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SOCIETY'S CHALLENGES

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Summary: In this chapter, we'll analyse the relationship between Islam and the Western world, and modernism, through social issues such as the place of women in a country like France, or educational stakes. This analysis will allow us to identify society's challenges, particularly in relation with Islam. It will also allow distinguishing what relates to news, through the media, as fundamental issues. The representations, perceptions, images and contexts at stake of Islam's resources imply social issues.

Keywords: Islam, West, Western world, social issues, France, place of women, education, educational stakes, contextualisation of Islam, headscarf

Place of Women

In a number of societies, teaching falls to women, as Alain Touraine (2007, p.201) points out: "Women hold the main part in a child's relationship". In principle, this foundation resists societal and cultural evolutions. According to him, women are the operators of great cultural overthrows, leading us from a culture of conquest to a culture of knowledge and self-building. When faced with the contemporary evolution of women in the West, very few analyses give constructive criticism of the contrasting truth between idealisation and universalisation of the emancipation paradigm, and seemingly perfect social and cultural progress. Alain Touraine (2007) considers that laws and morals combined place women, often victims of inequality, violence – often within the family circle – and sexual harassment, in a place of inferiority and dependency. Feminist battles for thought and action are incarnated by writer Simone de Beauvoir, who wrote: "One isn't born a woman, she becomes one", have been fruitful. They have led to the acknowledgment of male-female equality, and extending women's rights. The right to vote, given belatedly to women in some Western countries, is the explicit expression resulting from a common battle in the name of justice, freedom, and the right to exist. Social scientist and demographer, Jean-Claude Chesnais (1995) is the author of *Crépuscule de l'Occident*. In his book, he condemns the dangers of an apathetic demography in a sterile Europe, all while being opulent and with a strong social welfare. Jean-Claude Chesnais, like many other Western scholars, looks objectively, even sometimes critically, on women's place in the West. He refers to the guilt felt during pregnancy, which "harms" the economic production and is experienced as an "anomaly". There

exists a cause unique to women that results of their specific nature. A cause which calls to a particular mobilisation for them to hold their claims high, and fight injustice. This is what Alain Touraine calls "the great feminist battle for equality". If yesterday's Western woman suffered the pressure in a predominantly male society, today she is subject to other forms of domination and oppression, just as detrimental to her condition. The modern woman has acquired through circumstance intellectual and material independence. However, in doing so, she has seen her part in society profoundly altered. The violence and injustices women are subject to, take on new forms. They make up for a worrying amount, even in the most developed countries: "In our country, marital violence affects one woman in ten. It's the same in other countries too. No matter what their social and political structures are. When I visited the Bechterew Institute, in Leningrad, in 1984, the director pointed out she treated many men. These men, when they had drunk too much vodka, would often beat their wives. She also said that these acts of violence were a major problem in the Soviet Union. In the United States, between a third and half of couples acknowledge physical aggression towards their wife. Over half of them recognise reciprocal violence occurring" (Karli 2002, p.87). The social, intellectual, economic and technological mutations of the last Century have pushed women to demand their status to be recognised, to the same level society offers men. In a socio-economic system dictated by imperative productivity and unrestrained competition, and incentive to consumption, the socio-professional promotion now dresses itself as final. Today, women are confronted with new forms of violence and injustice inherent to modern societies. Daily, women are submitted to violence at home, at work, in the streets, that undermine their liberty and dignity. The commodification of women's bodies on television, in cinema, through advertising, on the internet, reduces her to the rank of consumable. This feeds and conditions behaviours, and encourages a discredit of their status and condition. For Alain Touraine (2007, p.247), "the judgment that we have of a country is now less based on labourers situations, than it's based on women's place, on their rights or on the violence they suffer". Following suit to Nordic countries, a few governments have decided to openly legislate a rebalancing, and truly valuing women's professional status. There is a dilemma between the requirements and rhythms imposed by a modern economic system on one hand, and the educational requirements of a mother that are devoted to her on the other. In Europe and Japan, this issue takes a specific turning point in a demographic context. Marked by an ageing of the population, and a low birth-rate explain the non-replacement of generations.

Women in Islam: Between Fantasy and Reality

The current situation of women in numerous countries can be explained by the weight of traditions that have progressively distorted Islam. It can also be explained by a thought-process not perceived as a universal and contextual project for Man, within time and space, but more as a body of fixed laws, prisoners of history. This altered vision of Islam is one Western Muslims try to distinguish themselves from. They try to do so by developing their own critical thinking towards text interpretation, and enlightening the realities clocked by modern secular democracies. This leads us to halt upon two Koranic concepts founding the male-female relationship in Islam, in a perspective of social justice, respect, defence of human values, and change in mentalities. These two concepts clearly establish the prerogatives of man and woman. Both are dependent on Islam and must both aspire to achieve higher aspirations of spirituality and love within a family, and the different layers of society. The Arab term *qiwâma* (Quran 4: 34), which indicates man's responsibility in the larger sense, has various implications. It includes an economic dimension, since it is up to the man to provide for his family. It also encompasses a human and psychological dimension, in which the man must be a pillar: reassuring and on which any member of the family can lean on. With his wife, they are the guarantors of the couple's stability, the children's education. The assurance he gives off must allow each member of the family to live, and think of the future serenely. The term *hâfidhiya* (Quran 4: 34), implies an idea of preservation of the family's cohesion, inside and out of the family home. Thanks to her listening abilities, her gentleness and sensibility, the wife is able to offer a soul to family life, and to bring out a real sense of belonging within the family. Through her personality, she can generate a strong family-identity. On a larger scale, she holds more power in the education of future generations. Through her motherly love, she provides a true immunity to these future adults that are her children.

There are numerous texts and analyses on the issue of Muslim women defending the premise of a dominated, oppressed being, submitted to man's will. In the Quran, the overall principle ruling the social male-female relationships is one of equity, interdependence, and complementarity. "The headscarf is no longer a blind submission to tradition. Nor is it expressing the imprisonment of ancestral femininity, withdrawn from the public eye. This headscarf now externally legitimises women, and at the same time gives a moral sense to her life. There is no solution in French society, where a collective establishment of sense no longer exists" (Gaspard and Khrosrokhavar 1995, p.49). For these two social scientists (1995), this type of headwear reflects a will to affirm oneself to our parents. But also towards French society which represses, in the name of universality, all forms of identity too specific which interiorises those coming from elsewhere. Against the racism that contests their dignity, these women give themselves a "hidden identity" that takes their stigmatised difference at their word. "These young ladies would wear their headscarves despite the collective disapproval that identifies the scarf as alienating for some, and as an imprisonment in the Islamic community for others. Implying an active opposition against the Republic" (Gaspard and Khrosrokhavar, 1995). The challenge for these Muslim women, who are Western citizens, consists in affirming their identity without complex or ambivalence. The issue of Muslims and Islam with republican citizenship and values leads to a number of questions, which need to be attended. In several European countries, the debate on Islam within the Western world and its relationship with the Republic has focused on a few questions. Mosques blooming in urban areas, the "Islamisation of the suburbs", fundamentalism and terrorism, are subjects that regularly feed the media. Some questions are of national controversy, such as wearing headscarves, and more recently the right to wear a full Islamic veil in public, or the construction of minarets. These "religious symbols" qualified as ostensible are sometimes presented as the symbol of world-wide female oppression. Their presence, investing public areas, would put in peril the sustainability of the nation's democratic and Republic foundations. The Stasi commission, a commission reflecting on applying the principle of secularism, put into place in 2003, couldn't ignore the 1989 notice of the Conseil d'Etat. This notice reminded them that it could "only claim the right of expression of students within a public establishment, as recognised by the legislator".¹Based on this, the Conseil d'Etat acknowledges students' rights to visibly wear religious symbols of their faith within the school's boundaries. Post-adolescent girl's headscarves are designed to "refuse their parents quietist and traditional Islam. It's a

1 « Laïcité et République », report made to the President of the French Republic, La Documentation française, Paris, 2004, p. 66.

form of activism, not in a political sense or a rupture with French society. It's more a will to be French and Muslim, modern and veiled, independent and Islamic. The headscarf wants to open a new space for identity where its specific nature won't be a contradiction with the French nation. Ironically, these young ladies are attached to the secular guarantee France offers". In this analysis by Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar (1995), the headscarf appears to the main public Islamic claim, while hand-in-hand with their Frenchness. They go on: "This point of view calls into question the status of public space on one hand, and the nature of 'French' identity on the other. The idea of a public veiled identity and being publicly French affects a certain kind of secularism. The meaning of this veil mustn't be misinterpreted. Essentially, it's not defined to Algeria or FIS, but has more of a relationship with the dynamics of French society that it's a part of" (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995, pp.47-48). During their analysis of the veil's associated meanings, the two social scientists notice a classification. A "claimed veil" appears unexpectedly alongside the "immigrated veil" and the "teenager's scarf": "A clear paradox shows this veil appearing in young ladies' lives, with whom integration into French culture and society is most active. They usually speak very good French. In a French society going through a strong crisis of its values and institutions, this problem can't be understood out of context" (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995). The Republic's political parties, unions, associations and institutions linked with integration are "out of order": "Nothing seems to fill youth's feeling of anomie. Those marginalised or excluded are those in search of deviancy or self-destruction through drugs. Whereas as those who do better must start a new project, to fill the void left by a lack of purpose. It's no wonder girls are better 'integrated', thanks to their studies and socio-economic belonging (they are often part of the lower-middle class), and wear their headscarves 'publicly'" (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995, pp.45-46). Therefore, Islam is renewed by the young ladies, "reworked and renewed into a different form of tradition, to fix the cracks in the construction of sense, at best lacking and at worst inexistent" (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995).

The Headscarf Issue

In France, the debate on wearing a headscarf in school has grown and some would see it banned in Universities. American anthropologist John R. Bowen, Islam specialist (specifically of Muslims in France), author of *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* (2008), points out that this focus on the headscarf is explained by a historic awareness linked to religious expression in school. The fear that occurs through possible links of expressing one's Muslim identity publicly and radical Islam, and because of media frenzy widely contributing to voting a law banning the veil in 2003-2004. Finally, after years of legal and political agitation, the decision was invalidated by the 1989 Conseil d'Etat notice. The notice considers the veil, as a religious expression, within school, to be compatible with

secularism. It is interesting to ask if these evolutions are a social regression, or a progression charging the defenders of a certain conception of secularism conducting the exclusion of French female citizens from the system? According to John R. Bowen (2008), although defending secularism was presented as the first argument for this law, politicians, scholars and media deliberately associated the veil with social tensions such as communitarianism, fundamentalism, or every day discrimination and violence towards women.

Muslim scholars agree that religious prescription is without a doubt the headscarf that doesn't hide one's face. According to Muslim sources, the Prophet and his followers never forced a woman to wear a veil. In Islam, this is a personal choice born of a deep religious conviction. It's an assumed act of total devotion, and not the fruit of male pressure exerted either directly, or indirectly, upon women and their consciences. This would compel some women in France and elsewhere to follow this practise.

According to Islam, spirituality resides in each person's will to intentionally and freely walk towards God. It's not following blindly or forcefully. If we take into account what Islam's prophet teaches when he says "actions aren't worth the intent that commanded them". Then pushing someone to act under constraint would be a way of denaturing, and perverting their intent, and making them take action falsely. In fact, the whole Koranic message resides in the essence of tolerance and flexibility of religions: "No constraint within religion" (Quran 2: 256), and "God does not impose to a soul that which it cannot bare" (Quran 2: 286). Yesterday's and today's Muslims prescribing women to wear a full veil, or jilbab (full-length Muslim gown covering from head to toe) are interpreting the texts in a very marginal way.

The presence of the veil in public establishments, whether worn by students, mothers accompanying their children, or even by women in education (teachers, pre-school nurses, etc.) would go against secularism. In accordance with a neutral principle, secularism is meant to protect the child's education from all religious or ideological influence. This argument is problematic in many ways especially as the expression of religion is not confined to the walls of their school. Children see women in headscarves everywhere: in the street, in public transport, at the supermarket, when going to school, on television and the internet. Children's education is not only in school. They are exposed to many positive and negative influences and these will entice them to develop a critical mind forging their personality and independence. Of course school plays its part in building a child's personality, but it's influenced just as much by their family, the media, their friends, and their surroundings. The dangers hovering over children's education doesn't only lie in women wearing headscarves in school. The educational goals are complex in their influence over social evolution, new technologies, eroding of traditional markers, based on values and proximity. Some television programs, video games, and websites enter our homes and have negative effects on the younger generation.

Sometimes, the use of these new technologies leads to isolation, or addiction in young people. Building a virtual world through internet, and social networks has consequences on their education and social relationships. The constant rise in suicides, tobacco, drug and alcohol use in youths is worrying. Especially as they start younger, and younger. The damage for their health and wellbeing only translates the state of advanced societies.

Educational Issues

Modern theories on children's education and psychology developed by Rousseau and Durkheim, to which we refer to, and later by Françoise Dolto who we associate with the "child king" myth, allow us to apprehend the child's human personality. Though some ideas are confrontational, there are a number of principles in common to the different theories. These evolve at the same time as the child's surroundings change. A child is sensitive by nature, physically and psychologically but also because he has a growing personality. Islam attaches a great importance to children and their education. This is because they represent a gift from God to parents that only an education through love, ethic, moral and wisdom can preserve. Islam considers that deep inside each person resides, as soon as they are born, a faith in God, in an invisible world. This original faith, immaculate, is very soon put to the test by their own awakening. As early as three years old, the child will assert his personality towards others. At this age, the child experiences his first "clash" as he discovers the ability to say "no". The first egocentric thought is born. The child absorbs everything around him: school, friends, neighbours, neighbourhood, television, and internet; as many elements contributing to their education. The child is not solely the fruit of his parent's education: "What a child receives from his parents are very widespread abilities; a certain force of attention, a dose of perseverance, a healthy judgement, imagination, etc. But each of these abilities can be a means to all sorts of different ends. [...] Therefore, the stretch between these natural qualities and the specific form they take is considerable when they're to be used in life. This is how much our congenital constitution is undefined" (Durkheim 1985, p.63). In a number of societies and cultures, it's the woman's responsibility to educate future generations. However it's not only the mother's role. Islam considers women as a pillar of the family structure. She alone has the power to build lasting love and trust at the heart of the family. The pace of life dictated by ever more demanding economies, especially in labour work, pushes Western women to let go of their children very early. They are often confronted with the choice between being a stay-at-home mother, and having a professional career. The latter being socially rewarding, they must put their children into nurseries which are often perceived as impersonal. This early separation that would distance the child physically and emotionally from its mother would deprive him of her proximity, her affection, her reassurance that her presence gives, and her listening. Some cultures, like in Japan, consider that in the early years

of a child's life, the mother's place is by her child's side, to insure its education. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's merits describe breastmilk as impossible to substitute by any kind of nursery. It is like a preventive medicine in a hostile environment. Some specialists think that research ought to be done into personality disorders observed in modern societies, into emotional starvation, into frustration, and into the causes of isolation. The loving parent-child links are the solid base on which a strong and balanced personality could be built on: "No mother, no child. There are mutual duties between them; and if they are badly done on one side, they will be neglected on the other. A child must love its mother before he knows that he must. If blood ties aren't strengthened by habit and caring, they will die during the first years, and so the heart dies before it has begun to live. Here we are, from our first steps into nature" (Rousseau 1964, p.19). According to Claude Allard (2000, p.270 and 274), "a failing family environment helps televisual absorption, and even use of this media as a way of compensation. In extreme cases, an excessive use of television and other audio-visual tools can be considered as emotional starvation. [...] Deconstructing the family because of consequences brought through work, television adds itself as a false compensation. However, we know that this tool will never substitute a parent's presence, which is also preferred".

The child's protection and education policies invested by Western governments attempt to adapt to an increasingly hostile environment. A "consumer-society" that lures children into thinking they must buy things they don't need. This environment is defined by trivialised violence through television and video games that help condition education: "Families accuse media of anything and everything (which isn't entirely wrong), by pressing shocking images with complete disregard for morals, or gratuitous violence inciting children into criminal activities. The media advocates freedom of speech which often forgets to underline the sustainable profits it feeds. It also accuses parents of giving up their children to the small screen (which isn't entirely wrong), but they don't miss out on the hypocrisy: everything is profitable, even when it's illegal" (Allard 2000, p. 287). Claude Allard (2000) adds that even though the thrill of transgression isn't new to children, it's now possible virtually. A child will be more interested in the small screen than in frustrated parents or teachers asking them to think for themselves. One of the consequences of this easily accessible "culture of violence" is that juvenile delinquents start younger. Although a political awareness has arisen today on the need to value the human dimension, and refocus on learning and morals, the public authorities must face a complex social, economic and cultural context generated by globalisation. The difficulty to build a real project for a child, in harmony with its specifics, reveals the absence of a profound analysis on the origins of its problems. It could conclude in a political inclination of repression which would be illustrated in closed educational institutions for minors. The child no longer identifies solely to its family or direct surroundings, but is subject to fashion and gang influences conditioning his personality. Confronted

with the expansion of “educational references”, his personality, when left unprotected, is submitted to disruption, deficiency, and failures of the educational system and the successive reforms to which it’s subject. These effects are accentuated in “sensitive” urban areas: “Absence of work structure in decent conditions, absence of surveillance, and of educational presence: there is a huge gap between the official authorities’ speech and real life” (Lemoine 2006, p.72). Antoine Léon thinks that the “answer to fundamental issues on the finality or the future of the educational system. This voluntary illusion consists of seeing school as an irreplaceable instrument of human liberation and social transformation. It often gives up its place to the fatal illusion privileging all reproductive functions of inequalities, while at the same time minimises the length of any educational action” (1995, pp.124-125). He continues his analysis by clarifying that in times of crisis “the responsible politics and educational authorities cannot take into account the often unpredictable effects of social, economic, and technical changes of these misunderstood mechanisms” (Léon 1995, p.125). Today, the educational system is incapable of stemming these worrying evolutions defined by youth (depression, alcohol consumption, drug use, tobacco, screen addiction). Confronted with evolutions and goals, how should we apprehend the issue of education? Today’s children and pre-adolescents are more and more premature. They evolve in an environment where violence, sex, alcohol, and drugs are trivialised through traditional media, internet and screens. The pace of life imposed to children as well as the multiple pressures of their environment expose them to many perversions, making them less receptive. The hold of the child’s gang, added to the truth affecting mind and behaviour, affects the construction of his personality. Very soon, he tries to identify himself, to stand out. This pursuit occurs in more “sensitive” areas with gangs, an identity safe-haven for youths. Pre-adolescents are also faced with gang phenomena. The youth identifies himself with his neighbourhood, with his city, but also with the gang he is a member of. In Europe, we are still very far from the American urban ghettos where youths, victims of spatial, racial, and economic segregations, are left to themselves. The marginalisation and boredom of more and more youths living in “sensitive” neighbourhoods is fact. In France, secular education has allowed to create a strong foundation based on republican values of educational and cultural democracy. A close-minded interpretation of secular principles would lead to excluding headscarves in school in France.

The ideal secular democracy, equity, and justice principles are explicit in the 1905 law separating the church and the state. If the socio-demographic, religious, and cultural evolutions aren’t taken into account enough, they could hardly be pretexted in University, or defend the right of collective, or personal diversity. Excluding young women from republican schools only encourages tensions, social exclusion, and community temptations (Frégosi 2008). The issue of living together, of accepting each other, also arises within multicultural societies. These issues affect children in,

and out, of school. Islam's main assignment to parents is the responsibility of their children's education. The child will first see the world around him through what his family teach him. According to Emile Durkheim, considered as the father of modern sociology: "Saying that innate personalities are, for the most, very generous, is to say they are malleable, supple, that they can receive extremely different meanings. The gap between indecisive potential making a man what he is when he's born, to what he will become permanently later in life is huge. This is the distance education must help the child walk. We only see a wide open space for action" (1985, pp.63-64). Today's secular education is not fully materialised in practise, in republican ideals, in freedom, in equality, and in fraternity preached by France in the 19th Century by Jules Ferry. Religion's place in Western educational systems, different from country to country, is largely conditioned by the evolution of ideas, societies, institutions, economies, and cultures. At the end of the 19th Century, moral and civic instructions took the place of religious education in France. At the heart of religious or ethnic communities, the will to pass on religious and cultural heritage is fact. Today, the ideals and legitimacy of republican education is subject to much criticism. They did nothing to stop inequalities growing, nor segregation phenomena in the suburbs of large cities. The use of school as the hearth of national identity needs to be reconsidered in its principles and goals. Emile Durkheim somehow defines this identity hearth as the duty of each nation. They must transmit through education, to all their children, without social discrimination, a whole of ideas, sentiments, and practises. He considers education the cement and guarantor of consistency of society. This "glue" sticks in the child's mind as "the essential similarities" to living within a community. He admits that each society has its own ideal of Man. Social scientist Joëlle Perroton (2005, p.74), questions the "integration" capacity of the educational system: "The headscarf issues in school have brought forward young immigrants, and directly question the part our educational system plays in integration. Beyond the issue of secular education, these young immigrants can appear as a 'challenge' for the school. They seem to accumulate a number of socio-demographic statistics linked to educational failure (belonging to underprivileged backgrounds, large families, undereducated parents, unemployed mother...)". She underlines that recent studies show that although these youths are in some educational difficulty, they still manage to achieve as much as their native French classmates at the same level. Sometimes, they can even do better. She thinks that it ought to be the educational authorities put under the microscope (Perroton 2005). To think of education's finalities, one must first check the current state of affairs to determine the origin of these handicaps, and failures in context. We think it's important to first build together a prospective vision of society and Man of tomorrow. The social scientist says that "'putting aside' certain students is far more based on their ethnic origin than on social or educational criteria (even if the added inequalities are obvious). Furthermore, we can point out a good portion of

educational segregation falls in with spatial segregation. However, the public observed in studied schools was still different to that which we expected given the sectoring. Bypassing the school card definitely plays a part in upholding disparities between establishments. From this point of view, the wish to avoid a certain type of person often joins up with the parent's preoccupations of educational standards" (Perroton 2005, p.75). Even if politics are more sensitive to the theme of social mix, Joëlle Perroton thinks they prove to be powerless in regulating these types of educational avoidance. She underlines that these segregationist processes create "ghetto establishments". Therefore, there are consequences on educational knowledge, and the subjective view of education. It's in school that the ethnic dimension is the most important. It can even escalate to racial tensions. From the beginning, Western Muslims have tried to organise themselves to preserve their spiritual and cultural identity by building areas devoted to their cult, and the creation of associations. From an educational view, the first priority was to transmit the precepts of Islam to the new generation while familiarising them with the Arabic-Muslim culture. The quality of guidelines and teachings was not a priority at first. As we have previously underlined, the relationship between secular institutions and religion is different from one country to the next, particularly with Islam. The United Kingdom is a model society of communitarianism with its Muslims schools well anchored in the background. In France, the few projects laid out have difficulty finding their footing due to financial, legal and administrative complications. For example, in Belgian schools Islam has found its way into school programs which include studies of religion. The state gives the choice of studying religion, or following a non-confessional morals class. In Germany, according to Fundamental Law, religion is part of the standard classes in public schools (Pépin 2009). Emile Durkheim (1985, p.47) says: "To define education, one must consider the current and past educational systems, to bring them together, and identify the common ground. What we are looking for will be clear as soon as we identify these characteristics. Along the way, we have already determined two elements; for there to be an education, there must be an older generation and a younger generation, and an action taken by the former on the latter. Defining this action is all that's left". According to him, education is summed up by an action taken by an older generation on those not yet ready to socially integrate. Its finality is for the child to develop physical, intellectual, and moral capacities. These will allow him to fit society's requirements in general, and specifically to his future surroundings. In his mind, an accomplished education is one leading to an independent personality. This is the absolute contrary to Greek and Latin teachings, which would preach blind obedience of each and every one in the community. John Stuart Mill thinks that education represents everything we do for ourselves and what other people do for us in order to bring us closer to our perfect nature. In an even wider acceptance, he even integrates indirect effects on Man's character and faculties by elements which have

a very different goal (laws, governments, industry, or even natural elements, independent of Man's will like climate, the territory, or geographic area). Following Kant, education must help every individual to develop a perfection to which he is susceptible. For James Mill, education must be an instrument of happiness for the individual for himself and others. However, as Durkheim underlines, happiness is subjective. This sort of definition leaves education's goal undefined, and therefore education itself since its left to individual arbitrary. For Western Muslims, the search for an education fitting with their identity, guaranteeing freedom to express their convictions, and in line with secular foundations, is a real challenge. In other words, this means they want to find a compromise between community temptations and identity disintegration. One of Muslims' priorities is to rethink the methods and finalities of the education of light within context, and analyse historical ruptures that changed the essence of their model. Only a clear and dynamic understanding of these sources will allow a lengthy restoration process. The future and place of a Muslim and civic education in the West implies an approach based on postmodern societies state of affairs: place of education, conception of family, evolution of morals, mentalities, law, science, etc. And an approach based on the educational system's complexities state of affairs: finalities, actors, structures, means, operations, handicaps. Emile Durkheim (1985) reminds us that historically, forming and developing education systems depended on beliefs, political organisation, science's development, the state of the industry, etc. According to him, they become unintelligible when detached. Confessional schools appearing here and there raise a debate on integration and Islam's relationship with secularism. For some Muslim citizens, it creates the only alternative to a crisis-stricken educational system. We think that concentrating on debating about wearing "visible symbols" and their possible dangers on secularism will hide us from the real problem: how is it possible to durably integrate a conceptual hearth of ever-changing society and spirituality, while protecting the national cohesion and avoiding a cultural clash? In its 2004 report, the Stasi commission underlines that under the effect of immigration and social diversity caused, the goals changed their nature. The separation law of 1905 was essentially based on the Catholic Church. The same commission agreed that the today's challenges are more complex. The main goal is to compromise a unity and a respect of diversity. Thanks to the "headscarf case", it recognises that "today's secularity allows the full intellectual growth of the Islamic thought, protected from authority's constraints".² Today's problem is, the conceptual frame of secularity confronted with unknown practices. These put secularity to the test, and confront its

2 « Laïcité et République », report to the President of the Republic, La Documentation Française, Paris, 2004, p. 79.

inherent capacity to constantly question its and our foundations so we don't betray our ideals. Western Muslims' goal is to think and build an individual and collective identity open to the world, a goal conceiving education in all forms, with the hope of renewing Islam and secularism. Private religious schools appear as a possible alternative for some. Their conception, finalities, and actions are yet to be defined. The educational role of the parents, the educational system, the extracurricular structures, and other actors must be thought of as a whole, an ensemble protecting children from an increasingly hostile environment. This innovative approach could guarantee the construction of a model aware of the specifics of social context. When faced with the deep mutations of the traditional family structure and the constant educational failure, often lacking in self-criticism, reforms and innovations, it is urgent to ask about education and its goals. We must place these questions at the centre our concerns for a proper renewal project for postmodern societies. Today, in countries like the United States and France, there seems to be a multi-layer education system. More and more, we can see an educational "painting" where "good schools" live alongside "problem" schools. The former having little to no problems and providing a certain level of quality and seriousness. The latter being manned by overrun and powerless teaching staff, in areas piling on handicaps: unemployment, educational failure, delinquency, insecurity, drug dealing, etc. These establishments reveal worrying symptoms of an underlying social unrest. They have become a permanent playground for all kinds of violence and everyday incivilities. A number of families in these "sensitive" areas must give their children to overrun and powerless public schools. Being a teacher is now more precarious than ever. It's now considered a dangerous job with its assets being put into question: "Certainly, these 'incivilities' are predominant; we are tempted to think they have always existed in school, so there's no reason to make an issue of them. In truth, they have grown in number and they affect a growing number of schools. For the most, they only concerned the pupils, but now they are more and more often directed to the teachers and other school staff" (Karli 2002, pp.85-86). Pierre Karli (2002) thinks that delivers a number of consequences. When combined, they seriously disturb many schools operations as they are eroded from the inside. "On top of the specific personal difficulties encountered by many teachers, there is also the fact that the institution's image is degraded because of the violence it is submitted to. The effects entail a devaluation of its own social status. In these conditions, it's not surprising that fewer people want to become teachers, and more teachers want to make a career change" (Karli 2002, pp.85-86). In the meantime, many teachers suffer from their position. Faced with their pupils' violence, their calling to transmit knowledge is overpowered by the need to insure "maintaining order". In France and other countries, the activities suggested by mosques and other religious associations appear as a refuge for Muslim parents facing a failing educational system. They don't substitute it but only add to what is taught in school. In "sensitive" areas, particularly

in city suburbs, abandoned by the local authorities, the local associations can't overcome the parents' educational roles, or the lack of means. Recent decade's partitioning results from spatial, social, and economic segregation leaving a whole part of the population to one side. These new ghettos, pariahs of the Republic, have become the symbol of the explosion of urban violence, all kinds of discrimination, and the territory of uprooted youths.

Children's and adolescent's education has become a complex goal faced with the influences of new technologies, the existence of an overshadowing virtual world, and social evolutions exponentially defying growingly abstract morals. In terms of prevention, there are priorities. Some television programs, video games, and websites find their way into our homes and have negative effect on education. The worrying growth of suicide amongst youths, tobacco, drug, alcohol use ever younger, with all the known dangers to health and wellbeing, are as many phenomena translated by modern societies. Today's adolescents and youths are yesterday's children. We must remind this obvious fact, because we long thought that giving our children a good education and an almost limitless freedom was the miracle formula to a proper up-bringing. The theory is that these growingly disrespectful and irresponsible adolescents weren't prepared as children to be actors in society, not only because of video games and adverts. Ironically, a child free from all restraints, the "child king", loses all self-confidence. He seeks refuge in an adult-free universe (virtual world on the internet or in video games, reality-TV, identifying themselves with celebrities, etc.).

The issue of education, in its essence and finality, should be placed at the heart of any society's project. Today's society's problems are treated with urgency when it's necessary to take a step back. Society should ask itself what we wish to build and what challenges it wants to face as a group.