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Religious Epistemology and the Problem of Public Justification

Towards a New Typology of Religious Convictions

Zusammenfassung: Die Debatte um die Legitimität religiöser Argumente in öffentlichen Rechtfertigungsdiskursen setzt häufig ein problematisches eindimensionales Verständnis der epistemischen Struktur religiöser Überzeugungen voraus. Dies gilt auch für die vielversprechendsten gegenwärtigen Beiträge zu dieser Debatte, exemplarisch in Andrew Marchs innovativer Typologie religiöser Argumente. Daher ist es das erste Ziel des Artikels, eine ebensolche Analyse der epistemischen Struktur religiöser Überzeugungen zu liefern. Mein Vorschlag besteht darin, zwei Komponenten religiöser Überzeugungen zu identifizieren: kognitiv-propositionale Bestandteile (*belief*) und regulativ-expressive Bestandteile (*faith*). Das zweite Ziel des Artikels ist der Aufweis, dass wechselseitige Akzeptabilität ein adäquates Kriterium öffentlicher Vernunft ist, welches religiöse Überzeugungen aufgrund ihrer epistemischen Struktur nicht erfüllen können. Zugleich sind religiöse Überzeugungen jedoch keiner Privatisierung zu unterziehen, da sie jenseits der öffentlichen Rechtfertigung essenziell für einen vitalen öffentlichen Diskurs sind. Es ist notwendig, auf dem Kriterium der wechselseitigen Akzeptabilität für öffentliche Rechtfertigungen zu beharren, ohne daraus abzuleiten, dass Religion Privatsache sei.

Schlüsselwörter: Epistemologie, Öffentliche Rechtfertigung, religiöse Überzeugungen, public religion, Andrew March

Summary: In this paper I argue that the debate on the legitimacy of using religious arguments in public discourse displays a one-dimensional understanding of the epistemic structure of religious beliefs. This holds true even for the most recent and most advanced approaches such as Andrew March's innovative typology of religious arguments. Hence, my first aim in this paper is to provide an analysis of the epistemic structure of religious beliefs. I suggest that religious convictions have two main components: they have a cognitive-propositional dimension (belief) as well as a regulative-expressive dimension (faith). Therefore, they may

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be intersubjectively accessible, but not mutually acceptable. My second aim in this paper is to show that mutual acceptability is an adequate criterion for political legitimacy. However, although the demands of public reason require mutual acceptability, religious convictions ought not to be privatized as they offer essential input for public discourse beyond public justification. Thus, it is necessary to insist on the mutual acceptability of reasons in public justifications, but this does not imply that religion is a private matter.

Keywords: Epistemology, Justification, Religious Convictions, Public Religion, Andrew March

I Introduction: The Problem of Religion in Politics

The relationship between religion and politics is highly contested. Modern liberal societies are committed to a certain neutrality towards the different religions within constitutional states, but nonetheless religious communities remain a public phenomenon and regularly interfere in public debates concerning a wide range of political issues. Some argue that religious communities provide valuable insights to public discourse in an inclusive and multi-cultural democracy, whereas others maintain that there is hardly anything that creates more conflict and division than religion. One of the central contentious issues in the debates on the relationship between religion and politics is the question of the legitimacy of religiously based arguments in the public sphere: Is it legitimate to base the justification of political norms and laws on particular claims of a certain religious tradition, or must political norms and laws be justified by reasons that are equally accessible and acceptable by all citizens? Exclusivists usually argue that the inclusion of religious reasons in public debates would endanger the legitimacy of collectively binding norms in pluralist societies; while inclusivists object that every exclusion of religious voices in the public sphere would violate the right to freely exercise one's religion and impose too high a burden on religious citizens.

In this paper, I will argue that within this debate on religion in public discourse, the *epistemology of religious convictions* is a neglected area. A profound debate on the legitimacy of religious convictions in the public sphere needs to include a more precise epistemological account of the structure of religious convictions. I will thus try to illuminate that basic epistemic structure of religious convictions and draw normative conclusions from it. Mainly, I will defend two theses:

a. Religious convictions might be equally accessible, but not equally acceptable to reasonable beings. Their epistemic structure may allow for cognitive accessibility, but their regulative function thwarts their mutual acceptability.

b. Public justification not only requires accessibility, but also acceptability. However, public discourse amounts to more than just public justification, which is why a demand for a privatization of religion is misguided.

In order to defend these theses, I will exemplarily show that the debate on religion in politics requires an epistemological complement by engaging with one of the most promising approaches in recent years, brought forward by Andrew March (2). I will then provide an attempt to identify the basic epistemic structure of religious convictions (3), showing that they might be equally accessible, but not equally acceptable (i. e. the validity of thesis (a)). Subsequently, I will illustrate the normative impact of my analysis (i. e. the validity of thesis (b)) by defending accessibility and acceptability as requirements of public reason (4). Thus, I will dismiss the demand for a complete privatization of religion but will argue for a moderate restriction of religious arguments in public justification based on epistemological considerations concerning the epistemic structure of religious convictions.

II Religion and Politics: Towards an Epistemological Turn

The debate on the legitimacy of religious convictions in public discourse has traditionally been spun around two main positions: exclusivism and inclusivism. On the one hand, exclusivists argued for a restriction of religious arguments in public discourse, basing their position on the liberal principle of restraint which says that it is immoral to impose coercive norms on fellow citizens without providing acceptable justifications for this coercion. On the other hand, inclusivists denied any moral duty to refrain from including religious arguments in public discourse. They contended that the liberal principle of restraint faces severe difficulties because it entails unacceptable consequences for religious citizens. A famous example is the charge of necessitating a split of identity into religious and secular components, which is said to show that the exclusivist position is overly restrictive. Cristina Lafont pointedly formulates this central line of conflict between the principle of restraint and its ethically undesirable consequences:

> It [an ethics of democratic citizenship, M. B.] must determine whether citizens of faith should follow the alleged obligation of giving priority to religious over non-religious reasons in their decisions concerning fundamental issues of justice, as Wolterstorff argues, or whether they should follow the democratic obligation of giving priority to generally

acceptable reasons over religious reasons in such political decisions, as the liberal criterion of democratic legitimacy prescribes.[1]

Recently, an innovative proposal has been brought forward by Andrew March in order to overcome the deadlock of these two positions.[2] March claims that it is necessary to "disassemble 'religious arguments' and 'political issues' into more basic concepts" (525) and proposes a new typology of religious arguments in order to "think more systematically, analytically and schematically about different kinds of religious arguments" (524). He conclusively demonstrates that it is crucial to differentiate between different forms of 'religious reasons' in order to gain a nuanced understanding of their roles and their legitimacy in public debates. Neither a bold exclusivism nor a simplistic inclusivism provide sufficient conceptual tools to tackle the complicated question of the role of religious arguments in public discourse.

March distinguishes between four types of religious arguments: (1) religious commands from revealed texts, authorities or personal experience; (2) theological or moral doctrines drawn from theistic claims; (3) references to traditional religious commitments or practices; and (4) appeals to practical wisdom or moral insight found in religious traditions (527f). He then claims that especially (1) is highly problematic for public reason as these arguments are merely authoritarian claims instead of justifications, whereas the other three forms of religious arguments "do not appeal directly to scriptural or ecclesiastical authority (...) in order to justify a law or a position within practical ethics" (532). With these differentiations, March is able to introduce important ramifications concerning the different types of religious arguments in public discourse. Thereby, he overcomes a one-dimensional and holistic understanding of 'religious arguments' and provides a very promising impulse for the entire debate. On the basis of his typology, he finally concludes that "public reason liberals can save the most important parts of the doctrine of religious self-restraint [...] without requiring that all religious arguments be considered suspect in public life" (539).[3]

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1 Cristina LAFONT, "Religion and the Public Sphere. What are the Deliberative Obligations of Democratic Citizenship?", in: Calhoun, Craig et al. (Eds.), *Habermas and Religion,* Cambridge / Malden 2013, 230–248, 242.

2 Andrew MARCH, "Rethinking Religious Reasons in Public Justification", in: *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013), 523–539.

3 March does not only break down "religious reasons" into component parts, but does the same with the term "political problem" (530f.). He argues that the legitimacy of religious reasons in public discourse depends on the issues which are at stake – religious arguments are, for example, not as easily acceptable when it comes to the question of same-sex-marriage as they are when they are uttered in debates on social justice. The reason for that distinction is the differing level

March's proposal has been given a lot of attention, since it is a well worked-out and innovative proposal which goes beyond the untenable dichotomy of exclusivism and inclusivism. However, he still fails to give an *epistemological* explanation of why the first type of religious arguments seems to be problematic in public discourse, but not the other three. His typology centres around the *content* of religious arguments, thereby neglecting important insights on the epistemic *structure* of religious convictions. When he claims, for example, that "one does not need to be a Catholic to appreciate and learn from Catholic writings on dignity or believe in a divine Creator to be swayed by that claim that human life as such is sacred" (529), he intuitively grasps a central distinction in the epistemology of religion (the one between acceptability and accessibility), but he does not make his assumptions on the epistemic structure of religious convictions explicit. In the following, I will offer an explanation of why religious convictions are, epistemically speaking, a special case of convictions. Thereby, I aim to offer an epistemological complement to March's idea of advancing the debate by breaking down religious reasons into component parts.

It can thus be maintained that, even in March's nuanced typology, there is an unresolved tension regarding the epistemic status of religious convictions in public discourse. This tension cannot be solved by looking only at the content of religious arguments and the context in which they are uttered. Instead, one has to take a closer look at the epistemic structure of religious convictions. Only when the specific structure of a religious conviction is clear will it be possible to think further about the norms of public discourse.

III The Epistemic Structure of Religious Convictions

If the above analysis is correct, the debate on the legitimate role of religious convictions in public discourse cannot be solved without a solid analysis of the epistemic structure of religious convictions. I agree with March (2013) that the reason for the deadlock between liberal exclusivism and radical inclusivism is their mutual display of simplistic forms of conceptualizing religious convictions, or, worse, their identification of religious convictions with appeals to religious authorities, holy scriptures or mystical experiences.[4] It will hence be helpful to

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of coercion that is at stake in these debates. Due to the different objective of this paper, I will not go further into March's second typology concerning political issues.

4 Paradigmatically, John Rawls denies any engagement with concepts of an epistemology of religion as he is committed to a 'nonmetaphysical', 'political' approach. Thereby, he is neither

introduce two distinctions to help illuminate the epistemic particularity of religious convictions: the distinction between 'faith' and 'belief', and the distinction between 'accessibility' and 'acceptability'.

The first distinction between the concepts of '*faith*' and '*belief*' can be traced back to Kant's notion of the 'practical faith of reason'. These two concepts are equally constitutive elements of religious convictions. The concept of faith refers to the practical dimension of a religious view of the world: it does not seem to be exhausted in a merely theoretical commitment to the truth or adequacy of certain theistic or religious assumptions; it rather seems to provide a comprehensive practical perspective on how to view the world and one's own existence. Religious faith has a regulative structure in that it provides a performative guidance and a perspective of orientation. Thus, a religious view of the world is a comprehensive practical attitude as opposed to a merely theoretical set of convictions. Religious convictions may therefore, in Wittgensteinian terms, be labelled as 'grammatical' since they seem to rule the way a religious citizen views the world.

However, the practical dimension of *faith* is usually accompanied by a dimension of *belief*: Religious convictions also display a cognitive structure and have propositional content. Religious beliefs are not only a practical attitude of trust, but also contain certain substantial propositions regarding, for instance, the existence and the attributes of God, his or her revelation, etc. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between the semantic content of religious convictions (i. e. beliefs) and their regulative function (i. e. faith).[5] A set of religious beliefs may also be called "doxastic faith", following the structure 'I believe that p', whereas religious faith may be called "fiducial faith", following the structure 'I believe in p'. Both elements are equally constitutive of religious convictions, since neither the merely cognitive acknowledgment of a religious conviction nor a practical approach without any substantive view on the world is a coherent notion. If Anna, for example, holds the conviction that a Trinitarian God has

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able to differentiate between accessible, publicly relevant religious convictions and private convictions at all, nor is he able to acknowledge the critical impact religious convictions may have on public discourse. His refusal leads to a paternalistic treatment of religious convictions in general, depicting them as inconvenient occurrences which must be treated civilizedly, but which cannot provide any sensible input to public discourse (cf. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York 1996, 212–254).

5 The distinction between 'faith' and 'belief' is not a contemporary concept, but may be traced back to Augustine who distinguished between the material content of religions (*fides quae creditur*) and the performative act of faith (*fides qua creditur*). Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIII, 2,5. For the analogous contemporary distinction cf. John Bishop, "Faith", in: Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), URL: <http://plato.stanford. edu/archives/ fall2010/entries/faith/>.

revealed his essence as unconditional love through Jesus, but does not deduce any practical impact on how to view (and act in) the world, we would hardly speak of an authentic religious conviction. Conversely, if Stephen says that he leads a Christian life but does not have any conviction on whether God exists, on his attributes, etc., we would again be hard put to assign religious faith to him. Thus, the twofold structure of religious convictions seems to be uncircumventable because it is implausible to speak of authentic religious convictions as soon as one of these two dimensions is missing.

The twofold structure of religious convictions may explain why religious (or fiercely non-religious) citizens are remarkably resistant when their religious convictions are challenged: Usually, a religious citizen will not give up her faith even when she is confronted with atheist criticism, say with Feuerbach's projection thesis, which she, at least for now, fails to address and defeat. Conversely, an atheist citizen will not give up his faith when challenged with an argument for the existence of God, say Goedel's reformulation of Anselm's ontological argument, which he is equally not able to address and defeat at least for now. This is because of the twofold structure of religious convictions: They do not work like autonomous convictions which are solely based on rational insight and thus can (and must) be easily given up when encountering counter-evidence. However, this does not mean that religious convictions are not in need of rational justification: They also have a propositional content and claim universal validity for their assumptions, so that convincing reasons for their claims are required.

The second distinction follows from the first one: It is necessary to differentiate between *intersubjective accessibility* and *mutual acceptability*. Convictions are *intersubjectively accessible* if their consistency and coherence can be discursively assessed by others, i. e. if they are not opaque, private and incomprehensible utterances. However, cognitive comprehension by others does not entail *mutual acceptability*. Convictions are *mutually acceptable* if they are intersubjectively accessible *and* shareable without embracing a whole set of regulative practices. In other words, they are mutually acceptable if they can be autonomously recognized by reason, without sharing an encompassing view on the world.

Combining the two distinctions, it can be concluded that religious convictions may fulfil the first criterion of intersubjective accessibility: They consist of propositional beliefs which are not merely private and opaque, but which can be discursively evaluated. This does not imply that all religious convictions are necessarily intersubjectively accessible (for example, private revelations or appeals to a revealed text are not accessible); it rather implies that there are many religious convictions which *may be* intersubjectively accessible. Religious convictions may be important critical voices in the public sphere precisely because they are not utterly opaque, and they may offer politically relevant input for a

postsecular society.[6] However, a fulfilment of the second criterion of mutual acceptability is structurally impossible: Religious convictions are not shareable in terms of purely autonomous reasons, as they require an existential involvement (i. e. faith) which cannot be produced by reason alone.

To summarize, the analysis of the epistemic structure of religious convictions has shown that they have cognitive content which may be intersubjectively accessible, but not mutually acceptable because they are at the same time rooted in a regulative practice which encompasses one's entire approach to life. Thus, a distinction has to be made between autonomous convictions, which can be accepted or given up on reasons based purely on autonomous justifications, and religious convictions, which are in need of a rational justification in terms of their content but are not exhaustively explained in rational justifications only.

IV Acceptability and Accessibility as Criteria of Public Reason

The above analysis of the epistemic structure of religious convictions is rather futile if it is not possible to demonstrate its normative impact on the debate of religious convictions in public discourse. If intersubjective accessibility or mutual acceptability are irrelevant criteria for public reason, the analysis will be equally irrelevant for the question of public justification. However, I will defend the thesis that both accessibility and acceptability can be successfully defended as criteria of public reason. There are three arguments which sustain this thesis: First, the argument from an unjustified 'tyranny of the majority'; second, the argument from an unfair treatment of citizens in pluralistic societies; and third, the retorsive argument from the inevitability of universalization of justifications.[7]

The 'Argument from an Unjustified Tyranny of the Majority' says that every liberal democracy is crucially dependent on reciprocally justified reasons in public

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6 In his recent writings, Jürgen Habermas has explored several functions of religious utterances in the public sphere, while at the same time insisting on a secular justification of coercive political norms; cf. Jürgen HABERMAS, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Cambridge 2008; Jürgen HABERMAS, *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Postsecular Age*, Cambridge 2010; cf. also Craig CALHOUN et al. (Eds.), *Habermas and Religion*, Cambridge 2013. I will develop an account of the different functions of religious convictions in the public sphere beyond justification in section 5.

7 For a more thorough discussion of these three arguments cf. Martin BREUL, "Religiöse Überzeugungen und öffentliche Vernunft", in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 90 (4 / 2015), 481–503.

discourse. If this ideal of mutual shareability of the reasons given by citizens to each other is given up, it will deteriorate to a hegemonic and unstable tyranny in which political norms cannot be equally accepted but will be enforced on the respective minorities. The narrative presentation of incommensurable worldviews or sets of values is not open for an intersubjective discursive evaluation, so that their plausibility can only be judged by a mere aggregation of votes.[8] Political legitimacy, however, requires that the reasons for political norms are, at least in principle, acceptable to all citizens – any unjustified norm would be a tyrannical imposition of unjustified rules and thus be no legitimate basis for state coercion. Democratic decisions are in need of reciprocal justification, since anything else would include a move to a "post-truth-democracy".[9] The particular comprehensive sets of values of individual citizens should not be the basis for a justification of collectively binding norms which impose on the liberty and equality of all citizens. Only if these sets of values are backed up with mutually acceptable reasons, is it acceptable to present them as a legitimate basis for collectively binding norms, since a failure to do so would result in unjustified state coercion, which is just another word for tyranny.

The second argument, the 'Argument from Fairness', emphasises the normative insight that any liberal democracy is based on the freedom and equality of all citizens. However, the acknowledgment of the freedom and equality of all citizens entails that one should not support political norms which cannot be justified by mutually acceptable reasons. This argument is closely related to Rainer Forst's account of a 'Right to Justification' which states that the first and foremost principle of justice is the entitlement of every citizen to reciprocal and general justifications of political norms and structures:

> This is thus the most universal and basic claim of every human being, which other human beings or states cannot reject: the right to justification, the right to be respected as a moral person who is autonomous at least in the sense that he or she must not be treated in any manner for which adequate reasons cannot be provided. Moral persons themselves decide about the "adequacy" of these reasons in concrete dialogue with others; abstractly stated, [...] these are reasons which can be reciprocally and generally justified – or better,

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8 Cf. Robert TALISSE, "Deliberation", in: David Estlund (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, New York 2012, 215: "At best, storytelling can help me to understand *your* reasons for favoring some given policy option; it cannot by itself give *me* a reason."

9 Jürgen HABERMAS, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Cambridge 2008, 144. A conception of a 'post-truth-democracy' seems to be the ideal that Nicholas Wolterstorff proposes when he asks: "Why do exclusivists think that publicly-offered reasons of any sort are called for in discussing and determining political issues in a liberal democracy? What is wrong with each of us making up his or her own mind without bothering to offer reasons to others, and then voting?" (Nicholas WOLTERSTORFF, "The Paradoxical Role of Coercion in the Theory of Political Liberalism", in: *Journal of Law, Philosophy and Culture* 1 (2007), 135).

which cannot be rejected – without violating the respect for others as beings with their own perspectives, needs, and interests.[10]

Thus, the Kantian idea of respect and of acknowledging other persons as ends in themselves implies that norms and actions which constrain the opportunities for action of any person must be justified with mutually acceptable reasons. A failure to meet the criteria of acceptability and accessibility would mean to disrespect a fellow citizen and to subjugate her by imposing unjustified coercive norms and laws on her.

The third argument, the 'Argument from Inevitability', states that the most plausible reconstruction of actual human behaviour in public discourse includes the presupposition of universalization. In contrast to the first two arguments, which were based on normative considerations, this argument is a retorsive one because it merely reconstructs the epistemic assumptions human beings implicitly make when stating assertions or arguing for or against a case. Robert Talisse, for instance, has pointed out that even in dictatorships a huge amount of propaganda is used to create the illusion of an epistemically justified structure of society.[11] Although the repressed citizenry could also be held down by violent force and oppression, the ruling powers use a lot of energy to manipulate the cognitive 'household' of their citizens. Talisse and Aikin claim to have made explicit "the aspirations that inhere in the everyday practices of people. [...] Argument expresses our commitment to the aspiration to believe in accordance with the best reasons we can find."[12] Propaganda usually does not only consist of a representation of a certain political ideology, but also of a claim of *epistemic* authority. The latter claim is necessary as one is obviously not in the position to truly accept a conviction without acceptable reasons for that conviction. Without a justification that is at least regarded as sound, one might fake persuasion but never really achieve it. Thus, the "commitment to the norm of reason-responsiveness that makes propaganda necessary in dictatorial regimes"[13] is an uncircumventable implication of our everyday practice as reasonable persons. We cannot but acknowledge the criteria of accessibility and

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10 Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification. Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*, New York 2012, 209f.

11 Cf. Robert Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, New York 2009, 121–127.

12 Robert Talisse / Scott Aikin, *Why we argue – and How We Should*, New York 2014, 35f. Talisse and Aikin also give an example illustrating this rather theoretical point: "It may be true that the proverbial man on the street often fails to believe what his best reasons say he should believe, but, crucially, the man on the street does not take himself to hold unfounded or otherwise defective beliefs. Rather, he takes himself to be successful in tracking his reasons. Otherwise, he would not believe as he does." (Ibid).

13 Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 123.

acceptability as necessary conditions of our basic epistemic mode of operation. In other words: These conditions are hard-wired into our capacity for reasonable and argumentative discourse.

To conclude, there are two criteria of public reason that can be successfully defended: intersubjective accessibility and mutual acceptability. While religious reasons may fulfil the first one of these criteria, they fail to meet the second one: Because of their twofold structure (belief / faith) they cannot be autonomous insights from reason alone. Thus, they will never be acceptable to all citizens due to structural reasons. This result seems to support the classical liberal demand that religion be privatized. However, this is an impermissible generalization: Religious convictions may have various functions in public discourse beyond the justification of norms. Although religious convictions fail to meet the challenging criterion of mutual acceptability, it does not follow that they ought to be a private matter. In the following, I will attempt to shed some light on some of these possible functions by giving just two examples of the public relevance of religious convictions: translation and motivation.

V The Lasting Relevance of Public Religions

Religious utterances in the public may have a lasting relevance for a liberal constitutional state as they might be important and vital features of democratic discourse. These features would be lost if a strict doctrine of privatization was inferred from religious convictions' failure to meet the criterion of mutual acceptability. A first example of the lasting relevance of religious convictions to the public sphere is the 'Argument from Translation' which has been brought forward very prominently by Jürgen Habermas: the inclusion of religious convictions into public discourse is necessary in order to be able to *translate* them into autonomous, i. e. mutually justifiable reasons. The secular state profits from such translations as religious utterances provide public discourse with important 'semantic resources' that might help to overcome the pathologies of modernity:

> [R]eligious traditions perform the function of articulating an awareness of what is lacking or absent. They keep alive a sensitivity to failure and suffering. They rescue from oblivion the dimensions of our social and personal relations in which advances in cultural and social rationalization have caused utter devastation. Who is to say that they do not contain encoded semantic potentialities that could provide inspiration if only their message were translated into rational discourse?[14]

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14 Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, 6.

According to Habermas, religious convictions may thus contain encapsulated resources and moral insights which are necessary to cope with a neoliberal, naturalistic and depoliticized zeitgeist. These resources and insights should therefore be translated into the secular discourse of contemporary politics in order to become mutually acceptable.[15] However, for them to become candidates for a cooperative translation, religious convictions must be part of public discourse – if they were a completely private issue, there would be no starting point for translation in the first place, as no one would know about their potentialities at all. Hence, religious convictions must be uttered in public discourse to engage with their semantic potentialities and assess their translatability.

A second example of the lasting public relevance of religious convictions might be their use as 'markers' of one's *motivation* to engage in public discourse. *Motivational* reasons can be distinguished from *justificatory* reasons: The latter justify the normative adequacy of a certain norm, the former provide reasons to act according to normatively adequate norms. The restraint of comprehensive or religious convictions in public justifications does not at all include their restraint as motivational resources which induce moral behaviour or political involvement.[16] It would be too strict to postulate a 'Principle of Secular Motivation'[17] that accompanies the requirement of mutual acceptability. The distinction between justificatory and motivational reasons is linked to a certain externalism regarding the relationship between these two kinds of reasons: Discerning the normatively adequate norm does not necessarily lead to an *internal* motivation to actually act according to that norm; rather, it is often the case that there have to be additional, *external* reasons for creating motivation to act.

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15 It would take up too much space to illustrate the complex relationship between translation and the relationship between faith and reason in the Habermasian account as well as in the analysis of religious convictions provided in this chapter. I only want to hint at the fact that Habermas's assumption of an incommensurability of faith and reason is a serious challenge for his postsecular translation proviso, because translation usually presupposes a certain set of shared commitments, beliefs and convictions. Thus, the analysis of the epistemic structure of religious convictions provided in this chapter is probably a better candidate for a theoretical framework that makes translation possible in the first place – only when religious convictions are not regarded as epistemic black boxes but rather as discursively assessable convictions with propositional content it becomes possible to evaluate attempts of translation. Cf. Martin Breul, *Religion in der politischen Öffentlichkeit*, Paderborn 2015, 145–174.

16 For a theological foundation of a prepolitical motivation to moral action or democratic involvement, cf. Linda Zagzebski, *Divine Motivation Theory*, Cambridge 2004.

17 This principle is exemplarily defended in Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*, New York 2000, 96. However, Audi fails to provide any justification for this rather austere principle. I cannot think of a reason why a secular motivation to engage in politics is by any means more valuable or moral than a religious motivation.

Again, an example might be useful to illustrate this point: Imagine Felix who is an opponent of torture. He has very strong, mutually acceptable reasons for his claim that torture is never right. However, his motivation to engage in campaigns against torture is based on his religious conviction that this practice is a fundamental contradiction to the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is by no means clear why it is a violation of his obligations as citizen to utter his motivational reasons for his actions in addition to the justificatory reasons that he also must provide.[18] Thus, the inclusion of religious reasons as motivational reasons is an important feature of vital democratic deliberation and speaks against a privatization of religion. It is both legitimate and sensible to publicly identify one's motivational reasons, be they religious or secular.

These examples show that religion is a profoundly public matter.[19] Hence, religious convictions should be assigned important functions in public discourse beyond justification – it is a wrong alternative to either postulate a doctrine of privatization or a doctrine of radical inclusion. For this reason, the most plausible position in the debate on religious reasons in public discourse is a 'Moderate Exclusivism': On the one hand, religious convictions fail to meet the criterion of mutual acceptability and are therefore not an appropriate basis for a justification of legitimate political norms; on the other hand they have essential and highly relevant public functions for a vital democratic discourse.

VI Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued for two theses: first, that religious convictions are intersubjectively accessible but not mutually acceptable; and second, that mutual acceptability is a sensible criterion of public reason. The first thesis is based on an analysis of the epistemic structure of religious convictions: They contain two equally irreducible elements as they are constituted by a cognitive-propositional component as well as a regulative-expressive component. The cognitive-propositional component refers to the propositional content of religious

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18 Michael Walzer offers a similar argument when he claims that religion has a lot of motivational resources in its narratives (one famous example is the Exodus-narrative) and its mobilization of passions. These resources are, according to Walzer, very important parts of public culture and should not be privatized, cf. Michael WALZER, Drawing the Line: "Religion and Politics", in: *Soziale Welt* 49 (1998), 295–307.

19 Apart from these two examples there are other important forms and functions of religious utterances in the public sphere. For a more comprehensive list, cf. BREUL, *Religion in der politischen Öffentlichkeit*, 216–226.

convictions which may be assessed on the grounds of reasons and justifications; the regulative-expressive component contains a 'grammatical' function in that it formulates a comprehensive orientation and attitude towards the world. Because of this twofold structure, religious convictions are intersubjectively accessible (because their cognitive content may be assessed by autonomous reasons), but not mutually acceptable (because their regulative function cannot be adopted solely on the basis of autonomous reasons).

The second thesis implied that both intersubjective accessibility and mutual acceptability can be successfully defended as criteria of public reason. They are necessary in a normative perspective to avoid a tyranny of the majority and to ensure equal respect for all fellow citizens, as well as implications of our every-day practice as rational agents. Hence, it is illegitimate to justify a political norm which is collectively binding on the basis of one's particular religious convictions. It is a moral (not a legal) obligation to present justifications for political norms in public discourse which are, at least in principle, acceptable to all those affected by that norm. However, this exclusivist stance in justificatory public discourses does not result in a doctrine of restraint or privatization. Instead, there are multiple public roles for religious convictions beyond justification, such as providing motivation for political engagement or offering semantic potentials for an otherwise impoverished public discourse.

These aspects complement the typology of religious reasons brought forward by March (2013), as they are based on epistemological rather than political insights. March's focus, which is on the content of religious arguments only, profits from this epistemological complement as it provides the conceptual tools to disassemble the epistemic structure of religious convictions and to explain their Janus-faced appearance in public life. A one-sided emphasis on the differing levels of authority of religious arguments that is implicit in March's typology is thereby supplemented with a profound analysis of structural elements which may offer an explanation of modern societies' ambivalent attitude towards the public relevance of religious traditions.

To conclude, a 'moderate' exclusivism reconciles a highly idealized form of public reason with the public relevance of religious convictions. It provides a demanding criteriology of public reason which may be a set of tools for participants in public discourse to critically evaluate the scope of their validity claims and to differentiate between strictly justificatory and more broadly public reasons. With this set of tools, it is thus possible to argue for the compatibility of a general justifiability of political structures and democratic decisions, while at the same time emphasizing the important and essential role that religious convictions will and should continue to play in postsecular societies.