

natural world. And all of these have been central elements of that sort of classical, high cultural religion, but today those key contemporary political and ethical issues are generally not seen as a visible part of what the media and modern ideologies normally identify as “religion”.

So when we look at what happens to our religious studies students, they tend to go almost entirely into three areas. One is service professions, so they become doctors and psychologists and therapists. Or often it’s political and NGO activism, whether locally or internationally. And the third one is creative arts, an application of the arts to spiritual life. All of these again have their pre-modern equivalents. But basically, it’s rare in my experience that they do any of these three things in what people identify today as an explicitly “religious” framework. But in fact they’re forging the new religious forms of the centuries to come.

And also, this all depends on the local politics surrounding religious issues. You were just mentioning the [Fethullah] Gülen movement there, so certainly there are interesting parallels to be teaching in a Catholic university, a self-consciously Catholic university, that are very similar to the dilemmas that most Muslims face in the contemporary world. They grow up in nation states, ostensibly in secular education systems, but want those systems to pay lip service to Islam. So the particular form of the dilemma that Muslims face in those nation state environments mirrors a great deal what people are wrestling with who are Catholic in Catholic educational contexts.

: I want to come back to the Catholic question in just a minute and your argument about the liberal arts tradition and religious studies, a place of religious studies and spirituality there.



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