General Part

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Religion beyond Communicative Reason

A Dilemma between Philosophy and Social Theory in Habermas' View of Rationality

Abstract: The development in Habermas' political philosophy towards a greater appreciation of religion in the public sphere is already a much discussed issue. In this article, however, I argue first of all for the sustained significance of his theory of communicative action and its structural implications for a religious discourse in a modern, multicultural society. Habermas' theory is remarkable for its double commitment to social theory and philosophical self-reflection. Thus, it claims to offer a 2nd person perspective of communicative reason for which there is no alternative but discursive particularism. Though the endorsement of rational commitment to engage in a free dialogical discourse stands as a well-argued precondition for a democratic constitution, the theory of communicative action nevertheless seems negligent of some of the problematic ramifications it may have for religious believers. For one thing, the theory tends to trivialize various forms of religion by associating them collectively with the validity criterion of subjective authenticity, thus putting them in a black box of particularism. Moreover, it undermines religious holism by its distinction between form and content, thus enacting a form of discursive power that contradicts its own pretention.

Keywords: Habermas, theory of communicative reason, religion, power, holism, truth claims

1 Introduction

Life in the present day society is a life populated with multicultural orientations. Contrary to what the secularists of the former century predicted, sacred values and religious beliefs are for many people invested with powerful emotions. While this situation can be observed and submitted to analysis through the lens of social

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theories, it requires a philosophical investigation to understand and evaluate the interests invested in the theoretical objectification of religion. There are underlying commitments to truth at stake which no one, on each side of the gap, can be expected to abandon freely. Insofar as a philosophical reflection differs from the scientific interest in objectivity, empirical standards of truth constitute an insufficient frame of reference for philosophy. It goes without saying that social theories have every right to stick to their own objectifying premises and criteria of empirical knowledge. It still leaves room for philosophy, however, to reflect on the kind of cultural activity we engage in when we confront a world of faith with an attitude of pure observation.

Jürgen Habermas stands out among current philosophers as one who eminently tries to combine the 3rd person perspective of social theory with a 2nd person perspective of philosophical reflection. In the following I shall therefore relate his line of thought to various aspects of religious life in a modern world which, in Habermas's own words, is genealogically post-metaphysical, yet sociologically post-secular (2012, 100f.). Habermas developed his ground-breaking reconstruction of modern rationality in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (henceforth TCA), culminating in the work of the same title published in 1981, and although his view on religion has since changed in crucial respects, as has gained the attention of theologians and philosophers of religion alike[1], I shall in this article draw on (and argue for) his unchanging commitment to the basic principles of communicative action. Aiming to counterbalance what I regard to be a frequent exaggeration of his 'converted' appreciation for religion,[2] my focus will not so much be on Habermas' otherwise promising steps towards a genuine philosophy of religion as on the unyielding commitment to post-metaphysical rationality that essentially structures his stance towards a religious discourse. Hence, the ensuing discussion points to limitations of the principles underlying TCA.[3] To be precise, I do not find the counterfactual aspects of Habermas' theory, which make it immune to empirically based objections, criticisable according to the intended reconstruction of universal criteria of validity. What I want to arrest is that it implicitly underestimates its idealistically self-securing character in the process. That being said, TCA remains without a doubt a crucial perspective for social studies in general, and for our self-understanding in a multicultural world in particular.

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1 See especially Langthaler/Nagl-Docekal 2007; Reder/Schmidt 2008; Ollig 2008; Wenzel/ Schmidt 2009; Höhn/Laux/Kühnlein/Reese-Schäfer, in Kühnlein 2010.

2 See, for instance, Trautsch 2004, 180ff.; Striet 2005, 508ff.; Schmidt 2007, 322ff.; and in general Calhoun/Mendieta/VanAntwerpen 2013.

3 When no other publication is mentioned, I refer especially to his two-volume work of 1981 (cf. 1986–87) when speaking of TCA.

Endorsing TCA in the sense of acknowledging that we already find ourselves *in the game*, so to say, the argument I am going to pursue in this article is not that we should change the rules, but rather that their idealization, implying serious ramifications for a religious self-interpretation, adds to the secularizing effects rather than to strengthen the suggested willingness to learn from religion. The principles of communicative action cannot be conceived entirely beyond the implication of power.

2   Religion within the Confines of Post-metaphysical Thinking

According to Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action in its *strong form* (1999, 122–24), modernity means a differentiation between objective and intersubjective criteria of discursive validity (1986, 48ff., 186ff.; 1983, 35ff., 130ff.; reiterated in 2008, 41; 2013, 364).[4] In other words, we are accustomed to distinguish between stating something to be objectively true and stating something to be morally right. A third criterion of subjective authenticity appeals to trustworthiness via a socially convincing coherence between acts and utterances, but contrary to the other forms of validity there is no immediate way of redeeming this appeal by discursive means alone (see especially Habermas 1999, 122ff.). Authenticity constitutes the irreplaceable world of the subject.

Communicative action turns into a *discourse*, when objections are raised against a statement, requiring the speaker to offer supporting arguments. In the ensuing dialogue the partakers will have to respect the better argument and not confuse the three criteria of validity. Although they may appear entangled, as for instance in statements involving aesthetics judgments or religious values, the point is that the criterion of (objective) truth does not follow from the normative or subjective point of view, as neither does the criterion of moral validity follow from the objective or subjective content of the statement. For a statement to gain moral validity, according to the criterion of righteousness, all involved parties must agree to *the reason* for following the implied rule of action. Thus, in an open communicative interaction where everyone is allowed the opportunity to speak freely, the content of belief gains it rational justification from being translated

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4 Habermas is inspired in this respect by Lawrence Kohlberg's theory about the isomorphic relation between logical and moral judgments, Kohlberg 1981, 137f. As for the epistemic criteria of claims to truth, "in science (as already in everyday communication)" they do in principle exceed "and thus is independent of, all contexts" (2013, 364).

into arguments that everyone can agree on. A principle of mutual respect does not, therefore, assume its discursive validity from having its alleged background in the religious demand of neighbourly love, but from a non-coerced consensus among the communicative participants themselves. What anyone *personally* thinks, or believes, constitutes the world of subjectivity. The values and existential attitudes of this world as being, for instance, of a religious orientation, may constitute an inspirational context for the intersubjective dimension of moral discourse, but they carry no rational justification in themselves. The universal justification, which is the implied ideal of a moral discourse, therefore both includes and transcends the horizon of the individual subject. To sum up: What is objectively true and morally right are judged by statements through which individual language users interact socially, either by referring to the physical world or by referring to rules for the coordination of actions among themselves. Religious beliefs, then, reducible neither to objectivity nor to moral universalism, essentially belong to the subjective world-dimension (1986, 85ff.; 1998, 309ff.; 2001a; 2008, 271). As Habermas phrases it in his distinction between faith and knowledge (commenting on Kant's philosophy of religion):

> "This mode of faith resembles the propositional attitudes we adopt towards our own forms of life that we regard as authentic. We live in the certainty of our way of life when we are convinced by its values. But there are different, equally authentic ways of life, so in this respects certainty and truth-validity diverge in an interesting way. No matter how certain we are of such an existential self-understanding, this does not licence us in the least to confuse the underlying value judgments with universalizable moral convictions (or even theoretical statements)." (2008, 239)

In his TCA Habermas explicitly borrows from Weber's thesis of occidental rationalization-processes (1986, 230f., 234) and Durhkeim's elaboration on the phylogenetic transformation of religious values into generalized principles of law and morality (1987, 83). The semantic surplus of revelatory elements are thus left to the comforting role of theology, and accordingly to the meaning horizon of the individual believer. It has to be said, though, that Habermas has since renounced the prognostic implications of TCA. He no longer sees a proportionate relationship between secularization and societal modernization (i.e., a zero-sum game of rationality vs. religious belief), but acknowledges the continued relevance of religion as deep-seated truth-commitments among different groups of citizens in a multi-cultural democratic society. On the one hand, he has begun to reflect, more elaborately, on the necessity of mutual toleration bound to the rational accep-

tance of unresolvable differences in fundamental belief-systems (2008, 251ff.),[5] on the other hand, he has come to acknowledge the possibility for both religious and secular citizens to learn from each other, realizing that the secularized view of reason may suffer from an insufficient understanding of its own religious roots (2008, 211; 2012, 105f.). That being said, Habermas shows no signs of retreating from his insistence on the indispensability of the principles of communicative reason when it comes to criteria of universal validity (2012, 127; 2013, 364f.). Religious truth-claims are a matter of faith, and as such they belong to subjective criteria of an existential perspective, whereas *truth*, in its discursively redeemable sense, implies the empirical criteria of *knowledge*, that is, of scientific objectivity.[6] Consequently, religious claims to truth belong to a semantic level below—or subsumed under—the structuring principles of TCA.[7]

It is important, therefore, not to conflate Habermas' sociological sensibility towards the level of a religious self-understanding with his philosophical pledge to communicative rationality. Thus, with regard to the possibility of coming to a rational agreement (on some concrete issue), a common language is needed which does not separate the religious believer irredeemably from the non-religious one (2005, 36; 2012, 155). Although it serves the democratic integration of a multicultural society that all of its citizens are willing to engage in an open unprejudiced dialogue with each other, the only way to avoid cultural particularism is the procedural option of reaching a rational agreement (*Verständigung*) by means of arguments in dialogue. Consequently, there is only room for the untranslatable part of religious faith in the subjective world. Be it that sacred values may comprise a group of individuals and a whole nation, in the form of tradition; this does

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5 Habermas' understanding of a *weak form* of communicative rationality that merely applies to agreement concerning epistemic truth conditions and authenticity (i.e., truthfulness) may thus apply to the rational conditions of tolerance, whereas the *strong form*, with which I am concerned in this article, also pertains to the validity criteria of coming to an intersubjective agreement about universal questions of morality (cf. 1999, 122ff.).

6 2008, 310, cf. ibid. 84–86. Likewise, in an interview with Eduardo Mendieta, Habermas avers that "even if thinking about the postsecular situation should result in an altered attitude toward religion, this revisionism may not change the fact that postmetaphysical thinking is a secular thinking that insists on distinguishing faith and knowledge as two essentially different modes of taking-to-be-true" (2012, 103), translated by Matthias Fritsch at http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/02/03/a-postsecular-world-society/.

7 Hence, in his reflections on religion in the public sphere, he holds that "[t]he truth content of religious contributions can enter into the institutionalized practice of deliberation and decision-making *only when the necessary translation already occurs* in the pre-parliamentarian domain, i.e. in the political public sphere itself", 2008, 131. Italics are mine.

still not change the fact that intersubjective agreement is post-traditional in its underlying argumentative structure. Tradition can no longer *dictate* anything!

In a sociological perspective things look differently. Thus, in his latest works Habermas has acknowledged that his former thesis of secularization, i.e., that religion will lose importance in a modern world, has outlived itself (2001a; 2008, 1ff.; 2005, 31ff.; 2012, 96ff.). In sociological terms, we live in a post-secular age, which, among other things, brings the old traditions of Christianity and Islam on a refueled collision-course. It is therefore of utmost importance, he claims, that we recognize the presence of religious values in the public sphere and that religious citizens are allowed to present their beliefs in an open and unprejudiced dialogue (2001a; 2008, 114ff.). As things stand, however, the differentiation between faith and reason, which has been an indispensable factor in the development of a demystified world-view, seems to have degenerated into an unsound opposition between fundamentalism and naturalism (2008, 1f.). Thus, orthodox believers tend to withdraw themselves into a position of discursive seclusion instead of engaging themselves in a reinterpretation of tradition that brings its semantic potential in touch with the conditions of a modern society. Contrarily, adherents of a professed atheistic, naturalized world-view, tend to trivialize the existential dimension of human life by the uncritical commitment to an objectifying, instrumental rationality. The 'view from nowhere', which characterizes a hard-core scientific objectivism, is nothing but an unreflective relocation of God's point of view, as Habermas remarks (2012, 103). Thus, instead of reifying reason and religious faith as each other's enemies in a modern world, we should remind ourselves of their shared roots in the past (2008, 6).

Hence, in his reconstruction of modern reason, Habermas acknowledges a religious debt, pertaining to faith and transcendence (2007, 28; 2012, 120ff.). Yet, the extramundane source of faith has transformed into the mere anticipation of communicative agreement, and the only level of transcendence that has sustained itself is 'a transcendence from within' (*Transzendenz von innen*, op. cit. 141).[8] In other words, the ultimate commitment relates solely to the absolute binding power of the better argument as presented in open dialogue, the resources of which is intrinsic to the use of language (2002b, 91; 2008, 25; Andersen 2008, 64ff., 130ff.). Although participants in a public discourse may draw on different background orientations, the formality of procedural reason will provide them with the means for moving from the level of (particular) values to the level of (universal) norms, that is, from judgments according to ethical preferences or

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[8] Haberms has returned repeatedly to this concept as in 1998, 17ff.; 1991, 127–156; 1997, 106; 2002a, 25; 2002b, 91; 2005, 252; 2008, 25f.

religious truth-commitments to judgments of universal right. The only way to secure a freedom of religion, for instance, is to accept the limits set for one's own beliefs. Although the world-view of the discursive participants may be *dependent* on the social and historico-cultural context, it is not *bound* to it. The possibility of free dialogue, entailing the willingness to accept the better argument, transcends the cultural outlook from within.

In this respect, Habermas adopts the Hegelian distinction between morality (*Moralität*) and ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), which he aligns with the constitutional priority of intersubjective judgments, reflected by law, over against subjective preferences, reflected by cultural values (1983, 55, 118; 1998, 309ff.; 2008, 130).[9] Rather than ignoring questions about the 'good life', he merely emphasizes the importance of excluding their particularistic aspects from an intersubjective discourse about morality and legality, which aims at norms that each of the involved parties can agree to. Consequently, religion *is* a subjective matter in the sense that it entails aspects of existential importance that can never be exhausted by arguments of intersubjective, that is, normative, validity. Religious values cannot *qua* being religious (that is, revealed or otherwise divinely ordained) claim the status of moral standards (shared by all members of a society) unless they are translated onto the level of intersubjective norms (2008, 130). On the one hand, Habermas does not presume that rational premises of righteousness can fulfil the quest for a meaningful life, on the other hand, no *values* can substitute the need for a formal discourse-practice concerning questions of universal morality (2007, 26ff.).

In order to reach a closer understanding of the implications this discourse-theory will have for religious citizens, we will, first of all, have to distinguish between different forms of religion, or religious attitudes, in a modern society.

3 Three Types of Religion

What is normally understood as religion (a strict definition of religion shall not occupy me here, cf. Albinus 2016, 28ff.) takes various forms in a modern, multicultural society. In the Western societies, the process of secularization, owing its lasting impact to the period of Enlightenment, has basically turned religious ad-

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9 Habermas' strict distinction between ethics and morality has met some objections worth taking into account; see, for instance, Micha Brumlik who finds it hard to think of a moral principle that does not already include a culturally specific, i.e., ethical, point of view, 1986, 265. I find Habermas' own *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur* (2002) to exemplify Brumlik's point, but I cannot go further into this in the context of the present article.

herence into a private affair. Religious congregations are not only bound formally by the law of secular state constitutions but also influenced semantically by the underlying view of civic life. Religion, therefore, no longer constitutes a perspective in which everything makes sense in the political, social and private life. I do not imply that there ever was unanimity among believers, but merely that religion was once a life-orientation in which every aspect of life *might* find its determination. In the wake of David Hume's concept of 'natural religion', things were beginning to change, at least in philosophy. 'Religion' became a matter that could be separated from other matters in the sphere of human life. To speak in rough terms, the human subject was no longer seen from the point of view of religion, but religion was seen from the point of view of the human subject. Faith drew its power from personal conviction, idealism, and social interaction, rather than from dogmatic authority. The loss of clerical authority—most prominent, however, in a Protestant tradition—led to a fragmentation of belief-systems and, in recent history, to various orthodox reactions towards this plurality. Thus, we find religious reformations, within Christianity as well as within Islam, which reach back to a stricter, more verbatim understanding of tradition. This form of religious attitude, we can call *fundamentalism* (1).

On the other hand, the process of globalization, which is also reflected in the religious world-traditions, has led to the shared prospect of finding a common kernel of religious truth and ethical values in a cross-cultural perspective. Although the ensuing institutionalization of *Interfaith Dialogue* (2) is largely an academic venture, it seems reasonable in a sociological perspective to speak of it as also a certain religious attitude.[10]

Furthermore, we also find in various theologies a continual reinterpretation of *one's own* tradition which is in keeping with the changes of society and part of the evolving world-view rather than reacting with hostility against it, and this type of religious attitude we could call *critical theology* (3).

Another form of religion which may, or may not, involve these different theological outlooks is the lived kind of beliefs through which religion is simply integrated in the rules of daily practice. For lack of a better world, one might chose to call this type *folk religion* (or a folk-religious attitude) (4).

Finally, the development of a highly individualized culture comes with a price. For many the freedom of opportunities undermines the attraction of tradition while opening other roads to spirituality; a society with prospects and demands that follow economical rules without any greater concerns than profit and economic growth, unanswered questions about the meaning of life fertilize

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10 The literature on the subject is massive, cf., for instance, Doi 1976; Arai 1989; Race 2001.

the ground for a plurality of religious movements that appeal to the individual need for *believing* in something. We therefore see a plethora of such movements which pull members into their fold with the promise of expanded consciousness, ultimate values and a social belonging. Perhaps, we could subsume these individually chosen forms of devotion under the label of *subjective religion* (or a subjective religious attitude) (5).

Whereas the first three forms of religious attitudes are based on history and theological self-reflection, it is tradition rather than theological concerns which is constitutive of the fourth. The fifth form may adorn itself with systems of thought and historical references, but are based more firmly on the market of psychological needs than on tradition. Critical theology, on the other hand, is consciously including current needs and orientations in its perspective without basing this perspective on them. The same may or may not be the case in interfaith dialogue. For the fundamentalist, revealed prescriptions make the unalterable rule of life in light of which current needs and habits are to be viewed; religion comes first, the individual comes second.

It goes without saying that I am speaking in rough sociological terms, here, suggesting a sort of 'ideal types' that serve to present an overview rather than referring to clear-cut divisions. The point of the matter is to review Habermas' TCA in light of religious orientations which may meet the option of open dialogue, and the anticipation of validity criteria it implies, with very different expectations.

4 Religion between Philosophy and Sociology

Before entering the specific problematics of a religious point of view in a multicultural society, where a democratic constitution secures the possibility of communicative action (in the above sense), we must take note of a distinction between science and philosophy that is crucial to Habermas himself. Criticizing a tendency in modern philosophy to align philosophy with science, Habermas warns against the resulting loss of self-reflection (2012, 103). As a branch of the empirical sciences, social theory may legitimately approach its subject matter from a 3rd person perspective. However, the premises for investigating social phenomena are themselves part of a social matrix, which means that a reflective self-assessment is also required. Habermas acknowledges that philosophy has abandoned its transcendental role of determining the criteria of scientific investigation. Yet, it should not give up its role as stand-in (*Platzhalter*) and interpreter (*Interpret*) of the very institution of science (1983, 9ff.). If the instrumental rationality that informs a theoretical and empirical investigation is allowed to stand alone, it entails a deficit in com-

municative rationality (1983, 29ff.). Thus, approaching the linguistic dimension of social life[11] from a 2nd person perspective, philosophy, as Habermas understands it, stands as a guardian of argumentative rationality in its de-transcendentalized, communicative, and differentiated sense (1996, 314).

As a 2nd person perspective TCA is, therefore, more than just a theory. It is the reconstruction of rules claimed to be anticipated by members of a secular state, and it is therefore also an appeal, or a reminder, to citizens of various beliefs. The address gains its apparent force from a distinction between the sociological view of a post-secular society and the philosophical explication of communicative rules that have come to (and *must* continue to) underlie cultural preferences (in a shared life-world), in order to secure a freedom of religion as well as keeping tradition from petrifying into particularism. Inasmuch as the conditions of rational dialogue are purely formal, everyone is expected to engage, on an equal footing, in a discourse about moral norms. Thus, even though Habermas admits the freedom of presenting religious points of view in a public debate without the restricting demand of translatability, such opinions do not, and cannot be allowed to, constitute the very discourse they enter. Ultimately, matters of belief, or sacred values, only gain the force of intersubjective validity by being translatable into universal norms. The inflexible part of a religious truth-commitment remains valid only on the level of the subjective world-dimension. The authority that comes from a transcendent source of legitimation is incompatible with the intrinsic authority of procedural argumentation. Communicative rationality is, therefore, the bedrock of post-traditional discourse.

It seems obvious that although Western societies can, in certain respects, be seen as post-secular, they are also post-traditional in the sense that the constitution of state is politically and morally independent of religious congregations. Yet, the question is how the religious citizen fits into this picture? First of all, the formality of discourse, which is not only a condition of possibility for communicative reason but also its claim to equality, presupposes the possibility of distinguishing between form and content (and thus implicitly presumes this distinction to be unproblematic). For religious citizens of the fundamentalist orientation, this is obviously unacceptable. Yet, in this case, one may simply acknowledge the inability of orthodox discourse to assume an intersubjective status surpassing that of a particularistic discourse (*Sonderdiskurs* in Habermas' terminology). Although there is a place for such discourse under the constitutional assured freedom of religion,

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11 Habermas here adopts Edmund Husserl's concept of *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld) conceived through the sociological perspective of Alfred Schütz, cf. Habermas 1986, 70. He thus states that we always already find ourselves as historical and social beings in a linguistically structured lifeworld, 2002a, 25.

people of this conviction cannot lay any rational claim to the agreement of others (cf. Habermas 2012, 99).

Turning to citizens engaged in Interfaith Dialogue, it is not immediately clear why they should be interested in translating the religious principles of their faith into non-religious arguments. Instead, they may occupy themselves with the possibility of assessing similarities and differences with the prospect of coming to agreement on shared truths and values. In the perspective of communicative rationality, however, this may only mean that the realm of subjectivity, i.e., of cultural preferences, is expanded to include ever more subjects. Yet, it does not, for that matter, reach the level of universal justification which by necessity transcends a *religious* justification of the valued perspective. The greater the agreement is between faiths, the greater is the likelihood that they correspond with moral rules (gained through communicative justification alone), but this is a coincidence which is quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. Thus, Interfaith Dialogue may appear willing to enter an open and free dialogue, but the premise of consensus is a commitment to *faith before reason* (a *credo ut intelligam* as in the Augustine tradition). Therefore, Interfaith Dialogue is also, in view of TCA, a particularistic discourse.

A different picture shows when it comes to critical theology (as I use the term for the sake of the present argument). Strands of traditional self-interpretation in a Protestant as well as in a Catholic context have to a certain extent embraced Habermas' view of modernity and communicative reason (cf., for instance, Glebe-Møller 1987; Metz 1989; Peukert 1989).[12] However, speaking from the point of view of a Catholic fundamental theology (*Fundamentaltheologie*) Metz and Peukert have pointed out that TCA ends in an *aporia* if it remains within its own post-traditional perspective. Drawing on the solidarity and equality between partakers in an open discourse, TCA assumes a responsibility for those victims of history who have paid the price for paving the way towards modernity, and the only way TCA can redeem this responsibility (or guilt as Peukert conceives of it) is by faith in a divine power as its own ultimate source and, therefore, as its historically transcending justification (1978, 304ff.; Metz 1989, 733f.). Habermas holds against this theological concept of 'anamnetic solidarity' that it springs from a metaphysical intuition the abandonment of which is the very condition of possibility for the development of communicative reason. To have this kind of reason retreat behind its own back, as it were, would be the same as giving up the very principle of world-differentiation that constitutes it (1984, 515; 1997, 105ff.).

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12 For more recent debates on this matter, see Arens 1999; Düringer 1999, 225–254; Langthaler/Nagl-Docekal 2007.

The Protestant adaption of Habermas' theory of modernity, in the guise of Glebe-Møller's 'political dogmatic', acknowledges the impossibility of giving any final reason (*Letztbegründung*) for the adoption of communicative reason, yet finds it in harmony with the Christian concept of neighbourly love.[13] The preparedness to engage in a continuous and critical appropriation of one's own tradition, which characterizes Glebe-Møller's position, is obviously in harmony with Habermas' view on the necessary conditions of survival for a religious tradition that wishes to avoid its own isolation in particularistic discourse. Yet, at the same time, Habermas wonders what power of appeal a political dogmatism might have among actual believers? (1991, 139) What Habermas seems to suspect, therefore, is that the ritual dimension of religion, that is, its aesthetic and bodily aspects, as well the personal dimension of belief in a supernatural being (which, in discursive terms, amounts to the uncritical force of unassailable authority), are indispensable components (2002b, 75; 2012, 78; 104). However, in an unreserved appropriation of communicative theory these components are rendered more or less superfluous. What remains is a translation of neighbourly love to intersubjective solidarity and discursive equality (2001b, 174f.; 2002b, 149), which begs the question why the reference to revelation is necessary in the first place. That being said, Habermas acknowledges a shared intuition between religion and post-metaphysical philosophy, which springs from the Lurianic Kabbalism and the Boehmian pietism. In this respect, the basic idea is that God's self-retreat (*Selbstkontraktion Gottes*) has left human beings to realize the principle of love and justice among themselves.[14] Yet, the premises are formulated in the language of philosophy, not in the language of religious tradition. Post-metaphysical philosophy can thus acknowledge its consonance with a religious tradition only inasmuch as it has separated itself from it and grown able to reach its own conclusions. That a religious discourse may support an *intersubjective* commitment established through rational agreement, does not make religion a matter of normativity on the level of intersubjective righteousness, but merely isolates the part of religion that is in (translatable) harmony with communicative reason (see, for instance, 2008, 131). What secular citizens might otherwise learn from religious citizens can only belong to the sphere of subjectivity.

Although Habermas condones the efforts of post-metaphysical self-reflection in critical theology (which may, of course, take many other forms than the examples dealt with here), he doubts that this theology is likely to survive as a *religious*

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13 Habermas has uttered a similar view in an interview, cf. 2001b, 174f.; likewise Düringer 1999, 22.
14 Habermas has returned to the significance of this tradition on his own thinking several times, cf. 1971a, 246f.; 1985, 378; 1997, 73–83; also Düringer 1999, 208.

tradition on that account. What makes theology *theology* in the proper sense of the term, and therefore a religious discourse, is that it reflects a semantic tradition of revealed truth. There is, in other words, an indispensable core of particularism in a tradition such as Christianity, which means that only *some* of the elements can be brought to fruition in non-coerced dialogue. The totality, or the very frame, of evangelical discourse, however, transcends the confines of dialogical agreement.

When it comes to religion as a practice (as in 'folk religion'), the anticipations of a communicative action could supposedly be a stumbling-block in certain respects, but generally the carrying out of religious duties, and the beliefs that might or might not accompany them, should be expected to follow the overall differentiation of civic life. As citizens are already accustomed to differentiate between certain roles in family, in school, at work, and so on, religious customs (as pertaining, for instance, to ritual practice in a church, a synagogue, a mosque, or a Hindu temple), may be regarded as pertaining to one obligation among others in the multifaceted orientation of a modern society. Without downplaying the possibility of a deep-felt religious world-view, that is, the existential side of religious life, it is a fair sociological expectation, I would say, that citizens can be religious in certain respects without buying into the whole complex of sanctified doctrine. Many people go to church, or live by alimentary rules prescribed by their tradition, without letting this practice interfere with criteria of reasoned argumentation when it comes to engaging in political, existential, or moral, questions. In Denmark, where I live, this relaxed attitude towards one's religious tradition is quite widespread. But then Habermas' square distinction between 'religious' and 'secular citizens' becomes question-begging (see also Schmidt 2007, 337, in this respect). Although these terms may, of course, be regarded as ideal types, they still seem to betray a view of religion that is unjustifiably compartmentalized (again in sociological terms). Citizens that observe certain religious obligations and believe in certain ultimate values *need* not be in conflict with communicative reason with regard to matters of intersubjective significance.[15]

If we regard the kind of religion I have termed 'subjective religion', it immediately fits the category Habermas have in store for religion as such (when it comes to criteria of validity), but then it also becomes apparent that we face a potential trivialization of the other forms of religion. These may differ from the new religious movements—and other subjectively based affiliations—in terms of historical back-

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15 The expectation, or possibility, of such self-limitation among religious believers constitutes an important premise, for instance, for the way in which John Rawls developed a 'wide view' of a multicultural democratic society in which an 'overlapping consensus' among 'reasonable comprehensive doctrines' is regarded as a precondition for 'a political reason', 2002, 131ff.; cf. also his reply to Habermas (Rawls 1996, 385ff.).

ground and deep-seated identity-building, but in terms of communicative reason they belong to the same catch-all phrase of subjectivity, comprising the third discursive world. The question is whether it suffices to differentiate between various religious attitudes (according to the five forms I have listed for the sake of argument) in sociological and historical terms, or whether it also demands a closer inspection in terms of philosophy?

5 Form and Content in Religion

One might ask, first of all, if it is philosophically fruitful to reduce the intersubjective horizon of religious tradition, on the one hand, and subjective faith, on the other, to the same level of *rational* commitment? Even if one might agree that religious values and truth-commitments gain their real authenticity through the way of life of each individual, it is not subjectivity as such, i.e., individual needs and interests, that encapsulates a historical tradition. It is the historical tradition that frames the world of the individual—by 'collective representations' to use Émile Durkheim's term. It is one thing, therefore, to acknowledge that we live in a post-traditional world with respect to the possibility of reaching a universal consensus in political and other normative matters; it is quite another to regard the semantic universe of a religious tradition as being pre-rational on an intersubjective level. Apparently, Habermas does refrain from committing this category mistake in recent works and interviews insofar as he acknowledges the historical connection between faith and reason as well as the insufficiency of a purely secularistic self-interpretation. Yet, let me repeat: Inasmuch as the discursive structure of differentiation (between objective, normative, and subjective criteria of validity), which genealogically separates modern discursivity from a tradition-bound one, does not allow for religious points of view to be normatively valid unless they give up their transcendent source of legitimation,[16] Habermas effectively condemns the core of religious belief to the world of subjective validity (2008, 130, 309f.).

It is probably uncontroversial to claim that religion gains its primary collective force from other emotional and intellectual sources than communicative reason

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16 In a recent *Essay on faith and knowledge* (not dated) he even phrases this point of view in a directly normative sense: "All parties to [an intercultural dialogue], irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, *must* be ready to consider controversial issues simultaneously from their own perspective and from that of each of the other participants; in addition, even in the case of questions of justice, they *must* be prepared to use only those arguments that could convince anyone in principle irrespective of their underlying metaphysical or religious commitments" (28), (italics are mine).

in Habermas' sense, and that it is not the better argument in dialogue that makes anyone religious. However, the continued reinterpretation of religious tradition (though taking place to a far lesser degree in fundamentalism), is inevitably challenged to integrate new discursive elements, with respect to form as well as content. Although sacred values and religious truth-commitments express a relative resistance towards the contingency of the world (and although the reason for this resistance ultimately—or in discursive terms at least—stems from the unwavering pillar of transcendent authority), religious language cannot avoid being affected by the ongoing change in the semantics of ordinary language (through the social nature of communication). It is on this ground that Habermas can soundly expect semantic elements of a religious discourse to translate into a common meaning-horizon, that is, a language shared by all citizens. But, as he also realizes, other elements expressed by verbatim truth-claims remain particularistic. Although he has come to think that we must reckon with the "enduring vitality of religion in a progressively secularizing environment", he also, and persistently, asserts that "everyone is permitted to realize her own ethos only within the limits required by equal ethical liberties for all" (2008, 308). This principle of equality, however, cannot be gathered from religious truth claims as such (309; cf. also 272).[17] A religious fundamentalist may even regard communicative egalitarianism as a fatal attempt of man to place himself in God's position.

Adherents of Interfaith Dialogue may argue along similar lines and claim, for instance, that various world-religions have ethical values in common that are not patented by a post-metaphysical communicative reason. One might be inclined to argue, therefore, that this form of rationality has developed in a continuum of social interactions and historical experience, including religious interpretations of human existence in the world, which makes it unfair to throw the baby out with the bathwater just because a post-traditional use of arguments finds itself liberated from the discursive power of revealed truth. Although Habermas acknowledges the religious roots of communicative reason, it is difficult to see this acknowledgement as anything but a polite, yet gratuitous, gesture insofar as the 'truth' of the physical and social world has been transformed into universal validity criteria of empirical truth and moral righteousness. Filtered through the medium of communicative reason, the living power of religious tradition becomes divided between components translatable on an intersubjective level and com-

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17 "As soon as the idea of the correct life takes its orientation from religious paths to salvation or metaphysical conceptions of the good, a divine perspective (or a 'view from nowhere') comes into play from which (or from where) other ways of life appear not just different but *mistaken*." (2008, 309) It is worth noting that he also sees a hard-core naturalism as guilty of a similar aspect-blindness, as mentioned above.

ponents valid only as cultural preferences. My point is that the latter are exactly those that separate religion from other belief systems and ethical values. In fact, Habermas himself seems to agree (cf. Habermas 2008, 129, 309). By thus dissolving the integrating, holistic power of religious discourse, communicative reason enacts its own form of power. At the same time, it renounces power in the name of discursive equality or rather it seems to exchange power in the sociological sense with the logical power of argumentative discourse. The validity of this power is of a philosophical, or rationally binding, nature, and can, therefore, in principle appear counterfactual without a sociological contradiction. Yet, Habermas also refers to the actual effect that discursive reason, including argumentative power, has in daily praxis concerning the post-traditional coordination of actions. The philosophical and sociological levels of reference are not always unambiguously discriminated in TCA,[18] and I venture to think that this double perspective may, to some extent, be responsible for the occasionally misguided appraisal of Habermas' recent 'openness' towards religion.

The conflict between empirical *realis* and pragmatic *idealis* is not a trivial one. TCA's idealizing distinction between discursive *form* and *content*, as a premise for uncoerced dialogical argumentation, does in actual fact predetermine matters of semantic content inasmuch as the two, form and content, may not be easily divided in a religious world-view. Let is suffice here with one example. In a revelatory discourse, where a divine voice, perhaps through the mediation of a prophet, authorizes the obliging legitimacy of the revealed content, the form is obviously intimately connected with the content. The discourse does not refer back to God as the ultimate source of truth in pragmatic terms alone, but also narrates about this God, thus making the pragmatic power of discourse an indispensable part of its semantic horizon. It may actually be one of the crucial characteristics of religious discourse that the one dimension intrinsically implies the other. When a vicar baptizes a child, he may be seen as speaking on behalf of God, yet he also speaks *about* the kingdom of God as the frame of reference for the ritual practice, and he wouldn't be able to claim his priestly authority without this reference. TCA may escape this apparent quandary by referring to the performative character of such speech acts, thus placing them amongst aesthetic utterances and, accordingly, in the world of subjective validity criteria.[19] But, apart from the oddity of speaking about liturgy in terms of subjective authenticity (even on behalf of the congregational 'group-subject'), liturgical acts are one thing, the continuity between this

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18 In fact, Habermas himself points out that philosophy and sociology will have to inform one another, see, for instance, 1971b; 1986, 102ff.

19 This would be the so-called 'constructive' view of philosopher of religion Anders Jeffner (1972, 95ff.).

frame of reference and the meaning-potential of religious values and truth-claims in general, implying various moral obligations, is quit another and should not be dismissed. The intimate relationship between form and content in a religious discourse, ranging from fundamentalism to critical theology, is indubitably a potential obstacle to communicative reason and makes TCA a potential enemy for the religious believer. Even the most critically minded of theologians, for instance, may renounce anything but the last reference to *something* transcending intersubjective discourse (cf. Habermas 2008, 129). In a theological perspective, pure *formality* cannot stand alone. The question is whether even *rationality* can be reduced to a formal frame of discourse? One of Aristotle's surviving claims about ethical rationality, *phronēsis*, is that it differs from the formality of logical reason, *nous*, by way of concrete life-experience.

Another problem which is arguably related to the issue of form and content is the question of truth. In TCA, 'truth' is defined as empirical or scientific truth, that is, the predicated validity of statements referring to objective reality. Any other sense of truth, from aesthetic judgments to religious beliefs, will therefore be metaphorical in kind. Thus, when Habermas takes notice of religious truth-claims in his later dealings with religion in the public sphere (as, for instance, 2008, 131, 309), it does not imply a departure from the philosophical, and genealogical, reconstruction of the dialogical validity criteria of truth, but rather displays a sociological level of analysis. On the surface, it may seem confusing that he acknowledges the possibility for 'secular citizens' to learn from these religious claims to truth. This uncensored attitude, however, pertains solely to the existential dimension of faith and morality. It does certainly not imply any possible undermining of a scientifically corroborated world-view (2008, 137). The way Habermas refers to religious truth in his later writings, therefore, does not express a deviation from TCA, but merely discloses his retreat from the secularization thesis that originally accompanied it.[20]

That being said, TCA's notion of truth as a communicative validity criterion (pertaining to objective reality) was never meant as a denunciation of aesthetic values, existential life choices, or personal convictions. Nevertheless, the implicit distinction between a sociological inclusion of concrete truth-claims and a philosophical stipulation of truth as such[21] runs the risk of creating an ideal of validity rather than reconstructing anticipations concerning the actual procedures of truth-predication in the real lifeworld. The way I see it, TCA's normative spec-

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20 For a similar point of view, see Danz 2007, 13f.

21 In his prominent work *Betweens Facts and Norms* (*Faktizität und Geltung*), Habermas undertakes a similar distinction between positive law (as *Geltung*) and the discursive justification (*Rechtfertigung*) of law, 1998, 17ff.

ification of truth as consensual, empirical verifiability lifts itself, idealistically, above this impure matrix. To *make* 'truth' a predicate of propositions which refer to the world according to empirical premises implies a barely hidden appraisal of the higher value of a scientific world-view. When religious 'truth-claims' are regarded purely as a matter of subjective authenticity (on the level of cultural preferences) they stand to be evaluated accordingly (cf. Habermas 2008, 130). Even if the 'subjective world' is conceived, again in sociological terms, to encompass a community of believers, a religious world-view cannot rationally substitute the universality of intersubjective criteria for an open and critical dialogue. Religious truth becomes divided between rationally justifiable (and translatable) elements of morality, and mythical or metaphysical elements only to be taken seriously in an aestheticized form. The question is, however, whether one is entitled to simply dismiss the probable objection from religious quarters that religious truth is severely banalised in the process?

To say of a revelatory truth such as the evangelical utterance 'I am the way the life and the truth' (John 14.6) that its rational significance lies either in a moral message or in an aesthetic view of human existence may seem trivializing. Instead, one might in this specific case be inclined to reject the relevance of a rationality-criterion. But then the meaning or significance of the sentence seems to elude the perspective of TCA. And insofar as TCA represents a sort of an anticipated ground-rule for the gradual rationalization of the life-world, religious truth-claims thereby face an invading force of an intrinsically hostile rationality-commitment.

From the point of view of TCA, one may respond that such is the prize for the development of modernity and that we would not sincerely want to give up rational, communicative freedom for the values of the 'old world'. Habermas readily admits the relative defeatism of modern reason in respect of the existential dimensions of life, but still refers to the gain of personal freedom and the greater variety of choices that is a result of the modern life-world (2007, 29ff.). The values of life do not follow from moral obligations according to communicative judgments of righteousness, but from choices *made by* socialized individuals, and *made possible by* the implementation of a rational world-differentiation (2008, 271f.). I mostly agree with this, though to make religion a choice of the individual clearly conflicts with the religious frame of belief where the perspective is the exact reverse: humans are chosen by God not *vice versa*. Of course, it may be possible, especially for critical theology, to make a pragmatic distinction between the level of existential faith (where God is the chooser) and political freedom (where each individual citizen is the chooser), but the prize for doing so might nevertheless be the renunciation of tradition understood as an unnegotiable given. The individual is left on the blazing field of unbounded social life.

However, what I want to point out, first of all, does not concern a matter of wanting to return, or *reasons* for returning to premodern forms of life (desperate, and politically infiltrated, attempts to do this in the current world may stand as a sufficient warning). My basic point is rather that TCA is more limited in its pretention to be a 2nd person perspective than acknowledged by itself and that power creeps into it in ways that even contradict its own explicit denunciation of it.

6 The Power of Discourse

TCA stands out forcefully as a reconstruction of the development of communicative action, contravening the historical authority of sacred norms. In that respect it is liberating; a voice against power. The anticipation of an argumentative differentiation underlying the modern conditions of communicative rationality in relation to official, institutional engagements is integral to a democratic constitution and secured by *the power* of the law.[22] However, by way of a gradual life-world rationalization, which is another matter, TCA expects believers—in a modern, multicultural society—to (become able to) translate, or reinterpret, values and truthconditions in a language open to the separation of form and content. That Habermas, in the current perspective of things, exempts religious citizens from this expectation in the immediate public debate does not mean that he is willing to bend the principles of TCA on that account. Furthermore, 'truth' in its universally defendable sense is—as a matter of principle—a predicate of verifiable sentences and only in a metaphorical—or in a sociologically descriptive—sense, does it pertain to an existential totality *sub specie aeternitatis*. As a consequence, religious discourse participants are ensnared into undermining exactly that kind of holism which may be indispensable to the very power of *their tradition*, its *collective* attraction. Indebted to the spirit of Protestant humility, as it seems, TCA merely expresses the weak power of the word, the apparently innocent force of the naked argument. Yet, it is a *logos* through which one no longer hears the voice of God, but solely the voice of language users engaged in exchanging their own views. However, when religion in its authentic and untranslated form retains its discursive

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22 Thus the 'strict demand' of a secular translation of religious viewpoint "can only be made of politicians operating within state institutions who have a duty to remain neutral among competing worldviews, in other words, of all those who hold a public office or are candidates for such" (2008, 128). Conversely, religious citizens "may express themselves in a religious idiom only on the condition that they recognize the institutional translation proviso" (130; likewise 2012, 112, 155).

validity only in the world of subjectivity, that is, as personal belief and individual identity-building (which is the unavoidable consequence of TCA), something seems to be lost in the process. As Hans Joas has remarked, for instance, it seems unclear how the "sensitization to the suffering of others", which is the essence of the Christian ethos of love, should follow from "rational argument" (2014, 129) alone. Habermas would seem to agree, but still places the religious source of motivation outside the perspectival frame of discursive argumentation that forms the backbone of modern philosophy.

The criterion of authenticity belonging to the world of subjectivity may be germane to the life-world rationality of individual attitudes, but not necessarily to the collective interest invested through generations in the tradition of religious beliefs and values. Speaking from the point of view of rationality, one might even say that religious doctrines could be a way of expressing the 'rationality' of rationality's self-limitation, the hard-learned truth of the need to set limits for human freedom. However, my point is *not* to endorse such a view, but rather to make visible the element of power which accompanies the allegedly powerless invitation to rational discourse and its claim to monopolize reason.

Lending word to John Rawls, he refers to the dilemma between 'transcendent values' and 'reasonable political values' which, for religious people, may mean that the former are "higher, or superior to" the latter which 'merely' concern earthly matters (2002, 173). Yet, religious people may reasonably agree to the let 'a political reason' override these other values in matters that have to do with 'constitutional essentials' bearing on civic life. Still, there is no guarantee, Rawls admits, that the religious doctrines will prosper under such conditions. They may even decline, and what can justify this, he asks?

> "Here the answer lies in the religious and nonreligious doctrine's understanding and accepting that, except by endorsing a reasonable constitutional democracy, there is no other way fairly to ensure the liberty of its adherents consistent with the equal liberties of other reasonable free and equal citizens. In endorsing a constitutional democratic regime, a religious doctrine may say that such are the limits God sets to our liberty." (2002, 151)

It might be a fair guess that people in a Protestant tradition are more inclined to accept such a view than people adhering to other traditions such as Islam and Buddhism. The implication of power cannot easily be dismissed.

7 Conclusion

The relationship between philosophy and social theory with regard to the under-standing of sacred values and religious beliefs in a multicultural society is indeed a complex one. So much is at stake that no single approach might be able to fully justify itself. Jürgen Habermas makes a prominent thinker in that regard, however, relating sociological theories of modernity to a philosophical reconstruction of normative commitments, thus intending to establish a balance between a 3rd person and a 2nd person perspective. Where other political thinkers such as Michael Waltzer, Jeffrey Stout, Charles Taylor, John Rawls, Robert Audi, Richard Rorty, to name but a few, are occupied with similar questions, Habermas stands out by insisting on a holistic concept of rationality, divided between three epistemic worlds and reflecting the different spheres of life. This reconstruction of actual communicative anticipations, intended to end all metaphysics, makes TCA a compelling philosophical proposition. It is not a philosophical system in the Hegelian sense, yet it is almost just as comprehensive in its ambition. However, there is an obvious fissure in the closely knit texture of the theory which has to do with the question of validity. Whereas TCA claims that validity criteria in general are differentiated between truth according to objectivity, righteousness according to intersubjectivity, ethical values and authenticity according to subjectivity, it remains unclear what kind of validity TCA claims for itself.[23] Habermas, on his part, appeals to the mere plausibility of TCA (1981), which seems reasonable, yet doesn't clarify what kind of validity 'plausibility' actually is, insofar as it is obviously neither that of truth, righteousness, or authenticity. Moreover, to speak of the plausibility of plausibility would lead to an infinite regress. Habermas acknowledges the fallibilism of post-metaphysical philosophy; he cannot offer any final reason (*Letzbegründung*) for the post-metaphysical perspective of TCA, but claims that there does not seem to be any alternative in sight (ibid.; repeated in 2012, 142). That may very well be. My point goes in a different direction. Although Habermas renounces the normative power of philosophy to dictate anything, let alone to speak from a privileged point of view *above the subject matter*, as it were, TCA still functions as a strong

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23 Actually, it appears as the included outside of TCA, "a bond of inclusive exclusion" as we might be inclined to phrase it, drawing on the paradoxical perspective laid out by Giorgio Agamben's notion of the figure of the law-constituting sovereign (cf. 1998, §1; 21). Although TCA is intended to reflect the anticipations of an actual practice, its validity as a theory stands as a constitutive exception to the reconstructed validity criteria. Similar to 'language' and the sovereign of law, TCA appears from "a permanent state of exception" (cf. ibid.) from whence it lays out—or reconstruct—the ground rules of criteria of validity pertaining to speech acts.

theory which implicitly produces a certain image of religion in a modern world.[24] I shall not belittle that fact that Habermas expressly has changed his view on the significance of religion in our contemporary society since his development of TCA more than 30 years ago, and I have no reason to suppose that he is anything but sincere when he now speaks of the possibility for secular citizens to find inspiration in religious truth claims. Yet, I have not come across even the slightest sign in any of his works or interviews that he has abandoned the fundamental principles of TCA when it comes to the absolute premises for reaching a rational agreement. He may over the years have loosened the internal bond between meaning and rationality, but only inasmuch as philosophy recognises its own limits when it comes to existential questions. One may ask if this is a limit for philosophy that we are willing to subscribe to.

If I am right that TCA continues to be the constitutive core of Habermas' thinking, I find the underlying image of religion, pertaining also to his later views, problematic in certain regards dealt with in this article. For one thing, TCA trivializes the distinction between different types of religious attitudes. Thus, in their untranslated forms, fundamentalism, interfaith dialogue, critical theology, folk religion, and subjective religion, as these 5 types are defined above, are all effectively placed in the category of subjectivity (or a subjective world-dimension) according to the question of rational validity. This means, for instance, that the appeal of subjective religion, which might by deeply influenced by commercial interests and personal aspirations of charismatic leadership, is realigned, though unintendedly as I presume, with long-standing traditions of collective beliefs and popular identification. Some of these stances are more likely to translate their 'values' into a common, secular language (and norms of righteousness) than others, but as they stand they are equally (ir)rational inasmuch as they represent a particularistic choice of life. Something is clearly amiss in this picture!

Another way in which TCA runs the risk of misguiding the understanding of religion is by defining 'truth'—according to the dialogical standards of universal rationality—to be objective, empirically justified truth. It goes without saying that science will have to abide by such a concept and that a religious ontology consequently stands to lose in a dialogical game of arguments. But creationism and other pseudo-scientific views aside, the ontological or metaphysical element of religious truth may also express a certain way of looking at the world as, for instance, in awe, hope, or thankfulness, regardless of the facts being facts. To extract this element as an aesthetic decoration, as it were, deprives it of its sacred

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24 Lending word to Agamben's perspective, as in the former footnote, one might say that TCA includes religion by excluding it.

value, a way of looking at the world as a whole *sub specie aeternitatis* (as has been pointed out from Spinoza to Wittgenstein). Taking critical theology as an example, religious truth may, first of all, be an existential truth (clearly recognized by Habermas himself, 2008, 130), and although subjective authenticity seems to be an evident, if not necessary, part of this, it is counterintuitive to regard authenticity—and individual life choices—simply as sufficient. By defining truth in terms of objectivity and faith in terms of subjectivity, TCA is, inadvertently, a gesture of power.

The same goes for TCA's distinction between form and content inasmuch as it stands to undermine the holism of religious beliefs. It seems indeed fair to suspect that the holism of a religious world-view may block a rational exchange of arguments, thus identifying 'an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine' to borrow another term from Rawls, but this does not change the fact that the very distinction between form and content which, among other things, works to undercut the holism of religious beliefs, has ethnocentric implications and is, therefore, another gesture of power.

As I have argued in this article, it seems fair to say that TCA does not exhaust the role, or the rational potential, of religious beliefs and sacred values in the world of today, whether we speak in philosophical terms about a post-traditional society, or in sociological terms about a post-secular society. However, the reconstruction of a three-world differentiation does point to an acquisition of communicative rationality which in crucial respects is power-minimizing and indispensable to the cohesion of democracy. Perhaps it is important, though, to remind ourselves that the faith which may go into the anticipation of reason has not only developed from a religious world view but also works actively to change it. Neither philosophy nor social theory is a neutral matter.

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