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**The Role of Religions in  
the Public Sphere:  
The Post-Secular Model of  
Jürgen Habermas and Beyond**

Edited by  
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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## PREFACE

The realm of the “public sphere” has been mired in controversy. The main focus of the controversy is the question: “To whom does the public sphere belong?” or “Who has the right over the public sphere?” In the modern period this question emerged in the context of Western and Northern European liberal democratic nations, which before their formation as Liberal Democratic Republics were under the “Papal State Regime” and had to fight hard to achieve their freedom. Since the Church had dominated the public sphere until the formation of the Liberal Democratic Republics in Western and Northern Europe, the newly formed liberal democratic nations did not want to let the Church – that dominated them – have any influence in the public sphere of their nations, and wanted full control over their public sphere. Thus, the immediate context of the “problem of the public sphere” is the conflicting relationship between the liberal democratic states and the Catholic Church. Though the problem of the public sphere originated in the context of Church-State relationships in Western and Northern Europe, there was an attempt by the proponents of the secularization theory to universalize this antagonism towards the Church and to extend it to religions in general. Thus, the secularist stand on this issue would be that not only the Church, but also all religions should be pushed out of the public sphere and should not be allowed to have any influence in the public sphere. As a result, the problem is no more “To whom does the public sphere belong?”, but “What is the role of religions in the public sphere?”

In fact, this issue of the role of religion in the public sphere is still very significant in many of the already existing and emerging new liberal democratic nations. Therefore, the role of religion in the public sphere has been taken up for discussion by many authors. Jürgen Habermas has written extensively on this issue, and there has come about a significant change in his perspective on this issue. His thought shifts from an apparently dismissive attitude towards religion to equivocal criticism and from sympathy and comprehension to a more receptive stance on religion. Hence, it is fitting that an attempt to study the role of religion in the public sphere is made having Habermas’ thought on this issue as its background. This volume entitled *The Role of Religions in the Public Sphere: The Post-Secular Model of Jürgen Habermas and Beyond* attempts to explore the role of religion in the public sphere, an issue that is very relevant and significant in our times, in the light of Habermas’ thought.

Before we move further in exploring the issue in this volume, we need to acknowledge and express our gratitude to Professors Christian

Bryan S. Bustamante, Debika Saha, Kuang Snaping, Ozlem Uluc, Rajesh Shukla, Zeng Teqing, and Zhang Haojun who have contributed these scholarly papers that make up the volume. A special word of thanks to Professor Plamen Makariev, who, besides guiding the Spring Seminar 2012 and writing the introduction to the volume, has contributed a paper which is included in this volume.

*Vensus A. George*

# INTRODUCTION

*PLAMEN MAKARIEV*

All the papers in this volume, with the exception of the one by Rajesh Shukla, have been developed on the basis of presentations at the seminar on the theme *The Role of Religions in Public Sphere: The Post-Secular Model of Jürgen Habermas and Beyond*, organized by the Council for Research of Values and Philosophy and conducted from March 26 to April 6, 2012, at the Council's premises in Washington, D.C. This was one of the regular Spring Seminars of the Council, which invites scholars from all over the world to discuss a theme, relevant to the research in values and philosophy. The theme was formulated by Prof. George F. Mclean, the President of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. The interest towards it was provoked by some of the recent publications of Jürgen Habermas – *Religion and Rationality* (2002), *The Future of Human Nature* (2003), *Religious Tolerance: The Pacemaker for Cultural Rights* (2004), *Between Naturalism and Religion* (2008), the Holberg Lecture “Religion in the Public Sphere” (2005), the paper “‘A Post-Secular Society’: What Does that Mean?”, presented at the Dialogues of Civilizations Seminar in Istanbul, and the lecture “Myth and Ritual”, delivered at the Berkley Center in Washington D.C., on October 19, 2011 – that have opened up the question regarding the role of religion in the public sphere.

## **RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: THE PERSPECTIVE OF HABERMAS**

The above-mentioned publications of Habermas fit the general tendency of the recent decades to build models of the public sphere which are more inclusive with regard to contributions by religiously inspired views,<sup>1</sup> contrary to the secularization-paradigm, which insists on the strict separation between religion and public sphere. Numerous interpretations and explanations of the desecularization processes have been proposed by various authors. Habermas himself claims that there are three factors most influential in this respect, which creates the impression of a worldwide ‘resurgence of religion’: firstly, the missionary expansion; secondly, a fundamentalist radicalization; and thirdly, the political instrumentalization of the potential for violence

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of such views are those presented by José Casanova in 1994, Peter L. Berger in 1999, and John Rawls in 1997.

innate in many of the world religions.<sup>2</sup> By “missionary expansion” the author refers to the activities of conservative groups within the established religious organizations which have been spreading their influence in countries mostly of the so-called “third world” – in Africa, in East and Southeast Asia, as well as in Latin America. A special case in this respect is what Habermas calls “the decentralized networks of Islam”, which has taken root in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> Concerning fundamentalism, he points out that religious movements, such as the Pentecostals and the radical Muslims, as well as various sects which combine elements of traditional and popular religions with pseudoscientific and esoteric doctrines, are attracting more and more followers throughout the world, including in countries, such as Japan and China.<sup>4</sup> Finally, by “political instrumentalization” of religion Habermas means first of all the “... political unleashing of the potential for violence innate in religion,”<sup>5</sup> having in mind the *Mullah* Regime in Iran, the “desecularization” of the Middle East conflict, the politics of Hindu nationalism, [and] the mobilization of the religious right in the United States in relation to the invasion of Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

The “secularization – desecularization” debate concerns not so much a descriptive challenge (i.e., how should the researchers understand the phenomena of the sort of the ones mentioned above – as a real “worldwide resurgence of religion”, or as nothing more than some aberrations), but rather a normative issue, namely, whether these tendencies represent a danger for the democratic political order and should they be opposed in one way or another.

Here the question is not so much whether religious institutions and communities should have the right to express in public their opinion on social and political issues of general concern – for restrictions of such rights would amount to a violation of the freedom of speech – but whether such institutions and communities should have the opportunity to exert influence on the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, which take decisions and carry them out and these decisions are binding for all citizens, regardless of their beliefs. In case that the “weight” of religious considerations in the public sphere becomes so great that they would be shaping public policies, a danger appears that these policies

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “A Post-Secular Society’: What Does That Mean?”; Paper presented at the Istanbul Seminar organized by Reset Dialogues of Civilizations, Istanbul, 2008, p. 2. Retrieved from the website: <[www.resetdoc.org/EN/Habermas-Istanbul.php](http://www.resetdoc.org/EN/Habermas-Istanbul.php)>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*



would be affecting negatively the interests and rights of the citizens who do not share the religious convictions in question. In such a situation, the fairness of the political and social order would be disrupted. However, a strict “censorship” on the interventions of representatives of religious institutions and communities in public debates would violate unquestionable cultural rights of the religious citizens. How can we draw a correct demarcation line between a harmless public expression of an opinion, on the one hand, and swaying the public opinion in one or another direction in such a decisive way that this would predetermine public policies, on the other? What criteria can we use in order to make such a difference?

Jürgen Habermas proposes a solution to this problem which is based on his “two track” model of deliberative politics. He uses the term “post-secular society” in order to demonstrate his specific position with regard of the “secularization-desecularization” dichotomy. Descriptively, he characterizes this type of society by referring to three phenomena: the effects of globalization on western-type societies where a secular mentality has predominated so far; the role which religious organizations have begun to play in public debates on issues that are so controversial that the secular public is split in its opinion on them; and the effects of the immigration from third world countries.<sup>7</sup> Firstly, the global conflicts, many of which are religiously inspired, make the European citizens “... aware of their own relativity within the global horizon.”<sup>8</sup> It is impossible under the conditions of globalization to keep thinking that cultural and social modernization can advance only along one route, i.e., the one which historically has been followed by European societies and which presupposes the secularization of public life.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, Habermas points out that Churches are increasingly assuming the role of “... communities of interpretation in the public arena of secular societies.”<sup>10</sup> On issues, such as the legalization of abortion, voluntary euthanasia, animal protection or climate change, the public debates reach in some cases such deadlocks that the moral intuitions that are specific for a religious mentality can provide a valuable input, which would help move the debate in a constructive direction. Finally, the immigration from countries with traditional cultural backgrounds adds

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “A Post-Secular Society’: What Does That Mean?”, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Habermas’ considerations in this respect can be complemented by the opinions of quite a few other authors, such as Shmuel Eisenstadt’s conception of the “multiple modernities”. Cf. Shmuel Eisenstadt: “Multiple Modernities”; *Daedalus*, vol, 129, no. 1, (2000), pp. 1-29.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Habermas: “A Post-Secular Society’: What Does That Mean?”, p. 4.

inevitably a religious element to the cultural pluralism which is characteristic for contemporary democratic western-type of societies.

How does Habermas deal theoretically with the challenge of making the public sphere more inclusive with regard to contributions from religious viewpoints without taking the risk of converting the government into an "... executive arm of a religious majority that imposes its will on the opposition?"<sup>11</sup> As mentioned above, he makes use of his "two-track" model of deliberative politics, developed by him most articulately in his work *Between Facts and Norms*.<sup>12</sup> Here, he differentiates between "strong" and "weak" public spheres – the former represented by the institutions of power and the latter by the so called "informal public sphere" functioning in civil society. The communication within "the institutionalized decision-making process at the parliamentary, court, governmental and administrative levels"<sup>13</sup> should be conducted in a universally accessible language, so that the cogency of any claim can be assessed by every participant in the decision-making process and, thus, the universal legitimacy – legitimacy from any viewpoint – of the decisions can be guaranteed. This kind of communication is obviously not possible in a public sphere where religiously motivated positions are directly presented and defended. If claims for or against public policies are substantiated by referring to values or norms which are specific to a certain religious doctrine, they cannot be considered as convincing by participants in the public communication who do not share the values in question and do not regard as valid the respective norms.<sup>14</sup> However, for Habermas, such communication – communication among representatives of different religions and/or purely secular citizens – is perfectly feasible in the *informal* public sphere of civil society because no binding decisions are taken there. At this sphere, the presentation of positions, opinions, and viewpoints can be done in any form and the attainment of agreement on a certain issue is a matter of continuous dialogue which need not fulfill strict discursive requirements. It is important only when claims for or against public policies are eventually presented to the institutions of power in a universally accessible language. Thus, according to Habermas, there is a filter between the weak and the strong public spheres "... through which only translated, i.e., secular contributions

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *Between Facts and Norms*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas: "A Post-Secular Society': What Does That Mean?", p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. John Rawls: "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"; *University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 64, no. 3, (1997), pp. 780-807.

may pass from the confused din of voices in the public sphere into the formal agendas of state institutions.”<sup>15</sup>

All this implies that participants in the informal public communication – despite their cultural, religious, and secular background – should find a *common language* in any situation in which they are adamant to press the state institutions to adopt certain public policies. Habermas does not say how. He only claims, in a very plausible manner, that this is highly desirable. Concerning the value of the contributions to public discourses from religious positions, he points out that “... religious traditions possess the power to convincingly articulate moral sensitivities and solidaristic intuitions,”<sup>16</sup> which might be very helpful in debates on sensitive issues which concern vulnerable social relations. On the other hand, he maintains that religious citizens and communities should not adjust to the constitutional order in a *modus vivendi* manner. “They are expected to appropriate the secular legitimation of constitutional principles under the premises of their own faith.”<sup>17</sup> This highly desirable process of reciprocal movement from both sides to mutual understanding and acceptance presupposes, according to Habermas, a “complementary learning process”<sup>18</sup> in which both the parties should be involved. A necessary prerequisite for this is that a self-reflective attitude be adopted by them. “So, if all is to go well, both sides, each from its own viewpoint, must accept an interpretation of the relation between faith and knowledge that enables them to live together in a self-reflective manner.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Habermas regards the informal public sphere as a mediator between the particularistic positions of religious organizations and communities, on the one hand, and the universalistic decision-making on the territory of state institutions, on the other – a mediator which transforms the diverse messages, contributions, and claims which originate in the non-public domains into unified forms that could regulate social processes in the equal interest of all parties affected.

## PLAN OF THE VOLUME

How do the papers in this volume relate to the above-said impressive conception? As all other academic initiatives of the Council for Research of Values and Philosophy, the seminar on the “Role of

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<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas: “‘A Post-Secular Society’: What Does That Mean?”, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Religions in Public Sphere” brought together scholars from various cultural backgrounds. Naturally, most of their comments on Habermas’ model concern its relevance to the cultural environments in their own societies. This polyphonic reaction to the theoretical challenge that Habermas presented is not simply thought provoking, but a clear evidence of the cultural relativity of even the most fundamental philosophical theories. Even those authors, who do not deal explicitly with the relation between Habermas’ conception and their own cultural worlds, exercise their reflection on the public role of religion in a manner which is culture-specific.

The first two papers, which make up the first and second chapters of the volume, are the only ones in the collection which keep to a more general philosophical approach to the theme of the seminar. The first chapter contains Plamen Makariev’s paper entitled “The Public Sphere: The Ideal and Realities”. It serves as a second and more extended introduction to the volume. The author situates Habermas’ conception of the public sphere into a larger context of theories on the same subject matter, regarding the model of the German philosopher as an idealization and outlining the parameters of the main discrepancies between ideal and reality which we face today. As a result, he draws conclusions about what can be qualified as absolute and what as culture-specific in Habermas’ model.

The second chapter contains Zhang Haojun’s paper entitled “Component or Moment? A Critical Assessment of Habermas’ Division of the Life-World”. It aims at clarifying the notion of life-world, an important concept in Habermas’ thought, which plays a central role in his theory of communicative action, and refers to the non-public domains of social life in Habermas’ conception of the public sphere. The author addresses Habermas’ view that the life-world should be regarded as composed of three components – culture, society and personality. Zhang Haojun claims that, in the light of the undeniable mutual dependencies among the three, their designation as “components” looks not quite adequate and a better term which would express more correctly Habermas’ understanding of the life-world would be “moments” in the meaning assigned to this term by Edmund Husserl in his work *Logical Investigations*.

In the third chapter, Ozlem Uluc uses Habermas’ methodology in order to assess the recent political development in Turkey, especially concerning the role of Islam in public life. In her paper “Re-Visiting Habermas on Religion in the Public: Does He Shed Light on Islam in Turkey?” she reflects on the shift of the public policies in this respect from a radical laicist trend, characteristic for the Kemalist political tradition, to a model of public life which is more inclusive regarding Islam, that has been developed by the Justice and Development Party.

Throughout the last ten years when it has been in power, this party has been trying to combine active technological modernization with pro-Islamist cultural policy, thereby making efforts to corroborate the conception of multiple modernities which was mentioned above. However, it has encountered serious opposition from the older parties which keep to the Kemalist paradigm. All this has resulted in bitter political and cultural debates, some of which, especially the one on the Islamic veil, have been briefly presented by Ozlem Uluch. She concludes that the confrontational nature of these controversies is due to the cultural “struggle” between secularist and Islamist forces, and is directly related to the political realm. As a result, this relationship is not mediated by a strong and independently functioning public sphere, which should have been the case according to Habermas model of deliberative democracy.

This model is obviously based on a set of assumptions, which are far from culturally unbiased. Individualism, the attitude of making fundamental difference between public and private life, and between matters of personal choice and of common concern – all these are manifestations of a modern and western mentality. To what extent are Habermas’ considerations about the desirable role of religion in the public sphere relevant to non-western societies? This question is dealt with in the next four chapters.

In the fourth chapter, Rajesh Shukla in his paper entitled “Religion, Politics, and Liberal Democracy: An Uneasy Alliance” critically reflects on the separation of religion from politics which is characteristic, at least ideally, for liberal democracies. He demonstrates convincingly that religion has been often used as an instrument in the political life of western societies. An example of this is the faith-based initiatives of President George W. Bush in the U.S.A. However, the crux of his paper is a brief exposition of Mahatma Gandhi’s view on the relation between religion and politics. Distancing himself explicitly from western individualism, Gandhi insists that the welfare of all presupposes not only social partnership, but also spiritual partnership. The ultimate goal of politics should be the realization of truth in this world. However, since according to Gandhi’s theory truth is synonymous with God, politics is inseparable from religion.

The fifth chapter bears the title “Religion in the Public Sphere: An Indian Perspective”. The author, Debika Saha, points out that the public sphere in India, a country famous for its religious pluralism, has never been really secular. So, no processes of de-secularization or post-secularization are taking place there. Initially it has developed in colonial conditions and consequently – not as a product of a free society. It was not vibrant in its character as it was controlled by the colonial governance. However, nowadays it is a territory of demonstration of

religiosity. As Debika Saha writes “what has become prominent in the public sphere is not secular reason but religious celebration”. Actually religion, in its plurality of forms has become a powerful force in civil society. As India has been making spectacular economic progress in the recent decades, many are ascribing the country’s success to the Hindu values.

In the sixth chapter, Kuang Sanping and Zeng Teqing in their paper entitled “Some Problems about Religion Entering the Public Sphere: A Chinese Cultural Perspective”, reveal that there is even a greater discrepancy between the liberal model of the public sphere and their own cultural reality. They claim that the very “religious-secular” dichotomy is irrelevant to Chinese cultural experience. At least from a Confucian point of view public life is inseparable from traditional cultural and moral norms, such as the “view of kindheartedness”, “considering others by putting oneself in their places”, the “classification of loves”, the “virtue ethics of self life” and the “internal saints and external kings”, which are based on religious beliefs. According to Chinese cultural traditions religion is an indispensable factor for structuring a harmonious society.

The seventh chapter deals with Christian Bryan S. Bustamante’s paper “A Reading of Jürgen Habermas’ Religion in the Public Sphere in the Light of Foucault’s Concepts of Bio-power and Archaeology, and Philippine Experience”. It exposes another case of contradiction between Habermas’ model of a post-secular public sphere and a cultural reality. According to Bryan Bustamante the Catholic Church occupies a prominent place in the Philippines’ public sphere. Though Catholicism does not control the government by being a state-religion constitutionally, it exercises enormous influence on public policies, as Habermas would say, by exercising “communicative power” and shaping public opinion. The Church’s position on many controversial issues of common concern is quite conservative, from a liberal point of view. For instance, the Church would be in favor of moral censorship on the mass-media and against birth control. However, it is still accepted as legitimate by the vast majority of the population. The dominant position of the Catholic Church is not supported by any political repressive means and/or by imposing legal restrictions on religious pluralism. The Catholic faith is simply *de facto* shared by almost all of the people in this country. This circumstance does not leave room for religious conflicts in public life, and this is very important, as the concern about such conflicts is actually the *raison d’être* of the secularist model of the public sphere.

In general, the papers in this volume demonstrate certain cultural limitations on the applicability of the model of a post-secular public sphere which was developed by Jürgen Habermas. However, these

critical reflections do not contradict the “*spirit*” of Habermas’ undertaking because the latter was itself intended to bring forth a more realistic approach to the establishment of a status of religion in our contemporary societies which would allow these societies to benefit from the creative resources of religious faith without nurturing conflicts between people with different beliefs and convictions.

In the conclusion, Vensus A. George highlights some of the issues that have been raised by the various papers included in this volume on the theme “State, Religion, and the Public Sphere”. Some of the issues that capture our attention are the following: the veracity and universal applicability of the secularization theory; the unacceptability of absolute religious exclusivism and the unacceptability of extreme religious inclusivism leading to the emergence of a theocratic state. Having elaborated on these three issues as they are unfolded by various authors of the papers contained in this volume, he makes an attempt to strike a balance between the views of absolute religious exclusivism and extreme religious inclusivism so as to give both the secular and religious ideas an equal level playing field in the public sphere, so that state and religion are not considered as opponents who need to be afraid of each other, but as collaborators in the exalted task of nation-building and development of people. The volume ends with a bibliography of the works used by the authors in writing their papers, and an index.





## CHAPTER I

# THE PUBLIC SPHERE: THE IDEAL AND REALITIES

PLAMEN MAKARIEV

Although the term “public” has been in use in the social sciences for a long time, and is defined and understood in various ways, the term “public sphere” is associated with a concrete conception, the basis of which, according to general opinion, was laid down by Immanuel Kant. In several of his publications, and especially in his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, he formulated the idea that the relation between politics and morality is mediated by the “*Publizität*”. In an appendix titled “Of the Harmony Which the Transcendental Concept of Public Right Established between Morality and Politics”, Kant proposes a “transcendental formula of public law” which says: “All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity.”<sup>1</sup> He formulates another affirmative version of the same principle in the same volume: “All maxims which *stand in need* of publicity in order not to fail their end agree with politics and right combined.”<sup>2</sup> Kant’s argument in favor of this principle looks simple. If I can’t make public the maxim of certain political actions of mine without “... exciting universal opposition to my project,”<sup>3</sup> this is due to the injustice with which this maxim threatens everyone, and from this necessarily follows that the maxim, or project in question is contrary to morality. On the other hand, if a political project conforms to the public’s universal end and happiness, it can be made public – this will remove the public’s distrust in the maxims of politics – thereby contributing to “... the union of the goals of all possible.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, Kant’s message here is that public acceptance is the touchstone for the correspondence of a given policy to the norms of morality.

Jürgen Habermas outlined in his book *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, a picture of certain patterns of communication in *bourgeois* social circles in late seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries which he qualified as *Öffentlichkeit* – translated into English as public

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant: *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

sphere.<sup>5</sup> This was, in his account, communication on issues of common concern, which was free and open, and as such it had powerful legitimating or de-legitimating effect on the norms of social life, especially on the legal ones, and public policies. Further, Habermas claimed in the critical spirit of the Frankfurt School, that in modern mass society, characterized by a welfare state and consumerist culture, the public sphere is in decline – under the pressure of commercialized mass media, ideological propaganda and public relations campaigns. Its legitimating function is manipulated from behind the stage and cannot be trusted any more. This very influential work of Habermas was criticized by quite a few authors, as for instance in some of the papers in the collection *Habermas and the Public Sphere*,<sup>6</sup> which was dedicated to the first English-language publication of the volume *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Its assumptions are historically wrong, especially as far as the free and open nature of the legitimating communication among representatives of the *bourgeoisie* is concerned, because it offers no opportunities, for instance, for the participation of proletarians or women. However, it is undoubtedly an impressive presentation of a modernist ideal of legitimating communication.

Much later, in the early nineties of the twentieth century, Habermas developed a more articulate version of this ideal, not relating it to a concrete historical period especially in his work *Faktizität und Geltung*, published in 1992, and translated into English as *Between Facts and Norms*. Here, in his description of the mechanism of policy legitimization, Habermas presents civil society as a social environment for the functioning of the public sphere. This qualification applies to debates that take place within and among informal associations, social movements, professional organizations, intellectual circles, mass media, and other social entities not involved in the exercise of political power which nevertheless deal with issues of common concern. Habermas refers to the domains in which non-public issues are discussed as the “life-world”, using a category initially developed in phenomenological philosophy. Civil society “transmits” influences from the life-world to those institutions of representative democracy in which decisions binding all are taken. Insofar as civil society “hosts” the public sphere, it is capable of fulfilling the function of transforming signals coming from culturally proliferated interactions that take place within the life-world into plans and models for the just regulation of relations among all

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Craig Calhoun: *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992).

citizens independently of the cultural specificities of their beliefs and interests.

Thus, it is the public sphere which, “as a network for communicating information and points of view”, i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes, filters and synthesizes the streams of communication in such a way that they “coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.”<sup>7</sup> Habermas regards the public sphere as a self-regulating network of communication streams that forms the opinions and wills of citizens. This enables him to discern within it a capacity to transform the diverse messages, contributions, and claims which originate in the life-world into unified forms that regulate social processes in the equal interest of all parties affected. It is through the public sphere that culture-specific arguments are transformed into arguments that are generally accessible to everyone. As a result of this functioning of the public sphere, public opinion is formed on various issues. It may be described as comprising a recapitulation of the debates that take place informally and as the ultimate instrument for influencing debate and decision-making within the institutions of representative democracy. Thus, public opinion reveals to the government and political elites “what the public of citizens would accept as legitimate decisions in a given case.”<sup>8</sup>

How can the influence of public opinion on the institutions of democratic societies be explained? Why do the latter tend to comply with the former? A key formulation which Jon Elster puts forward in the “Introduction” to the volume *Deliberative Democracy*, namely, “the civilizing force of hypocrisy,”<sup>9</sup> casts light on this issue. This implies that the interest to preserve – or rather the concern not to lose – the legitimacy of one's own political conduct in the eyes of the public, who eventually comprise the electorate, is the source of what Habermas terms “communicative power”. He remarks: “Not influence per se, but influence transformed into communicative power, legitimates political decisions.”<sup>10</sup> Concerning the ideal of the public legitimacy of a collective decision – actually the legitimacy of norms and practices depends on the explicit or implicit approval of the public which in turn can be regarded as a form of collective decision – Habermas subscribes to the criteria of public deliberation. Most generally, they should guarantee that the acceptance of the decision is a genuine one, and not given out of fear, momentary emotion, or blind trust to somebody else's

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<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 360.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Elster: “Introduction”; *Deliberative Democracy*, ed. Jon Elster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 371.

opinion. If the decision is taken in a procedurally correct way, it should be in the equal interest of all persons affected – not in the sense that someone else decides that this is so, but because these persons themselves accept the outcome of the deliberation. They do this as responsible people who know what they are doing, and not just because they happen to agree. Of course, some or even all of them might be wrong in accepting the decision in question. Some, or all of them might have insufficient or false information about the situation, might be guided by assumptions and values that they would subsequently reconsider. However, the procedural correctness of the decision also presupposes its revisability, if someone presents ample argumentation for a change.

The theory of public deliberation is far from unanimity concerning these criteria. Different “lists” are in circulation. For, in his work *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas has appropriated the one proposed by J. Cohen as Habermas puts it, “a plausible characterization of the deliberative procedure”<sup>11</sup> According to Habermas, Cohen prescribes the following parameters of a legitimizing discussion: firstly, rationality – “argumentative form”;<sup>12</sup> secondly, inclusivity and publicness – all who are possibly affected should have equal chances to take part; thirdly, freedom from external coercion; fourthly, freedom from internal coercion – equality among the participants so that their positions in the debate should yield only to “the unforced force of the better argument”;<sup>13</sup> fifthly, revisability of the decisions; sixthly, inclusivity concerning the subject matter of the deliberation – any matter discussed can be regulated in the equal interest of all; and finally, inclusivity with regard to interpretations of needs and wants.<sup>14</sup>

If we simplify the picture a little, we can conclude that according to the ideal of public legitimization presented in Habermas’ work *Between Facts and Norms*, a norm or a social practice – for instance, a public policy – can be regarded as legitimate if it is positively evaluated by a public discussion which is rational, equal, open and free from coercion. Why exactly these and not other parameters? According to Jostein Gripsrud, the basic assumption here is that a social norm or practice is legitimate if it is worthy of approval by a person who corresponds to the *modern* ideal of a human being, i.e. someone who takes his/her decisions in an autonomous and responsible way. In other

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

words, this understanding of public legitimization is a modernist one.<sup>15</sup> This perception is also valid for Habermas model of the public sphere as a whole. For, Peter Muhlberger, the key word in this respect is “agency”. One cannot exercise his/her agency in approving or disapproving of social norms and practices if she/he is doing this not according to his/her own will, but because of being coerced in some way, or because she/he trusts blindly someone else’s opinion on the matter under consideration, or if she/he is yielding to certain emotions, or if certain important and relevant information is being concealed from him/her.<sup>16</sup> A great part of the discussions on the public sphere concerns the instances and forms of misuse of this powerful instrument of legitimization. The discrepancy between ideal and reality in this case is not so much as a matter of the imperfection of the actual patterns of public legitimization in comparison with the ideal ones, but as an ideological issue. The theoretical and political challenges in this respect are seen not as how to find ways of improving the public communication, but rather as how to expose the machinations of various representatives of the dominant classes, or, more generally, the dominant economic and political circles in society.

My position on this issue is that we face a major theoretical task concerning the discrepancies between the modernist ideal of a public sphere and the actual ways in which public legitimization is done. We need to make a difference between two kinds of such discrepancies. Some of them are due to historical and cultural differences between an actual society and the modernist ideal of social life. Others are due to certain distortions in social life. We should not confuse the former with the latter, in order not to condemn incorrectly as morally wrong certain forms of public legitimization which have functioned in the past and continues to function at present quite un-problematically in their societies, for the sole reason that they do not correspond to the modernist understanding of legitimacy. This is not only a matter of historical justice, but also of intercultural understanding and tolerance, especially if we accept as conceptually sound and empirically corroborated the theory of multiple modernities.<sup>17</sup>

By “distortions” I mean here the deliberate manipulations which aim at legitimizing certain social norms and practices that are conductive

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jostein Gripsrud: “Scholars, Journalism, Television – Notes on Some Conditions for Mediation and Intervention”; *Television and Common Knowledge*, ed. Jostein Gripsrud, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Peter Muhlberger: “Human Agency and the Revitalization of the Public Sphere”; *Political Communication*, vol. 22, no. 2, (2005), pp. 163-178.

<sup>17</sup> Shmuel Eisenstadt: “Multiple Modernities”, pp. 1-29.

to the realization of private interests at the expense of the common good and social fairness. They also involve ideological propaganda, brainwashing, and the deformations of public communication that are due to the general social conditions in the respective society. An example of this would be the commercialization of the public sphere in modern mass society, which has been subject-matter of bitter criticism by Habermas in his work *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Of course, there is no clear demarcation line between the manipulations of public communication, on the one hand, and the discrepancies between what public communication is expected to be, and its actual functioning in the “force field” produced by the interplay of various influences exercised by powerful factors in social life, on the other. Some of the distortions of public communication in the latter case are not an effect of intentional actions, but if they happen to be beneficial to the interests of powerful “players” in this “game”, they are tolerated by them. However, the difference between the two kinds of distortion of public communication does, in my opinion, matter from a moral point of view.

At present, the specialized literature offers an abundance of critiques on the quality of our contemporary public spheres as functioning in democratic western-type societies.<sup>18</sup> In none of the four aspects, mentioned above, does the legitimizing public communication correspond fully to the modernist ideal. Instead of freedom of formation and expression of journalists’ opinion on matters of common concern, we have the tacit censorship of the managements of the mass media and the auto-censorship of intellectuals who sometimes prefer to “trim” the truth in their publications if this is necessary in order not to jeopardize their careers. Instead of the argumentative communication, which aims at convincing the public, we have in many cases brutal pressure of mass-media literally on the senses of the audience. Instead of exchange of reasons between equal citizens, we often have deliberate and careful bringing up of cult figures, who can influence the hearts and minds of the people in order to promote any cause, disregarding possible negative effects on society as a whole. Instead of openness of the debates for any relevant information, we have “invisible” barriers raised by drastic

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. William Greider: *Who Will Tell the People?* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992). Cf. also Herbert Schiller: *Information Inequality*, (New York: Routledge, 1996). Cf. also Michael Sandel: *Democracy’s Discontent*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996). Cf. also Zillah Eisenstein: *Global Obscenities*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998). Cf. also Nina Eliasoph: *Avoiding Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

differences in the patterns of argument which prevent people from recognizing the validity of “strange” reasons.

Karl Boggs writes the following about the detrimental effect on the public sphere of investment in public communication of colossal material resources, done by large business corporations:

Without doubt corporate power and wealth shape politics in the United States today more than ever – in corporations’ very growing presence in the economy, their extensive lobbies and influence over legislative activity, their ownership and control of the mass media, their preponderant influence over election campaigns, their capacity to secure relief from myriad regulatory controls, their massive public relations apparatus, their general subsidies to the two major parties and the convention process, and so forth.<sup>19</sup>

The same author claims that the control of mass communications to a large extent by “corporate behemoths”, such as Time Warner, Disney/ABC, Bertelsmann, Viacom, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, exercises great influence on film production, TV, print journalism, and book publishing. Having established ideological hegemony they trumpet “... those virtues or attributes most consonant with perpetuation of that very system of power and wealth, namely, free markets, consumerism, personal responsibility, competitive individualism, and lessened reliance on the public’s input or state governance.”<sup>20</sup>

The openness of public discourse is a necessary element of the modernist ideal of legitimizing public communication. Speaking on this point, N. Fraser highlights the importance of the “sociocultural means of interpretation and communication.”<sup>21</sup> She means by this notion “the historically and culturally specific ensemble of discursive resources available to members of a given social collectivity in pressing claims against one another.”<sup>22</sup> These typically are: officially recognized idioms, vocabularies, paradigms of arguments, narrative conventions, and modes

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Boggs: *The End of Politics: Corporate Power and the Decline of the Public Sphere*, (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> N. Fraser: *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

of subjectification.<sup>23</sup> On the whole, these are the patterns of argumentative communication which are recognized in a given sociocultural environment as convincing. If a certain reason is formulated and presented in a substantially different manner, it will not be regarded in this environment as valid – not because of *what* is being claimed, but because of *how* it is being claimed. Fraser insists that the means through which a debate is conducted is not indifferent to its outcome – actually they may pre-decide this outcome. Consequently, if a part of the citizens in a given society, such as a social class, or an ethnic community, has established hegemony over means of interpretation and communication, it would amount to legitimizing its economic and political domination, and there is a great chance of perpetuating this domination. If among the rest of the citizenry certain opposition against the *status quo* begins to take shape – in spite of the communicative hegemony in question – it has little chances of articulating claims which contest in a convincing way the domination of the said class or community. This is simply because the public at large does not accept as convincing those arguments that do not conform to the hegemonic standards of communication. So, it seems that even if in a given society there is no censorship, public communication may be not free and open. In such cases the norms and practices that are regarded as legitimate by the general public are not legitimate according to modern standards. From a modernist point of view they are only *de facto* legitimate, insofar as they are regarded by the greater part of the citizens to be such as they ought to be. However, they are not genuinely legitimate.

Does this mean that the modern ideal of a public sphere is useless? In my opinion – not at all! As an ideal it can fulfill an important social function. It can be used as a benchmark to measure the advancement of democracy in modern and “late-modern”<sup>24</sup> societies. What this *modern* ideal should not be used for, as I claimed above, is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the patterns of public legitimization in societies which differ, in historical and cultural aspects, from the modern ones. In other words, we do not have sufficient reason to qualify as not genuinely legitimate norms and practices which are *de facto* legitimate in their societies, but which have been and are justified by public communication exercised in patterns that differ historically and culturally from the modern one. What is the difference, actually,

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> The “late-modern” is used by some authors, such as Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, as an alternative to “post-modern”. Cf. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash: *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).



between the two cases that have just been described? Many authors claim that the mass media manipulations compromise the public legitimization of norms and practices in western-type democracies. However, at the same time many admit that it would be a manifestation of modernist *naïveté* and arrogance to condemn as fictitious the legitimization of norms and practices in all non-modern societies. Is it because the public communication which justifies them is not entirely free from coercion and/or is not argumentative enough, and/or is influenced more by authority of the persons who participate in the debates than by the quality of the reasons that they use, and/or is not open enough? What is the difference between legitimizing a law in a Western European country by an exclusive lobbyist campaign in Parliament and in the mass media, and a Decree of the Sultan or King in an Islamic monarchy? Why should the legitimacy of the law in the former case be undermined by the deficiencies in the public communication which has promoted it, but the criteria which are used in order to expose these deficiencies are not regarded as relevant in the latter case?

In my opinion, there is a substantial difference between the two cases and this difference is in terms of the self-consistency of the normative<sup>25</sup> systems of the societies in question. The discrepancies between the modernist ideal of public legitimization and the actual ways in which this legitimization is done are considered to be a major break in the self-consistency of the normative self-understanding of “late-modern” societies. The analogous self-understanding of a “non-modern” society may suffer from other inconsistencies. However, it is not plagued by a contradiction between the assumptions that legitimize those norms and/or practices which are worthy of approval by autonomous and responsible individuals and the actual patterns of legitimizing communication which are characteristic for this society. This is so simply because such an assumption is not an element of the normative self-understanding of non-modern societies.

Of course, the very “modern – non-modern” dichotomy is a gross simplification. I use it here in a very narrow sense, referring to the difference in the normative self-understanding of the societies that has just been discussed. In a larger sense, there are various ways of being modern, “late-modern”/“post-modern” in the technological, ideological, and political aspects.<sup>26</sup> Besides, the very normative self-understanding of societies is never an integral whole. There are different tendencies, cleavages, and transformations. So, we can speak at most about the “predominating” or “prevailing” self-understanding of a society in a

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<sup>25</sup> The term “normative” here is understood in the larger sense of the word.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Shmuel Eisenstadt: “Multiple Modernities”, pp. 1-29.

given historical time-frame. Yet, I think that it makes sense to differentiate between a case in which there is a basic contradiction of a given kind in the normative self-understanding of a certain type of society and a case in which there is no such contradiction in the self-understanding of another society. If we regard certain criteria as irrelevant for the evaluation of the legitimizing capacities of the public communication in certain societies, this does not mean that we accept that the legitimizing function of this kind of public communication should be regarded as immune to any criticism. It may well have inconsistencies of its own, and new ones can occur. For example, western-type modernization tendencies cause considerable cultural and social tensions in some Third-World countries. Substantial cultural heterogeneity makes the task of public legitimization immensely difficult. However, scholars should not make it even more complicated by applying irrelevant criteria for qualifying certain norms and/or practices as legitimate or illegitimate.

**CHAPTER II**

**COMPONENT OR MOMENT?  
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF HABERMAS'  
DIVISION OF LIFE-WORLD**

ZHANG HAOJUN

**INTRODUCTION**

Habermas borrows the term “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) from Edmund Husserl, who develops and systemizes the notion of the life-world in his later works, especially in his book *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. He benefits a lot from Alfred Schutz, who introduces the concept of the life-world into social sciences for the first time, and analyzes the structures of the life-world in his works *The Phenomenology of the Social World* and *The Structures of the Life-World*. However, Habermas endows the term “life-world” with new significances in his volume *Theory of Communicative Action*. He conceives it as “a concept complementary to that of communicative action”<sup>1</sup> and as the social background of communicative action.

In this chapter we do not plan to clarify the differences in the use of the notion of life-world by Husserl, Schutz, and Habermas. Our main task here is to examine the legitimacy of Habermas’ division of the life-world into three structural components in terms of Husserl’s analysis of “parts and wholes”, “pieces and moments”, besides attempting to justify the substitution of “moment” for “component”. We elaborate the concept of life-world in four parts. The first part clarifies Habermas’ division of the life-world into three components. In the second part, an argument against Habermas’ division of the life-world is carefully carried out grounding on that “component” which is, to some extent, a synonym of “part”. The third part analyzes the relationship between “parts and wholes”, and “pieces and moment”, as explained in Husserlian phenomenology so as to justify that the term “moment” would be a better choice for replacing the term “component” not only terminologically, but also theoretically. The fourth part is the conclusion based on the above arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 119.

### HABERMAS' DIVISION OF THE LIFE-WORLD INTO THREE COMPONENTS

In order to “rationally reconstruct” the necessary presuppositions and the intersubjective mechanism of cooperative and coordinative practice of communication, Habermas embeds his concept of communicative action within the concept of the life-world. He describes the life-world as “the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims..., and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreement.”<sup>2</sup> In Habermas’ view, the life-world, within which the social action takes place, is composed of three components: culture, society, and personality. He defines the three components as follows:

I use the term *culture* for the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world. I use the term *society* for the legitimate orders through which participants regulate their membership in social groups and thereby secure solidarity. By *personality* I understand the competences that make a subject capable of speaking and acting that put him in a position to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity.<sup>3</sup>

Habermas considers that the delimitation and description of the structure of the life-world is only a preliminary achievement for his analysis of the relationship between the life-world and communicative action. What should be clarified properly is another crucial question: “How a society reproduces itself?”<sup>4</sup> In other words, “how these three components of the society as life-world are reproduced through time?” and “how the identity of the life-world is maintained after the content of the cultural tradition, institutional structure, and personal competences have undergone changes?”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, p. 137.

Thus, Habermas “distinguishes two aspects of social reproduction.”<sup>6</sup> The first is symbolic reproduction and the second is “material reproduction.”<sup>7</sup> By symbolic reproduction Habermas means the reproduction of these three components of the life-world – culture, society, and personality. By material reproduction<sup>8</sup> Habermas means the “maintenance of the material substratum of the life-world,”<sup>9</sup> which is “the organized production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, as well as the society’s external and internal defense.”<sup>10</sup> According to Habermas, it is the communicative action that performs the symbolic reproduction of the life-world. To quote him:

In coming to an understanding with one another about their situation, participants in interaction stand in a cultural tradition that they at once use and renew; in coordination their actions by way of intersubjectively recognizing criticizable validity claims, they are at once relying on membership in social groups and strengthening the integration of those same groups; through participating in interactions with competently acting reference persons, the growing child internalizes the value orientations of his social group and acquires generalized capacities for action.<sup>11</sup>

By the above argument, Habermas claims that to correspond to these three structural components of the life-world respectively, there exist three kinds of functions or processes in symbolic reproduction: cultural reproduction; social integration, and socialization. Habermas describes each of these processes according to its function, resource, and

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Habermas thinks that symbolic reproduction fulfills the maintenance of the life-world along with “material reproduction.” Since the latter notion is not directly connected to the theme of this paper, I do not analyze the latter in any detail. Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, pp. 137-138.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, p. 138.

crisis, when there is the case of the failure or disturbance of reproduction.<sup>12</sup> We briefly consider each of these processes here below.

The first is the function of cultural reproduction. It is “the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge,”<sup>13</sup> so as to ensure “that newly arising situations are connected up with existing conditions in the world in the semantic dimension.”<sup>14</sup> It ensures “a *continuity* of tradition and *coherence* of knowledge sufficient for daily practice.”<sup>15</sup> Its resource is meaning; the crisis is a loss of meaning and “corresponding legitimization and orientation crises.”<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the function of “social integration” consists in establishing “social solidarity through shared norms and institutionalized values.”<sup>17</sup> It makes sure “that newly arising situations are connected to existing conditions in the world in the dimension of social space.”<sup>18</sup> It takes care of “coordinating actions by way of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations [and stabilizes] the identity of groups to an extent sufficient for everyday practice.”<sup>19</sup> Its resource is “social solidarity”; and the crisis is the anomie within the “society” as a component of the life-world; a threat to the society’s identity within the cultural sphere, and alienation within the sphere of personality.<sup>20</sup> The third is the function of Socialization which consists in developing “personal identities.”<sup>21</sup> It ensures “that newly arising situations are connected to the existing situations in the world in the dimension of historical time.” It secures “for succeeding generations the

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hugh Baxter, “System and Life-World in Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action”; *Theory and Society*, vol.16, (1987), p. 48. Cf. also Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23, which Habermas summarizes in *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, pp. 142-144.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Theory of Communicative Action; Life-World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2, p. 140

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, pp. 140-141. Cf. also Hugh Baxter: “System and Life-World in Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action”; *Theory and Society*, vol. 16, (1987), p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 24.

acquisition of generalized competences for action,” and to secure “that individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life.” Its resource is “*ego-strength*.” Its crisis is the psychopathologies within the sphere of personality; a “break in cultural tradition” within the sphere of culture; and the “withdrawal of motivations” within the sphere of society.<sup>22</sup>

#### **“COMPONENTS”: AN UNNECESSARY APPENDAGE?**

Hugh Baxter holds that if we understand the life-world as the background of social interaction, and as the stock of resources on which actors draw, then we see that actors rely on culturally transmitted knowledge, group membership, and personal identities including skills, dispositions, and motivation. However, “Habermas quickly converts the resources of ‘action’ – ‘culture,’ ‘society,’ and ‘personality’ – into ‘structural components of the life-world,’ or rather, structural components of society seen as life-world.”<sup>23</sup> In Hugh Baxter’s view, Habermas’ conversion “is puzzling”. He questions: “Why would we necessarily think that society has ‘components,’ if that term has the ordinary meaning of ‘parts’? And why would we assume that culture, society, and personality are the appropriate parts?”<sup>24</sup> It is evident that here Hugh Baxter raises two issues: the first is that if it is appropriate to use the term “components” to characterize the structure of life-world insofar as that “components” is equivalent to ‘parts’ in the ordinary sense; and the second is that if it is legitimate to assume that the life-world is made up of only three rather than more components.

To the second question, although Hugh Baxter does not give his own answer, it seems to me that he thinks that the life-world could be viewed as having more than three components. Besides, culture, society, and personality are neither necessary nor sufficient components of life-world. Hugh Baxter deals with the first question as follows.

As Habermas has explained, his interest is in accounting for how societies reproduce themselves through time. Certainly he is right that a society’s continued existence-as recognizably the same society-depends on its ability to maintain, even though change, a cultural tradition. Clearly, also, a society needs to be able to maintain (again, even though change) its basic social institutions, and equally clearly, it needs to transmit appropriate skills, dispositions, and motivations to its members.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hugh Baxter: “System and Life-World in Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action”; *Theory and Society*, 16, (1987), p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

What Habermas calls cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization all seem to be necessary functions for a society's reproduction. But to say that is not to commit ourselves to the idea that the society has "components" and that the components are culture, society, and personality. We can speak of reproductive functions without localizing them in a particular "component" of society.<sup>25</sup>

Hugh Baxter further clarifies that the idea of "components of a society" is not only "unnecessary" but also "positively disadvantageous" because this idea "suggests that society has parts, and if the first-order division of life-world is into culture, society, and personality, then one naturally wonders where to place more particular social phenomena. The problem, though, is that one-to-one assignment generally is impossible."<sup>26</sup> In order to justify his point of view, Hugh Baxter takes the Church as an example. He asks first of all: as an organization, "is it [Church] located in the cultural component, the societal component, or the socialization component?"<sup>27</sup> Then, he says:

Pretty clearly it performs all three functions that Habermas attributes to those 'components': it transmits and reproduces a cultural tradition; it integrates the members of the Church through shared norms and values and through common experiences; and it socializes the members, encouraging them to develop their personal identities in particular ways. Showing how the Church fulfills these reproductive functions would be a significant part of explaining the Church's social significance. But claiming that the Church is 'in' a 'component' called 'culture,' 'society,' or 'personality – or 'in' all three – would add nothing to the explanation.<sup>28</sup>

It seems to Hugh Baxter that since Church as a social organization that fulfills at the same time three reproductive functions of life-world, i.e., cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization, it cannot be classified as any component of life-world. It is in this sense that Hugh Baxter even suggests that the term "life-world" should be dropped.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



### **“MOMENT”: AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR “COMPONENT”**

It seems to me that Hugh Baxter's suggestion of dropping the term “life-world” by reason of Habermas' misuse of “component” to characterize the structure of the life-world is to some extent sound, but not exercisable, insofar as it is constitutive for Habermas' theory of communicative action and the discourse theory of law and democracy. However, we can employ another term “moment” to take the place of “component” in order to abstain from the latter's ambiguity. Someone may ask the reason for our choice of the term “moment” rather than any other synonymous term to be a substitute for the term “component”. Before answering this question, I would like to discuss the term “moment” in terms of Husserl's phenomenological analysis of the relationship between parts and wholes in his *Logical Investigations*.

Husserl deals with the relationship between wholes and parts, moments and pieces, and defines relative terms in the third *Logical Investigation*. In his view, wholes can be distinguished into two different kinds of parts: pieces and moments. “*Pieces* are parts that can subsist and be presented even apart from the whole; they can be detached from their wholes. Pieces can also be called independent parts.”<sup>29</sup> However, “*Moments* are parts that cannot subsist or be presented apart from the whole to which they belong; they cannot be detached. Moments are *non-independent* parts.”<sup>30</sup> According to Husserl, good examples of “pieces” are the roots, trunk, bark, wood, branches, and leaves, which can be separated from the tree as a whole, and still present themselves as independent entities. When separated, “pieces” become wholes in themselves and are no longer parts. Pieces, then, are parts that can become wholes. The examples of “parts” are components of a machine, a member of a troupe of actors, a soldier in a platoon are elements within their respective wholes.<sup>31</sup> Good examples of “moment” are the hue, saturation, and brightness of color, which cannot occur apart from some surface or spatial extension, and the pitch, timbre, and loudness of sound, which cannot exist except as integration into a sound.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 23. Cf. also Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 23.

“Moments cannot be except as blended with other moments. Moments are the kind of part that cannot become a whole.”<sup>33</sup>

According to Husserl’s analysis, “pieces” is equivalent to “components” in the sense that Habermas uses in his theory of communicative action, and that Hugh Baxter argues against. Apart from Hugh Baxter’s second question – “why would we assume that culture, society, and personality are the appropriate parts?” – if we merely think about the first question – “why would we necessarily think that society has ‘components,’ if that term has the ordinary meaning of ‘parts’?” – we would find that indeed culture, society, and personality cannot be understood as “parts” of the society as life-world in the sense of “pieces”, but should be understood as “moments”. Only in so doing, the problem of ambiguity and misunderstanding could be resolved. Because “moment” is a non-independent part of the whole, and hence an *abstractum*, it cannot separately exist or be presented apart from the whole. Besides, the whole, in turn, cannot exist apart from its moment. For example, color is a moment of extension; we cannot find an extension without any color in the perceivable world or even in any imaginable world at all. For the same reason, not only can we think of the timbre and loudness of the sound abstractly and theoretically, but also we cannot find any sound without timbre and loudness. For timbre and loudness are the moments of sound.

In this very sense, we can also say that culture, society, and personality are not the “parts” but the “moments” of the life-world. “Moments” could be considered as an acceptable substitute for “components” because a society as life-world apart from culture, society, and personality would no longer be a society, and the reproduction of the life-world through time, namely, through the functions of the cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization, would no longer be carried out at all at least in Habermas’ viewpoint, although his division of the life-world only into these three “moments” has not completely sufficient and trustworthy reasons. In fact, the moments of the life-world in my view should be more or less in different senses, or be different from Habermas’ classification: for example, politics, economy, culture, myth, ritual, religion, and the like.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented my analysis regarding the division into three components of the life-world that Habermas performed in his work *Theory of Communicative Action*, and put forward my proposal of substituting “moments” for “components” in terms of the logic of parts

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

and wholes, especially that of “pieces” and “moments”, which Husserl treated in his third *Logical Investigations*. Hugh Baxter’s critique of Habermas’ classification of the life-world into three “components” to which the “parts” in the ordinary sense is very relative is to some extent reasonable, but his assertion that the term “life-world” should be thoroughly dropped and is not acceptable. In my point of view, we can revise in part Habermas’ division of structural “components” of the life-world by means of the term “moments”, since the structural division and reproduction of the life-world grounds his theory of communicative action.



## CHAPTER III

# **RE-VISITING HABERMAS ON RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: DOES HE SHED LIGHT ON ISLAM IN TURKEY?**

*OZLEM ULUC*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to re-visit Habermasian consideration on religion in the public sphere, and explores if the thought of Habermas on the role of religion in the public sphere has a bearing on Islam in Turkey. In clarifying this theme, it begins by setting the context with the elaboration on the rethinking of modernization and secularization theory. Then an attempt is made to give a critique of the secularization theory and present the new conceptualizations of religion in the modern context. The next two sections delve into Habermas' perspective on religion in the public sphere and Turkey's experience of religion in the public sphere. The conclusion sheds light on how the Habermasian perspective on religion in the public sphere has a bearing on religion in the public sphere in Turkey. In the first section, we set the context by highlighting the rethinking that has been happening in regard of the modernization and secularization theory in recent times.

### **SETTING THE CONTEXT: RETHINKING MODERNIZATION AND SECULARIZATION THEORY**

Religion is an increasingly important issue among the subjects the social sciences deal with, due to its controversial position and power to influence social and political life. The ongoing debate and research on the relationship between religion and modernity are carried out with reference to the theory of secularization. However, since traditional theories of secularism only partly explain the process of secularization and modernity, and fail to explain the increasing impact of religion, the search for new concepts to analyze the social implications of religion has emerged among social scientists. For example, among other approaches Habermas' concept of "post-secular society" which addresses religion in the public sphere is one of the leading perspectives which has created many debates. Similar to other concepts bearing the prefix "post", Habermas' concept of "post-secular" seems, initially, to include an ambiguity because the prefix "post" can both point to the subsequent stage within the same phenomenon and qualify the new one although it

is not a different concept. However, the ambiguities and the obvious contradictions in the multi-meanings of the word “secular” may be the reasons for the uncertainty in the meaning of the word “post-secular”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in order to better explain Habermas’ post-secular age approach and analysis, it would be appropriate to examine the debates on the place of religion in an advanced society through, primarily, the traditional modernization and secularization phenomena and their criticisms.

It is a fact that the concept of modernization and secularization is directly linked to the nation-state project and to the relationship between religion and the nation-state. The social consciousness which led to the emergence of the *bourgeois* public sphere and the French Revolution embodied the quest for democratic society and state in the establishment of the nation-state. However, one cannot argue that this new political structure is based on direct participation into the public domain as it was in the ancient Greek public sphere or that it is a pluralistic democracy tolerating diversities. In the middle ages, during which the influence of religion on politics was down to zero, the communities willing to get rid of the hegemony of the Church and the ruler, tried to build a structure that would avoid the influence of both the institutions and their actors. This resulted in a more homogeneous and uniform mechanism which excludes pluralism both at the level of the religious and ethnic identity. On the other hand, due to the effects of scientific developments and industrialization, the perception that positivist thinking will lead to democracy was established and the idea that religion will develop in conflict with the scientific progress also emerged.

A widely accepted view was that, due to the rise of modernity, religion would lose its influence. In other words the power of religion to influence the society would decrease gradually as the societies become modernized and public life would be shaped without the impact of religion. However, until now this expectation did not largely come true. As a result, a critical debate on the traditional secularism theory has started. Religion was not ‘defeated’ against science but gained a distinguished place for itself both in the public domain and in the scientific field as a result of the change in the social structure throughout the world, in the perception of the state phenomenon and in the consciousness of identity and citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Due to factors, such as democratization, the search for freedom, migration and globalization, religious symbols, organizations, and identity claims become more

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. José Casanova: “Are We Still Secular?”; *Post Secular Society*, eds. Peter Nynas, Mika Lassander and Terhi Utriainen, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Özlem Uluç: *Kamusal Alanda Din*, (İstanbul: Yarı Yayınları, 2013), p. 16.

visible in the lives of individuals, and in social, political and economic platforms. This has led the sociology and political science scholars as well as many intellectuals to focus their attention on the revival and increasing visibility of religion, especially in the recent decades.

### A CRITICAL APPROACH TO SECULARIZATION THEORY

“The Secularization Theory” occupies a central place in the sociological inquiry about religion in modern societies. Secularization theory is based on the argument that modernization would lead to decline of traditional forms of the religious life. It also predicts that religion will lose its influence on social and individual consciousness and eventually disappear.<sup>3</sup> For example, Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, Steve Bruce, Thomas Luckmann, and Karel Dobbelaere, the defenders of the secularization theory, have established a correlation between the start of modernization and the decline in the traditional religious lifestyle. According to Bryan Wilson, secularization is a process in which religious ideas, practices and institutions lose their significance within society. On the other hand, scholars, such as Peter Berger, Rodney Stark, Daniel Bell, and Jeffrey Hadden criticize this approach

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<sup>3</sup> For further readings on secularization theory: Cf. David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Bryan Wilson: *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Bryan Wilson: *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Karel Dobbelaere: *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, (Bruxelles: P. I. E.-Peter Lang, 2002); Steve Bruce: *God is Dead*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Peter L. Berger: *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (New York: Doubleday, 1967); Peter L. Berger: “A Bleak Outlook is Seen for Religion”, *New York Times*, April 25, 1963, p. 3.; Peter L. Berger: “Secularism in Retreat”, *National Interest*, (Winter, 1968, pp. 3-12.); Rodney Stark: “Secularization: R. I. P.”, *The Secularization Debate*, ed. William H. Swatos and Daniel V. Olson, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 41-66); Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge: *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Daniel Bell: “The Return of the Sacred”, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 419-449; Jeffrey K. Hadden: “Desacralizing Secularization Theory”, *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered*, ed. J. K. Hadden and A. Shupe, (New York: Praeger House, 1989), pp. 3-26; Jeffrey K. Hadden: “Religion and the Quest for Meaning and Order: Old Paradigms, New Realities”, *Sociology Focus*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 83-100; Anthony Gill: “Secularization and the State: The Role Government Policy Plays in Determining Social Religiosity”, *The Role of Religion in Modern Society*, eds. Detlef Pollack and Daniel V. A. Olson, (New York & London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 115-139.

arguing that the sacred has returned. Peter Berger, in a special way, claims that religion has never disappeared.

In fact, in his earlier studies Peter Berger strongly supported the idea that as a result of modernization religion would diminish. However, after witnessing the vigor and significance of religion in American society, he has changed his views on the secularization theory. Now, Berger suggests that the assumption that we are living in a secular world is wrong. For him, the world today, although there are some exceptions, is very religious. Berger states that modernization did not bring about secularization, but pluralism. The pluralism America experiences today emanates from its historical characteristics.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Karel Dobbealere explains secularization on three levels. On the individual level, he argues that under the forces of modernization, human beings will be less religious; they will lose their interest in religious rituals, beliefs and practices. On the societal level, he thinks, religion will not be the dominant factor. On the organizational level, he claims that religious institutions will become more open and accountable in the modern period because of the diversification and competition in the religious market.<sup>5</sup>

A different perspective is adopted by Bryan Turner who makes a distinction between political and social secularization. By “political secularization” Turner primarily means the secularization at the level of religious institutions and political systems. He uses the term “social secularization” referring to the area which we define as social values, practices and traditions, alias as the daily life.<sup>6</sup> Some thinkers even argued that religion would totally disappear under the forces of modernization. C. Wright Mills, for example, wrote in his famous book *The Sociological Imagination* that under conditions of modernity, “religion, shall disappear altogether, except, possibly in the private

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bryan Wilson: *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 149. Cf. also Peter Berger: “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview”; *The Desecularization of the World, Resurgent Religion in World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger, (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), p. 2. Cf. also Peter Berger, Grace Davie and Effie Fokas: *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations*, (England: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 14-15. Cf. also Thomas Luckmann: *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Karel Dobbelaere: *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, (Bruxelles: P. I. E.-Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm and Peter Nynas: “Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction”; *Post-Secular Society*, eds. Peter Nynas, Mika Lassander and Terhi Utraiainen, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), p. 7.



realm.”<sup>7</sup> Secularization has different forms and dimensions. For example, Veit Bader states that secularization has three dimensions: Cultural, social and political. According to Bader, secularization within a cognitive and normative cultural frame is possible in terms of philosophy, society and the individual. For him, decline in religious beliefs and practices in modern societies is a social secularization. Secularization of the state or politics falls under the scope of political secularization, which Charles Taylor defines as laicism. Casanova defines dimensions of secularization through categories of theological-philosophical, legal-political and cultural-anthropological nature.<sup>8</sup>

Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure differentiate between political secularization (laicisation) and social secularization. Political secularization means that the state accepts that it is independent from religion and displays itself through positive law and public policies. In a sense, it is a system of ensuring public order in which freedom of religion would prosper and it protects the citizens from the pressures exerted by religious groups or communities. Social secularization is erosion of the influence of religion in shaping the individual living as well as in influencing the social practices. Secularization basically is a reflection of the state’s will to approach its citizens in a fair manner. Therefore, all the definitions about secularization, such as ‘the separation of the Church and the state’, ‘the state’s neutrality towards religions’ and ‘the privatization of religion’ that makes religion a personal matter are true to an extent.<sup>9</sup> Some European sociologists and political scientists argued that the European experience is a universal one which will be the dominant model for any country or a society which will go through the process of modernization. Although it is not possible to describe Europe in a monolithic fashion, it is widely argued that the end result of modernization is secularization.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the

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<sup>7</sup> C. Wright Mills: *The Sociological Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Veit Bader: *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 39. Cf. also José Casanova: “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms”; *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor: *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, trans. Jane Marie Todd, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011) pp. 15-16, 19. Cf. also Dominic McGoldrick: *Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe*, (Oxford & Portland: Hart Publishing, 2006), p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> There is a comprehensive analysis which includes 196 countries on religion-state relation produced by Brian Grim and Roger Finke. For detailed information: Cf. Brian J. Grim and Roger Frinke: “International Religion

European experience is the example which serves as a base for the views of social scientists that defend secularization theory even today. In this context, the phenomenon of the public domain, which is secularized and the religion which is privatized, can be seen as an outcome of the European experience where religion or the Church was dominant and hegemonic in the middle ages. However, amongst different perceptions and the place of Christianity in the social life of the Europeans in general, the increasing Muslim population and the spread of new forms of beliefs as well as the examples emerging outside the Western Europe, reveal that modernization did not produce the same results in all societies.<sup>11</sup>

As noted above secularization theorists made a number of claims as to the future of religion in modern societies. Some of these claims seem to be true, especially for Western and Northern Europe. However when it comes to some non-Western societies such as Middle Eastern, Asian and South American countries, modernization did not exactly produce the same results. Even in the United States of America, religion is still a vibrant factor. It means that although modernization took place in countries such as India, Turkey, Israel and the United States of America, religious beliefs and institutions are still influential. It is largely true that Western Europe became secular in every aspect of the term, yet the British sociologist Grace Davie claims that the European experience is an exception rather than a universal rule. She claims that even in Europe, there are new forms of religiosity that have emerged, which she describes as “believing without belonging” to a Church.<sup>12</sup>

### **NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF RELIGION IN THE MODERN SOCIAL CONTEXT**

There are many cases which strongly indicate that in contrast to Western Europe, religion and its various manifestations are present in modern societies. Across the world, what we see is that the public role of religion is not only recognized but is also on the increase. This fact

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Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion”; *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, vol. 2, no. 40, (2006), pp. 7-8. For Church-state relations in European Union: Cf. also Gerhard Robbers: *Church and State in the European Union*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Grace Davie: “Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?”; *The Desecularization of the World, Resurgent Religion in World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger, (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Grace Davie: *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 25-26. Cf. also Grace Davie, “Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?”, p. 76.

causes debates in social sciences as to how secular and modern democracies should deal with such a reality because different forms of secularism have emerged. For example, the United States, many Eastern European countries, South American societies, and the Muslim world including Turkey face such challenges. The problems which these countries confront prove that traditional modernization theory is deficient to clarify the existing social realities. For example, in the United States, although religion is defined through secular concepts, its perception and practice are different than they are in Europe. On the other hand, it is obvious that, as it is in the West European countries, the historical experiences create differences about how religion is practiced. Moreover its level of influence on social and political life differs. Thus, after a certain point, accepting secularization as a generally accepted result of modernization would cause misleading interpretations, analysis and deadlock. At this point, it is significant to answer the question “how accurate a descriptor is the secularization phenomenon”. For example, religion-state separation in the United States is formally organized. However, in Scotland and the United Kingdom there is no such an official separation and there are even well-established Churches. The United Kingdom, in particular because of its unique social structure, is one of the rare countries in which the well-established Church and other belief groups can cooperate harmoniously; for every religion is recognized and protected.<sup>13</sup> Other than the two countries mentioned above, in the contemporary world, the alternative attitude regarding the existence of well-established Churches is the rigid separation of Church-state relationship as it is in France.<sup>14</sup> Even these three different schools of thought reveal the fact that given the realities of the social life, it is not possible to make a comprehensive definition of modernization and secularization.

Thus, the current developments and recent social and cultural transformations under the forces of globalization indicate that the prophecy of the secularization thesis seems to have failed to capture the ongoing influence of religion in public life. The analyses of Grace Davie and Charles Taylor indicate that the classical secularization theory looks like a Eurocentric approach. It looks at the Western European experience and generalizes the impact of modernity on religion. If one looks beyond

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Linda Hogan: “Introduction”; *Religious Voices in Public Places*, eds. Nigel Biggar and Linda Hogan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 6. Cf. also Roger Trigg: *Religion in Public Life: Must Faith Be Privatized?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> That dual distinction is explained with phrases such ‘rigid’ or ‘strict’ or ‘flexible’ and ‘open’. Cf. Jocelyn MacLure and Charles Taylor: *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, p. 27.

Western European experience, a different picture would emerge across the world, where religion is present in the public sphere or at least trying to have a place in the public realm. In contrast to the Western European experience with modernity and religion, Eisenstadt and Nilufer Göle offer a different perspective that they call “multiple modernities”. According to this approach, not all societies will experience a significant decline in the social influence of religion when they follow a process of modernization. This means that each society might have its own way of dealing with religion and modernity.<sup>15</sup>

In general, it is possible to explain the developments affecting the inquiries related to the phenomenon of secularization with three parameters: globalization, the European integration with other countries within the concept of European Union, and migration. It became clear that along with globalization, the secular structuring in the European countries did not develop into a universal norm which could be applied to the other countries throughout the world. This implies that modernization did not necessarily bring about secularization, but the communities became either more religious or in fact simultaneously religious and secular. On the other hand, the integration process with other countries through the European Union revealed the fact that the European countries, such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark or the United Kingdom did not develop a perception and practice of secularism that can be called “European”. Additionally, their relations with Eastern Europe, Russia and even with Turkey made it necessary for them to revise their interpretation of secularism.<sup>16</sup>

Migration from non-European countries especially caused a rise of different religious views and claims of the people who are members of those religious groups, and have questioned the relatively homogeneous structure of the population in terms of religion and the reality of the principle of impartiality of the state in the nation-state

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt: *Multiple Modernities*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002). Cf. also Nilüfer Göle: “Snapshot of Modernities”; *Multiple Modernities*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001, pp. 91-116. Cf. also Andrew Davison: *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Are We Still Secular?*, pp. 42-43. Cf. also Rajeev Bhargava: “Should Europe Learn from Indian Secularism? Religion in the Public Space: The Indian Pattern”; *International Workshop: Accommodating Religion in the Public Space, Looking Beyond Europe*, Work package 5: The Public Space, (Sofia: 20 October 2011), p. 5. Cf. also José Casanova: *Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prosoective Reflections on Islam*, p. 15. Cf. also Blandine Chelini-Pont: “Religion in the Public Sphere: Challenges and Opportunities”; *Brigham Young University Law Review*, (2005), p. 622.

structuring.<sup>17</sup> In fact, with the arrival of different immigrant groups such as Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who have changed the cultural landscape of European public sphere, even the Europeans themselves started to re-consider the place of religion in their countries. The *burka* ban in France, the cartoon crises in Denmark and the *minaret* referendum in Switzerland are the most recent examples that lead to re-consideration of religion in the public sphere in various national contexts which are heavily secularized.<sup>18</sup>

José Casanova identifies the social roles of religion within this process of transformation through the United States experience. By looking at the United States experience, Casanova talks about three forms in which religion plays a social role. First, he argues that religion provides motivation for the protection of traditional life styles against the forces of state and liberal market economy which are thought to weaken such traditional forms of life. In this context Churches and religious groups participate in public debates on issues, such as family and abortion. Second, Casanova talks about de-privatization of religion. Religion raises normative issues by being integrated into the public spheres of civil society and gets included into the processes of formation of normative structures and the rules. Thus, the religious institutions have begun to play an important role when there is a shift in the roles of religious and political initiatives. Casanova uses the term “de-privatization” to indicate this phenomenon. It means the impact of religion on various social processes. One can interpret this as the re-socialization of religion in the modern context. In this process, religions and religious groups engage in ethical debates in order to question state and the market as very important systems. For example, when it comes to nuclear defense policies or the war, religion reminds states and citizens of their ethical and moral responsibilities to achieve a common good. For Casanova, the third form of religion entering into public domain takes place by persistence of defending the idea of common good against individualist modern liberal theories. Individualist liberal theories tend to see the common good as the result of personal and rational preferences. Religions in this context provide a moral dimension

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Casanova, *Are We Still Secular?*, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> For more information: Cf. Jocelyne Cesari: *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Bernard Lewis and Dominique Schnapper, eds.: *Muslims in Europe*, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994); H. A. Hellyer: *Muslims of Europe, The ‘Other’ Europeans*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Jorgen S. Nielsen: *Muslims in Western Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Raphael Israeli: *Muslim Minorities in Modern States: The Challenge of Assimilation (Religion and Public Life)*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

by inviting modern societies to rethink the normative values and foundations.<sup>19</sup>

Religion gained strength while its disappearance was expected. However it also experienced a decline in the face of modernity. Such opposing views and realities brought new analysis through the emergence of alternative concepts such as de-secularization, re-sacralization, de-Christianization and emergence of a post-secular society as well as de-privatization. Persistence of religions and claims of religious people in modern societies or nation-states forces us to re-think how we can address questions on state-religion relations on the one hand, and religion in public sphere on the other hand. Given the increasing visibility of religion in modern societies, including Western Europe because of immigrants, we need to include and integrate the reality of religion into our social world and political debate. Craig Calhoun illustrates the intellectual challenge we face in this context as follows: “The prominence of religion still has the capacity to startle secular thinkers who thought it was clearly destined to fade in the face of Enlightenment and modernity.”<sup>20</sup> Calhoun draws our attention to Jürgen Habermas as one of these thinkers. For him “after decades of analyzing the public sphere in entirely secular terms, [he] insisted that religion needed central attention.”<sup>21</sup>

### **RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: HABERMASIAN CONSIDERATIONS**

New conceptualizations of secularization which are mentioned above strongly indicate that traditional secularization hypothesis does not explain the current presence and role of religion in modern society. Nevertheless secularization as a social process is taking place in different forms and degrees depending on socio-historical and political conditions of various countries. In this context, a significant question arises as to where we should place Habermas’ concept of post-secularism regarding debates on relations between religion and society. By the notion of post-secular society, Habermas basically refers to a general social transformation which implies that an increase has taken

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Public Religions in the Modern World*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 5-6, 228-229. Cf. also José Casanova, *Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Craig Calhoun: “Afterworld: Religion’s Many Powers”; *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 118.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

place in public consciousness regarding religion. To put it differently, the notion of post-secular society means that social awareness of religion is now felt stronger than before. Habermas attributes such an increase of public awareness of religion to the following reasons and facts. Firstly, religion has become more connected and linked with conflicts on a global level and has challenged the widely held secularist view that religion would inevitably lose its impact. Secondly, different national studies on value-laden civil and political issues and voices inspired and shaped by religious concerns have visibly increased. Thirdly, immigration in recent years and arrival of people with different traditional and religious backgrounds than that of the host societies led to the rise of religious claims. During this process religious matters become public and political issues. This observation is especially valid for Canada, Australia, New Zealand and wealthy European societies where peoples' ties with religion weakened considerably following the Second World War. As far as the trajectory of relations between religion and society are concerned, one might claim that today the strong separation between the secular and the religious is under question because the boundaries are becoming fluid and blurred. Habermas did not pay attention to the role of religion in the construction of public-sphere. Therefore, he did not emphasize this fact adequately in his earlier works. However, he states that religion should be taken seriously in the post-secular world that we are living in. Habermas places religious freedom at the center of his thesis and asserts that religious views should be heard subject to a translation process.<sup>22</sup>

For Habermas, the establishment of rational and inclusive democracy in societies which are thought to be secular includes both secular and religious individuals and groups. They should accept the fact that every one of them has the right not only to contribute, but also to participate in civil and social life. According to Habermas who places religious liberty at the center of his arguments, religious communities should have the right to represent their views in the civil and public-sphere. Deliberative politics can only be realized by the participation of religious and non-religious citizens into the debates which requires the use of public reason. If religious people are deprived of the right to participate and contribute to debates in the public sphere, a fundamental

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology”; *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 25. Cf. also Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm and Peter Nynas: “Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction”, p. 4. Cf. also James Gordon Finlayson: *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 103.

principle which is associated with a secular society and its identity will be lost. Therefore, liberal states should not try to persuade religious people and communities to give up expressing themselves with their ideas and identities in the political arena. According to Habermas, religious reasoning has also its place in the public sphere because the religious individual conducts his life according to his/her belief. It is for this reason that each and every actor, who is involved in political discussions in the public sphere, should understand and respect one another, so that varying arguments and positions could be harmonized. This process can only take place if different actors are able to engage in a mutually “complementary learning process.” Thus, for Habermas, the principle of Church-state separation requires politicians, public institutions and civil servants to formalize laws, court decisions, and provisions in such a language that could be understood by all citizens. Citizens in the public domain, who are not government officials, political party representatives, speakers for social institutions, Churches or other religious bodies, are not subject to such rigid rules while expressing their opinions. Moreover separating Church and state could be more difficult for religious citizens. They may not be able to fulfill such demands that would require using a language accessible to all citizens. In other words, religious citizens may not be able to distinguish between “what is secular” and “what is religious” in their minds without taking the risk of harming their lifestyle which is informed by their religious beliefs and principles.<sup>23</sup>

At this point, one should draw attention to the difference in the reasons that are used by the religious person in support for his/her claims. While making a claim for a religious space to worship she/he may have a language influenced by religious rhetoric. However, when it comes to making claims for his/her rights from the law-makers to justify his/her demands, she/he should use a language not based on religious

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology”, p. 24. Cf. also Jürgen Habermas: *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Ciaran Cronin, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 119, 121-122, 127, 129, 130-131. Cf. also Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm and Peter Nynas: *Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction*, p. 5. Cf. also Jürgen Habermas: “On the Relation between the Secular Liberal State and Religion”; *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta, trans. Mattias Fritsch, (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), p. 347. Cf. also Lasse Thomassen: *Habermas: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London, New York: Continuum Books, 2010), p. 155. Cf. also Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen: “Introduction”; *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 4.



justification. Politics and political mechanism include all citizens regardless of their ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics. Hence, if citizens are sincere in their commitments to the principles of inclusive and deliberative democracy, they should pay utmost attention to the language they use when they want to influence politics. This implies that they should purify their language from religious effects and refrain using religiously justified assertions and arguments. However, according to Habermas, the liberal state which protects all kinds of religious lifestyles equally should liberate their religious citizens from the responsibility of making a distinction between secular and religious reasoning in the public sphere. Habermas suggests that all citizens should establish a filtering system instead of imposing on the religious ones the duty to avoid completely using a religious rhetoric when they are making assertions and claims in the public sphere. Legitimization of arguments based exclusively on secular reasoning may only be expected from politicians working in public institutions. These people have the responsibility to remain impartial against different and competing worldviews. A bridge may be established between unofficial communications and discussions in the public sphere and official deliberations held by public authorities making binding decisions collectively. If such a mechanism is established, religious assertions and views – at a very initial stage of their expression – can be converted into a universal language to gain a legitimate place in making public decisions before being suppressed. Conversion of religious and secular language into such a language which can be comprehended by either party shall enable religious and non-religious citizens to find a common ground for the public reasoning.

As seen from the previous discussions, there is a new situation as far as complex relations regarding state, religion, secularism and the presence of faith groups with different claims in the public sphere are concerned. In order to understand and conceptualize this new situation, not only traditional laicist ideology and theory of secularism, but also eventual surrender of religion to secular ideologies and values should be re-evaluated and examined in detail. Habermas, with this perspective, addresses the basic difference between belief and knowledge, and considers religion as a source of motivation in the struggle against the powers of global capitalism. He believes that religious practices and perspectives continue to be major sources of ethics of multicultural citizenship which requires solidarity and mutual respect.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology”, pp. 25-26. Cf. also Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, pp. 128, 130. Cf. also Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen: “Introduction”, pp. 4-5. Cf. also James

Habermasian model regarding the management of religious people and religious claims in the public sphere may be useful for secular societies. However in cases where transition from a secular period to post-secular society has not been fully accomplished, the validity of the model may be questioned. Even such differences are discussed in a geography which may be defined to have a common history in the context of state structure, national identity and levels of religiosity of citizens as in Europe. Habermas' model for the management of religious demands in a post-secular society within non-western communities as well as in the United States face a risk of losing its power to explain the question under discussion. For instance, although the United States was founded as a secular state on the basis of its constitution, it has never experienced a *transition* or a *process* of official separation between Church and state. From the beginning, it was not a religious/confessional state that had a national Church in its history. In contrast to European countries, the United States has not experienced a de-confessionalization process either from a national ecclesiastical/religious institution or from a sectarian status. Therefore, it has not gained its existing state structure by passing through its religious, secular, and post-secular stages as in Europe. In other words, as the development of denominationalism has been guaranteed by the free and pluralist system in the society, a debate did not take place on two issues, viz., *the free exercise of religion* because it was allowed and *the protection of state having a national Church* because from the beginning the United States did not have it.<sup>25</sup>

The question whether Habermas' concept of post-secularism can explain the functioning of a political process and the extent to which it may be utilized to understand the Turkish experience with religion in the public sphere requires us to look at the historical trajectory of Turkey. Looking at the recent political history of Turkey will provide us the necessary material to test the Habermasian theory for the Turkish case. To this we turn our attention now.

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Gordon Finlayson: *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 103. Cf. also Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm and Peter Nynas, "Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction", p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Are We Still Secular?*, p. 36. Cf. also T. Jeremy Gunn: *Din Özgürlüğü ve Laisite, ABD ile Fransa Arasında Bir Karşılaştırma*, trans. Hüseyin Bal and Ömer Faruk Altıntaş, (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2006), pp. 19-23.

## RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: THE EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY

In the process of establishing a nation state, each state has tried to create a homogenous society based on a particular understanding of a nation. However, such a homogenization policy was challenged by the emergence of suppressed or disapproved traditions, customs and lifestyles, movements based on identity claims in the late 1960s. Different philosophical and political trends such as homosexuality, feminism, old or new immigrants, and green movements have begun to struggle for recognition of and respect for their differences.<sup>26</sup> The revival of religion in the public sphere and the increasing visibility of religion can be analyzed with these parameters. The *Alevi* community's claims for their rights and demands of conservative Muslims for freedom of veiling are instances that reflect the rising visibility of religion in the public discussions in Turkey. For sociologists and political scientists, Turkey provides rich material to engage in a debate over state-religion relations and the presence of religious claims in the public sphere. Turkey offers a unique opportunity to examine the question of religion in the public sphere as a case study for several reasons. First, it is a secular country with a dominant Muslim population. Second, Turkey tries to become a full member of the European Union and yet it is part of the larger Middle East where Islamic culture is the prevailing force. Third, questions of democratization, freedom of religion for un-orthodox believers and non-Muslim minorities are still not fully resolved. Lastly, secularism is still being hotly debated and seems to remain as a source of social and political tension for the foreseeable future. The Turkish political culture produced varying approaches to analyze the experience of Turkey. While some strongly defend the secularization policies of the State, some argue that in the process of European Union membership and rising tide of democratization, Turkish secularism should be re-defined. In this context, it will be a worthwhile effort to look at the Turkish experience through Habermasian lenses. Before doing that an examination of the development of state-religion relations in Turkey and the questions it has created will not be out of place because the secular nature of the state and the modernization process in Turkey did not lead to social secularism completely, as manifested in long running and inconclusive discussions.

Particularly, two significant issues come to the forefront in Turkey on questions regarding demands related to religion expressed in the public sphere and how these demands are managed. In general, one

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Çağla Kubilay: *İslamcı Söylemde Kamusal Alan ve Türban Tartışmaları*, (İstanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2010), pp. 172-174.

of the issues which we can analyze regarding the scope of religious freedom is the *Alevi* community which comprises 25% of the population, and their claims. This community asks for the legal recognition of their houses of worship (*cemevi*) and they do not want to be part of the dominant education system which teaches a *Sunni* interpretation of Islam. Another matter of debate in Turkey is the issue of using a veil in public spaces. Veiling is not allowed in public institutions legally, although this issue is somewhat resolved under the AK Party government in its ten years in power, particularly for female students in higher education institutions. However, prohibition of veil is still valid for civil servants.

In order to understand the controversial matters with reference to religion in the public sphere in Turkey, we should briefly examine the history of Turkish modernization addressing relevant questions. The modernization of Turkey has a long history dating back to the Ottoman period, starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Military defeats led to the recognition of the western society's technical superiority and to the reformation of military institutions. However, in the following years, reforms were initiated based on the consideration that only military superiority would not be adequate. By the Tanzimat Edict of 1839 and the Islahat Edict of 1856, state authorities tried to transfer western political institutions into the country,<sup>27</sup> but full westernization was not completed during the Ottoman Period. The project of comprehensive westernization became a state ideology in the formative period of the Turkish Republic. It was established in 1923 as a laicist and democratic state based on the rule of law. The four characteristics of the new Turkish state which distinguishes its form from the Ottoman state system may be summarized as follows: transition to the concept of administration based on rules and laws instead of the authority of individuals; transition from religious world view to the concept of scientific knowledge (positivism) to understand the universe; transition from the class based society shaped by the ruling and the ruled towards a concept of democratic community; and transition from religious community towards a nation-state.<sup>28</sup> These four parameters defined as the Kemalist modernization project led to the secularization of the state. Nevertheless such secularism as developed in Turkey by the state did not lead to the secularization of society to a large extent as was the case in the European experience where a large part of the society became secularized.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Şerif Mardin: *Türkiye'de Toplum ve Siyaset*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 205.

The Turkish state, for the purpose of controlling religion and for the protection of its citizens from intervention and influence of all kinds of religious authority, aimed at structural and institutional westernization.<sup>29</sup> Following the removal of the Sultanate on November 1, 1922, and the abolishing of the Caliphate and the Office of Shayk-al-Islam on March 3, 1924, the Presidency of Religious Affairs affiliated to the Prime Minister and the General Directorate of Foundations were established. The most important reform which shapes the Republic's relation with religion on institutional level is the foundation of the Presidency of Religious Affairs upon the law enacted on March 3, 1924. As a matter of fact, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is seen as the unique institution of the Republic, enabling the state to keep religion under its supervision. Shayk-al-Islam, an important institution in the Ottoman Empire, besides being in charge of religious affairs, undertook legal, judiciary, administrative and political duties. The Presidency of Religious Affairs which was established to replace it was structured as an organization affiliated to the Prime Minister. Through this institution, the state prevented the political legitimacy and the legal order to be based on religious institutions and rules. The Ottoman Empire was led by a Caliphate who represented worldly and spiritual authority. Therefore it was also described as an Islamic state. The modern Turkish Republic, however, is a secular state where the head of the state is a top public servant with no religious authority. It is possible to summarize the duties of the Presidency of Religious Affairs which functions to control religious hierarchy, the framework of religious education and streams, defined as heterodox Islam, as "services related to prayers and functions related to enlightening the society on religious matters; services related to religious education; foreign relations and services related to foundations which are relevant with the organization itself."<sup>30</sup>

In Turkey, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is accepted as the single official authority in relation to Islam. However, the presence and functions of this institution are subject to controversies. In this context primarily two issues emerge: the first controversy is whether such an institution can be present in a secular state which is supposed to be neutral to all religions. The second controversy revolves around the fact

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pascal Texier: "Fransız Laiklik Modelinin Kaynakları"; *Laiklik ve Demokrasi*, ed. İbrahim Ö. Kaboğlu, (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> İftar B. Tarhanlı: *Müslüman Toplum, "Laik" Devlet, Türkiye'de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, (İstanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1993), pp. 41, 73-89. Cf. also İftar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), pp. 23, 113-150, 246-247. Cf. also Şerif Mardin: "19. ve 20. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı'da ve Türkiye'de İslam"; *Türkiye, İslam ve Sekülerizm: Makaleler*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), p. 69.

that the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey adopts only the *Sunni* interpretation of Islam and the Hanafi legal school, but does not serve other sectarian groups, such as *Alevi*, *Shafii* and *Caferi*.<sup>31</sup> Thus, it is claimed that it provides religious services based on *Sunni* Islam, restricts freedom of religion by excluding non-*Sunni* groups and it is a part of state ideology and identity. Therefore, the mandate given to this institution indicates that the state is not impartial and state policies seem to provide privileges to some groups over the others. As the human rights discourse emerged, minorities, such as the *Alevi* community, began to question the state policies, which brought the position of the Presidency of Religious Affairs under the spotlight.

*Alevi* groups differ in their approach to the Presidency of Religious Affairs and in using the service it provides, such as praying in mosques, performing a religious marriage ceremony and a funeral ceremony, and the like. What makes *Alevi* groups different from the majority *Sunnis* can be observed in different areas: for example, *Alevis* generally do not go to mosques regularly, do not pray five times a day and do not fast in the month of *Ramadan*. Nevertheless, the Presidency of Religious Affairs stated that there are no differences in basic religious matters between *Sunnis* and *Alevis* except the issues around some local customs and beliefs. The Presidency argues that the difference people talk about is political in nature. Generally speaking the *Alevi* villages do not have mosques, instead they have a house of worship (*cemevi*) for their religious and spiritual ceremonies. Given this reality mosques were constructed in *Alevi* villages to put pressure on the *Alevi* communities to adopt the *Sunni* interpretation of Islam. These policies and practices present a social reality on the ground that ignored the nature of *Alevi*'s demands.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. İrfan Bozan: *Devlet ile Toplum Arasında, Bir Okul. İmam Hatip Liseleri, Bir Kurum Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2007), pp. 62-69.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. İrfan Bozan: *Devlet ile Toplum Arasında, Bir Okul. İmam Hatip Liseleri, Bir Kurum Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, p.73. Cf. also Şuayp Özdemir, İsmail Arıcı: *Alevilerin Din Hizmeti Beklentileri*, (İstanbul: Arı Sanat Yayınevi, 2011), pp. 49-54. Cf. also Battal Pehlivan: *Aleviler ve Diyanet*, (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 1993), p. 17. Cf. also Reha Çamuroğlu: "Türkiye'de Alevi Uyanışı"; *Alevi Kimliği*, ed. T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, and C. Raudvere, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 98. Cf. also Fuat Bozkurt: "Aleviliğin Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde Toplum-Devlet İlişkisi"; *Alevi Kimliği*, eds. T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, and C. Raudvere, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 113. Cf. also İftar B. Tarhanlı: *Müslüman Toplum, "Laik" Devlet, Türkiye'de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, pp. 179-180. Cf. also İftar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*, pp. 291-295.

Although *Alevi* groups differ in their opinions on the question of their representation in the Presidency of Religious Affairs, there is a consensus among *Alevi* groups that the current status of this Institution is in conflict with the principle of laicism. Moreover, in their opinion, this Institution is *Sunni* in nature and discriminates other religious faiths. However, *Alevi*s also have differences as far as the relations between *Islam* and *Alevism* are concerned. Some part of *Alevi*s in Turkey considers *Alevism* as part of *Islam*, whereas some others argue that *Alevism* is a different religion from *Islam*. Some other *Alevi*s define *Alevism* as a specific philosophy and lifestyle belonging to the Anatolia people which has nothing to do with religion. In other words, for them, *Alevism* is a secular faith enriched by folkloric elements. Sometimes *Alevism* is also defined as a struggle for democratization, modernization and secularization and a social opposition and focus of resistance. Claims of *Alevi* groups who underline secularism in their critique of the Presidency of Religious Affairs may be summarized as follows: Abolishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs; official recognition of their places for prayer (*cemevi*) where rituals different from the *Sünni* tradition are performed; the provision of financial support by the state; and representation of *Alevi*s in relevant state organizations, as well as the removal of compulsory religious education.<sup>33</sup>

*Alevi* groups are quite critical in regard of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The presence of a religious authority affiliated to the Prime Ministry harms the impartiality of the state. Therefore, it means a deviation from secularism. Besides, the *Alevi* community desires to perform their rituals according to their own beliefs. In the context of the European Union harmonization process, the *Alevi* community was not able to enjoy the rights recognized for the Christian Churches. *Cemevis*, as *Alevi* houses of worship, are not officially recognized as such and *Alevi*s even encounter various problems when they try to open a new *cemevi*. Though they are tax payers as citizens of Turkey, *Alevi*s are not able to receive financial support from the state.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Reha Çamuroğlu: “Türkiye’de Alevi Uyanışı”, p. 99. Cf. also İhtar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Dinin Tanzimi*, pp. 289-292. Cf. also Ruşen Çakır and İrfan Bozan: *Sivil, Şeffaf ve Demokratik Bir Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Mümkün mü?*, (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2005), pp. 267-286. Cf. also Hasan Onat: *Türkiye’de Din Anlayışında Değişim Süreci*, (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2003), pp. 53-54. Cf. also David Shankland: *The Alevi in Turkey: The emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 17. Cf. also Baki Öz: *Alevilik Nedir?*, (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2001), pp. 218-243. Cf. also İrfan Bozan: *Devlet ile Toplum Arasında, Bir Okul. İmam Hatip Liseleri, Bir Kurum Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, p. 73.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Andrew Davison: *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, p. 137. Cf. also İrfan Bozan: *Devlet ile Toplum Arasında, Bir Okul. İmam Hatip Liseleri*,

Compulsory religious education is another controversial issue for *Alevi*s. Religious education has been re-arranged following “The Law on Unification of Education” dated March 3, 1924, in the earlier Republican period. Until 1939, religious education was removed from the curriculum gradually. Although religious education was optional between 1948-1983, following the 1980 Military Intervention it was made compulsory in primary school – 4-5 grades, secondary school – 6-8 grades, and high school – 9-11 grades. These compulsory classes named as the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge lessons include the elements reflecting the *Sunni* tradition in line determined by the Ministry of National Education. Different *Alevi* opinions on the question of compulsory religious education may be classified as the following. Firstly, some *Alevi* people argue that this course should be optional and parents should be able to send their children to these lessons if they wish so. Secondly, some *Alevi* groups claim that the curriculum is one-sided, and it has been prepared according to *Sunni* faith, and does not provide information on the *Alevi* faith. Therefore, religious policy should be revised accordingly.<sup>35</sup> *Alevi* parents do not wish their children to attend these courses because they believe that their own traditions are not reflected and taught. Additionally, children of atheists and the *Alevi* community are obliged to attend these classes while children from non-Muslim minority communities are exempt.

When we look at problem areas as far as representation of religion and its forms are concerned, we might argue that the problem is not a “religious” one, but something to do with the idea of “citizenship”. The state has the responsibility of providing religious freedom and an opportunity to practice and has to realize the requirements of citizens’ beliefs. However, in some cases, as outlined above, we may argue that the public sphere is not functional in Turkey in the context of citizenship rights, freedom of religion and accomplishment of democracy. When we consider the Turkish case by focusing on demands of *Alevi*s and the status of religious education, we can argue that the public sphere either did not exist in the classical sense of the term, or existed only for power holders. The presence of public sphere is a fundamental requirement for the implementation of deliberative democracy. In the absence of public

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*Bir Kurum Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, p. 73. Cf. also Şuayp Özdemir and İsmail Arıcı: *Alevilerin Din Hizmeti Beklentileri*, (İstanbul: Arı Sanat Yayınevi, 2011), pp. 49-54 Cf. also Ali Fuad Başgil: *Din ve Laiklik*, (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyat, 2003), p. 220.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Faut Bozkurt: “Aleviliğin Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde Toplum-Devlet İlişkisi”, p. 112. Cf. also Recep Kaymakcan: “Türkiye’de Din Eğitimi Politikaları Üzerine Düşünceler”; *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, vol. 10, n. 27, (2006), p. 31.



sphere, reasonable demands of citizens cannot be met and their belonging to the state will become problematic. As the events indicate in Turkey, new policy decisions aim at expanding religious freedom only for a particular segment of society. However, religious freedom also includes the right to receive state services. Moreover, those who have no religious affiliations should also be protected from any pressure.

As far as religious claims in the public sphere are concerned, the question of veiling emerges as another important issue to address. The veiling became an issue in Turkey, since its use was prohibited in public institutions on the basis of protecting the secular principles of the state. The founders of modern Turkey tried to achieve the aim of westernization of the Republic on the institutional level while transforming some of the institutions related to religion or by closing some of them. These changes also brought about novelties which affect the daily life directly: for instance, the Hat Act dated November 25, 1925; and the Dress Act dated November 3, 1934. In other words, the prohibition of the fez and the enforcement of wearing western style hats have been steps revealing that the links with Ottoman past are disconnected.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the law dated December 26, 1925, introducing the change of the calendar, the Law dated April 1, 1931, on the Change of Measures, the Alphabet Reform dated November 1, 1928, and the enactment of use of Latin letters, the Surname Law dated June 21, 1934, the Law dated 1935 on Shifting the Weekend holiday from Friday to Sunday, the Law dated July 18, 1932, Making Ezan – call for prayers in Arabic – in Turkish have been innovations supporting the exclusion of religion and religious facts from the public-sphere upon secular arrangements form at *symbolic* level.<sup>37</sup>

The most important ones among these arrangements, which may be interpreted as a total differentiation from the Ottoman past, are those which try to change the social system based on the isolation of women. Those regulations that related to women aimed at ensuring women's public visibility and guaranteeing citizenships rights on the one hand and at shaping their fashion preferences and intellectual orientation, on the other. Turkish women gained rights upon the enactment of Civil Law dated 1926 which women in western countries could not acquire until then. With the 1930 suffrage rights, a legal foundation for the

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. I. Tekeli and S. İlkin: *Cumhuriyetin Harcı*, Bölüm 1, (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005). Cf. also Soner Çağaptay: *Türkiye'de İslam, Laiklik ve Milliyetçilik*, p. 23. Cf. also Nilüfer Göle: "Modernist Kamusal Alan ve İslami Ahlak"; *İslamın Yeni Kamusal Yüzleri, İslam ve Kamusal Alan Üzerine Bir Atölye Çalışması*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. İştâar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*, pp. 23-24.

completion of the Republican modernization project was achieved in relation to women. In the same period, changes introduced for the dress code affected the social life where women became more visible. New regulations on the dress code provided an opportunity for women not to wear the *jilbab*; but by using other kinds of dresses, such as pelerine, topcoat and net cover, though a *jilbab* type of dress continued to exist. The use of a hat did not become common among women. As a matter of fact, the scarf continued to be used in various ways. Besides, the *jilbab* was not prohibited by a law, but by some regulations introduced by the Municipalities. Regulations by some Municipalities prohibiting the *jilbab* led to a belief that this dress was prohibited all over Turkey.<sup>38</sup>

Perceiving this type of dress as a threat to laicism, reactionary ideology and conservatism began after the 1960s. After transition to a multiparty system in 1946, the Democratic Party came to power in 1950. In order to protect the support of its electorate, the Democratic Party gave concessions on the role of religion in social life which led to the increase in the number of veiled women. The Military staged a coup in 1960 to overthrow the Democratic Party government. The Military justified this coup arguing that the Democratic Party abandoned the principles introduced by Atatürk's reforms. The Army took power in order to transform the country into the democratic-laicist policy which they thought the Democratic Party deviated from. Even the comments made abroad indicated that the coup had taken place in reaction to government's appeasement policies regarding laicism that could be interpreted as instrumentalization of religion in politics.<sup>39</sup> Following this period it was claimed that most of the problems faced by the country were due to an inadequate level of westernization; and the lack of westernization was attributed to women's veiling tendency.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Nilüfer Göle: *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992), p. 101. Cf. also Cihan Aktaş: *Tanzimat'tan 12 Mart'a Kılık-Kıyafet ve İktidar*, (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2006), pp. 207-208, 214-215, 225.

<sup>39</sup> In its ten years governing period, Democrat Party made the following regulations related to religion: Islamic call to prayer in Arabic removed from the law (1950); State Radio started broadcasting Quran (1950); Religion classes were optional, but still were part of the curriculum (1950); Religious Vocational Schools which took 7 years were opened in 7 province (1951); religion classes were added to the first two years of secondary school curriculum (1956); High Islamic Institute was opened in Istanbul (1959). Cf. Ruşen Çakır and İrfan Bozan: *Sivil, Şeffaf ve Demokratik Bir Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Mümkün mü?*, pp. 18, 60.

<sup>40</sup> Şerif Mardin: "Religion as Ideology"; *Prof. Dr. Tavuz Abadan'a Armağan*, (Ankara: Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1969), p. 203. Cf. also İhtar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*,

This view led attacks and assaults on women wearing a scarf and *jilbab*. On the other hand, the introduction of the miniskirt fashion coming from the west in the 1960s and reactions to it from the right wing sections among the Turkish society were among the reasons that led to polarization concerning the dress code for women. We see here that women are seen at the center of modernization process in Turkey. In fact the role of women, which they can play in the modernization projects, is recognized not only in Turkey, but in many other countries. As a matter of fact “women are the new actors of contemporary Islamism, while veiling is the most remarkable symbol.” Veiling became a controversial issue mainly for two reasons. First, the historical background that we have outlined played a role in this process through laying the foundations for polarizations on the dress code. The second, veiling has become the most explicit indicator of religiosity and traditional roles of women in modern public areas, such as university campuses, city centers, political parties and industrial work places after the 1960s. Its “interpretation” as a threat against western values, such as democracy, laicism, equality and individualism is coupled with the idea that veil is a sign of bigotry and reactionary ideology based on the perception of binary opposition between religion and laicism, private and public spheres. The veil in this context is seen as the unique symbol of Islamism opposing democracy constructed by laicism.<sup>41</sup> The prohibition of veiling became a public issue during a graduation ceremony in 1964 at Istanbul University. A veiled female student who graduated with the top degree from the Faculty of Medicine was supposed to make a speech at the graduation ceremony. She was banned from this opportunity because of her veil. In 1968 yet another incident took place which involved a veiled student at the Faculty of Religious studies at Ankara University. When she wanted to enter the faculty with a veil, faculty administration and some teaching staff argued that she did not wear veil with her freewill but imposed by some religious orders or groups. This incident led to the dismissal of the veiled student from the university.

A number of regulations were introduced for the prevention of veiling in schools and public institutions, such as the directive by the Higher Education Council’s Directive dated December 20, 1982, which

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p. 32. Cf. also Bernard Caporal: *Kemalizmde ve Kemalizm Sonrasında Türk Kadını*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1982), pp. 222-225. Cf. also Cihan Aktaş: *Tanzimat’tan 12 Mart’a Kılık-Kıyafet ve İktidar*, pp. 208, 289, 299.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Cihan Aktaş: *Tanzimat’tan 12 Mart’a Kılık-Kıyafet ve İktidar*, pp. 302-303. Cf. also Cihan Aktaş: *Bacı’dan Bayan’a, İslamcı Kadınların Kamusal Alan Tecrübesi*, (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2005), p. 203. Cf. also Nilüfer Göle: *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*, p. 11.

introduced a total ban at the universities; the regulation in 1981 by the Ministry of National Education. Veiling prohibition in the public sector was legalized by the implementation of a regulation dated 1982.<sup>42</sup> In 1984, a new regulation was passed which introduced two types of veiling – one with a scarf and the other with a turban. The said regulation prohibited veiling with a scarf but permitted veiling with a turban. However, the Higher Education Council added one article to this regulation in 1987 which prohibited also the use of turbans at the universities. The parliament passed a law in 1988 for the permission of turbans at the universities. However, this law was annulled by the Constitutional Court in 1989. With a new law in 1990 freedom was introduced for Islamic veiling in Higher Education Institutions. On February 28, 1997, with the pressure of the National Security Council, qualified by many as a postmodern coup, the government had to resign and under the new coalition government the turban ban was extended to universities. This decision was taken in line with the National Security Council recommendations and a report released by the National Intelligence Organization related to radical Islamist activities. The Justice and Development Party with an Islamic political background came to power in 2002, and they did not make a statement that lifting the ban is on their agenda. In 2008, the parliament passed yet another law to lift the ban on turbans at the universities, but this was also annulled by the Constitutional Court. As of today veiling at the universities is allowed by practice and students with different forms of veils, such as headscarf and turban are allowed to enter university premises and classrooms. However the veiling ban for civil servants still continues.

As one can see from the above discussions on the controversial nature of veiling in Turkey that led to binary oppositions on different ideological spectrums throughout the political history, the question of veiling, turban and headscarf in the public sphere is at the center of political polarization in the country. In the debates regarding veiling in the public sphere, two main approaches can be identified. One of these approaches consider veiling as a symbol of “resistance” against the Republic’s secular modernization and westernization project; it obstructs the liberation of women, on the one hand, and indicates the women’s acceptance of their obedience to men, on the other. Therefore, it is seen as a symbol of religiously based suppression over women. The veiling is

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Cihan Aktaş: *Tanzimat’tan 12 Mart’a Kılık-Kıyafet ve İktidar*, p. 320. Cf. also İştar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Dinin Tanzimi*, p. 40. Cf. also Çağla Kubilay: *İslamcı Söylemde Kamusal Alan ve Türban Tartışmaları*, p. 78. Cf. also Dilek Cindoğlu: *Başörtüsü Yasağı ve Ayrımcılık: İş Hayatında Meslek Sahibi Başörtülü Kadınlar*, (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2010), p. 33.

also considered as a challenge to the secular formation of society on the assumption that women wearing a scarf tend to interpret all areas of life with reference to religion. This approach argues that even ‘a literate and urban Muslim woman’s veiling symbolizes radical Islam’. The veiling according to this view can also be turned into an instrument for oppressing women in their social life.

The other approach argues that the veiling in its current forms is a modern reflection of the Islamic way of life. Veiled women resist the interpretation of civilization on the basis of western ideals and the western lifestyle. According to this approach veiling enables Muslim women to get involved in public life, if they are allowed to wear a headscarf freely outside their homes.<sup>43</sup> For example, Nilüfer Göle, who seems to defend this approach, argues that veiling can protect women’s privacy while being in the public sphere. For Göle, veiling is also a sign of opposing the notion that Muslim women are obedient and suppressed subjects. On the other hand, Ali Bayramoğlu states that women are veiled because they consider it as “the requirement of religion and order of God”, but not because of the traditional perception of purity. Therefore he suggests that it is more than a symbol of identity. For him, the veiling has religious and personal dimensions.<sup>44</sup> The veiling by either wearing a turban or a headscarf in the public-sphere has still continued to be a question on the social and political agenda in Turkey for many years. Although the Justice and Development Party has been in power for the last ten years, this question has not been resolved. One of the main reasons for the prohibition of the veil and the controversy surrounding it is the fact that *Kemalist* as well as *Islamist* politicians manipulated the headscarf as a symbol and used it as a political instrument. It seems that this controversy will continue for some time to come simply because the political elite still tend to use the same method of manipulating the issue for their own purposes.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Dilek Cindoğlu: *Başörtüsü Yasağı ve Ayrımcılık: İş Hayatında Meslek Sahibi Başörtülü Kadınlar*, p. 39. Cf. also Binnaz Toprak: *Türkiye’de Farklı Olmak: Din ve Muhafazakarlık Ekseninde Ötekileştirilenler*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009). Cf. also Katherine Bullock: *Rethinking Muslim Women and The Veil*, (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2003), p. 120. Cf. also Nilüfer Göle: *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*, pp. 11, 117, 118, 125. Cf. also Cihan Aktaş: *Bacı’dan Bayan’a, İslamcı Kadınların Kamusal Alan Tecrübesi*, p. 17. Cf. also Dilek Cindoğlu: *Başörtüsü Yasağı ve Ayrımcılık: İş Hayatında Meslek Sahibi Başörtülü Kadınlar*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Dilek Cindoğlu: *Başörtüsü Yasağı ve Ayrımcılık: İş Hayatında Meslek Sahibi Başörtülü Kadınlar*, pp. 31-32. Cf. also Nilüfer Göle: *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*, 1991. Cf. also Ali Bayramoğlu: *Çağdaşlık Hurafe Kaldırmaz*, (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2006), p. 74.

So far we have outlined the trajectory of Turkish political history in relation to state-religion relations, the increasing visibility of religion and its symbols in the public sphere. Since the Republic of Turkey was established on strong secular principles, the rise of religious symbols led to controversies as to its place in social and political life. The foregoing narratives have also shown us the consequences of secularization and modernization in a country with a Muslim majority and the problems Turkish society faces today. In this context, how can we relate the Habermasian model to analyze the Turkish case and to what extent can we employ his approach to shed light on the issues under consideration? These issues will be addressed in the conclusion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Habermas builds his thesis on freedom of religion. One cannot deny the fact that his idea of post-secular society is a meaningful one and especially informs us about the western experience. When we talk about a secular society, we can defend the freedom of religion. However, in non-secularized societies the hegemony of religions can be seen as a threat to democracy itself. Although Habermas argues for the provision of religious freedom and democratic rights for religious groups, he seems to have neglected the rights of non-believers. In the Turkish case, one can argue that there is a need for an approach that would embrace not only the protection of freedom for religious people, but also the rights and freedom of secular as well as un-orthodox Muslim and non-Muslim groups. In Turkey, the claims of un-orthodox religious groups are not addressed. Besides, due to the influence of a particular religious orientation, rights of other Muslim groups as well as people with a weaker sense of belonging to religion are neglected and even their rights are violated. Nevertheless the public sphere is a meaningful construction as far as it consolidates democracy in the context of a modern nation-state.

It is not possible to define a structure as democratic if the public sphere is not functional. Liberty does not exist if the rights for all in society are unprotected. The public sphere contributes to democracy by the free participation of different actors in the process with the expectation of guaranteeing the protection of basic rights. The main indicator of the presence of differences/diversities of identities in the public sphere is their chance to gain visibility and the opportunity to participate in politics with such identity. Therefore, for the establishment of a truly democratic society and governance, social realities should be liberated from the control of legal rules influenced by all sorts of ideologies. The new Turkish Republic was established as a democratic and laicist state which introduced many reforms to westernize and

modernize the country including the legal, educational and political systems. Despite the concerted efforts of the state, the recent social and political developments indicate that Turkish society has not been secularized as was the case in Western Europe at which Habermas looked as the primary focus of his investigation. Religious commitments have not disappeared. On the contrary, there exists a social and political environment in which religiously inspired political groups aim at getting to political power and reaching their objectives by instrumentalizing religion. As far as the wider context is concerned, based on the influence of developments around the world, claims on the basis of religious commitments became stronger.

Although research findings suggest that the number of those who wish to have a *Sharia* state, a state ruled by Islamic Law, in Turkey is very small, a sense of religious commitment continues to influence a significant number of people in society. As one can see, Turkey has a different secularization experience than that of the west. Turkish society, in contrast to Western Europe, has not historically experienced a process similar to the European style secularization. Both historical and social factors are different. Therefore one cannot assume that Turkish society has been secularized to the extent that the west is. The Turkish society has not gone through the stages of secularism as defined by Habermas. The Habermasian concept of post-secular society does not apply to Turkey because the Turkish society is not in a post-secular age. The two main issues that we have outlined in this paper, i.e., *Alevi*'s demands and the question of veiling – arguments stated in this context as well as the management of these issues – indicate that the Turkish society is not in a post-secular age. We briefly elaborate on these points further.

As far as *Alevi*'s demands for their rights are concerned, they believe that their claims have not been addressed and demands are not met. This is an indication that Turkey has not been secularized in the sense of European secularization. In fact, a particular religious interpretation is believed to shape the political and institutional structure of the country. In Turkey, a concept of democracy based on the principle of rationality and where the public sphere is effectively functional has not taken roots. Thus, the social reality of demands based on religious diversity is ignored, and such demands are neither considered as citizenship rights nor fulfilled in a reasonable framework. This indicates that the politicians who are governing the political mechanism of this non-secularized society are not only not acting in a manner which is free from the influence of their religious affiliation, but also are not recognizing rights for other beliefs and religions.

As regards veiling, those who oppose it are basically concerned with the idea that veiling will damage the state's laicism. Yet, those who have political power still continue to use this power as a tool of political

manipulation instead of giving full liberty. Therefore, the veiling question cannot be resolved by a reasonable conclusion which would satisfy all sections of the society. People who fear that freedom of veiling shall lead to a transformation of Turkey towards an Islamic state under religious law ignore a social reality. In fact, the interpretation of this issue as a problem ensues from the fact that the women in Turkey gain visibility as they participate in social life. It seems that political parties and politicians, although they accept religion as a reality in cultural and social context and are trying to satisfy religious demands, are instrumentalizing religion in a sense because they subscribe to ideologies that would protect the existing constitutional order.<sup>45</sup>

Politicians with their practices and statements indicating their tendencies reinforce the concerns of secular sections in the society and by not interpreting religious claims over citizenship rights, use the issue as a tool in elections. As the *Kemalist* civilization project intended to penetrate lifestyles, ways of behavior, and daily routines,<sup>46</sup> politicians with Islamic orientation also used the same methods when they came to power. These politicians do not refrain from actions which might raise concerns among other sections of society. The *Kemalist* modernization project has failed in creating secularization at a social level. Politicians capitalize on this failure and manipulate the issue of veiling for their own purposes. In this context, the dress code of women becomes a battle ground for different ideological positions. Therefore the veiling issue remains to be a controversial problem. It shows us that the Habermasian view that politicians are supposed to function as a filter cannot be applied to Turkey because the Turkish political culture and the dominant political actors do not have such a culture.

Secular language means that supporting a claim based on only religious belief is not enough; it needs other political means, and arguments to be acceptable to and to be reasonable by all sections of the society. For Habermas, religious reasoning should not be excluded from public-sphere, but more important is that people in pursuit of a political position should not use the forms of religious reasoning and religious language. This implies that religion should not be used as an instrument for political interests. Religious reasoning should be primarily transformed into a language which may be comprehended by all people must be taken into account in political system. This language is a secular political language.<sup>47</sup> Besides, it is difficult to believe that politicians will

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. İřtar Gözaydın: *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*, p. 238.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Nilüfer Göle: *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*, p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *Between Naturalism and Religion*, p. 130. Cf. also Lasse Thomassen: *Habermas: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 155.



fulfill their duties in a rational way, using an objective language, free from religious influences, as if they grew up in a secular society. It is natural and necessary that politicians should undertake a mediation role to fulfill citizens' demands for rights which shall not negatively affect others' interests. However the priority which is assigned by Habermas' to religious freedom, although he was aware of the threats against democracy, is not adequate for societies which have not passed into a post-secular stage. Democracy is realized by the groups which are in power. If religious groups are in power, it is possible that they use democracy to protect their own interests. This might be a point of view that is too pessimistic, but such a risk is probable as we can see in precedents experienced in certain countries which claim to be 'democratic'.

Habermas assumes that there exists a transition from a pre-modern period to religious society, from religious society to a modern and secular period and finally to a post-secular stage. However, this assumption is not valid for every case. As a matter of fact, the problem in Turkey's experience as a non-secularized country appears particularly when the freedom of the entire society comes into question considering the potential of radicalization of religion in case that politicians who have strong religious commitment obtain political power. It is obvious that in Turkey, we do not have a public sphere, where opponents come together and share their opinions. We witness that obviously because of the demands of the *Alevi* people being not addressed, and even ignored. The duty of the state is not only to react to citizens' demands, but also to function as an order in which freedom in the areas of all sections of society may be brought up to an optimum level. Therefore, the important point here is to establish a structure which shall not be defeated by individuals' weaknesses and which shall provide equity and justice for all. By considering all these facts, we can say that the model idealized by Habermas seems not possible to be applied, particularly in Turkey, under the prevailing conditions.



## CHAPTER IV

# RELIGION, POLITICS, AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY: AN UNEASY ALLIANCE

RAJESH SHUKLA

### INTRODUCTION

Religion and politics have often influenced each other in significant ways. It may not require much effort to show that throughout human history religion has exercised crucial influences on social and political institutions. Likewise the social and political considerations of a given society seem to impact its religious considerations in a substantial way. We notice the marks of mutual influences of religion and politics in the Hindu concept of *dharma*<sup>1</sup> and in the Christian understanding of the Church as an important moral authority.<sup>2</sup> The instances of similar spiritual and moral confluence can also be found in the other religions as well. However, with the advent of liberal democracy the above intimacy of religion and politics has been questioned seriously. It is said that religion and politics deal with two separate domains of an individual's life and that they must be kept separately. Religion deals with ecclesiastical realities such as, God, soul, and immortality, and involves even some sort of superstitions; but politics is largely concerned with concrete worldly affairs, such as the functioning of governments, distribution of political power, and possession of goods.<sup>3</sup> Without rehearsing the atrocities that the alliance of religion and politics has produced in the past, I want to assume their occurrence. It would follow then that the liberal separation of religion and politics has a historical value: among other things, this separation has protected and enhanced an individual's freedom, stood firm against religious prosecutions and checked the rise of authoritarianism and tyranny.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Radhakrishnan S.: *Indian Religious Thought*, (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 2006), pp. 54-60.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), pp. 26-28. Cf. also Charles Taylor: "A Catholic Modernity"; *A Catholic Modernity*, ed. James L. Heft, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Richard Rorty: *Philosophy and Social Hope*, (New York: Penguin, 1999), pp. 168-174.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Hick: *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Response to the Transcendent*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 9.

separation of religion and politics has served the liberal democracies well, and continues to be relevant even today in vital ways – and no one should deny that. I do intend, however, to question the sharpness and extent of this separation. I shall argue that the separation of religion and politics may not be as clear cut and productive as the liberal democracies proclaim them to be. I shall offer twofold arguments to support my position. First, I will show that religion and politics are closely entangled in the functioning of liberal democracies in such a way that their total separation is unattainable in practice, and that liberal democracies need to recognize this limitation. My second argument is built on the first. I shall argue now that liberal democracies need to engage religion in a purposeful way, and not leave it out to the prejudices of the clergy or the masses. Indeed, I believe that liberal democracies can and should encourage and entice their citizens to shed their religious and moral superstitions and adopt a more informed approach towards their lives, and social and political institutions. Finally, to add credibility to my conclusions I shall ground them in the practical functioning of liberal democracies, drawing on the political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, John Stuart Mill, and other likeminded thinkers.

### **SEPARATION OF RELIGION FROM POLITICS**

Though it may be difficult to come up with a precise moment when the separation of religion and politics can be said to have truly started, one can safely associate its prevalence with the rise of liberal democracies in the modern world.<sup>5</sup> Indeed the separation of religion and politics was one of the most fundamental characteristics of the liberal democratic states that emerged in early nineteenth and twentieth century, and later on came to serve as the models of political governance in the western hemisphere and beyond. There were many complex intellectual and historical reasons for this separation, but two of them especially deserve our attention.

First, it was believed, partly under the influence of Enlightenment that swept through Europe, and partly under the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, John Lock, and others, that the alignment of religion and politics had some detrimental consequences.<sup>6</sup> As a general rule, religions, in their practical forms, claim to possess some kind monopoly over the eternal and profound truths and as such they demand complete

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. J. Perry: *The Political Morality of Liberal democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 102.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. & intro. Peter Laslett, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 269-302.

human attention, faith and worship. This monopoly over ultimate truths has further been accentuated by the desires of the religious leaders to propagate these truths, and to win the hearts and minds of the ordinary individuals and the masses. However, irrespective of the authenticity of the motive to make religious truths accessible to all humankind, its practical manifestation has often been marked by some misuse of power by religious authorities. We find glaring instances of such abuses in the medieval Europe, medieval India and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> It took centuries of struggle and plenty of sacrifices to put an end to the abuse of ecclesiastical powers by making a strong separation between the two domains of an individual's life, i.e., the religious and the political domain; and the birth of liberal democracies has to be seen in this very context.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, as powerful as the desire for the protection against the abuse of religious power and authority was, it could not have been the sole motivation behind the above separation. In his *Two Treatises of Government* John Locke argued that the most solemn function of a government was the preservation of the natural rights of men. Later on in the same work, Locke identified three such rights: the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to property.<sup>9</sup> The full realization of these rights, Locke thought, required that an individual should be permitted to pursue her interests and activities in an unhindered way in the spirit of her overall social and political obligations. In other words, according to Locke, as long as an individual does not infringe on someone else's rights, she ought to remain free in all domains of her action.<sup>10</sup> This included an individual's freedom of conscience, selection of vocation and possession of property. Surely, in an important way Locke has provided us with the philosophical justifications of liberal democracy.

Over a period of time both these reasons, i.e., the protection from coercion and the Lockean conception of natural rights, have come to play a central role in the liberal understanding of an individual as well as her politics. On the liberal view, each individual possesses some definite desires and needs, and wants to realize them without an imminent sense of fear or coercion.<sup>11</sup> The realization of these desires, we are told, requires some type of engagement with other members of society. The implication is that if I want to attain my ends in cooperation with others,

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<sup>7</sup> Jawaharlal Neharu: *The Discovery of India*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. J. Perry: *The Political Morality of Liberal democracy*, p. 77

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 269-302.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 381-382.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. J. Perry: *The Political Morality of Liberal democracy*, pp. 198-199.

then I must recognize and give similar rights and privileges to others as well. However, the recognition of the above mutuality has been contextualized in a specific manner; in particular, an individual's actions are broadly classified into two kinds: the private actions and the public actions. John Stuart Mill in his book *On Liberty* argues that an individual must be completely free in the domain of her private actions, but can be subject to some regulative constraints in the case public actions.<sup>12</sup>

Private actions or self-regarding actions, as Mill called them, consist of those activities that have a purely personal context and variation. Such actions are associated with an individual's personal orientation, taste, and thought and have no significant impact on others. In other words, self-regarding activities give expression to an individual's intellectual and emotional commitments, and moral and psychological propensities at the intimate level. Mill explains the rubric of self-regarding activities in the following terms. He writes: "It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological."<sup>13</sup> Hence Mill contends that an individual ought to be completely free in the matters of self-regarding activity. Public actions or other-regarding actions, as Mill called them, are socially relevant and have important implications in the public domain. These actions in their bare minimum form include an individual's conduct in a public place. It is imperative that while associating with other fellow citizens an individual honestly follows the principles of decency and respect. In a more potent sense, other-regarding actions concern the modes of governance, legislation, laws, and civil and military contracts, and the like. Mill maintains that all other-regarding actions can be regulated or guided in some form that they remain in agreement with the overall social spirit and values. Though Mill admitted some restrictions on other-regarding actions, he cautions in the same vein that imposed restrictions must not infringe on an individual's self-regarding actions. He wrote: "In the conduct of human beings towards one another, it is necessary that general rules should for the most part be observed, in order that people may know what they have to expect; but in each person's own concerns, his individual spontaneity is entitled to free exercise."<sup>14</sup>

Mill's distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding actions has been extremely influential in impacting the course of liberal

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. S. Mill: *On Liberty*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), pp. 8-12.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

democracies, especially their conception and treatment of religion and politics. If Mill's division of private and public spheres is correct then religion would seem to belong in the realm of private sphere, and politics in the realm of public.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, since Mill worried regarding the abuse of power and governmental interference in an individual's private sphere, he does not allow much exchange between the public and private realms. I have said earlier that there is some truth to such concerns; so, Mill and other liberal democrats are justified in their concern to some extent.<sup>16</sup> However, it can be said that the separation between the private and public realms is not as straightforward as Mill envisioned and liberal democracies expound. It seems that, despite all good intentions, Mill has exaggerated the difference between the public and private spheres, and religion and politics; and liberal democracies all over the world have more or less uncritically followed his lead on this issue. On the contrary, I think that there is a close connection between the private and public aspects of an individual's life that both aspects influence each other and are influenced by each other in turn. Hence, it is virtually impossible to bring about the separation that Mill proposed and that liberal democracies strive to achieve. Indeed the practical functioning of liberal democratic governments attests to our claim.

On the one hand, the intimacy between the private and public spheres is often noticeable in the electoral processes of liberal democratic governments. Theoretically speaking, liberal democratic electoral mechanisms are designed to select the best possible candidate or political party. In other words, though liberal democracies accord totally free choice to the voters, they do not have much to say on the practical aspects and exercise of this choice. They implicitly assume that the voters will exercise their choice on merit and that they will make considered judgments, without prejudice or bias. The "merit" here implies that an individual draws a distinction between the genuinely good qualities a candidate or a party possesses, and votes on that consideration alone. Such consideration may include the likeability of the candidate, her educational qualifications, experience and commitment to the public welfare as well as the priorities of her political party if she belongs to one. Needless to say that the practical voting experience in the liberal democracies tells a different story: religious and moral convictions play a vital role in an individual's exercise of her voting rights and electoral obligations. This use of religious and moral convictions is relevant because it is not limited to this or that country

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

and can be found in most liberal democracies.<sup>17</sup> In other words, irrespective of the theoretical claims of separation, religion and politics seem to be very much entangled in liberal democratic states.

On the other hand, we also see the evidence of the closeness of the private and public in the daily functioning of some liberal democratic governments. Since the governments are voted to office and out of office by the electorates, they try to facilitate the goals and projects of their electorates, and chart out their policies and programs accordingly. As a result, they often adopt populist policies on the matters of public importance. Indeed the educational reform policies adopted by Bhartiya Janata Party, which led the National Democratic Alliance Government in India (1998-2004), and the Faith-based initiatives of President George W. Bush in the United States of America readily come to mind as examples of such an approach. Both these endeavors were inspired by some sort of religious fervor. Indeed, in some Islamic countries the above proximity acquires even more accentuated overtones.<sup>18</sup> There are countless other examples of such religious inspirations, policies and programs.<sup>19</sup> They may differ a bit in orientation and emphasis but their basic thrust remains the same: that religious views of the electorates find a place in the functioning of the government despite opposite constitutional claims. It is evident then that the liberal democratic separation of religion and politics, private and public, is questionable on experiential grounds. In the next section, I argue that, unlike the liberal democracies, Gandhi believed that religion and politics are intimately connected and that they must not be separated at all.

## **GANDHI AND HIS RELIGIOUS POLITICS**

Recall that liberal democracies under the influence of John Locke and others seem to defend the validity of certain natural rights – the right to life, the right to liberty and the right property – and believe that each individual deserves the realization of her goals and projects.<sup>20</sup> It is assumed further that each individual is inherently endowed not only with equal potentials, but also with equal capabilities to pursue her rights. According to the liberal democratic view, it would be impossible to attain the above rights without a clear separation between private and

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Albert Somit and S. A. Peterson: *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005), pp. 55-56.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. John Hick: *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Response to the Transcendent*, p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. M. J. Perry: *The Political Morality of Liberal Democracy*, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 269-302.



public spheres or religion and politics. Gandhi disagreed with the above view.<sup>21</sup> He believed that the separation of religion and politics rests on a mistaken understanding of human life and its purposes, and has a harmful effect on the individual as well as the society.<sup>22</sup> This separation devalues the individual by emphasizing and conflating the claims regarding her self-interest and ignoring the more subtle and refined aspects of her being. It conceives of an individual in terms of a self-conscious and self-obsessed agent. In other words, only those things that are beneficial to an individual deserve her utmost concerns and considerations. Even when she takes interest in the welfare of others, her actions are justified in the name of her long term interest and equity. As a result her perceptions of her fellow beings get severely clouded by her own sense of personal welfare and self-interest. Surely, this excessive focus on oneself leads to economic dividends and earning, but at a heavy social loss. According to Gandhi, the true value of an individual's success can only be approximated by her service towards other fellow beings and not by her interest maximization. Gandhi wrote: "So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him."<sup>23</sup>

Besides, the separation of religion and politics is inimical to the society at large. Gandhi believed that a politically conscious society must facilitate an emotional and moral bond among its members, so that they can be truly interested in each other's welfare, and help each other sustain their moral faith in the times of crisis.<sup>24</sup> However, such camaraderie cannot be easily obtained. Its realization requires a cultivation of pure religious consciousness and a genuine sense of belonging among fellow citizens. Only such a sense of belonging can surpass the barriers of time and space and adopt the whole society and all its members as worthy objects of an individual's love, care, and gratitude. In its ideal form, an individual's religious consciousness can help her transcend her egoistic pursuits and develop an authentic sense of identification with other fellow beings, their pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. Speaking of how an ordinary human being can achieve such an extraordinary level of political and spiritual awareness, Gandhi insistently argued that anything less than self-purification would not do. He suggested that an individual must cleanse the crudities that husk her consciousness, blur her moral vision and impede her sense of solidarity with her fellow beings. Gandhi remarks: "Self-purification,

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1982/1927).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

therefore, must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings."<sup>25</sup> The notion of self-purification can be very tricky and even dangerous in politics and so we must clarify what Gandhi really means when he recommends its manifestation in all walks of life.

Prior to discussing the entailments of Gandhi's concept of self-purification, it would be useful to add a qualification: self-purification as Gandhi conceived is a purely personal matter, not amenable to outside pressure or interference.<sup>26</sup> One ought not be coerced or persuaded to seek out such purification against one's wishes. In other words, an individual chooses out of her own free will and pure volition to remove the burdens of ignorance (*samskara*) and no one else can make that choice for her.<sup>27</sup> So in a sense, it is like the Kantian moral law which is adopted by an individual without any external influences; but unlike Kant, Gandhi admitted that scriptures and association with others can intensify one's quest for such perfections.<sup>28</sup> Having made these observations we can move on to consider Gandhi's notion of Self-purification.

Truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*) constitute the core of Gandhi's idea of self-purification. According to him, truth is the ultimate end of all authentic pursuits, religious as well as political, and non-violence is the only legitimate means. To understand the full implications of Gandhi's conception of truth, we must draw a distinction between two kinds of truth: the empirical truth and the transcendental truth. Empirical truth deals with worldly affairs or day to day human life. In its most straightforward sense it requires an individual to tell the truth always and without fail, not because such truth telling can be contingently beneficial to her but because it comes to her spontaneously. In other words, empirical truth, for Gandhi, necessitates a readiness on the part of the individual to suffer the consequences that arise out of an individual's adherence to truth.<sup>29</sup> Thus, a follower of truth inherently believes in the goodness of others and considers it as her moral duty to be truthful, respectful, loving and generous towards them even when their actions betray prejudice, hurt, and bias. The only way to resist a wrong – moral, political, social, or otherwise – is not to cooperate with it. In fact, Gandhi himself used this tool of non-cooperation to oppose

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-200.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-246.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

the British rule in India.<sup>30</sup> The transcendental truth refers to pure spiritual perfection. Gandhi identified it with God. He strongly believes that the worldly realities that an individual confronts in her daily life are a mere appearance of something very intangible, profound, permanent and everlasting.<sup>31</sup> For him, that reality is God. He persistently maintained that the only way to realize God is to practice empirical truth in its purity and essence. He believed that such practices would take an individual closer to the ultimate truth, the Supreme Reality. M. V. Kamath remarks: "It was Gandhi's view that if we had attained the full vision of truth, we would no longer be mere seekers, but have become one with God, for truth is God."<sup>32</sup>

According to Gandhi, the most fundamental requirement for the realization of truth is non-violence (*ahimsa*). He uses non-violence in a very comprehensive sense. For him, a non-violent individual does not injure anyone in speech, thought, and action. Notably Gandhi does not view injury in a mere physical sense. From him, injury includes all actions, thoughts, and intentions that are malicious, hurtful and degrading. Non-injury ought to be practiced not only with regard to other human beings, but also with regard to all sentient beings. No matter how severe the necessities of life, one may not inflict violence on other creatures to preserve oneself: "There should be a limit even to the means of keeping ourselves alive. Even for life itself we may not do certain things."<sup>33</sup>

With the above understanding of truth and non-violence, we can now reconstruct Gandhi's understanding of religion and politics. For him, both religion and politics are two distinct domains of individual actions, but beneath this distinctness resides an ultimate unity of purpose.<sup>34</sup> In other words, both religion and politics seek to advance the same moral potentials and are crucial in the practice of truth and non-violence. In order to pursue truth – particularly the transcendental truth – an individual must be able to rise above her immediate gratifications and endure the demands of a sustained effort which is needed for the collective human emancipation. As long as other fellow beings are suffering, it is an incumbent spiritual obligation to work for their freedom and redemption. So, Gandhi seemed convinced that religion and

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-373.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>32</sup> M. V. Kamath: *Gandhi: A Spiritual Journey*, (Mumbai: Indus source Books, 2005), p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 231.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 453.

politics seek out the same truth in different forms. Gandhi commented on this point as follows:

To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.<sup>35</sup>

In the light of the above remark, we can identify the main attributes of Gandhi's religious politics. Firstly, politics must focus on promotion of the good of other fellow individuals, and not on the maximization of self-interest. Contrary to the liberal view which implies that each individual can, under best possible conditions, maximize her own good, Gandhi held that social and spiritual partnerships are required for the welfare (*sarvodaya*) of all.<sup>36</sup> In his view, anyone with a sympathetic feeling will find herself under a moral obligation to work for the betterment of all fellow beings, including even animals. In other words, unlike liberal politics which, by and large, has a competitive human reference point, Gandhian politics is truly compassionate in nature. Much like Mill's utilitarianism, Gandhian politics aims to alleviate the pain and suffering of all sentient beings, though in substantially different ways.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, politics is not merely an empirical tool or mechanism to resolve the problems that arise out of human associations or even reclusiveness. Politics has much more to it. For Gandhi, if properly pursued, politics can lift an individual in close proximity with the divine or the ultimate truth.<sup>38</sup> This is because an honest performance of action (*karma*) in any sphere of life is the surest path to complete spiritual freedom (*moksha*).<sup>39</sup> Thus, for Gandhi, politics has to be construed under the broad framework of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). Gandhi repeatedly reminded us that one who desires truth (*satyagrahi*) must always follow the truth and remain truthful under all circumstances, even when others show no such regard to truth and inflict harm on her. Finally, Gandhian politics calls for the character

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 47. Cf. also J. S. Mill: *On Liberty*, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

building of citizens. The pursuit of truth (*satyagraha*) is delicate work, and only a person with tremendous character and integrity would be able to stand its test.<sup>40</sup> According to Gandhi, one who pursues truth (*satyagrahi*) cannot be violent either in thought, speech, and action. On the contrary, she must show positive affections of love and kindness even towards those who perpetrate violence against her.<sup>41</sup> This is an exceptional demand and its fulfillment requires a constant commitment to truth, prayer, and character building on the part of the *satyagrahi*. Gandhi believed that with time and effort an individual can succeed in subordinating her primitive impulses of violence to her higher moral purposes.

In essence, the goal of Gandhian politics is the realization of the truth in this world and even beyond it. Since, for Gandhi, truth is synonymous with God, politics acquires a form prayer and worship at public square. In the next section, I will argue that the Gandhian ideal of religious politics seems theoretically sound and morally praiseworthy; and yet it poses some serious practical problems as well.

## **LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND BEYOND**

In the previous section we saw that according to Gandhi religion is essential to imparting some sense of meaning and purpose to politics. Gandhi also believed that religion can enrich political considerations and foster social and spiritual ties among the members of a given society.<sup>42</sup> Given the serious troubles that the association of religion and politics has brought about in the past, Gandhi's views look very optimistic indeed. Nevertheless, let us not forget that Gandhi not only practiced his philosophy, but also succeeded greatly in bringing about fundamental changes in the motivation and behavior of many involved in the Indian Freedom Movement.<sup>43</sup> He led the Indian Freedom Movement admirably by creating an army of truthful and nonviolent *satyagrahis*. Yet his success must not be allowed to blur the difficulties that stand in our way in understanding and implementing his political and religious thought.

First, Gandhi's identification of religion and politics rested on a specific understanding of truth and God. It is obvious that he considered truth as the manifestation of God, but then he never quite defined it. He thought that the best definition of the truth is deposited in every human heart.<sup>44</sup> This definition, if we call it a definition, is very specious, and

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-375.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. M. V. Kamath: *Gandhi: A Spiritual Journey*, p. 42.

can be employed in many ways. The followers of Gandhi who believe in his message consider that truth is invariably connected to non-violence, and understand it differently from those who are not interested in the above Gandhian metaphysics. It can be said here that Gandhi was explicit in holding that truth can never be separated from non-violence and so the chances of the above misunderstanding ought to be minimal.<sup>45</sup> However, the problem in this context is not merely regarding the theoretical clarity of Gandhi's thought, but also its practical implications. More clearly, Gandhi's identification of religion and politics runs a real risk of political manipulation and he does not provide us with much of a safeguard against such abuse – in the times of deep political crisis Gandhi always took recourse to religious prayer and prayed for the good conscience of the aggressor. For Gandhi, prayer was the surest remedy, but for others it may have no such connotation.

Secondly, Gandhi assumes that all religions in their pure form teach a true love for God and his creation. In other words, in Gandhi's view a religious person must show an unhindered love for the divine and express similar love and affection towards her fellow beings. This looks like an authentic religious conviction; but it receives some serious setbacks when examined in concrete situations. As a matter of fact, we notice some serious religious differences in the present day world; one religion is often pitched against another, and each of them seem to have their own list of grievances.<sup>46</sup> Needless to say that some of the most heinous crimes in the recent years have been committed in the name of religion. Surely, no such crime would ever occur if one understands religion the way Gandhi did, as a pure devotion to truth and nonviolence; but then not everyone shares in Gandhian understanding of religion. Hence, liberal democracies appear partly correct in resisting the Gandhian overlapping of religion and politics.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the above difficulties though, the merit of Gandhi's view remains undeniable. Surely, Gandhi was aware of some of the problems that resulted due to the convergence of religion and politics but believed that they would dissipate with the practice of *satyagraha*.<sup>48</sup> Indeed the Indian National Congress and others influenced by its political ideology resolutely followed truth and non-violence under all conditions, stress

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 454.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Albert Somit and S. A. Peterson: *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. S. Mill: *On Liberty*, pp. 40-45.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, pp. 318-319.

and provocation.<sup>49</sup> So Gandhi did succeed in altering the political behavior of individuals on a massive scale. This was a profound achievement; and it adds strength to his claim that truth and non-violence can offer a strong political alternative to the politics of self-satisfaction and self-aggrandizement. “Gandhi resolved the contradiction between religious faith and process of social liberation by making religious faith an ally and an instrument in the social and political liberation of human beings. Social and political liberation were correlates to spiritual liberation.”<sup>50</sup>

Given the fact that we live in a fast changing world, Gandhi thought that it is essential to have a spiritual thread that can hold our lives together in all changes. Religion is one such thread. Moreover religion can help us cultivate fellowship with other human beings and facilitate a morally meaningful existence in this world and beyond. It would be a travesty then, to deny religion an anchoring role in human life. To quote Gandhi on this point: “I think it is wrong to expect certainties in this world, where all else but God that is Truth is an uncertainty. All that appears and happens about and around us is uncertain, transient. But there is a Supreme Being hidden therein as a Certainty, and one would be blessed if one would catch a glimpse of that certainty and hitch one’s wagon to it. The quest for that Truth is the *summum bonum* of life.”<sup>51</sup> This puts us in the position to discuss the final characteristic of Gandhian coherence of religion and politics.

Gandhi wanted religion and politics to realize his conception of an ideal human being – a being who is at peace with herself and in love with her fellow beings.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, he required a *satyagrahi* to adopt a reasoned approach towards life, shun dogmatism, and always test her religious beliefs by taking recourse to the overall good of humankind. He also demanded that a *satyagrahi* must show an elevated level of consciousness, working for the promotion of peace, justice and freedom in the world. In other words, a *satyagrahi* must transcend the divisions that come in the form caste, creed, race and gender, and that stunt human thought and progress.<sup>53</sup> This is the reason that Gandhi so readily insisted that politics can play a vital role in ameliorating the human condition.

Up to now I have argued that religion can play an important role in politics, and that the political philosophy of Gandhi provides us with

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>50</sup> M. V. Kamath: *Gandhi: A Spiritual Journey*, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My experiments with Truth*, p. 235.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. V. Kamath: *Gandhi: A Spiritual Journey*, p. 48.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi: *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 454.

an ideal manifestation of a religiously inspired politics. I want to use my findings to suggest now that liberal democracies need to engage religion in a more constructive way. Recall that earlier I partly agreed with Mill's distinction between private and public spheres, but disputed its emphasis and extent. I want to offer two more supplementary arguments to support my claim that liberal democracies must use public space and interactions, not to leave religion out of politics, but to engage it in the service of public harmony and welfare.

In the first place, an individual's beliefs play an important role in shaping the course of her life and conduct; and her beliefs are largely shaped by education, culture, social and political *milieu*. Given that religious beliefs are a significant part of an individual's overall belief system, it may be useful to create suitable conditions for their cultivation and development in our social and political world. It is true that sometimes, despite their many positive qualities, religions tend to acquire dogmatic overtones. However, religious dogmatism cannot be countered by an attitude of benign neglect towards them. The problem of dogmatism requires to be confronted head on and this can be done once we recognize that religion does play a significant role in our social and political life. Jawaharlal Neharu elaborates the above issue in the following terms: "Religions have helped greatly in the development of humanity. They have laid down values and standards and have pointed out principles for the guidance of human life. But with all the good they have done, they have also tried to impress truth in set forms and dogmas, and encouraged ceremonials and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become mere routine."<sup>54</sup> Liberal democracies I believe need to recognize the above limitations of religions and take measures to address them.

In the second place, I also reinforce the notion that liberal democracies must resist legislation of religious laws and practices into civil law, criminal law, and the law of the state. Religious laws have a theological context, applicable to religious activities and orders; but they should not enter in the realm of civil justice in a liberal society.<sup>55</sup> The very idea of such religious legislations we have seen violates an individual freedom and is incompatible with the core principles of liberalism.<sup>56</sup> For instance, not all people of the same religion share in the exactly same faith and principle and action; hence, any religious legislation is bound to be selective and coercive in nature. Moreover, there is real danger that religiously inspired legislation in a liberal

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<sup>54</sup> Jawaharlal Neharu: *The Discovery of India*, p. 569.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. J. S. Mill: *On Liberty*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 8.



democratic society would undermine the historical progress and turn the clock back from positive law to theological law.

Finally, it has been my contention that religion plays an important role in the political processes of liberal democracies. Indeed it may be very useful for liberal democracies to encourage religions to shed their socially harmful and dogmatic practices that are causing civil strife in the public domain. Of course, this must be done in a way that it remains consistent with the religious freedom of an individual and her other democratic rights as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have raised issues connected with the sharp separation of religion and politics in the liberal democracies. I argue against the dominant liberal view that religion is a matter of an individual's private concerns whereas politics belongs in the social realm. I contend that religion and politics share in some common areas of social and political confluence and that they are closely intertwined in the political processes of liberal democracies. In addition, I have also used the political practices of contemporary liberal democracies to advance my claim that religion plays an important role not only in shaping the political considerations of an individual, but also in formulating her world view. Following Gandhi, I conclude that religion, if properly understood, can help us resolve our serious political differences and supplement our politics in a meaningful way. In the same vein, I also argue against the inclusion of religious principles in the civil and criminal laws of a state because such principles may run counter to the core liberal principles of liberty and equality of all citizens.



## CHAPTER V

# RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

*DEBIKA SAHA*

India is a country with diverse and distinct pursuits. It has divergent customs and different viewpoints. To understand the role of religion in the public sphere, it is necessary to understand the tradition of accepted heterodoxy in India. This heterodox tradition not only has a bearing on the development and survival of democracy in India, but also helped the rise of secularism in India. Indian secularism has certain peculiar characteristics which made it different from the rest of the world. India is a home for different religions. We find here so many religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, and others. This richness of the variety of different religions shapes our social world and the nature of our culture. This richness deeply influences Indian politics and makes India one of the largest democracies in the world. It is often said that democracy is a quintessentially western idea, but this view is limited because it neglects the close connections between public reasoning and the development of democracy that India had long before – a connection that has been discussed recently by contemporary philosophers like John Rawls. In fact, under the area of public reasoning it is possible for the citizens to take part in political discussions and in this way to influence public choice. Voting is one of the ways to make public discussion effective. So it is through elections and ballots that India has emerged today as one of the largest democracies of the world. It is true that the Greek and Roman heritage of public discussion has a long history, but India is also not lagging behind the race when attaching importance to public discussion.

As it is well known, even the world-conquering Alexander received certain arguments when he visited the northwest of India in the fourth century B.C. A group of Jain philosophers replied to Alexander, when he found that they were not even paying any attention to him, in the following way: “King Alexander, every man can possess only so much of the earth’s surface as this we are standing on. You are but human like the rest of us ... you will soon be dead and then you will own

just as much of the earth as will suffice to bury you.”<sup>1</sup> If we consider the history of public reasoning in India it can be observed that early Indian Buddhists had a commitment to discussion as a means of social progress. There are ‘Buddhist Councils’ which were held that aimed to settle disputes between different points of view. These Councils drew delegates from various places and from different schools of thought. There were mainly four Councils: the first was in Rajagriha after Buddha’s death; the second took place in Vaisali a century later; the third Council took place during the reign of Ashoka in the third century B.C. in Pataliputra; and the last one was in Kashmir in the second century B.C. Though these Councils were held mainly to resolve differences in religious principles and practices, they also tried to resolve the demand of social and civic duties and to promote a healthy discussion. This tradition of open discussion helps to add a grand flavor to the emergence of Indian secularism. As was said before, India shares religious diversity and this point can be developed historically.

The Vedas paved the way to what is now called Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> In sixth century B.C., Buddhism and Jainism emerged as two of the dominant religions. Besides, there are Islam and Christianity. Christianity also arrived early in India. By the fourth century A.D., there were densely populated Christian communities largely in what is now known as Kerala. The uniqueness of India is that each religious group managed to retain its identity within India’s multi-religious reach. This country is the most complex and comprehensively pluralistic society, home to a large variety of castes, religions, languages, customs, and ways of living. The Anthropological Survey of India under the name “The People of India Project” conducted a survey, where it has been estimated that there are nearly 4, 599 separate communities in India with as many as 325 languages and dialects in 12 distinct language families and some 24 scripts. This mosaic of identities constitutes the meaning of Indianness and today India has survived as a major secular democratic state.

Inside the Parliament of India the following maxim is inscribed: “The world is like a family.” Most of the modern religious teachers both in the east and west are emphatic in their view that humans are essentially identical in their inner foundations. For example, the Buddhists from the east and Kant from the west, who reject essentialism, hold that through non-violence and good will it is possible for human beings to be in spiritual communion with one another. There are two

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<sup>1</sup> Amartya Sen: *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, (New York: Picador, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The name “Hinduism” was used much later by Persians and Arabs, after the river Sindhu or Indus.

main approaches to secularism: the first, neutrality between different religions; and the second, prohibition of religious association in state activities. Indian secularism has opted for neutrality in particular, rather than prohibition in general. In fact, in India religion is not something which is to be treated separately. India has a vast religious literature and this is one of the reasons for associating the understanding of Indian civilization with religiosity. An expert in comparative religion once remarked: "India in particular furnishes within its limits examples of every conceivable type of attempt at the solution of the religious problem." Kautilya's classic treatise, known as *Arthashastra*, which means Economics, written in fourth century B.C. is basically a secular treatise, but it contains religious and social customs as well.

It is Akbar, the great Moghal ruler, who laid the foundations of secularism and religious neutrality within the state which he insisted upon throughout his life. He upheld that no man should be interfered with on account of religion and everyone should be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him. This view of Akbar that the pursuit of reason rather than reliance on tradition, as the way to address various social problems, has become important in the 21st century. Religion is not something which is to be treated separately from the secular. This view can be best represented in Rabindranath Tagore's writings. It is true that he came from a Hindu family – one of the rich *Zamindars* who had his property mostly in what is now known as Bangladesh. However, his writings had so much influence on the largely Muslim citizens of Bangladesh that they did not hesitate to choose one of Tagore's songs, *Amar Sonar Bangla* – My Golden Bengal – as their national anthem. As Amartya Sen remarks: "This must be very confusing to those who see the contemporary world as a 'clash of civilizations' – with 'the Muslim civilization,' 'the Hindu civilization' and 'the Western civilization' each forcefully confronting the others."<sup>3</sup> They would also be confused by Rabindranath Tagore's own description of his Bengali family as the product of a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mahamedan, and British.

The above narrative makes it clear that in a pluralistic country like India, it is not possible to separate religion from the public sphere. The concept of public sphere that we find in the west has a different character in comparison to India. The separation of state and Church contributed to the emergence of the public sphere in the 18th century Europe while the formation and development of the public sphere in India during the 19th and 20th century had a different story. This happened because India was long under colonial domination and Indian

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<sup>3</sup> Amartya Sen: *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, p. 91.

society did not have enough scope to rebuild its destiny. The emergence of a public sphere which was a contribution of the media, voluntary organizations and social movements was also restricted in its nature as compared with the west. Unlike the west, the public sphere in India was not the product of free society; it took shape within the environment of the colonial government. The public sphere was not vibrant in its character as there was always a constant watch from the colonial government. So, two tendencies were at work at that time: the first, liberal pretensions and also the second, authoritarian compulsions. Though India has now passed that phase, the legacy of the colonial rule still influences the space of the public sphere. It is true that India is one of the largest democracies in the world. Yet, the public engagements within the public sphere indicate a continuous struggle for democratic ideals and practice. In India, it is not possible to separate the religious sentiment as it forms the very core of public life. In fact, the policy of the Indian Government to allow equal recognition to all religions let open more space to all religions. As a result, what has become prominent in the public-sphere is not secular reason but religious celebration. The celebration of religiosity based on rituals co-exists in the public sphere. It may be said that religion becomes a very powerful force in civil society. The use of religion for political ends has substantially increased during the last decades.

In recent years there has been an increasingly sophisticated series of intellectual interventions which confront us to reconsider our thoughts about religion. Habermas in his Holberg lecture states: “At the international stage orthodox and fundamentalist movements are anyway on the rise. Apart from Hindu nationalism, Islam and Christianity are at present the two most vital religious sources.”<sup>4</sup> Drawing the thread from Habermas’ writing let us try to give an idea of what Hinduism means. Hinduism can hardly be defined. It is a way of life. “It [Hinduism] is not at all a single religion with a creed to which everybody must subscribe. It is rather a federation of different kinds of approach to the Reality that is behind life.”<sup>5</sup> Hinduism is the result of the blending of Aryan and non-Aryan – Aboriginal and Dravidian – elements. There are different periods of its development. We may divide the periods roughly as: the Vedic Period – Ritualistic and Philosophical (2000-600 B.C.); the Period of Reaction – Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, and the Rational foundation of Six Systems of Indian Philosophy (600 B.C-300 A.D.); the Pauranic

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<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, The Holberg Prize Seminar, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Haridas Bhattacharya: *The Cultural Heritage of India: The Religions*, vol. 4, (Gol Park, Calcutta: Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956), p. xix.

Period (300-1200 A.D.); the Muslim Period (1200-1757); the development of Vaisnavism, Vallabha and Chaitanya systems (1486-1533); the Modern Age – Brahmo Samaj (1757-1968); and the Post-Modern Era (1969-till date).

Though Hinduism is the dominant faith, there are other religions that are followed in India. So, the pluralistic society of India requires that there is some kind of neutrality. Everyone must be given their rights to practice their own faith. Every religion is originally a 'worldview' or as John Rawls would call a 'comprehensive doctrine'<sup>6</sup> in the sense that it lays claim on the authority to structure a form of life to its entirety. Religious freedom is the appropriate political weapon to the challenges of religious pluralism. From the viewpoint of distributive justice, the principle of equal treatment of everybody requires that all citizens have the same opportunities to make actual use of equally distributed rights and liberties in order to realize their own particular life plans. The Pluralistic society of India fulfills the above requirement.

Habermas points out that in a secular state government has to be placed on a non-religious footing. There are two components which operate here: first, the equal political participation of all citizens; and second, the epistemic dimension of a deliberation that grounds the presumption of rationally acceptable outcome. A kind of civic solidarity operates when one takes successful participation in democratic affairs that define the ethics of citizenship. Following Rawls these may be called the 'duty of civility' and 'the public use of reason'. Now, that India has emerged as an important player in the global market, many are beginning to ascribe the country's success to the superiority of 'Hindu Values'. This sentiment is being promoted by *gurus* and *teli-yogis*, such as Swami Ramdev and others. The public-sphere is replete with the messages of becoming more religious in order to become successful in the global race for money and power. Pavan K. Varma, an Indian Diplomat, in one of his books entitled *The Great Indian Middle Class*<sup>7</sup> treats religion as a kind of refuge for the alienated and lonely urbanites, uprooted from their old warm little communities they left in villages. Varma shows that the transition to modern life in the cities must be traumatic reality that drives the middle classes to seek out the consolation of God in the company of fellow believers.

However, there are also other views which hold that it is not insecurity which is the cause rather, there is also a sense of expanding

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Rawls: *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pavan K. Varma: *The Great Indian Middle Class*, (New Delhi: Viking, 1998).

horizons and multiplying opportunities that are responsible for being more religious. The urban middle class has done well for themselves by seizing the educational and career opportunities that came their way. So it is not alienation but rather ambivalence over the new found opportunities that seem a more plausible explanation of the growing religiosity in India. The role of religion in public sphere faces a question mark following some violent upsurge in different parts of India. In fact, it is an accepted truism that global inflows of immigrant people are increasing nowadays everywhere. So in this pluralistic society with a canvas of people, bearing different cultures, it is sometimes very difficult to maintain integrity and unity. Everyone wants to preserve their own ethnic identity which is very natural. Though the Government tries its best, sometimes the shift in political power makes the situation complex. As a result, there occur clashes between different groups. Habermas remarked that while coping with the pressure of globalized labor-markets, social integration must succeed even under the undignifying conditions of growing social inequality.

In fact, religion has emerged as a dominant power in the public sphere all over the world and India is also no exception. As Iranian sociologist and Islamic reformer Ali Sharyati puts it: "Religion is an amazing phenomenon that plays contradictory roles in peoples' lives. It can destroy or revitalize, put to sleep or awaken, enslave or emancipate, teach docility or teach revolt." So whatever role religion will play, it will be with us forever.



## CHAPTER VI

# **SOME PROBLEMS ABOUT RELIGION ENTERING THE PUBLIC SPHERE: A CHINESE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

*KUANG SANPING and ZENG TEQING*

### **INTRODUCTION**

What role will and should religion play in the public sphere? This has been a controversial problem. At present the viewpoints debating it in academia are mainly two ideas: religious exclusivism and religious inclusivism. In this chapter we begin elaborating on these two approaches. Then we proceed to expound on Habermas' conception that religion should be integrated into the public sphere. Finally, we consider the thoughts of the religious ethic of Chinese culture and the problems of Chinese Modernity in the light of Habermas' thought.

### **SHOULD RELIGION ENTER THE PUBLIC SPHERE?**

In our attempt to answer this question, we clarify the two approaches discussed in the academic circles in our times. The first approach says that religion should be totally excluded from the public sphere. The second approach considers that religion should be included in the public sphere. We briefly consider both of these views in the next two sections.

#### *Religious Exclusivism*

Secularization has been a dominant theme in the sociological discussion of religion, promoted especially by Peter Berger. It claims that under the pressures of modernization religions have retreated into the private sphere – functioning simply as a source of personal consolation, without any concern for the society and culture. A more moderate approach to religion is to consider it as an innocuous personal choice and the only thing we need to do is confine it in the private-space. The American sociologist Robert N. Bellah has declared in his book *Beyond Belief* that “the dominant target” of the religions has been

personal “delivering, enlightenment, or release” since the Axial Age.<sup>1</sup> The British philosopher of religion John Hick has acknowledged in his book *An Interpretation of Religion* that religions before the Axial Age functioned to maintain cosmic and social orders. He has also highlighted that after the Axial Age religions functioned mainly for personal “delivering or release.”<sup>2</sup> These “general categories” show a transformation from being-centeredness to self-centeredness in human survival. Some liberals hold that religions are a personal and private choice and must be separated from the public sphere of rationality and morality. The American political philosopher John Rawls has recognized that religion can play a proper role in some areas of public life. However the religious disciples should avoid appealing to the religious arguments when making mandatory laws. He argues that the doctrine of religious belief can usually not be proved by the evidences according to inductive law, which is commonly admitted. So if public policy is based on religious thoughts and values, this is unjust to non-believing citizens. It violates the justice principle of liberalism.<sup>3</sup>

The American post-modern philosopher Richard Rorty says that it is indeed bad taste to bring religion into the discussion of public policy” because religion will stop the conversation. Thus, for him, “we cannot maintain the democratic political association, unless the religious disciples agree with religious privatization to get guarantee for religious freedom.”<sup>4</sup> In Rorty’s consideration, religion must be privatized for the main reason that it plays a conversation-stopper role in political discourse carried out between the disciples and people independent of religious communities. Conversation-stopping means the end of our political consensuses in the democratic communities because if people are totally under the influence of their belief in God in their discourse process, the door of discourse is closed. The only function of religious faith is to make the individuals find their life-meanings and to provide help for them when they are in difficulty. The public sphere is where citizens discuss their political issues. Religious disciples should “place his/her religion at home.”<sup>5</sup> The American religious sociologist Peter

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert N. Bellah: *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*, (New York and London: Harper&Row, 1970), pp. 22, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John Hick: *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, (New York: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 22, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Rawls: “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics”, *Philosophical Review*, no. 60, (1951), pp.177-197. Cf. also John Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 215.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rorty: “Religion as Conversation-Stopper”, *Common Knowledge*, vol. 13, no.1, (1994), pp. 1-6.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rorty: “Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration”;

Berger thinks that religion will be privatized gradually and if it is done, it will be good for the private sphere. He has pointed out that in modern society “as far as the publicity of religion is concerned, it is short of a ‘substantiality’, while it is short of a ‘sharedness’ as far as its ‘substantiality’ is concerned.” Under this situation, religion has become one kind of “religious hobby” which can easily be abandoned.<sup>6</sup> In fact, similar thoughts have been found in Talcott Parsons. He has suggested that religion is a personal thing in the final sense. It relates to personal nature and the core of individuality in belief.<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville has denied the unity between religion and politics. He has claimed that religion should build its kingdom on the basis of the hope of eternal-life. If it makes alliance with politics, it will become the centre of disputes of power and interest. Religion works not for political power, controlling or interest, but for consolation and hope.<sup>8</sup> The American philosopher Daniel Dennett claims that religion should be regarded only as a historical vestige in the “cultural museum” or “cultural zoo” just as the endangered species are preserved in the wildlife parks. More discussions about religion in the free, plural, and secular society are centered on the possibilities that religion can cause disharmony within a society or among different societies. The “9/11 Event” caused by Islamic fanaticism enhances the contemporary consciousness of danger emanating from religion perhaps more than any other events.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Religious Inclusivism*

The differences between the sacred and the secular have been exaggerated by the above-mentioned viewpoints. They separate the sacred from the secular, the private from the public, the cultivating from the ruling consciously or unconsciously. They make these things which are relevant and opposite binary. In this framework, religious belief and religious organizations are made mysterious, private, psychological and totally unilateral. An individual spiritual life is seen as totally irrelevant to public life, social order and political life. In fact, it is impossible that religion is completely private even in American society, which enjoys modernity and profound democratic traditions. C. Stephen Evans, a

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*Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 31, no. 1, (2003), pp. 141-149.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Peter L. Berger: *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Talcott Parsons: *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, (New York: Free Press, 1960), pp. 247-248.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Daniel Dennett: *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 519.

professor at Baylor University, points out that the narration of the bad effects of religion and of religious exclusivism on the public sphere has a huge impact on the restrictive liberalists.<sup>10</sup> He thinks that from “the comprehensive perspective” the narration that “religion is just trouble” is excessively simplified. There are at least three reasons. Firstly, it may lessen the latent factors of causing religious divergences to remove religion from or restrict it in the public sphere, but it also weakens enormous social goodness appealed by religion. Secondly, obviously violent events have not decreased in European societies during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries after religious tolerance came true to a certain degree. The last, but not the least is that it is not clear whether secular morality on the basis of neutral reason can be treated as the foundation of religious tolerance and freedom.<sup>11</sup>

The American professor at Princeton Seminary, Max L. Stackhouse, has suggested that religion is not just individual and private; it goes beyond the boundary of intrinsic beliefs and individual practices; it impacts on public conducts and individual relations, and forms the public features of man. Thus, religion becomes inevitably a public phenomenon. At the same time, the Church always discourses in the public sphere because it has an ethical role and is worth sharing in the public sphere.<sup>12</sup> The American professor at Yale Seminary has cited Nicholas Wolterstorff’s viewpoint that a public life without divergence and conflict is only a *utopian* dream. The hurt it will bring would not exceed the benefit if we try to realize the world *utopia*. Without religious values and suggestions, the public sphere will be overrun by secularism.<sup>13</sup> The American scholar Clark Cochran has said that religion cannot and should not be retained in the private sphere and abandon its public services. Religion is situated “at the crossroads of the public and the private.” Therefore, it brings impetus to both the private life and the public life. For this reason, it gets involved in the public sphere in its political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Even though some religious traditions try to separate themselves from the political,

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. Stephen Evans: “Religious Belief Is a Public Value: A Christian Perspective”; *Religious Values and the Public Sphere: Public Religious Dialogue in China-Western Cultures*, ed. Kang Phee Seng, (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press 2008), p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Zhibin Xie : “How is Public? Which Limit?: Forms and Tensions of the Public Theology”; *Journal of Regent College*, vol. 2, (2005), Retrieved from: [www.regentcsp.org](http://www.regentcsp.org).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Miroslav Volf: “Self-Voice: Public Faith in the Pluralist World”; *Religious Values and the Public Sphere: Public Religious Dialogue in China-Western Cultures*, ed. Kang Phee Seng, (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 2008).

economic, and cultural spheres, the major religious traditions not only tend to exist in these spheres and cooperate mutually, but also try their best to affect these spheres.<sup>14</sup>

The American sociologist José Casanova did his best to bring back religion into the public sphere on the basis of “the three reasons for religion’s de-privatization”. He explored one of the dynamics in modern social development. For him, religious institutions deprived of earlier privileged roles – whether the privileged status of Christianity in late medieval Europe or the privileged position of Confucian ethics in the Ming (368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties – in public life, must find new ways to participate in modern society. He describes this transition as “the relocation of religion from a pre-modern form of publicness to the public sphere of civil society.” Casanova highlights the distinctive contribution of religion to the civil society. Religion, by entering the public sphere and promoting public discussion on certain issues, makes modern society to give openly and completely its ideas to the order system. We can speak in this way, removing religion from or restricting it in the public life will perhaps lighten the latent factors of religious divergence; but it can also weaken the good created by religion for the society. If religious functions disappear from society, the overall results may be the decline of the ethical values and the increase of violence. Thus, when we inspect theoretical problem of religion not entering the public sphere concretely, we find it to be a relatively complicated and knotty.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese scholar Duan Dezhi citing the Kantian proposal shows that the problem about religion entering the public life is really not a historical question, but a theoretic or cognitive question, not a question of whether it should but how it should. In other words, this problem refers not to the possibility of religion entering the public life, but to the problem regarding the way of it entering the public sphere.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Zhibin Xie : “Religion, Public Life and Globalization: Interview – Public Theologist of Princeton Max L. Stackhouse”; *Social Sciences Abroad*, vol. 2, (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Public Religions in the Modern World*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 222.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Dezhi Duan , “An Introduction to Monism Characteristics and Common Significances of the Confucian School: Inquiry into the Issue of ‘How Religion can Enter the Public Sphere’”; *Religious Values and the Public Sphere: Public Religious Dialogue in China-Western Cultures*, ed. Kang Phee Seng, p. 120.

## **RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: HABERMASIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Having clarified religious exclusivism and religious inclusivism in the above sections, we move on to consider the Habermasian perspective on religion in the public sphere. In this attempt, we first explore the evolution of Habermas' religious thought, after which we take up for consideration how Habermas talks about religion in the public sphere.

### *Evolution of Habermas' Religious Thought*

In the early phase of his thought, Jürgen Habermas held for religious exclusivism. As French scholar Philippe Portier's analysis shows Habermas' views on the relationships between post-metaphysical philosophy and religion as well as the public sphere and religion have not remained identical throughout, but have gone through three major developing phases.<sup>17</sup> Chinese scholar Cao Weidong suggests that Habermas' thought shifts from his earlier, apparently dismissive attitude towards equivocal criticism, from finite sympathy and comprehension to a more receptive stance.<sup>18</sup> In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Habermas views religion and metaphysics as "mythology", the "rational others", and does not think that religion can and should enter the public-sphere because theologians always view God as Lord and themselves as the rulers, which is against the equality principle in communicative action. However, in the books *On Social Identity* and *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas has become certain that religion can never coordinate with the principle in public sphere. Still influenced by Marxist theory, as a member of the Frankfurt School, he views religion as an "alienation of reality." With its dualist views of the world and the claim that salvation is more important than this-world happiness, religion has always served as a tool of the powerful. This critique is part of his broader philosophical agenda. At this juncture in his thought, Habermas believed in the "disappearance" of religion. To provide men liberty, modern society needs to escape from the empire of metaphysics

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Philippe Portier: "Religion and Democracy in the Thought of Jürgen Habermas"; *Society*, vol. 48, no. 5, (2011), pp. 426-427.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Weidong Cao : *Communicative Rationality and Poetic Discourse*, (Tianjin: Academy of Social Science Press, 2001). Cf. also Weidong Cao: "Language, Communication and Philosophy: Review of Habermas' Philosophical Texts"; *Philosophical Trends*, vol. 6. (2009).

and rely on the resources of communicative rationality, which is built on “principles of the secular universal ethic of responsibility.”<sup>19</sup>

A little later, Habermas replaces the notion of “disappearance” of religion with a call for its “privatization”. In his work, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures (1987)*, his thought shifts from his apparently dismissive attitude towards religion and equivocal criticism to finite sympathy and comprehension. Then, in his book *Post-Metaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, he reminds his readers that religion is an existential necessity that is “indispensable in ordinary life.” In the face of suffering, it is quite natural for people to turn to faith. Habermas understands that for a good part of the population, religion offers “consolation.” Nonetheless, religious citizens should not bring their convictions into the political sphere. In the public sphere, secular reason is sufficient. Religion – defined by particular belief – cannot claim to apply universally nor be justified rationally.<sup>20</sup> In fact, since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially after the “9/11” Event, Habermas has more frequently and distinctly talked about religion and has touched upon the ideological significance of religious beliefs and the social function in the so-called “post-secular societies”.

Habermas rethinks the self-sufficiency of the “secularist societies” seriously in his works, such as *The Future of Human Nature*, *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Essays, Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, *Between Naturalism and Religion; Philosophical Essays, Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* which he co-authored with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* which he co-authored with Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt, *Philosophical Texts*, and a series of lectures such as “Religion, Law and Politics On Political Justice in the Pluralist World Society”. Presently, Habermas supports the notion of “publicization” of religion. Under this rubric, he stresses that religion should not be limited to the private sphere. Rather, it should intervene in the public-sphere and use its founding documents and traditions to refine “moral intuitions.” This phase of Habermas’ thought predicts the coming of a “post-secular society,” in which individuals, without abdicating their autonomy, rediscover a sense of transcendence and religious belonging. From the above consideration we know that Habermas’ thought on the relations between religion and rationality, faith and rational knowledge, has shifted from his earlier religious exclusivism” to the later Religious Equivocality and to the present religious inclusivism.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Weidong Cao : *Communicative Rationality and Poetic Discourse*, p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

*How Does Habermas Talk about Religion in the Public Sphere?*

The western countries entered the modernization course by means of separating religion from the state. An incarnation of modernization is secularization. However, there are some problems of “ethical absence” in the process of secularization. Facing these problems, must we abandon the principle of separating religion from the state? Does this principle inevitably lead to the ethical absence? Is religion the public sphere *per se*? What role should religion play in the public sphere? How do people resolve the dilemma between the separation of religion from the state and the ethical absence? How can people deal with these problems about the cultivation of individual moral awareness and the religious conflicts in modern society? How can religion play a positive role in the plural and modern societies?

In order to cope with these problems, Habermas puts forward the conceptions of religion entering the public sphere under the fundamental framework of the separation of religion from the state. In Habermas’ estimation, if religion is integrated into the public sphere, religious citizens and non-religious citizens, people of different religious beliefs can communicate with each other. The relationship between them will be no longer strange and the trust between them will be reinforced. They will regard each other not as a so-called “monster” but as a civil partner. The conflicts caused by different beliefs can be resolved easily. The solidarity and cooperation among the citizens will be reinforced. In contrast, if religion is not integrated into the public sphere, the political and ethical demands of religious citizens cannot be expressed and their discontent can only repress their mind. So, they may adopt non-public manners, such as secret forms and confidential organizations under the principle of integrating state with religion, and resist public societies and governmental organizations. They may even use violent ways, such as carrying out new social movements or religious terrorism to destroy public facilities so as to arouse public attention and to express their political and ethical propositions from their religious perspectives. Habermas advocates that we may establish a mechanism that religion should be integrated into the public sphere so that we can take part in rational discourse and learn from each other between religious citizens and non-religious citizens. The non-religious citizens can learn the moral awareness and conduct from the religious citizens and the religious citizens can learn to express their attention to life and society in a public, comprehensible and rational way. In this context, we could mention that the Chinese scholar Zhang Qingxiong was inspired by Habermas’ conception that religion should be integrated into the public sphere.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Qingxiong Zhang: “Religious Pluralism, Rational Communication



Will Habermas' conception come true? Like Charles Taylor, Habermas also emphasizes that ethical comprehension provides inherent significance to the life of the cultural community members. He not only claims that religious believers must make great efforts to interpret his/her ideas expressing in the public sphere in secular language but also hopes that "secularized citizens can also participate in the relevant contribution in which they try their best to translate the religious language into the publicly comprehensive language." Habermas thinks that religion plays an important role in the process of enhancing the vitality of a civil society. According to him, religion may realize its purpose by its ideological function when the democratic constitutional state wants to make a consensus in a complicated and public discursive process. However, it cannot play its role sufficiently because the democratic constitution is the secularization of the governmental institutions. Democratic constitutions will not open to the faith societies. This dilemma implies that religion is an important factor in the public sphere and the democratic constitutional state contains its inherent demands of secularization and 'religionization'.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, for Habermas "religion provides not only emotional resources for the given crowds, but also contains the cognitive content in the universal sense. Philosophy should seek to salvage the cognitive contents of religious traditions and the human self-comprehension in religious beliefs so as to provide a kind of secular translation of religion to help people understand each other better between the special religious believers, other religious believers and non-religious citizens."<sup>23</sup> With the development of his thought, Habermas recognizes that communicative rationality and religion are, in fact, not opposed to and exclusive of each other. The emancipated targets of the communicative rationality cannot be separated from the semantic connotation of Judeo-Christian traditions. The rich and irreplaceable semantic connotations of religious theology also contain resources that modern society can make use of. So, modern society can include religion. Religion and the communicative rationality may equally communicate and harmoniously get along. Religion ought to play a positive role in the public-sphere. Society urgently needs to carry out dialogues between faith and knowledge in order to realize cooperation and mutual benefit. However, Habermas is certainly not able to resolve the problems about religion in the public

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and Institutional Guarantee – Inquiry to the Issue of “the Community of Religions”; *Academic Monthly*, vol. 4, (2011).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Weidong Cao : “Language, Communication and Philosophy: Review of Habermas' Philosophical Texts”; *Philosophical Trends*, vol. 6, (2009).

<sup>23</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Future of Human Nature*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p.114.

sphere ultimately because he limits himself to communicative rationality.

Chinese thought, while inspired by Habermasian consideration of religion being integrated into the public sphere, can also contribute in sorting out some of the problems regarding religion in the public sphere, which Habermasian thought did not succeed in solving. We turn our attention to the Chinese perspective of this problem in the next section.

### **PUBLICITY OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGION: CHINESE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

As personal belief and mystical experience, religion belongs to the private realm. However, as common belief and identical spiritual pursuit of social groups, religion also reveals its true “publicity” and “sharedness”. Therefore, considered as common belief, religion cannot be confined only to the privacy of the self. There is a growing awareness of the deep religious coloring of ancient Chinese civilization and a greater recognition of the important role of religion in the formation and development of the Chinese people.<sup>24</sup> A common spirit of the Chinese people has been developing within the culture itself. Many of its core elements are adopted and adapted by the three traditional religions of China: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. We briefly consider their ethical elements in the next section.

#### *Ethics of Chinese Religions*

Since its origin, religion as a social group and ideology has taken part in the public life, and made prominent contributions continuously to hold human society together in harmony. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have done these tasks in the western cultural traditions and Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism have performed these functions in eastern cultural traditions – though in their own differing ways. Confronting the strong trend of thoughts in which western thinkers, such as John Rawls,<sup>25</sup> Robert Audi,<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Stout,<sup>27</sup> and others

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pingye Li: “The Characteristics of Chinese Religion and the Development of Christianity in China”; *Sino-Christian Studies in China*, eds. Yang Huilin and Daniel Yeung, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), p. 326.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. John Rawls: *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Robert Audi: *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

claim that religion should not and will not enter the public sphere, we think that ethical thoughts of traditional religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism in Chinese culture coincide with Habermas' conception to a great extent. Chinese scholar Zhuo Xinping has emphasized the link between religious traditions and a culture's moral life. To quote him on this point: "As the source of the cultural tradition of humanity, morality is rooted in and is manifested by the various religions of the world."<sup>28</sup> Thus, religion, in his estimation, is not something that is simply added into the cultural life, but is "an important part of human cultural and spiritual tradition."<sup>29</sup>

The main ethical points of Chinese religions are the following. Firstly, religious ethics has a significant place in the political and public life of the people. Often it is referred to as the "political publicity of religious ethics". Generally, religious ethics discusses the political-religious relations, targets and structures political groups, and expects the statesman to function within the parameters of ethics in political life. It makes a contribution to democratic consolidation and democratic development, which is the embodiment of institutional ethics. Secondly, religious ethics gives norms for social life, which is often referred to as "social normality of religious ethics". Religious ethics regulates mainly the relations between belief groups, between belief groups and non-belief groups, between man and woman, and between human beings and natural environment. It helps its disciples to accommodate to their spiritual and secular life, and makes disciples play their dual roles – as God-fearing believers and law-abiding citizen of the nation – properly. This is the embodiment of normal ethics. Thirdly, religious ethics gives its adherents their cultural identity, which is referred to as the "cultural identity of religious ethics". Cultural identity is the sense of belonging that individuals cultivate within subordinate cultures and cultural groups. It is an intrinsic commitment and a socio-psychological process in which individuals maintain and develop their cultural characteristics. Sociologist Richard Madsen – who has researched the Han Chinese communities around the world – holds that the Chinese religious practices are an important element of the identity of these groups. Throughout history, religion has served as a significant foundation of both social and personal identity. In various cultures, religious beliefs and practices have offered a framework for self-understanding and a

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jeffrey Stout: *The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Xinping Zhuo: "Religion and Morality in Contemporary China"; *China Study Journal*, vol.14, no. 3, (1999), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

guide to self-definition. Clifford Geertz reminds us that religious traditions maintain this function today, providing intellectual perspectives and moral ideals that help people secure a satisfying sense of public identity.<sup>30</sup>

*Religious-Cultural Traditions: China and the Western World*

Liang Shuming has put forward a famous proposal that the religious problem is actually the watershed of the Sino-western cultures in his book, *The Quintessences of Chinese Culture*. His viewpoint has spelt out the difference between Chinese and western religions and cultures. In the west, there is an obvious tension between religion – specifically Christianity – and the public sphere. Though religion is one of the voices in the society, when it emits a voice in the public sphere, it is given more scanning and suspicion than other voices because it is a dominant and oppressive ruler in history. In fact, today religious values are specially restricted and filtered by a lot of ideological opinions in the normal public sphere. Unlike the west, Confucianism in Chinese traditional cultures and its theoretic systems has advocated the “sacrelization” of the secular with the help of conceptions like the “view of kindheartedness”, the “consideration of others by putting oneself in their places”, the “classification of loves”, the “virtue ethics of self life” and the “internal saints and external kings”, and with the help of the combination of moral philosophy with political philosophy.<sup>31</sup> The unification and inclusive spirit of sacredness and secularity, privacy and publicity in moral and political life, which are difficult problems for the western religious exclusivism, are characteristic of Chinese Confucianism.<sup>32</sup>

This characteristic of Chinese religions makes it possible for them to sustain a harmonious Chinese society. In the first place, it is beneficial to maintain China as a great ethical country. Elaborating on the relation among the Confucian, the Daoist, and the Buddhist traditions, Yao Xinzong says as follows: “Confucianism was expected to provide the moral principles for social and political life, while Daoism and

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Clifford Geertz: *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 175, 178.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Shuming Liang : *The Quintessences of Chinese Culture*, (Shanghai: Shanghai People Press, 2005), p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Dezhi Duan: “An Introduction to Monism Characteristics and Common Significances of the Confucian School: Inquiry into the Issue of ‘How Religion can Enter the Public Sphere’”; *Religious Values and the Public Sphere: Public Religious Dialogue in China-Western Cultures*, ed. Kang Phee Seng, pp. 119-135.

Buddhism are to sanction Confucian morality and help people psychologically and spiritually.”<sup>33</sup> Vincent Goossaert speaks of the various contributions of these three traditions: teaching the individual spiritual techniques – such as Buddhist *Chan* meditation – known as *Zen* in the west; teaching the devotional Pure Land spiritual exercises – invoking the savior Amitabha; teaching the Daoist psycho-physical techniques to transform the body and make it immortal; teaching the Confucian moral self-cultivation – like counting one’s good and bad deeds and keeping ledgers of merit; and providing ritual services to associations and communities.<sup>34</sup> Christian belief also has an influence on contemporary Chinese society in three ways. Firstly it can maintain traditional values including Chinese traditional values. Secondly Christianity offers a new value to the people. Thirdly, Christianity’s noble value prevents the trend of vulgarization of social values.<sup>35</sup>

Firstly, religion maintains traditional values including Chinese traditional values. For instance, the framework of core values, such as “great virtues have the capacity to contain all things,” and “to tolerate is a sign of greatness” in Chinese traditional culture has been recently revived as a potential resource within contemporary Chinese culture. It is this excellent cultural tradition that enlivens Chinese civilization, nourishes the Chinese nation and maintains the ethical characteristics of China. Secondly, religion offers a new value to people. It is beneficial to maintain social morality smoothly, boost the developing of social morality, and to lift the state of social morality. In contemporary China, the basic mission of religion in the development of the spiritual life is moral-cultivation and offering social services. Take for instance, Christianity: though it is a foreign religion in China, it has a clear moral orientation as it emphasizes the “principle of love”. Christianity plays a constructive role in Chinese society. The two doctrines – “Love God” and “Love of Your Neighbor” are the moral core and the top-level principles in Christianity. This is a best example that a religion has applied its transcendent spirit to conduct moral practices. The “Religion of Love” has three kinds of ideal state and three levels of morality. The first level emphasizes obedience to the concrete moral standard, i.e., to know what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. This is

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<sup>33</sup> Xinzhong Yao: *An Introduction to Confucianism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 224.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Lizhu Fan, James D. Whitehead, and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead: *Sociology of Religion: Religion and China*, (Beijing: Current Affairs Press, 2010), p. 24. Cited from Vincent Goossaert: “Religious Traditions, Communities and Institutions” *Religion and Public Life in the Chinese World*, (forthcoming volume).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Xiangping Li: “Ethics, Citizenship and Identity: The Ethical Life of the Christian in the Contemporary China”; *Tian Feng*, vol. 9, (2007).

indeed the ground ethics or “Golden Rule”. The second level is to pursue the supreme good. This is evidently higher than the base line ethics. As far as the soul is concerned, this pursuit is very important and significant. The third level is to integrate into the ultimate being, in the context of which people build up a sublimated relationship between God and human being in the religious sense. In the Christian sense, it is a sacred relationship of “integration”.<sup>36</sup>

Thirdly, a religion’s noble values prevent the trend of vulgarization of social values. It is beneficial to safeguard the social morality from descending. Because religion goes deep into the temperament and internal level of people and organizations, social politics and ethics get an intangible force of constraint from it, which would be absent in total secularization. However, religious organizations and associations should not get unduly entangled in the political sphere. They should not act as the political authority. The religious organizations should act as civil unions, non-governmental organizations, or non-profit organizations being composed of individuals who embrace liberal beliefs. As a social citizen, the member of a religious organization has dual identity, i.e. as a believer and as a social practitioner. As a citizen, he has the right and duty to participate in the management of the government, and to play his important role, which implies that he/she does not to seek the interests of his religious organization or to be a spokesman for his religion, but to carry out his “civil” responsibilities and obligations. Religious organizations should be restricted in their exclusive activity fields and interact with the social politics, economy, education, ethics, science and technology so that religion is prevented from politicization, privatization and marginalization. Thus, through the right type of interaction in all these spheres of social life, religion can safeguard social morality from descending.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Prospects of Religious Publicity in Contemporary China*

The problem concerning the relation of religion to the public-sphere seems to be a topic of the west, while in China legal religions can play their positive roles in various fields. The only problem is to think of the areas, where the religious organizations should get to do their work. In this section, we expand the notion of Chinese religious publicity in its different dimensions.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Xinping Zhuo: *“Globalized” Religion and Contemporary China*, (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2008), pp. 370-371.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

Firstly, we need to structure a harmonious society so as to accommodate religious publicity. Religion is regarded as an important element for structuring harmonious society. Religion is relevant to our social stability and sustainable development. Without religious harmony, it is impossible to have a harmonious society. Structuring a harmonious society needs the intrinsic and positive factors of Chinese religious cultures. It is the demands of our society and our times for Chinese religion. At the same time, the demand has paved a broad, healthy, and benign road for Chinese religious development. We should build an institutional structure in which religions can take part in discourse on the ethical, political, social and cultural problems which are of common concern in the public sphere in order to enhance mutual understanding between the rationality and the faith, to display positive role of religions in social life, and to realize religious peace and social harmony. We believe that it will bring more publicity to Chinese religions.

Secondly, we need to push forward a democratic politics which would promote tolerance to religious publicity. In contemporary China, all kinds of religious representatives can participate regularly in the management of the governmental affairs, and can bring forward suggestions to governmental policy and administration, and give reviews to the political and governmental affairs. This has embodied the intrinsic theoretical content in Habermas' conception that religion should be integrated into the public sphere. The phenomenon of the "formal" participation in political affairs, like the Chinese religious groups entering the political sphere, is extremely rare in the so-called "democratic" western countries. Therefore, we must pay more close attention to advocate and encourage "religious dialogue"<sup>38</sup> and "religious consultation"<sup>39</sup> and to broaden the channels of participation in the management of the governmental affairs, so as to push forward democratic construction and religious publicity.

Thirdly, we should empower legal institutions so as to protect religious publicity. Since, religion has peculiar complexity, the connection between religion and society exists in innumerable ways and on various planes. So, the religious participation in various public affairs inevitably comes into relations and behaviors relating to national and social public interests as well as rights and interests in religious circles. Religion is becoming an important component of social public affairs and it is about to fit into the management of the social public affairs by

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 356-361.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Lai Chen: "Religious Communication, Social Ethic, and the Contemporary Relations between Confucianism and Buddhism", *Studies in World Religions*, vol. 4, (2011).

law because of the existence of relations and behaviors. We administrate religious affairs by law to protect the legal rights in the religious circles and to regulate religious activities so as to make the religious affairs orderly and healthy, to avoid chaos, to stop the illegal activities, and to crack down on the violent terrors and criminal offenses in the name of religion. We depend only on religious groups and legal procedures to provide legitimacy and life-force for religious activity spaces from internal and external levels, so that can we ceaselessly perfect legal institutions and accelerate “religious legislation” in order to protect religious publicity.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that in order to establish a harmonious relationship between religion and the public sphere, we must let traditional cultures enrich religion in the public sphere. Religion has a lot of public activities in many fields, such as cultural, associational, economical, and even in politics. In recent years, Buddhism has advocated a “*solemn country and benefiting sentient beings*”; Christianity has called people to be “*the Salt and the Light, Glorify God and Benefit People*”; Catholicism has spoken of “*patriotism is God’s commandment*”; and Islam has proclaimed “*Two World Auspicious*”. All these religions have made positive effects on Chinese society. Two sessions of the “World Buddhist Forum” show sufficiently Buddhist attention to social life and social progress. So, we can use Buddhism to set up a public model of “institutionalized charity” or “institutionalized enlightenment” according to social justice, rights, impersonal and regular demands. We can encourage Buddhism to construct a social solidarity of the social values according to its emphasis on good-deeds and benefaction. In other words, let the Buddhist temple, the Buddhist groups, and the Buddhist beliefs become a public sphere of the daily life and social activities. By guiding it to be in the service of society actively, and to promote its role as the “salt” and “light”, we make religion embody its “public value” in the public sphere. As various legal religious activities are carried out, the publicness of Chinese religions will certainly be enriched on a continuous basis.



## CHAPTER VII

# A READING OF JÜRGEN HABERMAS' RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE LIGHT OF FOUCAULT'S CONCEPTS OF BIO-POWER AND ARCHAEOLOGY AND PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

CHRISTIAN BRYAN S. BUSTAMANTE

### INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx is one of the modern philosophers who criticized religion in the modern world. Marx's critique of religion is based on the ideas that religion is created by man in order to produce a "reversed world-consciousness," which is an exact opposite of his miserable and imperfect world.<sup>1</sup> That is why religion is an expression of real distress experienced by man and a protest against this distress. Marx calls it the "opium of the people", the "sigh of the oppressed", the "hearth of a heartless world", and the "spirit of spiritless nation" because people find consolation in their woes and miseries in the bosom of religion.<sup>2</sup> More than the consolation, man accepts his oppression and misery, and forgets the struggle to overcome such a situation because of the promise of religion. According to Marx, "... religion disillusioned man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself."<sup>3</sup> For Marx, the task of philosophy is to be critical of religion in order to emancipate man from the veil of religious ignorance and mysticism. It is the role of philosophy to aide man in unmasking religious alienation.

Marx identifies religion as ideological; and as such it cannot be separated from the material existence of man. The nature of worship, for example, is determined by the society and the ideas of higher beings and spirits are idealistic spiritual expression.<sup>4</sup> Marx equates this production

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Karl Marx: "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"; *On Religion*, Karl Marx and F. Engels, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Karl Marx and F. Engels: "The German Ideology"; *On Religion*, Karl

of religious fantasy to the “real production of the means of subsistence and of life itself.”<sup>5</sup> He concludes, then, that the “religious world is but the reflex of the real world.”<sup>6</sup> Since the social and real world is based on the production of commodities, religion is a commodity produced by the society for the consumption of its members. From the point of view of Marx, religion exists and persists because of the low stage of productive power of labor and narrow social relations within the sphere of material life.<sup>7</sup> The low stage of labor and the narrowness of social relations, according to Marx, can be observed in different popular religions.<sup>8</sup> He predicts that religion will vanish when “practical relations of every-day life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to nature.”<sup>9</sup> Religion is an institution produced by primitive and less advanced societies.

### RELIGIOUS REVIVAL AND UPSURGE

Marx’s prediction of the demise of religion in a highly developed and well-ordered society failed. Religion still plays an essential role in the social and political realms of the modern world. It is still present in a highly secularized state and its influences in the realm of political discourses cannot be undermined. In his lecture, *Myth and Ritual*, Habermas recognizes the essential role played by religion in the formation of the mind and concludes that religion endures throughout history.<sup>10</sup> In the book, *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, Habermas cites the functional contribution of religion to the reproduction of motivation and attitudes that are socially desirable.<sup>11</sup> He admits that there is a phase in the modernization of the public consciousness where religious and secular mentalities are assimilated.<sup>12</sup> In an article, *The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology*, he explains the assimilation of religious and secular mentalities. The authority of secular law and judicial power are connected with mythical narratives that connected

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Marx and F. Engels, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx: “Capital”; *On Religion*, Karl Marx and F. Engels, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Myth and Ritual”, Lecture at Berkeley Lecture Center, October 19, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger: *Dialectics on Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florian Schuller, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V., (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

ruling dynasties with the divine.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, religious ritual practices were transformed into state rituals.<sup>14</sup> He further explains that the modern state is tailored to the “economic imperatives of a system of economic exchange regulated by markets” and to the “pacification of bloody religious wars.”<sup>15</sup> In his Holberg speech entitled, *Religion in the Public Sphere*, he points out that religion plays an integral role in the life of a person with faith.<sup>16</sup> He claims that it is the source of one’s energy and it nurtures one’s entire life.<sup>17</sup> These statements of Habermas resurrect the philosophical problem of religion in the realm of political thought. He reminds us that religion is a powerful force that shapes an individual’s consciousness, ideas, values, attitude, and worldviews. This individual is also a member of the political and civil state, which is distinct and separate from the realm of religion. This individual, whatever his/her faith is, is guided by the teachings and ideals of his/her religion, as he/she interacts and relates with the other in the secular state. Habermas would like the modern secular world to realize this truth. The whole world saw this reality on September 11, 2001, which is described by Habermas as an event that exploded in an entirely different way the tension between secular society and religion.<sup>18</sup>

The “9/11 event” that shocked the whole world, influences Habermas’ philosophical discourse on religion. He writes heavily on the topics of religion and the public-sphere, civil society and religious tolerance, secular and post-secular states. He offers a theoretical and philosophical solution to the issues of religion and the secular world and religious belief in the secular world. The secular and religious worlds are two worlds divided by modernity; and a divide that caused the birth of political principles such as the “separation of Church and state” and “freedom of religion.” Aside from the 9/11, Habermas also cited the geographical expansion of Christian religion, such as the Catholic Church, the Protestants, the Evangelicals and the Muslims. The Catholic Church and the Evangelicals are spreading in Latin America, China, South Korea, and in the Philippines while the Muslims are extending

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology”; *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, Speech delivered at The Holberg Prize Seminar, (2005), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *The Future of Human Nature*, (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2003), p. 101.

from the Middle East to the sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.<sup>19</sup> Muslims are also competing with the Christian movements in Europe as well as in North America due to the influx of Muslim migrants in these parts of the world; while Protestantism is increasing in number in Latin America.<sup>20</sup> Habermas takes note of the clash not only between religions but also between religion the secular world. He states:

However, the attack on the twin towers and the rash reaction to 9/11 should not distract our attention from the fact that the Evangelical upsurge is no less important in scope and intensity than its counterpart in the Muslim world. Peter Berger characterizes the hard core as Pentecostalism, which combines biblical orthodoxy and a rigorous morality with an ecstatic form of worship and an emphasis on spiritual healing. Such born-again Christians share the opposition to cultural modernity and political liberalism, but they comply more easily with motivational requirements for economic modernization.<sup>21</sup>

He further explains that the Evangelicals, or hard-core born-again Christians, which is marked by a “fundamentalism founded on a literal interpretation of the Holy Scripture,” clashes with the fundamental convictions of modernity.<sup>22</sup> This clash between religion and the modern state is not only limited to the Evangelical Christians because it can also be observed in other religious denominations – Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist. This conflict between religions happens in a secular state which is neutral and recognizes and protects the freedom of religious belief.

## **POST-SECULAR STATE, TOLERANCE AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

In his paper presented at the Istanbul Seminar on June 2008, Habermas claims that we are moving towards a post-secular state.<sup>23</sup> A

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas, et al.: *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, Speech delivered at The Holberg Prize Seminar, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas, et al.: *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “A Post-Secular Society’ – What Does That Mean?”, Lecture delivered at the *Istanbul Seminar*, Organized by Reset Dialogues on Civilizations, Istanbul, June 2-6, 2008.

post-secular state is different from a secular state because the latter is characterized by political liberalism. Political liberalism “understands itself as a non-religious and post-metaphysical justification of the normative bases of democratic constitutional state.”<sup>24</sup> According to Ferrara, secularism has three meanings. The first is political secularism and it refers to the “fact that the exercise of legitimate state power – what we might call the coercive dimension of law – takes place in secular term.”<sup>25</sup> It is characterized by the existence of the constitutional principle of separation of Church and state and the principle of religious freedom. In political secularism, religions and religious exist; however, the state stands neutral and respects the existence of all forms of beliefs. The second meaning refers to secularism as social phenomena. In this context, secularism exists not only as a political and legal principle, but as a social norm and social practice. Religions and religiousness still exist in modern societies, but they become less influential in politics, education and public life in general.<sup>26</sup> Religious symbols’ significance and relevance to people’s lives are weakening and the general public use religious rituals less and less.<sup>27</sup> In the third meaning of secularism, religion exists, but it becomes only one of the options in people’s lives and it is not the easiest to embrace.<sup>28</sup> Secular societies can be classified according to these three meanings of secularism. There are societies that are secular politically which means that there is a constitutional separation of Church and state and the recognition of religious freedom as constitutional right. However, it is possible that in these secular societies, religious and religions may be influential in the social and cultural levels. Socially secular is the second classification of secular societies. Secularism in these societies does not only exist constitutionally or legally but also socially. It can be observed in the behavior and attitude of people towards religious and religiosity. Apathy to religious practice and symbols exists. People find religion as irrelevant and meaningless in their lives. Secularism in this context is widespread in the society and rooted in social behavior and practices. The third classification of secular societies where religions and religious are one of the options, and a very difficult option, is secular in its real sense. This is the highest level of secularism, for religion totally becomes irrelevant in public and individual lives. The first classification

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<sup>24</sup>Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger: *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Alessandro Ferrara: “The Separation of Religion and Politics in a Post-Secular Society”; *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 35, nos. 1-2, p. 78.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

of secular societies is “secular” because it recognizes the existence of religions and religious; however, it does not affirm the truth of religions.<sup>29</sup> The second and third classifications are “secularist” because they view religion as a “retrograde position” and see religious thinking as having “nothing positive to contribute to political discussion.”<sup>30</sup>

In post-secular states, religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernization is losing ground.<sup>31</sup> The post-secular state is characterized by the presence of religious communities. Habermas attributes the rise of post-secular states to three global phenomena.<sup>32</sup> The first is the perception of global conflict as caused by religious strife that changes the consciousness of the public. This perception increases the awareness of the public about the role of religion in their everyday life and the impact that it has on modern societies. The second phenomenon is that religion is gaining influence in the national public spheres as well as in the global spheres. This means that religion influences the formation of public opinion on certain political and moral issues in modern societies, such as legalization on abortion, euthanasia, reproductive health and medicine, animal protection and climate change. Lastly, the immigration of people from countries with traditional cultural backgrounds to North America and Europe is one of the potent forces that shaped and is continuously shaping the post-secular state. These three phenomena are not only shaping the post-secular state, but it is also responsible for what Habermas calls the “resurgence of religion”.

Habermas provides a sociological theory of post-secularism, for post-secularism is not a matter of objective reality, but of public perception and individual subjectivity.<sup>33</sup> Modern societies that are considered post-secular experience a “change in consciousness that Habermas attributes to the perception of global conflicts hinging on religious strife, the increasing need of orientation in pluralist societies and the formation of multicultural post-colonial immigrant societies.”<sup>34</sup> This change in consciousness signifies a “revision of a previously overconfidently secularist outlook, rather than a return of religion to a

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2011), p 202.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “‘A Post-Secular Society’ – What Does That Mean?”

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Volker Kaul: “Jürgen Habermas, Tariq Ramadan and Michael Walzer in a Dialogue on Politics and Religion”; *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 36, nos. 3-4, (London: Sage Publications, 2010), p. 507.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

stage on which it had once been absent.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, Habermas’ post-secularism does not provide a timeline that literally refers to the resurrection of religious dominance in social and public lives, but rather, it is a shift in public perception and opinion influenced by religions and religiousness or a public outlook that is religiously oriented.

With post-secularism and religious resurgence at the background, Habermas revisits modern political concepts that are related to religion in the secular world. The first concept that Habermas evaluates is the concept of religious tolerance. He explains that “tolerance is a form of behavior while toleration is a legal act which a government grants more or less unrestricted permission to practice one’s own particular religion.”<sup>36</sup> Toleration cannot be achieved without reciprocal recognition, and this recognition does not simply mean “to recognize the other,” but it also means respecting the other. The co-existence between people of different religious and cultural backgrounds can only be made possible if there is mutual recognition and respect. In relation to religious tolerance, Habermas raises the issue of “preventive protection” of the state against enemies of the constitution. In a constitutional state, freedom of religion and freedom of expression are at its very core. However, it also takes a preventive-protective stand in front of an imminent threat from enemies of the state. The issue of how tolerantly may a democracy treat its enemies remains unresolved, whether these enemies are political ideologists or religious fundamentalists. Habermas’ prescribes on this issue as follows: “A constitutional state must perform a twofold act: it must repel the animosity of existential enemies while avoiding any betrayal of its own principles – in other words, it is exposed in this situation to the constantly lurking danger of itself being guilty of retrogressively resorting to an authoritarian practice of *unilaterally* deciding the limits of tolerance.”<sup>37</sup> Tolerance, then, is not an absolute concept. There has to be certain limitations on it to protect the interest of a democratic state. This is also true of religious tolerance. It is the duty of the state to strike a delicate balance between tolerance and protection from enemies of the state. A state may not recognize religious tolerance if it is a threat to the constitution and the state. In tolerance, rejection cannot be avoided; but Habermas qualifies that such rejection must be done for subjectively

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<sup>35</sup> Austin Harrington: “Habermas and the Post-secular Society”; *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 10, no. 4, (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 547.

<sup>36</sup> Jürgen Habermas: “Religious Tolerance: The Pacemaker for Cultural Rights”; *Royal Institute of Philosophy*, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

*good* reasons.<sup>38</sup> One of the good reasons is the protection of the constitution.

Rejection of other beliefs for subjectively good reasons does not automatically mean indifference to these beliefs. Rejection differs from indifference. The former is an exercise of the state to protect itself and its constitution while the latter is a prejudicial and discriminatory attitude that exists between and among citizens with different religious and cultural backgrounds that is ignored and unresolved. For Habermas, it is impossible to exercise and observe tolerance if indifference exists and prevails. To quote him on this point: “We must be able to socially accept mutual cognitive dissonances that will remain unresolved for the time being. Yet such cognitive difference must prove to be ‘reasonable’ if tolerance is to be a meaningful response.”<sup>39</sup> These dissonances and differences need to be overcome. However, they cannot be overcome if their presence is not accepted and recognized. This leads us to the reality of religious and cultural prejudices and discriminations that exist in modern societies. Prejudices and discriminations need to be recognized, for the time being, and then, eliminated, in order for tolerance to be exercised. According to Habermas, “The norm of complete inclusion of all citizens as members with equal rights must be accepted before all of us, members of a democratic community, can mutually expect one another to be tolerant. It is the standard of non-discrimination that first provides this expectation with moral and legal reasons that can *out-trump* the epistemic reasons for the persisting rejection of those convictions and attitudes, we merely tolerate.”<sup>40</sup> It is implied that states that adopt the policy of tolerance, but do not eliminate discrimination or does not recognize its presence, cannot experience liberal peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, rejection or discrimination is not only experienced in the cognitive and social level, but also the function of “interpersonal dimension of the encounter of different persons who are aware that they hold contradictory beliefs.”<sup>41</sup> Individuals have different worldviews which are molded by their religious and cultural backgrounds. They are aware of their differences; and this awareness is the cause of rejection or unresolved differences. For this reason, the cognitive demand is not only on the social level, but also on the individual level. Individuals must develop from their own “worldview reasons that tell him why he may realize the *ethos* inscribed in that view only within the limits of what everyone is allowed to do and to

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



pursue.”<sup>42</sup> It is the duty of every citizen to understand his own rationality and that of the other. It is the duty of secular citizens to treat religious expressions of others as rational. Tolerance, then, is not only the responsibility of the state at the institutional level, but also the responsibility of individuals, or secular citizens, who have differing religious and cultural backgrounds.

Habermas also introduces the notion of cultural rights as different from human and civil rights. Cultural right serves the “purpose of guaranteeing all citizens equal access to those associations, communication patterns, traditions and practices, which they respectively deem important in order to develop and maintain their personal identities.”<sup>43</sup> It is different from human and civil rights that guarantee citizens equal access, opportunity and treatment. It provides citizens “equal access to the cultural environments, interpersonal relations and traditions.”<sup>44</sup> It provides peoples of varying religious and cultural traditions protection from annihilation by the secular state. Recognition of cultural rights is meant to ensure the survival of culture. This survival depends on the following factors: firstly, the state’s support for the cultures to have the “resources necessary for its survival;” and secondly, the individual members’ “ongoing appropriation and reproduction of that tradition.”<sup>45</sup> Cultural rights redefine the notion of the legal person – a person who enjoys constitutional and civil rights and at the same time enjoys protection for the preservation of his beliefs, values and traditions. The role of cultural rights is political, for it creates space for the “possible critical encounter with one’s own tradition” and for an “intra-cultural dialogue in civil society and the informal public sphere.”<sup>46</sup> This space opens the means for the production and preservation of culture.

The notion of cultural right is essential to the concept of toleration. It is one of the concrete expressions of a tolerant policy where the state allows citizens to be identified not only as citizens of the state, but also as members of a particular religious and/or cultural group. The notion of cultural right also introduces the idea that social norm and policy supports the achievement of political goals. In this case, cultural right is considered as a social norm while toleration is a political goal. Habermas evaluates and introduces these concepts because of the idea of post-secular state – a state that is characterized by the presence of

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh Baxter: *Habermas: The Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, p. 220.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

democratic common sense which he describes as “not singular;” but as “mental state of a *many-voiced* public.”<sup>47</sup> The different voices that are spoken in different languages, and influenced by different worldviews that they bring to the political public sphere.

### NEW EPISTEMIC ATTITUDE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Because of this *many-voiced* public in a post-secular state, Habermas proposes a shift from normative to epistemological arguments and highlights the importance of learning processes as important mechanisms in a liberal political order, without which mutual respect and cooperation from citizens of different faiths and backgrounds cannot be achieved.<sup>48</sup> He calls this the “new epistemic attitude” which can be acquired by learning the sacred truths of various faiths. This epistemic attitude is not merely meant for individuals who belong to different religions. It also should be adopted by the secularists in order that they understand that people disagree and political conflict arises because of religious opinions. The secularist must be prepared for any disagreement coming from the points of view of religious perspectives, doctrines and teachings. The religious side must also develop the same attitude to understand the secular world.<sup>49</sup>

Habermas’ notion of epistemic attitude is influenced by Rawls’ notion of *proviso* in public reason. Rawls explains that the idea of public reason “belongs to a conception of a well ordered constitutional democratic society.”<sup>50</sup> In a constitutional democratic society, where institutions are free, the plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines exists. In this light, citizens of a well ordered democratic society must set aside their comprehensive doctrines and consider the kinds of reason that they can share with one another in addressing fundamental political questions. In public reason, they address each other as citizens and based on the politically reasonable conception of justice, not on comprehensive doctrines. According to Rawls, “central to the idea of public reason is that it neither criticizes nor attacks any comprehensive doctrine, religious or nonreligious, except insofar as that doctrine is incompatible with the essentials of public

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<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Habermas: *The Future of Human Nature*, p. 109.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, p. 12

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas’ works: *The Future of Human Nature*, pp. 101-115; and *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, pp. 15-23; where he discusses the possible ways for religion and the secular state to arrive at cognitive understanding.

<sup>50</sup> John Rawls: “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited”; *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 64, summer, no. 3 (1997), p. 765.

reason and a democratic society.”<sup>51</sup> That is why, the civil society, or the culture of civil society, that includes the religious and non-religious comprehensive doctrines, is relegated by Rawls as “background culture” of public reason. It is separate and distinct from public reason. Rawls separated it and placed it as “background culture” for the reason that it is the cause of conflict in a pluralistic society. Rawls would like to present public reason as the reason that unifies people with varying cultural backgrounds. Since public reason is distinct from civil society, it is limited to public forums. In other words, reason is considered public when it is discussed by the members of the legislature, judiciary, or the chief executive. Not all political questions and discussions of fundamental questions are considered as public. Such questions become public when they are discussed in the realm of public institutions, such as the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive. Discourses of candidates running for public office are also considered public reason. Rawls also qualifies reason as public when it is the reason or discourse of free and equal citizens, the subject matter of which is the public good, and its nature and content is “expressed in public reasoning by a family of reasonable conceptions of political justice reasonably thought to satisfy the criterion of reciprocity.”<sup>52</sup> The criterion of reciprocity is essential in public reason.<sup>53</sup> Public reason, then, is an agreement or consensus among citizens. The content of public reason is what is considered to be reasonably just and fair by the citizens. In the process of coming up with an agreement which they consider to be reasonably just and fair, citizens are in original position.<sup>54</sup> It is a situation where

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 766.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 767.

<sup>53</sup> Rawls explains reciprocity as: “Citizens are reasonable when, viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of cooperation according to what they consider the most reasonable conception of political justice; and when they agree to act on those terms, even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that other citizens also accept those terms. The criterion of reciprocity requires that when those terms are proposed as the most reasonable terms of fair cooperation, those proposing them must also think it at least reasonable for other to accept them, as free and equal citizens, and not as dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position. Citizens will of course differ as to which conceptions of political justice they think the most reasonable, but they will agree that all are reasonable, even if barely so” Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 770.

<sup>54</sup> In his work, *A Theory of Justice* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), Rawls describes the original position as a “*status quo* in which the parties are equally represented as moral persons and the outcome is not conditioned by arbitrary contingencies or the relative balance of social forces” and as “purely hypothetical situation” (p. 120). He further explains that the idea

different parties are equally represented and a fair and pure procedure whose outcome is just and fair. For this outcome to be just and fair, participants are behind the veil of ignorance, a situation that completely shuts them off from their personal, social, political, cultural, and economic biases and prejudices. It is a situation required for the different parties to come up with reasonable and acceptable principles of justice. In the language of Rawls, they cannot argue based on their religious or non-religious comprehensive doctrines. They have to set their eyes on the formulation of a reasonable and acceptable conception of justice.

However, Rawls is flexible in the usage of comprehensive doctrines in the conception of political principles of justice as fairness. He explains that “reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons – and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines – are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support.”<sup>55</sup> He calls this *proviso* – the introduction of comprehensive doctrines into public political discussion for positive reasons.<sup>56</sup> However, this must be done in good faith, with utmost sincerity and without manipulation. In his notion of *proviso*, Rawls accepts the social reality that citizens in a pluralistic society cannot get away from the influences of comprehensive doctrines.<sup>57</sup> That is why it is the duty of every citizen, which Rawls calls as duty of civility, to

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of original position is “to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just” (p. 136). Its aim is “to use the notion of pure procedural justice as a basis of theory” (p. 136). As a pure procedural justice, participants in the original position are “situated behind the veil of ignorance;” and participants under the veil of ignorance are blinded about certain facts about themselves, i.e., social status, strength and abilities, and certain facts about the society, i. e., economic and political situations, level of civilization and culture (p. 137). What they know are general facts that are related to the choice of the principles of justice, i.e., general facts about the society, political affairs, economic theory, and basis of social organization and laws of human psychology (p. 137). In short participants in original position as pure procedural justice are focused only on the formulation of principles of justice that is good and acceptable to all. To achieve this, they have to be bracketed from their personal, social and cultural prejudices and biases.

<sup>55</sup> John Rawls: *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*, pp. 783-784.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 784.

<sup>57</sup> Habermas explains that John Rawls recognizes that the problems of the political impact of the role of religion in civil society have not been solved by the secularization of the political authority *per se*. The secularization of the state is not the same as the secularization of society. Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology*, p. 23.

understand one another's comprehensive doctrines, so that such doctrines can be positively used in political discussion. The mutual understanding of one's doctrines also cultivates acceptance and respect.

For Habermas, citizens can meaningfully use the *proviso* and perform their duties of civility if they developed the new epistemic attitude. In his theory of communicative action, he puts emphasis on the role of language to arrive at universal understanding. Language is the "link between universalization"<sup>58</sup> because through it unity and connection between individuals can be achieved. The goal of communicative action is to arrive at coordination of action and consensus by invoking claims that are accepted by all as valid, or to come up with a common understanding of the situation that confront individuals.<sup>59</sup> It is a procedure that leads to common understanding. That is why, participants in communicative action should be "free to raise and challenge claims without fear of coercion, intimidation and deceit; and all must be given the equal chances to speak, to make assertions, self-presentations and normative claims and to challenge others."<sup>60</sup> They should also establish rules and norms to secure the validity of disputed claims,<sup>61</sup> as instruments for arriving to agreement. In the context of Habermas' communicative action, citizens of post-secular states can arrive at common understanding, cooperation, coordination and consensus if they develop the new epistemic attitude. He describes this new epistemic attitude as "acquired by learning" and the learning that arises from a "reconstruction of sacred truths that is compelling for people of faith in the light of modern living conditions for which no alternatives any longer exist."<sup>62</sup> This new epistemic attitude means that religious citizens should have to learn how to adopt new epistemic attitudes toward their secular environment, and the secular citizens should not perceive religious traditions and religious communities as archaic relics of pre-modern societies<sup>63</sup> and, therefore, as irrational. In simple terms, Habermas' new epistemic attitude can be explained as an attitude of understanding that is acquired by learning the meanings of utterances, symbols, practices, beliefs and rituals of the religious and secular worlds. In a pluralistic society, the citizens of faith and people

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<sup>58</sup> W. Rehg: *Insight and Solidarity: A Study in the Discourse Ethics of Jürgen Habermas*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 41.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. J. Donald Moon: "Practical Discourse and Communicative Ethics"; *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> G. Warnke: "Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values"; *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White K. White, p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Jürgen Habermas: "The Religion in Public Sphere", p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

from the secular world have a duty to recognize their differences and work toward consensus by learning and understanding such differences.

This new epistemic attitude is important in the public sphere, particularly the public sphere of post-secular states. Habermas describes the public sphere as a “realm in our social life in which public opinions can be formed.”<sup>64</sup> The public sphere comes into being when private individuals assemble and form a public body to converse on certain political issues or on any activities of the state and the government.<sup>65</sup> However, the public sphere is not always political because there is also a literary public sphere where private individuals engage in exchange of ideas and intellectual conversations that are not necessarily related to their political and social existence. In the public sphere, freedom of assembly and association as well as freedom of speech and expression are essential, so that they can articulate and publish their opinions. The public sphere is not necessarily public like Rawls’ public reason that exists in the realm of government institutions. It is composed of private associations, assemblies, or individuals that express opinions on political matters. That is why newspapers, magazines, radio, televisions, and the internet are media of the public sphere. It is through these media that public opinions are published for the consumption of the society. Habermas defines public opinion in the public sphere as the task of “criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally and formally practices vis-à-vis the ruling structure organized in the form of a state.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, it is in the public sphere where private individuals articulate and publish their opinions that are critical of the established form of government or state. In this light, Habermas describes the public sphere as that which mediates the society and the

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”; *New German Critique*, trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, (1964), p. 49.

<sup>65</sup> In his work, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), Habermas further explains his notion of political public sphere as a “communication structure rooted in the life-world through the associational network of civil society.” It is a “sounding board for problems” that need to be processed and addressed by the political system. It is also a “warning system with sensors” that contain issues and opinions sensitive through society. The political public sphere is the realm not only to express problems, but also to define and identify them, provide alternative solutions, thematize them, and even dramatize to get the attention of the political system (p. 359). In the following page (p. 360), he also describes it as a social phenomenon, not an institution and an organization. He says that it can be best described as a “network for communicating information and points of view.”

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”, p. 49.

state because it is through it that the society communicates to the state. It is through this sphere where private individuals, assemblies, and associations in the society express their criticisms to the established government and state.

In his liberal model of public sphere, Habermas points out that the constitutions of modern states guarantee the autonomy of the public sphere; and it is a perfect image of a public sphere, for there is freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of association.<sup>67</sup> In this model, the media play an important role. It started with the newspapers in the second half of the eighteenth century and with the television and internet in the present time. However, the media are owned and controlled by the *bourgeoisie*. The media are organs of spreading news and public opinions, but those are commercialized and not free from the interests of private individuals. Habermas calls this a *bourgeois* public sphere. Public sphere does not only exist in the liberal world, but it exists also in the social welfare state.<sup>68</sup> The public sphere in a social welfare state becomes a field for the competition of interests, not a field that mediates the society and the state. These are the interests of the *bourgeoisie* motivated by their desire to control and earn profit and that of interest groups who are pushing for more intervention from the state to address the needs of the people. Because of their wealth and influence, the *bourgeoisie* would compromise with the state and with one another to protect their interests; and this results in the exclusion of the public sphere. Habermas describes the public sphere in the social

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>68</sup> Welfare state is typically defined in terms of social transfers and social services and unemployment. Cf. Walter Korpi: "Welfare-State Regress in Western Europe: Politics, Institutions, Globalization, and Europeanization"; *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 29 (2003), p. 592. In the light of this definition, a welfare state provides social services, such as health services, health insurance, free or subsidized education, and low cost housing in order to improve the quality of life and living conditions of people, particularly the poor or the marginalized. It is not only limited to the provision of services to the poor and marginalized but also the allocation of budget to financially help poor areas, communities, and families. This is also intended to develop the quality of life not only of the individuals, but also of the communities as a whole. Other authors provide a different description of the welfare state. According to Donzelot, the aims of the welfare state are: firstly, by enlarging opportunities, by the social promotion of the individual, it acts as a force of emancipation, and creates freedom; secondly, by reducing risks, by the promotion of the social and the corresponding limitation of the irrationalities of the economic, it acts as a force for socialization, and creates collective security. Cf. Jacques Donzelot: "The Mobilization of Society"; *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, et al., (U.S.A.: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 174.

welfare state as “refeudalized”<sup>69</sup> because of the dominance and control of wealthy and powerful elite of the political and social spaces. The public sphere, then, weakened in its critical functions. Its characteristic as space for expressing public opinion critical of the government and state has waned because of the dominating presence of the elite. The weakening of the critical functions of the public sphere leads to the birth of fundamental rights in the social welfare state.<sup>70</sup>

In the post-secular state, Habermas recognizes the presence of religious traditions and doctrines.<sup>71</sup> He claims that “religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto unexpected, political importance.”<sup>72</sup> This religious revival and upsurge reverberates in domestic as well as in international politics. For Habermas, it is most surprising to see this political revitalization of religion at the heart of western society,<sup>73</sup> a society characterized by secularism and that espoused the principles of freedom of religion and separation of Church and state. Habermas further claims that the secular character of the state is necessary, but not yet sufficient condition to guarantee equal religious freedom.<sup>74</sup> Disagreement on the matter of worldviews and religious doctrines is always present in the modern political society. Hence, individual citizens are expected to perform their duty of civility by respecting one another as free and equal members despite their differences. Religion plays an essential role in the formation of one’s public opinion and political worldviews. When individual citizens participate in the public sphere, the influence of their religious belief in their political discourses cannot be discounted. Religious communities and organizations in secular states also cannot be denied participation in the public sphere. Because of this reality in the post-secular public sphere, the secularists and the state cannot expect the citizens of faith “to split their identity in public and private components” when they participate in public debates and contribute to the formation of public opinion.<sup>75</sup> For Habermas, the separation of Church and state should not be translated into “undue mental and psychological burden” for people of faith.<sup>76</sup> It is a given reality in the post-secular society that people of faith, though they are using secular and legal language, are influenced by

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”, p. 54.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*



religious reason. Their arguments and opinion contain the element of faith. The secularists and the citizens of faith can develop respect toward one another, and the secularists can only accept the reality of religious doctrinal influence in the formation of public opinion when the new epistemic attitude is developed.

### **FOUCAULT'S CONCEPTS OF BIO-POWER AND ARCHEOLOGY AND HABERMAS' RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

Religion's presence in the secular society or post-secular society is undeniable. In some societies, it does not only exist, but it is relevant and essential. It is one of the remnants of earliest civilizations that still remains influential and significant in the modern and contemporary world. Habermas admits that religion is important in the formation of the mind and that it also plays an integral role in the life of an individual person.<sup>77</sup> However, he does not provide an explanation as to how it is essential in the formation of one's mind as well as integral in the life of an individual person. In this light, the author would like to offer Michel Foucault's concept of bio-power to provide an explanation on the essential role played by religion in the formation, or construction, of an individual.

Bio-power is "power over life."<sup>78</sup> It is related to the ideas of "what brought life" and knowledge-power as "agent of transformation of human life."<sup>79</sup> For bio-power, there is a mechanism and explicit calculation that created life. In this context, life does not refer to the biological, but to the political and historical. This looking into the political and historical life of human beings, their existence as a living being, is placed into question by politics. Life is politicized, influenced, and constructed by society and its different institutions. The society uses different means to construct human existence, for it to conform and to be an effective instrument of growth and development. The society invested in the body – education, health, and living condition – for that body to become useful to the economy. However, the construction of the human being's existence would not have been possible without knowledge-power. Knowledge is an indispensable element in the exercise of power. This does not mean that knowledge is power; rather, it means that knowledge is essential in the exercise of power. In order to exercise

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: "Myth and Ritual", Berkeley Lecture. Cf. also Jürgen Habermas: "Religion in the Public Sphere", Holberg Prize Speech.

<sup>78</sup> M. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 139.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

power over life, or the body, information is required. Information about life and body is extracted from individuals through the use of different techniques, such as confession, examination, and observation. Such information is transformed into knowledge; and this knowledge is translated into disciplinary and regulatory techniques, practices, and processes to control body and life.

Bio-power refers to the “set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of political strategy, of a general strategy of power.”<sup>80</sup> This set of mechanisms is used to calculate the management and transformation of human life or body, for it to become useful to the state or to any organization where it belongs. Foucault categorizes this set of mechanisms into two: the anatomo-politics of the human body and the bio-politics of the population. The former refers to the disciplining of the human body so that its capabilities will be optimized for it to become productive and useful to the organizations of the state or the society. It also refers to the integration of the human body to the system for efficiency and economy. On the other hand, the latter refers to the monitoring and regulation of the mechanics and processes of life: propagation, birth, mortality, level of health, life expectancy and longevity.

Religion, or religious institutions, is a mechanism of bio-power. It exercises bio-power. It provides knowledge about faith that transforms, regulates and calculates the life of an individual. Through rituals and doctrines, it constructs individual’s life for it to conform to the rules and norms of the religious institution. Furthermore, through these rituals individuals are integrated into the system and structure of the religious institution. Religion does not only construct or reconstructs the individual’s life through knowledge, rituals and doctrines, but it also disciplines and regulates life. For instance, in the Catholic Church there are the sacraments as means to discipline and regulate life. It also disciplines and regulates life through the notions of mortal and venial sins, the concepts of Christian values and virtues. In this light, religion as bio-power plays an essential role in the continuous formation of the mind and body. It is not only engaged in formation, but also in the construction and re-construction of mind and body. Religion constructs individuals for them to be integrated to the religious system of efficiency and economy. The construction of individuals as members of the political state is only secondary. Religions form and construct individuals to be their effective and productive members. That is why

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<sup>80</sup> M. Foucault: *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

differences of individuals in the public sphere always remain, and tension between religious institutions and the state is always present and waiting to erupt. Habermas' new epistemic attitude is a welcome solution to this problem in the post-secular public sphere; but we should also remember that the mind and the body that carry out this attitude were long before constructed by religion and faith. This new epistemic attitude, in order for it to be a solution to a polarized public sphere or society, should not only expect understanding, but it should also show respect. The gap between individuals and groups of different religious and cultural backgrounds and origins cannot be eliminated by this new epistemic attitude. It only bridges differences, but the space remains.

To drive further his point about these differences and gaps, the author will discuss Foucault's concept of archaeology. The primary concern of archaeology is to describe how discourses were formed and what rules are involved in the formation of discourse. Yet, we have to take note that it is not a pure description and not a mere recitation of discourses. It includes the "uncovering of the conditions that give rise to those practices and discourses."<sup>81</sup> It is not only a theory but also a model about discourses and a "perspective for understanding events."<sup>82</sup> From the point of view of archaeology, these events are related to and are products of discourses. According to Dean, it is a form of history that "suspends the norms of particular disciplines or established sciences as the filter through which to treat particular sciences, not only because of their lower epistemological status, but also because of their immersion in other non-scientific, political, and ethical discourses, and the close relation between their contents and a whole range of institutional practices and the wider social and political field in which they are located."<sup>83</sup> Again, archaeology is not a pure analysis of discourses. It also analyzes institutions that are related to the formation of discourse. Archaeology does not only understand discourses, but also understands events, for it sees discourses in the context of institutions where they originated – institutions that caused the transformation and modification of discourses. Archaeology, besides studying discourses that are considered scientific or academic or scholarly, also studies all kinds of discourses even the so-called illegitimate, non-scientific, and non-academic; even the discourses that are irrational, unreasonable and mad. Archaeology views truths as products of discourses. Burrell explains that

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<sup>81</sup> Todd May: *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 25.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>83</sup> Mitchell Dean: *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 30.

it “sees truth as the production of sets of statements and their regulation within discrete systems of discourse independent of the conscious speaker.”<sup>84</sup> Foucault sees truth as a product of number games in history. It is not an objective and universal truth; rather, it is a political and perspectival truth. It is a product of discourses of different institutions. Truth changes, transforms and modifies because of the changes in the discourses of knowledge and the changes in the rules of formation of discourse. For Foucault, there is no single and universal truth. There are different truths produced by institutions based on the rules of formation of discourse.

In the light of Foucault’s notion of archaeology, the formation of public opinions and discourses that take place in the public sphere is not ideal, smooth and continuous. The public sphere is a “space of multiple dissensions” and “different oppositions.”<sup>85</sup> There are varying, contradicting, and opposing discourses and opinions. These discourses and opinions are articulated by speakers coming from different institutional sites, positions and spaces. Discourses and opinions cannot be separated from the speakers. For this reason, these discourses and opinions reflect also the speakers’ qualification, language, prestige, status, institutional sites, space and domain. Discourses and opinions in the public-sphere are multiple, complex, plural and complicated, for they are articulated by speakers with different comprehensive doctrines and cultural backgrounds. Foucault reminds us that these discourses and opinions are also truths that individuals value and cherish, particularly those who belong to religious groups or those who adhere to any political ideology. These differences and dissensions in the public-sphere can be evened out by Habermas’ new epistemic attitude, but it is impossible for them to agree and to arrive at universal understanding. To understand one’s religious or ideological background is possible, but to arrive at universal and common understanding is impossible. That is why this new epistemic attitude must cultivate respect.

The author agrees with Habermas’ new epistemic attitude which is important to realize the ideals of public reason and to foster cooperation and coordination in the post-secular public sphere marked by the presence of religious communities and influence of religious

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<sup>84</sup> Gibson Burrell: *Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: The Contribution of Michel Foucault; Foucault, Management and Organization Theory*, eds. Alan McKinlay and Ken Starkey, (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), p. 16

<sup>85</sup> M. Foucault: *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourses on Language*, trans. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 155-156.

doctrines. However, he doubts that the epistemic attitude can lead to common and universal understanding. Using Foucault's notions of bio-power and archaeology, we are given a realistic picture of the post-secular society and political public sphere that is volatile, complex, diffusive, and always ready to erupt. Hence, instead of emphasizing the goal of common and universal understanding, we have to achieve mutual respect, which is a result of new epistemic attitude. Nevertheless, we should not forget that it is the responsibility of religious organizations and institutions, not only of the state or secular society, to inculcate in their members' mind the value and significance of respecting other faiths and doctrines. It should be part of their formation, discipline and regulation.

### **HABERMAS' POST-SECULAR STATE AND THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE**

Post-secular state is a secular pluralistic and liberal state where religions are present and relevant. Habermas differentiates it from the secular state which is politically liberal and plural but non-religious. The "non-religious" does not mean that there is no religion at all. It means that the state does not officially recognize any religion or religious doctrine and espouses the principles of separation of Church and state and freedom of religion. The secular state, which is a product of modernity, sees the non-religious stance as the best solution to the problem of religious pluralism that caused conflict among its citizens. Hence, in the secular world, everyone is free to believe or not to believe, and believing is purely private and personal. The secular world puts religion at the sideline in order to achieve cohesion and tranquility. But after the 9/11 event, Habermas sees it differently. Religion is here and it does not diminish as envisioned by the modern world.

In modern times, there are countries where religion remains to be essential and relevant, and one of these countries is the Philippines. The Philippines was colonized by the Spaniards for three centuries. According to Reylando C. Iletto in his book, *Filipinos and Their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography*, there are three realms in Philippine 19<sup>th</sup> century society: the Church-convent complex, the *principalia*,<sup>86</sup> and the Mt. Banahaw. The first realm is a "codifying"

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<sup>86</sup> The *principalia* is the local elite class during the Spanish period. To this class belong the wealthy natives who have control over politics and economy in the towns. The town or municipal mayors come from this class as well as the *inquilinos*, the natives who rent land from Spaniards and produce agricultural products from this land. In this class emerged the local intellectuals and professionals, known as the *ilustrados*, who were sent by their parents to

or “organizing” center because the foundation of the town coincided with the building of Church and convent to house the parish priest, and all native populace was organized around this center in fixed settlements called *barrios* or *sitios*.<sup>87</sup> Towns are established not only a political and economic geographical unit, but also as an ecclesiastical unit. That is why the establishment of towns coincided with the establishment of parishes. It follows that in towns, there are two leaders: the spiritual leader is the parish priest; and the political leader is the town’s mayor. However, in the Philippine society during the Spanish colonization, the former is more powerful than the latter because the Church-convent complex is not only the source of spiritual grace and salvation, but also the source of all power and authority.<sup>88</sup> Such is evident in the attendance of people during Sunday masses and religious activities as well as in the voluntary labor done in the Church and convent. The parish priest – besides administering the sacraments and presiding over religious activities – also presided over key political and social rituals, such as baptisms and marriages, feasts, funerals, and the election of officials.<sup>89</sup> The second realm is composed of the local gentry or elite – the town’s mayor and other local officials, the *ilustrados*, and the *inquilinos* – who have emerged as the dominating force of the political, social and economic life in the town.<sup>90</sup> To maintain their control of political position and influence in the town, the second realm established good relationship with the center, the Church-convent complex. Though there was an election, the people would elect the candidate for municipal mayor that was endorsed by the parish priest. Most of the lands were owned and controlled by the Spanish friars. The natives always kept the trust and confidence of the friars, so that they would be given the favor to manage their *haciendas*. The political and economic fortune of the second realm depends on their relationship with the first realm.

Mt. Banahaw, the third realm, is considered as the Holy Mountain by local folks. It is located in the provinces of Laguna and Quezon,

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universities in Manila or abroad. Some of the *ilustrados* wrote essays and books that contain anti-Spaniard and anti-friar themes and ideas. They published their books and essays as to inform people in Spain as well as in other countries in Europe about the abuses of the Spaniards and the sufferings of the Filipino people in the hands of the Spaniards. It is known as the “propaganda movement” in Philippine history that preceded the Philippine revolution against Spain.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Reynaldo C. Ileto: *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), p. 79.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

outside Metro Manila. As a sacred place for many natives, it posed a serious challenge to the first realm for various reasons. First, the natives considered it as an alternative center of power to the Church-convent complex because it was believed to be a source of supernatural and spiritual powers. People believed that the caves and springs that can be found in the mountain are sources of cure and physical and spiritual strength and rejuvenation. The spiritual leaders – called *maestro* (venerable teacher), *pator* (pastor) and *suprema* (supreme leader/supreme pontiff) – provide guidance, protection, and cure to the natives.<sup>91</sup> In this realm, natives established communities as alternatives to the towns established by the Spaniards under the guidance of the religious leader. Some of the religious leaders in the third realm are female as opposed to the patriarchal foundation of the first realm. The third realm is the dwelling place of those who did not want to be *hispanized* or those who rebelled against the Spanish authorities. These were the people who did not want to embrace the Spanish culture or did not believe the teachings of the friars.

According to Phelan's monumental work, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses 1565-1700*, the Spanish missionaries were the "leading protagonists" in the meeting of Spanish and Filipino culture, and geography was the major antagonist.<sup>92</sup> The Philippine pre-colonial society was decentralized; tribes had their own leadership and structure, separated by mountains, river systems, and islands. Because of this setting, the Spanish missionaries found it difficult to convert and *hispanize* the natives. Hence, the missionaries thought of congregating the natives into large villages, to facilitate indoctrination to the Christian faith and to impose Spanish laws, such as the collection of tributes and free and forced labor. According to Phelan, the Spaniards, influenced by Greco-Roman culture, believed that people can only be civilized if they live in the *polis* – where they can receive grace and be in communion with their fellowmen.<sup>93</sup> In order to entice the natives to resettle in the *polis* or *pueblo*, which literally means "town", the missionaries used the colorful ritual of the Catholic Church. They flock to the Church, the center of the *pueblo*, or the *cabecera*, to witness ceremonial occasions such as the Holy Week, the feast of Corpus Christi or the *patronal fiesta* of the locality. They also established *visita*, or a small chapel, outside the *pueblo* for those who cannot visit the Church or the *cabecera* due to distance and lack of means of transportation. The

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. John Leddy Phelan: *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses 1565-1700*, (Philippines: Cacho Hermanos, Inc., 1985), pp. 31, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

missionaries go to the *visita* to perform religious rituals and indoctrinate the natives. Besides, establishing the *pueblos*, the missionaries also indoctrinated the natives through the publication of Catholic teachings, and doctrines. Prior to the publication of such teachings and doctrines, they conducted thorough linguistic studies of different languages and dialects. According to Phelan:

Since all the printing presses were operated by the religious orders, the bulk of the Philippine imprints were bi-lingual catechisms, dictionaries, grammars, and confessionals. In addition to these printed works, many linguistic manuscripts circulated. The linguistic studies of the missionaries were a laborious undertaking, but in many languages the research done was inadequate.<sup>94</sup>

The indoctrination of the natives was systematic. Phelan takes note of the missionaries' strategy of giving special attention to the children.<sup>95</sup> The pattern of evangelization was, the indoctrination and baptism started with the children of the chieftain, followed by the chieftains who were persuaded with the help of their children. As the leaders were converted, the followers came next. Indoctrination or conversion through religious pomp, oral and written catechesis was not the only aim of Spanish missionaries. They would like also to penetrate the consciousness of the natives by creating a "Catholic community consciousness in which the teachings and the spirit of the Church would penetrate into the daily lives of the converts."<sup>96</sup> In order to achieve this aim, daily and routine religious activities were established. For example, the women and the children were gathered every day at the foot of the large wooden cross erected in the main plaza of each village to chant the Rosary, and in many parishes the children walked through the streets at sunset chanting the Rosary. In other parishes one of the altar boys rang a bell as he walked through the street at sunset, to remind the faithful to say one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the souls in Purgatory.<sup>97</sup> To add to this plethora of strategies designed by missionaries to convert the natives, the *fiesta* system was instituted to add more color to religious rituals and gatherings and the founding of sodalities or religious organizations. Phelan comments that one of the strongest appeals of

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 73.



Catholicism to the natives was its splendid ritual and its colorful pageantry.<sup>98</sup>

Ileto and Phelan provide us an idea about the political and cultural landscape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Philippine society, a society where the Catholic Church played an essential role in the political, economic and social lives of the Filipinos. The same is still true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Philippine society. The transplantation of a democratic government and a liberal and secular state by the Americans to the Philippine soil does not change the political and social landscape in the Philippines. Religion still occupies the center of the social life of the Filipinos. Their social rituals and norms are rooted in the Catholic religious rituals and rites. In recent Philippine history, religion, particularly the Catholic Church, played an important role in shaping the society. The Catholic hierarchy played an important role in the success of the peaceful 1986 revolution known as the EDSA revolution. The revolution that was responsible for toppling down the dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos and restoring democracy in the Philippines. Bishops, priests, religious brothers, nuns, seminarians and lay people joined together in the EDSA national road to protect the soldiers who defected from Marcos' dictatorial government and were inside the Emilio Aguinaldo military camp. They formed a human barricade to stop the armored cars and tanks in attacking the "military rebels" inside the camp. Armed with rosary and the cross, they triumphed over the military might of Marcos. The peaceful revolution started with the words of the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, over the radio, calling the people to go out in EDSA and protect the government officials and military personnel who defected from Marcos. It is a strong manifestation of the Catholic Church's influence on the Filipino people.

Aside from these grandiose historical events, the Catholic Church is also involved in opposing government public policies that are contrary to her morals and beliefs. The first case is the Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) policy of self-regulation during the leadership of Armida Siguion-Reyna.<sup>99</sup> In 1998, the MTRCB, under the leadership of Siguion-Reyna, adopted a policy of self-regulation. This policy gave the directors, producers, and filmmakers the opportunity to censor their movies. The said policy created a loud noise from the conservatives and moralists. They said that the policy would create more violent and obscene movies. However, the Armida Board replied that the

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Christian Bryan S. Bustamante: "A Policy Study on the 1998: Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Movie and Television Review and Classification"; *Scientia: Faculty Journal of the College of Arts and Sciences-San Beda College*, pp. 145-167.

policy would not tolerate and allow violent and obscene movies. For the conservative groups the policy itself is a problem, which needs to be modified; while, for the Armida Board, there is nothing wrong with the policy. The policy itself is not a problem. Conservatives, led by the influential Catholic Church and other religious organizations, supported their claim that the policy itself is a policy problem based on the knowledge and discourses of experts who found out that the violent and obscene movies have dangerous effect to the mind and psyche of an individual. This policy, they claimed, would corrupt the mind of young people, who do not know yet the difference between the real and the reel because of the flooding of violent and obscene movies. These movies would destroy the moral values of the young and the moral fiber of the nation. They also argued that the MTRCB is established by the State as a guardian of morality. The Armida Board argued that it is not a “guardian of morality.” They supported such a claim based on the knowledge and discourse that the primary objective of the MTRCB since its establishment on 1985 is self-regulation. The Armida Board shall prepare the basic requirements for the achievement of such objective by not exercising its power to cut, or to recommend cut, of a particular scene in a given film or television material. It is the responsibility of the producers and directors, who know their particular set of audience, to cut a particular film. They also set new criteria in evaluating and judging whether or not a particular movie is proper for public exhibition. These are the context of the film; intent of the director; presentation of the scene; and lastly culture of the movie. This being the case, even if a movie is sexually oriented it will obtain the board’s approval (with cuts or without cuts), as long as it passes the four criteria. After years of debate, the conservative group won and the self-regulation policy was revoked.

Another example is the proposed population control policy. Statistics showed that by the year 2005, the population was to increase to 85.2 million.<sup>100</sup> This meant that 5,800 Filipino babies were to be born every 24 hours.<sup>101</sup> The Asian Development Bank (ADB) noted that the continuous increase in population will not improve the per capita income in the Philippines. The ADB explains that from 1998-2002, the population increased by an average of 2.3 percent while employment increased only by 1.7 percent. This shows that there is a labor surplus and the economy cannot accommodate the new members of the work force. Hence, there comes about a non-improvement in per capita income. Based on the study of the Joint Foreign Chambers of

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Christian V. Esguerra: “RP Population to Hit 85.2 M This Year”; *Inquirer*, vol. 19, no. 169, May 28, (2005), p. A7.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

Commerce, the Philippine population was to reach 100 million by 2011 and double to 165 million by 2033.<sup>102</sup> For the above reasons, the Chambers of Commerce urged the government to prioritize the population policy in its policy agenda. Despite these studies on the relationship between rapid population growth and economic sustainable development, the Philippine government still takes the non-decision stand on the matter. Several bills were filed in the Congress to address the problem; for example, the two-child policy presented by Representative Edcel Lagman and Birth Moratorium Proposal by Representative Robert Barbers. However, until now the government has made no decision on the matter. The government still does not recognize the urgency of the problem as a policy problem. It is public knowledge that one of the reasons for the non-decision stand of the government is the influence of the Catholic Church. The influential Catholic Church opposes the passage of any bill that would allow the use of artificial anti-conception methods, and would curve down the population through such methods because of her moral teaching that these are an attack on the sanctity of life, body, and the Christian family. It seems that the majority of the policy decision-makers set aside the hard facts on the issue of the population problem, and accepted the moral knowledge and discourse provided by the Church. They set aside the truth of the scientific studies and embraced the truth of the Catholic Church.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this short narrative of Philippine colonial history and recent events, it is evident that religion plays an essential role in the formation of the society and of individual persons. The Philippines is a post-secular state by definition from the time the Americans planted the seed of democracy. The transplantation of democratic government and institutions in the country that espouse the principles of neutrality, separation of Church and state, and religious freedom, did not destroy the social landscape engraved by the Spanish missionaries in the social life of the country. It is still a landscape shaped by the Catholic Church.

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. "Foreign Chambers Call for Firmer Population Management Policy"; *Malaya*, vol. 22, no. 342, January 6, (2005), p. 11.



## CONCLUSION

### STATE, RELIGION AND PUBLIC SPHERE

VENSUS A. GEORGE

As we come to the end of this volume entitled *The Role of Religions in the Public Sphere: The Post-Secular Model of Jürgen Habermas and Beyond*, we need to highlight some of the issues that have been raised by the various papers included in this volume on the theme “State, Religion, and Public Sphere”. Some of the issues that capture our attention are the following: the veracity and universal applicability of the secularization theory; the unacceptability of absolute religious exclusivism and the unacceptability of extreme religious inclusivism leading to the emergence of a theocratic state. Having elaborated on these three issues as they are unfolded by various authors of the papers contained in this volume, we make an attempt to strike a balance between the views of absolute religious exclusivism and extreme religious inclusivism so as to give both the secular and religious ideas an equal level of playing field in the public sphere, so that state and religion are not considered as opponents who need to be afraid of each other, but as collaborators in the exalted task of nation-building and development of the people.

#### VERACITY AND UNIVERSAL APPLICABILITY OF SECULARIZATION THEORY

One can trace back the origins of secularization theory in the phenomenalism of David Hume, the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx, and the scientific positivism of Auguste Comte. All these three thinkers and their philosophies ignore the spiritual dimension and stress the significance of rational and material dimensions. Similarly, thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim also postulate the thesis that modernization and rationalization of the society would bring about a decline in the levels of religiosity among the people of a society.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the secularization theory presents an anti-religion-paradigm which claims that the influence of religion in the public life would diminish faced with the rationalization and modernization process in liberal and secular democracies. Hence, the power of religion to shape social consciousness would decrease gradually, so that over a period of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “Secularization”, Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization).

time the public sphere would be shaped without the impact of religion. Besides, secularization theory believes that the traditional forms of religion and their practices would no more be relevant to people's lives; religion would have no bearing on the formation of individual and social consciousness; and in due course religion would disappear and die out.

Even though secularization theory was widely accepted and considered as true, an honest look at the world scenario gives us a different picture regarding its veracity, its universal applicability, and its approach to religion. Plamen Makariev in the introduction to this volume speaks of "worldwide resurgence of religion" in recent times. Basing himself on Habermas, he thinks that factors, such as missionary activities of conservative religious groups; the mass appeal of fundamentalist religious groups, such as the Christian Pentecostals, radical Muslim groups, and other groups with pseudoscientific and esoteric doctrines; and the religious *Jihadi* groups – belonging to Muslim, Hindu, and other religious affiliations, which have the support of the political establishments of various countries – have led to the revival and expansion of religions in countries like Africa, East and Southeast Asia, Latin America, China and Japan. Similarly, in the third chapter of this volume, Ozlem Uluc says that the perception of the secularization theory regarding religion did not largely come true. According to her, religion was not 'defeated' against science, but gained a distinguished place for itself both in the public domain and in the scientific field because of the change in the social structure throughout the world, in the perception of the state phenomenon, and in the consciousness of identity and citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Though some of the claims of the socialization theory seem to be true of Western and Northern Europe, when it comes to some non-western societies, such as the Middle Eastern, Asian and South American countries, modernization did not exactly produce the same results. Even in the United States of America, religion is still a vibrant factor. Besides traditional and established Christian Churches, there are the new Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches that have a mass following. It implies that although modernization took place in countries, such as India, Turkey, Israel and the United States, religious beliefs and institutions are still influential. Thus, it is clear that the secular structuring in the European countries as the result of modernization cannot be applied as a universal norm to the other countries throughout the world. This implies that modernization did not necessarily bring about secularization and loss of the influence of religion in all countries of the world as it happened in some of the European countries, but, despite secularization and modernization, the communities in many countries of the world became

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<sup>2</sup> Özlem Uluç: *Kamusal Alanda Din*, p. 16.

either more religious, or simultaneously religious and secular. From this perspective, loss of influence of religion in the public sphere as the result of secularization and modernization in some of the European countries can be considered as an exception to the rule. Thus, Europe is an exceptional case in this regard.<sup>3</sup>

Even in Western and Northern Europe, where influence of religion in the public sphere was overthrown by secularization and modernization to a great extent, the traditional religions that were dominant in these countries, such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Lutheranism, and other Christian denominations, continue to exist even though their influence in the public sphere has diminished. However, there is a search among a large section of the population for new forms of religiosity, which Grace Davie calls “believing without belonging” to an organized religion.<sup>4</sup> We find glimpses of this new phenomenon in large sections of European population having affiliations to Hindu Ashrams, Meditation Centers, and *Yoga* Institutes run by *Yogis* and *Gurus*, such as Satya Sai Baba, Maharishi Yogi, Baba Ram Dev, and others. Those who visit such centers, though they do not belong to the structure of the organized religious centers, find in what these centers provide a fulfillment of their deeper, inner, and religious aspirations. Thus, the claim of the advocates of secularization theory that many European countries have succeeded in pushing religion out of the public sphere is not fully true because, besides the continued existence of traditional religions, new religious affiliations have emerged in many parts of Europe.

Besides, globalization, the European integration within the concept of the European Union, and migration of diverse religion groups into the countries within the European Union have also contributed to the upsurge of religion and religious practice in the Europe and consequently have begun to influence the public sphere, to some extent. Firstly, the globalization process has opened the more secularized European countries to the rest of the world where secularization and modernization has not diminished the influence of religion in the public sphere. Secondly, the analysis of the integration process of countries within the European Union reveals the fact that the European countries,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Grace Davie: “Religion in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Factors to Take into Account”; *Arch.europ.social.*, vol. 47, no. 2, (2006), pp. 291-292. Cf. also Grace Davie, “Europe: The Exception That proves the Rule?”

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Grace Davie: *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 25-26. Cf. also Grace Davie, “Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?”, p. 76. Cf. also Grace Davie: “Religion in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Factors to Take into Account”, pp. 274-277.

such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark or the United Kingdom did not develop a perception and practice of secularism that can be called “European”. Additionally, their relations with Eastern Europe, Russia and even with Turkey made it necessary for them to revise their interpretation of secularism.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, migration from non-European countries into the European Union countries has brought about a rise of different religious views and claims of the people who are members of those religious groups. They have questioned the relatively homogeneous structure of the population in terms of religion and the reality of the principle of impartiality of the state in the nation-state structuring.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the arrival of different immigrant groups, such as Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Afro-Caribbean Christians from West Indies has changed the cultural landscape of European public-sphere.<sup>7</sup> This, in turn, has made the Europeans themselves re-consider the place of religion in their countries. For instance, the *burka* ban in France, the cartoon crises in Denmark, and the *minaret* referendum in Switzerland are the most recent examples that lead to re-consideration of religion in the public sphere in various national contexts which are heavily secularized.<sup>8</sup>

From what has been said above, it is clear that large sections of the people in the European states maintain affiliation to religions and their practices. Therefore, the efforts of some governments to stop such practices in the public-sphere often meet with opposition. Speaking of the growing challenges religious diversity in Europe presents in various social domains, the European Policy Brief of the European Commission says as follows:

The growing religious diversity in European societies poses important policy challenges in various domains of social life. The new religious landscape means that

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Are We Still Secular?*, pp. 42-43. Cf. also José Casanova: *Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prosoective Reflections on Islam*, p. 15. Cf. also Blandine Chelini-Pont: “Religion in the Public Sphere, Challenges and Opportunities”; *Brigham Young University Law Review*, (2005), p. 622.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. José Casanova, *Are We Still Secular?*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Grace Davie: “Religion in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Factors to Take into Account”, pp. 285-288.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jocelyne Cesari: *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Cf. also Bernard Lewis and Dominique Schnapper, ed.: *Muslims in Europe*, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994). Cf. also H.A. Hellyer: *Muslims of Europe, The ‘Other’ Europeans*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). Cf. also Jorgen S. Nielsen: *Muslims in Western Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).



European states not only have to cope with inhabitants with varying commitments to Christianity as well as with humanists, agnostics, atheists, and Jewish and/or Muslim minority populations, but in many instances also with a ‘super-diverse’ range of other religious cultures and traditions which have entered Europe by way of immigration and conversion... [O]n four social domains where both acute and chronic challenges have arisen ... namely, the family, the labor market, the public space and the state’s support of religion... Cases from across Europe illustrate how some religious practices, beliefs and identities pervade various or all aspects of individual lives and that religion or belief is important to employees and employers in the workplace. The available European and national case law and sociological data show that tensions and conflicts have arisen with regard to religious dress and grooming requirements, opportunities to take time-off for employees to observe religious holidays and other practices and certain job tasks and conditions run counter to some religious or philosophical rules and practices. These issues have arisen in both private and public sector employment.<sup>9</sup>

This statement clearly points to the fact that religion and its influence on the public sphere is not totally wiped away in the European states. Grace Davie comments on this point as follows:

[T]he combination of all these factors will increase rather than decrease the salience of religion in public, as well as private, debate – a tendency encouraged by the ever more obvious presence of religion in the modern world order. In this respect, the world is more likely to influence the religious life of Europe than the other way round, even if the forms for religious life in Europe remain distinct. How then should the social scientific community react? One

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. European Commission – European Policy Brief: “Religious Diversity and Secular Models in Europe: Innovative Approaches to Law and policy”, May (2012); Retrieved from the website: [ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy-briefs-religare-may-2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy-briefs-religare-may-2012_en.pdf) Cf. also Human Rights Watch: “Questions and Answers on Restriction on Religious Dress and Symbols in Europe”, December 22, (2010); Retrieved from website: [www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/21/questions-and-answers-restrictions-religious-dress-and-symbols-europe](http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/21/questions-and-answers-restrictions-religious-dress-and-symbols-europe).

point is clear: religion can no longer be ignored in scholarly circles; nor – the implications for policy – can this be simply a “scientific” discussion. In short, normative questions must be central to debates about the place of religion in European societies, bearing in mind that these are likely to grow rather than diminish in intensity as the 21<sup>st</sup> century unfolds.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the claim of advocates of secularization theory regarding religion in the public sphere is proved wrong. Hence, we cannot hold for the veracity and universal applicability of the secularization theory.

### **UNACCEPTABILITY OF ABSOLUTE RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM**

The claims of the secularization theory are the foundation for the emergence of absolute religious exclusivism. It propagates the total removal of religion and its influence from the public sphere. It holds that religions should retreat into the private sphere of the individual lives of persons giving them personal consolation in times of problems and difficulties. Religions should not be included in the sphere of society, culture, and the governance of the state, as these belong to the secular sphere. Thus, in absolute religious exclusivism differences between the sacred and the secular are exaggerated. It separates the sacred from the secular, the private from the public, and the cultivating from the ruling consciously or unconsciously. Hence, absolute religious exclusivism makes religious belief and religious organizations mysterious, private, psychological and totally unilateral. An individual spiritual life is seen as totally irrelevant to public life, social order and political life. Thus, absolute religious exclusivism holds for the complete separation of the state and religion.

However, since the claims of secularization theory have been proved wrong *de facto*, there is no ground on which we can uphold absolute religious exclusivism. The analysis of the development of Habermas’ thoughts on religion unfolded by Kuan Sanping and Zeng Teqing in the sixth chapter of this volume supports the above-stated fact. As a member of the Frankfurt School and influenced by Marxist philosophy, Habermas had embraced absolute religious exclusivism in the early phase of his philosophical career. His thought shifts from an apparently dismissive attitude of religion towards equivocal criticism,

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<sup>10</sup> Grace Davie: “Religion in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Factors to Take into Account”, p. 294.

and from sympathy and comprehension to a more receptive stance on religion. Initially he wanted religion to be totally rejected; he believed that it was mythology and would disappear over time. Then he replaced the notion of disappearance of religion by the notion of the privatization of religion as he found that religion is a great source of strength for people in their struggles and pains. After the “9/11 event” Habermas spoke about the ideological significance of religion and its social functions in the post-secular societies. In the most recent phase of Habermas’ thought, we find him totally rejecting religious exclusivism and promoting some form of religious inclusivism – acknowledging the significant role religion can play in the public sphere. Now he believes that religion should not be limited to the private sphere, but, it should intervene in the public sphere, using its founding documents and traditions to refine “moral intuitions” that are vital for genuine wellbeing of the society and the nation at large. The example of the change in Habermas’ perspective on religion in the public sphere clearly points to the fact that an honest-thinking philosopher cannot but reject absolute religious exclusivism. In this section, we spell out some of the arguments against absolute religious exclusivism and some of the grave consequences of its blind acceptance in the individual and social life of nations and peoples.

Absolute religious exclusivism in the public sphere and total separation of state and religion has come about in European society since the time of enlightenment and renaissance, particularly in the context of the Catholic Church’s political control of practically all of Europe under the “Papal States Regime” and the struggle of individual states to liberate themselves from the control of the Church, not only ideologically but also politically. The notion of “Papal States Regime” and the force of religious faith and military power used to maintain religious authority over the secular space is definitely an overreach by religion and an unwanted entry of religion into the secular sphere. It is natural for political leaders of individual nations and the intellectuals who suffered under this theocratic regime to react against it and deny its influence over the liberal democratic republics set up by them after the fall of the “Papal States Regime”. Hence, absolute religious exclusivism and separation of state and the Church is a specifically European experience that has come about as a reaction against the Church’s forceful interference into the political space of individual European states. While acknowledging the wrong done by the established religion at a particular period in history, it would be equally wrong to exclude religion totally from the public sphere because the values religion stands for and propagates, despite its own errors as an organization consisting of frail human beings, is vital for the general wellbeing and value-based growth of societies and nations.

Despite the Catholic Church's unwanted intrusion into the political space of nations in the past, it is important to note that the Catholic Church has been the champion of freedom and democratic values in recent times. If an outlook that excludes religion absolutely from the public sphere was followed, the type of changes that have happened in the political landscape of some of the countries probably would have never occurred. There is no doubt about the fact that the Catholic Church, particularly Pope John Paul II, played a significant role in dismantling communism and establishing free and democratic Republics in Eastern Europe, Poland, and Russia. Though Pope John Paul II did not call for rebellion against communist governments, he encouraged the creation of alternative social and political institutions independent of the government so that the people of the nation as a whole could present a united front against the government's policies. In the case of Poland, the "Solidarity Movement" provided this alternative social and political institution. The Catholic Church in Poland stood by the "Solidarity Movement", thereby leading to the collapse of communism and the establishment of the Polish Democratic Republic.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the Catholic Church in Lithuania played a pivotal function in the movement against Soviet Communist Regime by defending Lithuanian national interests and values. Since 1972, a Catholic Underground Publication, *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, has spoken not only against Lithuanian's religious rights, but also of their national rights for freedom and democracy.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in the democratic revolutions that took place since 1989 that led to the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the fall of Soviet Union, and the emergence a number of Democratic Republics, we cannot deny the direct or the indirect role of the Catholic Church. By championing not only the people's right to practice their religion, but also their right to self-determination and freedom, the Church has facilitated the happening of these revolutions, even though the Church was not directly involved in the politics of any of these nations.<sup>13</sup>

Christian Bryan S. Bustamante, in the seventh chapter of the volume, speaks of the important part the Catholic Church played in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to bring about political, economic and social

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. "History of Poland (1945-89)"; Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Poland\\_\(1945-89\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Poland_(1945-89)). Cf. also "Solidarity (Polish Trade Union)", Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/solidarity\\_\(Polish\\_trade\\_union\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/solidarity_(Polish_trade_union)).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. "Religion in the Soviet Union"; Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_Soviet_Union).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. "Revolutions of 1989"; Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions\\_of\\_1989](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989).

liberation in the lives of the Filipino people and the Philippines as a nation. According to him, the Catholic hierarchy played an important role in the success of the peaceful 1986 revolution known as the EDSA revolution, the revolution that was responsible for toppling the dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos and restoring democracy in the Philippines. Bishops, priests, religious brothers, nuns, seminarians and lay people joined together in the EDSA national road to protect the soldiers who defected from Marcos' dictatorial government and were inside the Emilio Aguinaldo military camp. They formed a human barricade to stop the armored cars and tanks in attacking the "military rebels" inside the camp. Armed with the rosary and the cross, they triumphed over the military might of Marcos. The peaceful revolution started with the words of the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, over the radio, calling the people to go out in EDSA and protect the government officials and military personnel who defected from Marcos. It is not only a strong manifestation of the Catholic Church's influence on the Filipino people, but also a significant example of what religion can do to a nation and its people, if it has some influence in the public-sphere of that nation. Thus, absolute religious exclusivism can lead to the loss of the good religion and religious values can bring into the life of a nation and its people.

Rajesh Shukla, in the fourth chapter of this volume, in highlighting the main points of Gandhian philosophy of religious politics, states that separation of religion and politics is inimical to the society. A politically conscious society must facilitate an emotional and moral bond among its members which will assist them to be truly interested in each other's welfare, and help each other to sustain their moral faith in times of crisis. The actualization of this goal requires the cultivation of pure religious consciousness and a genuine sense of belonging among fellow citizens. Only such a sense of belonging can surpass the barriers of time and space, and adapt the whole society and all its members as worthy objects of an individual's love, care, and gratitude. In its ideal form, an individual's religious consciousness can help to transcend one's egoistic pursuits and develop an authentic sense of identification with other fellow beings, their pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow. Only the cultivation of this attitude can help an ordinary human being to achieve such an extraordinary level of political and spiritual awareness. Thus, religion and its values are vital for the genuine growth of not only the individual but also the society and the nation at large. Hence, absolute religious exclusivism does not assist the genuine wellbeing of the society. In a similar vein, Debika Saha, commenting on the role of religion in the public sphere in the Indian context, says that in a multi-religious country as India, religion cannot be separated from the public sphere and the public life of the nation. Hence,

though India is a Secular Democratic Republic, there is no general prohibition of religious association in state activities, but it maintains strict neutrality between different religions. Hence, in India religion is not treated separately as it is part and parcel of the life of the people in their personal and societal lives. Hence, religion freely interacts with the state in public life. Likewise, Oslem Uluc, in the third chapter of this volume, says that in the trajectory of Turkish political history regarding state-religion relations, we can see the increasing visibility of religion and its symbols in the public sphere. Thus, both in India and Turkey, religion plays a vital role in the public sphere and its role is accepted by the players in the state and the government.

Kuang Sanping and Zeng Teqing, in the sixth chapter of this volume, say that the ethics of Chinese religions has a significant place in political and public life of the people. According to them, generally speaking, religious ethics discusses the political-religious relations, targets and structures political groups, and expects the statesman to function within the parameters of ethics in political life. Besides, religious ethics gives norms for social life; it regulates mainly the relations between belief groups, between belief groups and non-belief groups, between man and woman, and between human beings and natural environment. It helps its disciples to accommodate to their spiritual and secular life, and makes disciples play their dual roles – as God-fearing believers and law-abiding citizen of the nation – properly. Again, religious ethics gives its adherents their cultural identity and the sense of belonging that individuals cultivate within subordinate cultures and cultural groups. It is an intrinsic commitment and a socio-psychological process in which individuals maintain and develop their cultural characteristics and their community identity. Throughout history, religion has served as a significant foundation of both social and personal identity. In Chinese culture, religious beliefs and practices have offered a framework for self-understanding and a guide to self-definition. Thus, the Chinese religious traditions maintain the function of providing intellectual perspectives and moral ideals which help people secure a satisfying sense of public identity.<sup>14</sup>

Since religion plays a significant role in the public spheres of many of the present day Secular Democratic Republics, the American sociologist José Casanova attempts to bring back religion into the public sphere by “de-privatizing religion”. For him, religious institutions deprived of earlier privileged positions in public life, must find new ways to participate in modern society. Casanova, highlighting the

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Clifford Geertz: *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 175, 178.

distinctive contribution of religion to the civil society, says that religion, by entering the public sphere, promotes public discussion on certain issues of vital importance for the society. If religious functions disappear in society, the overall results may be the decline of the ethical values and the increase of violence. Thus, when we inspect the theoretical problem of religion not entering the public sphere concretely, we find it to be relatively complicated and problematic.<sup>15</sup> From what we have said so far in this section, it is clear that absolute religious exclusivism is unacceptable.

### UNACCEPTABILITY OF EXTREME RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVISM

Just as we cannot accept absolute religious exclusivism that gives hardly any significance to religion in the public sphere, so also we cannot accept an extreme type of religious inclusivism that attempts to govern the destiny of a nation according to the laws of a particular religion, leading up to the emergence of some form of a theocratic or theonomic state. While religious ideas and values should have an equal level of playing field with the secular ideas in the public sphere, it would be improper to allow the whole secular-sphere to be taken over and controlled by the religious-sphere. However, extreme religious inclusivism existed in the history of different nations and still continues to exist in some form or other in a number of countries. The Catholic Church's control of the European states under the "Papal States Regime" is a vivid example of extreme religious inclusivism, where religious authority replaces secular authority and religious laws determine the rightness and wrongness of secular laws. It could be called an ecclesiocracy, in which Pope and the Church leaders assume the leading role in the civil and ecclesiastical administration of the Papal States.

In the present day world we find extreme religious inclusivism particularly in the Islamic world, as many Islamic countries adopt the will of *Alla* as revealed in the Qur'an as the norm of every aspect of the life of a nation and its people. Thus, the legal order or the Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) – developed from the Qur'an and traditions associated with Prophet Mohammed – becomes the legal code that implements the divine revelation. Hence, *Shari'ah* becomes the only legal code that ultimately matters and the criterion for the validity of all other laws governing social and political life of the people.<sup>16</sup> In countries, such as

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. José Casanova: *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 222.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Andrew J. Waskey: "The Political Theory of Theocracy"; *National Social Science Association*, DaltonState College; Retrieved from the website: [www.nssa.us/journals/2007-28-1/2007-28-1-16.htm](http://www.nssa.us/journals/2007-28-1/2007-28-1-16.htm).

Afghanistan, Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, *Shari'ah* is the official basis for state laws. Saudi Arabia has the system of religious courts for all aspects of the law and maintains religious police to oversee that the people comply with the laws. In Pakistan, Islam is the official religion and there is the Federal Shari'ah Court that is authorized to strike down any law that is not in agreement with *Shari'ah* code of Islamic law.<sup>17</sup>

The Islamic Republic of Iran has both theocratic and democratic elements in its constitution. According to this constitution, all civil, penal, financial, administrative, cultural, military, political and all other laws and regulations must be based on the Islamic code. Like other Islamic states it follows religious laws and maintains religious courts to interpret the law. Besides, it has a Supreme Religious Leader, who is a scholar of Islamic law, and possesses more powers than the elected President of Iran. This Supreme Leader appoints heads of many powerful offices in the Iranian state, such as the commanders of armed forces, the director of national radio and television network, the heads of major religious foundations, the Chief Justice of Iran, members of the National Security Council, and co-appoints twelve Jurists of the Council of Guardians. The Council of Guardians have power to veto bills from the parliament; approve candidates for high offices, such as the president, members of the parliament, and the Assembly of Experts; and supervise the election process. The Supreme Leader is elected by the Assembly of Experts, a group of Islamic scholars competent to interpret *Shari'ah* code of Islamic law (*Mujtahids*). Thus, we find a full-fledged religious leadership that guides both religious and secular aspects of the Republic of Iran and its people.<sup>18</sup>

Extreme religious inclusivism, whether it comes from Christianity, Islam or any other religion is unacceptable because it does not allow a genuine public sphere to exist. The religion envelopes the totality of individual and social existence, and takes control of every aspect of society, so that there is hardly any public sphere left where the secular and non-religious ideas and values can come and interact with each other. In the scenario of extreme religious inclusivism only religious sphere – that also of the religion that dominates the scene – exists, and the public sphere is totally obliterated. This situation destroys the democratic political order; stifles the formation of public opinion on social and political issues; and opposes every expression of non-religious and secular views, ideas and values. These restrictions amount to a curtailment of the rights of every non-religious group within the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. "Theocracy"; Retrieved from the website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theocracy).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*



society and the violation of the freedom of speech and expression. Besides, the religious leadership and their appointees not only influence, but also take over the legislative, the executive, and the judicial functions, thereby enact laws, issue executive orders, and deliver judicial judgments based on the religious tenets of a religion. These laws, judicial judgments, and executive orders are binding on all citizens, including those who do not share the religious beliefs of that particular religion, such as the secularists, atheists, rationalists and religious groups who do not adhere to that particular religion that controls the public sphere. As a result, the religious considerations bear their weight on the public policies so much so, that there is the danger that these policies would affect negatively the interests and rights of the citizens, who do not share the same religious convictions. Similarly, the kind of censorship and control the religiously controlled governmental mechanism would place on secular and non-religious groups and organizations would violate their unquestionable rights. Hence, any country that embraces extreme religious inclusivism would disrupt and destroy any form of fairness in political and social order. From what we have said above, it is clear that extreme religious inclusivism is dangerous because it does not allow the genuine development of a just and fair social and political order that would bring about a public sphere that is open to all sections of the society without partiality and prejudice.

### **STATE AND RELIGION: COLLABORATORS IN NATION-BUILDING**

Absolute religious exclusivism, basing itself on the secularization theory, attempts to drive away religion and its influence from the public sphere. In doing so, it blocks the emergence of a public sphere that is open to receive the positive ideas and values of every realm of the society, including the religious sphere. It looks at the religious sphere as an opponent that must be uprooted from the public sphere. On the contrary, extreme religious inclusivism brings about the takeover of the public sphere by religion. It destroys the existence of a genuine public-sphere because the only sphere that exists under this regime is the religious sphere. Thus, both absolute religious exclusivism and extreme religious inclusivism do not allow a genuine public sphere in which people can bring in the cultural and religious diversities of their “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) without fear or favor. Hence, in order to deal with the problem of the relationship between the state, religion, and the public sphere, we must deny both of these extreme approaches and look for a middle path which would allow the development of a genuine public sphere in which both religious and secular forces, instead of being opponents, become collaborators and pool together their energies and

resources, thereby building a just and fair social and political order. In elaborating on this issue, we briefly consider what a genuine public sphere means, some value-based principles that should guide both the secular and religious players in the public sphere, and public communication with the help of which the dialogue in the public sphere should be carried out in order to conduct the task of nation-building in the spirit of collaboration and partnership by every section of the society, including religious and secular forces.

### *Concept of a Genuine Public Sphere*

Aristotle, in his work *Politics* situates the public sphere within the city-state (*polis*). It is related to the public life of the political community. It involves concepts of common life, community, associations, relationship and the city-state. Thus, for Aristotle, public sphere is the public life constituted in the spatio-temporal setting of the market place (*agora*), where citizens as equals gather to discuss issues that are of common concern for the city-state. He further clarifies the public-sphere by distinguishing it from the private realm of the household (*oikos*), which, though part of the larger city-state, has the dimension of privacy.<sup>19</sup> Later thinkers, such as Hanna Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, Charles Taylor, John Keane, and Robert D. Putnam, despite their differences with Aristotle, basically agree with him in that they locate the public sphere in the civil society, where exchange of meaning and points of view takes place, which, in turn, leads to deliberative and associative democratic process of decision making.<sup>20</sup> However, regarding the nature of the public sphere there are differences among them: Aristotle, Hannah Arendt, and Habermas emphasize that the public-sphere is a single shared discursive sphere; Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser view it as a multiple segmented sphere; John Keane portrays the public sphere as multiple and multilevel overlapping spheres; and Robert D. Putnam speaks of multilayered and complex public spheres. Despite the differences in the way they perceive the nature of the public sphere, each of their perspectives highlight the critical, protective, regulative, legitimizing, participative, and integrative function of the public sphere, giving paramount importance to consensus

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Gürcan Koçan: “Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy”; *Eurosphere Working Paper Series*, Online Working Paper, no. 2, (2008), pp. 5-7. Retrieved from the website: <http://erosphere.uib.no/knowledgebase/working-papers.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

in the decision making process.<sup>21</sup> At this juncture, it is worth quoting the description of the public sphere given by Gürcan Koçan:

Public sphere is a historical concept which has been under development since the time of Aristotle. Aristotle refers to the public-sphere as a social and political space in which citizens come together to talk about issues of public concern [and] to form civic opinions. For Aristotle, social space is public communication. Public sphere facilitates public communication by providing a social space for citizen interaction. In other words, public sphere as a social place is constituted in the systemic interactive practices of citizens... There are different conceptual traditions of public sphere... Some set of theories suggest that public communication should operate through a single overarching sphere. For these theories, a single overarching sphere is better for coordinated communicative action (ideal speech situation) and consensus building. These theories also suggest that public communication in the public sphere should be confined to persuasive argumentation about the common interest. Other sets of theories hold that public sphere can better be envisaged of as a plurality of overlapping, intersecting, and completing communicative spaces... If the public sphere is to be fully open and free for participation of people then the end of public sphere must an end in itself.<sup>22</sup>

The above-mentioned concept of the public sphere points to the fact that public sphere is an open and public *forum* – whether perceived as a single shared sphere or as a multiple segmented, multilevel and complex spheres – in which both the secular and the religious groups and institutions come together, despite their differences, in view of establishing a consensus on matters that affect the good of the nation and its people. Thus, it is imperative that the public sphere includes every group and none is excluded. In the public sphere all that needs to be spoken must be spoken; all that must be heard and listened to must be heard and listened to and deliberated on before a considered decision is made. In the acts of speaking with each other, listening to each other, and hearing each other, the participants, both religious and secular, must

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

be guided by certain value based principles. We turn our attention to these principles in the next section.

*Principles Guiding Interactions within the Public Sphere*

Gürcan Koçan in his essay entitled “Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy” speaks of some principles the participants in the public sphere should be guided by, while entering into a dialogue with each other. The first is symmetry and participation. It consists in providing equal opportunity to every group or individual that takes part in the communicative process of the public sphere. There should be no exclusion based on religion, color, race, language or any other consideration. Everyone should have equal chance to argue, question, or answer. The second is mutual respect. It refers to the reciprocal situation in which all participants of the dialogue empathetically consider different perspectives presented by the other. The participants respect each other’s opinions and points of view, and try to understand them in the spirit in which they have been presented without making biased judgments. The goal of this mutually respectful listening to others’ views is movement towards developing a mutual understanding and nothing less than that. The third is truthfulness. It refers to the truth-value of the viewpoints the participants express and their intentions. It is vital that the opinions, views and interpretations that are presented in the public-sphere and the attitudes with which they are presented must be honest and sincere. The fourth is rational justification. It stands for the rational coherence of the views presented in the public sphere. Every idea must be expressed in such a way that people can easily understand it. Lack of logical flow and ambiguity in the presentation of views and opinions would lead to confusion and misunderstanding. In propounding matters of public concern, it is not enough that one express his/her ideas clearly, but he/she also takes part in the rational critical debate more persuasively in order to make the other grasp the importance of the issue under consideration. The fifth is common interest. It implies that one makes every effort to present his/her opinions and views, not moved by his/her self-interest, but by the common interest of the nation and people at large. Adhering to common interest calls for working hard to actualize the common good concretely so as to be beneficial to the people.<sup>23</sup> Commenting on this point further, Gürcan Koçan says:

For interaction through the public sphere to occur, each of these validity claims or conditions [value-based principles] must be met. If one of them breaks down or is violated,

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

then that distorts necessary agents of the communicative process or encumbers the public sphere and prevents mutual understanding from emerging. This could be at the agent level, where participants in a communicative interaction are not obliged by these, or where there is an undemocratic authority or uneven distribution of power situation. Today, in many societies, the public sphere is distorted because at the level of institutions and structures, many of these conditions are not likely to be associated with a number of features – openness, fairness asymmetry, mutual respect, and consensus.<sup>24</sup>

It is to these same principles Habermas refers to when he proposes a shift from normative to epistemological arguments and highlights the importance of learning processes as important mechanisms in a liberal political order, for without which mutual respect and cooperation from citizens of different faiths and backgrounds cannot be achieved.<sup>25</sup> He calls this the “new epistemic attitude” which can be acquired by learning the sacred truths of various faiths. This epistemic attitude is not merely meant for individuals who belong to different religions. It also should be adopted by the secularists in order that they understand that people disagree and political conflict arises because of religious opinions. The secularist must be prepared for any disagreement coming from the point of view of religious perspectives, doctrines and teachings. The religious side must also develop the same attitude to understand the secular world.<sup>26</sup> This sort of honest effort to understand each other’s perspectives of life and reality will bring about a genuine public sphere where each group and individual, despite their differences, can collaborate and cooperate as partners for the common good. Having looked in the value-principles that should guide the interactive process in the public sphere, we must take up for our consideration public communication with the help of which the dialogue in the public sphere is carried out. This is our task in the next section.

#### *Public Communication: Means of Dialogue in the Public Sphere*

In elaborating on public communication as the means of dialogue among the participants in the public sphere, we briefly clarify the

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: “Religion in the Public Sphere”, p. 12

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *The Future of Human Nature*, pp. 101-115. Cf. also Jürgen Habermas: *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, pp. 15-23.

concept of public communication and then move on to consider different models of public communication. The use of any one model of public communication or a combination of them can facilitate right manner of conducting dialogue in the public sphere. Now, we proceed to consider the concept of public communication.

*Concept of Public Communication.* Public communication involves a dynamic interplay of meanings in the process of dialogue among the participants in the public sphere. The acts of the participants are formed and reformed, and is constantly changing as the result of the interactions among them. Thus, public communication is a joint action with mutual response among the participants in the social and political context. Hence, the nature and the quality of the sociopolitical context have a great influence on public communication. Similarly, the interactions among the participants also can have a bearing on the sociopolitical environment. The content of public communication is the thoughts and ideas that are exchanged among the participants and their meanings. For this reason, public communication is an association with others in the public sphere formed by the exchange of ideas and their meaning. The modes in and through which the public communication is expressed are speaking, writing, listening, reading, touching, seeing, smelling, talking, gesturing and the like. Therefore, public communication begins when meaning is transmitted in and through modes of communication, such as words, observation, speaking, writing, body language, tone of voice, and the looks that go along with words. The roles of the addresser, who transmits meaning, and the addressee, who receives meaning are constantly changed between the people who participate in the dialogue. In this interactive communication, open self-disclosure of personal feelings, knowledge, and evaluative views about the particular question under consideration is very important in order to bring about understanding. In the exchange of ideas and their meaning from the addresser to the addressee an understanding of the issue under consideration happens. Thus, understanding occurs in the dynamic process of one revealing one's point of view, while trying to see the world through the eyes of others. This calls for distancing oneself from oneself and one's world and entering into the social, cultural and political world of others and establishing connection with it.<sup>27</sup>

From what we have said above, it follows that a shared understanding in public communication implies that the participants are not only ready to engage in the dialogue process and present their own views, but also are willing to accept views that are different and contrary

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gürcan Koçan: "Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy", pp. 17-19.

to their own. When this happens in the reciprocal manner in the interactive field of public communication of the public-sphere, there comes about a mutual recognition of each other's perspectives within this interplay of meanings. This mutual recognition makes each participant see the positive value and relevance of other perspectives. As a result, the participants are able to see other worldviews and perspectives without necessarily losing their own identities because the process of understanding connects the self and the other in an ever-changing joint world of public communication.<sup>28</sup> Speaking on the concept joint world of public communication Gürcan Koçan says:

This notion of the joint world of public communication refers to a reciprocal exchange relation. Interlocutors are dependent on each other's wordings and actions for formation of their utterances, but rather interact spontaneously in response to one another and in reference to the surroundings and momentous occasions, jointly giving rise to an understanding of views, ideas or issues that neither interlocutor had earlier considered. Such openness serves as a starting point for self-transformation or differentiation of the participant from previous positions. The emergent understandings are available as new potentials and new possibilities that fuse different perspectives found in one and the same participant. This is a case of a rise of a mutual understanding or a new understanding that involves a unity of what is said at the beginning and what is not uttered. This means that every understanding in the communication process is not only a response to preceding messages of the given context, but also a prompter of understanding. Participants of public communication are determinant to the extent that they can alter one another's responses from their baseline levels. Each response refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies upon other responses, presupposes them to be known, and somehow considers them. Therefore, each kind of response is filled with various kinds of reaction to other messages as responsive understanding of the given context of the dialogical situation.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the public communication – as a joint venture of the participants of dialogue in the public sphere – operates in relation to the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

intentional world of the addressor, the conceptual world of the addressee, and the interpretation of the immediate social and political situation that concerns the people and the nation at large in the historical *milieu*, moving actively and responsively in understanding what has passed, what is present and what will be in the future.<sup>30</sup> Having clarified the notion of public communication, let us move on to consider the models of public communication in the next section.

*Models of Public Communication.* Based on the way public communication is structured and the way dialogue moves, grows, develops and functions, we can speak of three models of public communication. They are regulative public communication, truth-oriented public communication and storytelling public communication. In this section, we briefly consider each of these models.

*Regulative Public Communication.* Regulative public communication focuses on identities, norms, and relations between those who participate in the dialogue process with the aim of producing shared understanding, common meanings for the description of issues, and mutually acceptable and appropriate responses. In order to arrive at mutually acceptable responses to situations, regulative public communication gives importance to rational argumentation and open questioning of assumptions by participants, equal treatment of the participants in the dialogue process, and freedom of thought and action. Firstly, regulative public communication requires coherent, consistent, and persuasive arguments on the part of its participants. They must make their case in the process of dialogue with logical consistency so that others can clearly grasp their point of view. The aim of the rational argumentation is not merely to assess if the propositions are true or false, but to discuss the propositions critically so as to establish a consensus, for no one can reject a proposal supported by the best arguments. Secondly, all must be considered equal when the dialogue takes place in the public sphere. Equal rights and equal respect for personal dignity of all must be guaranteed. In other words, all participants should have an equal voice in the decision-making process and equal opportunity for the consideration of their interests. Only when all are treated equally and given equal opportunity for expressing their views can we expect everyone to arrive at a consensus on the matter under consideration. Thirdly, there must be genuine freedom for all the participants before, during and after the dialogue process. There should be no coercion, domination, or intimidation of any kind. Participants should be free to accept or reject any proposal. Only in the context of such freedom, any

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 20.



proposal considered valid would meet the condition that all affected parties can freely accept the consequences when the consensus proposal is implemented.<sup>31</sup> Commenting further on this point Gürcan Koçan says:

Regulative [public] communication has a pragmatist notion of discursive justification. This idea refers to the moral and political validation of the plurality of claims and differences among the participants. Regulative [public] communication does not deny our embodied and embedded differences, but aims at developing moral capabilities and dispositions and encouraging transformations that can yield a point of view suitable to all. In regulative dialogue [public communication] difference serves as a starting point for reflection and action, but it must be settled rationally... Persuasion and agreement are necessary conditions for this settlement.<sup>32</sup>

In this manner, regulative public communication can be used to bring together secular and religious elements in the public sphere and facilitate better understanding and consensus on issues that concern the life of the peoples and nations.

*Truth-Oriented Public Communication.* Truth-oriented public communication is based on the Socratic Method. It is a special mode of inquiry that uses question-answer techniques to question the validity of general and commonly held beliefs and thereby bring about a new perspective regarding them. The following description clarifies the Socratic Method:

It is a dialectical method, often involving a discussion in which the defense of one point of view is questioned; one participant may lead another to contradict himself in some way, thus strengthening the inquirer's own point... The Socratic Method searches for general, commonly held truths that shape opinion and scrutinizes them to determine their consistency with other beliefs. The basic form is a series of questions formulated as tests of logic and fact intended to help a person or group discover beliefs about some topic, exploring definitions ... seeking to characterize the general characteristics shared by various particular instances. To the extent, to which this method is employed

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

to bring out definitions implicit in the interlocutor's beliefs or to help them further their understanding, is called the method of *maieutics*.<sup>33</sup>

Following the Socratic Method, the truth-oriented public communication begins with an interlocutor's claim. Once the claim is made by the first interlocutor, the second interlocutor raises other points of view to show that the claim of the first interlocutor is inconsistent and contradictory, to which the first interlocutor makes further counter-claims. Thus, truth-oriented public communication is a method of proposing claims and opposing claims, formulating arguments and putting forward counter-arguments with the intention of discovering truth. Thus, this method, by raising questions and eliciting answers between the interlocutors, draws forth the latent and unformed understanding and thereby facilitates the emergence of new understanding.<sup>34</sup> Truth-oriented public communication using an inductive line of reasoning clarifies moral truths, refutes morally unacceptable beliefs, and supports and promotes right moral principles. However, being inductive in its approach, truth-oriented public communication's proposals and counter-proposals on moral matters will continue until a satisfactory response is found.<sup>35</sup> To quote Gürcan Koçan on this point:

The chief parts of truth-oriented [public] communication are "rational accounts" which examine or justify beliefs or theories. Here justification is characterized as giving a rational account of the belief. Nevertheless, the justification of a certain belief can never be final as it is always conditioned. Paradoxically, the dialogue must remain unsatisfactory (i.e., non-final) in order to remain dialogical (i.e., open). A final universal justification of something is empirically and logically impossible in truth-oriented dialogue [public communication] because when such a justification is made, the basis for having a communication no longer exists. Justification, then, is thought of as something that is always out of the reach of the participants. Nevertheless, at the same time, the participants must presuppose its possibility in order for

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<sup>33</sup> "Socratic Method"; Retrieved from website: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic\\_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gürcan Koçan: "Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy", pp. 24-25.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

public communication to succeed. This suggests that truth should be seen as an ever-receding horizon of public communication.<sup>36</sup>

Since moral principles are vital for maintaining the spirit of the sociopolitical fabric of the nation and people at large, the truth-oriented public communication, despite its limitation of being non-final and open, can be of great help in demonstrating general definitions of moral principles that would guide the people in their lives.

*Celebratory Public Communication.* Celebratory public communication, as the name suggests, is a communication among different groups and individuals in the context of the celebration of a cultural or national festival. Celebration of a festival is an open-ended dialogue among all who participate in the celebration and by its nature is an “interactive life-event”. It promotes a sense of freedom, liberation, and creativity. Celebratory public communication is informal and brings about free and familiar contact among people who are normally separated by social designation because on such common celebrations the sacred meets with the profane, lofty with the low and the wise with the unwise.<sup>37</sup> The folk dances and plays associated with such festivals take up and debate on issues, such as life and death, darkness and light, good and evil, thereby permeate the *pathos* of change and relativity of all things. These art forms challenge the hierarchies and disparities existing in religious, political and moral values, norms and prohibitions. Thus, they bring about the equality of all and cultivate a sense of empathy and understanding among the diversity of the people of a nation. As a result, such celebratory events and the public communication associated with them can prepare people for social, political, and cultural change without creating divisions among them.<sup>38</sup> Besides, the folk art forms communicate indirect discourse that is double-voiced and multi-voiced, and highlights drawbacks and imbalances that exist in the social, political and religious systems. Hence, celebratory public communication revolves around the test and provocation of ideas while it interrogates the validity and acceptability of the ready-made truths as the official voice of the established beliefs

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. M.M. Bakhtin: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1997), p. 132. Cf. also M.M. Bakhtin: *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. M.M. Bakhtin: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 122. Cf. also M.M. Bakhtin: *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 7, 10.

and courses of action. Therefore, celebratory public communication can only be understood when one enters into it as an active listener of each voice not from one's own perspective, but from that of others. Even though these efforts of celebratory public communication does not lead one to any definite conclusions, it liberates the participants from existing viewpoints, conventions, established truths, and from all that is traditional and universally accepted. This, in turn, frees people to develop a new outlook on the existing social, political and religious relations and open them to experience a completely new order of things.<sup>39</sup> Speaking of celebratory public communication Gürcan Koçan points out:

Celebratory [public] communication is guided by freedom from rhetoric and the reasoned mechanized process of action. It refers to a means to an end but also a medium through which participants discover their own meanings, either by contrast or by appropriating the meaning of others. It represents a kind of self-governing practice, a free move in the game whose rules are contingent rather than necessary. It gives voice to the other as it exposes differences and overcomes fears. It is an open-ended, personal and public practice that celebrates other ways of knowing, doing and being, thereby upsetting the *status quo* and promoting a robust and multi-vocalic communication of the independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, celebratory public communication can well be used to bring together, the secular and religious forces of a nation into the public sphere in the context of local as well as national cultural and religious festivities, thereby cultivate a sense of national oneness and bring about the integration diverse groups that are different in their ideologies and practices.

## CONCLUSION

Our consideration on the theme "State, Religion and Public Sphere" clearly has shown that the public sphere is neither the monopoly of the state nor of religion. Neither the state nor religion can claim that

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. M. Bakhtin: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 126. Cf. also M. M. Bakhtin: *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Gürcan Koçan: "Models of Public Sphere in Political Philosophy", p. 27.

the public sphere belongs to it only. It is called “public sphere” because it belongs to the public, and all – whether they have a secular affiliation or religious affiliation – belong to it. Absolute religious exclusivism and extreme religious inclusivism are attempts to monopolize the public sphere by the state and religion respectively. Our analysis of these two forms of approaches to statecraft – the former based on the secularization theory which considers religion as a myth and so should be done away with from the public sphere, while the latter based on the belief that religion has the absolute truth and so, the secular sphere has no relevance – have not succeeded in their task of true nation-building and development of the people. History reveals that both of these approaches to statecraft, when concretely implemented, have not succeeded in bringing about holistic development of the nations and their peoples. Rejection of religion from the public sphere by the secularist approach, while it made great strides in bringing about economic prosperity, scientific inventions, and developments in science and technology, has failed, to a great extent, in building up the moral and spiritual fabric of their nations and peoples. A number of values that held institutions, such as family, community, society, and the like, are done away with, leading to their breakdown. Similarly, the takeover of the public sphere by religion has often led to the stifling of the secular sphere and secular values. Both of these extreme approaches had led to the violation of human rights in one or the other form: under the secularist regime rights of religion has been under threat and, in some cases, there has even been religious persecutions; under religious regimes the rights of minorities and secular forces have been blatantly violated.

Another significant consequence of these two inauthentic approaches is that they perceived the state and religion as opposing institutions that are hostile to each other. There has been a constant effort on the part of the state and religion to push each other out of the public sphere. Under the influence of this confrontational and antagonistic attitude towards each other the state and religion have forgotten that they both share a common role and responsibility in the task of nation-building and development of the people. It is important that both the leaders of the state and of religion recognize and acknowledge this shared responsibility. They must accept that – as institutions with the aim of working for the true welfare of the people – both the state and religion are collaborators and partners. Hence, it is their duty and responsibility to allow a genuine public sphere to emerge. There should be no domination of the public sphere either by the state or by religion. Secular leadership of the nation should encourage the participation of religious institutions and organizations in this collaborative effort and religion should offer its support in implementing

the right governmental policies. There should be no vested interests and hidden agenda on the part of the leadership of the state and of religion. There should be mutual respect for each other's points of view and perspectives, though different and at times contradictory. The leadership of both of these institutions must see to it that the best religious and secular values must combine to make the public sphere a genuine one. This calls for genuine dialogue and interaction at various levels of the state and the religious organizations. Allowing the value-based principles to guide their relationship with each other and using diverse communication models according to different contexts, the leadership of the state and religion must work together along with every other group for the betterment of the nation and its people.

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# **The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy**

## **PURPOSE**

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

## **PROJECTS**

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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