1. Introduction: a framework of analysis of the relationship between religion and public administration

1.1 RATIONALE: WHY A BOOK ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This is a book about the manifold relationships between religion and public administration. The relationship of the religious to the political has been given wide attention in the social sciences literature – however, there seems to be a gap regarding specifically the relationship of religion in its social and public dimension to public administration as a field of social scientific inquiry and an area of professional activity. The ample literature review we have carried out in preparing this manuscript supports the claim there is a gap to be filled here. Indeed, to our knowledge there is no book-length systematic analysis in the contemporary social science literature that focuses specifically on the relationship of religion to public administration.¹

This is a book about public administration, public governance, public management, and the relationship of administration and public policy (to which we hereafter refer in short as: PA) which explores how the religious dimension may be brought to bear for enhancing our understanding of PA. This book proceeds from the widely held assumption that context does matter for public administration and public management (Pollitt, 2013; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017), and we argue that religion is part (and parcel) of the societal, cultural, political and administrative context which shapes PA, its functioning and its reform, in a given polity (Houston et al., 2008; Spoelstra et al., 2021). Religion has been overlooked as a key explanatory factor and yet it is one, if not the, ‘elephant in the room’ in PA studies (see also van Putten et al., 2019).

¹ There are journal articles and some book chapters, which we systematically review and to which, we think, this book may represent a powerful addition, in order to frame the existing scattered knowledge and inform both the social-scientific and the public debate on the topic.
There are many possible reasons why PA scholars have been reluctant to investigate the role of religion in PA. These range from ‘Western’ interpretations of the relationship of the religious to the political, notably through the lens of certain interpretations of ‘secularisation’ of society and of politics as part of it, interpretations which have become dominant in international literature, at least in English-language literature, to considerations about the fact that the religious dimension may fit problematically into certain epistemological approaches, like certain forms of neo-positivism, which have been in the ascendancy over the past decades. However, it is the core argument of this book that overlooking religion in PA studies has contributed to a major gap in the understanding of PA, and therefore bringing religion in its social and public dimension into PA can help widen our understanding of it.

In this book we adopt a broad definition of religion as ‘the relationship of the human to the divine’ and we focus our attention on institutionalised and traditional, organised religions and faiths. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the definition of religion as ‘the belief in or acknowledgement of some superhuman power or powers (esp. a god or gods) which is typically manifested in obedience, reverence, and worship; such a belief as part of a system defining a code of living, esp. as a means of achieving spiritual or material improvement.’ (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). In the social scientific literature, religion has been defined as:

a set of coherent answers to the core existential questions that confront every human group, the codification of these answers into a creedal form that has significance for its adherents, the celebration of rites which provide an emotional bond to bring into congregation those who share the creed and celebration, and provide for the continuity of these rites from generation to generation. (Bell, 1980, pp. 333–4)

This definition seems to us an adequate one for this study, since it combines a Durkheimian perspective on religion which ‘recognizes the centrality of religious practice to belief’ (Turner, 1991, p. 243) with ‘a Weberian concern for the question of meaningfulness’ (p. 244) – these sociologies being important underpinnings for the present study: in fact, this definition of religion stems from the field of sociology, and the object of investigation in this study, namely public administration, is part and parcel of society, and administrative studies rely on the social sciences at large and sociology as a core discipline in this set. And our choice is corroborated by the judgement of authoritative sociologists of religions like Turner (1991), who considers this definition ‘comprehensive, influential and in many respects persuasive’ (p. 243).

As to the closely related notion of faith, we employ the one proposed by the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which defines faith as an ‘inner attitude, conviction, or trust relating human beings to a supreme God or ultimate salvation’
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(Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). This definition reflects one of the main characteristics of faith, which is being ‘relational’ and ‘implying the trust of one upon another’ (Newman, 2004, p. 104). Both religion and faith are intended in their institutionalised, organised, and traditional manifestations.

These two definitions differ from the semantics of the word ‘spirituality’, which can be defined as:

the quality or state of being spiritual or of being attached to or concerned with religious questions and values broadly conceived. The term is also frequently used in a non- (or even anti-) religious sense to designate a preoccupation with or capacity for understanding fundamental moral, existential, or metaphysical questions, especially regarding the nature of the self (or soul, or person), the meaning of life, the nature of mind or consciousness, and the possibility of immortality. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

In a rather similar vein, ‘spirituality’ is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the ‘attachment to or concern for spiritual (as opposed to worldly or material) matters or pursuits’ and the related word of ‘spiritual’ is a notion which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as being ‘characterized by sensitivity to or appreciation of emotional, philosophical, or mystical matters and lack of concern for material values or pursuits.’ (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Therefore, spirituality is intended in a broad and loose sense comprising all those mystical manifestations that are neither institutionalised nor organised. There has recently been an interest in organisation and management studies on spirituality, often under labels like ‘workplace spirituality’, a catchy expression, yet potentially misleading (Bell and Taylor, 2015). These topics are important, but investigating these too, in what is an immensely vast potential field of inquiry, would lead us astray from the core focus of this book, which is centred on the influence on public administration by organised and institutionalised, traditional religions and faiths in their social and public dimension, rather than on spirituality loosely intended. The core focus is on religion and PA, as also the title of this volume clearly suggests.

1.2 OUR PERSPECTIVE: GLOBAL – NOT GLOBALIST

In this work we take a global perspective, meaning that we aim to conceptualise and theorise the influence of religion (notably organised, institutionalised religions) on the functioning of public administrative systems in all the regions of the world.

However, the perspective of this book is not a globalist one: we do not think there is one global ideological-theoretical perspective that may explain the relationship of religion to PA. This occurs for two main reasons. First,
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because religions (in the plural) are diverse, and thence their influence on public governance differs. Second and equally crucial, because there is not one viewpoint, one ideological-theoretical lens through which to look at the relationship of religions to society: across the globe, certain societies are secularised, others are not; and certain societies have become secularised over time (notably in the Western part of the world over the past five centuries) but they were not in earlier times; and taking the long-term perspective, both retrospectively looking at the past and prospectively looking at the future, processes of secularisation may flow and ebb, at different periods in different areas of the world. And, third, administrative systems across the world are themselves highly varied and different, hence their interplay with religion will also differ. Therefore, what we aim to study is how different institutionalised religions in different areas of the world characterised by diverse religious regimes and by the flowing and ebbing over time of secularisation processes affect in a differential way the functioning of public administrative systems: the influence of institutionalised religions on PA under a varied set of conditions and circumstances, in secularised and in non-secularised societies, as well as across the variety of administrative systems that have developed across the world and over time. In short, our aim is to provide an encompassing introduction to the topic of the relationship between religion and public administration, an introductory essay that may hopefully be of use for all those interested in this topic over time and across regions and jurisdictions.

1.3 RELIGION, MODERNITY, AND SECULARITY IN THE WEST – CHARLES TAYLOR

Philosophical reflection in the West has highlighted a major shift in the conception of the relationship of the human self to the world and God/the divine, a shift which started around the sixteenth/seventeenth century CE in Europe and, by reflection of the European colonisation occurring about that time, in the Americas, marked by events like the Reformation and the scientific revolution. This major change in thinking has led to what has been described as ‘modernity’, and modernity plays a key mediating role in the relationship of the human to the divine (and before delving into this topic, we should immediately note here that the term may be misleading, as ‘modernity’ seems to entail something inherently ‘superior’ to what came before: instead, it makes sense to refer to and use the notion in a very descriptive and neutral way, to denote something that is temporally located in more recent times of the history of humanity, and that therefore is ‘modern’, but it is not necessarily better, nor necessarily worse, than what came before, and that of course may be transcended in the future by what will come to be).
What is this conception of the modern self? The philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) provides a powerful account of how several intellectual-philosophical strands have gone into making the identity of the modern human subject as a self who: values freedom, possesses inner depths that are deemed to be worth exploring, sees nature as a source of goodness and contact with it as renewing, prizes authenticity and individuality, affirms ordinary life, feels the pull of benevolence – all of these being traits of the identity of the ‘modern’ self, at times co-existing and at times in tension between them (see also Encyclopaedia Britannica).

This modern selfhood, in defining him/herself, has also redefined its relationship with the divine and God: this has occurred through the process of ‘secularisation’ of society, a topic to which Taylor has devoted a major work: *A Secular Age* (2007), on which we rely to introduce this crucial theme.

With a specific focus on those who live in the West or, as the author puts it ‘the North Atlantic world’ (p. 1), in his 2007 work Charles Taylor questions what it means to live in a secular age. The author poses the following question: ‘why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 [CE] in our Western society, while in 2000 [CE] many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?’ (p. 25). Taylor examines this question as a philosopher, a social scientist – sociologist and historian – and as a believer. The starting point of Taylor’s argument is a critic of the classic secularisation theory, which he finds ‘very unconvincing’ (p. 21). In doing so, Taylor distinguishes three types of secularities.

The first one is ‘the retreat of religion in public life’ (p. 423) and public spaces. In all aspects of public life and state activity, from economic to political, from cultural to professional and recreational, Taylor, as Weber prior to him, suggests that rationality has substituted God or any other religious belief as the ultimate source of norms and principles for deliberation. However, emptying God from the public sphere is still compatible with people believing in God in their private life. In the West, churches and states are now separated – although there are a few exceptions, notably England and some Scandinavian countries such as Norway, characterised by state churches in a context of liberty of profession of religious creed. The second understanding of secularity is ‘the decline in belief and practices’ (p. 423). In this sense secularity consists ‘in people turning away from God’ (p. 3) and no longer attending places of worship. These first two definitions of secularity are in line with the prescriptions of classic secularisation theory.

The third type of secularity is the one Taylor (2007) is particularly interested in. Secularity in this third sense entails ‘a move from society where belief in God is unchallenged and, indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among the others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace’ (p. 3). According to Taylor, in this third sense of secularity, men’s
and women’s sense of fulness may still derive from God or some other sort of external force such as the ‘voice of nature’ or the ‘force which flows through everything’ (p. 6) if they are believers or, if modern unbelievers, from the power of rationality which allows human beings to make their own laws by which they live, thus, not from an eternal force but from a force within each human being. A true humanism in Taylor’s words. With this interpretation of secularity, Taylor disregards the notion pushed by secularisation theory scholars that ‘God is dead’: for Taylor, in the secularised West there is still space for God and religious belief, and there is also space for other forms of spirituality different from traditional organised religions – while at the same time Taylor’s line of argumentation is compatible with the possibility of thinking of a world without God.

At its core, secularisation theory claims that ‘in the face of scientific rationality [and modernity], religion’s influence on all aspects of life – from personal habits to social institutions – is in dramatic decline’ (Swatos and Christiano, 1999, p. 214). Taylor, as other scholars before and after him, criticises classic secularisation theory on two grounds. First, secularisation and the decline of religious belief is not linear, as supporters of secularisation claim. Second, factors – ‘secularising agents’ – like modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, and so on did not per se turn men and women away from God, but they allowed for that plurality of options that Taylor describes with his third understanding of secularity.

Taylor’s view of secularity and secularisation, interestingly, is in line also with the one proposed by Swatos and Christiano (1999). For them, secularisation is a by-product of a change in the epistemological ‘global explanatory structures of bases upon which we attribute credibility or truth’ (p. 221), thus leading to the same plurality of options discussed by Taylor. In this regard, Peter Berger (2001), who studied modernity and secularisation, declares that ‘[m]odernity pluralizes the lifeworlds of individuals and consequently undermines all taken-for-granted certainties.’ (p. 449) and, in line with Taylor’s third understanding of secularity, ‘[t]his pluralization may or may not be secularizing, depending on other factors in a given situation’ (p. 449). This is a line of thought recently developed by Habermas (2006), also in a dialogue with Ratzinger (Habermas and Ratzinger, 2006) centred on the relationship of faith and reason. What all these authors suggest is that today, more predominantly in the West, ‘far more religious world views are in immediate competition with each other than has ever been the case in the past’ (Swatos and Christiano, 1999, p. 221).

We believe that Taylor’s third understanding of secularity is pertinent to the global – not globalist – perspective of our book as well as the sociological and historical approaches that derive from the scope of our book, for the following reasons. First, Taylor’s approach is capable of better explaining
religious behaviour in countries and societies where classic secularisation theory fails to do so. The United States of America is one such case: one of the earliest societies to complete the separation between church and state, it is also one of the Western countries with the highest rates of both religious belief and practice. Second, Taylor’s secularisation approach is not contingent on a specific geographical area or a specific culture. The ‘options’ he talks about are applicable both to more secularised countries and to those countries where the secularisation process has just commenced or has yet to start – if it will ever start at all in these other countries, which may well be on a different path than Western countries (see Chapter 2 for a mapping of religions and religious regimes across the world). Finally, given the long-term perspective of our book – both retrospective and prospective – Taylor’s approach may best be suitable to explain the processes of secularisation flowing and ebbing that may happen in different eras. Consider as examples Western European countries before and after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (secularisation has mostly flowed since the sixteenth century, albeit with a far from linear trajectory), or Russia before and after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), where the role of religion in the public sphere has been growing after the collapse of the communist regime and a distinctive path of ‘symphony’, rather than separation as in the West, between state and church (notably the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate) has re-taken its course, in many regards in continuity with the ‘pre-modern’ arrangements concerning the role of religion in the public sphere that characterised tsarist Russia (Kahla, 2017a; so, secularisation has flowed and ebbed – perhaps mostly ebbed in more recent times – here too following a far from linear trajectory).

1.4 RELIGIOSITY ACROSS THE WORLD AND HISTORY: SETTING ‘WESTERN MODERNITY’ AND SECULARISATION PROCESSES IN PERSPECTIVE

Secularisation is a process which occurred at its utmost intensity in the West, albeit with variations also within it (most notably, the stance of the US political-societal system, which stands out in the level to which religiosity permeates the public sphere). Because of the influence the West has had on most of the world since the sixteenth century and notably during the nineteenth and twentieth century (colonisation and globalisation), processes of secularisation have occurred, in a differential way, across most of the world; however, the extent to which societies across the world are secularised varies widely. This is reflected in our book, which analyses the influence of religion on PA both in cultural-political-societal contexts that are heavily secularised and in those that
are not, and the many instances that can be placed in intermediate positions along the two poles from fully secularised to not at all secularised societies.

To this regard we should note that our study is mostly contemporary in that we chiefly study and investigate the influence of religion on contemporary public administrative systems, and consequently our extant empirical cases and references are mostly contemporary. However, this is due exclusively to the limits of what we are able to cover in this book, and – at least theoretically – we aim to adopt a long-term historical perspective in this book. Therefore, we would argue that the study of the influence of religion on administrative systems also of the past, through historiographical methods, represents an additional source of knowledge for furthering our understanding of the relationship of religion and PA: in this book, wherever we were also able to encompass into our study elements of knowledge about past cases of influence of religion on administrative systems, we did include these. Ultimately, our framing of the relationship of religion to PA is driven by a theoretical preoccupation rooted in the recognition that the question of the relationship of religion to PA is perennial: it exists since humans, as beings capable of religious belief, formed complex politico-administrative systems, and any understanding of PA cannot be achieved without encompassing religion and the religious regime of the administrative system under investigation. When seen from the long-term perspective of the entire history of humankind (nothing less than that!), secularisation occupies only a segment of it (roughly the latest five centuries): it is therefore a core preoccupation of this book to set secularisation in perspective and consider the influence of religion on PA both in the presence and in the absence of it, without making any assumption or prediction (which would require the crystal ball which we surely do not have) on whether in the future it will expand across the globe, or it will contract and perhaps wane, or just continue to be a cultural-ideological influence which will be more influential in certain regions of the world and less so in others.

Before we continue in our discussion on the significance of secularisation for understanding its mediating role on the influence of religion on PA, some terminological notes: we refer to ‘secularity’ as the notion (in the plural – secularities – following Taylor’s three notions) and to ‘secularisation’ to denote the process whereby one or more of the three processes described by Taylor occur, while ‘secularised’ is used to denote the effect, or outcome, of the process; finally, ‘secularism’ evokes the ideological position of attributing a ‘positive value’ to secularisation and secularity, that is, it refers to normatively charging these notions (in our book we will not deal with secularism and its supporters or its detractors, rather we will simply use the notions of secularity, secularisation and secularised as descriptive concepts for the purposes stated of analysing the influence of religion on PA).
1.5 THE RELIGIOUS AND THE POLITICAL: MAX WEBER AND BRYAN TURNER

In *The Religious and the Political*, Bryan Turner (2013) states that ‘[r]eligion and politics are two fundamental dimensions of human society, and yet are often at loggerheads’ (p. 1). The reason why these two dimensions clash is because, according to Turner (2013), they ‘appear’ to belong to different realms. Yet, throughout his contribution, the author provides evidence to support the claim that de facto ‘religion and politics are almost inevitably entwined’ (p. 1).

Prior to Turner, the German sociologist (and lawyer, and economist, and philosopher) Max Weber amply researched these two dimensions of human society in his quest to connect them to the idea of rationality arisen with the modern age. In so doing, in the first volume of his collected essays on the sociology of religion (1963), Weber, adopting an historical perspective, states that social life can be analysed and understood using six ‘value spheres’: religion, economy, politics, aesthetic, the erotic, and intellectualism. According to him, since each of these spheres has its own internal way of functioning, tensions arise between the religious sphere and all the other spheres as these spheres are governed by different types of rationalities. While religion is grounded in value rationality, politics is grounded in instrumental rationality.

Much of Weber’s writings are focused on the process of rationalisation that took place in the Western world with the modern age, and the autonomisation of social life that derived from it (a key feature of which is the elimination of the magical from the world – entzauberung – which can roughly be translated as ‘disenchantment of the world’). Traditional and charismatic sources of authority are viewed by Weber as non-rational, and religion is the base for the traditional form of authority. In contrast, rationality consists of a set of social actions governed by reason or reasoning, calculation, plus the rational pursuit of one’s interests. Rationality forms a large part of rational-legal authority which is at the base of Weber’s theory of bureaucracy, a theory which has so significantly shaped the study of public administration. Although, as Weber describes it, this process of rationalisation and modernisation has lain at the heart of the secularisation of the Western world, much of his work focuses on the ‘analysis of the social effects of religion on economic and political development’ (Turner, 1991, p. 16) as a way to understand ‘the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move’ (Weber, 1949a, p. 72).

There is one especially significant case which provides a sort of bridge for Weber’s two areas of inquiry which are pertinent for our book: bureaucracy (Confucian PA) and religion (Confucianism). Confucian PA is deeply rooted in neo-Confucianism (c. 800–1905 CE), which is considered ‘largely a concrete
state doctrine’ (Drechsler, 2020a, p. 29) and at the core of Confucian PA was the Imperial civil service, which prescribed that having virtuous civil servants/bureaucrats was more important than having virtuous laws (Drechsler, 2020a). In Weber’s words, as reported by Drechsler (2020a, p. 31), “Confucianism [is] the ethics of a powerful civil service” (2001: 270), and, naming the protagonists of world religions [ideological carriers], “then for Confucianism, this is the world-ordering bureaucrat” (2001: 282–83; see 166) (see also Turner, 1991, p. 208, for additional discussion on ‘ideological carriers’ of world religions). Although differences between Confucian PA and Weberian PA exist – for example the lack of rational professionalism (Drechsler, 2020a) – for Weber, Confucian PA was the most similar model to the Weberian model of PA (Drechsler, 2020b), given the role assigned to the bureaucracy and the similarities in both values and institutions.

Weber’s approach to the sociology of religion has been criticised from different angles (see for example, Turner, 1991). The first and main critique to Weber’s sociology of religion is that he never provided a definition of religion. In addition to that, ‘Weber’s sociology is flawed by its failure to pay sufficient attention to the “original meaning” of religion’ (Turner, 1991, p. 16). Turner (2016), and before him Leo Strauss, also points out that Weber’s writings were filled with value judgements ‘that went well beyond “purely historical study”’ (p. 143). One example of these value judgements is Weber’s judgements about the character of Islam (see for a thorough discussion Salvatore, 2016). A further critique moved against Weber is about the sources used in his writings, which ‘were insufficient by the standard of his time’ (Drechsler, 2020b, p. 28) and by today’s standards – even though, Drechsler (2020b) notes, those who moved this critique against Weber never suggested additional sources he could have cited but failed to do. Finally, as pointed out also by Drechsler (2020b), his work may be considered ‘orientalist’ in today’s perspective, and it may very well be the beginning of ‘sociological orientalism’ (Lin and Palmer, 2016, p. 5; see also Horii, 2019).

Although we are aware of these critiques to Weber’s sociology of religion, Weber’s work remains, we deem, a central term of reference in the sociology of religion, and one which can be fruitfully applied to the purposes of our book, namely, advancing knowledge about how the social and political dimension of religion affects public administration. Our approach for the development of our analysis is in the footsteps of Weber: our interest is in enhancing the understanding of the way human collective action – notably administrative action – unfolds, by finding (also) in religion a key set of its determinants. We are interested in – and this book is about – explaining the effects of organised religions on the field of public administration at the micro-, meso- and macro-level (that is, the level of individuals/people, organisations, and administrative systems respectively).
To further delineate the scope of our work, this book is not about other key questions, such as explaining why people believe or not in God. This is a crucial question, but one which is simply outside the, immensely more limited and humble, remit of our book. The theme of why people believe or not in God has occupied the minds of philosophers over the millennia, and in more recent times it has also seen specialised disciplines to engage with this question, like psychological theories of religion (within this discipline, at one extreme we can find Sigmund Freud, who reduced religion to a mental process – the unconscious need of the mind for fulfilment of wishes – and considered religion as ultimately a ‘symptom’ or manifestation of the mind, following in this the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach; and on the other hand we find Alfred Adler, for whom striving towards God is a defining and constitutive feature for the human being): also, at another level, neurological theories of religion have engaged with this question and focused on the physical substrate that makes belief possible if not necessary for human beings (see for example Torrey, 2018): according to these theories, there are areas of the brain that are designed for religious functioning. Yet other theories query why religions arose, as intellectualist theories of religion do (scholars such as Tylor, Frazer and Malinowski represent this branch of anthropology); yet other perspectives propose interpretive approaches of religion (as those adopted by authors like Douglas and Geertz). These are important contributions that help deepen the understanding of the nature of religion, from different angles, but they are outside the remit of this book, which is focused on the influence of religion on social action, notably as this contributes to explaining collective action in public administrative systems.

From another standpoint, we also refute a religionist approach to religion that considers any ‘attempt to “sociologize” religion inherently futile, for the origin and function of religion can only be religious. Otherwise, religion ceases to be religion and becomes society’ (Segal, 2009, p. 54). We do agree with Segal (2009) that ‘[s]ocial scientific theories do not miss the religious nature of religion. On the contrary, it is what they mean by religion. […] [t]he religious nature of religion may be the starting point of theorizing, but it is not the end point. […] No social scientist fails to recognize religion as religion’ (p. 49).

In other and simpler words, if religion did not have any social dimension, our attempt to explain the effects of organised religions on the field of public administration at the micro-, meso- and macro-level would be futile, as public administration is embedded in society and it ultimately is a ‘social phenomenon’; therefore, while we fully recognise the ‘religious nature of religion’, we also consider that religion does have a social dimension. Summing up, the starting point of our theorising lies in the religious nature of religion, in the roots of sociological theories of religion, and in Weber’s approach to the sociology of religion.
Max Weber as well as Emile Durkheim (whose sociological theory of religion is also a reference, albeit less of direct applicability to the analysis presented in this book) represent ‘the classics’ (Goldstein, 2012, p. 347) of the field of sociology of religion. Sociologists active from the 1950s through to the 1980s such as Talcott Parsons, Robert Bellah, Niklas Luhmann, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Bryan Wilson, David Martin and Richard Fenn represent ‘the Old Paradigm’ (p. 349) of the sociology of religion, while R. Stephen Warner and his American school (among others: Theodore Caplow, Roger Finke, Andrew Greeley, Nathan Hatch, Laurence Iannaconne, Mary Jo Neitz, Rodney Stark, Nancy Ammerman and Darren Sherkat) represent ‘the New Paradigm’ (p. 350). What differentiates the Old Paradigm from the New Paradigm is the understanding of secularisation. For the former, secularisation is a linear process, the latter instead ‘sees religion as going through a process of revival and routinization’ (p. 350) – in short, for the latter the important consideration is that there is no inevitability in secularisation, and this consideration has to be taken into account for an understanding of the influence of the religious on the administrative (and the political more broadly). Our work can be placed in the stream of the New Paradigm of the sociology of religion, in the sense that we consider there not to be any inevitability in secularisation, which can rather ebb and flow over time and place. Weber’s sociological theory of religion and the others briefly recalled here are an important base to explain, or to underpin potential explanations, for the phenomena that are being discussed throughout this book.

1.6 RELIGION, CONTEXT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The philosopher Taylor, on whose work we have heavily relied so far, has also stressed the significance of the way in which meanings change over time and across cultures. The meanings that human beings give to things, and which are different over place and time, shape diverse ‘contexts’ in which humans live their lives and societies develop and unfold (while also recognising that there are certain features that characterise ‘being human’ as such and thus transcend the differences of time, place, culture and language).

This idea that contextual differences play a central role is pivotal to our argument. This book aims to contribute to the stream of literature about the analysis of contextual influences on the functioning of administrative systems and public services management, and in this sense it belongs to the strand of studies in comparative public administration and management, notably the sub-field focused on addressing the research question about how the societal, cultural, political and administrative context affects the functioning and the reforming of PA (for example, Ongaro and Van Thiel, 2018; Painter and
Peters, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). What makes this book distinctive is its focus on religion, that is, addressing the question of how religious differences, by affecting society, culture and the political, affect the configuration and functioning of public administrative systems. In simple terms, religion is the explanatory factor which we single out for investigation in this work, recognising its interplay with the other contextual factors outlined and investigated in the literature.

We follow Bouckaert in arguing that religion is beyond culture, but it has an influence on culture; similarly, religion is beyond society, but it has an influence on society (since it has a social dimension, as discussed); and, mediated by the political regime, religion has an influence on politics (since the two are entwined, as Turner provocatively pointed out). In turn, culture, society and politics are part and parcel of the context within which a(ny) public administrative system is embedded, and contextual influences matter for PA (Bouckaert, 2007; Ongaro and Van Thiel, 2018; Pollitt, 2013; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017): therefore, bringing the religious element into the picture is a way of developing, supplementing and complementing the extant explanatory frameworks for how context affects PA, an area of inquiry that is being researched by a growing body of literature in comparative public administration.

Let’s take some illustrative, broad-brush, examples of such major differences across contexts, as shaped also by religion, in which PA systems are embedded – examples which we just evoke here and discuss systematically in later chapters throughout the book. As a first example, one can contrast the extant differences, from the standpoint of religion and religious regime, between a context like that of China, shaped over the millennia by the doctrines of Confucianism, and the contexts of countries such as France, or Germany and Italy, or Russia, shaped by Christianity. If the nature of Confucianism as a religion is contested, as the diverging accounts of it provided by sociologists like, respectively, Weber and Bellah attest (we return to this in Chapter 3), one element that seems to hold a large consensus is the political character of Confucianism, placing salvation firmly in this world and conjoining familial and societal piety, the duties towards the parents and those towards the public authorities. In this sense, ‘the Chinese soul has never been revolutionized by a prophet’ (Weber, 1951, as reported in Turner, 2013, p. 172). Quite the opposite, the European soul has been totally revolutionised by the Christian revelation and the announcement of the Gospel, (indeed the Christian revelation has fundamentally shaped Europe as such and what Europe is), and the foundation of Western thought can be found in Patristic philosophy and theology, a gigantic attempt to connect the Greco-Roman civilisation to the Judeo-Christian revelation, a ‘revolution’ of the soul which had altered nearly all the premises on which the Greco-Roman civilisation rested.
Continuing with our broad-brush comparison to highlight the extent of contextual differences, in the West modernity originated and flourished, and secularisation unfolded at pace from the sixteenth century, thus creating the conditions leading to the ‘modern self’, so effectively described by Taylor. If in the West, modernity and secularisation have asserted themselves, taking very profound roots, in China and elsewhere across Asia there has been no Western-type modernity until forms of it came to be foisted upon China over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, often through the use of force. In terms of religious regime, limitations to religious freedom are apparent in China and not, or to a much more limited extent, in Western countries. Our book aims at bringing to the fore these whopping, yet mostly overlooked, contextual differences and analyse if and how they affect the workings of administrative systems and public services.

There are of course also major differences within what we have so far mostly referred to indistinctly as ‘the West’. Secularisation has been at times propounded by an ideology of secularism, which led to a radical separation of state and church, at times even a confrontational approach, as, for example, in France through the at times ideologically charged notion of sécularité. Also at certain epochs in France or elsewhere in the West it may be possible to detect a ‘militant and combative’ approach to secularisation which has become entrenched into a secularist ideology held by certain political-social groups, and which at times have become hegemonic in a society, as it happened during the French regime when ‘Jacobinism’ briefly peaked before ebbing away in the Napoleonic era and then the Restoration. In other times, in France as well as in many other places across Europe and the West, separation between state and church meant mainly ‘co-existence’, often featuring highly porous relationships, unfolding through continual, mostly behind the scenes while at times formal and public, negotiations as circumstances evolve about the mutual room for manoeuvre/sphere of influence, which materialise into formal agreements (like the Italian concordato between the Italian State and the Catholic Church) as well as intensive bargains on sensitive issues between institutionalised churches, notably the majority one, and the state. Examples of these are the cases of Germany or Italy (for example, for upholding tenets of the morality promoted by a church when issues involving such tenets become the subject of legislation by the state, as, for example, in the case of the regulation of abortion, marriage, end-of-life treatments, and other morally sensitive issues). Importantly, in all these jurisdictions, the central notion of the ‘neutrality’ of the state vis-à-vis religions (liberty of creed) does not mean a ‘neutralising’ role of the state, that is, that it actively operates to diminish religion and to push it off the public sphere, that it be attempting to limit the effects of religion in the public sphere.
The dynamics of church–state relations can also unfold according to patterns of a more outright osmotic relationship, and in this sense the church–state relationship should be placed at the opposite end of the spectrum to clear-cut separation, and even more so the ‘confrontational’ mutual stance. The osmotic relationship is instantiated by the ‘symphony’ pattern of interaction between state and institutionalised church, as in Russia where the relationship between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate is characterised by the two institutions of the state and the church complementing and supplementing each other. This is clearly described in the social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church, which delineates the cooperation of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Russian state (see Kahla, 2017b, pp. 61–2, for the English translation of paragraph III.4 of the Social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church reported here, and more broadly pp. 61–3, for a review and analysis):

[Symphony] is essentially co-operation, mutual support and mutual responsibility without one side intruding into the exclusive domain of the other. The bishop obeys the government as a subject, not because his episcopal power comes from a government official. Similarly, a government official obeys his bishop as a member of the Church, who seeks salvation in it, not because his power comes from the power of the bishop. The state in such symphonic relationships with the Church seeks her spiritual support, prayer for itself and blessing upon its work to achieve the temporal goal of its citizens’ welfare, while the Church enjoys support from the state in creating conditions favourable for preaching and for the spiritual care of her children who are at the same time citizens of the state.

Continuing in our broad-brush evocation of examples highlighting the major contextual differences that can be found across jurisdictions, in other instances – and here we shift to the Islamic religion and to the case of a country, Turkey, which, like Russia indeed, spans from both a geographical and a cultural standpoint Europe and Asia – the role of the state in either publicising or privatising religion may be a major one. This is manifest in the case of Turkey: in modern Turkey, the state has performed a major role in regulating religion through its ministry for religious affairs, the Diyanet (for an account see Turner, with Berna Zengin Arslan, 2013, pp. 206–23). Indeed, Turkey is a jurisdiction in which it is possible to tentatively claim that the state and its administrative arm has tried to substantively, even pervasively, regulate the extent of publicness of religion, in pushing it towards a higher influence on the public sphere or, to the other extreme, pushing it to the margins of the public sphere. The regulatory intervention of the state has been varying widely in its fundamental direction and thrust over time, from the period of political domination by the ‘lay’ Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) [Republican People’s Party] to the Erdogan era after 2002. The state, through its ministry for religious affairs,
performed a major role in regulating religion by at first reducing the extent of publicness of religion over the time span since the foundation of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal ‘Ataturk’ until the period before Erdogan became the dominant political actor in Turkish politics, that is, the period of political domination by the CHP. This period has seen a process of privatisation of religion: the state administration has actively operated to confine the religious in the private dimension of life – along the lines of what has been done by the modern French state through the policy of laïcité, the laïcité (the modern Turkish state and its administration has itself been patterned on the French model of state and administration). This trend has been reversed during the Erdogan era, since 2002, according to the new political priorities of the government, by enhancing the publicness of religion, with a key role in the regulation of the ‘degree of publicness’ of the religious dimension in public affairs taken by an administrative arm of the state: the Diyanet. This regulatory role of the state in affecting the ‘degree of publicness’ of religion and the leeway afforded to the religious in the public sphere – which can be wielded either in the direction of promoting an expansive role for religion in the public sphere or in the very opposite direction of constraining or outright banning any role for religion in the public sphere – has also been described using the term ‘Caesarism’ in religious affairs (see Chapter 2).

In yet other jurisdictions across the world, the religious and the political are intimately conjoined, a state of affairs which has been the case for a large part of the history of humankind, and God and the divine are the ultimate holder of sovereignty and guarantor of the legitimacy of public institutions. Before the axial period and the appearance of the major world-religions, most sovereigns – kings and emperors – likened themselves to deities (pharaohs in ancient Egypt, worshipped as god-kings, are a sheer illustrative example). However, it is only within the framework of the revealed religions of universal salvation that appeared during the axial period that it is possible to speak of ‘theocracies’ and theocratic regimes in the proper sense: public governance arrangements whereby religious doctrines and institutions – and an organised priesthood – have a major influence over the state and its administration, and either religious law has primacy over the state, or religion provides a source of legitimacy of the state (an example of the latter being the influence of monastic Buddhism on the legitimacy of the King of Thailand and hence on the legitimacy of the state), or both (examples include Saudi Arabia, in the Islamic Sunni tradition, or Iran, in the Islamic Shiite tradition) – a contextual feature with hugely significant implications for the workings and the accountability lines of public administrators.

In Chapter 2 we perform a reconnaissance of the religious composition of all countries in the world over the period from 1900 to 2020 and (projections to) 2050, based on publicly accessible datasets, to then adopt an oft-used and
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wide-scope typology of religious regimes, and develop a classification of all countries in the world by religious regime. Chapter 2 intends to offer a database and an entry point for the comparative study of PA across the world, for all research designs in which religion features in the explanatory framework.

The evocation, by way of such broad-brush strokes, of these examples of significant contextual differences with regard to religion and the religious regime of different jurisdictions highlights the variety of contextual features into which public administrative systems are embedded. Such variety elicits analytical questions about what theoretical framework to adopt that may enable us to capture how these contextual differences affect public administration and public services management, the overarching goal of this book. It is to this task we now turn.

1.7 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ADOPTED IN THIS BOOK

This book argues that religion is influential on the functioning of PA. In the framework of our book, therefore, religion (the institutionalised religion, or religions, extant in the jurisdiction, and the religious regime that regulates their public space) is the explanans, and PA – the functioning of the administrative system and the management of public services – is the explanandum.

We consider that religion may be influential on and for PA in two ways: (1) motivational/behavioural, and (2) ideational. With regard to the motivational/behavioural influence of religion, in line with eminent studies in sociology and the social sciences, we consider religion to be (also) a ‘personality system’ (Turner, 2013, p. 173), that is, a shaper of personality, thence a driver of human behaviour and the motivation of people to act (Turner, 2013). With regard to the ideational influence of religion, we argue that since institutionalised religions are a source of value-laden, normatively charged doctrines – a body of thought which shapes the world view of its adherents – then religion affects potentially all key social actors in the public administrative space, from public decision-makers to users of public services. It affects public decision-makers at all levels and in all capacities: as administrators or managers (be they elected or tenured officials) in charge of deciding on the configuration of the public governance and public service organisations; as professionals in public services (such as medics, teachers, social workers, and so forth); and as ‘street-level bureaucrats’ interacting with users of public services in a range of settings (such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and so forth); and it affects the users of public services, both as recipients of public services and, where meaningful, also in their role as co-producers/co-creators of public services.

Importantly, we consider religion to exert influence both at the level of the broader configuration of public governance and the administrative system
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(which we refer to as the macro-level) and at the level of the operations and delivery of public services at the organisational and the individual levels (we refer to the level of organisations – public service organisations and the organisational networks into which they are embedded – as the meso-level, and to the level of individual persons – the street-level bureaucrats, the individual users – as the micro-level). At the macro- and meso-level, one can think, for example, of the role of faith-based groups in shaping the governance configuration of public services, thereby including both the patterns of service delivery – for example, the modalities of involvement of faith-based organisations in the delivery of public services – and the performance criteria which are given prominence – for example, by emphasising fairness, equality, toleration, or on occasions purposeful faith-based discrimination in public services. At the micro-level, one may think of the role of street-level bureaucrats, for example teachers educating pupils at school, medics (non-) practising abortion in a hospital, and so forth.

The key mediating factor of the influence of religion on the functioning of the public administrative system and public services is the religious regime in the given jurisdiction/country, notably with regard to religious freedom and the role of religion in providing legitimacy to the state, and the relationship of organised priesthood to the State. The religious regime is a feature combining with the religious configuration of the country, that is: whether there is a majority religion in the country (a denomination which is adhered to by a majority of the population); and the nature of the religious composition of the country (what the majority religion is, what the religious minorities are – including the non-religious population). The mediating influence of the religious regime may be more apparent on the meso- and macro-level themes (Chapters 6 and 7), while the mediating influence of the religious regime on two of the micro-level themes we discuss in Chapter 5, namely Person–Organisation fit (P–O fit) and Public Service Motivation (PSM), may be much more limited if not outright irrelevant, notably because both these themes concern personality traits which may be unaffected by an institutional factor like the configuration of the religious regime. However, the religious regime may have some mediating influence on three other themes, which are also located at the micro-level, that is, the level of individuals and their behaviour, as these three other themes concern the behaviour of public sector managers and employees, of Street-Level Bureaucrats (SLB), and of citizens as users of public services.

Yet another analytical level – which may be especially meaningful for certain countries and jurisdictions – lies in further distinguishing between religious affiliation of the political-administrative elite, on one hand, and religious affiliation of the population as a whole, on the other hand. In some (possibly most) instances, the two tend to coincide (for example, the
US, where Christianity is the majority religion of both the population and political-administrative class, but in certain instances they may, at least partly, diverge (for example Viet Nam is a historically Buddhist majority country, and as of 2020 Buddhism represents the single largest religious group, but in it Confucianism has historically had an important influence on the ruling class).

We rely on well-established analytical frameworks for outlining the religious regimes of countries and jurisdictions across the world: these are examined and discussed in Chapter 2. We should also make the reader aware here that our approach as social scientists is driven by empirical considerations, and as such we recognise that there are factually different degrees to which religious freedom is protected across the world. Whilst our normative stance is that religious toleration is a value to uphold (always and anywhere), we recognise from a factual standpoint this occurs to different extents in different jurisdictions and over time, for complex and varied reasons, and our analysis of the influence of religion on PA takes into consideration this empirical factuality.²

The religious regime is a key mediating factor of the influence of religion on PA, given the religious composition of the jurisdiction under consideration.

Based on what has been outlined so far, our overarching theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

We encompass in our study both the Abrahamic religions/faiths – Judaism, Christianity, Islam – and the (so-called) ‘Asian’ religions, notably focusing, in this work, on Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism. Out of the scope of this work are non-(or less-)institutionalised religions like animism, druidism, shamanism, or popular religions. Also out of the scope of this book are institutionalised religions such as Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and other religions: this is simply due to limitations to what we could study for the preparation of this book (due to our limits of knowledge and time), and also based on the pragmatic assumption that they wield an overall more limited influence on the functioning of administrative systems and hence for the study of PA, the subject of this book. As mentioned, this book is not about religions per se, it is about the influence of institutionalised religion on the functioning of administrative systems and public services;

² We should also note that a normative stance of religious toleration as a value upheld by believers in God (as in the case of the authors of this book, who are believers in the Christian Catholic faith) is fully compatible with their faith in God being the ultimate sovereign of history and the course of human and natural events (God-Providence). Philosophical and theological reflections developed over the centuries on religious toleration as a value have brought to the fore that toleration is a value that can be equally upheld by non-believers and believers in God-Providence; the latter will fully respect all religious attitudes and stances (including non-believing) while retaining awareness within their conscience of the sovereignty of God over all human and natural events.
hence our selective approach to religions as a function of their influence on PA.

The reason why we distinguish between Abrahamic and ‘Asian’ religions (noticing the latter term, though widely used – which is why we employ it here – is contested and sociologists are deeply suspicious of the use of such terms’, Turner, 2013, p. 153) is that, following again eminent sociologists of religion, it is important to note there is a fundamental difference between Abrahamic religions and Asian religions (Turner, 2013). Abrahamic religions emphasise ‘correct belief’ over ritual practice and community, and it is only with reference to Abrahamic religions that notions like conversion and apostasy (defined by adhesion to definable doctrinal contents, for example, as contained in the Catholic catechism) make sense. Asian religions are rather intended variedly as a body of wisdom (for example, Confucius’s analects), practices and rituals which bind a community and its quest for the divine and
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the spiritual: so, Hinduism as ‘the wisdom-spirituality-culture of Southern Asia’ (India and Nepal), Confucianism as ‘the wisdom-spirituality-culture of China’; and so on (implying a closer interconnection than in the west between religious and philosophical thought, with implications also for PA research and practice, Ongaro, 2021). Abrahamic religions are always universalistic in thrust, while for Asian religion the applicability of this notion is contested (so the argument is that Confucianism is the religion-sapience-philosophy of China; Hinduism the religion-sapience-philosophy of India; Shintoism the religion-sapience-philosophy of Japan, and so forth) – which, however, does not eliminate the nature as both personality systems and ideational bases of the Asian religions too: shaping human behaviour and collective/political life in deep ways.

Finally, the definition of PA adopted in this book: by PA we refer to the configuration and functioning of public services and public administrative systems, to public decision-making and the public governance arrangements that enable and shape them. Under the label of ‘PA’ we encompass the terms – and fields of scholarly inquiry and practice – of ‘public administration’, ‘public management’, ‘public governance’ and the implications of ‘public policy’, cognisant they have a different emphasis. In referring to ‘public administration’ there is an emphasis on the processes of preparation, promulgation/enactment and enforcement of law and on notions of public accountability, while the term ‘public management’ emphasises the dimension of the relationships of resources utilised to the results produced by public organisations, and related notions like those of efficiency, effectiveness, economy, sustainability (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). The term ‘public governance’ is employed to refer to broader processes of steering of society by public institutions and the involvement of economic and societal actors into public policy, often in contrast to a narrower focus on governmental authoritative decisions and administrative processes (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Torfing et al., 2012). Finally with the implications of ‘public policy’ we refer to implications for public sector organisations and third-party organisation derived from the implementation of public policies and programmes.

As a field of (academic) inquiry, PA can be seen as a subject matter, defined by its subject (the practice of government, the administrative dimension of governing and effecting public policies) and studied by a plurality of academic disciplines. These include typically (and in no particular order) a range of disciplines in the social science and the humanities: historiography (history of administration), law (administrative law notably), management and organisation studies (central in a public management perspective), political science and public policy analysis (at times PA is seen as subsumed into these disciplines, as part of ‘government’ studies, but however important this perspective is, that would be in our view a too strict and limiting view of PA), (public choice)
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Economics, social psychology and cognitive psychology (disciplines at the heart of the growing field of behavioural public administration), and sociology (on which we have relied extensively throughout this chapter). Another academic field that contributes to PA is philosophy, intending philosophy not as another discipline lined up next to the others, but rather intending philosophy as foundational to gauge the contribution to PA that each individual discipline can provide, as well as a body of knowledge and understanding which may perform an integrative function, that is, the function of integrating the specific contributions made by the individual disciplines to PA (an argument about the significance of rediscovering philosophy for the development of PA is wrought out in another book – see Ongaro, 2020 – by one of the co-authors of this work; see also Ongaro, 2022a).

In this book we put forward the argument that the disciplines of religious studies and sociology of religions – as well as theology and philosophy of religion, for the clarification of doctrinal contents and implications of religions for society – need to be added as disciplines that can contribute to the study of PA. The themes in PA for which we have identified religion to be a part of the explanatory framework (see next section) are informed by knowledge drawn from religious studies and the sociology of religion.

Alongside being a subject matter and as such an object of interdisciplinary (academic) study, PA is also a profession and an art. It is a profession, practised daily by hundreds of millions of people all over the world, and an art, since not all the knowledge that gets mobilised in PA takes the form of scientific knowledge. Indeed, the arts can provide a source of insights and understanding for PA, as Drechsler (2001) and de Graaf and van Asperen (2018) show us through a commentary of the actuality of the fourteenth-century paintings of ‘The Good Government’ by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the City Hall of the municipality of Siena, in central Italy. Religion as both an ideational base and a personality system is, in our view, an overlooked dimension of PA as a profession and an art.

Finally, PA is inherently concerned with (public) values and the effecting of values in and through public service; it is in essence (also) part of the humanities, as a liberal art (Waldo, 1948[1984]) and a form of practical humanism (Ongaro, 2020 and 2022b). If the religious question and engaging with religion is integral to humanity and ‘being human’, then religion – and all the responses that stem from this engagement, from believing and adhesion to religion (theism), to rejection and atheism, to agnosticism or forms of natural religion (deism) – cannot be left out of the picture in a form of practical humanism such as PA (as we argue PA to be).

How, specifically, does religion matter for PA? What are key themes in PA whose advancement may benefit from the inclusion of religion in its social
dimension into the explanatory framework? We have identified ten main themes, and the next section provides an overview of each of them.

1.8 HOW RELIGION MATTERS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THEMES AND THREADS

The ample literature review we have carried out in preparing this book was conducive to the identification of ten themes of research at the micro-, meso- and macro-level (that is, the level of individuals/people, organisations, and administrative systems respectively) about the manifold relations between religion and public administration. Table 1.1 presents a preview of the themes and threads treated in the book. For each of the identified themes, Table 1.1 provides a short overview of the theme itself and its key connections with the public administration literature. These themes are analysed in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Table 1.1 Preview of the themes and threads treated in the book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme title</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Key connections with PA literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person–Organisation fit perspective (micro-level)</td>
<td>P–O fit is defined as ‘the compatibility between people and organisations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both’ (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4–5). In this micro-level theme religion is seen as driver to work for the public service as well as to strive to attain the highest standards of morality while working for the public service.</td>
<td>P–O fit is related to intent to join or quit, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Verquer et al., 2003), turnover, task performance, and organisational citizenship behaviours (Hoffman and Woehr, 2006). P–O fit can also be interpreted as mediating the relationship between PSM and job satisfaction (Bright, 2008; Steijn, 2008; Wright and Pandey, 2008).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion and Public Service Motivation (micro-level)</td>
<td>‘Public service motivation may be understood as an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations’ (Perry and Wise, 1990, p. 368). In this second micro-level theme religion is seen as an explanatory factor of PSM.</td>
<td>This theme partakes of the PSM stream as it focuses on religion as an explanatory factor associated with higher levels of PSM. Most studies that employ religion as an explanatory factor of PSM focus on Protestant and Catholic countries.</td>
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<td>Theme title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion and Public Service Motivation <em>(micro-level)</em> (cont.)</td>
<td>Religious foundational beliefs are related directly to several facets of public service motivation, specifically commitment to the public interest/civic duty and compassion (Perry, 1997, p. 184).</td>
<td>Scattered findings include studies in Christian Orthodox contexts and the relationship of PSM with Confucianism. These limited results open up paths of investigation for both deeper and wider investigation of the influence of different religions on PSM.</td>
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<td>The influence of religious beliefs on public managers and employees’ behaviour in public sector organisations <em>(micro-level)</em></td>
<td>This theme focuses on how public managers and employees’ religiosity impacts on both their work attitudes and motivations and their views about their organisation and their fellow employees. This theme focuses on the behaviour among individuals within public sector organisations.</td>
<td>Studies show that ‘religious public managers tend to have a stronger orientation toward job security and a more favourable view of their organisation and fellow employees.’ (Bozeman and Murdock, 2007, p. 309).</td>
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<td>Religious beliefs and bureaucratic discretion <em>(micro-level)</em></td>
<td>This theme focuses on the religiosity of street level bureaucrats (SLB) and its impact on their ‘policy-making’ function while executing their tasks at the interface with the users of public services, by exercising their discretion, as enabled by their relative decision-making autonomy.</td>
<td>Street-level bureaucracy (SLB) theory has been introduced and developed most notably by Michael Lipsky, to explain officers’ behaviour in ‘schools, police and welfare departments, lower courts, legal services offices, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions’ (1980, p. xi; Hupe, 2019, and Evans and Hupe, 2020). Their religiosity may be influential on their decision-making in interacting with users.</td>
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<td>Religion as a moral and belief system affecting behaviour of citizens/users of public services <em>(micro-level)</em></td>
<td>This micro-level theme shifts the focus from within the bureaucracy to the users: it focuses on the religiosity of citizens/users of public services and how this affects their behaviour.</td>
<td>This theme pertains to the impact that users’ religious beliefs have on public services, notably in fields like education or healthcare. For example, Campbell et al. (2005) investigate whether religious citizens are more likely to use school vouchers, finding that ‘[f]amilies who used vouchers differed from the eligible population less in their income or education as in their religious practice (p. 537).’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme title</td>
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<td>Religion as a factor shaping an organisation’s mission and values as well as its management practices and performance (meso-level)</td>
<td>This meso-level (organisational-level) theme is examined by analysing (a) the role of religion in shaping organisational values; (b) value congruence between employees and organisational values. Religious diversity may also impact organisational performance</td>
<td>This theme pertains to the organisational theory and behaviour field, and it is centred around the main question “can workplace values be managed?” (Paarlberg and Perry, 2007). It is also linked to the field of employees’ motivation and performance and thence to the literature on employees’ retention and job satisfaction, as well as to the ‘diversity and inclusion literature’ in public administration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and implications for their involvement in public services delivery (meso-level)</td>
<td>‘A Faith-Based Organization is any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith’ (Clarke, 2008, p. 6). This theme presents Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and queries how faith shapes organisational values or behaviour, and the implications for the involvement of FBOs in public services delivery. The origin of FBOs and the distinctive characteristics of these organisations are considered for each religion.</td>
<td>This theme concerns third sector organisations as providers of public services where these third sector organisations are faith-based. The PA literature on FBOs has studied the issue of identification of FBOs (Jeavons, 1997; Sider and Unruh, 2004; Smith and Sosin, 2001); the influence of faith on organisational behaviour of FBOs (Berger, 2003; Ebaugh et al., 2006; Goggin and Orth, 2002; James, 2011); and the typologies of FBOs (Clarke, 2008; Hefferan et al., 2009; Sider and Unruh, 2004), amongst others.</td>
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<td>Government funding of external providers and religious affiliation (meso-level)</td>
<td>This theme complements the previous one by focusing on the ‘broader’ governance and funding arrangements and the role of FBOs in them, rather than the individual organisations’ behaviour of FBOs (previous theme)</td>
<td>This theme focuses on the broader governance arrangements for public service delivery and their drivers, notably in relation to public funding of public service providers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme title</td>
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<td>Faith organisations and leaders’ participation in public governance and co-creation, and dynamics of social cohesion and interculturalism (meso-level)</td>
<td>This theme analyses whether and the extent to which formal faith organisations and faith leaders are included in public governance and public decision-making processes (especially at the local level) and the formulation and implementation of public policies, as well as the co-governance and co-creation of forms of service delivery and public value.</td>
<td>This theme pertains to the overall PA literature on (local) public and collaborative governance as well as the co-creation and co-production of public services and public value (see for example Torfing et al., 2021)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion as source of legitimacy and basis of accountability, responsibility, and delegation of power in public administration, institutional quality, and ethics (macro-level)</td>
<td>This theme analyses the ideational influence of religion with regard to issues of legitimacy and accountability of administrative action.</td>
<td>This theme elaborates on the notion of religious regime introduced in Chapter 2 and revisits political-philosophical issues of legitimacy and accountability of PA in relation to the role of religion.</td>
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1.9 METHODS

This book is mostly the result of desk research and theoretical speculation: an effort to systematise available knowledge and theoretically develop a framework to make sense – in as comprehensive a way as possible – of the influence that religion may have on PA.

We conducted an ample literature review of journals in the categories of Political Science, Business Administration and Management, and Public Administration, and set up a data set that we used to analyse and categorise the extant literature in terms of level of analysis (that is, micro-, meso-, and macro-levels), the methodology employed, and for empirical pieces the sample or data employed, the jurisdiction or jurisdictions of interest, and the level or levels of governance concerned (that is, international, supranational, federal or national, state or regional, and local).

We further selectively snowballed from reviewed sources as well as other publications (books, book chapters) we came across in our search in order to include the so-called ‘grey literature’ (Rothstein and Hopewell, 2009) that was deliberately excluded in our initial literature review (Ongaro and Tantardini, 2023a).
Our review, while extensive, was confined to scientific works in the English language: this is a major limitation which should be accounted for. This limitation may be especially significant for religions and jurisdictions for which the bulk of the literature (scientific, as well as theological) is in languages other than English: a clear example is the case of Shintō, for which the debate has historically unfolded and continues to unfold mostly in Japanese (Chapter 3).

For the discussion of the major religions, religious policies and religious regimes and implications for administrative systems in different polities, we also refer to encyclopaedical (notably, but not exclusively, Britannica and Stanford encyclopaedias) and other sources. It should also be noted that we do not include in the scope of this book the philosophical-religious stance of deism – defined as ‘the belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe’ (from the Oxford Dictionary) – which grew in significance in the West particularly during the epoch of the Enlightenment, nor other forms of philosophically derived, rational(istic) approaches to the divine and the relationship of the human to the divine. Our focus for the (already so wide) field of inquiry of this book is on traditional, revealed (‘revelation-based’), institutionalised religions, analytically considered in relation to their influence on PA.

As part of the preparation of this book, we also proceeded through consulting leading experts and selectively asking them for a ‘critical friend’ commentary on excerpts of previous drafts of this manuscript – their support is gratefully acknowledged at the outset of this book. As always, responsibility for all mistakes lies exclusively with the authors.

From a methodological viewpoint, we adopt the approach of methodological agnosticism (Bell and Taylor, 2015; Porpora, 2006), that is, we adopt an analytical strategy that suspends or ‘brackets’ (Berger, 1967) ontological and epistemological assumptions about ‘what there is’ and ‘what can be known’ about God, the world, and the human beings in societal settings, to then study how the religious as such and notably the specific and distinctive religions included in this study, by shaping personality and providing an ideational basis, shape social agency and social structure (see also Berger, 1999, and James, 1902), and therefore also PA as part and parcel of society. An advantage of this approach is that, in the words of Bell and Taylor (who refer spe-
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cifically to spirituality in management and organisation studies, but we would argue it applies equally to the application of religion to PA studies):

[m]ethodological agnosticism avoids the question of whether or not belief systems have an ontological reality independent of the social actors who believe in them, by ‘bracketing’ (Berger, 1967) this issue. Spirituality is thereby granted ontological equivalence to the material and social, and belief systems are positioned as ‘aporetic, infinitely complex, impossible to know, and always open to question’. (Bell and Taylor, 2015: 550)

Through cultivating doubt, not just as a temporary problem to be solved through discovery (Locke et al., 2008) but as a permanent feature in the study of spirituality, explanations about the nature of reality are held in a dynamic tension that must be accepted rather than resolved. (Bell and Taylor, 2015, p. 554)

1.10 PREVIEW OF THE BOOK/HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The most obvious way to read this book is in the way it is presented, from Chapter 1 to Chapter 8, from the first to the last line. However, readers of academic books are often under multiple pressures to read quickly and selectively – be they scholars aiming at taking away the key ideas needed to finalise their own book or article, or students striving to capture the key concepts ‘necessary and sufficient’ to overcome the looming hurdle of a fast-approaching exam.

For any purpose, Figure 1.2 guides the reader through the intellectual journey of this book in graphical format. So, if you, dear Reader, feel competent enough with Abrahamic and Asian religions (and indeed you might be much more competent than we are), then you can skip Chapters 2, 3 and 4, perhaps after having read section 5 of Chapter 2, which presents and discusses the religious regimes of jurisdictions in the world, which we will reference throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the book.

In the case you, dear Reader, decide not to skip these three chapters, this is what you should expect. Chapter 2 provides an entry point for the comparative study of the influence of religion on PA. It maps and analyses the relationship of the religious to PA, that is, relating religions and religious regimes to the configuration of public administrative systems. It presents the geographical distribution of the world religions and describes religious change and its impact on societies; it reports and discusses a world map of religious freedom, and it concludes with the identification of the religious regime of any given country, which is the key mediating variable of the influence of religion on the public administrative system in the framework of analysis we propose in this book.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a (very) succinct overview of the selected major world religions that are being discussed in this book in relation to their
implications for PA. The introductory elements that are presented for each of the religions discussed are intended only to provide the reader who may not be knowledgeable about a given religion with some entry points to grasp the broad picture, in order to be able to better appreciate some of the implications for PA, the ultimate object of study of this book. Chapter 3 proposes a PA-focused introduction to the (so-called) ‘Asian’ religions; notably, we consider here: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. They are presented following, roughly, the order of their historical appearance. Chapter 4 introduces and provides the reader with an overview of the Abrahamic religions and faiths, namely (in chronological order of their appearance) Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which all have their roots in the covenant between God and the prophet Abraham, as narrated in the book of Genesis in the Bible.

Chapters 5 to 7 provide the core and distinctive contribution made by this book. Chapter 5 focuses on religion as a ‘personality system’, that is, a shaper of personality, thence a driver of human behaviour and the motivation of people to act (Turner, 2013). The focus of this chapter is on the behaviour of elected and tenured officials, as well as of third sector individuals engaged in the provision of public services and of citizens-users of public services at large. Five themes have been identified as especially significant for the analytical study of the influence of religion as a personality system on PA: these are the first five themes listed in Table 1.1. Throughout the book, we will also refer to these themes as micro-level themes, because they are centred on the level of individuals.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus on the organisational level as the main unit of analysis and therefore public and non-profit sector organisations, broadly intended, and the organisational networks into which they are embedded. The themes presented in this chapter function as a link between the themes in which religion is analytically treated as a ‘personality system’ (Turner, 2013) (Chapter 5) and the themes in which religion is analytically treated as an ideational basis, a source of value-laden, normatively charged doctrines that shape the broader configuration of public governance and the administrative system (Chapter 7). Four themes have been identified as especially significant for the analytical study of the influence of religion on organisations (the themes are listed in Table 1.1). Throughout the book, we will also refer to these themes as meso-level themes.

Chapter 7 focuses on religion as a source of value-laden, normatively charged doctrines that shape the broader configuration of public governance and the administrative system (ideational influence of religion), which historically had, and continues to have, a significant influence on profiles of legitimacy of public institutions and public organisations, their accountability to the public, the ways in which responsibility in the performance of public tasks is wielded, and, last but not least, on political (and therefore also administrative)
power dynamics. This is the final – and very broad – theme listed in Table 1.1. Throughout the book, we will also refer to this theme as the macro-level theme.

In the final chapter (Chapter 8), we outline a research agenda for continuing and developing research on the influence of religion on public administration along a number of lines – all of which, we deem, may be extremely valuable for providing a different, and complementary, perspective to a range of research themes in the thriving field of public administration research. The final chapter – advocating the pursuit of a research agenda – is also a call for a dialogue with theologians and experts in religious studies and the philosophy of religion and the sociology of religion, whose contribution may be extremely beneficial to the field of administrative studies (see also Ongaro and Tantardini, 2023b).

We hope through this book to be able to open up paths of investigation into such a major area of inquiry, hence contributing to the further consolidation and strengthening of the study of comparative public administration and the development of a global (not globalist) perspective in the study and practice of public administration.

Figure 1.2  Book flowchart