New Forms of Religious Life and Civil Society in Australia: Fragmentation or Enrichment?

Rowan Ireland and Lyn Baker
La Trobe University

Acts of religiously inspired terrorism have revived fears about the fragmentation of civil society as religious diversity increases in Europe, the USA and Australia. This article proposes criteria for distinguishing between types of religious associations which fragment civil society, thus confirming fears, and those that enrich it. In an exploratory study of six New Religious Movements (NRMs), two were considered closest to the type that enriches civil society. These two, Mahikari and Ananda Marga, are described and ways in which they contribute the enrichment of civil society are explored. Despite differences, the NRMs are found to enrich civil society not only as associations relating to other elements of local civil society, but also through the orientations and dispositions towards civic engagement they foster among members.

In many countries where religious diversity is rapidly increasing, the consequences for civil society, and ultimately for democracy are at issue. In the USA and Australia, the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 revived old anxieties about fragmentation and subversion of civil society, latterly focussed on the New Religious Movements (NRMs) or 'cults' as they were often labelled. Since then the focus, of course, has been on Islam, still a relatively new form of religious life in the countries of the great Islamic diaspora of the late twentieth century; and the burning issue is whether some Islamic groups may have become terrorist cells. But there are common issues in the cult controversies and the concerns about diasporic Islam, not least the questions pursued in this paper: Is increasing religious diversity *per se*, or by virtue of certain religions in the mix, contributing to the fragmentation and weakness of civil society? Or do at least some elements in the diversity enrich civil society, by increasing the density and quality of connections between people, and inducting new actors into community and political affairs?

In a large, long-term project we are exploring answers to these questions in studies of new forms of religious life in Australia, Brazil, and, by way of secondary rather than primary research, the USA. In these countries we are examining the whole array of religious associations that are the components of increasing diversity – not only NRMs and New Age spirituality networks, but New

Immigrant and Ethnic Community (NIEC) religions, new forms of religious life in old traditions, and new coalitions or ecumenical networks. Our aim is to map fragmentation and/or enrichment arising from new forms of religious life, on the ground as it were. In this paper we report only on a small pilot study of six Australian NRMs, in which we sought to determine their roles in local civil society and their effects on their members' orientations toward civic engagement. On the basis of these determinations we intended to draw tentative conclusions about each NRM's likelihood of contributing to the enrichment or fragmentation of local civil society.

Our questions about the enrichment of civil society require some clarification and elaboration, not least because of controversies about the notion of civil society itself (Edwards B. and Foley M., 2001: 2-8). In this paper we follow Skocpol and Fiorina when they depict civil society as "the network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs" (1999:2). This simple definition is modified by the specification, commonly made, that the networks and groups comprising civil society are not over-determined either by the self-interest of the market or the coercive potential of the state – albeit that state and market penetrate deeply into civil society, sometimes strengthening its constituent networks and associations (Skocpol, 1999) sometimes subverting and "colonising" them (Habermas, 1976).

It is in this tense, ambiguous relationship between civil society, market and state that the notions of the enrichment or destructive fragmentation of civil society are grounded. In multicultural, globalising, market societies like Australia, civil society itself is variegated, its constituent associations and networks relating in a wide range of ways to the market, the state, and to one another. Some tend to maintain and strengthen civil society's relative autonomy from state and market. Others tend to aid and abet the collapse of civil society into its global market and state contexts. Others still maintain autonomy from state and market but minimise connections and interactions with other elements of civil society. A given network or association may be said to enrich civil society to the extent to which it equips and disposes individual members to connect not only with others in the network or association, but beyond, engaging them in "community and political affairs". In such civic engagements, citizens use or create public space to negotiate identity and lifestyle, norms and values - participating in the post-materialist issues of the 'new politics' (Nash, 2000) as well as the old issues of who gets what, when and how. In the negotiations lies the enrichment: active citizens having a hand in the construction of the complex society they constitute rather than being determined by the power of the state or by market forces. Conversely, a group or network may be said to fragment and diminish civil society to the extent to which it reinforces over-determination of members by market or state, and/or impedes their development as active citizens.

More will be said of the active citizen "subject" in the conclusion. But on the basis of the concepts discussed so far, we can return to religious associations and

networks and their potential to fragment or enrich civil society. Religious associations have sometimes been seen constituting civil society as "mediating structures...those institutions which stand between the individual in his private sphere and the large institutions of the public sphere" (Berger, 1977: 132). We expand on the notion of mediation, seeing religious associations also potentially enriching civil society by forming competent citizens, able to resist over-determination by market and state, disposed to negotiate religiously based lifestyle, norms and values, and equipped to negotiate the religious and cultural diversity they help constitute (Connolly, 1995). In this perspective, religious associations may enrich civil society in three ways: as socialising environments disposing and equipping members for civic engagement; as social units civically engaged with other social units negotiating interests, values and lifestyle; and as home bases, sustaining individual members in their own civic engagements.

A review of typologies of NRMs (aided by Saliba, 1995: 11-28; and Bruce, 1995: 169-181) suggested that we might expect to find NRMs in Australia located on a range between two ideal types, the one which we expected would contribute to the fragmentation of civil society, the other to civil society enrichment. At one extreme we thought we might find something like a cross between the stereotypical cult (Saliba, 1995: 11-17) and the world-rejecting NRM (Wallis, 1984). Behind high symbolic and even physical boundaries, we would find members orientated away from an evil and threatening world, disposed only to obey the teachings of their authoritarian leaders rather than to negotiate lifestyle and belief inside the group, let alone outside with religious and non-religious others. In this extreme case, the form and day-to-day modus operandi of the association, and the orientations and dispositions fostered (or perhaps just reinforced) within the religious association, would have two effects conducive to fragmentation and weakening of civil society. First, the association itself, introverted, particularistic in its values and goals and insulated from the outside, would join the class of tribe-like associations (mainly secular), which in their lack of engagement with one another and their disdain for public engagement, contribute to fragmentation (Maffesoli, 1996). Second, the individual members of the congregation, should they venture out into the streets, would avoid any form of civic engagement, as disposed by their religious beliefs and orientations. In their avoidance, we could consider these believers on strike against civil society, weakening it as they live their religious protest. We will call this ideal type, type A.

At the other extreme, informed by accounts of civic engagement fostered in religious associations as diverse and Catholic base communities in Latin America (Levine, 1992) and Wicca covens in Australia (Hume, 1997), we constructed an ideal type of the NRM that would enrich civil society. Associations of this type would enrich in the three ways spelled out above: as civically engaged social units, as socialising environments, and as home bases. As a socialising environment, this sort of NRM would foster certain orientations to the world, such that, for example,

work on and in the everyday life would be considered part of the religious mission. The world would be perceived as fractured but transformable, so that witness to, and negotiations with, groups and institutions that are to be transformed were worthwhile. And the mission of transformation would admit tp ambiguity, the good, and the means for realising it, seen not as lying exclusively within the faith community, but also outside and attainable only in interactions with outsiders (compare Wood, 2000: 316-318). Associations fostering such orientations might have high symbolic boundaries, but if they did, there would be bridges to the outside, with much two-way traffic across them (Warner, 1997). We will call this ideal type, type B.

The pilot study of NRMs

For our pilot project we decided to limit ourselves to the study of NRMs. We selected six NRMs which previous work on types of NRMs (Ireland, 1999) had suggested would fall in different places on the range between our two ideal types. We were very conscious that NRMs are only one of the elements in Australia's increasing religious diversity, and that the full range of significant difference on the issue of religious associations and configurations in civil society was unlikely to show up in our study. Numerically NRMs are a much less significant element in that diversity than NIECs, or new developments in old traditions. Nevertheless, they are of interest because of publicly expressed fears about their threat to civil society (Parliament, 2000), and even numerically, because the members in registered associations appear to represent only a small proportion of those shopping around, and intermittently engaged with what we might call the NRM world.

Our chosen groups were Mahikari, The Family (Children of God), the Pagan Alliance, Ananda Marga, the Raelians and the Church Universal and Triumphant. We did not succeed in finding local congregations of the latter two religions. But in all cases we interviewed leaders and ordinary members with a view to determine the orientations and dispositions of members related to civic engagement; the religious beliefs and practices informing those orientations and dispositions; narratives of experience within the association and perceptions of it; and accounts of the implications in everyday life of being a committed member. In addition to using a checklist under those headings, we encouraged our interviewees to tell stories – of joining the group, of experiences within it, of the ways in which their religion figured in their everyday lives. This latter strategy had the advantage of providing rich, relatively non-formulaic statements from which we could construe orientations and associational form.

Mahikari and Ananda Marga, we found, were closest to our ideal type B profile of the civil-society-enriching religious association, though they approximate the type, and depart from it, in specific ways. They also taught us, through the testimonies of their members, that the attempt to locate our NRMs somewhere between our two types should not be adhered to too exclusively. To do

so would be to obscure some interesting links between some forms of religious life and the vitality of civil society. In this paper we limit our description and discussion to these two cases, in part due to limitations of space, but even more because of a belief that is only asserted and not defended here. That is, that in multicultural Australia, post 11 September 2001, it is more important to work out how certain features of certain faith communities might enrich civil society rather than to confirm prevailing prejudices about the damage done by new forms of religious life in general. This can be done, we believe, without abandoning the critical edge of sociological inquiry.

Mahikari: After we contacted him and explained our project, we were invited by the Australian leader of Sukyo Mahikari in Australia, Dr. Andris K Tibecis to visit the striking new Temple and Regional Headquarters in Canberra, to attend a special monthly ritual at the Temple, and to conduct our interviews over two days in November 1999. We already knew some things about Mahikari. These included its Japanese provenance and continuing governance from Japan where it had been founded in 1959 by Okada, the first Messiah of the New Era; its dedication to the diffusion of the energy and light of the New Era around the world, for the attainment of world peace and harmony; and its self-representation as neither a sect of Buddhism or Shinto, nor a new religion, but a religion which one could join without giving up one's religion of origin – a form of religious dual citizenship, you might say.

Some of what we had learned from self-representations already suggested how Mahikari might approach our Type B. These were the suggestions that Mahikari was a world-affirming religion with a critical edge, disposing members to work for peace and harmony in civil society, as well as personal well-being, and that the association itself was low-boundary and committed to the promotion of peace and harmony in Australian society. But there were other purported features of Mahikari belief, practices and organization, gleaned not only from websites but from a fairly slim academic literature, that did not sit easily with a Type B classification. These were Mahikari beliefs in spirits as the source of misfortune and illness – spirits which could and should be dealt with by the constant application of Light by members. Further, in Japan at least, a form of esoteric shamanism appears to be part of Mahikari practice (Cornille, 1992). These features suggested that Mahikari might actually function as a rather introverted religious association, its members focussed on individual therapeutic practice to the exclusion of civic engagement. One of the aims of our interviews became the exploration of what, from our perspective of focus on civil society, were its cross-cutting features.

Then there was the issue of Japanese orientation. The first visit to the large temple which was in layout and decoration a very Japanese space, and assistance at the monthly ritual, underlined for us the Japanese connection of Mahikari. In the ritual, as in the everyday one-on-one ritual of passing the Light, the chants were in Japanese. Dr. Tebecis led the ritual in Japanese garb and Japanese gestures of

salutation and respect were used throughout. After the prayers and chants, Dr. Tibecis and some others reported on what was clearly a sacred pilgrimage to the world Headquarters and temple in Japan. All this raised an issue, specific to Mahikari, which we pursued in our interviews along with our general agenda of issues. This was, to what extent is commitment to Mahikari an attempt to learn and express a Japanese way of life in Australia, with minimal address to the negotiation of that identity in Australia, and constant focus on the pure beliefs, practices, and identity found in Japan and the texts from Japanese Headquarters? The alternative possibility was that what we observed was already a form of negotiation of otherness, a forging of an Australian identity, inflected with rituals and revelations of Japanese provenance, but focused on living a fuller, better Australian life in an improved Australia.

We will address this issue first. The matter of Australian focus and identity turned out to be not just the researchers' issue but also a concern to Mahikaris, especially the officials we interviewed. One, responsible for public relations, stressed that Mahikari did not want to be perceived as a Japanese cult precisely because this would get in the way of Australian members working on themselves and in Australian communities for the betterment of Australian society. Leaders wanted Mahikari "to be part of the community". The testimonies of ordinary members suggested that their attachment to Japanese forms in ritual activities did not involve such a focus on doing things the Japanese way as to divert attention and energy away from self, immediate community and society in an Australian here and now.

This was consistent with the basic orientations we found in our biographical interviews. All our Mahikaris believe in one supreme being who, through Mahikari ritual, passes energizing light to those who accept initiation. In turn, the key responsibility of all Mahikaris is to receive the Light, which is concentrated in the Omitama pendant that each initiate receives, as often as possible from their fellow members, and to spread the light through their workplaces, their networks of family and friends, and in public places. The world, in this matrix of belief and practice, is conceived of as fractured by disharmony and conflict to the point of crisis, because of man-made blockages (including false dichotomies between spirit and matter, science and spirituality, true religion and false religion) to the flow of divine energy. But the world can be and is being transformed through the spreading of the Light.

Among our three Mahikari leaders we found strong expressions of a vision connecting their religious practices to social transformation on a local and global scale. As our Mahikari leaders tell it, theirs is a religion of energy (=Light) release and flow. As the individual Mahikari receives light s/he will be awakened spiritually, strengthened physically and morally, and empowered and motivated to spread light in the family, the community, and the workplace. As communities of Mahikaris share the light they will be strengthened as communities, they will network with other communities around the globe, and so the Light spreads around

the world. There is a flow in individuals – "…as they grow [people] actually change. You know, they tend to become more altruistic and think about bigger things…" Then there is a flow from the individual outwards: as one of the leaders put it "I mean if only one person can change that's a big step. And then two or three or four join in and they start to change, their families change and their colleagues change, you know. It's satisfying". Eventually, the flow is to the whole world: "Like our spiritual leader encourages us to change because, you know, no matter what's going to happen to this world, if human beings could change their attitudes, it would change." "If we change ourselves, become more harmonious and altruistic, then things can change as well."

Did our small sample of ordinary but committed members share this vision of energy flow and dedicate themselves to help making it happen in local civil society? Up to a point, yes. The vision of the leaders was endorsed, but it was not the kernel of what our interviewees wanted to communicate to us. They wanted us to know about how the flow of energy acquired in Mahikari worked in their individual lives and in the lives of their families. Some of them expressed their satisfaction in Mahikari explanations for misfortunes and problems encountered in daily life, but all were enthusiastic about the simple and effective means that they found in Light-sharing (okiyome) for addressing those problems of personal experience.

These committed, non-officers of Mahikari communicated to us a certain ambivalence, even nervous tension about their local Mahikari community. On the one hand they were grateful to it – not in any sense as a perfect or all-absorbing community, but for the fellowship and sense of belonging it provided and because it was where solutions to life's problems could be found. On the other hand, they made it clear that they did not want a club or anything approaching what we might call a total institution. They wanted what they got and what they felt they had made as they built the Temple and shared the Light: a limited community, perhaps a very suburban Australian form of association.

The testimonies do not show us Mahikaris setting out from the temple to work in and on civil society, either in Mahikari-initiated projects, or as individuals moved and motivated by Mahikari to participate in social movements or local community affairs. But they do show us Mahikaris who have drawn from their religious beliefs and practices and their faith-community confidence in their ability to explain and address (personally) their own and (collectively) the world's problems. They have acquired hope that the resolution of personal and social problems can be found in the here and now through the sharing of the Light. They are not activists in civil society by virtue of living their faith, but they are citizens who in their religious life have achieved control, a sense of efficacy and direction in their everyday lives. This does not amount to what Mark R Warren (2001) calls bridging social capital, generated in religious life and expended in the revitalisation of civil society. But it may amount to a necessary precursor of such social capital – a sort of spiritual capital which empowers individuals with a sense

of efficacy in the control of their own lives, and a sense of the possibility of social transformation as the Light flows out from Mahikari in ever-widening circles. This point will be returned to in the concluding section of this paper.

To return to our outline of characteristics of the type B religious association: First, Mahikari Canberra, as we found it, approaches the type as a socialising environment orientating its members to this-worldly engagement and empowering them with a sense of efficacy; but, in effect, 'this world' appears largely to be a congeries of fairly personal networks. Second, Mahikari Canberra as an association, approaches the type in that its leaders are disposed to engage with other social units in its environment; but there is no sustained, broad-based civic engagement, only an associational disposition towards it – unless invitations to local priests and rabbis may be considered civic engagement. Finally, Mahikari is represented by its members, and seems actually to function as, a home-base sustaining individual members in this-worldly engagements. But, as already noted, 'this-worldly' appears to constitute mainly private worlds of family and work, and action is predominantly the action of spreading the Light.

Ananda Marga: On the basis of an afternoon interviewing three members of Ananda Marga, a questionnaire return for an entry into our Directory, and limited library research, we are hardly in a position to make secure claims about this faith community. Nevertheless, we are in a position to compare and contrast at the level of this pilot exploration. And, on the basis of our exercise, we have found Ananda Marga, like Mahikari, to be relatively close to Type B, despite striking differences between the two in the religious orientations they foster, and their associational features.

Our three interviewees included the sector coordinator of Ananda Marga in the South Pacific region, Dada Paramatmananda, a monk born into a Hindu family in South Africa who became estranged from Hinduism as he worked as a computer engineer but found "rational answers" to his questions about meaning and the religious quest from an Ananda Marga teacher of meditation. The two lay activists, also interviewed on the occasion of our visit to the Ananda Marga Meditation Centre in Coburg (a suburb of Melbourne), were M., a member for 20 years and part of the 'active team" but with work outside and a family to support; and R., a more recent member, a part-time activist from an Australian-Italian Catholic family. R. explained that his commitment to Ananda Marga resided in his gratitude for the meditation practices and ascetic disciplines that had enabled him to overcome alienation and a drug problems related to living with a very severe physical handicap.

Superficially, Ananda Marga might appear very distant from our type B religious association. Its monastic elements, the emphasis on private and collective meditation, and a range of ascetic practices might suggest world-rejection and introversion rather than the fostering of orientations for civic engagement. Like Mahikari, foreign provenance and exotic practice might suggest minimal collective or individual engagement in Australian civil society. But our exploration of our

interviewees' orientations to the world and to action in it, and the accounts they gave of how their spirituality informed their everyday lives, challenge superficial impression.

Committed members do indeed follow ascetic disciplines, especially the central practice of trained, daily meditation, but like the monks, and their female counterparts, the *didis*, they do so in the world, and for the sake of building a better, less fractured world. Predicated on holism – the notion of the oneness of all creation – the orientations fostered in AM belief and practice are profoundly world-affirming and appear to draw Margis towards various forms of civic engagement as part of the spiritual quest. Each of our interviewees, though in different ways, expressed the connection between the philosophy of holism, the key practice of meditation, working on the self through ascetic practice for spiritual advancement and the achievement of social good.

M. spelled out these connections in his way. He is reflecting on those who come and go in Ananda Marga, coming from an initial "New Age thing" fascination with yoga, and going because the long-term commitments to the linked search for holistic meaning, spiritual development, and collective action addressing social problems are too hard to make.

> ... those that find a home here are people that successfully have had some internal experience and internal realisation that has given meaning not only to their own life but shown them the interrelatedness of their lives with the rest of creation, of their lives with people, with their jobs, with their families. Given new meaning...that part is essential if one is going to now become an ideological, what I call a spiritual soldier, wanting to help not only Ananda Marga but any human being on this planet as a collective, standing collectively, in moving to an idealistic goal. The goal of an equitable society in every sense of the word...What that means? ... It goes to trying one's level best as a human being, joining a collective, to try and do one's best to see how deep-seated problems could be, solutions could be found. And these are not things that happen in a few years. It's a life-time...Ananda Marga is the initial platform. Then there is networking between other groups and Ananda Marga...There's no way we can think that Ananda Marga is going to be the solution to everything, all the world's problems. That's dumb. So you know we have to make contact and we do...on the ecological front, on the emergency relief fund, on the community development front, on the, you know, social justice, economic justice, quality of life.

On the basis of the connections spelled out above by M. and the defining orientations that appear to be fostered in the community, a number of almost paradoxical characteristics of Ananda Marga emerge from our interviews. Ananda Marga associations like the one we found in Coburg strive to be settled communities, with quite elaborate procedural rules for internal democracy; but neither the community itself nor the spiritual life that it sustains are taken by the most deeply committed Margis as sufficient in themselves – both take their meanings for our interviewees only as the necessary starting points in the sustained

quest to find and bring forth the wholeness and fullness that is in the world. Margis like M. and Dada Paramatmananda stress the rational philosophical underpinnings of AM spirituality; but their beliefs call on them to negotiate belief and practice with others and join with them in a continuing quest for solutions to the world's ills.

These lived tensions, at the heart of Ananda Marga spirituality for our interviewees, fairly obviously connote a potential for AM associations as type B, contributing to the enrichment of civil society in Australia. As a powerful socialising environment, it fosters orientations of service to and negotiations with the world outside the community: that is the expected fruit of the life of the spirit acquired within. Leaders of the community, as spiritual leaders, commit themselves to seek out and work with other social units that are trying to transform the world for the better, and they perceive their spiritual community as a continuing homebase as members go out from the Meditation Centre in different directions to serve the world. We have some indications that this potential is realised in the lives of our interviewees. R., himself physically handicapped, considers his spiritual journey has led him to an active role as a volunteer worker in a share organization helping the disabled and the elderly. Dada Paramatmananda, didis and helpers provide vegetarian food at local and alternative living festivals, and there they make contacts and help build networks, as well as teaching meditation and talking about Ananda Marga.

Discussion

None of the remaining four NRMs in our study came as close to our type B faith community with its high potential to enrich civil society as Mahikari or Ananda Marga. This is not to say that more intensive and extensive study of the groups might not modify our placement of all six across the range from close to type A to close to type B. In any case, the aim of this analysis was not to provide such relative placements, but to test some working hypotheses about how features of faith communities affect how they figure in civil society; and more particularly, how some of the newer faith communities might enrich civil society, rather than impoverish or even subvert it, as some prevailing stereotypes suggest they do.

Let us highlight the various ways in which these two faith communities appear to us to enrich civil society. We do so in the spirit of stimulating further enquiry and discussion rather than advancing firmly established conclusions, not only because the research data is from an exploratory pilot study but also because the theorisation of civil society and its discontents requires development. However, even tentative argument requires spelling out what has so far been largely implicit: the connection between a religious association's possession of features of ideal type B and its contribution to the enrichment of civil society. Following McDonald (1999) we see civil society under threat as the citizens who would construct it in their everyday life interactions fail to develop as individual and collective actors in their "struggles for subjectivity". From this perspective,

associations that enrich civil society are identified as those that assist in those struggles by providing discursive and experiential resources that increase the chances of success and counter factors conducive to failure.

The contemporary citizen in consumer-capitalist, globalising, multi cultural societies is challenged by a cultural imperative to achieve subjectivity, i.e., to choose collective identification and personal identity, and to live the chosen life in sustained creative negotiation in a variety of differentiated social settings, with a variety of similarly challenged by others. But the challenge to construct subjectivity, the central challenge for the contemporary citizen, is not easy. Subjectivity, individual and collective becomes more and more difficult to attain as means and models for its attainment, available at mid-twentieth century, diminish. A melange of interacting factors reduce the means for constructing subjectivity in the workplace and in everyday life: these include the decomposition of mid-twentieth century career-paths, and the reduction of securities once provided by the industrial welfare states and institutions like trade unions that buttressed them. At the same time, the profusion of lifestyle options, conjoined with a collapse of authoritative models for living and collective action, make increasing demands on the creativity of individual citizen-subjects (for a similar analysis see Zygmunt Bauman, 1998).

The citizen-subject knows that the opportunities and the means for mobilising subjectivity are located in job and consumer markets, but her subjectivity is fragile before market forces that might exclude her or, at the other extreme, overdetermine her as a manipulated consumer (Lyon, 2000: ch.5). In danger of exclusion from economic citizenship or consumer-overdetermination, she may seek community as a source of norms, values, lifestyle and support. But she finds the communities of industrial society dispersed, or the new and reconstituted communities based on ethnicity, nationality or religion authoritarian and, again, overdetermining as their members react to the ambiguities and uncertainties of globalising, multicultural societies by demanding total submersion in the community itself.

In such a post-industrial world – the world experienced by McDonald's Australians – citizenly negotiation of interests and identity is extremely difficult. The logics of markets and communities and the imperatives of self-creation are difficult to reconcile. Chances of effecting some sort of reconciliation in the political sphere are restricted by the steady reduction of political life to administration of the economy, and of the state (always vital to the development of citizenship and civil society) to the function of economic management. And reconciliation is difficult in work and everyday life because of the decomposition of career paths and other features of contemporary society listed above which, in concert, undermine the moral imagination, the focused energies, and the skills needed by the subject-citizen.

Religious associations with Type B characteristics help enrich civil society as socialising environments and home-bases in which members may equip themselves to reconcile the competing logics of market, community and self-

creation. They orientate their members to critical engagement in everyday life, focus energies on such engagements, and provide communal models, support and practice in the skills of negotiating subjectivity. In this they are unlike some of the associations we placed closer to Type A which reinforce either the logic of the market or of community at the expense of sustained citizenly negotiation of identity and lifestyle, variously circumscribing the citizenly dispositions and the subjectivity of the subject-citizen.

Mahikari and Ananda Marga, by contrast, dispose their members to be citizens in interactions within and beyond the religious community and, while providing models and templates for engaged citizenship, appear to do so without eradicating or swamping their members' subjectivities. Both of these Type B religious associations socialise members in particular critical visions of the world, but each believer is expected to reflect on the meaning and implications of the shared vision in personal experience. The shared vision locates fracture and goodness or wholesomeness everywhere: the good and the possibility of attaining it is not confined to the religious group or its hallowed leaders, but is there to be worked on, drawn forth in the home, at work, in lifestyle festivals - in the ambiguous world at large. The religious community is a special place, essential to acquiring the discernment and strength for spiritual development in the midst of ambiguity, and forces that the isolated individual seems unable to control. But it is not the exclusive locus of spiritual development: that (most clearly in the case of Ananda Marga) demands action in the world beyond the religious community, in concert with the non-religious other, for collective goods (compare the cases discussed in Wood, 2000).

This exercise in ideal typing leaves us a long way short of demonstrating conclusively how the two religious associations actually figure in local civil society or showing how members of either group actually conduct themselves as citizen-subjects. On the other hand, it renders more plausible the claim that some of the newer elements in Australia's increasing religious diversity may be enriching civil society rather than fragmenting it. Further, albeit tentatively, it helps us articulate, how other elements in the diversity, including numerically more significant New Immigrant and Ethnic Community religions, and new forms of religious life in old established religions, might be enriching Australian civil society. That might be a small but significant contribution from the sociology of religion to help us address the fears and the pessimism about increasing religious diversity in Australia that appears to have been re-activated by the terrorism of September 11 2001.

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