since, especially as they have been well studied (Saurugger 2009; Wiener and Diez 2009). Suffice to say that by the turn of the 21st century an increasing number of scholars turned to “cultural” and even religiously based explanations to scrutinize EU political developments. Albeit difficult to define, the concept of culture has a capaciousness, which makes it eminently suitable to connect scholarship on political mindsets and identities, collective memory and traditions, symbolic meanings and religious beliefs. However, definitions of political culture vary greatly: from meaning-making practices (McNamara 2015) to religiously shaped ideas and action (Nelsen and Guth) to the negotiation of narratives and symbolic representations of Europeanness (Calligaro 2013) to analyses informed by political theory of the EU founders’ discourses and practices (Guisan 2003 and 2011) to the Europeanization and politicization of national public spheres (Risse 2004). And this is hardly an exhaustive list of a very rich scholarly literature.

But political science continues to offer scant resources on the political meaning of self-transformation. This is surprising considering that much research exists today on the founding role of Christian-Democracy (Kalyvas 1996; Kaiser 2007) and more broadly on religion and European integration politics (2017 Haynes; Foret 2015a and b; Leustean; etc). One rare exception, in this respect is Giulio Venneri and Paolo Ferrara’s book chapter, “Alcide De Gasperi and Antonio Messineo: A Spiritual Idea of Politics and a Pragmatic Idea of Religion?” (Venneri and Ferrara 2010, 109-123).

Also in spite of Haas’ early focus on political innovators, research in European studies and more broadly in political science has been marked by skepticism toward explanations focuses on individual agents of change, especially when identified by name. Of course, focusing on individual agency undermines the scientific process of generalization, comparison, and quantification; moreover it risks turning into a cult of the “saints of European integration”, as Milward mockingly called Adenauer, Schuman and Monnet (Milward 1992, 322). And yet researching religious and spiritual commitments in politics must include attention to agents’ choices. Even if Monnet’s *Memoirs* were financed by the Ford Foundation, this need not cast suspicion on the genuineness of his testimony, contrary to what Anthony Cohen implies (Cohen 2007), any more than a EU grant financing the research of a scholar of European integration should jeopardize the project’s credibility. This essay seeks neither to prove causation, nor to argue that the “turn to conscience” is the only factor in political change. But it takes seriously the self-interpretations of the actors to highlight one too often under-examined factor in political innovation and change: self-reflection and self-transformation, and their contagious and public impact.

**Part II. Empirical evidence for the “turn to conscience” in European integration: Christian-Democrats and Social Democrats elites, and grassroots movements**

***Retrieving the European Union’s founding from Christian Democracy***

A broad consensus in the academic community holds that Christian-Democrat actors, parties and networks played a crucial role in the founding of European integration in postwar Europe. Wolfram Kaiser labels it “hegemony by default,” whereas “the continental European socialist parties remained largely confined to the class ghetto” (Kaiser 2007, 8-9; 166). However, the leadership of Socialist and agnostic if not atheistic politicians such as Paul-Henri Spaak in Belgium, Guy Mollet, René Marjolin and Maurice Faure in France was just as essential. Jean Monnet, the French official who first proposed the idea for the ECSC, was an agnostic, perhaps even anti-clerical Frenchman (Kaiser 2007), even if he collaborated with the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and many other Christian-Democrats, as he had with French Socialists and Communists during his years at the head of the French Planning Commission (1946-1950). One of Monnet’s closest collaborators Max Kohnstamm, who became ECSC first secretary-general, was also an agnostic. So were other collaborators of Monnet and Spaak such as Pierre Uri and Etienne Hirsch. And this non-exhaustive list should include “Altiero Spinelli, a fellow traveller of the Italian Communist party and a realist” (Foret 2015a, 44).

Why should this matter? First, it seems important not to confine the ideational founding of European integration to a Christian and even more narrowly to a confessional group of actors, and thus encourage wrong-headed comparisons with a latter day Carolingian Empire (Kaiser 2007, 228). Scholars have challenged the monolithic aspect of Christian-Democratic support for European integration (Risso 2010, 93 and 104). And François Foret notes that, “The view of European integration as a process of constituting a ‘Christian club’ under the aegis of the Catholic Church and Christian-Democrat parties ought to be clarified and nuanced” (Foret 2015a, 39). In fact, Kaiser acknowledges the input of French, Belgian and Dutch Socialists “into two crucial policy dimension of the Schuman Plan”. The first was its “supranational design” and the second, “the rejection of the cartel solution” (Kaiser 2007, 245-6). Yet Foret, like Kaiser, traces the ideational roots of the European “ideological conversion” to “cultural Catholicism”, which was not a “prescriptive matrix,” yet in “competition from internationalized socialism” (Foret 2015a, 47-8).

Second, and more importantly for this essay’s argument, the degree of cooperation between politicians and their advisers, in spite of profound national, partisan and metaphysical differences, altered politics in Europe. I argue that this collaboration entailed profound psychological changes in individual and collective mindsets, akin to a process of “conversion, ” (Melchionni and Ducci 2007) although it is well acknowledged that such processes involved only a minority of elite and non-elite actors (Kaiser 2007; Guisan 2011, 25).

***The “turn to conscience” of elite Christian and agnostic supporters of European integration after WWII***

Pro-integration leaders of the 1950s appreciated the political importance of emotions although they conceived the new Transeuropean institutions as an instrument of behavioral transformation rather than healing of emotions. The first president of the Coal and Steel’s High Authority Jean Monnet wrote that, “men’s attitudes must be changed:” the French had to be delivered of their fears of the Germans, the Germans of the humiliation of occupation (Monnet 1978, 291).[[2]](#footnote-2) For German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer the ECSC would change “the thinking and political feeling of European man” (Adenauer 1966, 331). Jacques-René Rabier and Max Kohnstamm, who started working with Monnet early in their careers, warn against an “excessive idealization” of European integration (Guisan interviews, 1999).[[3]](#footnote-3) But Kohnstamm recalled with emotion meeting the author of the Schuman Declaration in 1950:

It was love at first sight. I was struck by Monnet’s worldwide vision, which was political, not economic. He was proposing a deep change in the relationships between nations with a very soft voice; it was about introducing a new element in these relationships besides national sovereignty. Monnet did not write on his philosophy, but all his actions were guided by a philosophical conception: what matters is man as a person, not abstractions. ‘He is abstract, thus cruel,’ wrote Dostoevsky. De Gaulle talked about French greatness as an abstraction. Monnet was a personalist even if he did not pronounce this word. He detested domination and relationships of inequality; the rule of law was essential, because men stand equal under it (Guisan 2011, 33).

The Catholic convictions of Adenauer and Schuman are well known, and I will not discuss them here (references). However Monnet’s “thinking” practices have rarely been examined. Monnet’s close collaborator Jacques-René Rabier remembers him as a “man of action who adopted a lifestyle favoring reflection:”

Religion deals with the transformation of behaviors. Regarding faith Monnet stood as if he was facing a mountain or a cliff; he was interested, but not involved. But, consciously or unconsciously he was doing spiritual work. To reconcile people implies necessarily a spiritual connotation. This transforming vision was more conscious in Adenauer and Schuman. What I find interesting is that Monnet thought that human behaviors could change. It is not self-evident that institutions contribute to change in behaviors and reciprocally. Some of Monnet’s collaborators were personalists, others were moved by the economic realities of the time, but all were convinced that we could not make progress on a purely political path. It worked thanks to the pressure of material necessity, which was not the essential concern for Monnet. As for me I had the feeling to act as a citizen and a father, my Catholic faith was not a primary motivation. In any case, Christians have no privileges, only supplementary duties. Agnostic humanists had other motivations: to avoid war (Guisan 2011, 35-6).

Monnet writes of solitude and the enlarged mentality not as theoretical concepts but as a lived experience, indispensable for thinking the new in times of crisis.[[4]](#footnote-4) Indeed Monnet chose the solitude of early morning walks, although he “could not explain” the source of the conviction that suddenly called for a halt to his reflection and turned it into a decision (Monnet 1978, 288-9). At the height of the diplomatic crisis over the US proposal to rearm the Federal Republic of Germany in April 1950, the “anxious” President of the Commissariat au Plan chose to withdraw to the Swiss Alps for a two-week hiking trip with a mountain guide as his sole companion. At night he penned down his private reflections in a spontaneous and telegraphic style in a pink notebook (*carnet rose*), a “life-long habit” to make sense of events and prod himself into action (Roussel 1996, 694, 773). Although he did not have a “perfect answer” when he returned to Paris, he had “so full an account of the reasons for acting and so clear an idea of the direction in which to move, that from my point of view the time of uncertainty was over” (Monnet 1978, 289).

As he reread his notes twenty-five years later Monnet was struck by how changed circumstances were, which made it difficult to remember the “rigidity” of minds in spring 1950. Then, leaders and public opinion were “locked in on a single object,” – the cold war – which was a much graver danger than the accumulation of weapons. Mental warring “had to be opposed by imagination.” Monnet struggled to represent to himself the French and German points of view, and engaged in what he called “lateral thinking.” Rather than find solutions to problems as they were conventionally articulated, better to think through how to modify the circumstances that created them. He concluded that the context must be “enlarged,” the Franco–German problem become a European problem (Monnet 1978, 289-296).

Even if Monnet’ *Memoirs* should be read with full awareness of the biases present in such texts (Cohen 2007), Monnet’s public interventions indicate the same attention to “the actual psychology” of contemporary Europe. Collected in a French-language and never translated book, *Les Etats-Unis d’Europe ont commencé* (1955) his speeches to the ECSC and the Council of Europe Assemblies especially retrace Monnet’s concern for peace, the need for changes in collective and individual psychology, and the transforming role of institutions (I will develop this analysis later, probably shorten Monnet, and add one paragraph for Spaak, 1969; and one for Robert Marjolin, 1986). Monnet’s collaborator at the French Plan and (Catholic) economist Jean Fourastié stresses that there were never any philosophical conversations in Monnet’s entourage, because Monnet was focused on action with no time to waste on abstract debates: “I have the impression that he wanted to limit himself, at least with us, to political, administrative and economic problems, which was already a considerable undertaking. The point was to try, starting from the tensions between men, to limit the dramatic and disorderly character of life” (Fourastié 1981, Marès interview).

Another former Commission president, Jacques Delors is often compared to Monnet for the creativity he brought to his work (Drake 2000, 26-28, 253). George Ross, who observed the Delors cabinet at the EU Commission at close range for several months, noted *chef de cabinet* Pascal Lamy’s systematic efforts to free the president’s time for reflection and a broadening of mental horizons (Ross 1995, 63-4). Crises prompted the Socratic inner dialogue of conscience. A Catholic, Delors refused to refer to his faith in public. But to avoid discouragement in times of setback or failures, he started “with autocriticism, not to call it an *examen de conscience*,” and tried to find out whether the direction he proposed was the right one, whether the method had been appropriate. Perpetually caught in the “dialectical movement between reflection and action,” he feared “losing the necessary conceptual basis” when he devoted too much time to action. By the same token he wanted to test his ideas against the harsh test of facts (Delors 1994, 320-1, 386). Original ideas might be born in solitude, but their development is social; Monnet and Delors wrote their *Memoirs* in a dialogue with close collaborators. Yet their marginality may have been what protected them from stereotypical thinking and acting.

***The pro-European “turn to conscience” and grassroots activism in post WWII Western Europe***

As Wolfram Kaiser writes, the role of civil society organizations in European integration is somewhat under researched except for Transeuropean federalist groups (e-mail to the author, August 18, 2015). Most of the transnational organizations of “societal actors,” parties, trade unions, business organizations have been geared toward influencing market-related issues, international aid and development, and the environment (Kaiser and Meyer 2013). However, whereas European integration is most often discussed as an elite process (Maas 2007), a surge of grassroots movements provided the necessary affective underpinning to reconciliatory processes in Western Europe after WWII (Mink 2007). Grassroots activism sometimes overlapped with official action, but in the more intimate settings offered by trade unions’ meeting halls, churches, and non-profit associations, small and large shifts in attitude could occur away from the glare of publicity. Like the state-led initiatives, these grassroots networks were Transeuropean, not exclusively French and German. The World Council of Churches, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Pax Christi brought former enemies together. Joseph Rovan, a former prisoner of Dachau, founded in 1945 the *International Bureau of Liaison and Documentation*, an organization dedicated to Franco–German reconciliation. In 1949 the French–German Institute of Ludwigsburg was created to serve a “real political and cultural interpenetration” between the two countries (Bouvet et all 1998, 16). And there were also many youth meetings, from boy scouts to university students.

Edward Luttwak documents the role of one NGO, the Moral Re-Armament movement (MRA, today renamed Initiatives of Change, IofC), which relied on the work of hundreds of volunteers from all walks of life. One hundred Swiss families pooled their savings to buy a dilapidated hotel in the village of Caux, Switzerland, and rehabilitate it with the express purpose to serve European reconstruction. In the years immediately following the war between 1946 and 1950 MRA brought together in Caux 1,983 French citizens and 3,113 Germans. The participation of French and German coal industry representatives from labor and management was strong (Luttwak 1991, 49-51). According to Luttwak, these encounters dovetailed with the launching of the ECSC in a “classical case of serendipity.” Jean Monnet, the initiator of the ECSC, did not have contact with MRA (although Schuman and Adenauer both did). However, “it was certainly a crucial advantage for the politicians and bureaucrats on both sides that many leading French and German coal and steel industrialists and trade union leaders had already developed warm personal relationships at Caux” (Luttwak 1991, 52, 55).

The work of self-transformation, akin to what Jaspers had recommended to Germans only, could be excruciatingly painful. One of the organizers of the Caux Conferences, Leif Hovelsen, a former student member of the Norwegian resistance who had been incarcerated and brutalized by the Gestapo for several years, later worked for reconciliation between Germany and Norway and spent several years in Germany. His autobiography *Out of the Evil Night* describes the encounter between a former French resistance fighter, Irène Laure, who had become a Socialist (and thoroughly secular) member of the French Constituent Assembly, and a group of young Germans in Caux in 1947. Laure had come to Caux suspecting a capitalist trap, and her suspicion turned to revulsion when she saw Germans there (Hovelsen 1959). She had seen the bodies of her friends in mass graves, and her youngest children almost starved to death. But one organizer’s question stopped her from leaving Caux immediately: “As a socialist what kind of unity do you want for Europe?” With her bags already packed, she struggled through three sleepless nights between holding on to her hate or giving it up (Lean 1988, 352-3). Meanwhile the German youths had made up their mind that if Laure expressed her justified hate for Germany publicly they would remind her of the exactions committed by the French occupying forces in the Black Forest. Laure surprised them. She asked to speak at a meeting and said only three sentences: that she had so much hated Germany that she had wished it erased from the map of Europe; but that she had understood that her hate was not justified; and that she would like to ask all Germans present to forgive her for it. One of the Germans, Peter Petersen, who had served in the Nazi Youth Movement, describes the emotional turmoil this simple declaration provoked in him:

For several nights I could not sleep. My whole past was in revolt against the courage of this woman. I suddenly realized that there were things for which we, as individuals and as nations, could never make restitution…One day we told her how sorry we were and how ashamed we were for all the things she and her people had had to suffer through our fault, and we promised her that we would now devote our lives to work that such things would never happen again anywhere (Hovelsen 1959, 58).

Petersen would eventually become an influential Christian-Democrat member of the German Bundestag. For Irène Laure the Caux speech was only a beginning. From January to March 1949 she crisscrossed Western Germany, speaking two hundred times in public, and in eleven of the twelve state Parliaments. Every time she asked for forgiveness for her hatred in order “to restore Germany to a place in the family of nations, and to inspire the youth with a vision of a future to be built, rather than with dreams of revenge.” Her son Louis, a former resistance member, rebelled like others among her fellow resistance fighters; and she chose to explain herself publicly at a meeting of 5000 persons arranged by a Socialist trade union friend in Lille, France: “I know I may offend many of you. For weeks my heart ached, when I spoke in Germany. But I made penance. Our task is to take the first step towards the Germans so that what happened before can never happen again.” (Laure in Piguet 1985, 43-4, 47). For Joseph Montville, Laure made a “noteworthy contribution to a public environment,” which facilitated Franco–German reconciliation, and the creation of the European Community (Montville 1991, 183).[[5]](#footnote-5)

**III. Contemporary scholarly debates on reconciliation: the case of Cyprus**

***Political science, Cyprus and, religion***

To the reader: The third part of this essay is very much a work in progress, and will require another field trip to Cyprus to complete the research.

How to make the invisible visible? This essay has argued for a complementary notion to religion, which takes into account inner processes of self-reflection and transformation. Such processes may carry political consequences, although only narratives of the thinker cum actor reveal the “turn to conscience” to the external observer. Another challenge for the researcher is that peace is “quiet.” If violent conflicts are lacking in a situation of conflict, what is there to observe? Several scholarly strands need to be brought together to probe adequately and from the point of view of the residents, the uneasy, yet peaceful politics of the island of Cyprus at the time of this writing. The third part of this essay draws from the discussions of the “turn to conscience” in Part II and I to examines political practices in Cyprus in a novel way, by focusing on the lived experience of self-transformation of ethnically diverse Cypriots academics, officials, and grassroots movements. It ponders to what extent religion understood as self-transformation contributes to maintaining a non-violent *status quo* politics in spite of the lack of a political resolution to the island’s division. The research relies on anthropological observation and interviews in Cyprus (2018 and 2020), as well as the scholarship on Cyprus’ politics and society.

As Thomas Diez and Nathalie Tocci write, one challenge for political science inquiries is that there are so “many Cyprus” (Diez and Tocci 2009, 295). Here are a few facts most scholars can agree on, and which constitute the historical background for the subsequent discussion. Cyprus became an independent Republic in 1960. However, fighting soon erupted between the majority Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot minority over the management of local municipalities, and the UN sent peacekeepers in 1964 who are still on the island today. After a 1974 Greek Cypriot nationalist coup against the Cypriot President Archbishop Makarios, the Republic of Cyprus was divided into two zones. Although the coup failed, Turkey intervened twice in 1974, as one of the three guarantor powers of the constitutional order (beside Greece and the UK who did not approve), and on the grounds of protecting the Turkish Cypriots. Turkey moved 30,000 soldiers to the island, which drove over 180,000 Greek Cypriots from the North. Meanwhile, 50,000 Turkish Cypriots moved from the South to the Northern part of the island, where they joined the 150,000 settlers sent by Turkey. In 1983 the Northern part of the island proclaimed itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), but only Turkey has recognized the sovereignty of this entity.

Although the EU had stated since 1997 that all border and minority conflicts must be solved within and between candidate States for an accession to proceed, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC)’ accession to the EU proceeded in 2004, without its Northern part. The EU focused its attention on the full implementation on the *acquis communautaire* (the EU body of laws) and other technocratic requirements, while the UN Annan Plan for reunification was submitted to a referendum in 2003, but only Turkish Cypriots in the Northern part accepted it by a wide majority, whereas the Greek Cypriots rejected it by an even wider majority. According to Nathalie Tocci, Cyprus’ accession “was a missed opportunity” for the EU, which failed to propose a solution to the divisions on the island, claiming a “division of labour” with the UN (Tocci 2007, 30 and 32). In 2008 the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities started to meet under the auspices of the UN. They have held many other meetings since, but without reaching agreement on three major issues: the fate of the settlers, the compensation to the displaced owners for lost properties, and the presence of Turkish troops on the territory of an EU Member State. It has been argued that the political division of the island need not prevent its economic integration (Lauhlé Shaelou, 2009, 322–32, 286); but this would be “at best” a form of “negative integration” and a far cry from the democratic peace community envisaged by the EU founders.

Scholars have offered many contradictory views on the conflict. William Mallinson argues for the “restitution of stolen property since 1974…, a single government, parliament and judicial system free from the primitive ethno-linguistic-religious discrimination of former years,” no discrimination, positive or negative, withdrawal of foreign forces and repatriation of illegal settlers (Mallinson 2010, 83). By contrast James Ker-Lindsay suggests that the Greek Cypriots should accept their tragic experience of displacement as a typical European experience, which their EU partners know all too well, and use their memories to contribute to European reconciliation and integration (Ker-Lindsay 2009, 237). Burak Akçapar argues that Turkey’s intervention prevented the interethnic strife in Cyprus “from deteriorating into something akin to Bosnia” (Akçapar 2007, 179). Gilles Bertrand regrets the EU leadership’s lack of political involvement in the solution of the Cyprus division and that it failed to notice the shift of position of the Turkish military, which had accepted to withdraw its troops according to the Annan Plan (Bertrand 2009, 120-1). Michális Stavrou Michael’s *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History* describes perhaps best a 45-year-long process of misrecognition, which he calls a “repetitious cyclical pattern” in which both sides have retreated to their entrenched positions in spite of civil society groups’ efforts to promote rapprochement. The conflict is *value*- and *interest-based* and, as with most protracted disputes, “requires innovative and multidimensional approaches capable of introducing, at key junctures as circumstances change, new variables and parties, linking them at different levels into the central peace process” (Michael 2009, 199, 201). But in the case of Cyprus who should be the initiator is unclear: the Greek Cypriots are a majority on the island, but feel they are a small group in the international context; Turkey feels unrecognized by its EU partners, but is considered a major regional power (Theofanis Stavrou, conversation with author, 2011). Converging initiatives by the political leadership and grassroots groups are needed, with a focus on the present.

Although there is a very rich academic literature on the politics of Cyprus, few have studied or even mentioned religious institutions as a factor in the ongoing conflicts (Constantinou 2007; Diez 2002; Diez and Tocci 2008; Tocci, 2004; Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006; James Ker Lindsay 2009; Stavrou Michael 2009). This is surprising considering that the Orthodox Church has been a major presence historically and politically on the island, although the Turkish Cypriots developed a more secular identity under the influence of Kemalism during the 20th century than their Greek-speaking fellow citizens, whose identity remains closely bound with the Church (Féron and Lisaliner in Diez and Tocci 2009, 205). Thus *Cyprus: a conflict at the crossroads* (Diez and Tocci 2009) takes into account a remarkable diversity of actors, from individual Greek and Turkish Cypriots and refugees, to “meso-level actors” such as business actors and the media, to the “macro level” of political elites (3-5). It examines the role of external actors also, such as the EU and the UN, and adopts gender and identity as alternative analytical lenses. It is true that “methodologically” any ontological perspective (in this case social constructivism) “has to bracket some factors because it cannot analyze everything at the same time and has to start from somewhere” (ibid., 298).

But the Orthodox church remains an important actor and it has played an ambiguous role since 2004, sometimes stoking the flames of anti-Turkish Cypriot sentiments (Dietzel 2018) and other times encouraging rapprochement between the two communities.

***“A comfortable conflict”?***

Recent literature notes that many Cypriots have settled into a somewhat “comfortable conflict” (Daglı 2017). As Thomas de Waal writes, “The Cyprus conflict is less toxic than many other disputes in Europe. It has moved from the realm of violence into politics and law... The situation on the ground is more tolerable as standards of living are also higher. Much has been agreed in negotiations, and there is a fair amount of people-to-people contact and civil society interaction” (De Waal 2018). Although major political issues are still pending, people pursue their daily activities - working, raising families, teaching the young – quite effectively. Millions have gone through the two crossings of the Green Line, which opened up in 2003, and many Turkish Cypriots work in the Republic of Cyprus government controlled-areas today. Two new crossings opened in November; and it is expected that phone services will function on both sides of the Green Line soon again, at last. Some stress the role of economic interest in strengthening the fabric of Cypriot society; others are more skeptical. Paradoxically, the “occupied zone” may offer a limited space of freedom to critics at a somewhat lesser risk than in Turkey. Tourism is booming in both parts of Cyprus and well organized. The highway between Nicosia and Famagusta (TRNC) is in excellent condition, and many new houses going up, apartments in shades of green and pink, and more sober commercial constructions. Thanks to EU/UN support, the old town of Famagusta has been impeccably restored, though the once thriving port looks listless. Famagusta’s former cathedral of Ayios Nicolaos, now Lala Mustafa Pasa mosque, is a wonder of Gothic architecture, but also an oasis of serenity. Here the two religions seem to coexist peacefully rather than clash, and many tourists linger in the beauty.

The collaborative programs across the divide between NGOs, academics, and business people, impress by their number and quality. Cypriots like to stress that the island is small and everybody knows everyone, but some activities do not seem well known, which does not make them necessarily less effective. Thus the UN sponsored in November 2018 a seminar at the Home for Cooperation between students from the University of Cyprus and from Eastern Mediterranean University and their professors on the use of natural resources for peace or for conflict. Although the event was public, there is Internet announcement. The support of small countries, such as Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, beside the EU and the UN, is many fold. Norway supports PRIO, Sweden the Religious Track. But there are many more modest local initiatives also. L.L, a former Cyprus Airlines employee and now an artisan, was forced to leave his hometown in 1974. Much later he helped restore with Greek Cypriot friends and Turkish Cypriot workers (some of whom volunteered their labor) the Church of Ayios Giorgos in Upper Kyrenia where he grew up. Orthodox services are held there several times a year. L. L. acknowledges that this may make little difference to politics. “But it gives hope for the future. You cannot solve a problem without connections.” The absence of demonization of the adversary, even among respondents little inclined to contact with the other community strikes the observer. Convictions are firmly held, in a calm tone, without verbal attacks or insinuations.

There are many explanations offered for the current state of peace without peace. Some mention the role of civil society (Tziarras 2018); others confidence-building measures (Hatay and Bryant 2011); others EU policies (De Waal 2018). Peter Loizos and Tobias Kelly noted how Greek Cypriot refugees from the North were integrated economically and socially in the South after 1974 (Loizos and Kelly 2009). To a lesser extent EU citizenship plays a similar integrating function between the two communities on each side of the Green Line today. Many Northern Cypriots work in the South and 100,000 of them (out of 300,000 citizens/residents of the TRCN) hold a EU passport. For the first time a Turkish Cypriot, political scientist teaching at the University of Cyprus (ToC) Niyazi Kızılyürek is standing for elections to the European Parliament in May 2019, with a good chance of being elected one of the six members of the RoC representation (ahvalnews 2019).

Thus, instead of looking for one comprehensive solution to the so-called Cyprus problem, should the observer focus on understanding better the capacity of Cypriots on both sides of the Green Line to survive calamities and weave decent lives? Instead of one solution for one problem should one rather think of the “solution” as an incremental, yet quite effective process of weaving a web of concrete collaborations around shared interests? What role has the Office of the Religious Track of the Peace Process (RTCYPP) played as it brought together Greek Orthodox, Muslim and other religious leaders? Is the large number of neglected and closed religious monuments on both sides of the Green Line, which are now being repaired and opened for worship for the first time ever since 1963 or 1974 cause or effect of changes in mindsets? How is it that Orthodox senior leader Archbishop Chrystomos II who is known for his conservative and anti-Turkish views has engaged repeatedly with Muslim clergy on this island since 2011 and supported the rebuilding of places of worship? Have his views changed? Why? How?

***Further writing and research.***

I will make use of my interviews and conduct more to answer these questions. I have one interview, for instance, of a former EOKA fighter, who reflects in a Jaspers-like mode on his past involvement and his work in the Famagusta port’s customs office pre-1974 with Turkish Cypriot colleagues to maintain a peaceful working environment. This was the only place where violent fighting did not erupt in the 1960s. To be checked. Other interviewees have described to me their thinking process, what self-reflection means, how this transformed how they engaged with the other (one academic and one artist especially described long-term processes of interaction). I have also interviews that demonstrate a total rigidity in attitudes, no apparent change since 1974, no engagement with the other (Greek Cypriot officials). Yet they think.

I plan to return to Cyprus within the next 12-18 months to investigate religioustrack.com and PRIO, as well as relevant individuals, such as some religious leaders my interviewees mentioned. My plan at this stage is to focus on civil society primarily, and compare with the post WWII environment in Western Europe where civil society action dovetailed with elite political initiatives. Such elite initiatives are lacking for now in Cyprus, but examining interactions and policy advocacy within the new Cypriot delegation to the EP could yield useful information. I will be in Brussels this fall, and plan some interviews.

Questions to 15 interviewees in 2018 (academics, artists, NGOs workers, three RoC officials (two retired, one active), business people)

Respondents were asked whether concepts and practices of reconciliation, as both the researcher and they define them, fit into the national experience and if so, how. If not, why not? Do religious commitments encourage non-violent conflict resolution or to the contrary provoke conflicts, in view of their national experience? Some were also asked to comment on the relevance (or lack thereof) of the Franco-German experience of reconciliation for their post Cold War national experience and accession process in the EU.

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***Interviews by the author in Cyprus, October 2018***

1. Arendt according to Margaret Canovan drew from her encounters with totalitarianism the lesson that goodness was politically irrelevant: “Conventional morality had been no impediment to political evil… The only adequate answer was, she [Arendt] concluded, a political one: the agreement of citizens to establish and to maintain a republic based on equal rights for all” (Canovan 1992, 197). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Men who are placed in new practical circumstances, or subjected to a new set of obligations, adapt their behavior and become different. If the new context is better, they themselves become better: that is the whole rationale of the European Community, and the process of civilization itself” (Monnet, 1978, 389–90). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jacques-René Rabier, a senior French civil servant, was Monnet’s *directeur de cabinet* in the French Planning Commission (Commissariat du Plan) and at the ECSC High Authority. He became *directeur de cabinet* of Monnet’s successor, René Mayer. In 1960 he became head of the Directorate X, responsible for information and the press relations of the three European communities (EEC, Euratom and ECSC). Rabier took early retirement in 1973 but volunteered for the Commission. In this capacity he created the Euro-barometer after training in polling methods in the US with Ronald Inglehart, and he remained active with Directorate X until 1990. Max Kohnstamm became a diplomat for the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry after spending much of the war years in prison. In 1952 he joined Monnet in Luxembourg and became secretary-general of the ECSC. When Monnet retired from the presidency of the ECSC, Kohnstamm helped him set up the Comité d’Action pour les Etats-Unis d’Europe and became its first secretary-general and eventually its vice-president. He was the first President of the European Institute in Florence from 1974 to 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. François Mitterrand called him a “man of silence” who drew strength and clarity from his practice of daily meditation (Mitterrand in Roussel, 1996, 914). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A DVD of Laure’s story, “For the Love of Tomorrow,” has been used in many situations of conflict around the world. A DVD of Laure’s story, “For the Love of Tomorrow,” has been used in many situations of conflict around the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)