Religious education as a counter-secularization strategy in contemporary Romania

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The thesis of this paper[1] is that in spite of the disappearance of the communist regime and its secular policy of implementing an atheistic worldview, the Romanian post-socialism brought forth not a religious revival, as some sociologists have claimed, but a new logic of secularization. This logic of secularization manifests itself especially among the young generations that were socialized within the new post-socialist life-world and takes the shape of three very distinct processes: de-Christianization of the religious world-view, de-institutionalization of religious experience, and most of all de-moralization of the practical sphere of life.[2]

In the context of the emergence of a new secular culture that informs mostly the life of teenagers, religious actors try to cope with this by articulating different strategies of counter-secularization. The secularization process is not a uni-linear one, a direct correlative of a modernization process, but needs to be linked to an erosion of the plausibility structures of every-day life[3] a process that has to be considered as a byproduct of the pluralization of life-worlds. The absence of integrative structures of meanings is not a fatalistic destiny of modern culture; new "prophets" can emerge that are able to offer certainty in time of crises.[4]

Religious education was introduced in the Romanian curricula with grate haste. But this is not a peculiarity of the Romanian system[5]; almost all other Eastern European countries have done the same. While in most Western European countries the implementation of religious education was part of a wider strategy to address specific educational reforms[6] in Easter Europe this has been realized without developing the needed resources (integrated curricula, well trained teachers, etc.). The lack of debates and deliberation within the civil societies has lead in Romania and in other countries of Eastern Europe to the idea that the Churches are exercising political power and are threatening the lay state and lay educational system.

In this paper I am analyzing the issue of various forms of religious education that have been implemented in the public educational system from Romania. In the early 90's religion has been introduced as a mandatory subject of study from the 1 st to the 8 th grade in accordance to the confessional belonging of each student. The post-socialist governments financed this from public money and created as well the legal framework for the establishment of denominational educational institutions. Most of all I am analyzing the impact of new religious movements on the Romanian religious landscape and the way Pentecostals and Baptists deal with the issue of secularization by institutionalizing a confessional education system and their attempt of

restructuring the world-view and values of Romanian teenagers. Through a religious education system I mean the consolidation of confession based high-schools that are opened (through the requirements of the Romanian law) to all religious confessions but is led by a particular religious confession that usually attracts teenagers from the same confession. Besides the general curricula, these high schools use as well a specific religious one that is taught in an environment that promotes Christian values.

There is a general trend in Eastern-Europe to fund confessional schools, the only few exceptions are encountered in countries that usually are in favor of strong separation between the state and church such as Bulgaria, Russia Albania, and Ukraine[7] Besides these countries most of other Eastern-European states not only allow confessional schools and universities but fund them as well from the state money: the only difference is between countries that fund most of the existing religious groups and countries that limit this to religions that have reached a specific threshold.

The issue of confessional private schools is addressed very differently by the European Union (EU) countries. While some countries prohibit it, others strongly encourage it as long as these schools are taking over some functions of public schools. The law in Hungary for example stipulates that the state is obliged to finance those religious educational enterprises that assume some of the public educational function that the secular state has to fulfill[8]. This is the case as well for one of the most secularized countries of Europe, namely France[9].

In order to contextualize the issue of Neo-Protestant confessional education we have to review very briefly the historical situation of these religious movements in post-socialist Romania. After the fall of communism Romania witnessed a strong intensification of religious activities and a wide presence of religious content in the mass-media. This intensification of religious life has to be understood as a specific religious counter-movement that was building on the new found religious freedom after decades of state organized repression. The Neo-Protestant denominations (Pentecostals, Baptists Adventists, Christian Brethrens, and others) played an important role in this intensification of post-socialist religious life.

During the communist period these religious denominations were strongly persecuted and their activities regulated by the state-officials.[10] In spite of this, during the communist period these religious movements (especially the Pentecostals and Baptists) managed to strongly increase their numbers of followers[11] and this growth intensified even more during the post-communist period. The Neo-Protestant movements have established religious communities since long time in Romania, but the strong regulation imposed by the communist regimes and the state led persecution of the "sectarian" activity made the Neo-Protestant churches not that visible in the Romanian public sphere.

The religious decree from 1948 appeared to be an improvement of the Neo-Protestant legal situation. During the inter-war period these religious movements were tolerated as religious associations while the new communist Constitution recognized them as legal religious cults alongside the Orthodox Church.[12] This legalization process had its downsize, it forced the religious communities to institutionalize themselves and formalize all of its religious activities. The election of national bodies of representation, the religious meetings, the establishment of new religious communities, the construction of new church buildings, etc. could be performed only through the imposed regulation of the Department of Cults, the department that was in charge of supervision of all Romanian religious activities.

The Department of Cults was a strong repression tool of the communist regime that had as its goal the permanent surveillance and normalization of all the religious activities with a specific focus on the Neo-Protestant movements that were trying to attract new church members and spread their

religious faith. In the 80's this had become an important issue for the communist party because the Neo-Protestant movements were strongly increasing their memberships[13] {Neagoe-Plesa E., 2005:367}. This posed problems for the communist authorities because the rapid extension of the Neo-Protestant movements made them very hard to be monitored and most of all governmentalized as this quote from a secret service report shows:

"What is extremely dangerous is that these cults don't have a static character, but by their essence they determine their members to convert new proselytes [...] Some of the elements of these cults encourage anarchic actions, want to extend the religious life (and get out of the cult house), to engage in sectors that do not belong to them, to hinder the good enfolding of collective activities through an intensification of religious services."[14]

As a reaction to this the communist local authorities imposed strong regulations regarding their activity and practiced a policy of marginalization of those belonging to such sects. Party memberships, good working positions, access to high education were things that were un-officially forbidden to the members of these religious communities. Sometimes the secret service was involved in warning N-Protestant believers that their religious activities were going against the policies set up by the Party.[15]

This led to the formation of a religious culture of resistance and martyrdom, with strong integrated communities that developed a genuine rejection of the socialist world and public life in general. Suffering persecution and marginalization for the sake of one's faith was conceptualized as the genuine Christian way that each believer should adopt. This theme of following the way in spite of all opposition and constrains was accompanied by an outer-world hope that eschatological redemption is more important than the successes in every-day life. Although the communists did not manage to stop religious growth, they managed to hinder their entrance in political structures, strongly regulate all their religious meetings, control the religious leadership, marginalize their members, and minimize their presence in public life.

After the fall of the communism the different persecuted religious movements saw in the new era of post-socialism the chance not only to assume openly their religious identity but also to start sharing their faith with others and preach the Gospel. Public evangelization meetings, radio stations, newspapers, the proliferation of specific religious literature, Neo-Protestant music and later on TV shows were used to achieve a more intense presence on the public sphere. Although according to the latest National Census there are only approximately 3.8 % Pentecostal, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventists altogether in Romania, a lot of people perceived their presence as ubiquitous.

Table 1. The confessional structure of the Romanian, Hungarian and Roma population from Romania. Source: Recens?mântul Popula?iei ?i Locuin?elor – 2002.

	Ortodox	Greek and Roman Catholic	Reformat	Unitarian	Neo protestan?	Other religion	No religion	Undeclared
Romanian	94.08%	2.61%	0.10%	0.01%	**2.66%**	0.41%	0.07%	0.03%
Hungarian	1.97%	42.37%	47.62%	4.53%	**2.14%**	1.01%	0.23%	0.09%
Rroma	81.87%	4.94%	3.12%	0.12%	**8.67%**	0.65%	0.35%	0.23%

Gradually the martyrdom rhetoric and the rejection of the world were replaced by a bold attempt to conquer the new established post-socialist capitalism through the emerging of new elite: Neo-Protestant entrepreneurs, politicians, teachers, journalists, theologians, doctors were all fighting for the institutionalization of a Neo-Protestant counter-culture.

One of the important consequences of the Neo-Protestant movement is the emergence of an autonomous social space[16] that allows the members of this community to articulate their own culture and identity.[17] This is done through the way the religious community is structured and through a strong moralizing of behavior that sets them apart from the rest of the "world". This religious culture has a great impact not only upon the personal life but it leads to restructuring of all social networks as well[18]. As other studies have shown[19] the Neo-Protestant movements are parts of a wider globalization process that lead to a consolidation of strong local communities and to the articulation of a distinct socio-cultural identity.

It is in this context that the idea of a specific Neo-Protestant high schools emerged. A Neo-Protestant educational establishment fulfills several functions. First, it acts as a symbolic institution that refers to a definite presence on the public sphere and thus it sets up a marker of recognition that breaks with decades of marginality and exclusion. And second, it acts as an extension of the religious community (some of the teachers are important members of the church) by building strong external religious networks and an environment where adulthood is dealt with not in secular, but religious terms.

As we can see from the following table out of the 78 confessional high-schools existing in present-day Romania, more than 22 % of these schools belong to Neo-Protestants. All of these Neo-Protestant educational institutions were established after the fall of the communism and still new ones are announced to be established. While these religious communities expand and attract more and more middle and upper-middle class members of the society, the "need" for such high schools arises. This allows the community both to signal its presence in the local community and set up a religious-safe environment where their children can be educated in accordance to their own belief values.

Table 2. Confessional High Schools in Post-socialist Romania. Source: The Ministry of Education (Reteaua unitatilor de invatamant post-gimnazial de stat care functioneaza in anul scolar 2006/2007)

Orthodox	Neo-Protestant	Reformed	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Unitarian	Total
35	17	8	12	4	2	78
44.87 %	21.79 %	10.26 %	15.38 %	5.13 %	2.56 %	100 %

Taking into consideration the fact that Neo-Protestantism represents only 2.5 % out of the entire Romanian religious system, this makes this particular confession rank highest in "colonializing" the Romanian education system with confessional high schools. Compared to the specific number of believers, none of the other religious confessions has a greater tendency to establish specific confessional high schools, than the Neo-Protestants.

Table 3. Number of believer per one confessional high school. The number of religion membership have been used from the 2002 Census.

Orthodox	Neo-Protestant	Reformed	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Unitarian

537.327	**8.996**	87.319	85.700	48.870	33.423

This makes us question why there is a need in the Neo-Protestant community to establish specific confessional high schools at such high rates; and more particularly what exactly distinguishes teenagers that study here from teenagers studying in regular schools. None of the other religious confessions existing in Romania has the tendency to "enchant" the education system more than the Neo-Protestant community

The Neo-Protestant high-schools are marked by a few peculiarities. These high schools are not theological vocational schools like most of the other schools are. Unlike the other confessional schools, people attending the Neo-Protestant ones are not preparing themselves for priesthood or other churchly-related vocation. The high school is not a preparation stage for a clerical career and so the institution is not run by the church authorities as most of the other high-school seminars are.

The school is open both to boys and girls, to neo-protestants and non-neo-protestants, and although there is strong emphasis on biblical study; most of the people that graduate here are not pursuing a Theological University, but rather a regular one. The religious teachings should serve them as a strong foundation for their life and as guidelines of how to act as a Christian in a secular society.

These high-schools are led not by pastors or priests but by lay people most of whom belong to one of the Neo-protestant Churches. The school has a strong religious orientation that aims not necessarily at preparing Church ministers but at offering an alternative religious worldview and a religiously safe environment that should protect the teenagers. At least this is what some of the parents have in mind when they encourage their children to apply for this type of high school.

In this case we can clearly identify a coherent strategy to institutionalize a specific religious world-view that tries to integrate all aspect of life: the educational one included[20] (Demerath, 1998). After the forced atheist period of communism when all religious activities were strongly regulated this idea is very innovative and has strong implications: it acts as a de-secularization attempt that tries to integrate not only the private life, but the public one as well.

By labeling the institutionalization of confessional education as a de-secularization attempt we do not want to imply that the entire Romanian society is undergoing such a process: we just want to point out how a specific religious movement contributes to this and what the mechanisms of institutionalizing a religious life-world are.

The research focuses on the main consequence of these types of high-schools and namely on the institutionalization of world-view and values of teenagers studying here. To what extent do teenagers that study here perpetuate a religious world-view and what is the difference between such teenagers and teenagers studying in secular high-schools? Is the de-secularization strategy successful and to what extent is it able to structure the lives of people studying here?[21]

I wanted to investigate this by surveying four different high schools from one of the largest multi-confessional cities of Romania, namely Cluj-Napoca: a Baptist-Pentecostal High School (PBHS), an Adventist High School (ADHS) and two regular lay High-Schools (L1-HS, L2-HS). I have used a 185 item questionnaire to measure different dimensions of religiosity and the relationship of religion with different aspects of life: we have managed to interview a total of 750 subjects with an age between 14 and 18 years.

Table 4. Religious membership among different Neo-Protestant religious movements. Source: Recens?mântul Popula?iei ?i Locuin?elor – 2002

	Baptists	Pentecostals	Adventists	Brethren Assemblies	Evangelicals
Romanian	20.80%	**53.54%**	15.14%	7.72%	2.77%
Hungarian	**42.11%**	18.51%	29.42%	5.88%	4.06%
Roma	10.22%	**74.16%**	9.95%	4.36%	1.29%

In what follows we will summarize our main findings. The presentation limits itself to the religious world-view of teenagers; future studies will explore the relationship of this religious values to different spheres of life.

Table 5. General Religious Beliefs among Teenagers

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
Belief in God	96.5	98.1	88.40	94.2
Belief in sin	96.6	94.3	84.4	94.2
Pray	98.9	100	89.1	91
Comfort and strength from religion	86.9	99	58.5	78.8

The teenagers studying in a regular High School are undergoing a soft but clear process of de-Christianization. This process can be traced back to the pluralization of life-worlds to which post-socialist teenagers are exposed. The diversity of social structures, which are competing for the definition of social reality lead to less firm plausibility structures and accordingly to the relativization of the objective and stable meanings of social reality. As we argued elsewhere[22] this is a result triggered by the pluralization of life-worlds that has been taking place in the post-communist period.

A specific effect of the de-objectivization of religion due to the pluralization of the structure of plausibility[23] is a more invisible religiosity that abandons the traditional embodiments of religion.[24] Religion becomes more diffuse and more individual allowing for a wider space for self-made religious views.

If we take a look at the next table we can clearly see that this process affects most of all teenagers that are studying in a lay high school. Although we can find among them high adhesion to general religious ideas such as belief in God, sin, and prayer; when it comes to specific Christian articles of faith we can identify a clear erosion of the Christian ecclesial worldview. The mean percentage of the belief in Hell, Heaven and Life after Death is situated somewhere around 62.3 %, a bit higher than the 18-24 age segment of the entire urban population, but significantly lower than the teenagers that study in a Neo-Protestant high school. The disparity between general religious beliefs and specific Christian ones almost completely disappears here.

Among the Neo-Protestant teenagers the religious beliefs appear in a traditional form and the specific Christian religious meanings are not at all eroded. They tend to articulate a distinct strong religious world-view that denies any kind of modern elements of faith.

Table 6. Specific Religious Beliefs among Teenagers

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS

Belief in life after death	95.1	83.8	69.9	81.7
Belief in hell	97.2	69.5	66.5	71.2
Belief in heaven	97.2	58.1	71.3	77.9

There is a clear distinction as well between the two teenager categories when it comes to the level of newly imported religious beliefs.[25] As we can see from the next table, there is a great segment of teenagers studying in regular high schools that manifest the belief in non-Christian ideas such as the belief in telepathy, reincarnation, Yoga, and astrology. In comparison with this mixture of oriental beliefs, teenagers studying in a Neo-Protestant high-school tend to perpetuate a Christian world-view and strongly reject all non-orthodox elements of faith.

Almost 21.80% (26% in the second lay high-school) of the lay teen-agers believe in reincarnation (a clear non-Christian belief) while only 3.5% (2.9% second confessional high school) of the Neo-Protestant teen-agers believe in this; 35.40% (65% second lay high-school) of the lay teen-agers believe in horoscopes in astrology while only 2.2% (3.8% second confessional high school) of the Neo-Protestant teen-agers do believe. The other elements of non-Christian religious beliefs used in our analysis show the same tendency.

Table 7. Non-Christian Religious Beliefs among Teenagers

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
Belief in Reincarnation	3.5	2.9	21.8	26
Belief in Horoscopes and Astrology	2.2	3.8	35.4	65.4
Belief in Yoga	3.2	4.8	44.7	50.5
Belief in Telepathy	18.9	10.5	45	54.8

We can observe the same pattern of religious de-objectivation when we look at how teenagers perceive their object of faith. Among the teenagers studying in regular high school the traditional view of God, as a Personal Being with whom you can have spiritual relationship is held only by 32.1 % (32.7% second lay high-school), the dominant view being that of a Spirit or Life Force which is held by 40.6 % (49% second lay high-school). Among the Neo-Protestant teenagers we see that the dominant perspective is a Personal Being, and the massive adherence to such a perspective shows that this traditional perspective is not at all eroded by the secularization forces.

The table shows how little the other teenagers are exposed to such a de-Christianization process. These religious ideas are main articles of faith, important and longstanding doctrines of all Christian confessions that inhabit the post-socialist religious space, and the lower levels of acceptance of these specific religious ideas contrasts with the widely held general religious beliefs and illustrates the de-Christianization process that is taking place among the lay-teenagers.

Table 8. Object of Religious Faith among Teenagers

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
Personal God	89.7	98.1	32.1	32.7
Spirit or Life Force	3.3	1.0	40.6	49

A new type of religiosity is emerging among the lay teen-agers: one that distances itself from the traditional Christian type of religiosity. This does not mean that this is a completely non-Christian religiosity but definite signs of erosion of the old Christian worldview can be observed in the life of teen-agers that were socialized in post-socialist Romania.

We can conclude from this that the Neo-Protestant confessional education system institutionalizes a strong religious counter-culture that opposes the moral relativization triggered by the new capitalist cosmologies. The intended social environment within the Neo-Protestant education system aims directly at maintaining a strong Christian identity among future generations and underlines the importance of a continuous religious socialization. Another structural effect of the above described process regards the de-institutionalization of religious experience. By this we understand a general dissolution of the institutionalized religion and the diminishing role played by the religious community in the life of the believer. The emergence of invisible religion can be measured by the degree of the existence of a churchless-religion or in Grace Davie's terms by the existence of those that "believe but do not belong"[26] (Davie, 2000)

Table 9. Church Attendance among Teenagers.

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
More than once a week	61.1	84.8	4.3	4.8
Once a week	31.9	14.3	16.0	15.4
Once a month	3.8		28.2	18.3

From the following table we can easily observe that in comparison with the teenagers from the Neo-Protestant high-school where regular church attendance reaches the incredible level of 90-95 % the other teenagers have an attendance rate of 20-22 % ; almost the same as the attendance rate of the young urban generation from the entire Romanian society.

We can easily observe that the church loses its privileged position and that the process of de-institutionalization of religious experience leads to structural changes of the place of the church within society.[27] This becomes evident when we analyze the legitimating of the different roles of the Church among the two teen-ager groups.

In previous researches[28] we were able to show that there is a clear generational shift among the young post-socialist generations in the way they relate to the institution of the church. The older generations from the Romanian society tend to regard the church as a total institution that should act as guardian of all spheres of life and should provide general guidelines for how a believer should conduct his life and social relationships. The Church as an institution should be not only the spiritual and moral regulator but one that influences the entire social and political system. The younger generations have a total opposite way of approaching the Church. For them the legitimation of this institution is strictly limited to spiritual issues, and there is a stronger tendency to decline the church's competence when it comes to the other important spheres of life: the familial, social and political.

Table 10. Church and Spheres of Life among Teenagers

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
Church and society	68.1	46.7	26.5	16.3

Church and family	79.7	73.3	35.6	45.2
Church and morality	84.8	77.1	62	64.4
Church and spirituality	97.3	96.2	90.3	95.2

In our sample we can clearly see that while the de-legitimation of the different roles of the Church strongly affects the teenagers studying in regular high schools, in the Neo-Protestant high school this process has a very marginal impact. The Church is seen here as a central institution that is able and has the legitimacy to supply meaningful insights and religious understanding of the moral, familial, social and political spheres of life.

An invisible religion, or the category of churchless religious is almost absent in these type of communities, and we can again see how important religious socialization is for Neo-Protestant teenagers. The center of the religious life is the local Church community that allows them to institutionalize their own culture and a sense of overarching community that integrates their life in a meaningful way.

We can conclude from this that the Neo-Protestant culture institutionalized in the confessional education system tries not only to set up a meaningful relationship between the Church and education but also to institutionalize religiosity through stimulating Church participation. Private religiosity makes no sense for this community. The Neo-Protestant education system tries to re-conquest the different roles that the institution of the Church is losing among lay teenagers by encouraging a Christian education system as well as a Christian political and social system in which the Church plays the integrating role.

These findings are consistent with a general trend that can be highlighted among the young generations from Romania. In a sociological research on life-styles among the college students from Cluj-Napoca[29] 72 % of the interviewed students have stated that they consider themselves religious persons, 18 % not religious, while 10 % did not know. The dilemma posed by the large percentage of people who consider themselves to be religious is that their religiosity does not have an institutional expression. We can find here the same type of cleavage between religious beliefs and their institutional expression that is recorded at the level of the entire population.

Table 11. Religious participation among college students

Every week	Once, twice a month	A few times a year	Never	DK	NR
11%	14 %	18 %	39 %	16 %	2 %

As we can see from the next table, religious attendance is very low among college students. 39 % do not go at all to church and if we add to this the 18 % that does this very seldom, we have almost 60 % that do not express their religiosity in institutional settings. Only 25 % of the college students do this.

The Romanian college students make a strong distinction between religious attendance and personal relationship with the perceived divinity, the last one being able to exist without the former.

Table 12. The degree of agreement with the statement: "It is not important if you go to Church or not; what is important is the relationship with God"

Total agree	Partial agree	Partial disagree	Disagree	NR

| 53% | 26% | 12% | 6% | 3% |

Almost 80 % of the interviewed college students think that the Church is less important than having a personal relationship with God. For a large segment religion is experienced within the private sphere of life and their religious quests are perceived as individual matters that do not require any institutional assistance.

The Church and Christian doctrines are losing more and more the status of meaningful locus of spiritual experience.[30] The college students do not anymore consider the local Church as the privileged space of religious communion with the Divine and reject as well the stereological representations that are specific to this type of traditional medium.

We can notice again how far the dichotomization goes between these two levels of religiosity by analyzing the next table. What is important for students is faith and not the concrete form which it takes within a religion or another. Both at inter-religious and inter-confessional level, the lines of demarcation are not perceived as strictly fixed and rigid. Beyond all socio-cultural and theological differences that divide religions and confessions, the surveyed subjects consider that what prevails is the subjective act of faith and spiritual life and not its doctrinal expression.

Table 13. The degree of agreement with the statement: "What truly counts is belief and not a particular religion"

Total agree	Partial agree	Partial disagree	Disagree	NR
54%	26%	9%	8%	3%

80.5% of respondents believe that this is true, while only 16.5% think that religion is more important than what the subject is experiencing. This situation is paradigmatic for modern religiosity.[31] The pluralization of worldviews makes the affirmation of a sole and exclusive religious social world increasingly difficult: in Geertz's terms we could say that world-view is increasingly uncoupled from the community ethos and this is so because societies structurally allow for multiple ways of social integration.

We can notice the very low values of religious fundamentalism among college students. There are just a few people that believe that only their religion expresses the true doctrine of faith (12%), while the vast majority believes that the other religions are viable ways of achieving salvation. It is important to emphasize that the pressure of social pluralism leads to a strong subjectivization of religion so that the doctrinal edifice of the belonged tradition is relativized; the hermeneutics of the personal religious tradition retains from this only the subjective faith and not so much the way the religious contents are articulated at the level of collective representations. Certainly the privatization process of religious experience is more intense among students due to field-specific social pressures to which they are exposed.[32]

The erosion of both Christian pastoral activity that was functioning as a meaningful and significant meta-narrative and its role of supplying the believer with a moral mapping of the social space in which he was enfolding his everyday life is visible when we highlight the specific role the Church is perceived to play when it comes to its public roles. The legitimization of the roles of the Church by a society is a real indicator of societal secularization. In other words, the greater the legitimation of the area of involvement of the Church becomes, the lesser the differentiation between the lay and religious sphere is. Accordingly; the lesser the societal secularization is within a society.

These findings are consistent with a general trend in post-communist Europe that reveals a decrease of religiosity among the young generations.[33] In spite of the increased presence of religion in the public sphere[34] and the religious rhetoric that political parties use during elections periods, the younger generations generally move away from a religious representation of every-day life. In comparison with the generations that were brought up during the communist period the post-communist generations are more secular and the empirical data suggest that atheism did not have the secularizing impact that the post-socialist modernization has[35]. Church membership and religious attendance are much lower among the young people that inhabit the post-communist social space[36], and overall those strata that are exposed to education and urbanization factors tend to develop patterns of secular worldviews. This shows that Eastern-European countries are generating the same secular path-dependency as Western European countries do.

Probably the most import effect of the secularization that the young post-socialist generation is experiencing is the process of de-moralization of the practical sphere of life. The ending of the communist ideology- prescribed social order was followed by new era of moral freedom. Both the State and the Church lost their power to regulate the practical sphere of life. Among the young generations religion is de-coupled from morality. The moral standards set by the Church are received to be obsolete and backward and religiosity while present among teenagers tends to lose any moral relevance.

The uncoupling of the religious meta-narrative from social system leads to an increasing difficulty of an efficient moral integration of individuals into communities. This is presented not only in to the de-institutionalization of religion (as we have shown above) but in a de-moralization process as well. By this we do not mean that the modern societies become immoral, but that morality is not anymore grounded in religion, it is not legitimized by a religious world-view.

The concept of de-moralization represents itself at the level of practical behavior -the correlative effect of the crises of modern societies- and in its inability to generate norms that can be legitimately shared by the majority of people as well as in its incapability to elaborate socializing structures that are able to meaningfully integrate the life of individuals.

This is most evident when we look at how teenagers represent their every-day life in terms of the moral guidelines that they find pre-interpreted within their life-world. While the overwhelming Neo-Protestant teen-agers think that there are clear guide-lines between good and bad (77.8% and 82.9%), the lay teenagers see their every-day life in completely opposite ways. This lack of moral cartography of the social world is evident as well when we analyze the different moral values that exist in their life.

Table 14. Clear guidelines between good and bad.

	PB HS	AD HS	OR HS	L1-HS
Clear guidelines between good bad	77.8	82.9	18.8	18.3
No clear guidelines between good bad	18.4	14.3	77.6	79.8

In our analysis we were able to observe that those specific values that are backed-up by the church are strongly contested among the lay teen-agers. In the life of lay teen-agers religion becomes simply spirituality that has no relevance for the practical sphere of life. Religion is still an important dimension of their life, but this is rather a spiritual quest and not a moral guideline.

Homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and extramarital sex are just a few of the values that teenagers studying in regular schools tend to accept. In contrast to this, within the Neo-Protestant High School there is a strong tendency of fighting moral liberalism by encouraging teenagers that study here to follow the religious prescriptions regarding their conduct.

We are again able to see that in the life of Neo-Protestant teen-agers the de-moralization process is practically non-existent and that their religiosity tends to perpetuate not only an institutionalized form of religion, but also one that is still coupled to the moral, practical sphere of life.

Table 15. Social Values among Teenagers. The mean scores range from 0 (lowest – rejection) to 10 (highest, acceptance)

	PB HS	AD HS	L1-HS	L2-HS
Homosexuality	1.23		3.99	
Euthanasia	2.58	2.39	6.01	4.91
Abortion	1.58		3.85	
Divorce	2.03	2.26	5.87	5.61
Lying when you have the interest to	2.18	1.86	4.41	3.87
Casual Sex	1.69		4.1	
Drugs	1.43	1.10	1.81	1.47

We can conclude from this that the Neo-Protestant culture institutionalized in the confessional education system aims exactly at avoiding the de-moralization of the practical sphere of life of the teenagers. It tries to set up a safe moral environment where children can study without getting "contaminated" by the libertinism that characterizes the "non-conformist" teenagers of today. Parents see in such an environment a safe alternative to secular high schools that enables them to morally protect their children.

In this paper I have tried to analyze the issue of religious education and the effect the policies implemented by the state have on religious socialization. To what extend are these policies effective in generating specific beliefs (atheistic or religious) among teenagers? Are the state structures capable of implanting a specific word-view in the lives of students and generate specific religious / secular outcomes? Our analysis suggests that this has only a limited impact and that ultimate values cannot be regulated by the educational system.

During the communist period the communist ideologists had to find different ways to modernize the rural religious mentalities. Because their efforts were not very successful and families were still religiously socializing their children, the Communist Party set up an elaborate plan to govermentalize the time resources of children and discipline them into adopting a dialectical materialist world-view.

The idea of the communist authorities was that within the educational establishment children and teenagers would get in touch with the enlightening power of science that would drive away the obscure mystical forces of religion. Teachers were instructed to teach their students the value of scientific explanation and of the atheistic worldview. Their psychological and social sanity was dependent on replacing their magical religious attitude with a scientifically-atheist one that could ensure the construction of the humanist Communist society. As a result of this all educational

institutions were transformed into controlled environments where a nude form of political secularism was exercised in order to construct the New Human Being. This New Human Being was supposed to be able to realize its essence through labor and would be committed to a materialist philosophy. In this perspective religion was considered a reified bourgeoisie ideology that was holding the Proletarian forces back.

But these secular polices had a very limited effect on the religious representations of students and the Romanian society continued to perpetuate a religious world-view. The religious socialization of children within the families was much more important than the secular policies implemented by the state, therefore the atheization process was a practical failure.

I am trying to argue that during the post-socialist period the implementation of religious education within lay schools that indented the opposite effect had a limited result as well. The emergence of pluralist culture led to a general trend of secularization that affects mostly the teenagers socialized in this new post-socialist world. The secularization process takes the shape of three distinct sub-processes (de-Christianization of religious beliefs, de-institutionalization of religious experience, and de-moralization of the practical sphere of life) that builds up to a general trend of domination of the secular culture.

The religious classes that were introduced in the lay schools during the post-socialist period are not able to counteract this general trend. The secularization process is much stronger among teenagers than the rest of the population because they are much more connected to the various media that exposes them to a new secular and pluralist culture. The religious classes are not able to generate the envisioned religiosity and constitute limited resources in halting the spread of the secular culture among students.

Within the Neo-Protestant educational system the story is different only because here the religious counter-culture is not limited to religious classes but to an entire educational environment. The institution of the Church, the families and the educational environment build up to an extensive project of creating religious subjects.

I have tried to outline only a few of the strategies which the Neo-Protestant educational system tries to articulate in order to establish a religious counter-culture to the national educational system. Our findings showed that within the Neo-Protestant high-schools the restructuring of the world-view goes as far as stimulating a specific perspective on marriage, work or politics. It encourages the establishment of a specific social network outside the church and to the formation of young teenager communities along religious lines.

In this sense the education system represent a systematic strategy to counter the process of secularization. By institutionalizing a specific confessional system they try to articulate the cultural means through which a process of de-secularization can be set in motion. But this has rather a local effect; the massiveness of secularization that is affecting mostly the teenagers socialized in post-socialist Romania is rather the general, global trend.

The Neo-Protestant project of an alternative religious education system points out to the general tendency of secularization that is going on among the other teen-agers. The reason why parents and pastors made great efforts to establish these high-schools is precisely because they were afraid that their children were too much exposed to emerging post-socialist secular culture. The reason why such religious establishment exists is because there is an increasing awareness of the expansion of secular culture and secular life-styles among teenagers and religious tutors would like to create protective environments where their children will not get "contaminated" by this.

On a general level we can conclude that confessional education mirrors in fact the vast secularization process that is going on in every-day life of the students and the secular culture that has become an important part of the lay schools.

Notes:

1. This is an updated and revised article of a previous published paper called "The institutionalization of confessional education: religious values in the neo-protestant high-schools" in *Studia Sociologia*, Issue 2, 2007, pp 77-89. This version expands the sample of teenagers studying in high schools and contextualizes the findings in relationship to issues of counter-secularization strategies through religious education.

2. Sorin Gog, "The construction of the religious space in post-socialist Romania" *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*(15), 2006, pp. 37-53.

3. Peter Berger, *The sacred canopy: elements of a sociological theory of religion*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

4. Gabriel Motzkin, "Science, Secularization, and Desecularization at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Science in Context* 15(01), 2002, 165-175, pp.172- 175 and Max Weber, *Etica protestanta si spiritul capitalismului,* (Bucuresti: Editura Humanitas,2003).

5. Bojan Aleksov, "Religious education in Serbia," *Religion, State and Society*32(4), 2004, 341 – 363, pp. 358- 360.

6. Smaranda Enache, Educa?ia religioas? în ?colile publice: promovarea interesului superior al copilului în educa?ia religioas?: monitorizarea educa?iei religioase în ?colile publice din România. Targu Mures, Editura Pro Europa, 2007. http://www.proeuropa.ro/educatie.html

7. Glanzer, P. L, "Religion, Education and the State in Post-Communist Europe: Making Sense of the Diversity of New Church-State Practices." Comparative Education Review**53**(1) 2008, 89-111; pp. 99- 103.

8. Renata Uitz, *Freedom of religion in European constitutional and international case law* , (Brussels: Council of Europe Publishing, 2007), p.117.

9. Ibid., p.116.

10. Elis Neagoe-Ple?a and Liviu Ple?a, "Cultele neoprotestante din România în perioada 1975-1989", in Adrian Nicolae Petcu (ed.), *Partidul, Securitatea ?i Cultele, 1945-1989*, (Bucure?ti, Editura Nemira, 2005,) pp. 350- 394.

11. Ibid., pp. 354- 359.

12. Ibid., p.351.

13. Ibid., p.364.

14. Ibid., p.364.

15. Ibid., p.368.

16. Michale Martin (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to atheism* , (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

17. Roland Robertson, *The sociological interpretation of religion.* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970). Pp.212- 218.

18. Alan Aldridge, *Religion in the contemporary world : a sociological introduction* , (Cambridge, UK- Malden, Ma.: Polity Press ; Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 46- 49.

19. Simon Coleman, *The globalisation of charismatic Christianity : Spreading the gospel of prosperity*, (Cambridge, U.K..: New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

20. N.J. Demerath, et.al.(eds.), *Sacred companies : organizational aspects of religion and religious aspects of organizations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

21. We do not want to imply that the origin of the religious values articulated by the teenagers studying here lie in the educational institution itself. Religious socialization within the family and in the church plays by far the most important role in this. We just want to point out how the religious educational establishment helps in "keeping children safe" from the "decayed and depraved world".

22. Gog, op.cit.

23. Berger, op.cit.

24. Loek Halman and Ole Riis (eds.), *Religion in secularizing society : the Europeans' religion at the end of the 20th century* ,(Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).

25. Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (eds.), *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London and New York:, Routledge, 2005), pp. 54- 86.

26. Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe. A memory mutates* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

27. Olaf Müller, "Religion in Central and Eastern Europe: Was There a Re-Awakening after the Breakdown of Communism?" in Detlef Pollack and Daniel V.A. Olson, *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies- Routledge Advances in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 63- 81, especially see pp. 72- 80.

28. Sorin Gog, "Individualizarea experien?ei religioase ?i erodarea func?iilor eclesiale în România postsocialist?." *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* Vol.VII No.3, 2007. pp. 791 -801.

29. Ancheta "Stiluri de via?? studen?e?ti"realizat? pe un e?antion reprezentativ în anul 2000 de c? tre C.C.R.I.T.

30. Halman, op.cit. pp. 53- 56.

31. See Jon P. Bloch, *New spirituality, self, and belonging : how New Agers and Neo-Pagans talk about themselves*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), pp. 7- 28 and Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after modernity*. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp.12- 45.

32. Loek Halman, and Veerle Drauans , "How secular is Europe?" *The British Journal of Sociology* 57(2), : 263-288 , pp. 280- 283.

33. Ariana Need and Geofrey Evans (2001). "Analysing Patterns of Religious Participation in Post-communist Eastern Europe," *British Journal of Sociology*, 52:2, 2001. pp. 228-248.

34. Ibid., p.229.

35. Ibid., p.232.

36. Ibid., p.237.

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