

Anil Babu Suthi

Postmetaphysics

A Socio-Philosophical Challenge to
the Indian Religious Public Sphere

Anil Babu Suthi

Postmetaphysics

Dedicated To
My beloved Parents
Mary Victoria and Joseph Nagaraju Suthi

To
Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum

Anil Babu Suthi

Postmetaphysics

A Socio-Philosophical Challenge to the
Indian Religious Public Sphere

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation
in der Deutschen Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte bibliographische
Daten sind im Internet über www.dnb.de abrufbar.

wbg Academic ist ein Imprint der wbg
© 2022 by wbg (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), Darmstadt
Die Herausgabe des Werkes wurde durch die
Vereinsmitglieder der wbg ermöglicht.
Satz und eBook: Satzweiss.com Print, Web, Software GmbH
Gedruckt auf säurefreiem und
alterungsbeständigem Papier
Printed in Germany

Besuchen Sie uns im Internet: www.wbg-wissenverbindet.de

ISBN 978-3-534-40702-6

Elektronisch ist folgende Ausgabe erhältlich:

eBook (PDF): 978-3-534-40703-3

Dieses Werk ist mit Ausnahme der Abbildungen (Buchinhalt und Umschlag) als Open-Access-Publikation im Sinne der Creative-Commons-Lizenz CC BY-NC International 4.0 (»Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International«) veröffentlicht. Um eine Kopie dieser Lizenz zu sehen, besuchen Sie <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>. Jede Verwertung in anderen als den durch diese Lizenz zugelassenen Fällen bedarf der vorherigen schriftlichen Einwilligung des Verlages.

Table of Contents

I	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
II	ABSTRACT.....	13
II	ABSTRAKT	15
III	GENERAL INTRODUCTION	17
	PART I: PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.....	21
1	Research Question/Problem Statement.....	23
1.1	Religious Exclusions.....	24
1.2	Militant Truth Claim	26
1.3	Reactionary Modernism.....	28
1.4	Inadequacy of ‘Ratio’ in Religion.....	30
2	Thesis Prospect: Reasoning Religion.....	32
2.1	Habermas as a Conceptual Source for a Postmetaphysical Approach.....	32
2.2	Objectives of Research	36
3	Methodology.....	38
3.1	Rational Reconstruction.....	38
3.2	Application	40
3.3	Organization of the Study.....	41
	PART II: CONTEXTUALIZING HABERMAS IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS SETTING	43
1	The Setting of Religion in India.....	45
1.1	Historical Background of Religion in India	45
1.1.1	Religion as Dharma.....	46
1.1.2	The Aryan Invasion Theory.....	49
1.1.3	The Indigenous Religion	51

1.1.4	The Advent of Islam and Diversity of Religion.....	52
1.1.5	Puranic Process	55
1.2	Classification of the Society	56
1.2.1	The Religious Basis of Varna	56
1.2.2	Varna as an Organization of the Society	58
1.2.3	Varna to Caste: A Demeaning Element of the Society	60
1.2.4	Caste an Artefact of Colonial Project	62
2.	Public Sphere as the Stadium of Habermasian Philosophy of Religion	64
2.1	The Public Sphere	65
2.2	Public Opinion.....	67
2.3	Transformation of Structures	69
2.4	Religion and the Public Sphere.....	72
2.5	Public Sphere in Pre-Modern India	75
2.6	Religious Spaces as Public Sphere	78
3	Habermasian Parameters in Indian Context.....	80
3.1	Modernity	80
3.1.1	Modernity Defined.....	81
3.1.2	Enlightenment and Modernity	83
3.1.3	Modernity a Scheme to Emancipation.....	85
3.1.4	How far is India modern in Habermasian Sense?.....	87
3.2	Secular	89
3.2.1	Indian versus Western Secularism	90
3.2.2	Toleration as the Dynamism of Secularism	91
3.2.3	Indian Secularism as Trans-Cultural Potentiality.....	93
3.3	Plural	94
3.3.1	Sarva dharma sambhava (Political Neutrality to Religions?).....	95
3.3.2	Socially Confused Identities Based on Foreign Background	96
3.3.3	Freedom to Practice Individual's Faith.....	97
3.4	Challenges from Unmediated Areas	99
3.4.1	Encounter of Tradition with Modern	99
3.4.2	Contested Areas.....	100
3.4.3	Rationality in Religion.....	101
3.4.4	Postmetaphysics	101

PART III: HABERMAS' RELIGION I –TRACES OF RATIONALITY IN RELIGION 103

1	Rationalization of Society in Durkheimian Categories	107
1.1	Collective Consciousness	107
1.2	Totemism	109
1.3	Psychological Factors.....	112
1.4	The Profane and the Sacred.....	116
1.5	Rituals and Symbols	120
2	The Axial Age.....	123
2.1	Defining Axial Age.....	124
2.2	From Mythos to Logos.....	126
2.3	Pre-Axial Cultures: Robert Bellah.....	128
2.3.1	Episodic Culture.....	128
2.3.2	Mimetic Culture	129
2.3.3	Mythic Culture	129
2.3.4	Theoretic Culture	130
2.3.5	The Axial Age – India.....	131
2.4	A Revolutionary Age.....	134
2.4.1	Analysis of Religious Movements.....	134
2.4.2	The Prophetic Movement.....	136
2.4.3	The Buddhist Movement	139
2.4.4	The Jesus Movement	142
2.4.5	Anthropological Intentionality.....	147

PART IV: HABERMAS' RELIGION II – POSTMETAPHYSICAL

PHILOSOPHY AS BRIDGING THE SECULAR AND RELIGION 151

1	Faith (Glauben) and Knowledge (Wissen) as Points of Orientation.....	153
1.1	Metaphysical Inquiry as the Production of Axial Cognition	154
1.2	Habermas' Summarization of Metaphysics	156
1.3	The (Non)-Occidental Approach of Connecting Faith and Knowledge.....	159
1.4	Co-existence of Glauben und Wissen	161
2	Postsecular	166
2.2	Postsecular as the Religious Signature of the Present.....	166
2.1	Postsecular as a Process of Recognition.....	168

2.3	Does Modernity lead to a Religious Erosion Process?	170
2.4	Postsecular as a Neutral Space	172
2.5	A Reflective Religion.....	173
3	Postmetaphysical as Saving Religion	177
3.1	Postmetaphysical Thinking as Translation	178
3.2	Kantian Models for Postmetaphysical Translation.....	180
3.2.1	A Dialectical Relationship between Moral and Religion	180
3.2.2	Translated Categories	183
3.3	The Functionality of Translation	187
3.3.1	From Elimination of Religion to Translation	187
3.3.2	Translating into Secular without removing the Core of the Sacred.....	189
3.3.3	Religion: A Beacon of Motivation.....	191
3.3.4	The Potentiality of Semantic Contents of Religion	193
3.3.5	Concept of Tat Tvam Asi: An Expression of Religious Semantic Neutrality....	195
3.3.6	Religious Base of Human Rights	199
3.3.7	“Common sense” as the Third Party between Science and Religion	203
4	Re-viewing Postmetaphysical Philosophy.....	204
PART V: SECULARISM AS POSTMETAPHYSICAL <i>MODUS OPERANDI</i>		207
1.	How does Secular Reason Function for Religion?.....	209
1.1	Re-reading Secular	209
1.2	Positioning Postmetaphysical with Secularism.....	211
1.3	Secularity as an Option	214
1.4	Intrinsic Goal versus Extrinsic Goal.....	215
1.5	Religious Liberalism as the Prerequisite of Secularization.....	216
1.5.1	Secularized Idea of the Absolute.....	217
1.5.2	The Autonomy of Sphere Agents	218
2	Varieties of Modern Religion	220
2.1	Taylor’s Threefold Analysis of Secularism.....	220
2.1.1	Phenomenal Change.....	221
2.1.2	Profound Change	221
2.1.3	Optional Change	222
2.2	Secularism as a Transformed Religion.....	223
2.2.1	Transcendence to Immanence	223

2.2.2	Spirituality versus Religion.....	225
2.2.3	Diffusive Religion.....	226
2.2.4	Shared Religion.....	227
2.2.5	Religion – Nationalism	227
3	Intrinsic Role of Religion	229
3.1	Could Modernity weaken Religion?	229
3.2	Religion for Contemporary Values	231
3.3	Is religion an Indispensable Element to Society?	235
3.4	Religious Influence on Violence.....	237
4	Reasoning Religion with a Secular Attitude	239
4.1	Secularizing Religion through Disenchantment.....	239
4.1.1	<i>Entzauberung</i> : A ‘Deconstruction’ Concept	241
4.1.2	Demagification of Religion	242
4.1.3	Prophetic Disenchantment	244
4.1.4	Disempowerment of Religion.....	246
4.1.5	Desacralization	247
4.2	Epistemic Proposals	249
4.2.1	Epistemic Stance to Other Religions.....	251
4.2.2	Epistemic Stance towards the Internal Logic of Secular Knowledge.....	252
4.2.3	Epistemic Stance towards the Priority of Secular Reasons in Politics.....	253
	PART VI: Postmetaphysical Approach to Public Religion in India.....	257
1	Significance of the Habermasian Approach to the Problem of Religion.....	259
1.1	Philosophical Mediation	260
1.2	Discursive Rationality: an Alternative to Apologetic Religions.....	264
1.3	Constructivism against Fundamentalism	266
1.4	Reflective Religion based on its ‘ <i>Telos</i> ’.....	267
2	The Functionality of Epistemic Religion	271
2.1	Bengal School of Religious Reasoning	271
2.1.1	Secularization of Belief.....	272
2.1.2	Dialectics of Religion.....	273
2.1.3	Mutuality of Religious Traditions.....	275

2.2	A Gandhian Position	277
2.2.1	<i>Satya</i>	279
2.2.2	<i>Ahimsa</i>	280
2.2.3	<i>Satyagraha</i> as Synthesis.....	281
2.3	A Critical Appropriation of Religion.....	282
3	Reasoning Religion in Public: The Habermasian Challenge to Indian Religions.....	284
3.1	Public Theology.....	285
3.2	Critique as a Hermeneutic Responsibility.....	289
3.3	Proposition to Initiate Habermasian Principles	292
3.3.1	Critical Religious Study.....	292
3.3.2	Religious Authorities	294
3.3.3	Centres of Religious Formation	295
3.3.4	Religious Gatherings as Public Sphere.....	296
IV	Conclusion – Towards a Critique of Religion	301
1	Why Habermas?.....	301
2	Resurgence of (Negative) Religion	303
3	Critiquing Public Religion	304
4	Genealogy of Religion and Reason through the ‘Axial Age’.....	306
5	Secularization as a Research Programme.....	308
6	Formative usage of Religious Deposit	309
V	BIBLIOGRAPHY	311
VI	GLOSSARY	325

I ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With a grateful heart I gladly thank the Almighty God for his constant guidance and enlightenment in order to find meaning, strength and enthusiasm in this project. I am ever thankful to my loving parents who gave me the first chance of education, the best schooling available and constant support of love and encouragement during these years of my doctoral research away from my homeland, together with other members of family. This was further nourished and encouraged by the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins, Marymatha Province, India, who gave me the opportunity and opened the doors, in order to take up this doctoral project. Similarly, my gratitude goes to the Friars Minor Capuchins of the German Province, especially the Capuchin Fraternity at Münster for being my family here in Germany that cared for me, protected me and supported me in all the ways possible. In addition, I thank the German Agency, 'Kirche in Not' for having been an important financial support in the initial stages of my doctoral programme.

The most important and the central part of my research programme is the scientific support, which I would like to acknowledge. I would not have reached today this stage without my Doktorvater, Prof. Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt, Professor for Religionsphilosophie, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt a. M. His timely acceptance of my doctoral project, his tremendous competence as '*direkt Schüler*' of Jürgen Habermas, his ability to read my thoughts and understand my thesis, have been the most important motivating factors to work on my project. He could surmount the cultural specificity of scientific methodology, which created a bridge to both of us to complete this project. He has also been an important instrument in supporting my project and for the acceptance of the same at Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt a. M. I also thank the Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät and its members for considering my project and accepting me as doctoral student. I thank wholeheartedly Prof. Dr. Dr. habil. Klaus Müller, Philosophische Grundfragen der Theologie, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster, who helped me initially in choosing my theme and for an intensive follow-up of my project by being my first Doktorvater up until he unfortunately met with an accident. His constant support in choosing and suggesting the required literature for my thesis has indeed lightened my difficulties at a foreign University. The basic difficulties of comprehending a German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in the German language was supported by Prof. Emeritus Frau Dr. Edeltraud Bülow, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität-Münster, for

which I am immensely grateful. In a moment of uncertainty when my first Doktorvater met with an accident, Prof. Dr. Norbert Hintersteiner, Institute of Missiology and the Study of Theologies Beyond Europe, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität-Münster became a beacon of light so that I might not lose my direction. I am indeed grateful to him for taking up this role to guide me further both scientifically and also to find a new Doktorvater.

Added to the above-mentioned important personalities, I could not have presented the thesis in this given period without the help of the following persons, whom I would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank. Fr. Henry OSB M.A., S.T.L., L.S.S., Ampleforth Benedictine Abbey, York, U.K., Emeritus Member of the Faculty of Theology, Oxford University and the General Editor of The New Jerusalem Bible, has offered his precious time in correcting and giving suggestions with regard to English and a certain conceptual clarity. Fr. Prof. Dr. Emeritus Leonhard Lehmann OFM Cap., Pontificia Università Antonianum, Rome, in his competence in guiding many foreign students in Rome, has gladly gone through my paper. His contribution has been of importance owing to his proof reading of the whole paper from various perspectives. Fr. Paul Colemann, former Provincial Minister of the English Capuchins, U.K. had initially spared his time to go through my paper and made valuable suggestions and corrections. Fr. Dr. Stefan Walser OFM Cap. Junior Professor, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Universität Bonn, too has been a friendly and fraternal support, who gave timely feedback regarding the presentation of my paper.

There have been a number of people in Germany, Switzerland and Italy added to my homeland India, whom I have encountered during these years of my doctoral studies. They have been a great support in many different important ways in order to realize this doctoral project. I am indeed deeply grateful to them.

Anil Babu Suthi
Friar Minor Capuchin
25.01.21

II ABSTRACT

The terms “postmetaphysics”, “religion” and “public sphere” in the title suggest that my thesis places the emphasis on a study that revolves around the performance of religion in the public sphere, thereby implying a socio-philosophical discourse of religion. This study is based on Jürgen Habermas’ postmetaphysical philosophy about religion, paradigmatically expressed through the Essay, *Religion in Public Sphere*, in response to postsecular societies as well as their reception and rejection of religion. The primary questions functioning as points of orientation towards my work are premised on the problematisation of the mode of the functionality of religion within the public sphere, predominantly in India. Therefore, this research serves to expose fundamentalist and non-reflective forms of religious problems in a society founded on the misunderstanding or irrational application of religious traditions. Consequently, it viscerally indicates that the Indian society has gradually distanced itself from a rational understanding and living of religion.

In response to the aforementioned phenomenon, the Habermasian postmetaphysical philosophy serves as a bedrock upon which I could construct my thesis by employing the working methodology known as rational reconstruction. This methodology primarily necessitated conducting an analytical and historical study of society and the public sphere provided by Habermas, with a parallel positioning of the Indian context. This included the first premise, the functionality of religion within the public sphere. By tracing its sociological origins, the basic claim that religion in its primary appearance is inextricably interlaced with society has been proved based on the discourse provided by Émile Durkheim. Obviously, that would not suffice to support my claim of rationality that could potentially be ascribed to religion. Consequently, a reconstruction of rational traditions supplemented my thesis via a detailed investigation into India’s socio-philosophical religious traditions, namely, the Cognitive Upanishadic Traditions. This approach is buttressed by an extensive analysis that exposes various rational traditions of religion, based on the methodological approach provided by theories of the Revolutionary Religious Movements, the Axial Age, the Prophetic Disenchantment and Secularism, whose aim was to initiate a discourse that paved the way to reformative, authentic and rational religion. The logicity provided by these analyses through the help of Hans Joas and Charles Taylor, which underpins the similitude between the various developments in the religious sphere and the postmetaphysical approach to religion in the public sphere. It is in this manner that both *Glauben* and *Wissen* accommodate each other in finding a common ground or genealogy. The

visibility of their results is expressed by making clear and distinct societal changes in a sphere where the performative role assumed by religions goes beyond the private sphere. This analysis is grounded in the exposition of postmetaphysical philosophy. The postmetaphysical methodology thus demonstrates that it does not position itself against religion. On the contrary, it not only presents various arguments to recognise the constructive, rational and positive character of religion but also urges the secular societies not to alienate religion by categorizing it as an irrational element. Furthermore, the possibility of translation of religious semantics to advance secular purposes has been further expounded on through the Habermasian discourse of Kantian philosophy of religion.

Therefore, the results emerging through the above-mentioned analysis paved the way to further ascertain the availability of similar occurrences in the Indian context and sphere. This enabled a potential dialogue between the Habermasian provision of postmetaphysical philosophy and the religious in India. Subsequently, it was revealed that postmetaphysical approaches are apparently not alien to the Indian society. Nonetheless, the salient objective was to determine approaches and methodologies, which are either ignored or have disappeared. As a result, it was deemed quite fitting to discover this postmetaphysical methodology – which has thus far been worked out in a western context by Habermas – within the Indian context. Accordingly, it facilitated a transparent and unambiguous contextual understanding and functioning of postmetaphysical methodology.

After having various sources and analyses at our disposal, this thesis sheds important light on the originality of religion which possesses profound rational traditions and its concomitant sociological meaning. Finally, towards the end of my research, various postmetaphysical proposals are provided to the Indian religious, who become the primary agents in undertaking a self-critique of religion. The functionality of these proposals is realised by the application of the regained sources in order to respond to the problem of irrational and non-reflective religion in the public sphere, which becomes the *summum bonum* of postmetaphysical philosophy.

II ABSTRAKT

Die Begriffe „Postmetaphysik“, „Religion“ und „Öffentlichkeit“ im Titel deuten darauf hin, dass meine Arbeit den Schwerpunkt auf eine Studie legt, die sich um die Performanz von Religion im öffentlichen Raum dreht und damit einen sozialphilosophischen Diskurs über Religion impliziert. Diese Studie basiert auf der nachmetaphysischen Religionsphilosophie von Jürgen Habermas, die paradigmatisch in dem Aufsatz ‚Religion in der Öffentlichkeit‘ zum Ausdruck kommt, als Antwort auf postsäkulare Gesellschaften sowie deren erfolgter Rezeption wie auch Ablehnung von Religion. Die Leitfragen, die meine Arbeit prägen, sind die Problematisierung der Funktion von Religion im öffentlichen Raum, insbesondere in Indien. Daher dient diese Untersuchung dazu, fundamentalistische und unreflektierte Formen religiöser Probleme in einer Gesellschaft aufzudecken, die auf dem Missverständnis oder der irrationalen Anwendung religiöser Traditionen beruht. Infolgedessen wird deutlich, dass sich die indische Gesellschaft allmählich von einem rationalen Verständnis und Leben der Religion entfernt hat.

Angesichts des oben geschilderten Phänomens diente die nachmetaphysische Philosophie von Habermas als Grundlage, auf der ich meine These aufbauen konnte. Dabei verwendete ich die Arbeitsmethodik der so genannten rationalen Rekonstruktion. Diese Methodik erforderte in erster Linie eine analytische und historische Untersuchung der Gesellschaft und der öffentlichen Sphäre, wie sie von Habermas geliefert wurde, mit einer parallelen Positionierung des indischen Kontextes. Dazu gehörte die erste Prämisse, die Funktionalität der Religion innerhalb der öffentlichen Sphäre. Die grundlegende Behauptung, dass die Religion in ihrer primären Erscheinungsform untrennbar mit der Gesellschaft verwoben ist, wurde auf der Grundlage des Diskurses von Émile Durkheim nachgewiesen, indem ihre soziologischen Ursprünge nachgezeichnet wurden. Das reicht natürlich nicht aus, um meine Behauptung der Rationalität, die man der Religion möglicherweise zuschreiben könnte, zu stützen. Folglich ergänzte eine Rekonstruktion der religiösen Traditionen meine These durch eine detaillierte Untersuchung der soziophilosophischen religiösen Traditionen Indiens, nämlich der kognitiven Upanishadischen Traditionen. Dieser Ansatz wird durch eine umfassende Analyse gestützt, die verschiedene rationale Religionstraditionen aufzeigt, basierend auf dem methodischen Ansatz der Theorien der revolutionären religiösen Bewegungen, des axialen Zeitalters, der prophetischen Entzauberung und des Säkularismus, deren Ziel es war, einen Diskurs zu initiieren, der den Weg zu einer reformatorischen, authentischen und rationalen Religion ebnete. Die Logik, die diese Analysen mit Hilfe von Hans Joas und Charles Taylor vermitteln, unterstreicht die

Ähnlichkeit zwischen den verschiedenen Entwicklungen im religiösen Bereich und dem postmetaphysischen Ansatz für die Religion im öffentlichen Raum. Auf diese Weise kommen sich Glauben und Wissen bei der Suche nach einer gemeinsamen Basis oder Genealogie entgegen. Die Sichtbarkeit ihrer Ergebnisse kommt dadurch zum Ausdruck, dass sie die gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen in einer Sphäre deutlich machen, in der die performative Rolle, die die Religionen einnehmen, über den privaten Bereich hinausgeht. Diese Analyse stützt sich auf die Darstellung der nachmetaphysischen Philosophie. Die nachmetaphysische Methodologie zeigt damit, dass sie sich nicht gegen die Religionen stellt. Im Gegenteil, sie führt nicht nur verschiedene Argumente an, um den konstruktiven, rationalen und positiven Charakter der Religion anzuerkennen, sondern fordert auch die säkularen Gesellschaften auf, die Religion nicht zu entfremden, indem sie sie als irrationales Element einstufen. Darüber hinaus wurde die Möglichkeit der Übersetzung religiöser Semantik zur Förderung säkularer Zwecke durch den Habermas'schen Diskurs der kantischen Religionsphilosophie weiter ausgeführt.

Daher ebneten die Ergebnisse der oben erwähnten Analyse den Weg, um die Verfügbarkeit ähnlicher Vorkommnisse im indischen Kontext und in der indischen Sphäre weiter zu ermitteln. Dies ermöglichte einen potenziellen Dialog zwischen der Habermas'schen Bestimmung der nachmetaphysischen Philosophie und dem Religiösen in Indien. In der Folge zeigte sich, dass nachmetaphysische Ansätze der indischen Gesellschaft offenbar nicht fremd sind. Dennoch bestand das Ziel darin, Ansätze und Methoden zu ermitteln, die entweder ignoriert wurden oder verschwunden sind. Es liegt daher nahe, diese nachmetaphysische Methodologie, die bisher im westlichen Kontext von Habermas erarbeitet wurde, im indischen Kontext zu entdecken. Dies ermöglichte ein transparentes und eindeutiges kontextuelles Verständnis und Funktionieren der postmetaphysischen Methodologie.

Anhand verschiedener Quellen und Analysen ermöglicht dieses Werk wichtige Erkenntnisse über die ursprüngliche Natur der Religion, die über tiefgreifende rationale Traditionen verfügt, und über die mit ihr verbundene soziologische Bedeutung. Am Ende meiner Untersuchung werden den indischen Ordensmitgliedern verschiedene nachmetaphysische Vorschläge unterbreitet, die sie zu den Hauptakteuren einer Selbstkritik der Religion machen können. Die Funktionalität dieser Vorschläge wird durch die Anwendung der wiedergefundenen Quellen realisiert, um auf das Problem der irrationalen und unreflektierten Religion in der öffentlichen Sphäre zu intervenieren, was zum *summum bonum* meiner nachmetaphysischen Philosophie wird.

III GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Has secularism truly triumphed through the decline of the undeniable influence of religion in the public sphere? In all fairness, in order to address this rigmarole, it is important to engage in a dispassionate debate about the *factum* of this phenomenon. Based on various recent events, both constructive and destructive, every society is invited to ponder: that religion like never before, is percolating into western and non-western societies alike with even greater vigour that any secular man could ever envisage. Religion is taking various forms: progressive, conservative, stagnated, productive, fundamentalist, terrorist, and reconciliatory, among many others. In any case, it is being increasingly recognised that in a secular world, religion is expressing its potentiality of being translated.

Precisely because the philosophy of history became the discipline that inherited the questions concerning the translation of religious contents into the domain of politics, the question has since its inception involved further questions of secularization. This issue was first raised in relation to the classical thesis developed by Carl Schmitt, who claimed ‘all significant concepts of the modern doctrine of the state are secularized theological concepts’.¹

Therefore, in this case, as many secular intellectuals have portended, religion did not disappear. If anything, it is witnessing a resurgence with renewed vitality through the institution of state² (in the case of India) and is flowing underneath as gushing waters with heavy current. A sociological commitment reveals that society and religion are inextricably linked.³ However, the more one seeks to insulate it from societal matters, the deeper it creeps in and takes root.

¹ Maria Pia Lara, “Is the Postsecular a Return to Political Theology?”, in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 73–4. Cf. Footnotes 9. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theological: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 36.

² For my purpose I refer to the Indian scenario where political parties strongly identify themselves to Religion. Also see: Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India’s Future*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 152–185.

³ Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. II*, trans: Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 43–77.

Arguably, there is no other element of society that exerts such a strong impact on individuals than religion itself. The semantic inheritance of religion influencing the societal pillars of morality and ethics is indubitable. Religion is unique in that it imparts a collective consciousness and unifies people while simultaneously excluding those who do not belong to it. In that sense, its proclivity as a divisive instrument is self-evident.

Today, many political agendas focus on placing religion at the forefront of their political discourse because its trenchant proclivities can capture the minds of the people and gain precedence over the sentiments of the common folk.⁴ Conquerors in history have very often attempted to impose their own religion on the people they conquered upon so that it would leave behind a residue of collective consciousness, which made it easier later for them to rule without great opposition.⁵ A poignant example is the idea of dividing India postulated on religion, which arose ever since the 1930's among the Muslims (Jinah as the pioneer),⁶ which demonstrates the extent to which religion can unite and divide people at the same time.

The visceral attractiveness of religion can capture people more easily than any other organization. It appeals greatly to the sentiments of the people that causes them to approach religion for answers to seek answers, solace, and succour. This is an exclusiveness of religion that no other elements of philosophy or science can replace.

As the greatest sense bracket, it not only provided the legitimation of social order, it also provided the individual with an unquestionably valid reservoir of patterns of interpretation with which all personal and social destinies could be meaningfully understood and explained – birth, death, family, profession, social position, moral judgements, private and public life.⁷

⁴ Cf. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*

⁵ History of Conversions in Germania, Roma, Britannia and Islamic Invasions. Adolf Harnack A, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten. Die Mission in Wort und Tat*, (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906), 261–267. Also see: Sebastian Ristow, “Frühes Christentum in Gallien und Germanien – Nachhaltige und unterbrochene Christianisierung in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter”, in *Christianisierung Europas: Entstehung, Entwicklung und Konsolidierung im archäologischen Befund*, eds. Orsolya Heinrich-Tamaska, Niklot Krohn, Sebastian Ristow, 73–94 (Regensburg: Schnell&Steiner, 2012).

⁶ Stephan Schlenzog, *Der Hinduismus* (München: Piper 2006), 388.

⁷ Bernd Schnettler, “Alltag und Religion”, in *Religion in der modernen Lebenswelt*, eds. Brigit Weyel and Wilhelm Gräb (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 88.
Als größte Sinnklammer sorgte sie nicht nur für die Legitimation gesellschaftlicher Ordnung. Sie stellte auch dem Individuum ein unhinterfragbar gültigeres Reservoir von Interpretationsmustern zur Verfügung, mit dem sich alle persönlichen und sozialen Schicksalhaftigkeiten sinnvoll verstehen und erklären ließen – Geburt, Tod, Familie, Beruf, gesellschaftliche Stellung, moralische Urteile, private wie öffentliche Lebensführung.

Religion promises its adherents a better life than the present one through the concept of eternal hope. In doing so, it links light-hearted people to those who constantly long for a spiritual way of life. This corresponds to the famous *charismatic* movements, which developed a newer concept that entails a mysterious healing movement of sorts in its centres. These centres of prayer and worship are referred to as charismatic healing centres. In the name of God, they promise an instant healing to all those who visit these places. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church, which is founded not only on the unshakable faith of the apostles but also on the strong philosophical underpinnings of Thomistic and other philosophical schools, has become a rather apparent supporter of these movements in recent decades. Religion is gradually being stripped of its rationality, which once used to be a human cognitive achievement. More alarmingly, some of its regressive elements are pushing the common folks backwards. Thus, religion sometimes gives an impression that it is becoming an instrument in slowing down the development of rational thinking and scientific temper. Any religion could oppose such progress of the human mind. Therefore, it is difficult to affirm with certitude that one particular religion stands against the ethos of modernization. In generalised parlance, it can be argued that every religion, in one way or another, serves as an agent against modernization. Religions, which are strongly premised on the cultural ground, or identify themselves with a particular land and culture, for instance, Hinduism and Islam, are struggling to make the requisite transition towards modernization. On the surface, this might probably capture the attention of only a small percentage of people. Nevertheless, this small percentage apparently has a greater influence because the greater percentage is either tepid, or remains voiceless, or because the small percentage is routinely exploited by the politicians to accomplish their often-nefarious goals, thus offering them an extended platform.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to acknowledge the vital role that religion plays in Indian society. It is seemingly impossible to separate this religious consciousness from an Indian's psyche, albeit with few exceptions. As a matter of fact, it reflects itself in most of the social and public areas of the Indian society. India is rightly associated with the undeniably robust Vedic culture and Upanishad philosophy, dating back to about the fifth to tenth century BCE. Although the sub-continent evolved from ancient times with a particular culture, philosophy and religious beliefs, she got exposed to the major and dominant religions of the world in the course of time through the encroaching mighty colonial powers, be it from the Persian world or the European world in the subsequent period. This resulted in the plurality of religions, which has had a tremendous impact on the development of society. Nevertheless, the new religions, which had entered the sub-continent, have caused both positive and negative

All German quotations have been translated and inserted into the body text, while the original wording can be found in the footnotes.

impact on the Indian people. It could be compared to present day Europe, which is experiencing a widespread influx of eastern religion. Although Christianity and Islam took their roots in India two thousand and fifteen hundred years ago, respectively, Indian society continues to struggle to reconcile with the contours of these foreign religions.⁸ This religious, and by extension, societal schism, is creating manifold challenges in India. Though it is projected to be one of the salient countries that contribute to the international proliferation of information and technology, or the world of medicine, one can hardly understand this phenomenon back home. Religious colouring that is fundamentalist in nature to every minute system seems to be the norm of the day. Religion is creeping into every aspect of society and sometimes appears to be an anti-modernistic agent. It does not allow people to think critically; on the contrary, it makes people more obsequious to the point that they prefer to reconcile with the status quo. Unfortunately, this is the situation among all the existing religions.

Therefore, with this background, the dissertation aims to illuminate the rational elements of religion and its interlacing with societal life. This research is particularly founded on the philosophy and views espoused by Jürgen Habermas, who, in the German philosophical circle, is considered one of the most important intellectuals of our times. Nevertheless, his presence and philosophy among religious circles, especially in the context of catholic philosophical centres in India, is not a very remarkable one. It would be onerous to identify outstanding Indian Catholic Philosophers or Theologians who credibly engage themselves with Habermasian philosophy of religion. Consequently, through this study, I intend to explicate the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas as an option oriented towards a critical study and living of one's own religion in the public sphere.

⁸ Cf. Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 17–51.

PART I: PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1 Research Question/Problem Statement

The Indian context is widely known to have a varied and integrated approach towards religion. By contrast, the western understanding of religion, especially that of Christianity, is rather different. Habermas sees Christianity as a religion that has successfully undergone enlightenment; the protestant reformation is a poignant example of this phenomenon. This implies that religion has already been reformed in the past and has altered its approach to gain acceptance in society. However, no religion that currently exists in India has not undergone this phase of enlightenment as in the western sense. Thus, I contend that religion in general needs to be revisited to better understand its role in society and in the lives of individuals. To illustrate, though Christianity in the western world has undergone reformation and enlightenment, apart from its tenants of faith, the core practice of Christian religion has remained unchanged in India. Western Christianity is open to rationality and an intellectual understanding of its faith. Christian religious practices are frequently questioned by the faithful themselves and do not escape trenchant criticisms from even the believers. Whereas in the Indian context, Christian religious practices are neither questioned by the believers nor do they reflect on religion's functioning in their societies.

How can the Indian society engage in a discourse about religion, which aims at arriving at a better understanding of religion that contributes to a secular and modern India? India is globally renowned for its profound philosophico-religious traditions in the world. People around the globe, are using the various methods of philosophies that originated in India to seek solutions for a plethora of problems ranging from self to that of society.¹ This is observed in various fields, where members of various western religions look towards Indian philosophical expositions as a panacea for their challenges. This approach is beneficial in that it gives them a different perspective of understanding their own religions. However, the various religious philosophies and traditions of India have been either buried, disregarded, or left in a state of confusion and disarray. It is ironic that even the foreign religions that entered the sub-continent seem to be gradually losing their rational and intellectual traditions in the public sphere. As a case in point, Christianity played an important role in the emancipation movements at various social levels. Its intellectual and rational traditions challenged some grotesque social and religious indigenous practices. Even to this day, society experiences its engagement in social movements;

¹ Yoga, Buddhism, etc.

but the propensity for acquiescing to religious superstitions and social inequalities based on caste, language, region and rite continues unabated.

Therefore, I claim that in India, all religions have remained stagnated religion when it comes to their role in the public sphere. There is a perceptible absence of intellectual comprehension of religion, which is definitely a problematic attitude that could exacerbate religious fundamentalism in India.² To make matters worse, religion is apparently concentrating more on external practices than its intrinsic attributes, which sometimes become a burden to its adherents as well. It prevents people from thinking beyond their given social structures and systems. Within such a framework, I see that it is necessary for the people of India to question the existing religious scenario in the country. And how one could alert the public about religious practices that do not go beyond mere rituals and festivities?

Weber plainly stated that Hinduism, because of its otherworldly nature and metaphysical orientation, limited the development of a spirit of enterprise and innovation, which was instrumental in the development of capitalism in the West. He argued that the development of capitalism in the West was facilitated by Christianity; Hinduism instead stood in the way because it was opposed to the spirit of entrepreneurship.³

In what follows, I will enumerate the problem denotes the background for my research. It is classified into four areas; wherein religion apparently functions as a negative vibe to the society when it is practised without a proper intellectual or rational understanding of itself. Here, I will try to base myself on the facts and events, which speak for themselves, in expounding on how religion is lived today.

1.1 Religious Exclusions

To elaborate on the challenges associated with religion, I would like to commence with the phenomenon of exclusion based on religion. Though religion unites people, it is more than capable of dividing people. In order to elucidate this phenomenon, I shall refer to Rajeev Bhargava and his thesis concerning religious exclusions. He opines that there are two models of

² Religious riots: Gujarat (1992), Mumbai (1992–93), Odisha (2008). Also see: Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*.

³ Swapan Pramanik, "*The Sociology of Religion in India*", in *The Sociology of Religion in India, Past, Present and Future*, eds. Ferdinando Sardell and Ruby Sain (New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, 2013), 59.

exclusion related to the area of religion: Religious exclusion and religion-based exclusion.⁴ For the purposes of this study, I am more concerned about the problem of religious exclusion than religion-based exclusion.

Religious exclusion is mainly based on personal religious beliefs, traditions and practices. Elaborating on this type of exclusion Rajeev alludes to one of the deadliest practices in India, untouchability.

For centuries, in India, a religious sanction has been granted to the horrendous practice of untouchability that excludes Dalits from, say, entry into Hindu temples. I call these instances of internal religious exclusion. The suppression of internal religious differences or dissent is also a form of internal religious exclusion.⁵

Though this practice is not visibly practiced in our times on a large scale, it continues to exist in various other forms. Untouchability was originally a practice based on Hindu religion that refers to ‘contamination’ caused by a member of lower castes. While this aspect of contamination is not openly expressed today, people of higher castes still tend to avoid members of lower castes. Sometimes, their involvement in auspicious public occasions is also prevented. This is also expressed in inter-caste marriages or inter-rite nuptials. If a person from one’s own religious community establishes a relationship with a person of another cast, religion, or even rite, they are, in most cases, excommunicated from their religious communities and even disowned by their own families.⁶ More shockingly, “this form of exclusion is also found in the professedly more egalitarian religions such as Christianity. The Pulaya Christians of Kerala, who were formerly untouchable Hindus, are still treated as untouchables by the Syrian Christians.”⁷

The second type of exclusion that Rajeev refers to is religion-based exclusion. It is an “exclusion of people from the wider, non-religious domain of liberty and equality (citizenship rights).”⁸ This type of exclusion is mostly experienced by members of religions that are not of Indian origin, such as Christianity and Islam. Civil benefits namely economic and political are denied on the grounds that they belong to foreign religions. But in the context of the concern that this study aims to address, these internal exclusions are worrying because the religious members themselves do not have a sound understanding of their religion.

⁴ Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India’s Secular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 240.

⁵ Ibid, 220.

⁶ Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (Amsterdam: Radopi, 2002), 179.

⁷ Bhargava, *The Promise of India’s Secular Democracy*, 243.

⁸ Ibid, 220.

Religious exclusions, which begin within one's own communities, gradually spread their tentacles by distancing themselves from other religions and then claiming superiority of one's religion over the other. Such attitudes sow the seeds of religious aggression or religious persecution. It assumes different forms such as attacking their places of worship, families, houses, educational centres, etc. Nonetheless, such behaviour is likely to be unrestrained because one tries to mix up religion and nationalism, as evidenced in the case of RSS in India, or other forms of religion-nationalistic movements in various parts of the world.⁹ This creates a fertile ground for religious fundamentalism, which is how I would like to expound on religion as a problem.

1.2 Militant Truth Claim

From the above-mentioned exclusivism, one can arrive at doctrinal exclusivism, also referred to as religious fundamentalism. The events surrounding September 11, 2001, led Thomas Schirrmacher to analyse such terrorist attacks as religiously fundamentalist attitudes. He poignantly defines this fundamentalism as: "What is meant in common parlance with the word 'fundamentalism' is, however, a militant truth claim, and precisely that is what I find to be the shortest definition"¹⁰

This is a phenomenon that is more or less visible in all religions.¹¹ It is more apparently experienced by religions that claim to be the repositories of absolute truth. Until very recently, the Catholic Church has constantly held on to such an attitude, in matters of doctrine and even further proclaimed it confidently. The Catholic Church has excluded salvation outside of her boundaries and she is the sole container of all truth.¹²

Fundamentalism is a militant truth claim, which derives its claim to power from non-disputable, higher revelation, people, values, or ideologies. It is aimed against religious freedom and calls for peace; it justifies, urges, or uses non-state or state-based

⁹ Ibid, 228–9.

¹⁰ Thomas Schirrmacher, *Fundamentalism: When Religion becomes Dangerous*, eds. Thomas K. Johnson and Ruth Baldwin, trans. Richard McClary (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013), 13.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, "An Awareness of What is Missing", in *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Jürgen Habermas et al, eds. Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 20.

¹² Inquisition Age, Colonial Ages when masses were forced to convert to Christianity. Areas like Goa in India have experienced the most mass conversion both by force and allurements. Missionary groups in India that speak outrageously against Hindu Faith and practices. Such attitudes could be grounded on religious teachings. Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 3. Art. 846.

non-democratic force in order to accomplish its goals. In the process, it often invokes opposition to certain achievements of modernity in favour of historical grandeur and bygone eras, all the while using these modern achievements mostly in order to extend and produce a modern variation of older religions and worldviews. Fundamentalism is the transformation of a religion or worldview conditioned by modernity.¹³

Karen Armstrong sees fundamentalism as “embattled forms of spirituality and militant piety”.¹⁴ Religious wars, which human history has experienced, have been primarily sanctioned by religious authorities that presented strong faith-based justifications.¹⁵ A similar justification is also provided in cases of societal oppression and discrimination. Religious fundamentalists take their authority directly from the sacred texts of their religion. This obviously demands an uncompromising subservience to a way of life. As a result, they do not consider and recognize the validity of secular authorities. Instead, the only law that governs them is the Law of God.¹⁶

A key characteristic shared by all religious fundamentalists is their commitment to a collective and individual identity based on the affirmation of ‘certainty’ in ‘essential, core values’ sourced from religious texts perceived to be valid for all time, in contrast to the loose and shifting values undergirding individual identities in the 21 century.¹⁷

India is replete with the challenges associated with the combination of religion and ethnic fundamentalism. There is a tendency to protect one’s culture and ethnic identity, which, in turn, is strongly connected to a particular religion. This is particularly experienced in the northern and central parts of India. “It is not unusual for ethnicity and religion to combine, as in Hinduism. Hindu Fundamentalism is ethno-nationalist as well as religious. The two spheres are not neatly separated.”¹⁸ However, fundamentalism inevitably gives rise to violence, especially when it comes to attaining fundamentalist religious goals. Violence driven by religious

¹³ Schirrmacher, *Fundamentalism*, 14.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Krishna Kumar, “Religious Fundamentalism in India and Beyond”, *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), 29, <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol32/iss3/10>.

¹⁶ Priyadarsini Samantaray, “Global Rise of Religious Terrorism: A Reflection in India”, *ECONSPEAK: A Journal of Advances in Management IT & Social Sciences* 7, no. 7 (July, 2017), 20, https://www.academia.edu/34200359/GLOBAL_RISE_OF_RELIGIOUS_TERRORISM_A_REFLECTION_IN_INDIA.

¹⁷ Pradip Ninan Thomas, *Strong Religion, Zealous Media Christian Fundamentalism and Communication in India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2008), 12.

¹⁸ Kumar, “Religious Fundamentalism in India and Beyond”, 10.

fundamentalism is not a new phenomenon in India. It has seen a number of such incidents, especially in the post-independence era. Two prominent examples include the persecution of Kashmiri Pandits by the Muslims between 1989 and 1991 followed by the Ayodhya Controversy in which members of both (Muslims and Hindus) religious groups had to face a terrible loss.¹⁹ The dispute is centred on a plot of land in Ayodhya, which is regarded by the Hindus to be the birthplace of the Hindu God and King Ram.

These two models demonstrate how problematic religion and its role in the public sphere could be. At this point, it would be pertinent to explicate another problematic aspect of religion via the model of Reactionary Modernism.

1.3 Reactionary Modernism

As discussed above, the tenets and purpose of religion could easily be subverted by fundamentalist conceptions. The present point pictures how modernity could be hijacked by religion without being itself essentially modern.

According to Meera Nanda, the concept of reactionary modernism is rooted in religious beliefs. She presents the case that the Hindu religious extremists attribute the success of modern science to the scriptures of India. She, being a scientist, refers to this attitude as reactionary modernism (RM).²⁰ This term RM could be traced, according to Nanda, to Jeffrey Herf (1984).²¹ Against the backdrop of the Nazi regime, Jeffrey addresses the deadliest nationalistic phenomenon.

¹⁹ Ramachandra Guha, "The Multiple Tragedies of the Kashmiri Pandits", *Hindustan Times* (8. September 2019), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/the-many-tragedies-of-the-kashmiri-pandits/story-8QKwIRf8ZrsfxhXlqwUEMM.html>.

²⁰ Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward. Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 52–93.

²¹ Jeffrey Herf, "Reactionary Modernism, Some ideological origins of the primacy of politics in the Third Reich", *Theory and Society* 10, no. 10 (November 1981). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00208269>. "Reactionary modernism contributed to the nazification of the technical intelligentsia, thus facilitating the pursuit of a racial dogma at the expense of the minimal formal rationality and not so ideologically committed stratum might have possessed. The accomplishment of the reactionary modernists can be summarized as follows: They placed modern technology within the political discourse of German nationalism, that is, of Kultur, and removed it from that of enlightenment, reason, and civilization." (Herf, "Reactionary Modernism, Some ideological origins of the primacy of politics in the Third Reich", 821). "My analysis of reactionary modernism is directed against the "fundamental underestimation" of the importance of ideology in general, and Nazi ideology in particular" (Herf, "Reactionary Modernism, Some ideological origins of the primacy of politics in the Third Reich", 824).

Herf succeeds very convincingly in hammering out the inherent logic in the world-view among an influential group of thinkers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a logic he refers to as reactionary modernism. Their thinking separated technological results (and their aesthetic forms) from their background in modern natural science.²²

Meera Nanda considers this model to explain the prevailing political attitudes in India espoused by some Hindu Parties and Hindu Nationalistic Parties. These groups do not deny modern principles such as democracy, science and secularism; on the contrary, they become hyper motivational about these western ideals being rooted in their Hindu Scriptures.

(T)his seemingly hyper-modern attempt at translation of modern secularism ... and scientific worldview ... into the language of Hindu dharma actually subverts the task of creating a secular and humanistic worldview that can support the values of a tolerant and plural democracy.²³

In wake of the Ayodhya Conflict and the ubiquitous success of nuclear bombs, these religious fundamentalists project themselves as having an upper hand. In both instances, the fundamental ideology is to establish Hindu supremacy. For the purposes of this dissertation, I would call it a religious supremacy. Their intention is to bring Hindu gods, scriptures and traditions to the forefront.

The ideologies of Hindu nationalism and many ordinary people on the streets claimed that the bomb was foretold in their sacred book, the Bhagvad-Gita, in which the god Krishna declares himself to be ‘the radiance of a thousand suns, the splendour of the Mighty One. ... I have become Death, the destroyer of the worlds.’... the nuclear tests were a religious experience in which they saw ‘the triumph of divine power ... the working of providence, grace, revelation and a history guided by an inexorable faith.’²⁴

Thus, espousing such views threatens the very secular fabric of the nation. These ideologies are not only detrimental for the survival of secularism; they also impede the, progressive lifestyle

²² Uffe Ostergaard, “Reactionary Modernism And Nazism In Germany: Inevitable Destiny Or Chance?” *German Studies Newsletter*, no. 5 (1985), 46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23733944>.

²³ Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward. Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*, 54.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 54. Cf. William Harman, “Speaking about Hinduism and speaking against it”, in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68 no. 4 (2000), 733–740.

of the common people. Similar attitudes of religious bigotry exists in all religions in India which poses a threat to scientific temper and progressive thinking.

Like the aggressive, militaristic version of god Rama, Bharat Mata, the patron goddess of India, or the “atomic Ganesh” – they are carefully dressed up with the sanctity borrowed from the old and dearly loved gods. It is the continuing potency of religion, its power to call the masses to arms and justify acts of violence and intolerance as righteous that is of concern [...] This does not show that something is inherently wrong with non-western religions. It merely shows that these societies have not yet had the revolution in values that are needed to create a liberal, secular culture.²⁵

1.4 Inadequacy of ‘Ratio’ in Religion

In each of the above-mentioned situations, the problematic elements of religion are highlighted. These situations have a common pattern whereby religion is separated from its rational traditions and used as an instrument to implement either individualistic or sectarian ideologies. In an attempt to accommodate fundamentalist attitudes, any religion loses its rational approach or traditions.

With regard to religion, the European model could be, to some extent, taken into consideration as possessing characteristics of rationalistic and secularistic components in the public sphere. With the genesis of the Lutheran Reformation in Germany and the Anglican Reformation in England, religious life in Western Europe apparently gave rise to a religion that wanted to extricate itself from elements that are associated with reasonableness and rationality. Naturally, this was expressed through agitations, reformations, and revolutions; many lives were also lost in this process. However, it presented an opportunity to question individuals’ own faiths, religious practices and traditions. It was tantamount to marching towards an enlightened faith.²⁶ If societies do not undergo a process of questioning individuals’ religion and its traditions, it could lead to the above-mentioned problems. In essence, it would lead to the problem of religious freedom, in which members of minor religious communities will have to face a gamut of challenges, including bloody persecutions. Political hijacking of religion obviously is deeply embedded in our societies, especially India, but if the masses themselves are

²⁵ Ibid, 63.

²⁶ Keith Ward, *Religion – gefährlich oder nützlich*, trans. Bernardin Schellenberger (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 2007), 174–5.

educated about the desirable attitude associated with an individual's own religion, the chances for religiously motivated societal disturbances will certainly reduce.

Religious fatalism believes that all events are predetermined so that man is powerless to alter his destiny. It affects a number of religions, especially Islam. If a daughter is sick, saying 'It is the will of Allah if she dies,' it should not preclude calling a doctor. As another case in point, Lalu Prasad, the Indian railways minister from 2004 to 2009 was a Hindu. He exhibited a dangerous fatalism when he blamed India's bad transport safety record on a god: 'Indian railways are the responsibility of Lord Vishwakarma, so is the safety of passengers. It is his duty, not mine.' Fatalism can be an excuse for defeatism, laziness and not trying.²⁷

Therefore, I would like to adduce Jürgen Habermas in presenting my case against similar irrational connotations of religion in modern societies. As this case stresses the need for religious reasoning, I see the inherent necessity to undertake an analytical study of the role of religion in human society, especially in the Indian context. Thus, to embark on such a discourse, Jürgen Habermas is considered to be one of the important figures of our times, whose philosophy of religion would contribute towards a progressive Indian religious thinking.

²⁷ Bernard Charles Lamb, *Human diversity: Its Nature, Extent, Causes and Effects on People* (Singapore:World Scientific Publishing, 2016), 35.

2 Thesis Prospect: Reasoning Religion

2.1 Habermas as a Conceptual Source for a Postmetaphysical Approach

After having illuminated the problem of religion becoming a burden to society and the root cause of several wars and riots, I wish to present the philosophy of Habermas as an alternative through which religion can play a constructive role in the public sphere. This approach would allow us to understand religion as a contributor to human society and human cognition. It is vital to recognize the fact that religion is the cornerstone and progenitor of human rationality.²⁸ The foundations of various religions based themselves on reason, knowledge and faith, whose sole aim was to enlighten humanity.

[...] the task of influencing society and its leadership elites in such a way whereby human coexistence in freedom and justice is devoid of violence cannot be accomplished without detailed knowledge of the structural make-up, constitutive processes and historical genesis of complex social systems.²⁹

The views of Habermas that religious semantic contents foster the establishment of human rights and protection of nature, to ensure justice and righteousness form the foundation on which the edifice of a positive and rational religion in the public sphere could be further constructed.

²⁸ Habermas considers Religion as the ‘*Vorstufe*’ of Reason. “Die Religion wird mit Blick auf Emil Durkheim, George Herbert Mead und Max Weber als Vorstufe der Vernunft thematisiert.” Klaus Viertbauer, “Von der Säkularisierungsthese zur postsäkularen Gesellschaft”, in *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber (Darmstadt: WBG, 2017), 12.

²⁹ Markus Wirtz, *Religiöse Vernunft* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2018), 281.
[...] die Aufgabe, auf die Gesellschaft und ihre Führungseliten so einzuwirken, dass menschliches Miteinander in Freiheit und Gerechtigkeit ohne die Ausübung von Gewalt möglich wird, ist nicht zu leisten ohne eine detaillierte Kenntnis vom strukturellen Aufbau, den konstitutiven Prozessen und der historischen Genese komplexer Sozialsysteme.

The man's likeness to God into the same and unconditionally respectable dignity of all human beings opens up the content of biblical terms to a general audience of non-believers and unbelievers beyond the boundaries of a religious community. Walter Benjamin was someone who sometimes succeeded in such translations.³⁰

Religion alone possesses this rational semantic inheritance to our society. Therefore, instead of overlooking this rational inheritance in India or exploring a conscious rejection of religion in the west, we would do well to recognize the religious foundation of our society.³¹ However, in some of his recent writings, Habermas naturally focuses on religion more from a western perspective. But in general, one can decipher a strategy of analysing various world-views with universal acceptance in his texts. In *The Theory of Communicative Actions*, Habermas speaks about the development of religion in the context of societal rationalizing. In doing so, he refers to Weber, Durkheim and Mead. Habermas reconstructs this rationalization process and demonstrates how the ethics of fraternity or brotherhood, which are rooted in Judaeo-Christian traditions, were imbibed into communicative ethics.³²

Habermas warns western society not to do away with religion; instead, he wants us to consider its deeply-embedded, rational semantic contours which served as a foundation in maintaining a just human society.

Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of communal life. In corresponding political debates, this potential makes religious speech a serious vehicle for unravelling possible truth, which can then be translated from the vocabulary of a particular religious community into a generally accessible language.³³

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und Religion*, (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 32.

Die Übersetzung der Gottesebenbildlichkeit des Menschen in die gleiche und unbedingt zu achtende Würde aller Menschen ist eine solche rettende Übersetzung. Sie erschließt über die Grenzen einer Religionsgemeinschaft hinaus den Gehalt biblischer Begriffe einem allgemeinen Publikum von Andersgläubigen und Ungläubigen. Walter Benjamin war einer, dem solche Übersetzungen manchmal gelangen

³¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II (PT II)*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 14.

³² Wirtz, *Religiöse Vernunft*, 337.

³³ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion (BNR)*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 131.

In this manner, he makes religious traditions available to both religious and non-religious citizens.

The term “postmetaphysical religion” indicated in the title of my paper captures the religious philosophy of Jürgen Habermas. This term allows us to understand various nuances of Habermas’ reflections on religion and its role in the public sphere. As Habermas opines in BNR,³⁴ postmetaphysical philosophy should engage present-day religion, and it should do so with what he refers to as a dialogical approach. According to this approach, there should first be a dialogue between religious and non-religious on a cognitive level. This prevents both groups from being judgemental and recognizes the rational elements present in both schools of thought.

Postmetaphysical thinking is not the abolition, outbidding or replacement of religion. It does not represent a higher form of rationality than religion per se; instead, is the philosophical-historical counterpart to enlightened faith. While ‘postmetaphysical’ marks a genealogical point of development, the ascription ‘postsecular’ denotes a sociological context.³⁵

This could be further used within the context of religious fundamentalism, where the religious members could be familiarized with the cognitive contents of their own religious traditions. The relationship between religion and science has been tense in the recent past, especially when we consider the development that took place in the twentieth century. However, this apparent discordance makes it more philosophically nuanced and receptive. An analysis of Niklas Luhmann’s pragmatic development of the ethnological, psychological investigations and especially functional religious sociology makes it possible to understand important views ingrained in the social and pragmatic meaning of religious praxis. It could be partially compatible with the main thesis of pragmatism in the religious philosophy of Dewey and William James. Religion allows itself to investigate its pragmatic and meaningful constitutive function in wake of the unavailable conditions of human life.³⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff suggests:

³⁴ Ibid, 245.

³⁵ Stephan R. Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*, Religion in Philosophy and Theology 86, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 55.

Das nachmetaphysische Denken ist nicht die Aufhebung, Überbietung oder Ablösung der Religion. Es stellt keine gegenüber der Religion per se höhere Rationalitätsform dar, sondern ist das philosophiegeschichtliche Pendant zum aufgeklärten Glauben. Während nun ‘nachmetaphysisch’ einen genealogischen Entwicklungspunkt markiert, bezeichnet die Zuschreibung ‘postsäkular’ einen soziologischen Zusammenhang.

³⁶ Schnettler, “Alltag und Religion.”

Habermas thinks that to understand the relation between post metaphysical philosophy and present-day religion, we must remember that both had their ultimate origins in that same axial age. The project of what he calls Postmetaphysical philosophy is somewhat misleading for identifying the sort of philosophy he has in mind. However, post metaphysics is not opposed to metaphysics ... rather this project refrains from making and assessing metaphysical and comprehensive ontological pronouncements.³⁷

Though India cannot be considered a postsecular society in the generally-accepted sense, a deeper analysis of the societal context does bring the country closer to the parallel level of a postsecular society. As Habermas suggests, it is important to adopt this postmetaphysical approach in a postsecular society, wherein a dialogue occurs at the cognitive level.³⁸ This is aptly summarized by Klaus Müller in his essay: Habermas und die neue Metaphysik.

Habermas has been talking about the post-traditional appropriation of religious traditions, which is necessary for the continuation of the project of enlightenment, for much longer. Since the *Paulskirche* speech, however, this has been done with an explicit positioning of the religious option as a rational position sui generis in the horizon of plural socialisation, provided the following conditions are met: Firstly, the religious consciousness must cognitively process the encounter with other denominations and other religions. Secondly, it must adjust to the authority of sciences, which hold the social monopoly on world knowledge. Finally, it must accept the premises of a constitutional state based on profane morals. Without this impetus for reflection, monotheisms in ruthlessly modernised societies unfold a destructive potential.³⁹

³⁷ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue”, in Habermas and Religion, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 92–93, 95. Cf. Habermas, BNR, 140.

³⁸ Habermas, BNR, 137.

³⁹ Klaus Müller, “Habermas und die neue Metaphysik. Konvergenzen und Divergenzen mit Dieter Henrich und Michael Theunissen”, in *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Gruber Franz (Darmstadt:Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017), 109–10. Cf. Footnote 23. Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 14.

Von der für eine Fortsetzung des Projekts der Aufklärung nötigen posttraditionalen Aneignung religiöser Überlieferungsbestände hat Habermas ja schon sehr viel länger gesprochen. Seit der Paulskirchen-Rede aber geschieht das unter ausdrücklicher Lozierung der religiösen Option als einer vernunftfähigen Position sui generis im Horizont pluralischer Vergesellschaftung, wenn folgende Bedingungen erfüllt sind: Das religiöse Bewusstsein muss erstens die Begegnung mit anderen Konfessionen und anderen Religionen kognitiv verarbeiten. Es muss sich zweitens auf die Autorität von Wissenschaften einstellen, die das gesellschaftliche Monopol an Weltwissen innehaben. Schließlich muss es sich auf Prämissen eines Verfassungsstaates einlassen, der sich aus einer profanen Moral

2.2 Objectives of Research

Based on this basic understanding of Habermas' 'new interest' in Religion, I wish to extend my work focussing on the role of religion in the public sphere. Though the essay, '*Religion in der Öffentlichkeit*' is more Euro-American in context, the philosophy, ideology and methodology in this essay could also apply to a non-western society like India. Though he places more emphasis on differentiating between secular and religious, a hidden stress on plurality of religions is apparent. However, he says: "The introduction of the freedom of religion is the appropriate political answer to the challenges of religious pluralism. But the secular character of the state is a necessary but not yet a sufficient condition for guaranteeing equal religious freedom for everybody."⁴⁰ This is indeed is my area of interest, as I could extend Habermas' thought and apply him even to other societies. What does this actually mean to me in my research?

Secularization of European society originated as a result of the critical view of religion. This is exactly what is lacking in Indian society.⁴¹ Religion had been considered a field that is above scepticism or criticism. Be it Christianity, Islam or Hinduism in India, their adherers hardly take a critical stand towards their own religion. It is always this feeling of 'awe' towards religion or the accompanying superstitious beliefs that hinders them from being critical towards their own creed. Although prominent philosophies like Jainism and Buddhism were born in India as a result of their critical attitude towards their own Hindu Religion, modern society seems to be blissfully unaware of this fact. Truth be told, it is a rather delicate issue to be handled. Being an Indian, I cannot criticise Hinduism and its practices, especially when I am a Christian. Thus, I do recognize the importance of proposing an alternative outlook on religion and its role in India.

Authors like Kanchana Mahadevan work with themes such as postsecular in India. K. Mahadevan, in an article written in 2019, made a comparison between Habermas and Ambedkar.⁴² She critiques the non-rationalistic religious understanding within the circles of Hindu communities, thus making it appear that it is a matter of only one religion. I would adopt a

begründet. Ohne diesen Reflexionsschub entfalten die Monotheismen in rücksichtslos modernisierten Gesellschaften ein destruktives Potential.

⁴⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere", *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (April, 2006), 6. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.84.9609&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. Also see: Habermas, *BNR*, 114–149.

⁴¹ Here, I mean a critical view of religion in a generalistic sense as available in present-day India. It is not to be mixed up or conflated with various reformative personalities who existed in India.

⁴² Kanchana Mahadevan, "Rethinking the Post-Secular and Secular with Habermas and Ambedkar", *Cahiers d'Etudes Germanique* 74, (2018). <http://journals.openedition.org/ceg/2976>; doi: 10.4000/ceg.2976.

contrarian stance and contend that such non-rationalistic living of religion can be seen in all religions practised in India. For instance, Christianity is booming with its new Pentecostal communities, which do not preach anything else other than that Christianity is the true religion.⁴³ One cannot still deny conversions through allurements among the Christian churches. The Catholic Church itself is struggling with issues like caste, regionalism, *ritism*, which inexorably fosters exclusive attitudes. Each religion has its fundamentalist proclivities, albeit in unique ways. Therefore, the application of my study is to propose concrete situations and contexts, where religion could be worked out cognitively as Habermas suggests:

This arduous work of hermeneutic self-reflection must be undertaken from within the perspective of religious traditions. In our culture, it has been accomplished in essence by theology and, on the catholic side, also by an apologetic philosophy of religion that seeks to explicate the reasonableness of faith. Yet, in the final instance, it is the faith and practice of the religious community that decides whether a dogmatic processing of the cognitive challenges of modernity has been 'successful' or not; only then can believers accept it as a 'learning process'.⁴⁴

⁴³ Also see: Thomas, *Strong Religion, Zealous Media, Christian Fundamentalism and Communication in India*.

⁴⁴ Habermas, *BNR*, 138–9.

3 Methodology

3.1 Rational Reconstruction

One of the important scholars who worked on the methodology of Jürgen Habermas is J. Pedersen. This method is specific to the German historical school and is referred to as Rational Reconstruction. Habermas is best known for his discursive method, which is significantly developed in his magnum opus, *Theory of Communicative Actions*. Unlike the hermeneutical methods, this Rational Reconstruction (RR) concentrates on rules, “which actually underlie that are not known by the subject or the subject is not aware of these. However, the subject has the capacity by intuition to master them.”⁴⁵

Before we delve deeper into the integration of this method in his magnum opus, we can say that it could be referred to his work in 1962, which is known for the discourse about the public sphere. For a rational discussion that was necessary among the bourgeois, he opines that it is a necessity to begin by rationally reconstructing the inherent normativity inherent in different practices. According to Pedersen, Habermas uses this method “... without it always being equally clear what is meant. [...] More specifically, he commences with earlier theorists or theoretical positions, picks these apart, rectifies their errors, and coalesces them again.”⁴⁶ In order to approach the reality, he tries to combine both interpretative and explanatory approaches. However, this approach requires being descriptive and normative as well. Consequently, this comprises or deals with the reconstruction of the intuitive knowledge of the subject concerned.⁴⁷

What does RR try to unravel? It attempts to investigate and reveal the deep structures based on a set of rules similar to the production of meaningful linguistic expressions. This is considered the primary premise by Pederson for RR. “RR must [...] be assumed to explicate essential features of that which is being investigated.”⁴⁸ This process of RR seeks to uncover the dynamics of fundamental competencies whilst also helping us comprehend the process of development

⁴⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Sprachtheoretische Grundlegung der Soziologie*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 24–5.

⁴⁶ Jørgen Pedersen, “Habermas’ Method: Rational Reconstruction”, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 38, no. 4 (December 2008): 482, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393108319024>.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 9.

⁴⁸ Pedersen, “Habermas’ Method: Rational Reconstruction”, 463.

over time that gave rise to these fundamental competencies. When one investigates how rationality and reason have been developed in religion at various stages, it becomes easier to unveil layers of fundamental competencies.⁴⁹

[...] Contrary to empirical analytical sciences which seek to replace pre-theoretical knowledge with a more adequate scientific explanation, reconstructive sciences seek to understand and uncover the structures on which our pre-theoretical knowledge is built.⁵⁰

According to Habermas, based on the pluralism existing in the methodological approaches to social phenomena, one should not confine the discussion to a particular discipline. RR rests primarily on such theoretical and methodical pluralism.

One must remain open to different methodological standpoints (participant vs. observer), different theoretical objectives (interpretive explication and conceptual analysis vs. description and empirical explanation), the perspectives of different roles (judge, politician, legislator, client, and citizen), and different pragmatic attitudes of research (hermeneutic, critical, analytical, etc.).⁵¹

Pederson says that Habermas' intention in using this method is to establish a critical social theory. Such a social theory is made possible within the framework of two distinctive characters, which are, however, a consequence of RR. One is called the synchronic or horizontal analysis and the other refers to the diachronic or vertical reconstruction. In synchronic analysis, users themselves reconstruct intuitive or universal knowledge. "The crucial insight that Habermas reaches here is that there is a normative element in the way language is used, and that this normative element may serve as a critical standard against which actual communication may be measured."⁵² In the diachronic reconstruction, "the historical development of language use is subjected to a thorough reconstruction"⁵³ Thus, Habermas takes Hegel's historical element seriously. He also makes it clear that historical accounts are necessary to demonstrate that language undergoes a process of change over time and that language usage divulges the structures of consciousness embedded in it.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 464.

⁵¹ Ibid, 465. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contribution to a Discourse Theory on Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 6–7.

⁵² Ibid, 467.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Having thus presented the methodology that underpins the basic philosophy of Habermas, I would now like to elucidate how it would be applied in my research.

3.2 Application

My research is based on two pillars, namely, 1) social, philosophical and historical analysis of religion and 2) their contribution to the process of rationalization of society. The introductory chapters serve as a primal yet informative basis about religion and its development to incorporate Habermasian philosophy of religion to our societies. I find it pertinent to reconstruct the development of religion in our society, which can serve as a solution to many problems related to religious riots in our society. This can help us to de-fundamentalize the religious ideas and understand religion as an essentially societal phenomenon, which gives people a sense of belonging to a particular community into which they are bound by culture and language. To a great extent, western philosophical texts base themselves on logical conclusions, which, of course, cannot be denied by scientific research. However, dealing with a sensitive topic, I would like to rely on the Indian way of dealing with a philosophy which fundamentally does not differentiate itself from its religious texts. Therefore, the principles of RR are used to analyse the relationship between religion and society. In doing so, I aim to unpack the various developments in order to know the reality, especially in pursuit of the application to religion that currently exists in our society.

Habermas' religious philosophy is in the context of religious citizens and non-religious citizens. He extols the virtues and valuable contributions of religion so that the non-religious citizens could also profit from it. Therefore, his philosophy has a special context where religion (institutionalized Christianity) is apparently dying out (or being transformed). But could that also be applied in a multi-religious context, religiously pluralistic context where religion is an inextricable aspect of the lives of individuals?

Upon assessing the various aspects that Habermas explores about religion and its undeniably rich contribution to society and philosophy, one can also conclude that religion is indeed a blessing. However, it is also important to pinpoint exactly how it made its contribution to society. The religious wars, which are part of the history of humankind, on the contrary, inform us that religions have caused unleashed wanton and widespread devastation to humankind through catastrophic events such as wars. And the number of cruelties that have taken place in the name of religion is witness to this fact. That is why Habermas proposes that religion becomes a positive element when it is understood and practiced appropriately. His analysis of religion is mostly available in his later works, where he speaks of adapting an intellectual or rational religion that would avoid any fundamentalist approach to religions.

Therefore, a basic analysis of religion in the public sphere is counted vital which provides the setting to formulate a hypothesis about rational religion. This requires us to adopt a neutral approach to deconstruct the given phenomenon of religion in the public sphere and then investigate the possible instances of rational and non-elements attached to it. It is a known fact that India cannot be viewed as a post secular society in the western sense. It has not experienced the decadence and resurgence of religion. Nevertheless, it is vital to note how we can use the positive aspects of religion that Habermas proposes to respond to the societal problems caused by religion. Any attempt to hastily implement the western methodology of reformation of religion to the Indian context is likely to be a failure. Besides creating plenty of confusion and ambivalence, it can also trigger latent hostilities, towards modernism. On the contrary, if we solely analyse religious contents and their traditions embedded in rationality, we will give ourselves a better chance of understanding religion. This is what RR does in its process.

For this reason, following the methodology of Habermas, RR would help me to reconstruct the structures that underpin a robust comprehension of religion within the Indian context. Notably, this will further support the application of a postmetaphysical model of religion. Accordingly, my research aims at **consientizing** a socio-philosophical approach to religion in India to accelerate the modernity of religion in the public sphere, which is primarily based on the philosophical approach of Jürgen Habermas who evinces a special interest in the **socio-cognitive contents** of religion that grew up together with philosophy in the history of mankind.

3.3 Organization of the Study

Part I concentrates on presenting the various contexts that serve to illuminate elements, which could be considered potential reasons for the problem of religion in India. This begins with a short historical background of religion in India, and with the ways in which it comes into contact with foreign religions. In order to locate Habermasian philosophy, I shall, in the first part, focus on the aspect that Habermas directs his debate towards, namely, the Public Sphere. So I commence with defining the area where this debate would preliminarily take place. Then I proceed with presenting contexts within India that are parallel to that of Habermasian. This part comes to an end by an exposition of the challenges, which arise through an interplay between the contexts, thereby introducing the contested areas, which will be discussed with the help of Habermas' discourse on religion in the subsequent elements of my paper. After having contextualized the philosophical settings of the project, I proceed to explore the philosophy of religion based on Habermas' viewpoints that analyse the gradual development of his philosophy on religion, which then emerges as the content of Part II and Part III as described below.

Part II thus expounds on the conception of Habermas about religion and rationalization of society, which has a universal character. It deals with Habermas' views on religion as a sociological component and simultaneously on how one can comprehend the development of human cognition. This basic idea of Habermas is firstly illuminated via Durkhemian categories of religion and secondly by exploring the idea of axial age, as a cognitive leap, (with the help of Robert Bellah's research on the development of axial age) which strengthens the notion of developing human cognition that is expressed in a religious setting.

Part III of my research consists of Habermas' later philosophy of religion expressed through postmetaphysical thinking. This is accomplished by laying down the meaning and content of postmetaphysical approach, a term, which he uses to further develop the theme of religion. I then present Habermas' appeal to preserve religion and its rational cognitive contents in the secular world by means of translation. This section analyses how translation works by first finding parallels in Kantian categories and then by interrogating Habermasian proposals.

In Part IV, a secularistic approach to religion will be presented, which includes two authors, namely, Charles Taylor and Hans Joas. Based on the previous chapter that analyses Habermas' religion, these two authors expose secularism as being useful in the process of a reformative religion. More importantly, they help us to recognize the forgotten sociological meaning of religion, which forms the nucleus of postmetaphysical approach to religion. This analysis strives to present before society, a religion that has the capacity to be rational, intellectual, reasonable and genuine. Furthermore, secularism serves as the ambience in which Habermasian translation has a better likelihood of fructifying. It interrogates religion in the modern and secular world. This part presents religion in the secular world, not as an element that has lost its relevance for human society; instead, it stresses the importance of religion in the phase of secularity. It chiefly demonstrates the meaning and search of a genuine religion within a secular context.

Part V denotes an attempt to make the Habermasian religious philosophy relevant to Indian society. This includes some postmetaphysical models, which serve as parallels in connecting the Habermasian philosophy. In the later section of this part, I try to recapture the principles of Habermas, which could be applied to the Indian context irrespective of its apparent non-Habermasian secular context. Lastly, I seek to locate the area and context where these Habermasian challenges (principles), namely, a philosophico/theological responsibility, could be materialized. Thus, it will attempt to propose concrete groups of persons, who could take up the responsibility of this hermeneutical responsibility of self-reflection.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Habermas, *BNR*, 138.

PART II: CONTEXTUALIZING
HABERMAS IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS
SETTING

1 The Setting of Religion in India

1.1 Historical Background of Religion in India

This section is a starting point of the discussion on various historical contexts of India that exposes the problem of religion that is rooted in the past. This makes it possible to comprehend religion as what we know it today. This discussion encompasses the Indian understanding of religion based on the Hindu/Indian scriptures and the growth of this religion. It also investigates the encounter of indigenous religions with their foreign counterparts and their response to this maiden experience.

India is far too complex geographically, ethnically, linguistically and religiously to be able to say anything binding. Everything should be treated with caution. Millions of gods, a thousand castes, a hundred languages and dialects. Basically, Hinduism is not a uniform religion at all, but a potpourri of religions, doctrines and views of life, rites and cults, moral and social norms [...]. Thus the images chosen for Hinduism are similar: an impenetrable jungle, a sponge that absorbs everything, a net that catches everything, a banyan tree that is upside down because of the infinite number of roots from the branches grow into the ground.¹

The following table provides a clear picture that facilitates an understanding of the historical background of India:²

¹ Axel Michaels, *Der Hinduismus* (München: C.H. Beck), 1998, 17.

Indien sei geographisch, ethnisch, sprachlich, religiös viel zu komplex, um etwas Verbindliches sagen zu können. Alles sei mit Vorsicht zu genießen. Millionen Götter, tausend Kasten, hundert Sprachen und Dialekte. Im Grund sei der Hinduismus gar keine einheitliche Religion, sondern ein Potpourri von Religionen, Doktrinen und Lebensanschauungen, Riten und Kulturen, sittlichen und gesellschaftlichen Normen [...]. So gleichen sich die Bilder, die für den Hinduismus gewählt werden: ein undurchdringbarer Dschungel, ein Schwamm, der alles aufsaugt, ein Netz, in dem sich alles verfängt, ein Banyan Baum, bei dem alles verkehrt herum ist, weil unendlich viele Wurzeln von den Ästen in den Boden wachsen.

² Ibid, 28.

01.	Epoch	Till 1750 B.C.E.	Pre-Vedic Religions
02.	Epoch	1750–500 B.C.E. 1750–1200 B.C.E. From 1200 B.C.E. From 850 B.C.E.	Vedic Religion Early Vedic Phase Middle Vedic Phase Later Vedic Phase
03.	Epoch	500 B.C.E. – 200 B.C.E.	Ascetic Reforms
04.	Epoch	200 B.C.E. – 1100 A.D. From 200 B.C.E. From 300 A.D. From 650 A.D.	Classical Hinduism Pre-Classic Hinduism Zenith of Hinduism Later Period
05.	Epoch	1100–1850 A.D.	Sects: Hinduism, Islamic-Hindu syncretism
06.	Epoch	From 1850 A.D. From 1850 A.D. From 1950 A.D.	Modern Hinduism Neo-Hinduism Missionary-Hinduism

1.1.1 Religion as *Dharma*

Habermas' religious discourse is basically in relation to the understanding of religion in a Durkheimian sense of a church, an organized body, a community of believers.³ The following lines demonstrate the exposition of the concept of religion in a non-western sense, i.e., Indian. The modern Indian mind has borrowed the word religion from a foreign language. Anyone who looks into the languages of India would find it difficult to present any single word to translate 'religion'.

The very expression or invention of the term 'religion', is basically a vocabulary of the Christian European culture. As in any culture, religion refers to the area of human life pertaining to the relationship between man and a super human or absolute being called God. In the Indian scenario, there had to be a vocabulary to express this phenomenon.⁴ What a western mind understands under the term religion – everything connected or related to God, faith and

³ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans: Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

⁴ Ram Adha Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg, Eine interkulturelle Perspektive* (Freiburg / München: Karl Alber, 2013), 204–5.

rituals – is denoted by the term *dharmā* in the Indian languages.⁵ A word that is not equivalent to a western understanding of religion, as an organized one, with which the Indians were not familiar.

For Indians, religion represents the innermost core of self-experience and God-experience and is a matter of the heart. Religion as a cult, church, temple forms the outer shell. As the raindrops that fall from the sky flow down the many rivers into the ocean, so the various prayers addressed to the many gods reach the one God.⁶

This is nevertheless what an indigenous Indian would concur as well. It is a widely accepted theory mostly among Hindus. Hinduism distances itself from dogmatism in this manner if we want to make a comparison to a western religion, Christianity. More expressive in modern times, it has been palpable through the lifestyle of Gandhi and his philosophy. “Hinduism is not a system of fixed dogma or official exegesis. According to Gandhi, Hinduism is a quest, a path for the seeker to take.”⁷

Many Hindus identify their religion as *sanātana dharmā*, meaning eternal *Dharma*. The word *dharmā* is etymological related to the Latin terms *firmus* (fest, stark) and *forma* (Form, *Gestalt*). This form holds the world together and protects the *sanātana* Law that in turn is responsible for maintaining order in the world.⁸ *Dharma* is etymologically explained as something that binds all the phenomena, be it material or spiritual. Mahabharata says that *dharmā* assists people in reaching their goal *moksa* (heaven). It assists to fulfil one’s obligations, which are demanded in order that one can reach one’s destination, which is *moksa*.⁹

However, like western religions, the Indian religion too refers to a sphere, in which a divine entity becomes the centre of the system. However, this refers to theistic schools of religion.

⁵ Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Svami Pujyasri, *Hindu Dharma: The Universal Way of Life* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995), 660.

⁶ Ram Adhar Mall, *Der Hinduismus: Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 9.
Religion stellt für die Inder den innersten Kern der Selbst- bzw. Gotteserfahrung dar und ist eine Angelegenheit des Herzens. Religion als Kult, Kirche, Tempel bildet die äußere Schale. So wie die Regentropfen, die vom Himmel fallen, über die vielen Flüsse in den Ozean fließen, so erreichen die verschiedenen Gebete, die an die vielen Götter gerichtet sind, den einen Gott.

⁷ Ram Adhar Mall, *Studie zur indischen Philosophie und Soziologie, zur vergleichenden Philosophie und Soziologie* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1974), 124.
Der Hinduismus ist kein System festgelegter Dogmen bzw. offizieller Exegesen. Nach Gandhi ist der Hinduismus eine Suche, ein Weg, den der Suchende einschlagen kann.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ram Adhar Mall and Heinz Hülsman, *Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien, Europa* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1989), 222–3.

The *Vaishnavas* of the Vedanta, the *Nyaya Vaisheshikas* and even the *Advaita-Vedanta* are schools which link religion to a god. In western religion as well as in Islam, one can imagine heaven only within the context of religion and fundamentally with God. Thus, religion becomes a path that leads to heaven. On the other hand, unlike the west, Indian religion also accommodates atheistic schools, which too propose ways to heaven, albeit without the intervention of a divine being. Instead of looking towards a higher being called God, these spiritual paths pave the way for self-fulfilment, which refers to salvation and freeing oneself from the bonds of this life. That is how one can differentiate between the Semitic and Indian religions. “What unites all systems of thought regarding religion is the firm belief that religion is a path and leads to liberation and bliss, with or without God.”¹⁰ The fact that spiritual fullness of man could be achieved without God becomes evident if we precisely analyse Buddhism and Jainism as heterodox schools and even other orthodox schools such as *Samkhya* and *Mimamsa*. These are all pathways that show how one will be able to reach the goal and be set free from the bondage of this world. By contrast, salvation and freedom from sin is a possibility only through faith and belief in God for members of Semitic religion and generally to the western public.¹¹

Contrary to the western religions of revelation, the Indian religion is open to the possibility of God’s presence in this world as pluralistic. The famous Bhagvadgita verse speaks of the incarnation of God more than once. The divine appears in this world whenever injustice begins to spread its evil roots. “*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśhāya cha duṣhkṛitām dharma-sans-thāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.*”¹² On the contrary, western religion speaks of God’s presence in a historic context and Parousia, where the possibility of a second incarnation is completely suspended. “Die drei großen Offenbarungsreligionen lassen das eine Wahre, das eine Göttliche (*Religio perennis, sanatana dharma*) in einer bestimmten historischen Gestalt von Religion ausschließlich aufgehen.”¹³ The Indian subcontinent nevertheless believes in the re-incarnation of the divine and there is no one particular religion that can claim its climax. Therefore, it is evident that India cannot give or have the model of a central religious philosophy as conceived by the western. Owing to the status that Buddhism – without God – received

¹⁰ Mall, *Indische Philosophie: Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg. Eine interkulturelle Perspektive*, 204–205. Was alle Denksysteme in Bezug auf die Religion miteinander verbindet, ist die feste Ansicht, dass Religion ein Weg ist und zur Befreiung und Seligkeit führt, ob mit oder ohne Gott.

¹¹ Ibid, 205.

¹² Bhagvadgita 4:8.

To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to reestablish the principles of dharma I appear on this earth, age after age. <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/4/verse/8>:

¹³ Ibid, 204–5.

as a religion, it would be difficult to put the whole understanding of religion within the framework of a western religion.¹⁴

However, that is a myopic view because it pertains to the period before the European colonisers or even before Islam entered the subcontinent. After the advent of Islamic and Christian, cultures, the sub-continent gradually got used to the term or concept of an organized religion.¹⁵ Therefore, even India has become part of the other parts of the world, which centred themselves on particular religions, thus giving them their culture. In discussing this theme of religion in the Indian context, we would do well to consider the existence of various religions that existed in Indian for more than 1500 years.¹⁶ A period that is more than enough to make it indigenious.

1.1.2 The Aryan Invasion Theory

A very controversial theory among Indian historians is the Aryan invasion theory. This theory posits that even before the Muslim rulers and the modern colonists invaded India, a group of people called ‘the Aryans’ had already invaded the country in an earlier period.¹⁷ These people who are called Aryans have their origins in the Indo-European people. However, this group of people was further divided into Indo-Iranian, who subsequently became the Iranians and the Indians. This particular group named itself the Aryans or *Awairya* (skt. ārya), which means the noble ones. Moreover, as opposed to being characterized by a particular race, they are known for their belief in certain moral norms like being faithful to the treaties they made, hospitality towards both enemies and friends, truthfulness, etc. The historians in general claim that this migration took place in the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. beginning from Iran and progressing gradually towards India through Afghanistan. Consequently, it is believed that a bulk of this migration took place between 1700 and 1400 B.C.to India.¹⁸

This description is no more than a theory about the earliest known people of India. It does not distinctively elucidate their religious beliefs as what we know today i.e., Hinduism. But we can derive some of the elements, which were common to these civilizations like the term gods (*Devas*) or even the concept of sacrifice to these gods. Historians, however, demonstrate

¹⁴ Ibid, 207.

¹⁵ The presence of Thomas Christians, however, did not apparently make a drastic difference in the subcontinent, though they their presence could be dated back to the early first century.

¹⁶ Christianity: A.D 52, Islam: 623 B.C.E.

¹⁷ Schlenso, *Der Hinduismus*, 31–3. Also see: Jürgen Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. 1, 361.

¹⁸ Mall, *Studie zur indischen Philosophie und Soziologie*, 28.

a comparative culture of belief in gods as similar to that of ancient Rome, as Stefan Schlensoog cites Stietenron:

Thus there are deities “who belong to the Indo-Iranian language and cultural community, but remained alien to the rest of the Indo-European language area”: the Vedic god Mitra (Avestish; Mithra), who again gained importance in imperial Rome as Mithras ...¹⁹

This theory postulates that there had been an existing culture and tradition in the region of India, which was invaded by the so-called Aryans. These are known as the indigenous (*einheimischen*) who were considered the descendants of Harappakultur or the migrated Vedic Aryan race of the Indo-Aryan tribe in the *Rigveda* known as the *Dasa* or *Dasyu*, physically characterized as dark in complexion, snub-nosed, and more commonly described as those having a barbaric dialect.²⁰

By stating this theory, we are in fact coming closer to the reality of multiplicity of religious beliefs even from the ancient period of India. Today’s religious diversity in India is not a new phenomenon; on the contrary, the land has seen the cultivation of myriad belief systems as the nucleus of its culture. It was in the later period that the Vedic literature and the domination of the priests gave a commonality to these different belief traditions. Though this commonality was a much later phenomenon, it came to be known as one religion of the land.

¹⁹ Schlensoog, *Der Hinduismus*, 29–30. Cf. Footnote 8: H.V. Stietenron, Religionen, in: H. G. Franz, *Das alte Indien. Geschichte und Kultur des indischen Subkontinents*, München 1990, S. 177–244, Zit. S. 178. So gibt es Gottheiten, “die zwar der indoiranischen Sprache und Kulturgemeinschaft angehören, jedoch dem übrigen indoeuropäischen Sprachraum fremd blieben”: der vedische Gott Mitra (avestisch; Mithra), der im kaiserzeitlichen Rom als Mithras nochmals Bedeutung gewann ...

²⁰ Ibid, 31. Cf. Footnote 16.

The following foot note explanation is taken from the author of this book in order to present a profound explanation to the theory that has been denoted through these footnotes. The explanation is deemed to be essential to clarify the position of the actual indigenous who claim themselves as *dravidians*. (Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass es sich bei den Dasa/Dasyu um Nachfahren der Harappakultur handelt. Nach A. Michaels könnten mit Dasyu aber nicht nur indigene Industalbewohner, sondern auch indoarische Stämme gemeint sein, die vor den vedischen Ariern eingewandert sind; denn von ihnen wird nicht gesagt, dass sie die falschen Götter, sondern die Götter falsch verehren (*Der Hinduismus*, S. 51). So auch A. Parpola (referiert von T. Oberlies, *Die Religion des Rgveda*, Bd. I, S. 157), der die Dasyu als Mitglieder der ersten (allerdings mit 2000 v. Chr. zeitlich sehr früh angesetzten) vorvedischen arischen Einwanderungswelle identifiziert. Dagegen „läßt sich nicht beweisen, dass die Ureinwohner Draviden gewesen sind, also die Vertreter der heute in Südindien gesprochenen dravidischen Sprache“ (F. Wilhelm, *Art. Geschichte*, S. 92). Obwohl Dasa später in Rgveda, Sklave bedeutete, scheinen die Einheimischen von den Arieren wohl nicht einfach versklavt, sondern nach und nach – freilich mit niederem gesellschaftlichem Status – in die arische Bevölkerung integriert worden zu sein.)

1.1.3 The Indigenous Religion

The postmodern reality of ‘anything goes’ is an expression in which the Indian religion can be described. Nevertheless, one cannot name an Indian religion as the one religion to have always existed in the history of India. While India came into contact with many foreign religions, such as the Abrahamic religions, it is pertinent to note that these religions did not engulf the indigenous religiosity like in the other parts of the world. This proves that the indigenous religions were strong enough to preserve themselves. Furthermore, even Buddhism, could not expand effectively in its own land of birth despite the strong political support of King Asoka.

“It must therefore be internal criteria that determine the special ‘power’ and form of the Hindu religions.”²¹ Alex Michael considers this phenomenon as “der identifikatorische Habitus” or *the identifying habit*.²² Wikipedia gives us the definition Habitus as following: “is a system of embodied dispositions, tendencies that organize the ways in which individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it”. The Hindu religion is however bound especially through the descendants; the ancestry of individuals assumes great importance in India. This word Habitus is further explained as: “Habitus refers to culturally acquired attitudes, habits and predispositions as well as conscious, purposeful actions or mythological, theological or philosophical artefacts and mentefacts.”²³ Therefore, it could be imperatively suggested that the strong cultural oneness and their thinking pattern could have been an important factor in facing these foreign religions. The cognitive, together with normative and aesthetic aspects, constitutes a common social attitude, which leads to a solid orientation of being together.²⁴

In trying to pinpoint the exact indigenous religion in India, we commonly refer to Hinduism as the religion of the land or indigenous. But which of the many traditions that exist in India could be framed as Hinduistic? This is also a contentious matter among many Indians. According to some, Hinduism is just a coherent or an interrelated religion constructed by the west. The word Hindu is, however, a foreign derivate beginning from the Persian Muslim rulers who differentiated Muslims from the others. It is they who gave the name Hindu to the population

²¹ Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 19:

Es müssen also innere Kriterien sein, die die besondere Kraft und die Form der Hindu-Religionen ausmachen.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 21.

Habitus bezeichnet kulturell erworbene Lebenshaltungen und -einstellungen, Gewohnheiten und Veranlagungen ebenso wie bewußte, zielgerichtete Handlungen oder mythologische, theologische bzw. philosophische Arte- und Mentefakte.

²⁴ Ibid, 18–22.

living beyond the river Sindhu. And so, the European colonialists continued to use this term.²⁵ *Ergo*, only with difficulty and conventionally can 'Hindhu' be regarded as a religious name.

However, *Dharma* is also understood relatively according to each one's societal stand. The salvific character of this *dharma* is predicated on how each one takes *dharma* or lives *dharma* in the hope of having a better rebirth. This relativity of *dharma* is further explained by Axel Michaels in Hegelian terminology: "When we say bravery is a virtue, says the Hindoo, bravery is/is a virtue of the Kshatriyas (warriors)."²⁶ This relativity of *Dharma* is something very special to Hinduism. It is possible because every single social group that conveniently accommodates itself to this ethic in relation to *Dharma's* could be exchangeable. For the sake of further clarity, it can be inferred that the principle of *dharma* stands above an absolute claim. This principle stresses itself as a social thinking pattern in accordance with the habituality of a group. Therefore, this type of religious character almost gives us the picture of the diversity of religious groups and their understanding of religion in India.²⁷

Nevertheless, the indigenous religion has its basis in the Sanskrit texts and their *Brahmanic* traditions. To explore this religion in its details would be to enter into a bottomless abyss comprising gods and goddesses of various regions and social groups of the people beyond Sindhu. Therefore, we must confine ourselves to the Brahmin scriptures as the fundament of an indigenous religion. "For a long time, it was also customary to declare the traditions, mostly based on Brahmanic Sanskrit texts, to be the 'foundation' of Hinduism and everything else to be deviations or modernizations."²⁸ The authority of Vedas is however considered central to all these indigenous religious groups. Brian K. Smith opines that Hinduism is a religion whose people and their traditions are generated with a legitimate relation to the authority of the Vedas.²⁹

1.1.4 The Advent of Islam and Diversity of Religion

The Islamic invasion of India is considered one of the important phases that contributed to a hybrid Indian culture. Up until then, its monoculturalism had largely prevailed in India in the aftermath of the Aryan invasion. India had become a region of a multiplicity of gods and

²⁵ Ibid, 28.

²⁶ Ibid, 32. Wenn wir sagen, Tapferkeit ist eine Tugend, sagt der Hindoo, Tapferkeit sei eine Tugend der Kshatriyas (Krieger).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 34.

Lange Zeit war es auch üblich, die meist auf brahmanischen Sanskrittexten beruhenden Traditionen zum 'Fundament' des Hinduismus und alles andere zu Abweichungen oder Modernisierungen zu erklären.

²⁹ Ibid.

goddesses, however, based on the Vedic literature and subsequent scriptures like Bhagvadgita. This was characterized by belief in the multiplicity of gods and ritual practices.³⁰ The advent of Islam to India could be conceived in comparative terms of secularism in the west or even the early Christianity against the roman polytheism. Islam enters a land of a multiplicity of gods and it proclaimed just one God without a portrait or representation in human senses. Islam's ideology and religion was in stark contrast to India's many forms of divinities that were always expressed and portrayed in different human and animal forms. This mode of comprehension of religion and divinity certainly posed a challenge to the existing non-secularistic culture.

Islam, which is strongly identified with the Arabic region, did have traces of its Arabic presence in India even before the genesis of Islam. The sea trade that was quite common between India and Arabia made it easier for the later Islamic rulers to reach India before the Europeans landed. The first invasion took place in western India under the Caliphate of Caliph Omar (634–644). It is said that just as in other parts of the world where Islam was very vigorously conquering the lands, a strategic religious policy was adopted in India as well. From a Muslim point of view, both Hindus and Buddhists were polytheistic and factually considered non-believers. Instead of forcing these nonbelievers to convert³¹ as in certain regions with regard to Christians or vice versa, they allowed them to continue to practise their own religions and cultures and morality. However, this was permitted only after the payment of a special tax known as *jizya*.³² Thus, the Muslim rulers were able to gradually extend their empire throughout India by the middle of the twelfth century.³³

A noteworthy characteristic of this period was the openness and readiness of some Muslim rulers, who were not just interested in conquering India and bringing Islam. As a matter of fact, they were also philosophers and artists who promoted philosophical debates between the two cultures and religions.

³⁰ Cf. Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 222–246.

³¹ German Scholar Max Weber proclaimed Islam as *Kriegesreligion*. John F. Richards, a prolific scholar of Indo-Islamic history, shares this view. Andre Wink, "Perspectives on the Indo-Islamic World", Second Annual Levtzion Lecture, delivered 2 April 2006 at Tel Aviv University: The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies – The Institute of Asian and African Studies – The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2007), 4. (This is one of the Lektüre given by Prof. Norbert Hintersteiner in his seminar.), 2.

³² It is a per capita yearly tax historically levied on non-Muslim subjects, called the *dhimma*, permanently residing in Muslim lands governed by Islamic law. Ahmed Ziauddin and Ziauddin Ahmad, "The Concept of Jizya in Early Islam, *Islamic Studies* 14, no. 4 (1975): 293–305, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20846971>.

³³ Schlensog, *Der Hinduismus*, 290–1.

It stresses not conflict but accommodation between the expanding Islamic world and Indian societies in the medieval and early modern periods. It looks at Islam as India-oriented, mystical and inclusive rather than Mecca-oriented, prophetic and exclusive. Side-stepping military history, it focuses above all on peaceful conversion, on Sufism, and on cultural syntheses of Indian art and literature with Islamic elements.³⁴

The nature of Islam in the periods surrounded by the Akbarian rule favoured all the existing religions, including the new Christian religion that was entering India. Akbar's wish for inter-religious dialogue and mutual understanding has been encapsulated by Schlensoog as follows:

I wish ... that on a certain day all books and all religious laws are presented and that the scholars meet and have discussions so that I can listen to them and that everyone tries to make clear which is the truest and the most powerful religion.³⁵

With the advent of Islam, the indigenous religions were considered one religion – the Hindu religion³⁶ in contrast to the foreign religion – Islam. Nevertheless, these two religions represented not just their belief systems but also had their own cultural setup.

Islam has changed and shaped the cultural landscape of India like no other religion. The relationship between Islam and Hinduism still has an impact on politics on the subcontinent today, as it touches centrally on the national sentiment of both modern India and modern Pakistan.³⁷

The combination of Islam and Hindu ideologies made its presence felt on a variety of spheres, such as religion, art, music, architecture, literature, astronomy and mathematic. What one

³⁴ Wink, "Perspectives on the Indo-Islamic World", 4.

³⁵ Schlensoog, *Der Hinduismus*, 307.

Ich wünsche ..., dass an einem bestimmten Tag alle Bücher und alle religiösen Gesetze vorgelegt werden und dass die Gelehrten sich treffen und Diskussionen durchführen, so dass ich sie anhören kann und dass jeder klarzustellen versuche, welches die wahrhaftigste und die machtvollste Religion sei.

³⁶ The term Hindu "was adapted from Islamic and Persian sources who by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries spoke of "Hinduism", as the religion practiced by people on the "other side" of the Indus." Fred W. Clothey *Religion in India. A Historical Introduction* (Routledge: New York, 2006), 88.

³⁷ Schlensoog, *Der Hinduismus*, 315.

Wie keine andere Religion hat der Islam die kulturelle Landschaft Indiens verändert und geprägt. Das Verhältnis von Islam und Hinduismus wirkt bis heute in die Politik auf dem Subkontinent hinein, berührt es doch zentral das Nationalgefühl sowohl des modernen Indiens wie des modernen Pakistans.

experiences today in India as some of the historic icons as part of tourism, are largely also Islamic.³⁸

1.1.5 *Puranic* Process

In the wake of the emergence of foreign invaders entering the subcontinent, the natives felt a compelling urge to protect their own culture and above all, their religion. As explained above, the religion of the natives of the subcontinent was thoroughly different from that of the Islamic invaders. They felt threatened by the advent of a monotheistic culture trying to invade and make space for itself within the sub continental context. However, this awareness and fear of losing their stronghold on tradition and culture impelled the Brahmanic community to invent a new process of uniting the different tribal religions of the subcontinent. This was also the method they had used in the ancient period by introducing Vedas and the Upanishads. Apparently, they adopted the same strategy in protecting themselves and the subcontinent as well. “The Puranas grew into a vast corpus with some regionally identifiable texts, rich and variegated in their myths and forms of worship and even social norms suitable to the changing conditions.”³⁹

However, this process provided a protective cover against foreign invaders as well as the local born movements such as Buddhism and Jainism. It can be stated that this puranic process laid a foundation for the Hindu religion. More specifically, Sankara is said to have established the foundation for this process whereby a syncretic religion endeavoured to combat the challenge posed by Buddhism and Jainism in the post-Vedic period (600 B.C). Thus, it was an instrument of the Brahmins to unify the existing practices, beliefs and rituals of various regional folk forms. “The puranic process thus represents ‘an instrument for the propagation of brahmanical ideals of social reconstruction and sectarian interest, a medium of the absorption of local cults and associated practices and a vehicle for popular instructions on norms governing everyday existence.’”⁴⁰ It was a widespread phenomenon that involved Brahmins who were well versed in the Vedas as the donors of land grants, Brahmins who composed the Puranas, providing a “rich mythology around the major gods like Visnu and Siva, and Brahmana temple priests who followed agamic canons for temple rituals and worship.”⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid, 316.

³⁹ R. Champakalakshmi, “Sankara and Puranic Religion”, in *Ancient or Modern*, eds. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 48.

⁴¹ Ibid, 49.

This strategy of combating alien forces that threatened the Brahmanical religion was further extended and laid stronger foundations during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is ascribed to the great spiritual leader Sankara.⁴² However, other sources tell us that “it occurred during the Vijayanagara period which sought to restore temple worship and brahmstanical (Hindu) orthodoxy threatened by the intrusion of alien religions like Islam which affected the existing socio-political organisation.”⁴³

This entire mechanism can also be seen as a process of vedicization.⁴⁴ It was an attempt to include the widespread local tribal religions. This Purānizing of the other gods of various tribes was an attempt to lend credence to the Brahmanical emphasis that all the other religions had a Vedic-Brahmanic origin. It was portrayed as the sole source of all religions that would give a “pan-Indian character to all the regional and local cults”.⁴⁵

However, Champakalakshmi opines that the application of colonial and imperial laws to the Indian religious structures and systems led to the unification of various local and divergent faith traditions. It was advantageous for both the parties: the British and the locals. The locals now had their identity as a common Hindu folk that gave them a sense of pride of belonging to a strong religious tradition, namely, the Vedic tradition. At the same time, it became easier for the British imperial rule to deal with “the conflicting claims of different communities to socio-religious privileges and status hierarchy.”⁴⁶

1.2 Classification of the Society

1.2.1 The Religious Basis of Varna

Based on the Manusmriti, which serves as the basis of the division of society, caste or *varna* derives its origins in the Vedas. The word Varna originally meant colour and is different from how modern society currently views it. However, in the Vedic period, people were divided on the basis of their colour. “The earliest application to the formal division into four social classes

⁴² Champakalakshmi, “Sankara and Puranic Religion”, 71: “Later biographies of the seventeenth century follow a patterned imagination providing a mythical origin to Sankara. ‘Puranic’ and Āgamic texts give a highly mythologized account of Sankara, which is recurrent in later literature, namely, the idea that Sankara was incarnation of Śiva, born to rescue the Vedic faith and social ethos from the hostile attacks of diverse heterodox faiths, through an exposition of Advaita.”

⁴³ Ibid, 51.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 80–81.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

(without using the term *varna*) appears in the late Rigvedic *Purusha Sukta* (RV 10.90.11–12), which has the Brahman, Rajanya (instead of Kshatriya), Vaishya and Shudra classes forming the mouth, arms, thighs and feet at the sacrifice of the primordial Purusha, respectively.⁴⁷

The Aryans who entered the Indian subcontinent came into contact with the *Ureinwohner* who were dark complexioned. The Aryans who entered were white and originally did not create a schism between themselves and the dark complexioned people; instead they mixed openly with others. This became a matter of concern to the Brahmins, who saw that the society was moving towards *Gesetzlosigkeit* (adharmā). As a result, they invented various classifications in society, which is today known as the caste classification. In doing so, they pushed the native population to the lowest strata of society, naming them as *Dasyas*, the blacked skinned people.⁴⁸

According to the sources available, the ancient literature of India could be traced back to 1300 B.C. However, the appearance of the caste system does not seem to be very significant until the later Vedic ritual literature period from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. Interestingly, the earliest Rig-Veda period c. 1300–100 B.C. does not exhibit any signs of caste *system* that was included in this literature “though the elements out of which it developed were evidently in existence.”⁴⁹

However, caste is basically comprehended as a divinely ordained system. Indian society was given this understanding from the ancient period onwards wherein religious understanding and religious support of this system attained societal integration. Once it had garnered religious support, especially from the holy scriptures of the religion, acceptance grew faster without any resistance. The society which was chiefly dominated by the Brahmanic community owing to their knowledge of the Vedas and the authority that they possessed over the ancient scriptures, gave them the opportunity to organize society on a religious basis and more importantly, as a divinely inspired system. The theory that caste is based on religious ideas could, however, be supported by the analysis of Durkheim about religion by Célestine Bouglé.⁵⁰ It was put forward by the following citation from Alex Michaels: “The society-based belief system of the Hindu society-Dumonts “Church” (Frz. Eglise) was its caste system. Since then, the thesis that the caste system has been able to assert itself mainly on the basis of religious ideas has been

⁴⁷ Basham, Arthur Llewellyn. *The Origin and Development of Classical Hinduism* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 2.

⁴⁸ Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 180.

⁴⁹ A. A. Macdonell, “The Early History of Caste”, *The American Historical Review* 19, no. 2 (1914): 231, doi: 10.2307/1862285.

⁵⁰ Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 182.

repeatedly put forward.”⁵¹ Though the above historical background gives us an impression that caste system is basically founded on a religious comprehension of society, other scholars disagree. A study of certain researchers who stayed within villages experienced various factors that contributed towards this caste system. They deny the religious basis of this caste system owing to the following reasons: Contrary to popular beliefs, various castes do not represent social groups; rather, they are more cognitive concepts in social organization and hierarchy. These castes function as social system, albeit within certain limits. It is interesting to note that Brahmins alone do not belong to the dominant caste. On the basis that it provides to the social organization of the society, one can observe that caste offers individual talents, capacities or even goods in an exchangeable religious and economical system.

All these factors suggest that caste is not merely a religious based system; instead, it is founded on the aspect of “centrality, economic dominance and patronage”.⁵²

1.2.2 Varna as an Organization of the Society

The conclusion that caste is not a religious phenomenon gives rise to the further exposition of an organizational system. The following citation gives us an understanding of caste as a system of societal organization. This observation forms part of the missionary experiences of the early 20-century in India, where the missionaries were deeply involved in the societal activities of the poor strata of society:

Those who have the best qualities are called Brahmins. It is their duty to study and know Vedas and become gurus of those who should be taught. The next are with fair qualities and are named Kshatriyas, they may study Vedas but should not become gurus to teach others because their duties are of middling quality, if they are made gurus, they will create chaos of opinions. The third are inferior in qualities and are grouped together to be described as Vaishyas. They may read Vedas but should not become teachers because their intellects are dull. Now the small number of people left out of these three classes, in whom laziness and stupidity of the most extreme type prevails, cannot think and have no skill to pursue any profession, and to whom knowledge cannot be imparted, should

⁵¹ Ibid, 183.

Das von der Gesellschaft getragene Glaubenssystem der hinduistischen Gesellschaft – Dumonts “Kirche” (Frz. *église*) – war ihr Kastensystem. Seitdem wird die These, daß sich das Kastensystem überwiegend aufgrund von religiösen Ideen behaupten konnte, immer wieder vertreten.

⁵² Ibid.

Zentralität, ökonomischer Dominanz und Patronage.

be termed Shudras. Vedas should not be taught to them because they are heavy of tongue and cannot recite Vedas. But the general sense of the Vedas should be told them in such a shrewd manner that the sense will sink into their heavy skulls. If this Varna system is not strictly maintained, there will be confusion of castes (*varnasamskara*) through inter-caste marriages. That would mean that people would not remain in distinct categories: the best, the middling, the inferior and the stupid, and all would become barbarous. Therefore, every individual should act or live in his own caste. This is his Vedic religion, but if he strays into other caste's duties or work or action, his natural primordial nature will be sullied. And if he does the duties of a caste not his own, such as a Brahman doing work as a Kshatriya, it will lead to a terrible catastrophe. Therefore, it is right and proper to act, work and live by one's own caste's division of work and follow the teachings of the Vedic religion.⁵³

The following tables demonstrate the societal system based on this *varna* system:

Landowner	Rajputs, Kshetri, marhatta, Nair
Priest	Brahmanen
Astrologer	Joshi
Healer	Vaidya
Scribe	Kayashtha
Trader	Baniya, shrestha

A further societal division based on the nature of work was also automatically premised on the Varna.⁵⁴

Social Groups	Indian Terminology	Relations, Functions and Characteristics
Stand, Caste-Groups	Varna (also jati)	Classical Stand arrangement, socio-religious Ideology: Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya, Sudra

⁵³ Frank F. Conlon, "Speaking of Caste? Colonial and Indigeneous Interpretations of Caste and Community in the Nineteeth-Century Bombay", in *Ancient to Modern*, eds: Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube. New Delhi: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2009, 304.

⁵⁴ Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 186.

Caste, Professional-Grouping Sub-caste	Jati Jati	Commonality in Profession, Name, Traditions; Formation of (political) Caste-organisations Dto; however, it is limited to region and language.
Clan, Sippe Lineage	Gotra, vamsa, kula, sapinda; Hindi: Kutumb, bhai-bandh, khandhan	A genealogical fictional criterion, especially which are relevant for relationships for marriages and relative. Blood relations with visible or detectable links
Family Groups	Jati Hindi: Biradari, Nepali: Thar	A familial help contributed by neighbours in economic and religious occasions, marriage proposals, participation in rituals for the dead, and having common living quarters, gods and festivals.
Joint Family Extended Family <i>bzw.</i> Nuclear family.	 Parivara	It is similar to family groups but in addition. there exists a common inheritance and household. Commensality, raising children, ancestral care, performance of life cycle rituals

1.2.3 Varna to Caste: A Demeaning Element of the Society

So far, I have discussed the element of Varna as something that refers to a person's skin colour or complexion. The white complexioned Aryans who invaded the subcontinent gradually began subduing the native dark complexioned people as permanent slaves or workers in their household. This differentiation was made purely on the basis of skin colour. However, over time, this differentiation of colour became a reference point to establish a differentiation in social status, thereby emerging as a synonym for class division in society. Thus, the natives were considered to be inferior to the people of different skin colour. Nevertheless, the exact period of

emergence of this societal classification remains unknown. A song from the Upanishads gives information about this classification. (Rv X, 90 – Song of Purusa)⁵⁵

This system which had its origins in the Vedic period did not continue till the modern period; instead, it took different turns influenced by societal developments and foreign and colonizing influences. Today, caste system does not principally refer to a person's profession because members of various castes are present in various fields of works.

For example, there are Brahmins who work as scholars, others as soldiers, farmers or cooks, Even if two Brahmins are priests, they can engage in different activities – in the house, in the temple or on the unclean cremation site – that they have little contact with each other.⁵⁶

In the modern period, there is, at least officially, a claim of equality in a society that avoids any sort of caste-based discrimination. The Constitution of the free India in 1949 was composed by Dr Bimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who himself was a member of the lower caste. He belonged to the so-called untouchables of the society and went on to become a neo-Buddhist. The Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the constitution clearly speak of the equality of people and no discrimination based on Religion, Race, Caste and Sex. “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.” Furthermore, Article 17 condemns untouchability: “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.”⁵⁷

These articles in the Constitution are a clear indication of the existence of discrimination in society. The story of the untouchables in the Indian society is rather a tragic one that cannot be refuted. Although the caste system had its origin in Varna that did not include any discrimination such as untouchability, the later evolution of this system gave rise to such practices.

⁵⁵ Schlensog, *Der Hinduismus*, 62.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 63.

Da gibt es etwa Brahmanen, die als Gelehrte tätig sind, andere als Soldaten, Bauern oder Köche, und selbst wenn zwei Brahmanen Priester sind, dann können sie so unterschiedlichen Tätigkeiten nachgehen – im Haus, im Tempel oder auf dem unreinen Verbrennungsplatz –, daß sie kaum Kontakte untereinander pflegen.

⁵⁷ Constitution of India, “Part III: Fundamental Rights”, Arts. 14, 15, 17. https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf.

1.2.4 Caste an Artefact of Colonial Project

This is one of the most pervasive theories, at least in modern studies of the caste system. “A familiar trope in contemporary South Asian studies in the institutions often described as characteristic of Indian civilization, are, in fact, ‘inventions’ arising from the activities of British colonial authorities.”⁵⁸ However, in order to analyse this nebulous situation, I will try to expound the theme starting from the origin of the word ‘caste’, which had replaced the original term *Varna*.

The word caste has its origin in Portuguese, which in fact is derived from the Latin term *castus*; it is an adjective that means “morally pure, guiltless, pure, chaste, and pious”.⁵⁹ Some Portuguese ancient correspondences used this word ‘caste’ depicting their colony, India. For instance, in 1516 A.D., Barbosa writes about the King of Calicut and his familial situation. He describes that the King had thousand ladies who belonged to very good families (*de boa casta*). Another chronicler named Caspar Correa writes in *Cendas da India por* about the *casta* of Christians in 1561. In 1562, Garcia in his *Colloquios dos Simples e Drogas e Cousas Medecinaes da India* mentions the caste of Cobler. Another important source is the Sacred Council of Goa in 1567, which uses the word ‘caste’ as having the same meaning as that of a race, tribe or clan.⁶⁰ Other Greek and the Muslim sources are older than their Portuguese and English counterparts: Megasthenes who worked in the court of Chandragupta II in Patliputra (Patna) describes 118 tribes in India. The word used by him is *meros* of Greek, but it was translated by J. W. McCrindle as, ‘Tribes’. According to Michael, Megasthenes even simultaneously describes seven more classifications of professions: “namely sophists (Brahmins), farmers, shepherds, craftsmen and traders, military, officials and advisers.”⁶¹ In this manner, one’s position in society is emphasized.

However, this does not indicate the immense importance of race, which is underlined or normally understood by other authors. The British were rather partial in according the same status to its colonial nations as that of the European nations. They considered the organization of the state and nation in India to be more complicated and segmented. Therefore, in organizing Indian society, they did not want to use the same terminology that was common to European settings. Owing to numerous differences that prevailed in the society, they invented this

⁵⁸ Conlon, “Speaking of Caste? Colonial and Indigeneous Interpretations of Caste and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Bombay”, 291.

⁵⁹ Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 178.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 179.

nämlich Sophisten (=Brahmanen?), Bauern, Schäfern, Handwerkern und Händlern, Militär, Beamten und Beratern.

social group called 'caste'. "In this way, a new social group was 'discovered', the caste, in which one saw closed bodies without the ability to form territorial states, comparable to the medieval guilds and guild."⁶²

There has been a sceptical view on whether caste was a conspiracy between the Europeans and the Brahmins "imposing a specific unity on the complexities of Indian society?"⁶³ Certain scholars believe that the colonisers were being advised by the local Brahmins to maintain the *varna* system so that the Brahmins could continue to maintain their hegemonic presence in society under the aegis of the colonial rule. However, Susan Bayly does not agree that the British invented castes because she says that "the social reality of caste existed beyond the acknowledged influence of the British."⁶⁴ However, one cannot conclude with any degree of certitude that the British or other colonial powers invented this system that poses a serious threat to human dignity. Indubitably, 'caste' has different meanings, manifestation and derivatives or nuances of meanings.

Colonial rulers tried to use it, as had pre-colonial powers. Members of groups that thought themselves to be 'castes' were using it as well. The term 'invention' itself carries meaning including fabrication, falsehood, fantasy, or fiction. Possibly the imagined powers of caste as invented by British ethnography could be so described... It is time we moved on, for so long as we reactively dwell only upon the powerful role of the 'colonial project' we may fail to recognize the autonomy and agency of Indians in their own history.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid.

So 'entdeckt' man eine neue soziale Gruppe, die Kaste, in denen man geschlossene Körperschaften ohne die Fähigkeit zur territorialen Staatenbildung sah, vergleichbar den mittelalterlichen Zünften und Gildens.

⁶³ Conlon, "Speaking of Caste?", 305.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 305.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 306.

2 Public Sphere as the Stadium of Habermasian Philosophy of Religion

Habermas' philosophy of religion engages with the results of one's own private religious convictions and phenomenon. Put differently, it is a non-private or a public religious issue that he intends to deal with. Religion as experienced in personal lives through the aspect of a personal relationship with a higher being and compartmentalized in the field of *Glauben*' (Faith) is treated by Habermas by a debate with *Wissen* (*Knowledge*), which is a reflection of religious individuals' public life. Understandably, he does not treat ontological inquiries as the substantiality of his philosophy. Neither is his religion ensconced by an investigation into facts of revelation and questions related to the correctness of scriptures or their exegesis. To be clear, he is not a defender of faith and its tenets. Instead, he is a defender of the faithful or of believers.⁶⁶ I believe that it is important for Habermas to concentrate more on the believer than on the content of belief. In this way, he observes and expresses only what can be seen and experienced externally rather than imagining religious consciousness on a subliminal level. His analysis places importance on the actions of these believers inspired by a *personal* belief system. This, in turn, is available in the non-private sphere of the individuals, which Habermas refers to as 'Public Sphere' (PS).⁶⁷ This PS connects various individual believers where they can express their private beliefs on a communitarian level. My intention of religious analysis intrinsically finds its basis in this concept where religion is being investigated in the PS rather than in the private.

Undeniably, the role of religion in the PS has its roots in the ancient world. Nonetheless, in our modern times, authors such as Casanova, Berger, Taylor and Habermas have taken this theme to the forefront of philosophical discourses. The underlying intention behind such an approach could be attributed to their interest in the events relating to civil society. Habermas recognizes the relationship religions have as organized bodies across societies with the state, which governs the civic lives of its citizens.⁶⁸ The sphere existing between the state and the civil society is considered by Habermas to be the PS. It is in this sphere that all the organized

⁶⁶ The essay 'Religion in Public Sphere' clearly demonstrates Habermas' special engagement in considering the distinct presence and role of religious citizens in society.

⁶⁷ Habermas, *BNR*, 131.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 115.

religious bodies find themselves actively participating in expressing their views about the civic life and the policies that the state is required to make. Consequently, they apply themselves to debates, which are no more just religious, but are actually concerned with the policy making of the state.⁶⁹

The following chapter investigates the concept of the ‘Public Sphere’ along with the concomitant dynamics in society. It then attempts to connect religion and its communitarian role in the PS. I also contend that religious spaces could be considered to be the PS where the opinion of the public/believers is influenced and shaped.

2.1 The Public Sphere

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason.⁷⁰

The term ‘public sphere’ is often associated with social and political philosophy of Jürgen Habermas ever since he published his work entitled *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*.⁷¹ Habermas analyses the historical genesis of the PS in civic societies and explains how this PS began to deviate from its original intention along with its structural transformation. The study on the PS was his Habilitationsschrift (postdoctoral dissertation) in the Frankfurt School of Philosophy. Despite being initially rejected by his mentor, it was recognized as a valid contribution to the Frankfurt school of critical thinking in the later stages.⁷²

Habermas traces the origins of the PS to the Age of Enlightenment wherein both secular and religious scenarios were characterized by critical thinking and heated debates. The endeavour was to investigate the political discussions that the PS initiated during the American and

⁶⁹ Inger Furseth, “The Return of Religion in the Public Sphere? The Public Role of Nordic Faith Communities”, in *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere*, eds. Fredrik Engelstad, Hakon Larsen, Jon Rogstad, Kari Steen-Johnsen, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 225.

⁷⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans: Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992/2017), 27.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Douglas Kellner, “Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy”, in *Re-Imagining Public Space*, eds: J. M. Glass, D. Boros (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

French revolutions. He believes that the term PS is closely related to Bourgeois because it was seen as a space that existed among the Bourgeois, the so-called elite group of the society, which was keen to make its opinions known to the state by engaging in discussions on issues related to society and the state at large.⁷³ It was a post-war scenario in Germany that led him to unleash the latent potential of bourgeois.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas did not propose a universal theory of public life, and still less claim to offer a description of public life everywhere (so he is hardly refuted by showing that public life in many places is not what he described). Rather, he argued that at least one constitutive category of bourgeois life had not yet exhausted its emancipatory potential – even though the conditions of actual capitalist democracy had thwarted it.⁷⁴

It could be observed that Habermas explores this concept in relation to civic life; thus, the citizens themselves are the actors in this sphere. This space also allowed common men to express their views on various issues pertaining to the societal life. It is a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power.

The bourgeois avant-garde of the educated middle class learned the art of critical-rational public debate through its contact with the elegant world. This courtly-noble society, to the extent that the modern state apparatus became independent from the monarch's personal sphere, naturally separated itself, in turn, more and more from the court and became its counterpoises in the town.⁷⁵

Various aspects of the PS such as newspapers, journals, and institutions of political discussions and even places of entertainment like clubs were considered to accommodate the initiation of public discussions. Moreover, matters related to societal and political life were discussed even in even salons, pubs, and coffee houses, and meeting halls.⁷⁶ Though it is not difficult to identify limitations in Habermas' analysis on the PS, he is apparently right in plotting out its emergence in an era of democratic revolutions. Consequently, for the first time in history, ordinary citizens were provided with an opportunity to express their views concerning public

⁷³ Pauline Johnson, *Habermas Rescuing the Public Sphere* (London/NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 20.

⁷⁴ Furseth, "The Return of Religion in the Public Sphere?", 26.

⁷⁵ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 29–30.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

issues. This included their active involvement in political discussions, debates, organizations and protests against all sorts of unjust authoritarian structures of the society. This sowed the seeds of social changes that gradually cultivated in western societies and continue to this day.⁷⁷

[...] throughout the Middle Ages, the categories of the public and the private and the public sphere understood as *res publica* were passed on in the definitions of Roman law. Of course, they found a renewed application meaningful in the technical, legal sense only with the rise of the modern state and of that sphere of civil society separated from it.⁷⁸

2.2 Public Opinion

In discussing the public sphere, we inevitably exposed to the reality of its important component, i.e., Public Opinion (PO). In the previous section, we have seen that the PS creates space to express the opinion of people, which implies that this opinion of is formed through discussions and arguments. According to Habermas, this process needs to take the form of discursive argumentation. Importantly, this discursive argument presupposes freedom of speech, assembly and freedom of press as well.⁷⁹ Such freedom accommodates public use of reason, which depends on “normative commitments to openness and rational political discourse.”⁸⁰

The word ‘opinion’ both in English and French is derived from the Latin expression, ‘*opinio*’, meaning, “of the uncertain, not fully demonstrated judgement.”⁸¹ The PS paves the way for discussions on various issues relating to societal improvement through a discursive method.⁸² They basically reflect “the genuine needs and correct tendencies of common life.”⁸³ There is another meaning that Habermas attributes to it, namely, ‘reputation’. This word implies the representation of an opinion of a person by others. It is an:

“Opinion” in the sense of a judgment that lacks certainty, whose truth would still have to be proven, is associated with “opinion” in the sense of a basically suspicious repute among the multitude. Thus, the word carries such a pronounced connotation of

⁷⁷ Kellner, “Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy”, 6.

⁷⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 4.

⁷⁹ Kellner, “Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy”, 3.

⁸⁰ Furseth, “The Return of Religion in the Public Sphere?”, 27.

⁸¹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 89.

⁸² The discursive method in the philosophical area in our times is very much associated with Habermas, which is worked out, in his famous *Opus Magnum*, *The Theory of Communicative Actions*.

⁸³ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 120.

collective opinion that all attributes referring to its social character can be dispensed with a pleonastic.⁸⁴

One of the important elements of this PO is a *critical approach* based on *critical reflection*. With a basic background of critical reflection, one would be able to form a judgment, which then gets converted into an opinion. PO in English is developed through public spirit. However, Habermas opines that PO and Public spirit are not one and the same as he uses the word “instead” in using these two expressions. But the English have sometimes used these two expressions as synonyms. Nonetheless another expression such as ‘sense of the people’ forms the basis of public spirit, which in this context is an oppositional one to the commonly held opinions, especially by the state. This public spirit thus expresses an important character of the enlightenment era. Habermas sees an essential element that is utilized in this PO: reason.⁸⁵ Individuals put this reason into practice and therefore, PO “did not arise from mere inclination but private reflection upon public affairs and from their public discussions.”⁸⁶

There are two different categories of persons who are highlighted in order to make this PS work effectively through PO. The PS strongly depends on PO, which is formed and structurally presented through scholars. They take PO and examine it, then determine its rationality through their scholarly expertise. After having gone through this stage, PO moves to the Governors, the second category that puts PO into practice whatever conclusions were drawn based on the critical reflections of public guided by the experts/scholars.

The good books depend on the enlightened people in all classes of the nation; they are an ornament to truth. They are the ones that already govern Europe, they enlighten the government about its duties, its shortcoming, its true interest, about the public opinion to which it must listen and conform: these good books are patient masters, waiting for the moment when the state administrators wake up and when their passions die down.⁸⁷

In PO, there exists a mutual responsibility that every citizen owes to one another. The PS plays an important role in a democratic setup, where it forms the opinion based on valid reasons, and the justifications given by its members ought to be based on reasons acceptable by all.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 89.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 89–95.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 94.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 95–96.

“Only in this way can citizens see themselves not just as subject to the law but as authors of the law, as the democratic ideal requires.”⁸⁸

2.3 Transformation of Structures

The intrinsic capacity that is embedded within the purview of public opinion has the capacity to change the political structures. They have the potentiality to influence the secular authority and religious authority as well. On the whole, the PO that develops in the PS plays a key role in shaping various ideologies and beliefs, ultimately showing its impact on the legislation of civil life. Habermas explains this phenomenon with an example of the debate on gay marriage.

It is hard to see why a serious engagement in this debate would require secular citizens to open their minds to the possible truth of religious claims against homosexuality. It seems to me that a perfectly serious way of engaging in the debate is to offer the objections and counter-arguments needed to show why the proposed policy is wrong, if one thinks it is. Objecting to the unequal treatment involved in denying the right to marriage to a group of citizens or appealing to anti-discrimination laws to justify opposition to this policy seems perfectly appropriate ways to participate in such public debate.⁸⁹

Public views and opinions certainly play a role in effecting a change in the case of an institutional religion. In view of my overarching goal *i.e.*, to arrive at a postmetaphysical religion in India, this stage of transformation of structure is important. To bring about the desired change in the religious thinking, it obviously begins from the PS, where the PO is initiated and operated. A discussion of the existing system by the public will give the impetus to informed views about existing structures. Such an influence of PO on the change of religious thinking and structures is important for the purpose of post metaphysical thinking.

Habermas refers to the case of Britain in explaining this role of PO in politics.

Already in the 1670s, the government was compelled to issue proclamations that confronted the dangers bred by the coffee-house discussions. The coffee houses were considered seedbeds of political unrest: Men have assumed to themselves a liberty, not only

⁸⁸ Christina Lafont, “Religion and the Public Sphere: What are the Deliberative Obligations of Democratic Citizenship?”, in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta & Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 231.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 239.

2. Public Sphere as the Stadium of Habermasian Philosophy of Religion

in coffee-houses, but in other places and meetings, both public and private, to censure and defame the proceedings of the state, by speaking evil of things they understand not, and endeavouring to create and nourish an universal jealousies and dissatisfaction in the minds of all His majesties good subjects.⁹⁰

PO gradually developed in various places and were published in pamphlets before attaining the stage of press that presented critical opinions of the public.

[...] the press was for the first time established as a genuinely critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate: as the fourth estate. Thus, raised to the status of an institution, the on-going commentary on and criticism of the Crown's actions and Parliament's decisions transformed a public authority now being called before the forum of the public.⁹¹

Next, I will briefly explicate how PO functions actively, especially in an institutionalized Religion like the Catholic Church. This explains how PO could also be materialized in influencing legislation within the religious institutions. The Catholic Church, which is regarded as the oldest religious institution, also has traits of public opinion and its influence in the transformation of structures. Pope Pius XII was the first pope to use this term 'public opinion' within the Church.

We would like to add a word about public opinion within the church itself (naturally, in the subjects left to free discussion). Only those who do not know the church or who know it badly will find this strange. For the church, after all, is a living body and would lack something of its life if public opinion were lacking, the fault of which would fall on its pastors and on its faithful (Pius XII, 1950).⁹²

Against the backdrop of Lutheran Reformation, the church was impelled to respond to the situations and demands of its members (the public). At this juncture, the famous Tridentine

⁹⁰ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 59. Cf. Footnote 5. Cited after C. S. Emden, *The People and the Constitution* (Oxford, 1956), 33. Similar proclamations were issued in 1674 and 1675. Hans Speier's "The Historical Development of Public Opinion", *Social Order and the Risks of War* (New York, 1952), 323ff. establishes the connection between the coffee houses and the beginnings of "public opinion".

⁹¹ Ibid, 60.

⁹² Norberto Gonzalez Gaitano, "Public Opinion in the Church. A Communicative and Ecclesiological Reflection", *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016): 179, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2016.1238559>.

theology speaks of *sensus fidelium*. The Spanish theologian Melchior Cano († 1560) developed this doctrine in his work, *De Locis Theologicis*.⁹³ However, the public opinion that is experienced in the civil society and the PS that one experiences in the Catholic Church varies.

Public opinion is manifested or expressed in the church in diverse ways depending on the issue with which it is concerned. When it has to do with doctrine, and therefore with the demands of the faith, it behaves – or should behave – as one would expect with regards to dogma; when it concerns questions of government that affect the good of the communion, the hierarchical principle rules – or should rule – that is to say the demands of the communion; and lastly, when it is about contingent questions we are – or should be – in the fields of debate, of free opinion and of dispute, which involve the requirements of liberty and of plurality.⁹⁴

The remarkable influence of the public that includes both the civil and the community of believers which compelled the Catholic Church to make amendments in the transparency regarding child abuse cases cannot be denied. Equally, various Marian shrines of the late eighteenth to nineteenth century had a tremendous effect on the declaration of certain dogmas propagated by the church. Therefore, it is impossible to by-pass ordinary people, and their daily faith, beliefs and practices that made an indelible contribution to how the church functions till today.

[...] many defenders and critics of Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere fail to note that the thrust of his study is precisely that of transformation, of the mutations of the PS from a space of rational discussion, debate, and consensus to a realm of mass cultural consumption and administration by corporations and dominant elites.⁹⁵

The above citation illuminates a salient element that lies underneath the working of a genuine PO. The description on PS by Habermas obviously deemed to have an intention to rescue the original purpose and vitality of the PS, which had gradually lost its credibility. Based on the aforementioned observations, one can conclude that the PS has definitely a political function, especially in influencing the legislative body of the government. They have the capacity to offer reasons that are to be taken into consideration and lead the legislators to discuss the necessary response to various PO. This could be referred to for example in modern India.⁹⁶ The Indian

⁹³ Ibid, 181.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 175.

⁹⁵ Kellner, "Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy", 3.

⁹⁶ Bill No. XVI of 2019, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Law had to make necessary changes regarding the punishment of a rapist after continuous influence of the public and its opinion in treating a case of rape, which elicited the attention of the world media. The public consciousness in India grew rapidly ever since the grotesque incident that took place on December 16, 2012. This has become visible through the demonstrations and protests that shook the entire nation in exercising its right as individuals to express their opinion and even coerce the legislative body to make necessary amendments.⁹⁷

2.4 Religion and the Public Sphere

After having undertaken a robust investigation into the nature of the PS and its functions through the PO, I would like to explore why religion is apparently an important element of the PS that can even potentially affect the legislative policies of governments, let alone the ancient world and Middle Ages where religion dictated social and political lives of the people. Apparently, this impact continues to exist in our societies even today in a society where there is a clear separation of church and state. This is exactly what Habermas investigates in his philosophy of religion. According to him, ignoring such an element is not a good idea. Instead, being aware of it would give support in leading rational societal lives.⁹⁸

Rethinking the implicit secularism in conceptions of citizenship is important for a variety of reasons from academic soundness to practical fairness. It is all the more important because continuing to articulate norms of citizen participation that seem biased against religious views will needlessly drive a wedge between religious and nonreligious citizens. This would be most unfortunate at a time when religious engagement in public life is particularly active, and when globalization, migration, economic stresses and insecurity all make strengthening commitments to citizenship and participation in shared public discourse vital.⁹⁹

Habermas begins his analysis of religion in public by citing some of the important events to have unfolded throughout history. These mainly refer to the religious wars and suppressions

⁹⁷ On 20 March 2020, the traitors were hanged. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/morning-digest-march-20-2020/article31114944.ece>.

⁹⁸ Matt Sheedy, "Religion in the Public Sphere: The Limits of Habermas's Proposal and the Discourse of 'World Religions'", *Illumine: Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Graduate Students Association* 8, no. 1 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.18357/illumine8120092943>.

⁹⁹ Calhoun, Craig (2008) "Secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere", *Hedgehog Review* 10, no. 3 (2008), 21, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42645/>

that beleaguered modern times and continue to this day. He refers not just to the Muslim world but also to other parts of the world, where such religious related fundamentalism is prevalent. In this manner, he demonstrates how religious conflicts are dominating the narrative in world politics.¹⁰⁰ Religion also plays a pivotal role in the so-called modern societies like America. It even continues to dictate people's personal lives and their decisions. As a consequence, the quest for modernity in the world is apparently facing a stronger force that has stifled its acceleration. Ever since the enlightenment period, the west is trying to assert itself as the perfect model of a secularized society, holding the ultimate liberal space, where religion could not have an upper hand. On the contrary, these western societies witness a constant increase of religious presence and influence in their societies. Furthermore, these societies often witness hostile political divisions based on religion. It is not uncommon for politicians to take sides based on the importance of religiously motivated movements in society. Major issues like abortion, gays, and unconditional rejection of torture influence political divisions. Issues such as these are very much based on religious convictions.¹⁰¹

[...] religious traditions appear to be sweeping away with undiminished strength the thresholds hitherto upheld between "traditional" and "modern" societies, or at least to be levelling them. The west's own image of modernity seems to be undergoing a gestalt switch as if in a psychological experiment: what was assumed to be the normal model for the future of all other culture is suddenly becoming the exception.¹⁰²

The influence of religion in the public sphere is acceptable for Habermas, albeit on one condition that they must satisfy certain cognitive conditions with epistemic attitudes.¹⁰³ "The constitutional freedom of conscience and religion is the appropriate political response to the challenges of religious pluralism."¹⁰⁴ Every citizen has the right to participate in the public life of a society. Towards this end, the citizens can also exercise their rights to express their opinion in the PS, regardless of whether it is secular or religious. Unfortunately, it is often erroneously construed that imposing restrictions on religious life is not problematic. However, people belonging to this category consider the supremacy of rationality and the inferiority of religious rationality to be nothing less than irrationality in the public domain. "[...] secularists propose a limit on religion in the public sphere, which they take to be a basis for equal inclusion, but

¹⁰⁰ Habermas, *BNR*, 114–5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

at the same time insulate themselves from understanding religious discourse, practicing an ironic exclusion.”¹⁰⁵

The philosophical role of religion that Habermas recognizes in the PS is the significance of its contribution in forming the ethical and moral fabrics of society. In the context of PS, he concedes that religion is the cornerstone on which our society’s civic values and political structures have been constructed.

Habermas suggests, moreover, that religion is valuable as a source and resource for democratic politics. They offer semantic potential, the potential for new meaning, not least to a political left that may have exhausted some other resources. They offer semantic potential, the potential for new meaning, not least to a political left that may have exhausted some other resources.¹⁰⁶

Habermas sees the essentiality of religious rationality that lies at the centre of society that plays an unseen role in the formation of PO. Though liberals or seculars are quick to point out the diminishing role of religion in the PS, it cannot be denied that the influence of religion in our modern times is a reality, which, however, continues to represent the opinion of Westphalia Treaty (1648) when the principle was still “*cuius regio, eius religio* (whose region it is, his religion it is).” In essence, religion has never really been a private affair.¹⁰⁷ Hence denying the active presence of religion would be akin to denying a primal element of society. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the presence of religions, which have their share of contribution in forming laws pertaining to morality and ethics in society. Cristina Lafont clearly differentiates between J. Rawls and Habermas regarding the involvement of every citizen and the validity of the reasons cited by them. The limitation of Rawls in his proviso¹⁰⁸ excludes religious reasons to some extent. Though he does allow religious reasons in politics, there is a ‘providedness’ that puts a break on religious reasons and he continues with proper exclusiveness of political reasons. Habermas, on the other hand, widens the scope of religious reasons in the PS by obviating this censorship or proviso.

But precisely in view of this ideal of openness, it seems pretty arbitrary to claim that religious views should be allowed in the informal public sphere for the sake of possible

¹⁰⁵ Craig Calhoun, “Secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere”, *Hedgehog Review* 10, no. 3 (2008): 6, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42645/>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 14: “Rawl’s account of the public use of reason allows for religiously motivated arguments, but not for the appeal to ‘comprehensive’ religious doctrines for justification. Justification must rely solely on ‘proper political reasons.’”

learning processes, but that secularist views (whatever those may be) should be singled out for exclusion from the deliberative agenda of the informal public sphere.¹⁰⁹

2.5 Public Sphere in Pre-Modern India

Traces of the PS according to Habermasian work could be found during the Age of Enlightenment in Europe with the initiative of bourgeois societies. Through colonialism, postcolonial societies have imported the structures of the PS and the formation of PO in modern times. This is a general impression that is given by the colonial bosses to the rest of the world. Though the colonialists themselves engaged in critical debates, something which is deemed unique by Habermas, the fact remains that this was absent in the colonial areas.¹¹⁰ Here, I would suggest, with the help of Christian Lee Novetzke, that such an impression could be denied and that we could trace the PS and the development of PO in India even before the PS developed in Europe.¹¹¹ Apparently, in an early period, the PS functioned through the agency of religious saints in India. This establishes the fundamental differences between the early west and Indian PS. In a study about the PS in pre-modern India, Christian Lee Novetzke gives us examples of cases where PO cultivated within a religious context and religious literature.

The concept of PS is not alien to modern India as the country had experienced the workings and its effects during the independence movement. The traces of the PS could be traced back to the thirteenth century A.D., where the vernacularisation of religious texts became a powerful instrument in forming the PS. However, this is limited to a particular area in the vast sub-continent territory, because it is evidently a daunting task to spread its tentacles in a faster way that one could expect in modern times, owing to the vast territory that India has in comparison to the European territories. Therefore, it would be imprudent to compare the PS in a European context with that of pre-modern India. In his research, Christian inserts the analytical comprehension of the PS by Habermas to this context. He suggests that the PS comes from a religious background or movement. It cannot be denied that almost every religious founder was endowed with the charisma required for creating PO that affected the daily lives of people. “So, the idea of the Public Sphere that we have from Habermas, though it begins in a highly provincialized time and place (Europe, eighteenth century), has enough generality to it to extend beyond this time and place, to other societies engaged in critical debate about the

¹⁰⁹ Cristina Lafont, “Religion and the Public Sphere”, 238.

¹¹⁰ Christian Lee Novetzke, “Religion and the Public Sphere in Premodern India”, *ASIA*, 72 no. 1 (2018): 148, <https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2017-0055>.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 148.

common good.”¹¹² Interestingly, Habermas limits his PS to the eighteenth century, claiming that it cannot be transferable. For all those who continue in this line of thought, it is obviously an invention of the western world. However, Christian even opens up the possibility of looking at it in other non-western societies “... Habermas’ own definition of the public sphere is very general and appears quite transposable, hardly the homogenous product of eighteenth-century Europe; it appears as a heterogeneous phenomenon at home in many places and times. Habermas defines the public sphere as a society engaged in critical debate.”¹¹³

Christian Novetzke describes the “genealogy of discursive sphere” with a serious engagement of critical debates that Habermas discerns in cafes and public houses, existed five centuries earlier in India; he refers to this as the “nascent public sphere.”¹¹⁴ This PS neither entailed a complete democratic participation nor did it involve a political scenario. Thus, many scholars did not consider it to be PS prior to that of the European one. Despite such limitations, Christian Novetzke suggests that making Sanskrit religious texts available in vernacular languages was one of the best means through which a PS was created during these early centuries. Analysing two such texts of Lilacarita and Jnanesvari, Christian Novetzke comments:

[...] to the particular impulses toward social equality found in (these texts) as sonic equality, a term that convey the idea that all people have a fundamental right to hear the salvational message of the Gita. This is the unequivocal ethics at the core of the Jnanesvari, and I think it is traceable in the Lilacarita.¹¹⁵

It is clearly suggested that by the vernacularization of these texts and the availability of salvation to everyone irrespective of their caste or gender that a “[...] discursive sphere opens up in which questions of social equality, [...] rise to the surface of public debate.”¹¹⁶ In this manner, Christian Novetzke develops the idea of public debate of Habermas as something that cannot be constrained; instead, the diversity of public debate is brought into light.

This public debate was initiated by the lives of devout persons who used their devotion and religious commitment for bringing about societal changes and shaping consciousness. The character posed in these writings is Chandrakhar, a controversial figure, whose societal status, especially his caste, was unknown. Despite a controversial background, which is generally not acceptable for the Brahmins, he is considered a saint, a central figure who rejuvenated this

¹¹² Ibid, 149.

¹¹³ Ibid, 148.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 149.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 172.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 150.

public sphere and expressed critical ideas against evils of society. Nonetheless, unlike what we see in the modern times or even the beginnings of the public sphere in Europe, he ignites this fire through his religious discourses. A similar observation can be made about Kabir Das in the Moghul court. Belonging to a lower section of caste, he was able to initiate discourses that supported the idea of equality. “Kabir himself belonged to the weaver (*julaha*) caste of converts to Islam, placing him outside the pale both of the identifiably Hindu and the Muslim world.”¹¹⁷ To cite another example, the Bhakti movement was a religious movement that aimed at extolling the virtues of devoting towards a personal god. Bhakti means piety. The Bhakti movement created similar parameters in society for public debate that questioned the equality of man before God, irrespective of his caste and gender. Saints involved in this movement cultivated a sort of public sphere where both the commoners and the elite had the opportunity to come together. The aim of these saints, however, was to express their personal devotion to a deity. Through their methodology and approach to this deity, it was explicitly made clear that such devotion ought to overcome all impediments in the form of inhuman practices prevailing in society. In his devotional expressions to a personal deity, he overcomes all societal taboos that restricted members of lower status in participating public worship of gods. But the life of Kalidas proved that devotion to god goes beyond one’s social status. This is surely a matter of discussion among the elites of the then society, especially the Brahmins who consider Shudras as unclean and belonging to the lower part of the society. Lee’s study on the above mentioned two writings (Jnanesvari and Lilacarita) that engage in religious discourses with a highly debatable and critical style with regard to social problems, such as equality in society. By the very fact that these writings were made available in the vernacular language creates awareness of public and social problems that concern them.

Hence the PS that one could discover in India is significantly different from the Habermasian description of the western PS. Despite their different approaches and methods, the shared factor that could be derived in both these cases is ‘a critical approach’. They ignite a critical debate with regard to issues related to social and public lives.

Habermas called for renewal of what he identified as an 18th century ideal: the notion that ever-wider circles of private individuals could join in rational-critical debates, disregarding their differences of status, identifying the public good common to all of them and their whole society, and so informing the state and public policy.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Milind Wakankar, *Subalternity and Religion, The prehistory of Dalit empowerment in South India* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 44.

¹¹⁸ Furseth, “The Return of Religion in the Public Sphere?”, 24.

2.6 Religious Spaces as Public Sphere

After having analysed and compared J. Habermas and Christian Lee, it goes without saying that in the Indian context, public debate is an issue that could be more actively worked out in a religious context than in a secular context one like that of a European model. Examples for such in our present times are the strong political parties that place religious figures in the forefront in order to shape the public opinion for both credible and odious reasons.¹¹⁹ Similarly, the numbers of religious centres with their gurus, who are known to have the penchant of mixing religion with national opinion-forming are on the increase in the society. Therefore, I suggest here that religious spaces, what are generally called as places of worship, are indeed centres where the public opinion is being formed in a way that should not be underestimated. “[...] not only ought we move past the idea that religion has a restricted place within a given public sphere, but that it might be the very centre of one, the primary medium or aesthetic for critical public debate about the common good.”¹²⁰

Considering religious spaces as PS is helpful to recognize how deeply these religious spaces influence civic lives. In fact, this is true not only in the Indian context; rather, I see that it happens around the globe, though one does not make a mention of it as the PS. In every religious space when a community is gathered, religious convictions and consciousness are formed on a regular basis, which then get transferred to the civic societies in making decisions. Habermas cites Paul Weithman who sheds light on the role of religious, especially with the example of legislatures making decisions about sensitive topics such as abortion or gay partnership:

Paul Weithman draws on these sociological findings to support a normative analysis of the ethics of democratic citizenship. He describes churches and religious communities as actors in civil society who fulfil indispensable functional imperatives for the reproduction of American democracy. They provide arguments for public debates on crucial morally loaded issues and fulfil tasks of political socialization by informing their members and encouraging them to participate in the political process.¹²¹

This gives rise to the logical question: where do these citizens get influenced in forcing the governments to make policies that are congruent with their views? Without a doubt it is their religious gatherings, scriptures and constant expression of their communitarian opinion that inspire them to make their voices or opinion known to the governments. The example of

¹¹⁹ The Hindu god Rama is the most presented idol by BJP to form a Hindu-religious nation consciousness.

¹²⁰ Novetzke, “Religion and the Public Sphere in Premodern India”, 150.

¹²¹ Habermas, *BNR*, 125.

American evangelicals is particularly poignant in demonstrating how influential religion is in forming the PO. These evangelical centres are comparable with Habermasian cafes or saloons where PO is formed. The Islamic world that is constantly rife with the threat of war and violence could also be considered an example where the PO is imposed under the penalty of religious chastisement. The pre-independent India is another instance where we see the strong force of PO developed among the religious circles and centres that eventually led to the country's division on religious lines. Observing how the negative effects of religion were creeping into the Indian politics, Nehru the first Prime Minister of India was disenchanted with the state of affairs and was doubtful whether India would remain healthy and productive. He did not want religion to play any role in politics, but to no avail, for his wish has never come true. On the contrary, religion has had a strong impact on the so-called independent India. "How long that will take, I cannot say, but religion in India will kill the country and its peoples if it is not subdued."¹²²

¹²² Embree T. Ainslie, "Religion, communalism, and security in post-independence India", in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*, eds. Chris Seiple, R. Denis Hoover and Pauletta Ottis (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 228.
Cf. Embree, A. T. (1993). "Nehru's Understanding of the Social Function of Religion" in G. Sen (ed.) *Perceiving India: Insight and Inquiry*, New Delhi: Sage, 165–82.

3 Habermasian Parameters in Indian Context

As mentioned before, Habermasian philosophy is a euro-centric philosophy. Therefore, in the attempt to make him fit into the Indian context, it is fundamentally important to investigate whether similar social contexts can be seen elsewhere in the Indian setup. Hence, this chapter on parameters of Habermas helps me analyse the extent of the Habermasian context that can be found in India. I would be classifying the western context into three various phenomenal characteristics *viz.*, modern, secular and plural. Although these three parameters are interrelated, they exhibit their own specialities in the Indian setting.

3.1 Modernity

Modernity in relation to the theme of religion is the essential idea that underpins this discussion. Modernity is however a hallmark of European or western societies. As a starting point of the discussion on modernity, it is important to know the influence that religion has had on the thought pattern of society in general, given that it was seen as a stumbling block to modernity. In the context of modernity, secularism and pluralism are considered as essential, as characteristic features of the ideology of modernity. Societies which declare themselves as modern portray an image of an ecosystem that has liberated itself from the stifling shackles of religion, which has dominated civil authority in more ways than one. However, Weber posits that though modernity aims to establish a super excellent world of rationality that can only occur through the conduit of religion, as it is the essentiality of all pre modern societies.¹²³ Modernity's goal to transform existing practices that encompass human life in its entirety. It fosters a novel way of thinking and reimagining things to make way for progressiveness. Here, I would like to limit myself to the understanding of modernity in relation to Indian contexts and to show the similarities prevailing between the western and Indian societies with regard to modernity. It would also be pertinent to point out that this chapter would not undertake a

¹²³ Karl Gabriel, "Der aktuelle Diskurs über Säkularität und Moderne in der Soziologie", in *Säkularität und Moderne*, eds. Karl Gabriel and Christoph Horn, Grenzfagen Bd. 42, (München: Karl Alber, 2016), 82.

detailed explication on the concept of modernity. As the purpose of this chapter is to situate the Habermasian context, I would succinctly outline the theme within the boundaries of modernity pertaining to my research.

3.1.1 Modernity Defined

The central point of the discussion that characterizes the PS is a critical approach or critical thinking of the masses. This idea, however, is pivotal in understanding how modernity emerged in society. The word ‘modernity’ is derived from a Latin word *modernus*, derived from *modo*, meaning the ‘present, now and recently.’ Augustine had used this term in the early Christian period in a Roman context. The interplay of two different cultures, Roman and Christian, encouraged Augustine to coin this term “in contrast to an antinomic sense compared to *antiquus*.”¹²⁴ In his time, Christianity was like a young child belonging to a different generation. Therefore, he had to refer to this context in comparing Christianity to the older generation, which is the pagan Rome. Thus, the purpose of this vocabulary is to denote or express the difference or the newness of an historical era that brought about transformative change, almost obliterating everything pertaining to the past.¹²⁵ “[...] the expression modernity repeatedly articulates the consciousness of an era that refers back to the past of classical antiquity precisely in order to comprehend itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new.”¹²⁶ In this process, one can observe that there is a process of negation of the present; it is a movement that is looking for improvement or to accommodate the right perspective. It implies a human yearning towards authenticity or perfection that moves from an imperfect past, which is why Habermas says it is a “*yearning for true-presence*”.¹²⁷

The aspect of a continuous elaboration and improvisation in materializing modernity, as posited by Habermas is in contrast to those who say that modernity has been accomplished. More specifically, he said: “Modernity is the only universal civilisation and remains the only valid and legitimate universal discourse”.¹²⁸ The all-embracing element of modernity is the

¹²⁴ Alberto Martinelli, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005), 5.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project”, in *Habermas and The Unfinished Project of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d’ Entreves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 39.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 40.

¹²⁸ Siyabonga Lushaba, *Development as Modernity, Modernity as Development*, (Senegal: CODESRIA – Conseil pour le Développement de la Recherche Economique et Sociale en Afrique, 2009), 53.

virtue of self-correction, which is effected by reforming itself in the prevailing situations and conditions of the people. “The crux of Habermas’ argument is simply that modernity is capable of reforming itself by allowing, limiting, appropriating and internalising criticisms.”¹²⁹

Therefore, I deem it fit to summarize modernity in a single terminology based on the views espoused by Habermas and other modern thinkers, as rationalism. The idea of modernity that revived European societies is founded on this concept of reviving rationalism.

European rationalism has manifested itself in a variety of different forms, from Romanesque architecture to Renaissance painting, from the philosophy of Descartes to the music of Bach, from the democratic man of the Enlightenment to the *homo oeconomicus* of capitalism. It can be defined *lato sensu* as the capacity of the human mind to know, control and transform nature (according to a conception of the world as an environment that can be moulded to the fulfilling of human needs and wants) and as the confidence of human beings in rationally pursuing their own ends and, in the last analysis, in being the masters of their own destiny.¹³⁰

Western modernization, however, becomes an indicator to the rest of the world, which tries often to imitate it. This is an undeniable fact. For example, China, which is a very staunch adherent of communism, owes its idea to the western Marxist invention of communism. When we consider such examples, one must accept the fact that modernity is a child of western civilization. “Habermas – through a *re-formulation of the theory of rationality* – tries to demonstrate the historical-universal validity of Western rationalization, that is, the fact that it represents an ideal model for modernization.”¹³¹ However Habermas believes that despite being labelled as western, rationalism does not imply that it is *available only in the west*. However, in a Weberian sense, “rationalism is Western because it presents features *proper* of the Euro-Atlantic civilization – especially those recognized as bound to a logic of domination.”¹³² In addition, Habermas states that modernity loses its meaning and freedom if modern rationalism is characterized by logic of domination. Nonetheless, what Habermas observes about western rationalization is “a universal-historical emergence of modern structures of consciousness”.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid, 55.

¹³⁰ Martinelli, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity*, 16.

¹³¹ Emanuela Fornari, *Modernity out of Joint: Global Democracy and Asian Values in Jürgen Habermas and Amartya K. Sen* / Emanuela Fornari, trans. Philip Larrey & Silvia Cattaneo (Colorado: The Davies Group Publishers, 2007), 43.

¹³² Ibid, 45.

¹³³ Ibid, 46.

In line with the Habermasian conception of modernity, one can derive the idea of emancipation that runs through his discourse about modernity. The struggle arising during those periods of modernization were characterized by this single phenomenon that aimed at examining the importance of a subject, which is materialized by laying emphasis on the rights of individuals.

Modernity also comes to signify, as Habermas argues (1985), the establishment of rights and freedoms. The modernity project is a universalizing project of emancipation and, at the same time paradoxically, a legitimating ideology for the expansion of the first modern Western societies.¹³⁴

Hence, this aspect of emancipation will be elucidated in the following discussion by analysing the period of enlightenment and its effect on modernity.

3.1.2 Enlightenment and Modernity

The period of enlightenment was considered the era of modernity where there was a rift between the ancient regime, religion and progressive ideas in which a strong current was emerging by the triumphalism of science over religion to free people from obsolete thoughts and encourage them to explore more progressive thought patterns. Freethinkers mark the era of modernity as arising from the enlightenment period. The deistic movement played a remarkable role in the philosophical and religious world that prepared a fertile ground for freethinkers who were until then oppressed by the state and church alike. Urbanisation, industrialization, capitalism, and Marxist philosophy linked enlightenment and modernity from an elementary level itself. “In the Enlightenment, reason enables men to be liberated from error, from superstition and submission to the traditional powers of the Church and the aristocracy, to be masters of their own destiny, to pursue individual and collective happiness” (as the American Declaration of Independence recites).¹³⁵

In his essay on *The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment*, Habermas makes a comparison between enlightenment and myth that enters into the area of conquering the self, the Id or the ego. Based on the legendary Greek texts, he demonstrates how one has to undergo a lot of difficulties in the hope of overcoming the old self, but the fact of the myth is that one returns to the old self without being aware of it. One seems to elude the fate of the myth, but this is

¹³⁴ Martinelli, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity*, 8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

not the case. So for Habermas, “An almost completely rationalized modern world only seems to be demystified; on it rests in fact the curse of demonic objectification and fatal isolation.”¹³⁶ There is a formative process in which one struggles to move away from old and redundant elements while aiming for a goal that brings newness. Consequently, the concept of emancipation emerges from the whole process of enlightenment both on subjective and objective levels.¹³⁷

Habermas refused to subscribe to the pessimistic philosophy of history of his teachers and mentors and advised against abandoning the project Enlightenment before its emancipatory potential is fully realized. As a footnote to the poststructuralists and postmodernists, we have to add that for Habermas Enlightenment and modernism are synonyms. When he speaks of modernism, or *Moderne*, he refers to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and its continuation and development by Hegel.¹³⁸

Against the post-structuralists philosophy of the French, Habermas postulates that enlightenment, as an unfinished project of modernity and the elements that try to deactivate the emancipatory potentiality of enlightenment, especially by the French postmodernist, needs to be reconsidered rather than being ignored.¹³⁹

Initially, the French philosophers were popularizers of the new ideas, making them available to educated men and women on the peripheries of the growing movement. Over time, however, the philosophers grew more radical, more combative, more convinced than ever that they were the prophets of a new age that would rise on the ruins of the old.¹⁴⁰

The enlightenment period in the west apparently serves as the starting point of modernity that paved the way for the emergence of many new critical thinkers like philosophers, artists, scientists who strived to work towards removing impediments towards human development.

¹³⁶ Jürgen Habermas and Levin Y. Thomas “The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment”, *New German Critique*, no. 26, (1982): 16, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/488023.

Also see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). 160–130.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 19.

¹³⁸ Ehrhard Bahr, “In Defense of Enlightenment: Foucault and Habermas”, *German Studies Review* 11, no. 1, (1988): 99, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1430836.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁰ Ronald S. Love, *The Enlightenment*. Westport, (Conn: Greenwood Press, 2008), 48.

Modern philosophies such as Cartesian theory and others around the seventeenth century had apparently rejected previous philosophical theories. These new approaches placed human reasoning in the center of their thought.¹⁴¹ With such a basic comprehension of enlightenment, it would be interesting to look towards the east to see how the word enlightenment is referred to. Buddha's spiritual awakening is alluded to using the word 'enlightenment'. This too refers to a formative process in which Siddhartha had to undergo a process of renunciation and journey towards seeking the truth.

In investigating modernity and enlightenment, we often revolve around religion as the scapegoat that was labeled as an irrational element of society which was to be eliminated during this period in order to expedite the journey towards modernity.¹⁴² Religious reasons were hardly considered rational and the sole aim of these enlightenment advocates was to distance themselves from the irrationality of religious structures while reaffirming belief in a God. The various events that occurred in Europe such as agitations, revolutions, debates, suppression of religious orders like that of the Jesuits, and burning at stake for heresy resulted in the emergence of new religious groups like the Methodists in Britain or pietism in Germany. On the whole, this period has more to do with religion than with enlightenment.¹⁴³

3.1.3 Modernity a Scheme to Emancipation

The very idea of being conscious of one's own self and rights includes the emancipation that connects society with the French revolutionary principles such as fraternity, equality and liberty. Societies across the globe have accepted these principles in order to make a transition from the past, traditional to the present, new and modern. One of the enduring effects that was attributed to modernity is the idea of emancipation. This included a consciousness that brought awareness among the citizens about their rights as human beings both in Europe and globally. I shall refer to two examples, where this emancipation could be concretely experienced in order to demonstrate how modernity and emancipation are deeply interrelated: women and gays. These two categories of people have historically been relegated to the position of marginalized sections of society. In Indian parlance, a comparison could be drawn between women/gays and people belonging to lower castes who were not given equal status in society.

¹⁴¹ Martinelli, *Global Modernization Rethinking the Project of Modernity*, 6.

¹⁴² Leila Choukroune and Bhandari Parul, "Understanding the Modern in India", in *Exploring Indian Modernities, Ideas and Practices*, eds. Leila Choukroune and Parul Bhandari (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 3.

¹⁴³ Love, *The Enlightenment*, 48.

But globally, especially in the context of Habermas, women and gays were commonly subject to rampant discrimination. The modern consciousness that stressed on the theory of emancipation opened up opportunities for these two groups.

“Modernity is a process with no end that implies the idea of permanent innovation, of continual creation of the new. Living in the present, it is oriented towards the future, avid for novelty, promoting innovation. It invented, as (...), the *tradition of the new*.”¹⁴⁴ If the definition of modernity could be based on development and progression, then it can be construed that modernity has been part of our human history in every age. Just as the New Age thinkers consider themselves modernists for being reformers of the old religion, so did the reformers of every age. Therefore, modernity cannot be limited to a particular period of time in history because it is an on-going process that every generation seems to have experienced and continues to experience. In this sense, the origins of modernity in the subcontinent could be referred to reformed thinking beginning from Buddha himself. He was an enlightened person who abolished inequality among citizens and gave equal status to all, regardless of one’s caste, creed, or sexuality.

Still further one can refer to modern thinking in the sub-continent under the influence of colonial rulers. Reform movements were simultaneously in vogue in India as in the western world. These movements included the emancipation of women that even resulted in India proclaiming the first female prime minister in the world. The expansive potentiality of human rights consciousness that emerged in the west and then reached the colonial states accelerated the transition from the traditional societal living and responses to a so-called modern pattern.¹⁴⁵ India is considered the world’s largest democracy, which, in turn, is seen as the hallmark of modernity. The centrality of this discussion represents the idea of emancipation that allows modernity to emphasize the idea of equality. This, in turn, is materialized in a democratic state than in a theistic regime. The political atmosphere that fosters the engagement of every citizen in being part of the country’s legislation and election of its representatives indicates their active participation in public life.

Though the idea of modernization emerged in western circles around the enlightenment period and the early revolutionary period, it took almost three to four centuries to actualize these ideologies. I say ‘a certain realization’ because there is a lot more yet to be done as Habermas says, the project of modernity is not yet finished. A lot needs to be done to ensure everyone has equal status in society. This emancipatory aspect is an ongoing process that seems to be moving at a snail’s pace at many parts of the world, including India.

¹⁴⁴ Martinelli, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity*, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Fornari, *Modernity out of Joint*, 40.

However, if colonial history is anything to go by, we can safely infer that the process of modernity was not a successful one, as colonialism has acted in contrast to what their homeland people fought for through enlightenment and revolutions. The basic values of fraternity, equality and liberty were completely disregarded by the colonizers. Through colonization, humanity once again introduced slavery and violated freedom of expression. If modernity is emancipation, then such examples show that it remains an elusive goal.

3.1.4 How far is India modern in Habermasian Sense?

When answering this question, I have to be careful about the universality of modernity. In reference to *Eisenstadt*, authors like Choukrone and Bhandari have raised valid questions on the universality of modernity.¹⁴⁶ Could there only be one model of modernity? Is western modernity the only feasible type of modernity? Therefore, questions can be raised on Habermasian presentation of western rationalization as universal-historical emergence of modern structures of consciousness or an ideal model for modernization.¹⁴⁷ This impels us to reflect on the unilinear conception about understanding in contrast to that of a linear and singular model.

Each society engenders its own modernities emanating from its specific social and cultural contexts and programmes. The modern, therefore, did not have one singular interpretation but there were in fact multiple ways of being modern, and those that were not specifically dictated by western ideas of the modern.¹⁴⁸

However, the following discussion is an attempt to evaluate the levels of modernity based on Habermasian and Indian understanding.

When speaking of modernity, it would be imprudent to undermine the important group of citizens identified with modernity. The bourgeois middle class plays an important role in this regard. Just as the middle class or the bourgeois in Europe played a leading role, the same can be said about the Indian subcontinent. Though the middle class in India does not engage in political debates publicly, its lifestyle does change from time to time (or stage to stage). From the observers' point of view, it can be said that modernity appears by itself during this unconscious stage of changes. The middle class has a predilection for imitating universal trends. By this I mean that the middle class tend to adapt to an automatic learning process (transferred from

¹⁴⁶ Parul, "Understanding the Modern in India", 4.

¹⁴⁷ Fornari, *Modernity out of Joint*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Parul, "Understanding the Modern in India", 4.

the west) without being given normative instructions. In the present world, the middle class has access to universal trends, which could be tried out within their limited given contexts. Moreover, there is an awareness that grows among these people about subjects and ideologies through cross-cultural engagement that then leads them to modern lives.¹⁴⁹

One of the important means through which this consciousness increases in India is the theatre what is called the silver screen, the cinema and the popular magazines appearing in both English and vernacular languages. These serve as agents through which newer lifestyles are learned and imitated. Sometimes, it even occurs that this imitation is aimed at being a contested society in European or American societies while losing their self-identity. However, there are both positive and negative sides of these agents.

The transformation of the class system and the increase in social mobility, of which the most salient features are the decline of the farm labourer, the growth of the bourgeoisie and the working class, and the expansion and diversification of the middle class.¹⁵⁰

A critical response to societal problems is one of the remarkable features of modernization, which is particularly tangible in the Indian metropolitan atmosphere. Here, we need to distinguish between the urban and rural approaches and extrapolate the dependencies on each group's mentality, psychological and social perspectives. The urban approaches are based on their exposure to the global approaches which allows them to broaden their horizons, which, however, cannot be said for rural areas. One can observe that the more one is exposed to global perspectives, cultures and critical approaches, the more one will be able to progress towards a modernity that even the rural areas yearn for. "Demographic disturbances that uproot millions of people from their ancestral habitat and the concentration of the majority of the population in urban environments that are functionally complex, culturally pluralistic, socially heterogeneous if not chaotic",¹⁵¹ is an aspect that can be deciphered from the modernization process in diverse historical experiences.

As mentioned before, Indian modernity has an affinity towards imitation. The Indian consciousness has been conditioned to view the outsider or more precisely, that which emerged from the early colonial times, as superior.

The colonizer's stance of superiority rested upon the idea of the betterment of the inferior's condition in providing the indigene with access to a new existence characterized

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Martinelli, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity*, 11.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 11.

by material progress and the advent of reason. This promise of development was never fulfilled, for the colonial system would have collapsed under the realization of equality.¹⁵²

This type of consciousness has been enforced by the colonists in order to serve their agendas because the westerners could not understand the profundity or even nuances of indigenous cultures. Hence, the imitation of modernity is sadly a fruitless modernity that bears no change in the consciousness. Contrary to the west, modernity in India did not arrive through a mass change of consciousness. The masses never asked themselves why they needed to be modern or did not fight against monarchies in order to have a modern rule. They were treated as timid pushovers who had to accept whatever situation they were forced to be in. In a philosophical sense, modernization in Indian context was not a conscious process. Though I referred to the various conscious efforts of emancipation in India in the previous section, the point I am trying to make is that it was an extremely slow process due to the lack of mass involvement in the process of modernization. However, Choukroune points to a more than singular understanding of modernity, instead letting the experiences of various scholars and researchers speak for themselves:

the making of modern India is wrought with contestation and contradictions, going back and forth between ideas of progress and control, and the 'modern' in India is in a continual state of making, challenging, and accepting the various influences and forces from the past and the present.¹⁵³

Thus, the features of modernity in the west and India cannot be equated but it could be, to a certain extent, be traced out through the external appearance of modernity which is expressed by India's engagement in the process of emancipation though it cannot be considered a mass conscious engagement.

3.2 Secular

Modernity, as investigated above, leads us to a further parameter, which is closely related to modernity. The following point of discussion on the secular nature of the Habermasian context and the understanding of what secularism means from a sociological perspective accommodates Habermas' thinking in the Indian context. Notably, I will not be commencing a debate

¹⁵² Parul, "Understanding the Modern in India", 6.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 9.

on secularism as it will be discussed in a separate chapter to further my investigation on post-metaphysical thinking in relation to secularism.

In this section, I express my scepticism about the contours of Indian secularism, exploring whether India is still in a pre-secular stage in the western sense. The word 'secularism' itself was not originally part of the Indian constitution, but was later inserted by the late Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India in the wake of religious tensions between the Sikhs and the others.¹⁵⁴ Against this backdrop, the word 'secularism' could be dealt in a pluralistic context. This pluralism is mainly based on the existence of different religions in India. As we have seen in the previous section, even the word 'Hindu' was coined by the invaders in order to differentiate the local religions from foreign religions.¹⁵⁵

3.2.1 Indian versus Western Secularism

The idea of secularism that emerged in the Indian context is not comparable to the western or the American scenario. The word 'secularism' obviously originated in the western context, which has its impact on religious thinking, and simultaneously resulted in a secular way of life in various sections of society. But ...

(T)he condition of Indian secularism is no different, though some of the causes for its crisis certainly are. It is not a coincidence, however, that the external threat to Indian secularism has intensified precisely at a time of its degeneration into a meaningless formula (perhaps the real crisis of Indian secularism began when the real meaning of secularism was forgotten and ritualistically, the word 'secular' was introduced in the Indian constitution!), or when it is viewed purely as a procedural doctrine that mechanically separates religion from the state and is foolishly innocent of its ties with substantive values.¹⁵⁶

If one tries to apply the western concept of secularism to India, it could exacerbate the confusion about the whole affair of secularism. The concept of secularism emerged from the west in reference to the separation of the church and the state, as explained by various scholars; for this reason, it would be rather difficult to ensure contextual relevance in India. For instance, Marxist secularism was motivated by a visceral aversion towards religion per se. Whereas it would be difficult to have a hostile attitude towards religion from the individual's perspective

¹⁵⁴ Cf. The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1976.

¹⁵⁵ Axel, *Der Hinduismus*, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Rajeev Bhargava, *Secularism and its Critics* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1998), 67.

because religion is an inextricable part of people's lives and societal conditioning. Therefore, any expression that separates a person from religion would be nonsense. Religion in the western sense is represented by an entity called the church, which is institutional. It is a body of representatives of a particular religion that speaks for the whole community. So, the individual's religion is deeply linked with this institutional religion, which has the form of a governing body similar to that of the civil state. The history of Europe is replete with examples of immense power that the church had as a governing body over the civil society. This is exactly where the difference arises in the Indian context. Otherwise, secularism has to be conceived in the context of liberal-democratic tradition of the west, which is why America has naturally made a larger contribution towards it. "The secular state is a state that guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individuals as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor seeks either to promote or interfere with religion."¹⁵⁷

In the following discussion, I will analyse the Indian secularism in reference to toleration and equality of religion and the recognition of religion as a vital aspect of society.

3.2.2 Toleration as the Dynamism of Secularism

In the European historical context, one cannot separate the church from the state. The previous stages of European history were dominated by one religion, which was supported by the emperor. Any signs of other religious faiths were considered to be unacceptable. One of the famous examples of such suppression of other faiths even in modern Europe is the deadly inquisition. Even Germany's history depicts how the Germanic race was brutally suppressed by Emperor Charles V, who embraced Roman Catholicism and wanted all his German allies to be part of this faith.

The Wars of Religion in Central Europe which had erupted with the emergence of Protestantism in the sixteenth century were finally ended by accepting the principle that the religion of the king would be deemed to be the religion of the people of the kingdom. During the century, in England, the religion of the King or queen was accepted as the religion of the state. Roman Catholics were persecuted when Henry VIII broke with the Pope. During the reign of his daughter, Queen Mary, Roman Catholicism was re-established as the state religion and Protestants were subjected to persecution. After her

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 178.

death, during the time of Queen Elizabeth I, Protestantism again became the established religion of the English state.¹⁵⁸

However, in the Asian context, many kingdoms co-existed in one country. These kingdoms, however, differed in their religions: Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist. The kings of each religion did support their own religion but also respected members of other religions living in their kingdom. Nevertheless, in some south Asian countries where Islam has spread enormously, one had to resign to the fact that the monarchs did play a special role in that. They did sometimes enforce their religious ideologies on people belonging to other faiths, chiefly by means of taxation.¹⁵⁹

It is instructive to observe the situation of the Delhi Sultanate of the thirteenth century. The rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were Muslims, who were called the sultans. The Muslim law-makers present in the courts of the sultans were staunch followers of Islam and they zealously urged the Sultans to rule the sultanate in accordance with Islamic laws and traditions. However, the Sultans were prudent enough to be aware of the multi-cultural and prevailing religious scenarios of their kingdoms and acted accordingly. Though the religious leaders had a strong influence on the Sultans, their expectations were not always met. “Those laws and precepts had been developed and evolved for communities where the bulk of the people were Muslims. No theoretical framework existed for a state where the bulk of the subjects were non-Muslim even though the ruler was a Muslim.”¹⁶⁰ Due to this attitude, the sultans were sometimes even accused by the religious authorities as “having deviated from the path of the true faith.”¹⁶¹ However, the sultans based themselves on the teachings of the prophet in dealing with the non-Muslim majority population of their kingdoms.

The Quranic injunction that there can be no compulsion in the matter of faith (*La-Ikrah Fiddin*) and the principle taught by the Prophet of Islam when he concluded a truce with the Quraish of Mecca, known as the Peace of *Hudaibiya* that Muslims should live in peace with the non-Muslims, could not be ignored by the sultan.¹⁶²

The sultans followed this policy of religious tolerance and Akbar is one of the famous emperors who considered it to be a salient facet of his reign. His son Jahangir continued his policies

¹⁵⁸ Nurul S. Hasan, *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India*, ed. Satish Chandra (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64.

¹⁵⁹ Bhargava, *Secularism and its Critics*, 183–5.

¹⁶⁰ Hasan, *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India*, 64.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 66.

regarding religious tolerance. Though they were aware that religious wars were intensifying in other parts of the Muslim and Christian world, they took a different approach in accepting members of various religions. Conversions were also allowed, so much so that the Christian Jesuit fathers who were in the court of Akbar almost hoped that Akbar would be converted to Christianity owing to his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. However, that development did not transpire. Instead, the Christian missionaries were granted permission to convert people who wished to be converted.¹⁶³ “In fact Jahangir, in his *Memoirs*, claimed credit that while the Turanis persecuted the Shiites, the Safawids persecuted the Sunnis, during his father’s reign but religious differences were tolerated in his own reign.”¹⁶⁴

3.2.3 Indian Secularism as Trans-Cultural Potentiality¹⁶⁵

Rajeev Bhargava interprets Indian secularism as:

[...] a unique conceptual structure. I (Rajeev) only mean that embedded in it is a specific and interestingly different way of interpreting and relating the basic constituents of secularism. Indeed, this is why the distinctive character of Indian secularism does not make it non-universalizable. Indian secularism has trans-cultural potential.¹⁶⁶

This cultural aspect was influenced by the mingling of various foreign cultures that settled in the Indian subcontinent, thereby making the country multi-cultural redolent with various religious traditions. According to Rajeev Bhargava, he is trying to interpret the “basic constituents of secularism”¹⁶⁷ in the Indian context. It is important to interpret secularism considering the historical and contextual realities of the time and reiterate that there can be more than one interpretation of secularism. The idea of secularism itself is a *process of evolution*. It developed in various contexts and then takes different forms and expressions in diverse cultures. Therefore, this context-based aspect of secularism assumes great significance. For instance, we need to ask ourselves why we need secularism at all. What was the purpose of the emergence of this idea of secularism? From the history of secularism, it is apparent that the church in the

¹⁶³ Ibid, 75.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India’s Secular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2010), 65.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

European context had both temporal and spiritual power, which dictated society until very recently. Eventually, a compelling need was felt to separate the church from the temporal power. But this was not the case in India where religion had a different role to play in society.¹⁶⁸ Rajeev points out that this historical emergence of the idea of secularism must be interpreted based on the times we live in, not only in India but also in the western world, where the stronghold of various religions is becoming increasingly pervasive. “This new multi-religiosity is threatening to throw western secularism into turmoil.”¹⁶⁹

In the Indian context, the relation between secularism and “its constitutive relation with substantive values” Was evidently forgotten.¹⁷⁰ Ultimately, the unique situation of adapting secularism is based on India’s multi-religious context. Rajeev thus expounds on the distinctiveness of this interpretation of secularism that is unique to India in the following lines:

First, its explicit multi-value character. Second, the idea of principled distances that is poles apart from one-sided exclusion, mutual exclusion, and strict neutrality. Third, its commitment to a different model of moral reasoning that is highly contextual and opens up the possibility of multiple secularism, of different societies working out their own secularisms. Fourth, it uniquely combines an active hostility to some aspects of religion with an equally active respect for its other dimensions. Finally, it is the only secularism that ... attends simultaneously to issues of intra-religious oppression and inter-religious domination.¹⁷¹

3.3 Plural

The third parameter of pluralism can be deduced from such secularistic understanding of the Indian society. One can investigate pluralism in various areas of social scientific research. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will confine the discussion to pluralism in a religious context. Pluralism in religion is unique to India. Even before the Indian continent had encountered Islam or Christianity, it was characterized by pluralism in its own belief system. According to Mall, the famous phrase, “*ekam sat, vipra bahudha badanti* Rig Veda, 1, 164, 46”, formulates or lays foundation for all religious foundation.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 67.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 69.

¹⁷² Mall gives the Translation of „*ekam sat, vipra bahudha badanti* Rig Veda, 1, 164, 46, in German as “was nur das Eine ist, benennen die Redekundigen vielfach”, according to K. F. Geldner. Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 205.

3.3.1 *Sarva dharma sambhava* (Political Neutrality to Religions?)¹⁷³

In the Indian structure, politics and religion are not incontestably separated, which differs from to the western understanding of secularism. Secularism in the western sense is commonly understood as a complete separation of the state and the church. In this sense, secularism is conceived rather as a western concept and consequently, cannot fit into Indian scenario. Nevertheless, Casanova refers to Habermas that Europe is an exception with regard to secularism.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, one would find it difficult to expect a similar pattern of secularism in India. This is well explained as a “principled distance” by Rajeev Bhargava.¹⁷⁵ By this, he means that there cannot be an absolute separation of religion and state in an absolute manner. A certain amount of distance is set by the boundary of the preamble, which allows the state to interfere with (the) religious matters. In the case of Hindu religion, for example, when the members of lower caste are not allowed into temples, the state intervenes to protect the rights of these persons.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, secularism is understood in the context of a pluralist society. It could be consequently expressed as *sarva dharma sambhava*, which means equal respect for all religions. In fact, secularism in India is defined as showing respect to and considering all the religions to be equal. In particular, the political approach to religions must be neutral without any modicum of favouritism.

The first traces of religious freedom in India in the modern times dates back to the era of Queen Victoria. In the process of transferring power from the East Indian Company to the throne, the Queen issued an official proclamation in which she mentioned about the equal treatment of religions in India. Though it was not a constitution, it was still regarded as the official document in which Indians thereafter had recourse in matters of religious freedom.¹⁷⁷

The Queen’s Proclamation expanded upon the basic principle of free exercise to encompass the core components of religious toleration: freedom from persecution on religious grounds, civil equality with respect to religious affiliation, and freedom of religious

¹⁷³ Gurpreet Mahajan, “Contextualizing Secularism: The Relationship between State and Religion in India”, in *Secularism, Religion and Politics – India and Europe*, ed. Peter Losonczi and Walter Van Herck, (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2015), 36.

¹⁷⁴ Jose Casanova, “Exploring the Postsecular: Three Meanings of ‘the Secular’ and Their Possible Transcendence”, in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 34.

¹⁷⁵ Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India’s Secular Democracy*, 69. Also see: Mahajan, “Contextualizing Secularism”.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 37.

¹⁷⁷ Cassie S. Adcock, *The Limits of Tolerance. Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23.

practice. It established neutrality, non-interference, and religious freedom as reference points for policy and for colonial politics in the civic arena.¹⁷⁸

In the later period of early 1772, the first governor, General Warren Hastings, implemented a reform in ruling the people of India. He made a thorough assessment of the secular character of India and asserted that every Indian was to be judged according to their own religious law in religious matters and not in accordance with the English law. "... in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste and other religious usages, or institutions, the laws of Koran with respect to Mahometans and those of the Shaster with respect to Gentoos shall be invariably adhered to."¹⁷⁹ He opined that it was very important to administer a law based on justice that Indians would understand.

Ever since the entry of foreign religions into India, the country became a land where various faiths could co-exist. Principally, it became home to the two of the three great Semitic religions, namely, Christianity and Islam. Mall cites Amartya Sen in the following words: "that India's long and deeply rooted tradition of heterodoxy has contributed to the coexistence and coexistence of religions on Indian soil"¹⁸⁰ As a result, one would find that for some centuries, India accommodated various religions such as: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zarathustrianism, Sikhism, and Baha'ism.

3.3.2 Socially Confused Identities Based on Foreign Background

This confused identity in Indian society is a reality based on religions. Members of various religions, however, do not have a fixed identity of themselves owing to their adherence to foreign religions. In fact, the two major religions namely, Christianity and Islam should not be considered foreign religions in India in view of their background and their presence in India. Both these religions entered India roughly at the same period that they made their presence felt in the western or Islamic world. However, they failed to be recognized as indigenous religions due to historical confusion and background. Islamic and Christian kingdoms have existed in India for a very long time.¹⁸¹ But merely because the founders or the principal figures of

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 33.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 25.

¹⁸⁰ Mall, *Indische Philosophie. Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 211.

... dass Indiens lange und tief verwurzelte Tradition der Heterodoxie dazu beigetragen hat, dass ein Neben- und Miteinander der Religionen auf indischem Boden möglich wurde.

¹⁸¹ Sebastian Velassery, "Faith, Ethnicity and Nationalism: St. Thomas Christians in India", in *Living with Religious Diversity*, eds. Sonia Sikka, Bindu Puri and Beaman G. Lori (Delhi, London, New

these religions originate outside India, it is automatically considered that they are foreign. The existence of Islamic and Christian religions has made great contributions to the Indian culture and various aspects of literature and music.

Nevertheless, the religious traditions and beliefs espoused by these religions make them believe or feel that they are basically connected to other parts of the world. The Christianness of an Indian gives the feeling of being part of the larger Christian community, which exists outside of India. It is an inevitable feeling that religion imparts to its members. Though they are innately Indian in practicing the traditions of the culture, there is a side of life that clings to the non-Indian culture.

(In the words of late Indian social theorist Sebastien Kappen (quoted in Samartha, 1994: 34): ‘We have become mental immigrants in our own country.’ The ecumenical theologian Stanley Samartha (1994) goes on to observe: ‘This is truer of Christians in India than people of other religions. Our theology and religious life, our liturgy and music, and our ecclesiastical structures, even our attitudes towards neighbours of other faiths, are dominated by powerful forces from the West. The vast majority of books in the library of theological colleges come from the West. This is true of books on liberation theology as well.’¹⁸²

Such proclivities are found among non-Christians and non-Muslims too. Owing to modernity and western education, many Hindus also behave in a more western way than most of the Christians. However, they do not have to struggle with this identity crisis due to the very fact that they are not Christian. They are modern and western, but not Christian. This is what makes them more Indian than the Christians in India. However, if a Christian or a Muslim is asked about their identity, they would very much say that they are Indian, but they have a very strong affinity and affection towards the respective countries of their religious origin.

3.3.3 Freedom to Practice Individual’s Faith

Practising one’s faith, especially that of the minority, is obviously a difficult task. Though it is not the case for the whole of India, it is gradually creeping into various parts of the country. One can compare it to a seed that has already been sown which has grown into a tree spreading

York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016).

¹⁸² Pradip Ninan Thomas, *Strong Religion, Zealous Media Christian Fundamentalism and Communication in India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2008), 9–10.

its branches to the whole of India. Religious pluralism has always remained a special characteristic of India. Members of minor faiths had to undergo suffering in practising their faith owing to various reasons, as had been the case with Christianity in the early Christian period. Though religious pluralism has contributed significantly to the development of the subcontinent, it also had to pay the price for it. Religious conflicts in India have been making headlines for all the wrong reasons, especially in the recent past. This was, however, a phenomenon even the ancient times, but of late, it appears to be disturbing the democratic and secular nature of the country.

Pluralism in India could be considered in various areas of societal life. However, my main concern is pluralism with regard to religions and their influence on Indian society. This refers to communal groups and not ethnic groups. However, one should be careful in distinguishing between ethnic and communal plurality. As I am trying to discuss this topic in reference to the religious situation in society and the evident scenario of conflicts based on religion, it should be considered communal rather than ethnic.¹⁸³

With the rise of nationalistic parties, which confuse the citizens by stating that being Indian means to be a Hindu, the co-existence of various religious is at stake. Pluralism was safeguarded in the Indian society even from the times of Mughals or even before by the early indigenous kings.¹⁸⁴ In many religious riots, the minority group comes under attack by the majoritarian faith group of the particular area. In this case any of the three religions (Hindu, Christian, or Muslim) could come under attack. However, in most of the cases, Christians and Muslims are considered to be the minority groups that are being targeted and attacked, though members of all the three religions apparently live harmoniously in the normal day-to-day lives. But there are some pockets of India where the common folk is instigated by political parties with a self-motivated intention. In such instances, religion is perniciously used as a scapegoat. Ram Adhar presents the underlying claim of Absoluteness as one of the major reasons for religious conflicts. Therefore it is vital to have an interreligious philosophy, which should be made mandatory in order to avoid the religious reductionism.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 58.

“As Horowitz argues, all conflicts based on *ascriptive* group identities – race, language, religion, tribe, or caste – can be called ethnic. In this umbrella usage, ethnic conflicts range from 1. The protestant-catholic conflict in Northern Ireland and Hindu-Muslim conflict in India to 2. Black-white conflict in the United States and South Africa, 3. Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka, and 4. Shia-Sunni troubles in Pakistan. In the narrower construction of term, 1. Religious, 2. Racial, 3. Linguistic, and 4. Sectarian.”

¹⁸⁴ Velassery, “Faith, Ethnicity and Nationalism”, 30.

¹⁸⁵ Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 211.

3.4 Challenges from Unmediated Areas

Towards the end of this chapter, I would like to synthesise that has been discussed until now. This synthesis is divided into two points. Firstly, I am to show the encounter between tradition and modernity in which religion is obviously the linking point. In the second point, I wish to introduce the contested areas of this thesis that follow up this first part.

3.4.1 Encounter of Tradition with Modern¹⁸⁶

In developing the theme of my research, I have commenced by exploring the contexts of the main author and the contexts into which this research is intended. This exploration reveals an encounter between tradition and modernity. These two concepts appear to be in stark contrast considering their functions in the society. However, the process of this encounter between these two so-called polarities leads to philosophical and religious expositions that unravel newer elements which are reflected across societies.

There is an underlying tension that grows in this encounter between tradition and modernity, which sometimes results in conflicts in the societies that cause massive destruction. Sometimes, we can identify the modernists as secularists though not in the sense of atheistic nature and traditionalists as religious fundamentalists. As per my observations and investigations, religion becomes a topic of intense debate between these two different groups on either side.

However, the interplay between tradition and modernity also leads to the formation of newer forms of knowledge, which is fundamentally based on a critique of what was known before. For instance, in the preceding chapter, the discourse on parameters has demonstrated how the three areas viz., modern, secular, and pluralism paved the way to new knowledge. These three categories aimed at producing either a newer understanding of religion or accommodating the presence of foreign religions in the case of pluralism. During the development of the public sphere, it was observed how the bourgeois societies were involved in forming the public opinion with a critical theory as its basis.

Fundamentally, this encounter between the tradition and modern cleared the pathway for a critique on religion, which, however, has dictated human life from time immemorial. Modernity raised questions on the ancient rituals and traditions that are deeply rooted in the religion.

¹⁸⁶ Premised on the discussion above between Habermasian society and the Indian society based on religion, I attempt to problematize the encounter between the traditional and modern conception of religion.

In the Indian scenario, it was religion that was critiqued as part of a social reformative process as alluded to in the chapter that dealt with the caste system.

The very aspect of religious understanding and its societal functioning through the caste system in India has certainly undergone tremendous change. Both subjective and objective changes that occurred through various perspectives about such a religion-based system were attributed to an encounter between tradition and religion. In this encounter, one can observe that modernity has not weakened tradition; rather, it has added a new dimension to it.

Entering into modernity means there's a lot to do. The analytical attitude of proponents of modernity counts rationalism as its founding stone; however, there is more it than meets the eye. "Both tradition and modernity form the bases of ideologies and movements in which the polar opposites are converted into aspirations."¹⁸⁷ Based on this encounter between tradition and modern the following contested areas arise.

3.4.2 Contested Areas

As discussed above, the encounter between tradition and modernity produces aspirations, which are converted from polarities. And these aspirations could be themes, which pave the way for further discussion as elements of contested areas. In this context, I present two important elements that work as contested areas when it comes to religion. The Habermasian philosophy of religion will be divided into two parts. The one aspect is the question of rationality intertwined in analysing religion. The second is the formulation of this rational aspect in our times, which is expressed through postmetaphysical philosophy of Habermas. This process of reconstruction helps us to analyse the role of cognitive development that has brought about changes in society. This is well expressed by Habermas: "The genealogy of post-metaphysical thinking attempts to understand the structural change in world views on the occidental path of development as a learning process."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *American Journal of Sociology*, 72, no. 4 (1967): 351, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2775860.

¹⁸⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie. Die okzidentale Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen*, Bd. I. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 136.
Die Genealogie des nachmetaphysischen Denkens versucht, den Strukturwandel der Weltbilder auf dem okzidentalen Entwicklungspfad als einen Lernprozess zu begreifen.

3.4.3 Rationality in Religion

Wolterstorff clearly says that Habermas has not given a definitive definition of rationality.¹⁸⁹ This is hypothetically acceptable in reference to his discourse theory, which allows us to discover rationality that differs based on context and historical background. Could that also refer to how Habermas attempts to distance himself from the dominating attitude of Eurocentrism? In my argument against the problem of religion, the analysis of rationality helps to unveil that which has been hidden by unwanted religious traditions and societal practices. That is why I will be discussing this relation between the rationality of religion and society in the following chapter. Investigating this rational aspect of religion from the ancient times is important because as Habermas claims: “Religions are not only absorbed in the cognitive dimension of world views but have been constitutive for the structuring of early socio-cultural forms of life as a whole.”¹⁹⁰

3.4.4 Postmetaphysics

The very first impression that one would get in observing the word Postmetaphysics is it stands in stark contrast to metaphysics. Nonetheless, Habermas uses this strategy in initiating dialogue with the religious. The second part entails dealing with this second contested area, which is the postmetaphysical philosophy of Habermas. In the following parts, the exposition on Postmetaphysics clarifies this misconceived position about Postmetaphysics by dwelling on the reconstructivity of religion from a postmetaphysical logic. This is expressed to illuminate the concretization of the element of rationalization from historical perspectives to the present reality of the rationality of religion.

Hence, these two elements basically discuss elementary concepts of religion that sheds light into how religion could be given a positive status in our secular age based on their rational inheritance and contribution to societal cognitive growth.

¹⁸⁹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue”, in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 97.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 182.

Religionen nicht nur in der kognitiven Dimension von Weltbildern aufgehen, sondern für die Strukturierung der frühen soziokulturellen Lebensformen im Ganzen konstitutiv gewesen sind.

PART III: HABERMAS' RELIGION I – TRACES OF RATIONALITY IN RELIGION

My interest in reasoning religion forms the basis of the search for solutions to the problem exposed in my introductory part. In this process, the two parts of exploring Habermas' philosophy of religion facilitates the reconstruction of rationality that is bedimmed by a fundamentalist interpretation of religion or otherwise a highly secularistic position of the outright denial of religion. These are rather two extreme positions. Nonetheless, Habermas' postmetaphysical logic offers a philosophical solution that could resolve many of the challenges facing religion today. The word 'rationality' captures the centrality of the problem of religion that I am trying to enquire about. The term rationality functions as the basic concept that leads to the further exploration of post-metaphysics. This postmetaphysical approach certainly challenges religion and its practices especially from a perspective of reason. Habermas believes that reason is very essential in treating religion, but he draws a healthy boundary in dealing with both areas namely, reason and faith. Habermas himself does not define *Vernunft* in traditional forms, rather his comprehension of rationality is expressed firstly through his Theory of Communicative Actions. Habermas' philosophy of religion is certainly a *Denkprozess*. It is developed as a result of his deep ruminations. His previous conviction that communicative rationality will replace religious rationality sooner or later is certainly not his present position. He tends to see more positive aspects in religion.¹

In this segment, I will try to treat elements, which are instrumental in understanding religion from a sociological perspective that links with the Habermasian discourse of religion from a critical point of view. The extensive description of intellectual formations of axial age is meant to form the premises on which a clearer claim of rational inheritance of religion could be established. In the postmetaphysical discourse, the aspect of critical analysis of religion and its practices is meant to contribute towards a rational faith that combats socially problematic elements of religion. By contrast, I argue that the element that lies beneath the problem is the

¹ Florian Uhl, "Vom Ritual zur Sprache – Von der Sprache zum Ritual. Jürgen Habermas' Beitrag zur Religionsphilosophie", in *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber (Darmstadt: WBG, 2017), 258.

issue of rationality. This rationality need not be brought or borrowed by religion from outside to correct themselves; according to Habermas, one can divert attention to find the genealogy of rationality in religion itself, because reason's own genealogy is dependent on religion.²

It is argued that the rationality of modernity mostly appears myopic and narrow, expressed mainly in natural sciences, technology and economic models. Religion is the only element that could give rise to certain moral aspects and they are concretely found only in a religious language, which, however, is non-existent in natural sciences. To exercise such an approach, Postmetaphysical philosophy helps to disclose the productive elements of religion.³

The following investigates religion from a socio-philosophical approach and demonstrates the rationalization of society through religion. Firstly, to support this idea, I have considered the thesis of Émile Durkheim, whose approach to religion plays an important role in comprehending Habermas' genesis of religious philosophy. The following chapter, nevertheless, does not aim to question the existence of a particular transcendental being. Rather, my aim here is to understand and shed light on how humans began to conceive this idea of a transcendental being and what the external factors were – including the sociological factors. This part discusses the process of understanding religion, which underwent various stages of reformation from one generation to another through the conception of ideas such as *profane and sacred*, which eventually found their expression through *symbols and rituals*. These are the important foundational concepts, which support the description of religion in a rather more substantial manner: “If the Paleolithic man can be considered a “full human being”, it follows that he also had a number of beliefs and practised certain rites. For the experience of the sacred is an element of the structure of consciousness.”⁴

Habermas, in his second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, discusses this phenomenon in a dichotomy of terminology: ritual and symbols, profane, and sacred. Symbols and ritualistic gestures could be something which we encounter in everyday life; but it is very important to comprehend that which lies beyond these symbols and rituals – religion.⁵ Haber-

² Austin Harrington, “Habermas and the ‘Post-Secular Society’”, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 10 no. 4, (2007): 556. doi:10.1177/1368431007084370.

³ Thomas M. Schmidt, “Die Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen. Zur Genealogie des nachmetaphysischen Denkens bei Jürgen Habermas”, *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift, Communio*, 49 (März–April 2020): 192–205.

⁴ Hans-R. Reuter, *Religion und Gesellschaft*, eds. Karl Gabriel and Hans R. Reuter (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 17.

Wenn der Altsteinzeitmensch als vollwertiger Mensch gelten kann, so folgt daraus, dass er auch eine Anzahl von Glaubensvorstellungen besaß und bestimmte Riten praktizierte. Denn die Erfahrung des Heiligen ist ein Element der Bewußtseinsstruktur.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *TCA II*, 50–55.

mas speaks about religion in reference to society. Therefore, it is imperative to consider religion in its sociological perspective.

In the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1981b), in which Habermas bases his sociological and ethical approach, there are some initial references to the social role of religion, which are entirely under the sign of the secularisation paradigm. Habermas assumes that religion's function of creating integration and shaping society will basically pass over to secularised communicative reason as more modern democracies develop.⁶

⁶ Michael Reder, *Religion in säkularer Gesellschaft* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2013), 82. In der Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (Habermas 1981b), in der Habermas seinen soziologischen wie ethischen Ansatz begründet, finden sich einige erste Hinweise auf die gesellschaftliche Rolle von Religion, die ganz unter dem Vorzeichen des Säkularisierungsparadigmas stehen. Habermas geht davon aus, dass die Funktion der Religion, Integration herzustellen und Gesellschaft zu prägen, im Grunde mit der Entwicklung modernerer Demokratien auf die säkularisierte kommunikative Vernunft übergehen wird.

1 Rationalization of Society in Durkheimian Categories

It can be seen that underneath this assessment, there is definitely Habermas' foundational idea of communicative actions. Thus, the following part is a discussion based on Habermas' analysis of Durkheim's sociological concept of Religion. This noticeably dwells especially on the social factors that contribute to the birth and growth of a religion.

1.1 Collective Consciousness

“Durkheim analyses religious beliefs and patriotism not as extraordinary attitudes of contemporary individuals, but as the expression of a collective consciousness rooted deep in tribal history and constitutive of the identity of groups.”⁷ The relationship between the individual and society is inevitably significant in the social theory of Durkheim. The following quote specifies what is very fundamental to this idea of collective consciousness: “Purely religious beliefs are always common to a particular community which confesses to adhere to them and to practise the common rites that go with them.”⁸ Joachim reveals that for Durkheim, the very important moments of religion are collectivity, convictionality and rituality, which are essentially ritualistic practices. These elements have contributed towards the social coherence in the early stages of religion. They form of the core aspect of religion and Habermas makes a rational interpretation of Durkheimian view, based on his theory of communicative actions. In place of *rituality*, Habermas shifts to *linguistic communication*, which is comprehensible through *semantic potentialities*. And in place of *religion*, which possesses the power of social integration, Habermas makes the transition to *rationality of communicative actions*. For Habermas, communication, language, and rationality form the essence of his line of thinking in religion.

⁷ Habermas, *TCA II*, 46.

⁸ Joachim von Soosten, “Kommunikation und Religion, Obsoleszenz und Affirmation von Religion in der Theorie von Jürgen Habermas,” in *Religion als Kommunikation*, eds. Volkhard Krech, Hermann Tyrel and Hubert Knoblauch. Bd. 4, (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 1998), 280. Cf. Footnote 21. Durkheim, *Die elementaren Foremen*, 70.

Die rein religiösen Überzeugungen sind immer einer bestimmten Gemeinschaft gemeinsam, die bekennt, ihnen anzuhängen und die dazugehörigen gemeinsamen Riten zu praktizieren.

They almost take of the significant step of replacing Durkheim's triple concepts viz., collectivity, religion, and rituality.⁹

With this basic understanding of Habermas' evaluative perspective about Durkheim, I would like to return to his basic ideas about religion from a sociological perspective. In the following quote, Durkheim's concept about religion is poignantly articulated by J. C. Ranges:

Durkheim describes religion as first and foremost a system of ideas by means of which individuals imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure yet intimate relations they have with it. Moreover, Durkheim continues, religion fully translates the essence of the relations to be accounted for. It is true with a truth that is eternal that there exists outside us something greater than ourselves and with which we commune.¹⁰

The Palaeolithic age refers to the era when this concept of religion came into being: a stage when human beings tended to develop their cognition and aimed at knowing something higher or more powerful. This pursuit could be speculated to understand and ascribe meaning to themes such as suffering, sickness, death, and life, which were obviously a part of daily life. It began with experiences involving daily life situations. Religion was, however, part and parcel of society, and vice-versa.¹¹ It is well represented in how Émile Durkheim defined religion:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.¹²

Religious thought is itself composed of collective representations, which are the products of a real social group. The reality and dynamism of these social groups are obviously verifiable; therefore, Durkheim reverted to these original social groups in order to understand modern religion and its communitarian phenomenon. Apparently, he finds no highly significant difference between modern and ancient groups other than the aspect of faith in a named transcendent God.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ James Constantine Ranges, "Durkheim and Early Christianity", in *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today*, eds. Thomas A. Wilson, Idinopulos and Brian C. (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2002), 144. Cf. Footnote 6. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms*, 227, 141.

¹¹ Peter Fischer, *Philosophie der Religion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht UTB, 2007), 150.

¹² Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 47.

Durkheim had given normative status to the thesis that a religion that is only composed individually is absolutely unthinkable. No religion without church: no religion without collectivity, corporate body and chapels, this was Durkheim's basic sociological observation for the elementary form of religion.¹³

1.2 Totemism

The above quote exemplifies how the concept of religion is deeply embedded with societal lives. This aspect of collective consciousness, which is obviously a production of collectivity and commonality, could be more enlightened with the elementary form of religion known as totemism.¹⁴ The earliest form of religion alluded to by Durkheim was discovered among the Australian natives. At this stage, it would be pertinent to provide a succinct elucidation of form of religion: *totemism*. The central aspect of this religion is solidarity, which is formed through the rituals performed during the nightfall. This has an innate relation to the sociological aspect of religion, which can otherwise be replaced by the society: “[...] because, according to Durkheim, totemistic religions contain at their core the structure and elements of all further and later and moreover highly complex forms of “religion.”¹⁵

Although Durkheim discussed two other forms of elementary religion, namely, animism and naturism, he appears to be holding on to totemism in order to explore the origins of religion for another reason:

Since neither man nor nature have of themselves a sacred character, he argued, they must get it from another source. Aside from the human individual and the physical world, there should be some other reality, in relation to which this variety of delirium, which all religion is in a sense, has significance and an objective value. In other words, beyond those, which we have called animistic and naturistic, there should be another sort of

¹³ Soosten, “Kommunikation und Religion”, 279.

Durkheim hatte der These einen normativen Status gegeben, eine Religion, die nur individuell verfaßt ist, sei schlechterdings nicht denkbar. Keine Religion ohne Kirche: keine Religion ohne Kollektivität, Körperschaft und Kapellen, so lautete die soziologische Grundbeobachtung von Durkheim für die Elementarform von Religion.

¹⁴ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religion*, 88.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 277.

[...] denn nach der Auffassung von Durkheim enthalten die totemistischen Religionen im Kern die Struktur und die Elemente von allen weiteren und späteren und überdies auch hochkomplexen Ausformungen von Religion.

cult, more fundamental and more primitive, of which the first are only derived forms or particular aspect.¹⁶

This totemism, which he found during his years of research in Australia, is considered by Durkheim to be the elementary form of religion. The aspect of society being identified with a god or of God being the embodiment of society is well thematised in the following thesis of Durkheim:

How could the coat of arms of the group have become the sign of this quasi deity if the group and the deity had been two different realities? The god of the clan, the totem principle, can therefore be nothing other than the clan itself, but objectified and spiritually imagined under the meaningful form of plant or animal species serving as totem.¹⁷

In the modern world, one can comprehend this phenomenon concretely in the tribal societies and their religious systems (religions). Every tribe identifies itself with a god whom they consider to be the embodiment of themselves. Nevertheless, before continuing this discussion, I would like to quote the expression used by Durkheim to clarify totemism: “The species of things that serve to designate the clan collectively is called totem. The clan’s totem is also that of each of clan’s member.”¹⁸

These are the principles that helps us decipher the immanent relation between religion and the society. The “*Australier*” (the English translation could be “the Australian”), which denotes the aborigines, mostly live in small groups and in families. He observed that most of these groups live together on the basis of economic activity. Periodically, these different groups come together on account of their relationships with one another – they could, for example, be various families belonging to the same clan. Every time they meet, they celebrate, dance and sing together, which lends an element of group dynamism and excitement to the group members. For Durkheim, these are the focal points or the actual genesis of religion.¹⁹ These meetings

¹⁶ Robert Alun Jones, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), 8, <http://durkheim.uchicago.edu/Summaries/forms.html>.

¹⁷ Fischer, *Philosophie der Religion*, 158.

Wie hätte das Wappen der Gruppe das Zeichen für diese Quasigottheit werden können, wenn die Gruppe und die Gottheit zwei unterschiedliche Realitäten gewesen wären? Der Gott des Klans, das Totemprinzip kann also nichts anders als der Klan selber sein, allerdings vergegenständlicht und geistig vorgestellt unter der sinnhaften Form von Pflanzen- oder Tiergattungen, die als Totem dienen.

¹⁸ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 100.

¹⁹ Fischer, *Philosophie der Religion*, 158.

project the interrelatedness of these groups for whom it is difficult to comprehend religion and society as separate entities.

One cannot, however, separate religion from society for it is religion that is the basis of all morality in society and law. This is something I would be discussing at a later stage of this study. The individual is very much dependent on society and god. As mentioned earlier, god represents a clan and by extension, every individual living in society also depends on both god and society.

Durkheim first compares the relationship of the individual to society with the relationship of the individual to a god or divine power. In both cases, the individual feels inferior and dependent. In both cases, there are also obligations for the individual: God and society demand certain restrictions, privations and sacrifices from the individual.²⁰

Religion has always provided humans with a sense of community. Religion brings people together based on their commonality and encourages people to express concern for members of the community. Had it not been for religion and god, from where did the whole structures of morality and important themes emerge, like love towards neighbours, and forgiveness/reconciliation/acceptance of strangers? Thus, it is logical to discuss and reasonable to observe the existence of God as a supreme being. As a consequence of these logical discussions, one can either accept or deny the existence of God. However, could that also be said about religion? Religion is a day-to-day factor which continues to form societies and its moral consciousness. One cannot deny the fact that religion is a societal element and the foundation of society, which gives legitimacy to commonality. Religion gave direction to the commonality of devotion towards sacred objects/elements rather than to utilitarian earthly everyday concerns. Thus “religion has been the anti-individualistic force par excellence, inspiring communal devotion to ethical ends that transcended individual purposes.”²¹

Furthermore, said the following can be said about collective consciousness:

Society is not at all the illogical or a-logical, incoherent and fantastic being which has too often been considered. Quite on the contrary, the collective consciousness is the highest

²⁰ Ibid, 152

Durkheim vergleicht zunächst das Verhältnis des Individuums zur Gesellschaft mit dem Verhältnis des Individuums zu einem Gott bzw. einer göttlichen Kraft. In beiden Fällen fühlt sich das Individuum unterlegen und abhängig. Ebenfalls bestehen in beiden Fällen Verpflichtungen für das Individuum: Gott und die Gesellschaft verlangen dem Einzelnen gewisse Einschränkungen, Entbehnungen und Opfer ab.

²¹ Émile Durkheim, *The Sociology of Religion*, 2010. <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsci/undergraduate/introsoc/durkheim6.html>.

form of psychic life, since it is the consciousness of consciousness. Being placed outside of and above individual and local contingencies, it sees things only in their permanent and essential aspects, which it crystallizes into communicable ideas. At the same time that it sees from above, it sees farther; at every moment of time, it embraces all known reality; that is why it alone can furnish the minds with the moulds which are applicable to the totality of things and which make it possible to think of them.²²

Nevertheless, one can observe that Durkheim in his *Elementary Forms of Religion* tries to explain religion:

(I)n terms of the supernatural; he explains religion as an illusory epiphenomenon of a materialist or rationalist worldview, which denied the validity of religion, or to explain religion as an expression of society and thus a fact and form of culture as important as any of the activities and products of civilization, including morality, science, law and the arts.²³

Durkheim, however, tries to focus on the social function of religion, which has indeed become an important point of relation in figuring out the function of religion. Religion, nevertheless, is a very essential element of the social structure, which, in turn, contributes to stabilising the society through the empowerment of an organic solidarity.²⁴

1.3 Psychological Factors

In my further analysis of the deep structures that bind religion and society, I would like to explicate the function of psychology as an essential element in the development of religion. A discussion on the psychological perspective in this particular realm is apparently indispensable because it brings into light that there is no other factor than ‘fear’ that subjugates the human self to a so-called super-human self. It is well elucidated in various traditions and cultures in different ways.

Fear, as Epicurus and Lucretius say, was invented by the gods when lightning came down from the sky: “*Primus in orbe deos fecit timor, ardua coelo fulmina dum caderent*”. The

²² Ibid.

²³ William E. Paden, “The Creation of Human Behavior; Reconciling Durkheim and the Study of Religion”, in *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today*, eds. Thomas A. Idinopulos and Brian C. Wilson (Köln: Brill, 2002), 17.

²⁴ Reder, *Religion in säkularer Gesellschaft*, 39.

fear of the new and strange, the fear of the unpredictable and inevitable, the fear of the overpowering fate, the fear of one's own moral responsibility; these were the first things that folded the hands of the defenselessly abandoned Ice Age man, and today the proverb is no less valid: 'Necessity teaches to pray'; yes, the Holy Scriptures themselves recognise fear as the source of religion.²⁵

I opine that people from ancient times were inclined to experience this fear as a basic element in inventing the concept of gods and goddesses. Both for eastern or western origins of religions, the element of fear is the common thread that follows a collective consciousness. In fact, a psychological perspective would even take the aspect of collective consciousness of religion under its mantle, claiming that it is indeed man's psychological need to want to belong to a group of like-minded people, etc. Predominantly, the experience of transcendence by various people brings them together and gives a collective consciousness, as Robert Bellah describes:

Émile Durkheim speaks of 'collective effervescence,' as that condition in which people experience a different and deeper reality. Durkheim describes the rituals of the Australian Aborigines: Commencing at nightfall, all sorts of processions, dances and songs had taken place by torchlight; the general effervescence was constantly increasing.²⁶

Why would one have to give offerings to gods; what could be the possible reason behind it? I personally see it as an attitude of appeasing the so-called gods. I conciliate gods, because I am afraid that but for my offering, a sort of retribution or chastisement would ensue. Even modern men understand various natural phenomena as the inexorable retribution from gods and begin to attribute every mishap to a god who punished them. This might be one of the reasons why the prophets of the OT preached against such offerings.²⁷ Instead, they said that God demanded a contrite heart.²⁸ The material offerings were not deemed significant in the eyes of God. Human intellect and rationality teach us to impartially and critically analyse the underlying

²⁵ Anton Anwander, *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1927), 26.

Die Furcht, sagt man mit Epikur und Lukrez, hat die Götter erfunden, als der Blitz steil vom Himmel fuhr: Primus in orbe deos fecit timor, ardua coelo fulmina dum caderent. Die Furcht vor dem Neuen und Fremden, die Furcht vor dem Unberechenbaren und Unabwendbaren, die Furcht vor dem übermächtigen Schicksal, die Furcht vor der eigenen sittlichen Verantwortung, die hätten dem schutzlos preisgegebenen Eiszeitmenschen erstmals die Hände gefaltet, und heute gelte nicht minder das Sprichwort: 'Not lehrt beten'; ja, die Heilige Schrift selbst anerkenne die Furcht als Quelle der Religion.

²⁶ Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 17.

²⁷ Isaiah 1:11–14

²⁸ Ps 51: 16–17

cause of a particular disaster. On the contrary, even up to the Middle Ages, human history tells us that religion propagated the idea that all the catastrophic events that could not be explained owing to the lack of knowledge and scientific discovery was a ramification of divine wrath. Owing to the modern-day scientific developments, humans now have developed the ability to distinguish various phenomena. The enormous development in the area of psychology, however, gives us rather solid clarifications.

With the development of metaphysics and the use of reason, humans at least began to comprehend the realities of life by leveraging basic human rationality. Thus, psychological factors were apparently dominated by pure human reasoning and the cognitive faculty was preferred in reflecting the divine.

At last, it has been said that it was not fear and desire, not poetic idealism and unbridled imagination alone that were the masters of religion, but also man's power of thought, uncritical, hasty, raw thinking, and naive metaphysics, who, in the absence of proper knowledge of nature and spiritual life, populated everything with supernatural beings and weaved a colourful wreath of legends and myths to offer at least a temporary substitute for the causal instinct of the inquiring mind until the spirit awakens to full self-consciousness and science becomes the highest religion.²⁹

Contrary to what I suggest here – that the psychological factor of fear played an important role in inventing god – Max Müller seems to be presenting the prehistoric Aryans and their invention of gods otherwise. Thus, one can go beyond mere psychological factors to comprehend religion in its entirety. With the help of Rigveda, (the oldest Indian Books, as I mentioned earlier), Müller significantly notes that these Aryans came in contact with the Eternal and Unending Being through *Reason* just like the modern metaphysical thinking man. This gave them the impetus to move in the direction of discovering or establishing a religion. This religion is known as Henotheism which means that the Gods namely, Indra, Varuna, or Soma who capture the attention of his devotees turn towards them. These gods were regularly implored by the devotees as only true God. They understood from natural cognition that this divine,

²⁹ Anwander, *Die Religionen der Menschheit*, 26–7.

Endlich hat man noch gesagt, nicht die Furcht und die Begierde, nicht der dichtende Idealismus und die zügellose Phantasie allein seien der Religion Gevatter gestanden, sondern schon auch die Denkkraft des Menschen, aber ein unkritisches, voreiliges, rohes Denken, eine naive Metaphysik, die in Ermangelung richtiger Kenntnisse über die Natur und das Geistesleben alles mit überirdischen Wesen bevölkert und einen bunten Kranz von Sagen und Mythen geflochten habe, um dem Ursachentrieb des forschenden Verstandes wenigstens einen vorläufigen Ersatz zu bieten, bis der Geist zum vollen Selbstbewußtsein erwacht und die Wissenschaft die höchste Religion geworden sei.

eternal being cannot but be just one and this Unity was addressed as the Heavenly Father/Himmelsvater, which is incomparably the most beautiful expression which the Indo-German have given for the divine. Max Müller has very convincingly given the following context³⁰:

5000 years ago, or perhaps even earlier, the Aryans, who were neither Sanskrit, (neither Greek nor Latin language, called him Dypatar, heavenly father. 4000 years ago or maybe even earlier the Aryans, who had migrated south to the rivers of the Penjab, called him Dyausch-pitā. 3000 years ago or maybe even earlier the Aryans on the coasts of the Hellespont called him Zeus Pater (Zeus ...), heaven father. 2000 years ago, the Aryans looked up the Italian coast and saw that shining sky, hoc sublime candens, above them and called him Jupiter, Heaven Father. It was then perhaps for the first time pronounced by praying people.³¹

With this reference, the argument that religion had its origin only in the psychological factors can be ruled out to a certain extent. One of the German classics that explored the field of religion was Rudolf Otto, whose idea of the Holy sheds light onto religion itself. He explored this basic concept as the concept of the Holy is obviously central to religion.

A discussion, however, about Rudolf Otto's or Schleiermacher's expression of religion as something attributed to feeling, can indeed lead us to psychological factors. Though they discuss about a one-on-one relationship and experience, it is for me basically an analysis of the psychological aspects of humans. Robert Bellah refers to this phenomenon by citing George Lindbeck's attempt to explain religious reality:

Lindbeck's ... theory of religion is the widely influential experiential-expressive approach. This view assumes that there is general human capacity for religious experience that is actualized differently in different religious traditions. The experiential-expressive view in its modern form Lindbeck traces to Friedrich Schleiermacher, and in recent times, it was widely propagated by Paul Tillich. ... in one understanding the deep

³⁰ Ibid, 32.

³¹ Ibid.

Vor 5000 Jahren oder vielleicht noch früher nannten ihn die Arier, welche noch weder Sanskrit, (weder) Griechisch noch Lateinisch sprachen, Dypatar, Himmelsvater. Vor 4000 Jahren oder vielleicht noch früher nannten ihn die Arier, welche südwärts an die Flüsse des Penjab gewandert waren, Dyausch-pitā. Vor 3000 Jahren oder vielleicht noch früher nannten ihn die Arier an den Küsten des Hellespont Zeus Pater (Zeus ...), Himmelsvater. Vor 2000 Jahren schauten die Arier Italiens hinauf und sahen jenen leuchtenden Himmel, hoc sublime candens, über sich und nannten ihn Jupiter, Himmelsvater. Wurde damals vielleicht zum ersten Mal von Betenden ausgesprochen.

structure of religious experience exists generically in the human psyche. Particular religions are the surface manifestations of this deep panhuman experiential potentiality.³²

1.4 The Profane and the Sacred

Basing myself on Durkheim's definition of religion, I would like to infer that even before religion appeared in the form that we have today, the Palaeolithics had already conceived the ideas of the profane and the sacred. These are the two important concepts characterizing the essence of religion. The very first impression that one might get by hearing the word 'religion' is 'sacred'. A sort of sacrality is innately attributed to this word. Religion leads us to something sacred, which means the opposite of profane. We can comprehend the meaning of sacred in different ways. But a socio-philosophical perspective aims at searching the meaning in relation to society and its reception.

The division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought; the beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, that virtues and powers which are attributed to them, or their relations with each other and with profane things.³³

What is actually sacred? In sociological parlance, philosophers and sociologists consider society to be sacred – a society bound with a certain set of norms. It is like what we would call the church. It is an institute with certain set of normative regulations for a moral life that leads up to the spiritual regime. In dealing with this moral context and the 'way of life' typically demanded by the church, we arrive at the concept of sacredness. In this sense, it could be hypothetically concluded that the church is essentially an institute with a certain set of normative rules leading up to the sacredness of society. Habermas says:

According to Durkheim, this entity, society, can at first be viewed and recognized only in sacred terms. Apart from the fact that concepts such as "collective consciousness" and "collective representation" seduce us into personalizing society, assimilating it to a subject-writ-large, the proposed explanation is circular. The moral is traced back to the

³² Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution*, 11.

³³ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 37.

sacred, and the sacred to collective representation of an entity that is itself supposed to consist of a system of binding norms.³⁴

Sacredness receives authority by means of the group, which underlies the strong foundation for this institutional authority. Society exercises power and authority over the individual in more ways than one. It is a power that is imparted by the dynamism of the group. Due to the involvement of sacredness, this cannot be simply tarnished. Referring to the cognitive development of man in earlier times, I have been trying to decipher the true meaning of sacred and profane. Sacredness, as we now understand it based on various theories and definitions, is something which makes us feel a sense of awe and respect. To be clear, it creates an enigma about something that is hidden from the natural sense of human beings. Habermas detects an equivalent disposition leading towards what is sacred to moral authority. This is because sacredness too has the characteristics that awaken both awe and fear simultaneously.³⁵

However, in the archaic societies, sacred more or less corresponds to our present-day conception of sacred. As the sense of religion was emerging, this aspect of separation formed the dichotomy that existed in sacred and profane, thus leading to the notion of holiness, an indelible part of religion itself. In some objects and living creatures, there have been certain practices and symbols which were considered to be set apart. Similar objects were used both in the context of profane and the sacred. Though the objects remain unchanged, the meaning and worth attributed to them differs. We see trees growing everywhere in the forest, but a single tree – one among other trees – is set apart and dedicated for ritual practices and hence, is considered sacred. It is similar to the comparison of objects like stones or images created from stones or wood. Though ‘wood’ is used for fire, making hunting objects, building houses or huts, a certain wood is considered holy and sacred.

All sacred objects – flags, emblems, decorations, tattoos, ornaments, figures, idols, or natural objects and events – share this symbolic status. They figure as signs with conventional significations, and they all have the same semantic core: they represent the power of the sacred; they are “collective ideals that have fixed themselves on material objects.”³⁶

Habermas, however, finds out that Durkheim bases the foundations of morality exactly on this dichotomy of sacredness and profane. “He puts forward the thesis that in the last

³⁴ Habermas, *TCA II*, 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49. Cf. Footnote 27: “The sacred being is in a sense forbidden, it is a being which may not be violated; it is also good, loved and sought after.” Durkheim, “Determination of Moral Facts”, 36.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

analysis moral rules get their binding power from the sphere of the sacred; this explains the fact that moral commands are obeyed without being linked to external sanctions.”³⁷ In elaborating further on the sacred and profane, Habermas asserts that the individual enters into communion with other believers without regard for the imperatives of self-maintenance. This individual submits himself totally to the power that lies beyond human conception, or merges with the impersonal power of the sacred, which transcends everything that is merely individual.³⁸

With the above discussion about the notions of sacredness and profane, it appears to me that they spark, nevertheless, the idea of association or dissociation. Durkheim says, “The sacred thing is, par excellence, that which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity.”³⁹ The Indian society has used a similar expression about sacredness to label human beings as touchables and untouchables. “Sacredness is a property of society itself. It involves behaviours irreducible to any other kind of social domain.”⁴⁰

In the introductory part, I elaborately dealt with the caste system. Now, I shall analyse it in terms of the dichotomy of sacredness and profane. The intentionality underpinning the phenomenon of separation of objects according to the argument above is to create the two domains. However, this similar is intentionality carried faultily and irrelevantly in separating people based on their duties in society. All those who are bound to sacred duties are also considered sacred and entitled to elicit respect. Similarly, folks who are associated with menial jobs in society are considered profane. Thus, we have a very clear and tangible expression of both domains in societal professional terms. Unfortunately, this paved a natural way to the most insidious, deplorable, and social dehumanizing practice of society – ‘untouchability’. Based on innumerable incidents in Indian society, one can say that this practice is yet to be obliterated from the country. Thus, we can conclude that the meaning, sense, and understanding of the sacred and profane has undergone an evolutionary process. Consequently, it is evident how a rationalistic separation of the two could take the form of an irrational and heinous functionality.

What originally only means ‘colour’ is now synonymous with class, and next to the Aryan priests (braahmana), nobles (ksatriya) and merchants (vaisya), the natives as Sudras form the lowest of the four Varnas. We do not know when this differentiation will begin, at least not before they become settled. The most famous reference is the much quoted

³⁷ Ibid, 49.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 38.

⁴⁰ Ranges, “Durkheim and Early Christianity”, 18.

‘Song of (primeval giants) Purusa’ (RvX, 90), a hymn of creation from the later parts of the Rgveda, which will be discussed later.⁴¹

In an Indian context, it is very pertinent to discuss the caste system, which originally began as classification of societal jobs, and eventually adopted this dichotomy of ‘sacred and profane’. The problem of untouchability has its roots in this dichotomy. Though it was originally an idea that referred to a duty or dos and don’ts, Indian society misinterpreted it. Nonetheless, one can trace untouchability and its roots to the attitude of discrimination that the invaders projected towards the inhabitants of the land. That is, the lords, who became lords by conquering portions of land, made the inhabitants their permanent slaves and enforced all sorts of manual labour upon them. This was the origin of the phenomena of untouchability as introduced by the Aryan invaders.⁴² This took a new shape when the Aryan settlers claimed the land and began to divide societies according to the work they were engaged in. In the course of time, the settlers and the locals apparently became one folk living on the other side of the Hindukush. The sacred scriptures and other literature were common to all those who dwelt there. This separation in the archaic society was intended to create a special place for the things which could not be associated with the ‘normalcy’ of society.

[...] Sacredness needs to be looked at as a form of certain behaviour...sacredness is a characteristic of an object or state that correlates with certain behavioural attitudes and practices-stances and protocols that are appropriate for contact with or participation in that object or state. Objects deemed sacred may include superhuman beings, or some representation of them like a symbol, place, time, or status, but behavioural worlds build around these.⁴³

However, the development of the understanding of this sacredness mostly had a religious connotation, as it was attributed to sacred, holy, and mysterious gods. Sadly, it ended up establishing the most dehumanizing practice in the history of the world. Sacredness is an attribute

⁴¹ Schlensog, *Der Hinduismus*, 62.

Was ursprünglich nur Farbe bedeutet, wird nun zum Synonym für Klasse und neben den arischen Priestern (Brahmana), Adeligen (Ksatriya) und Kaufleuten (Vaisya) bilden die Einheimischen als Sudras die unterste der vier Varnas. Wann diese Ausdifferenzierung einsetzt, wissen wir nicht, jedenfalls wohl frühestens mit der Sesshaftwerdung. Den berühmtesten Hinweis bietet das vielzitierte „Lied vom (Urriesen) Purusa“ (RvX,90), ein Schöpfungshymnus aus den späten Teilen des Rgveda, auf den noch einzugehen sein wird.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ranges, “Durkheim and Early Christianity”, 25.

given to anything that man considered to be set apart. The sacred things and symbols that we see today would not have been sacred in themselves unless man attributed this significance to them and began considering them to be sacred. Durkheim was occupied "... with (the) how (of) *homo religiosus* forms behavioural systems out of the category of sacrality. Here, the sacred is not a reified, divine object, but rather objects of any kind upon which superhuman value has been placed and around which mythic and ritual worlds form."⁴⁴

The moment humans started separating certain things, like the trees, stones, or other natural or even manmade objects, from the ordinary, they automatically became sacred. The significance of the sacred lies in the fact that it is distinct from the profane.

[...] Systems of sacred objects evolve their own kinds of ritual and mythic behaviours and classifications. They form worlds of time, space, cosmology. They form systems of authority, inspiration, communication, respect, and relationship linked with the objects. Once generated, religious ideas set in motion a world of patterned negotiation between sacred and profane, attraction and repulsion, communion and interdiction, purity and impurity, and this world gains a kind of independence, following its own laws ...⁴⁵

Hence, the perception of man about society made an attempt to create an apparent division among the entities of the world. Consequently, the cognitive potentiality of man through the process of rationalization produced the dichotomy of sacred and profane in order to form the normative foundations of society.

1.5 Rituals and Symbols

Religion is a phenomenon that deals with the realm of experience of subject-and-object-dichotomy. Religion in this way is allegoric of a common idea that gathers people aiming at the same goal. In the process of achieving this common goal, they work together on regular basis. This particular 'work' turns out to be a ritual, which consequently gives them 'commonness'. As Durkheim refers to the coat-of-arms that represents the clan, religion in contemporary terms represents a clan of people. However, this may not be the same clan that one usually attributes to the term 'clan.' It actually means different individuals with similar goals. "Collective identity has the form of a normative consensus built up on the *medium of religious symbols* and

⁴⁴ Ranges, "Durkheim and Early Christianity", 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 18.

interpreted in the semantics of the sacred. The religious consciousness that secures identity is regenerated and maintained through *ritual practice*.⁴⁶

How should we then concretely experience these concepts of ‘sacredness’ and ‘profaneness’? A tangible experience or concretization of sacredness is possible through rituals and symbols, which are used in sacred gatherings, as Durkheim suggests. Durkheim refers to the meeting at night by the tribal communities in order to perform rituals in the darkness. It is something done in the same manner at the same time at regular intervals, which invites the community to a continuity of the tribe and its traditions. Robert Bellah clearly differentiates these moments from daily chores.

He specifically analyses Durkheim’s position about rituals:

Durkheim’s point is that the world of the ritual is quite different from the one “where his daily life drags wearily along.” It is the world of the sacred in contrast to the profane every day. And, for Durkheim, it is the profound creative and transformative power of society itself that is the reality apprehended in the ritual.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, certain daily activities of our lives turn out to be rituals and are associated with a religious meaning.⁴⁸ It is the same as when I referred to the sacredness attached to certain objects derived from normal existence. However, they acquire this meaning only in a certain context. Habermas alludes to Durkheim referring to a collective consciousness represented during these sacred rituals. Let us take the example of the Christian rituals in the modern age. Despite being rooted in antiquity, they represent a collective consciousness. It is these religious rituals and symbols that hold the collectiveness of the group and give credit to the institution.

[...] Durkheim gives his theory of collective consciousness the shape of a theory of symbolic forms: collective representations originate only when they are embodied in material objects, things, or beings of every sort – figures, movements, sounds, words, and so on – that symbolize and delineate them in some outward appearance.⁴⁹

Habermas expresses it by saying that every ritual has an element that enables or facilitates the continuity of religion. Religion alone would not survive without being rooted in a ritualistic

⁴⁶ Habermas, *TCA II*, 53.

⁴⁷ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*, 18.

⁴⁸ Surya Namaskar, which was just a normal morning exercise facing the morning sun as part of yoga has turned out to be a sort of veneration towards the sun god. Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 261.

⁴⁹ Habermas, *TCA II*, 51.

practice. Habermas believes that a ritual is a non-semantic form of expression, which developed even before the development of language with words. A man becomes a man by learning through his behaviour with his fellow members of the species, and by working harmoniously towards a common goal. The equilibrium between the needs of the individuals and the group is very fragile and needs to be stabilized through something, such as a rite. Thus, it is a form of communication which differentiates itself from the daily routine. However, the common goal of this rite is directed towards an object that does not belong to the world. The ritual serves as self-assurance of both the individual and the society and is able to create some sort of solidarity. This is exactly what Durkheim was pointing out when referring to the Australian religion of Totems.⁵⁰ “Religious symbols are disengaged from functions of adapting and mastering reality; they serve especially to link those behavioural dispositions and instinctual energies set loose from innate programs with the medium of symbolic communication.”⁵¹

Ritual can be observed as the enforcement of the outward behavioural program aimed at social integration. This indicates that ritual leads to solidarity, in which Habermas discovers the communicative role that these religious symbols and rituals give to its adherents. The rituals and symbols used by members of the same religion speak to one another and it is this communication that keeps the community united.

[...] Religious symbols have the same meaning for the members of the same group; on the basis of this uniform sacred semantics, they make possible a kind of inter subjectivity that is still this side of the communicative roles of first, second, and third persons, but is nevertheless beyond the threshold of sheer collective contagion by feelings.⁵²

According to Durkheim, one doesn't require language for social integration in the elementary form of religion, because the ritual speaks itself and it is *vorsprachlich*. The discussion undertaken so far has helped us go beyond the phenomenon of religion in the traditional sense. Religion that we experience and live today has been a gradual process of various societal cognitive developments. This is the first step towards analysing religion from a socio-philosophical approach that helps us to understand modern religion. At a deeper level, it can also help combat fundamentalist attitudes that claim the absoluteness of truth.

⁵⁰ Uhl, “Vom Ritual zur Sprache”, 261–3.

⁵¹ Habermas, *TCA II*, 54.

⁵² *Ibid*, 52.

2 The Axial Age

Why is the Axial Age in my research important and how does it improve the understanding of Habermas' attempt to strengthen his argument about the hidden normative principles of rationality within religious traditions? This is the basic question that will serve as the foundation in exploring this point of discussion. One cannot but refer to this Axial Age period in discussing rationality in religion. This discussion claims that the concept of rationality in the arena of religion or even of human reasoning made a very significant advancement during this period. Another important reason underpinning this Axial Age discussion is to establish the foundation for the forthcoming chapter centred on religion in terms of postmetaphysics. What Habermas calls postmetaphysical philosophy has its roots in this "axial intellectual formations".⁵³

It would seem that this axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 B.C., in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 B.C. It is there that we meet the deepest cut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today, came into being. For short, we may style this 'Axial Period'.⁵⁴

Therefore, in order to establish the rational inheritance of religion and argue that religion possesses rational heredity that formed the very basis of human rational thinking, I take it as another point of reference in exploring the philosophical discourse on religious rationality. Habermas uses the hypothesis of axial at a stage where he attempts to identify the commonality of genealogy of philosophical reason and religious faith. He contends that they both have the same point of origin. They are both products of the cognitive revolution of 800–200 BCE.⁵⁵ Axial Age initiates the independence of thinking and reflection. This is what Habermas calls "cognitive advance in the world history process of religious rationalization".⁵⁶

⁵³ Huw Dafydd Rees, "Decolonizing Philosophy? Habermas and the Axial Age", *Constellations* 24, no. 2 (2017): 221. doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.12267.

⁵⁴ Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans: Michael Bullock (London: Yale University Press, 1953), 1.

⁵⁵ Rees, "Decolonizing Philosophy?", 221.

⁵⁶ Peter E. Gordon, "Axial Age", in *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy Allen, and Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 24.

According to the research undertaken by Hans Joas, the Axial Age hypothesis can be traced back to Karl Jaspers and the likes of George Simmel, Sinologist Victor von Strauss, Max Weber, and Ernst von Lsaux.⁵⁷ Moreover, in our contemporary period, we Jan Assman and Robert Bellah are associated with this theory. However, for the sake of this discussion, Robert Bellah's work is especially poignant⁵⁸ because of his extensive exploration about India in the axial age. Terminologies such as revolutionary age in the human cognition could be summed up in one sentence: "Jaspers sees the axial transition as a revolution in human thought and subjectivity. The key theme, which he detects in the ideal of all the axial regions, is a new awareness of *transcendence*"⁵⁹.

2.1 Defining Axial Age

The thesis of Axial Age is defended by Karl Jaspers in his book, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* where the influence of Alfred Weber and Max Weber is palpable. Referring to the 'strangeness' that he detected in the world during this period, he says:

Victor von Straus in his wonderful Lao-tse commentary, (1870), says, 'During the centuries when Lao-tse and Confucius were living in China, a strange movement of the spirit passed through all civilised peoples. In Israel Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel were prophesying and in a renewed generation (521–516) the second temple was erected in Jerusalem. Among the Greeks Thales was still living, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Xenophanes appeared and Parmenides was born. In Persia an important reformation of Zarathustra's ancient teaching seems to have been carried through, and India produced Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism.'⁶⁰

The strangeness expressed here is considered by Habermas to be a cognitive leap of humanity. The human cognition during this period takes a further step by liberating itself in its thinking. It is not solely a liberation in thinking; instead, it is characterized by a revolutionary thinking that took the critical path by basically questioning the existing religious practices. As Eisenstadt put it, 're-organization and re-ordering' of society and its beliefs became the central point of interest to this age. "... [n]ew type of intellectual elite became aware of the necessity

⁵⁷ Ibid, 24.

⁵⁸ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*.

⁵⁹ Rees, "Decolonizing Philosophy?", 220.

⁶⁰ Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, 8–9.

to actively construct the world according to some transcendental vision”.⁶¹ The theme of critical theory, which appears repeatedly in Habermasian philosophy, comes to the forefront of this theme as well. The essential element that forms the basis of this theory is the focus on the cognitive leap of humanity. “Jaspers understands the fact that these parallel developments in different cultures occur at the same time as an indication that a similar mental state is articulated.”⁶² This includes members of all categories in human society. Thus, it is not just the philosophers (who were considered intellectuals) that come under this heading; religious thinkers, founders and preachers also initiated this move.⁶³ The axial age also witnesses the emergence of sacred scriptures or philosophical discourses that influence the world till today.

Religionen nehmen die Gestalt von schriftlichen kanonisierten Lehren an, die ganze Zivilisationen prägen. Sie bilden nämlich rationalisierungs- und institutionalisierungsfähige Kristallisationskerne für eine dogmatische Ausgestaltung differenzierter Überlieferungen und ebenso für eine politisch einflussreiche Organisation umfassender Kultusgemeinden.⁶⁴

The revolutionary character of the axial age is more visible in the socio-political scenario. Bellah demonstrates that the *nomos* thinking as the point of reference on which the political conditions of the society underwent a change. The advanced cognitive thinking that emerged through the prophets and wise men shaped the worldviews that emerged during this time. The axial age is preceded by the archaic age where the king was regarded as the divine representative in society. However, in the following period, this representation of underwent a change. The new rulers of the axial age also claimed to be of divine origins, but not in the line of the existing monarchs. They appear from an insignificant root, which was not deemed royal until then. They all claimed divine origin for their rule, or at least they were endowed with this. They had to move against existing societies. They were not from the existing lineage of kings; instead, they were born as leaders and had their own charisma, albeit with a divine claim, given either by themselves or by society.⁶⁵ However, “the old unity of God and King

⁶¹ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, “The Axial Age Breakthrough in Ancient Greece”, in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1986), 1.

⁶² Habermas, *AGPh I*, 179.

Jaspers versteht den Umstand der Gleichzeitigkeit dieser parallelen Entwicklungen in verschiedenen Kulturen als Hinweis darauf, dass sich darin eine ähnliche geistige Verfassung artikuliert.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 177.

⁶⁵ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*, 267.

was broken through dramatically in every case, and yet reaffirmed paradoxically in the new axial formulations.”⁶⁶ The axial age covers the time, for example in India, of the Buddha and his contemporaries, thus signifying an era resistance and revolution. The existing monarchies, religious, and social systems invited trenchant criticism, and this age was characterized by the movement towards greater purity.

Nonetheless, in the following section, I will discuss the process of gradual progression that served as a precursor to this newer stage of human cognition.

2.2 From Mythos to Logos

This was a transition from *mythos* to *logos*, from polytheism to monotheism, from entanglement in immediate experience to the attainment of rational distance. It eclipsed the pre-axial thought of civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and the Hwang-ho Valley.⁶⁷

The process of rationalization that emerges in human cognition could be explained through this transition period. The Logos basically differentiates itself from the mythos through its character of reason. The age of gods and their offspring is called the age of myth whereas the age of logos is referred to as the age of humans according to Herodotus. He uses the term ‘human age’ which indicates the mid-6th century, as also suggested by Jaspers to be the time of axial age. This implies that the age preceding the human age was an age of myth. The age of myth was marked by imagination and tales which were not verifiable, they were even turned into poetry, while the beginning of the age of logos was characterized by reason that entailed empirical investigations made possible through historical recording.⁶⁸ It could probably bring out the Hegelian philosophy of history where he attributes spirit to history and what is historical as mere nature.⁶⁹ What is spirit is dynamic and what is nature is static. Herodotus uses the word ‘Logos’, which means accounting for historical events while categorizing every other story under the category of myth, which cannot be subjected to empirical investigations.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Rees, “Decolonizing Philosophy?”, 220.

⁶⁸ Robert L. Flower, “Mythos and Logos”, in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 131, (2011): 47, doi: 10.1017/S0075426911000048.

⁶⁹ Rees, “Decolonizing Philosophy?”, 225.

⁷⁰ Flower, “Mythos and Logos”, 46.

What happens in the axial age is the transition from mythos to logos. This process of transition that shaped the axial age could be technically seen as a movement from the mythical understanding of religion or religion being formed and transmitted through myth into a realm of logos or translated here as reason. I am attempting to show the result of deduction observed through axial age. “The axial age religions”, says Habermas, “made the cognitive leap from mythical narratives to a logos that differentiates between essence and appearance in a very similar way to Greek philosophy.”⁷¹ By analysing this transition, we arrive at the emergence of the axial age. Mythical era or mythical stage of cognition is a period of time in human history in which religions mostly progressed by passing down of myths, which they have heard from the previous generations. What is lacking here is the written form of philosophising or reasoning the transcendental experiences, which were preserved in the religions.

Contrary to mythical thinkers, “evolutionary thinkers of this period (Logs) broke free from the immanent frame of mythical thought, and achieved a transcendent viewpoint from which to contemplate the world and human life as a whole.”⁷² In seeking to approach religion with a rationalistic perspective or even to present it to society with a rational essentiality, I find it vital to recognize the importance of such a transition from mythical humanity to rationalistic humanity. Habermas refers to Bellah in this perspective and how he presents that humans have gradually distanced themselves from mythical narratives and concentrated on a more transcendental point of reference to their moral and ethical actions in life. The term *Weltgesetz* represents the embodiment of an unseen god or saviour, a more concretization of the divine, transcendent power as experienced in the world of humans. However, the beliefs and practices do not completely disappear in this transformation, but take a new form. “The ideas and magical practices of popular religions do not disappear. However, they are integrated into new teachings founded by prophets and wise men and into new cultic forms, thus changing their meaning.”⁷³

What we could conclude or derive from these two elements, myths and logos, is that the intellectual or cognitive standard of man as undergoing a change. Logos can be understood as having characteristics such as reasoning and critical questioning:

Looked at philosophically, the powerful cognitive impulse behind the “Axial Age” (*Achsenzeit*) is captured in the First Commandment, namely emancipation from the

⁷¹ Rees, “Decolonizing Philosophy?”, 220. Cf. Footnote 19. Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 142.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 185.

Die Vorstellungen und magischen Praktiken der Volksreligionen verschwinden nicht. Sie werden jedoch in die neuen, von Propheten und Weisen gestifteten Lehren und in neue kultische Formen integriert und verändern damit ihren Sin.

chain of lineage and from the arbitrary will of mythic powers. At that time the world religions, as they developed a monotheistic or a cosmic concept of the Absolute, pierced through the uniform, flat surface of narratively interwoven, contingent appearance, thus tearing open the gap between deep and surface structure, between essence and appearance, which first granted humanity the freedom of reflection and the power to distance itself from the abyss of immediacy.⁷⁴

2.3 Pre-Axial Cultures: Robert Bellah

The following discussion refers to Bellah's description of pre-axial stages of human cognition. In making an attempt to explain what Axial Age is and its importance in the religious critique, I defined it as bringing out the aspect of the potentiality of human cognition. So the present discussion is about the various stages of this cognitive potentiality that allowed humans to reach the axial age. This is a brief description that will help us comprehend various important cognitive cultures as envisioned by Robert Bellah.

2.3.1 Episodic Culture

In this culture, Bellah brings out the earliest religious experiences related to the perception of mammals. This stage is the earliest type of culture that one can categorize in building up the process of human cognition. This phase of cognition refers to how a species responds to distinct situation based on earlier experiences. By analysing the responsive patterns of great apes, it is observed that they respond to particular situations promptly and constructively depending on previous experiences, which have been stored well in the memory. The higher mammals here require attention and intention, which are very significant in episodic culture. In describing this episodic culture and holding to the dichotomy of attention and intention, Bellah claims that the deepest religious experience is in this way rooted in the mammalian perception,⁷⁵ although one can observe that the responses are mainly based on utilitarian ends in this stage. What makes the species attentive and conscious is the need of being with fellow members of their groups where it is possible to relate based on needs. "Alert attentiveness is also a valuable asset for humans seeking to fulfil their intentions,

⁷⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality, Essays on Reason, God and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 158.

⁷⁵ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*, 118–120.

including moral intentions that are far more than utilitarian. But the concrete immediacy of a consciousness fully present in the here and now may also be significant resource for the religious life.”⁷⁶

2.3.2 Mimetic Culture

A significant feature, which is to be observed in this stage is ‘pedagogy’, a process of teaching imitation. In fact, this is the first time that pedagogy makes its appearance. Although the word ‘mimic’ suggests that the actions of the mammals did not comprise vocals, thus implying silent actions, vocalization did emerge during this period. Bellah says that Donald refers to prosodic control of the voice as a necessary part of the evolution of language. In this stage, humans did not have to learn everything; rather, they had the opportunity to be told how things could be done. Bellah refers to this culture as “*an event about an event*”. Humans, unlike other animals, could see and remember both the past and the present; they were also in a position to portend the future, and this Bellah sees as stepping outside of the episodic consciousness and moving forward.⁷⁷

But humans, once mimic culture had evolved, could participate in, could share the contents of other minds. We could learn, be taught, and did not have to discover almost everything for ourselves. Mimetic culture was limited and conservative; it lacked the potential for explosive growth that language would never have evolved.⁷⁸

2.3.3 Mythic Culture

“... [A]unified, collectively held system of explanatory and regulatory metaphors. The mind has expanded its reach beyond the episodic perception of events, beyond the mimetic reconstruction of episodes, to a comprehensive modelling of the entire human universe.”⁷⁹ Mythic culture is hugely connected to ritual, which created an opportunity and environment for learning. From the stage of mimics, which also involved vocals, humans in this mythic culture enter into the arena of semantics. This language acquisition, however,

⁷⁶ Ibid,120.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 120–130.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 131.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 272.

cannot be unfolded in an individual's context but only in a social context. The development of language required an external support system, which is nothing else but ritual – as maintained by Bellah, basing his arguments on Terrence Deacon. It is interesting to observe how myth permeates into every aspect of human life during this stage. “Although myth gives a comprehensive understanding of life, it does so exclusively by the use of metaphor and narrative. Also, mythic culture until very late in its history was, except for drawings of various kinds, an exclusively oral culture.”⁸⁰ During a ritual, people tried to repeat the actions and experiences not just in symbolic gestures but also with the use of language, which had been preceded by vocals. Robert has described the myths referring not only to the European context but also to the Australian aboriginal milieu.⁸¹ This stage has played a pivotal role in most ancient societies. The myths have served as a very important medium in establishing religions.

2.3.4 Theoretic Culture

This theoretical culture denotes a sort of dialogue with the mythic culture. It entails the dismantling of existing semantic models, especially the narrative style of thought. This does not, however, imply that there is a complete new way of semantics which has altogether pushed out the earlier forms of cognitive adaptation. This is merely a matter of reorganization of the earlier forms of communication. Put simply, this culture was aimed at storing its memory external to that of the human brains. The mythic culture gave way to the development of an important medium for knowledge transfer. This gradual use of language was essentially strengthened by myth-telling, which obviously requires human brains to store this knowledge. Besides human brains, there was no place of storage, where this knowledge could be preserved.⁸²

Early writings are clearly a significant step beyond painting in the amount of cognitive information that could be stored, but the unwieldy early writing systems and the limited number of people who could use them meant they were precursors to, rather than full realizations of the possibilities of theoretic culture.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid, 272–3.

⁸¹ Ibid, 130–133.

⁸² Ibid, 273.

⁸³ Ibid.

However, theoretic culture discovers an external disk of storage irrespective of human conditions. Thus, we have the first graphics independent of human corporality. These can also be evidenced by Palaeolithic cave paintings.

2.3.5 The Axial Age – India

This part analysis the axial age attitudes from religious heroes in the Indian subcontinent. It was an era when trade was flourishing and when a significant growth of population and well-fortified cities took place. At this axial moment, there appeared many renouncers of the world. Bellah says that the word ‘renouncer’ had various meanings; nevertheless, what one could derive by the sense of this word is this: renouncing the life of a householder to lead the life of an ascetic, which obviously was characterized by mendicancy as itinerants.⁸⁴

The importance of the renouncer’s role is that it allowed the possibility of viewing the entire tradition and the society that embodied it from the outside, so to speak. Renouncers viewed traditional society as imperfect. Dumont sees the renouncer as a genuine individual, capable of choice, in a society dominated by ascribed roles and particularistic relationships. In these ways the renouncer role is a signal of an axial transformation.⁸⁵

Bellah claims that the Indian case is nevertheless a unique one, which differs from all the other three axial-age centres, viz., Israel, Greece, and China. A brief explanation of the prevailing Indian scenario against the backdrop of sacred scriptures and the political situation will help us comprehend this issue better.

The Vedas are considered the earliest scriptures of the Indian sub-continent, and mostly comprise hymns, predominantly used at sacrificial rituals. Although Sanskrit appeared earlier, Vedas were written at a subsequent period. One can date it back to Asoka’s period, or 273–232 B.C. Rigveda is the earliest Vedas to have been written. Though one might find oral traditions in Israel or China, the Indian system appears to be different. For example, in treating the texts of Homer (the Greek one), the scholar Milman Parry carried out a study of traditional Serbo-Croatian oral poetry in Yugoslavia and found traces of this oral transmission.⁸⁶ However, the Indian case is generally different because Indologists believe:

⁸⁴ Ibid, 528.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 529.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 482.

[T]he oral transmission of these early texts is exact, word for word, even to the accents involved. What makes this believable is that the oral transmission continues to this day and seems to be accurate to the smallest detail, more accurate than the printed texts or the relatively late manuscripts that lie behind them. Thus, the Indic development of what has been called hyper orality, a complex system of cross-checking for verbal accuracy, turns out to be a unique kind of oral technology that is the functional equivalent of writing. Given that in all the great traditions even written texts were often memorized and transmitted orally, with the written texts used only as prompts to memory, we must consider that we are everywhere dealing with speech as much as writing.⁸⁷

Bellah's very elaborate description of the Vedic religion leads one to discover the importance of ritual in the life of the ancient Indians. Above all, Rigveda mainly deals with the rituals and the first of all rituals. The different types of rituals mentioned in Rigveda are also classified hierarchically. The most obvious motivating idea of Vedic religion is the Roman principle of "*do ut des*", "I give so that you will give", or in Vedic terms, "Give me, I give you", *dehi me dadhāmi te* – that is: reciprocity.⁸⁸ The most important reference in denoting the social and religious contexts during the earliest-known period in India is the Rigveda. According to Witzel, "The Rigveda thus represents, above all, the history of two royal lineages (Pūru and Baharat) toward the middle of the Rigvedic period."⁸⁹

The intellectuals of India were always identified with the *Brahmanic* class who were also the natural, ordained possessors of sacred knowledge. The priestly class even had an upper hand over the monarchy.

The Brahman intellectuals were a literati of partly princely chaplains, partly consulting, responding and teaching theologians and jurists, priests and shepherds. They were monks, teachers and gurus. They formed philosophical schools.⁹⁰

Brahmanism was the religion of the elite and Brahmins were often considered the best part of society.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 486.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 487.

⁹⁰ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Kulturen der Achsenzeit*, trans. R. A. Schalit (Berlin: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1987), 284.

Die brahmanischen Intellektuellen waren ein Literatenstand von teils fürstlichen Kaplänen, teils konsultierenden, respondierenden und lehrenden Theologen und Juristen, Priestern und Seelenhirten'. Sie waren Mönche, Lehrer und Gurus. Sie bildeten philosophische Schulen.

Brahmanic Hinduism in its various philosophical schools is indeed the work of intellectuals. The extremely rational character of these philosophies could only be the work of people trained in a teaching and thinking tradition.⁹¹

However, challenging this intellectual hegemony, the Buddhist movement arose in the Indian subcontinent. This birth of Buddhism⁹² gave society a new perspective. What was until now considered normal, for example the supremacy of Brahman religion, had to face rivalry from within the same society. Notably, Buddha did not belong to the Brahman class, but rather to the *Kshatriya* class. We should also be aware that the *Varnas* only denoted the type of work they were doing and not the caste system that is widely prevalent even in modern India. Buddhism shed light on the misery caused by Brahmanism in trying to impose on the people who were performing menial jobs. The idea of life as a misery for these people was challenged by Buddhism: “not that Buddhists think that daily life is completely miserable, but that those who reflect seriously on life may find that it is, in spite of many rewards, ultimately unsatisfactory, and that for those not looking beyond daily life at the moment, there is still much the Buddha has to teach.”⁹³

It further one step further and rejected the entire Vedic tradition upon which all of the entire Brahmin tradition was based. In fact, Buddha tried to go back to the origins of Brahmin texts and to understand them with full consciousness: “[...] understanding the words and their logical connection is only the first step, it is only when the teachings have penetrated deep into one’s consciousness that they can be transforming”.⁹⁴ I would like to identify this period as a period of transition, because the great Upanishads, which are characterized by metaphysical discourses, appear in the later part of this axial age.

We can hypothesize, therefore, the Upanishads represent a point where the Middle Vedic “arrested development of the state” was giving way to new state formations... Upanishads suggests a response to a rapidly changing and unsettling environment. Olivelle suspects that the emergence of “new ideas and institutions, especially asceticism and celibacy”, imply an urban or urbanizing environment.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ibid, 285.

Der brahmanische Hinduismus in seinen verschiedenen philosophischen Schulen ist in der Tat das Werk von Intellektuellen. Der äußerst rationale Charakter diese Philosophien konnte nur das Werk von Menschen sein, die in einer Lehr- und Denktradition geschult waren.

⁹² Cf. Habermas, *AGPh I*, (Habermas deals in this book extensively about Buddhism.)

⁹³ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*, 534.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 542.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 509.

Hence, instead of bringing the whole theme of the axial age to a conclusion, I would keep it open for further discussion following this chapter. This discussion on the axial age would serve as a link with the forthcoming chapter. However, I would like to refer to Bellah, which will give us the scope to continue my discussion in the following chapter:

(I)f the Upanishads mark the beginning of theoretical reflection at the level of metaphysics, where metaphors are still central but used to clarify concepts, and the argument is at the level of universal truth, then they can rightly be seen as a cognitively axial moment in the development of early Indic thought. Gananath Obeyesekere, however, has raised a question as to whether this new level of cognitive thinking involved an axial “ethicization” (his term) as well. He notes that the mid-first millennium BCE was a period “conducive to philosophical and soteriological probing and the systematization of thought (what Max Weber called ‘the rationalization of religious life’).⁹⁶

2.4 A Revolutionary Age

The Axial Age as expounded in the above discussion, could be summarized conceptually as a revolution in human thinking. The axial age could be seen as an age of revolution. With the emergence of various new religious consciousness and expressions, their aim was to present a new perspective of religion. It was clear in the first section that religion was an essential element of the society that held members of the society together through the ritual practices having common goals. As established before, society is the protector of an individual. Religion is, however, the only non-political organized body that engages itself in the betterment of individuals. Therefore, in the following, part I would elaborate on the basic characteristic of axial age in terms of religious movements. This reveals how the axial intellectual formations in the history of mankind converted religion into movement, which almost became the nucleus of society that dealt wholly with its affairs.

2.4.1 Analysis of Religious Movements

The different charismatic groups are rooted in different ancient religions. The axial age as discussed in my introductory part prompts us to consider various religions from this perspective. Taking into consideration the three main religions: Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism in the

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Indian continent, it is observed that all these religions had their phases as “movements”. Due to political engagement, religion was always considered a saviour of the people from their earthly miseries. But this redemption was basically owed to an unknown and unseen power named as God- a Saviour, and Redeemer.

One can observe that during this time, society was “heavily burdened” as Jesus would say to his people.⁹⁷ They were burdened not only by the political field; rather, the so-called comforting element of the poor and needy “religion” also became very burdensome.⁹⁸ It was at this point that all the traditions formed religions which did not just concentrate on a one-on-one relationship, like just the God and an individual; rather, the focus was on the relationship between God, individuals, and society. God was supposed to be acting in the lives of the individual and society.

The appearances of prophets in the Judaic culture and the reformatory icons in India like the Jain Tirthamkara⁹⁹ or the Buddhas¹⁰⁰ were indeed robust pillars of great movements that gave hope to the downtrodden and marginalised sections of society. The following discussion will focus on the three movements in the history of religions that emphasised the liberation of those who were burdened. In modern parlance, they denote the liberation movements or religious reformations.

Though Durkheim believes that religion began as a moment in individual’s life in reference to a societal aspect of coming together in order to celebrate “a thing”, it gradually grew and became all-encompassing, covering various dimensions of human life in totality. It became very much the central part of people’s lives. The term “solidarity” used by Durkheim in defining religion suggests that these movements too base their central ideology on this fact of solidarity.¹⁰¹ Durkheim’s idea of solidarity as the central aspect of religion very much considers the intrinsic societal dimension. In line with the Greek philosopher Aristotle who says that man is a social animal,¹⁰² implying that we need one another, religious movements also affirm that an equal distribution of societal benefits is paramount. This, in turn, is based on the principle of righteousness, which serves as the starting point (*Ausgangspunkt*) for the religious movements.

⁹⁷ Mt 11:28

⁹⁸ The temple sacrifices in the Judaic Religion and the multiplication of laws by the Pharisees and Sadducees apparently became burdensome instead of being a liberating factor.

⁹⁹ A reformatory group that laid foundation in battling against the Brahmanic Religion. One can say that this movement served as an impetus for the foundation of the Buddhism in the Sub-continent. Cf. Schlensog, *Hinduismus*, 154.

¹⁰⁰ The Enlightened Ones (Plural). Cf. Schlensog, *Hinduismus*, 144.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms*, 42–48.

¹⁰² Benjamin Jowett, “Politics”, in *Aristotle’s Politics: Writings from the Complete Works*, Bk 1, Sec. 1253 a1, ed. Jonathan Barnes (UK: Princeton University Press, 2016), 3.

Hence, I would like to consider religion to be a movement based on the three important movements in the history of religion: The prophetic role in Israel, the Jesus movement, and Buddha's reaction to the Brahman Religion.

2.4.2 The Prophetic Movement

This movement has been centred on religious heroes who were able to stir societies. The prophets in Israel were not men who could be limited to temples and the field of religion. On the contrary, they had the power to denounce the king and his actions while also calling the people back to God through repentance. The voice of a prophet was very strong and could garner the attention of everyone in society. The biblical prophets served in this role of leadership, which gave the community, as Durkheim calls it, a collective consciousness moving towards a collective goal.¹⁰³ A religious theme, which was addressed to the nation, was also a national and political theme. A call for the king to repent, asking him to turn towards God and his ways, meant a call to righteousness and justice in society. Simultaneously, a warning to the priests to turn towards one God is also a call to eliminate nefarious religious practices and to know what is truly important in religion. For example, the prophet Jeremiah said that God wants a merciful heart rather than the bloody sacrifices at the temple.¹⁰⁴ It is a direct denouncement of all the priestly abuses in the nation. As another instance, prophet Amos's prophecies demanded social justice and righteousness.¹⁰⁵ Here, I would like to crystalize this prophetic movement in a single terminology, commonly known as social justice. Though the prophetic movement has its roots in the Jewish religion, we cannot make a clear distinction between the national and religious history of the people of Israel. From this standpoint, social justice was always spoken in relation to religion. Put differently, religion spoke out against social injustice, which is offensive to the laws of God. This can also be noticed in the Torah, where the Law given by Moses as the law of YHWH, was the law of people of Israel.¹⁰⁶

Social justice refers to the overall fairness of a society in its divisions of rewards and burdens. Generally defined, social justice refers to the prevention and elimination of abuses

¹⁰³ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms*, 42–48.

¹⁰⁴ Jeremiah 7: 22; Hosea 6: 6.

¹⁰⁵ Bellah, *Religion in Human evolution*, 310–320. Cf. Amos 5: 24

¹⁰⁶ Leviticus 26:46

of human rights in areas not limited to, but including, belief, gender ethnicity, class, religion, ability, wealth, education and social status.¹⁰⁷

In referring to the prophets and their movements I would like to consider some salient characteristic of these prophets according to Haralson:

a. the prophets were speakers, and not writers. They were the recipients of revelation, generally received in a state of ecstasy, which was then transmitted to their audience in the form of the spoken word.

b. the prophets primarily saw themselves as messengers transmitting the revelations which they had received but occasionally supplementing these with their own words in order to clarify or provide reasons for the divine words.¹⁰⁸

Plato describes three elementary functions of prophets in politics. Firstly, prophecies come into play at the very origin of politics. Secondly a prophet serves as a bridge between the divine and the human sphere in governing society. Thirdly, God transmutes and acts as politician through instances of prophecy, which is called the divine moment. This is also called Theo-politics. As Plato would put it prophecy is a way of God to act upon human affairs, in an unmediated manner. It is God who acts and the prophet possibly serves the role of an appointed agent. The words of the prophet are considered the voice of God. Therefore, the decisions taken within this framework are said to be guided by the voice of God.¹⁰⁹

These prophets in Israel had a very special voice and the prophecies were considered to be the voice of God speaking to the Israelites. However, even in this area, they were professional prophets who trained themselves to be prophets and who proclaimed God's word as they had learnt it. The kings often consulted this group of prophets and were psychologically satisfied with their responses, which were often very pleasing. On the other hand, some prophets emerged from the normal class of society, who claimed revelation of the Absolute. These prophets did not belong to the line of so called professional prophets. Instead, they were touched by the spirit of God. These prophets always appeared at very crucial moments of Israel's history. They were regarded as the true mouthpieces of God. These prophets were characterized mainly by their spirit of boldness, which they never possessed prior to having received their mission

¹⁰⁷ Adolphus Chinwe Iroegbu, *Let justice roll down like waters* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2007), 10.

¹⁰⁸ John Haralson Hayes, *Amos the eighth century prophet, his times & his preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 34.

¹⁰⁹ Tilo Schabert, "Prophecy in Politics: The Voice of Plato" in *Propheten und Prophezeiungen / Prophets and Prophecies*, eds. Mathias Riedl/Tilo Schabert (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 47.

from above. This gave them the power and ability to speak to the kings in a tone which would often cost their lives (Rf. Prophet Jeremiah). Paradoxically, they did not give in to fear and continued to prophesy against the wishes of the kings. They proclaimed the message given to them in the presence of the kings and the people of Israel. They claimed that it is the Word of God that spoke to them.

Since the prophets were understood as condemning the society of their day and as proclaiming the downfall of the nation, this religious aspect had two foci, namely, the wrongs in the religion and behaviour of their contemporaries and the alternatives to these proposed by the prophets. The prophets were interpreted as protesting against religious practices that were communally oriented, ritually focused, ethically hollow, and infused with polytheistic and heathen elements and against social behaviour that was wealth oriented, legally corrupt, judicially unfair, and insensitive to the poor. What the prophets proposed as an alternative was individual and ethical idealism.¹¹⁰

This can be obviously seen in the Old Testament where the God of Israel, YHWH, did not favour double moral standards. Right and Wrong applies equally for both Israelites and non-Israelites. Instances in the history of Israel speak of wrongdoings committed against their worst enemies. God did not even spare Israel for this wrongdoing. YHWH demanded righteousness and hated injustice, even if it was done to their enemies. Prophets spoke of sin as an offence to the deity, which is fundamentally a thing of pure moral character. This encapsulates the intention that morality is for the sake of which all things exist.¹¹¹

One can cite famously the prophet Amos as one of the important prophets whose work calls us to a purely societal revolution. Prophets like Jeremiah present the will of God to the nation of Israel, beginning from pointing out to the king about his evil nature and demanding a return to God and his ways.¹¹² One of the famous verses from the Book of Amos, which is often spoken in reference to him is: 5:24: "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." This clearly projects the central message of Amos characterized by social justice oriented towards the needy and the poor.¹¹³ In considering the motivation of Amos or his intention in delivering such a message, we could observe the results of research by the recent social anthropologists who claim that the prophetic movements centred on social ethics pertained to the egalitarian revolution. This was a revolution, which occurred during the

¹¹⁰ Hayes, *Amos the eighth century prophet, his times & his preaching*, 32.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Jeremiah 1: 1ff.

¹¹³ Max E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 112.

time when Israel did not have a king. These pre-monarchical times were very much led by the prophets as they were the direct agents of YHWH, who was their king, and no other earthly person was considered to be their ruler. These anthropologists contended that no other earthly person was considered to be their ruler and that the nation of Israel was formed from various rebellious groups, which were mainly agriculturists and pastoral people from Cana. They opposed the centralized structure of their city-states in which the people, the agriculturists or the pastoralists, and were deprived of their rights and social justice.

This revolution against repressive overlords took the form of a 're-tribalization' movement toward the simple politics of the village-based life of the clan-tribe. Social justice was established through clan-tribal councils meeting at the city gate. Possession of Land was patrimonial, families and clans controlled land granted to them by Yahweh. These estates were passed from father to son, occasionally redistributed within the local clan.¹¹⁴

The essential ethical message, which is considered to be the central message in Amos, represents a call for justice and righteousness in Israel. These two words, however, sum up the attack of Amos on the rich and God's compassion towards the poor: "They are paired in three passages, and justice appears alone in one reference (5:7; 6:12b, 5:24). Justice (*mispāt*) and righteousness (*sedaqa*) are rich theological terms used to characterize Yahweh and to describe the covenant relationship between him and his people."¹¹⁵

2.4.3 The Buddhist Movement

All the three movements with which I am looking into have a commonality in their aims or goals: To liberate societies from both religious and social oppressions and suppressions. However, a closer look at them tells us that their formation was always reactionary to the existing well-established religions, be it Judaism or the Vedic religion. Buddhism can be considered or compared to the protestant reformation in Europe. The main aim of Buddhism is to enlighten ignorant folks or educate them to attain a self-enlightenment. This concept of enlightenment is central to this movement. It is actually a key opposing movement in the Vedic period, which gave rise to the upanishadic community.

Dating Buddha accurately and historically is ridden with contentiousness. Most of the sources rely on the Asokan Edicts which cite that King Asoka had sent ambassadors to the

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 128.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 135–6.

Hellenistic Kings dated at c. 268 BCE; one of the traditions of Buddhism, the Theravada, says that Buddha died 218 years before this. Some of the scholars however, opine that he lived c. 566–486 BCE. But there are also different dates according to some of the Sanskrit sources in East Asia and again in Tibet, which dates Buddha to 881 BCE.¹¹⁶

Buddhism founded by Gautama Buddha was indeed an individual's effort to attain the state of Bodhi, the enlightenment.¹¹⁷ He claimed to experience enlightenment after six long years of asceticism. It is a movement, which does not give metaphysical explanations or establish the facts of the existence of a particular deity or god. Instead, it encourages people to work towards enlightenment. However, its genesis was attributed to the Brahmin forces, which kept society in ignorance while as a priestly class, they became the superior class of society who had the ultimate authoritative say over many things concerning societal traditions too.¹¹⁸ "Since Buddha was the subject of numerous legends and because the earliest Buddhist chronicles were written two hundred years after the events, it is impossible to write a historical biography of the Master based on written documents".¹¹⁹ The chronicles of Sri Lanka (*Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*) and *Sarvastivadin avadanas* can provide us with some details of his life.

Buddhism, unlike the other two movements, which I have dealt with, did not arise from personalities or figures who were engrossed with the daily struggles of human life. It neither arose from a person who belonged to the normal strata of the society. The founder of this movement was a sheltered prince who was kept away from the miseries of the world. According to an old prophecy, he was not supposed to be exposed to the evils or the misery of human life, which would only have drastic ramifications in his life. However, this prophecy was fulfilled in Gautama the prince, who left his palace to see the world and experience it.¹²⁰

The term Buddhism referred just as Christianity to a group of people who became the followers of a certain Gautama. Christianity too derives its name from Christ who is the anointed one of God, a character assigned to Jesus. Buddhism centres itself around Gautama, as I have mentioned before, who is said to be enlightened one. This obviously presents the idea that all men are called to this awakening process and the ones who achieve this enlightenment are called Buddhas. Which means "the term 'Buddha' is not a proper name, but a descriptive title meaning 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'. This implies that most people are seen, in a spiritual sense, as being asleep or unaware of how things really are."¹²¹ The aspect of awakening

¹¹⁶ Peter Harvey, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Charles S. Prebish, Damien Keown (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 105.

¹¹⁷ Schlenso, *Hinduismus*, 144.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 208–214.

¹¹⁹ Zacharias P. Thundy, *Buddha and Christ* (Leiden [u.a.]: Brill, 1993), 54.

¹²⁰ Helmut Uhlig, *Buddha und Jesus* (Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1997), 51.

¹²¹ Harvey, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 92.

is, however, central to Buddhism. His role in society was to teach people to re-discover their original nature as human beings and this led his followers to revere him as a great teacher. When society is on the verge of losing its core values and truths, and when human beings cease to recognize the dignity of other human beings, this process of awakening helps society revive the lost element of humanity. “The key role of a perfect Buddha is, by his own efforts, to rediscover the timeless truths and practices of *Dharma* (Pali *Dhamma*) at a time when they have been lost to society.”¹²²

It is said that Buddha arrived the state of Nirvana through deep meditation. In contrast to the Hindu’s understanding of the Brahma, the Absolute one, Buddha gives a new picture and understanding of this Being. He has understood this Brahman in terms of goodness, helpful, and one who is close to the humanity. Congruent with the presentation of Brahman as the absolute Being, it was also necessary to realize Brahman in one’s own life.¹²³ The existing religion of the time, (the highly Brahmanic or the priestly religion), in comparison to the revolutionary Buddhist teachings, paid less attention to the individual self. Religion was unfortunately highly identified with a certain class, and the knowledge of the scriptures became the sole right of this priestly class. The example I have cited about Jesus can also be applied to Buddha and his society. The existing priesthood represented by the Brahman class was corrupt and burdening the society as any other priesthood elsewhere globally. The priest also became the ruler of the society. Having a very special place in the king’s court, they had power and authority.

Religion has in most ... cases taken over the role of power thinking. The priest is their functionary. He serves the king. But often he has gained power over the ruler himself due to spiritual abilities or strong influence at court.¹²⁴

Habermas observes that Buddhism with such a backdrop was able to present an unusual understanding of religion.¹²⁵ As an appealing aspect towards emphasizing the equality of society, the reform of Buddha not only rejected the authority of the Vedas but also denied the religious meaning attributed to caste. Consequently, Buddhist monasteries were open to all, irrespective of their social status.

¹²² Ibid, 93.

¹²³ Uhlig, *Buddha und Jesus*, 55.

¹²⁴ Wolfgang Siepen, *Weg der Erkenntnis – Weg der Liebe* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1992), 33.

Religion hat in den meisten ... Fällen die Rolle des Machtdenkens übernommen. Der Priester ist ihr Funktionär. Er dient dem König. Nicht selten hat er aber auf Grund spiritueller Fähigkeiten oder starken Einflusses bei Hofe selbst Macht über den Herrscher gewonnen.

¹²⁵ Cf. Habermas *AGPh I*, 366–367.

2.4.4 The Jesus Movement

Speaking of axial age with reference to the Jesus movement would be certainly confusing as this movement does not fall into the time period set for the axial age. However, I would like to adduce this movement here as it contains the traits of the axial movements.

This was undoubtedly a way of life that was proclaimed by the disciples of Jesus. Jesus, as is commonly known and claimed, was a historical figure and is not considered to be a mythical one. His birth in Israel and his attachment to Jewish ancestry naturally was an important element in his mission. However, the movement as it was commonly called in the earlier times, was similar to many other movements, which often arose in the society of Israel. For many generations, the people of Israel had been for waiting for a messiah who would save them and rescue Jerusalem from foreign powers. No figure like Jesus can be found in any other secular sources as he is depicted in the Bible. Nevertheless, besides the Bible, one can find a reference to him in the writings of a well-known source of Josephus.¹²⁶ However, the movement was said to be founded by this so-called Messiah, whom the people of Israel were expecting in accordance with the prophetic promises that found in the scriptures of the Jewish religion. He too belonged to the line of prophets, thus implying that he was a self-styled prophet. This figure has apparently garnered more attention in the history of Israel than any other prophet. His movement was the proclamation of a divine kingdom. This proclamation featured the theme of the appearance of the Kingdom of God in their midst.¹²⁷ It was almost a keyword or an arresting terminology used by him. For the people of Israel who were eagerly waiting for a messiah who would accommodate or return the kingdom to the Jews from the Romans, this message indicated a political kingdom or just an earthly affair. However, the movement of Jesus by nature is essentially religious. Jesus often hinted that it was about a relationship with God, who is pictured as a loving father and a benevolent provider. This was basically the message of Jesus – to proclaim a different picture of the old YHWH, whom the Jewish people looked at with utmost reverence and fear. This is important to realize because the concept of a loving and gentle God was uncommon back then. It has its genesis almost with Jesus. As it is commonly known in the history of Israel, people were often burdened by the existing religious practices. The religion as well as societal norms imposed difficult demands that were expected to be fulfilled. Put differently, religious leaders often presented a God who was demanding in exchange for sacrifices. Sacrifices for the common man were tantamount to a financial burden. The foreign Roman rule also oppressed them. Their constant desire or fight for freedom gave

¹²⁶ Cf. *Testimonium Flavianum*, 18, 63–64. Also see. Whealey Alice, *Josephus on Jesus. The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York: Lang, 2003).

¹²⁷ Luke 17:21.

them a reason to await for a messiah who would resuscitate them from such a societal burden. Contrary to this, through the appearance of Jesus in the Judean countryside, all their dreams of redemption were being fulfilled. His deeds and actions were totally at variance with those of the religious leaders and the political leaders. Miraculous and generous acts such as healing on Sabbath, rescuing a prostitute woman, etc., could be seen as the foundation of his mission. Though Jesus's appearance on earth was rather short, his teachings and life have influenced many and shaped different cultures. His disciples, who were basically all Jewish, spread themselves all over the world to proclaim the message of Jesus as he had commanded them to do so. "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."¹²⁸

In a certain text based on the historical description of the Romans around the time of Flavius Josephus, the following description as available about a man named Jesus:

[...] around this time Jesus lived, a wise man, if he can be called a human being at all. For he was the accomplisher of quite incredible deeds and the teacher of all men who received the truth with joy. Thus, he attracted many Jews and also many Gentiles. He was the Christ. And although Pilate condemned him to death on the cross on the farms of the noblest of our people, his former followers were not unfaithful to him. For he appeared to them alive again on the third day, as God's prophets had proclaimed this and a thousand other wonderful things about him. And still to this day the people of the Christians who call themselves after him persist¹²⁹

Unfortunately, most of his life has been described only in the four Gospels, which do not count as historical texts, rather just religious ones. Therefore, researchers cannot base themselves on the gospels in elaborating on the personality of Jesus. However, the dispute about the place of his origin or his family is intriguing. It is commonly known that Jesus is called a Nazarene, which can denote the place called Nazareth as it is known in the gospels, or the word Nazarene, meaning the anointed one. There is also another explanation: "Nazarene, Nazarite [...] was the name given to a community that rejected the bloody ritual of the Jewish temple cult and was

¹²⁸ Mark 16:15.

¹²⁹ Uhlig, *Buddha und Jesus*, 220.

... um diese Zeit lebte Jesus, ein weiser Mensch, wenn man ihn überhaupt einen Menschen nennen darf. Er war nämlich der Vollbringer ganz unglaublicher Taten und der Lehrer aller Menschen, die mit Freuden die Wahrheit aufnahmen. So zog er viele Juden und auch viele Heiden an sich. Er war der Christus. Und obgleich ihn Pilatus auf Betreiben der Vornehmsten unseres Volkes zum Kreuzestod verurteilte, wurden doch seine früheren Anhänger ihm nicht untreu. Denn er erschien ihnen am dritten Tage wieder lebend, wie gottgesandte Propheten dies und tausend andere wunderbare Dinge von ihm vorherverkündigt hatten. Und noch bis auf den heutigen Tag besteht das Volk der Christen, die sich nach ihm nennen, fort ...

hated and persecuted by the orthodox Jews.”¹³⁰ Ultimately, one cannot prove that Jesus was indeed a Nazarene from a historical context, but given the universal acceptance of the fact, let us consider the title given by Pontius Pilate, which was nailed atop of the cross on which Jesus was crucified: “Whether Jesus belonged to these Nazarenes cannot be proven, but the fact that he was called a Nazarene in his trial and named as such in the inscription on the cross suggests that he was considered a Nazarene and therefore persecuted.”¹³¹

There are a lot more controversies about the existence of Jesus, leaving us a very minute evidence of his true existence through historical texts. But that does not give us the legitimacy to completely disregard his life and teachings or his importance in the global history. A fairly recent research about the historical Jesus has made some startling revelations. Despite not gaining much recognition in research, one can still consider it as a piece of research based on the texts found in the Tibetan valley in a Buddhist monastery. The Russian researcher named Nikolaus Notowitsch, out of his curiosity to fill the gap of Jesus’ life from the age of twelve to thirty, about which the gospels remain silent, found astonishing texts. These texts provided him with enough material to fill the gap of Jesus’ life between twelve and thirty. In 1906, a book was published by an author named Ahmad Shah, who served as a resource for the German scholar, Albert Grünwedel, to translate the texts of Notowitsch.

The earth has shuddered and the heavens have wept because of a great iniquity that was committed in the land of Israel. For there they have tormented and executed the great righteous Issa, in whom the soul of the universe dwelt. He was made flesh in a simple mortal to do good to mankind and to eradicate evil thoughts. To bring back to man, degraded by sins, the life of peace, love and goodness, and to remind him of the one and indivisible Creator, whose mercy is infinite and without limits.¹³²

¹³⁰ Ibid, 223.

Nazarener, naziräer oder auch Nazariten bezeichnete man eine Gemeinde, die das blutige Ritual des jüdischen Tempelkultes ablehnte und dafür von den orthodoxen Juden gehaßt und verfolgt wurde.

¹³¹ Ibid, 223–4.

Ob Jesus zu diesen Nazarenern gehörte, ist nicht nachzuweisen, dass er aber auch in seinem Prozess als Nazarener bezeichnet und als solcher in der Kreuzesinschrift benannt wurde, lässt darauf schließen, dass man ihn für einen Nazarener hielt und deshalb verfolgte.

¹³² Ibid, 227.

Geschauert hat die Erde, und die Himmel haben geweint ob einer schweren Missetat, welche begangen wurde im Lande Israel. Denn dort hat man gepeinigt und hingerichtet den großen gerechten Issa, in welchem die Seele des Weltalls wohnte. Die Fleisch geworden war in einem einfachen Sterblichen, um Gutes zu tun den Menschen und auszurotten die bösen Gedanken. Um zurückzuführen den durch Sünden entwürdigten Menschen zum Leben des Friedens, der Liebe und des Guten, und um ihn zu erinnern an den einigen und unteilbaren Schöpfer, dessen Barmherzigkeit unendlich ist und ohne Grenzen.

Apart from the traditional “*Glaubenstext – die Evangelien*”, we have this controversial text, which presents Jesus as someone who was deeply involved in societal issues. This refers to the legend that Jesus preached against the inequality in society based on Caste. “... to follow an excerpt from the controversial text in which Jesus, like Buddha five hundred years before him, opposes the caste distinctions that only the priestly Brahmins and the Kshatriyas – the caste of princes and warriors – are allowed to study the holy scriptures.”¹³³ The text sheds more light on the way he reacted to the inequality that existed in the society.

... he preached ... to the Shudras against the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. He rebelled powerfully against the fact that a man presumes to deprive his own kind of human rights. Truly he said, ‘God the Father makes no distinction between His children, who are all equally dear to Him.’¹³⁴

Jesus belonged to the middle class. The relationship that Jesus had with the insignificant members of society is reflected in his wonderworks. The various miracles that one can read in the Gospels make it clear that he had very much been in contact with the marginalised sections of society. Though Jesus had also demonstrated his miracles before foreigners and the Roman officials, he was primarily responsible for looking after the poorest and the underprivileged.

In the society of that time, it was mainly the poor who could not afford a doctor and consequently who depended on a miracle healer. This is also reflected in the choice of images in his stories: They tell of small farmers, housewives, fishermen, fathers, day-labourers, tenants, small and middle capitalists, house farmers and of the big dreams of little people.¹³⁵

¹³³ Ibid, 227–8.

... einen Ausschnitt des umstrittenen Textes folgen zu lassen, in dem sich Jesus, genau wie fünfhundert Jahre vor ihm Buddha, gegen die Kastenunterschiede wendet, die nur den priesterlichen Brahmanen und den Kshatriyas der Fürsten- und Kriegerkaste das Studium der heiligen Schriften erlaub.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 228–9.

... er predigte ... bei den Shudras gegen die Brahmanen und Kshatriyas. Er lehnte sich mächtig auf gegen die Tatsache, dass ein Mensch sich anmaße, seinesgleichen der Menschenrechte zu berauben. Wahrlich sagte er, ‘Gott der Vater stellt keinen Unterschied auf zwischen seinen Kindern, die ihm alle gleich lieb sind’.

¹³⁵ Ulrich Luz, *Jesus oder Buddha*, 39.

Auf den Wunderheiler waren in der damaligen Gesellschaft vor allem die Armen angewiesen, die sich keinen Arzt leisten konnten. Sie zeigt sich auch an der Bildwahl in seinen Geschichten: Diese erzählen von Kleinbauern, Hausfrauen, Fischern, Vätern, Tagelöhnern, Pächtern, kleinen und mittleren Kapitalisten, Hausbauern und von großen Träumen kleiner Leute (Mt 13: 44–46).

Needless to say, this movement of Jesus was carried out not by Jesus alone but also by his followers. Together with them, he moved around in Galilee as a wandering preacher.¹³⁶ Even here one can notice that his disciples' preaching centred on poor of the society. "The addressee of the proclamation of Jesus is the whole people, especially the simple and uneducated women and men of Galilee."¹³⁷ Jesus' life and his movement became very contradictory from the very beginning. Unlike other preachers, neither he nor his disciples were ascetic. They ate, drank, and feasted, which was not something that could be said about the religiously dedicated or motivated people of the time. He did not want his movement to be insulated from the prevailing societal problems.

The path that Jesus chose for himself in his world of diverse religious possibilities was not the path of asceticism ... He did not join a group of the perfectly pure or the perfectly obedient, but lived with the people and proclaimed the rule of God to them. Also through his interpretation of the Torah, in which justice, mercy and faithfulness were important and not the title (Mt 23, 23f) or purity regulations, he brought God's will closer to the ordinary people.¹³⁸

Jesus and his movement was in contrast to the existing groups in Israel, namely, that of the Pharisees or Sadducees. These groups stressed on cultic practices and the purity of the people through sacrifices in the temple. However, this was not given importance to by Jesus; rather, he presented a new understanding of the God of the Old Testament to the people of Israel. Jesus' movement attracted an increasing number of people from other cultures and countries owing to its ability and willingness to accept one and all apart from the Jewish people. Thus, it separated itself from many of the Jewish religious practices. "With the coming of more and more gentiles into the fold of the Jesus movement and in their efforts to accommodate them,

¹³⁶ Lk 9: 58.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 42.

Adressat der Verkündigung Jesu ist das ganze Volk, vor allem die einfachen und ungebildeten Frauen und Männer Galiläas.

Jesus' preaching is addressed to the whole people, especially the simple and uneducated men and women of Galilee.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 44.

Der Weg, den Jesus in seiner Welt vielfältiger religiöser Möglichkeiten für sich gewählt hat, war nicht der Weg der Askese ... Er schloß sich nicht einer Gruppe der vollkommen Reinen oder der vollkommen Gehorsamen an, sondern lebte beim Volk und verkündete ihm die Gottesherrschaft. Auch durch seine Torahauslegung, in der es auf Recht, Barmherzigkeit und Treue ankam und nicht auf die Abgabe des Zehnten (Mt 23, 23f) oder auf Reinheitsvorschriften, brachte er Gottes Willen dem gewöhnlichen Volk nahe.

the Jesus people began to give up increasingly the practice of sacrifices, circumcision, and other Mosaic customs like the observance of the Sabbath and food laws.¹³⁹ Therefore, of the message of Jesus remained the focal point at all times.

2.4.5 Anthropological Intentionality

After having analysed the phenomenon of the above three movements, it could be inferred that the rationale of these movements is conceptualized as human dignity in an anthropological terminus, which was the salient concern of all these movements. Religion, which made the transition from rituals based on nature to mythical gods and offerings to them, now seems to be entering into a different phase.¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, it became more intellectual in inquiring the truths about the absolute. On the other hand, religion emerged as a vital instrument in saving the people. A succinct explanation about the movements and their context shows clearly that human dignity was always at stake. Both the rulers of the state and the leaders of religion failed to protect the human dignity. In all the three movements, it can be seen that people were at the receiving end. In the case of Buddha's context, the society was divided into different classes. The concept of human being as *imago dei*, is, however, not an explicit concept in the Indian context. Nevertheless, as an important product of these movements, 'human dignity' has been revived in our modern times, especially through the church documents. Therefore, in what follows, I will briefly describe the upholding of human dignity based on religious teachings. It is more concretely based on the Christian teaching, especially that of the development that took place within the church in the modern era.

According to Konrad Hilpert, the Human Rights comprises three important elements.¹⁴¹ Firstly, we discover the rights of the person and look at them as basic rights. Closely related to that is the challenge of being aware of them and protecting these rights. Secondly, having considered the discoverability of the rights and having recognized the rights, we need to respect the person as he or she is, i.e., in her *Dasein* und *Sosein*. Thirdly, it is important to support religious movements with strong arguments. He thus, speaks of the rudimentary Christian

¹³⁹ Thundy, *Buddha and Christ*, 164.

¹⁴⁰ Probably this is what is called as "ein kognitiver Schub" by Habermas. Cf. Habermas, *AGPh I*, 367.

¹⁴¹ This discourse is an extract taken from my Hauptseminar Arbeit Sommersemester 2015, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster (Menschenrechte: Ausgewählte Fragen des aktuellen ethischen Diskurses. Dozent, Peter Stica). It is based on the literature of Konrad Hilpert. Hilpert, Konrad, "Die Idee der Menschenwürde aus der Sicht christlicher Theologie", in *Menschenwürde: philosophische, theologische und juristische Analysen*, eds. Hans Sandkühler, Hans Jörg. (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2007), 41–55.

arguments for human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and that's the foundation of all human dignity. Hilpert further explains that man is just not God's creation, but he is valid as God's picture in this world. Man was endowed with a special privilege of even naming the other creatures, as seen in the Bible.¹⁴² Man is also a creature of Responsibility: Responsibility with Freedom. This freedom that he was given makes him solely responsible for his doings. Human being is a being-in-relation. Our existence on this earth is not supposed to be an exercise in isolation. We are called to as a family in society. So, man is a communicative being who must establish his communication not only with the people but above all with God, who created him. However, in all these aspects, the concept of human dignity that plays the most important role in the life of every citizen must not be undermined. The German Republic seems to have stressed these roots of human rights and human dignity from a very clear Christian background. Every person or community or society expects to live in freedom and righteousness and that is basic to human life.¹⁴³

The church distinctly asserts that the poor and underprivileged will not be able to enjoy their freedom when the elite classes are earning much more than normal people and when the rich can control things in society, while the poor have no agency or voice.¹⁴⁴ This is exactly why we need human rights. History is replete with examples that suggest that when society does not define human rights and human dignity, there is always a danger of the weak and the fragile being exploited by the strong. To expand my contemplations on the question why we need human rights, I would like to express myself through these lines of Jürgen Habermas:

The experience of the violation of human dignity has a 'discovery function' – for instance, with respect to intolerable social conditions and the marginalisation of poverty-stricken social classes; to the unequal treatment of women and men at the workplace, to discrimination directed against foreigners and cultural, linguistic, religious and racial minorities; to the distress of young women from immigrant families that must free themselves from the power of a traditional code of honour; and to the brutal deportation of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. [...] The violation of 'human dignity' is a seismograph that shows what is constitutive for a democratic legal system – namely the very rights that the citizens of a political community must grant each other so that they can mutually respect each other as members of a voluntary association of free and equal persons.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Gen 1:26

¹⁴³ Heiner Bielefeldt, "Was sind Menschenrechte?", *Una Sancta* 62 (2007): 130.

¹⁴⁴ Apostolisches Schreiben EVANGELII GAUDIUM des Heiligen Vaters Papst Franziskus: Das Gemeingut und sozialer Frieden, 178.

¹⁴⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights", *Metaphilosophy* 14, no. 4 (July, 2010): 467, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24439631>.

Jesus saved the adulterous woman from being stoned unjustly. He was quite comfortable in dining with the tax collectors and stigmatized sinners, and was ready to become a bridge between the Israelites and Samaritans. He spoke against the injustices in society and urged the rich to be charitable and compassionate to the poor and weak. “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me” (Matt. 25:41–45). This is the moot point of Jesus’ social teaching which the church upholds, because it is in doing so that we recognize the rights and dignity of every person created by God in his own image and likeness. The church has striven from the very beginning to uphold these teachings of Christ her Bridegroom and Master. She has taken a very special stand in recognizing human rights and dignity just after her Master and Lord. The text from Konrad Hilpert gives us insights about the church’s attitude towards human rights and the rediscovering of the roots of this attitude in the teachings of Christ – *das Evangelium*.¹⁴⁶

The movement of Jesus in the plains of Judah was a co-incidence similar to that of Buddha’s appearance in the Indian world. The historical facts of the Jewish religion, which can be known through the reading of the Old Testament, present a God who cared for his people. Simultaneously, he was also mostly presented as a deity to be feared endlessly. Every societal activity for the Jews depended on the Law of Moses, which they believe to have been dictated by God on Mount Sinai. The historicity and validity of these practices across societies are naturally questionable. The demands of the temple cult for a common man were heavily burdensome. In the Indian society, the Brahmin groups had the same position as the priests in the Jewish tradition. However, unlike these priestly groups who became a burden to society, there appeared wandering monks, who questioned the validity of these practices. “However, among the Brahmins as well as among the new religious class of ascetics, critical spirits arose who sharply criticised the life concentrated on greed and alienation. Even the existence of the gods was questioned by many.”¹⁴⁷

The appearance of these movements in contrast to the existing religious beliefs tried to enlighten the people about God or the Absolute Being. In the case of Jesus, one can clearly point out how he presented God to the people of Israel. In a context of fear and oppression from foreign invaders and the burdening religious practices, Jesus was guided by the mission to tell them that the most important thing in life was to love and be loved. This, in turn, gave them

¹⁴⁶ Konrad Hilpert, *Die Menschenrechte: Geschichte – Theologie – Aktualität* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1991), 137–148, 156–162.

¹⁴⁷ Uhlig, *Buddha und Jesus*, 40.

Unter den Brahmanen wie unter der neuen religiösen Schicht der Asketen traten aber auch kritische Geister auf, die das auf Habgier und Veräußerlichung konzentrierte Leben scharf kritisierten. Selbst die Existenz der Götter wurde von vielen in Frage gestellt.

an understanding of a God who is also loving. The Beatitudes, the famous teachings of Jesus on the Mount, are intrinsically rebellious in nature to the existing religious authorities. (Mt 5)

In particular, the Sermon on the Mount, which famously characterizes his mission, divulges the anthropological intention of Jesus. What is it that Jesus through his life and the movement that he began, would like to change in the lives of people? Jesus wanted to use a terminology that presented God who is merciful and compassionate. Though this picture is not new to readers of the Old Testament, the Israelites ostensibly did not take this attribute of God seriously. The religious leaders placed their emphasis on a punishing God. Here are some examples that depict God as compassionate. “The Lord, a God compassionate and merciful (*oiktirmon kai eleemon*)’ He is a ‘merciful Lord’ (*oiktirmon kyrios*) who does not forget the covenant with his people. Asking for God’s mercy is an important feature of Jewish prayer and is often linked with his forgiveness of sins.”¹⁴⁸ The teachings of both Buddha and Jesus were oriented towards the betterment of human beings. However, intrinsically, the ethics of both these personalities seemed to include many similarities.

With Jesus, love is central, with Buddha, benevolence and compassion are very important. The commandment of love, benevolence and compassion are universal in Buddha and Jesus. In Jesus as in the Buddha, there are approaches to a two-stage ethic, in Jesus in the form of the commandments which only apply to those who follow.¹⁴⁹

In the above discourse, I have attempted a reconstruction of religion from a rational perspective. The transformation of human cognition was remarkably experienced in and through religion, which extended its sacred complex by engulfing the whole of society. Therefore, it serves to extend my discussion further on Habermas’ philosophy of religion that now explicitly explores the concept of postmetaphysical thinking and its linkage with religion in society.

¹⁴⁸ Clifard Sunil Ranjar, *Be merciful like the Father* (Roma: G&BP, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017), 209. Cf. Exodus 34 : 6. Ps 144 : 8. Deuteronomy 4: 31. Neh 9 : 17 ; 19 :27–28. Ps 39 :12; 50:3; 77.38.

¹⁴⁹ Luz, *Jesus oder Buddha*, 78.

Bei Jesus steht die Liebe im Zentrum, bei Buddha ist das Wohlwollen und das Mitleid sehr wichtig. Liebesgebot, Wohlwollen und Mitleid sind bei Buddha wie bei Jesus universal ausgerichtet. Bei Jesus wie bei Buddha gibt es Ansätze zu einer Zweistufenethik, bei Jesus in Gestalt derjenigen Gebote, welche nur für die Nachfolgerinnen und Nachfolger gelten.

PART IV: HABERMAS' RELIGION II – POSTMETAPHYSICAL PHILOSOPHY AS BRIDGING THE SECULAR AND RELIGION

[...] (A)s is well known, Habermas strives to develop a critical theory of society on a post-metaphysical basis. Incidentally, this aspiration links him to (the early) Horkheimer. The early Horkheimers around Habermas share a postmetaphysical impetus in that they both endeavour to theoretically produce a more rational design of human life forms without relying on the authority of philosophical insights as the foundation of the enterprise.¹

In a further refinement of the Habermasian religious philosophy, it is important to base oneself on what is referred to as postmetaphysical thinking. This line of thought essentially accommodates a way that could (in principle) reconcile both secular and religious-minded people through mutual acceptance and learning. This chapter deals with how Habermas tries to unravel commonalities between the two rather than concentrating on emphasizing the difference. In this manner, it becomes an important argumentative structure that contributes to my research. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will discuss the various principles of postmetaphysical thinking and the manner in which it works in society. The underlying sociological condition that supports to explain postmetaphysical approach is however, postsecular. Accordingly, it eventually becomes also an important concept of this chapter to discuss.

What follows from here is an intellectual readiness to accept constantly that a mistake is possible anytime. Even though a piece of knowledge that has been well reasoned could be

¹ Maeve Cooke, "Die Stellung der Religion bei Jürgen Habermas," in *Religion, Moderne, Postmoderne – Philosophisch-theologische Erkundungen*, eds. Klaus Dethloff, Ludwig Nagl and Friedrich Wolfram (Berlin: Parerga, 2002), 101.

... bekanntlich strebt Habermas danach, eine kritische Gesellschaftstheorie auf postmetaphysischer Basis zu entwickeln. Dieses Bestreben verbindet ihn übrigens mit (dem frühen) Horkheimer. Der frühe Horkheimer und Habermas teilen einen postmetaphysischen Impetus, indem sie beide bemüht sind, eine vernünftigeren Gestaltung menschlicher Lebensformen theoretisch hervorzubringen, ohne sich dabei auf die Autorität philosophischer Einsichten als Fundierung des Unternehmens zu verlassen.

ridden with incorrect elements. A postmetaphysical attitude looks towards to constantly revise knowledge, which becomes a requirement of constructive and better refined knowledge.² Another important character that could be traced in this line of thinking is what Habermas refers to as the concept of discourse, which forms the basis of his famous discourse theory. The participant here does not merely analyse various arguments and validates them as good but is also open to all other newer forms of arguments. “Incidentally, such a discursive openness to new arguments would accommodate the fallibilism that Habermas emphasizes as a hallmark of a postmetaphysical theory of society.”³

² Ibid, 104.

³ Ibid, 105.

Eine solche diskursive Offenheit für neue Argumente würde übrigens dem Fallibilismus entgegenkommen, den Habermas als Kennzeichen einer postmetaphysischen Gesellschaftstheorie hervorhebt.

1 Faith (*Glauben*) and Knowledge (*Wissen*) as Points of Orientation

I will commence this discussion by basing myself on the talk given by Habermas on the reception of the *Friedenspreis*.⁴ Here, he makes his postmetaphysical intentionality clear by opening up the possibility of a dialogue between faith and knowledge. Consequently, I make it as a point of departure for my further investigation that exposes the commonality of rationality, which is a salient attribute of both philosophy and religion.

The discussion about faith and knowledge lays the foundation of a rationalistic religion. To grasp elements of rationality that formed faith traditions, we need to analyse its process of worldviews. This process of building up worldviews forms the link between the axial productions and the postmetaphysical views of religion. Undoubtedly, the worldviews emerging within the discipline of metaphysics produced by the gradual development of human cognition was clarified through the discussion of the axial age. According to Hans Albert, Habermasian postmetaphysical thinking is a dualistic metaphysics. Habermas clearly distances himself in producing worldviews and it is an approach that requires philosophy to distance itself from such worldview productions.⁵ Albert claims that if one closely observes the Habermasian postmetaphysical process, it becomes accident that what Habermas treats as postmetaphysical is metaphysical dualism.⁶

In a specific way, he draws upon the Kantian idea of the constitutive function of reason. He holds, as other constructivists, an idealistic metaphysics that leads him to the

⁴ Der Stiftungsrat Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels hat den Philosophen und Soziologen Jürgen Habermas zum Träger des Friedenspreises 2001 gewählt. Die Verleihung fand am 14. Oktober 2001 in der Paulskirche, Frankfurt a. M., statt. Die Laudatio hielt Jan Philipp Reemtsma

⁵ Hans Albert, “Die dualistische Metaphysik von Jürgen Habermas. Eine kritische Untersuchung seines, nachmetaphysischen Denkens”, *Rationality, Markets and Moral*, 01 (2009), 1ff. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45266686_Die_dualistische_Metaphysik_von_Juergen_Habermas/citation/download.

Cf. Jürgen Habermas, “Von den Weltbildern zur Lebenswelt”, Vortrag gehalten am 19.9.2008, XXI. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie, 15.9.2008–19.9.2008, Universität Duisburg-Essen.

⁶ Ibid.

construction of an epistemic dualism, contrasting the objective world of the natural sciences with the 'Lebenswelt' (Lifeworld).⁷

However, in order to explore postmetaphysical thinking, metaphysics becomes a vital point of discussion. Hence, I will briefly explain the basics of this process of metaphysics and the principles that underlie such ideology as worldviews. For this purpose, it would be helpful to construct the following part of the Habermasian postmetaphysical approach towards religion.

1.1 Metaphysical Inquiry as the Production of Axial Cognition

The following inquiry into the basics of metaphysics envisions the continuity between the axial age and its cognitive production. The word 'metaphysics' appeared in the western world around the time of Aristotle and his collection of writings that encompassed the themes of natural sciences and aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of theology and wisdom. Andronikos of Rhodos was the first editor of Aristotle's work. He compiled various works of Aristotle, which is called the first philosophy, and named them *ta meta ta physika*, meaning 'Schriften nach der Physik'. He named them so because he placed them behind the works of natural sciences.⁸ However, over time, this was understood as metaphysics, an area that deals what is beyond physical appearances. Aristotle, while dealing with this subject, places knowledge as *apriori* to experiences *i.e.*, we understand certain phenomena through intuitive knowledge before knowing more about them via experiences. This is, for Aristotle, is the very natural faculty of a being. Knowledge is essentially an understanding of the underlying principles and reasons of truths. Consequently, Aristotle uses the terms *arché* (Prinzip) and *aitia* (Ursache) as synonyms. "Metaphysics, however, is the most general and therefore the highest of all sciences, because it deals with the very first causes and principles, with those which determine everything else, on which everything else depends."⁹

The whole inquiry is fundamentally about these first principles, and reasons. Moreover, one should be able to acknowledge the speculative characteristic of this science about the first principles: While speaking of this first principle or the reason of all being, Aristotle called it the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Helmut Flashar, *Aristoteles: Lehrer des Abendlandes* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013), 209.

⁹ Jörg Disse, *Kleine Geschichte der abendländischen Metaphysik* (Darmstadt: wbg, 2001), 65. Die Metaphysik aber ist die allgemeinste und damit die höchste aller Wissenschaften, denn sie befasst sich mit den allerersten Ursachen und Prinzipien, mit denen, die am meisten alles Andere bestimmen, von denen alles Übrige abhängt.

divine principle, or in other words, God.¹⁰ Put simply, it pertains to knowledge about God. Consequently, trying to enquire and know the first principle is ultimately trying to know God, who is transcendent. This is exactly what the religions were trying to do. The axial characteristic of religions reveals that they arose from the normal societal explanations and reasons of religion to a transcendent one. Thus, they wanted to give a substantial meaning. This is obviously what the Upanishadic sages were pursuing. “The Upanishad Rishi (seer) is not yet an Arhat (early Buddhist ascetic); he still sees in the world the abundance of the divine Brahman and not exclusively the result of ignorance and lust for life.”¹¹

Metaphysics, on the whole, is the study of the ultimate reality. According to the metaphysicians, the reality is what one deems to find beyond the appearances in the world of visible objects. Nonetheless, one can foremostly speak of this reality only in reference to the empirical appearance followed by an inquiry beyond these appearances. If there is no ultimate reality, then metaphysics is reduced to a study without a subject matter. Metaphysics must be distinguished from the most general and all-embracing of the physical sciences.¹² This is imperative to know what lies beyond these appearances. Though the cosmological sciences helps us attain certain conclusions, they cannot lead us to the ultimate reality, which is often represented by religion.

However, the physical sciences cannot disapprove the thesis of religious groups concerning ultimate reality. Simultaneously, metaphysicians themselves cannot prove through the *mittel* of scientific methodology the existence of ultimate reality. Thus, it remains an unclarified area. It is here, however, that Habermas through his postmetaphysical approach, distances himself by being open to cognitive contents of religion. He differs from a traditional critic of religion, which is mainly based on this metaphysical tradition of philosophical theodicy.¹³ However, attempts have been made to rescue religion from a situation wherein traditional religious critics base themselves on the irrationality of religion as opposed to scientific insights. In a very vivid manner, postmetaphysical philosophy considers this problem and gives a scientific basis to religious traditions through discursive methodology.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hans Torwesten, *Vedanta: Kern des Hinduismus*. (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1985), 23.

The Upanishad Rishi (seer) is not yet an Arhat (early Buddhist ascetic); he still sees in the world the abundance of the divine Brahman and not exclusively the result of ignorance and lust for life.

¹² Ibid, 7.

¹³ Thomas M. Schmidt, “Nachmetaphysische Religionsphilosophie. Religion und Philosophie unter den Bedingungen diskursiver Vernunft”, in *Moderne Religion? Theologische und religionsphilosophische Reaktionen auf Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Knut Wenzel / Thomas M. Schmidt (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009), 11.

1.2 Habermas' Summarization of Metaphysics

After having presented the themes and discussions about metaphysics, we can infer that metaphysics plays a very important role in understanding and basing religious beliefs. Metaphysics gives us the reference point for our beliefs and especially to our values. Surely, it is mostly a theoretical world that focuses on picturing the unseen realities as realities only through speculations. With the development of physical sciences, which give valid and empirical evidence, metaphysics failed to satisfy the minds of the new scientists. In this case, will philosophy, actually still be relevant in dealing with the themes of metaphysics?

However, with the development of discourse theory and ethics of Habermas, it is often perceived that one does not require metaphysics, as discourse ethic develops morals and ethics not in reference to an existing element outside the purview of physical actuality. Rather, it calls for concreteness of various ethics, morals, or even societal beliefs by means of rational discussions and conclusions, which are to be arrived through a process of consensus.¹⁴ Probably Habermas had underestimated in line with the Frankfurt school the role of religion, which is intertwined with metaphysics. Nevertheless, his development of understanding the role of religion in society gives us clarity about the widening of his horizon with the understanding of metaphysics and its essentiality and vitality in society. Whether he arrives at this point from a believer's point of view, for whom the existence of a personal god is substantial, the explanations tend to be very vague. However, in his own words, he tries to defend himself in his dialogue with Eduardo Mendieta. Habermas' further discussions on his postmetaphysical thinking do not, in any way, deny the metaphysical arena; rather, he corrects himself saying that it only complements metaphysics. This seems to be attributed to his thought, which shows that as a philosopher Habermas is still seeking to understand the phenomena of metaphysics. It is, however, an uncompleted project.¹⁵

Metaphysics becomes enormously vital in society owing to the whole concept of morality and law. Morality and laws nevertheless base themselves on transcendental concepts, which renders them valid. Religion gives legitimacy to politics, which explains why politics, a controlling and organizing factor of society, has to base itself on religion. Notably, religion presents metaphysics; it provides explanations for things, which do not find explanations in themselves or any social organizer, or politician. Human cognition nevertheless moves forward towards scientific proofs and there is another side of the society, which leans towards the sentimental and transcendental world.

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking I, Philosophical Essays*, trans: William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 68–72.

¹⁵ Wolterstorff, "Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue", 95.

Seeking a precise definition of Metaphysics in a Habermasian sense would only lead to frustration. However, we can still explore this theme in which I shall try to summarize his exposition on metaphysics based on his book, *Postmetaphysical Thinking part one*.

Habermas claims that the position of positivists who tried to enquire or respond to the questions of the metaphysicians ended up in absurdity. He refers to Nietzsche, Heidegger, and even Adorno whom he considers philosophers who made sincere attempts to describe metaphysics but resulted in a negative metaphysics. In dealing with the new age movements which consider the scientific theories concerning the absolute and attribute the highest authority to them, Habermas tries to explain Metaphysics in this manner:

In a rough simplification that neglects the Aristotelian line, I am using metaphysical to designate the thinking of a philosophical idealism that goes back to Plato and extends by way of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Cusanus and Pico di Mirandola, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, up to Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.¹⁶

It can be said that the *philosophy of consciousness* is the inheritance of Metaphysics. When speaking of metaphysics, Habermas basically alludes to the philosophy of consciousness. He speaks of this consciousness in two different contexts or ideas *viz.*, mentalism, and subject philosophy. Based on this conception, he divides the history of philosophy into three stages: *Sein* (ontological thinking), *Bewusstsein* (reflexive philosophical thinking), and *Sprache* (linguistic philosophy). This change from the first stage to the next one is called the *Paradigmenwechsel* and the latter is referred to as the linguistic turn. Thus, one can derive the knowledge that the first two parts described in the metaphysical thinking, namely, *Identitätsdenken*, and *Idealism*, come under the ontological field. Therefore, the symbol of the form of metaphysics could be conceived through *Identität* and *Idee*.¹⁷ Identity thinking, which is the theme of unity within the philosophy of origins, deals with the origins of the world. Philosophy does consider the idea of the origins of mythology. However, it does not remain static with the myths in considering the time. Philosophy transcends this idea of the time of origin, and focuses more on philosophical methods. This point of beginning is, however, seen either in the relationship with the inner being of the world or deemed separate (which is dualism). Ultimately, different views exist when it comes to considering this origin; lastly, “the many are reproduced as an ordered multiplicity.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Habermas, *PTh I*, 29.

¹⁷ Daniel C. Henrich, *Zwischen Bewusstseinsphilosophie und Naturalismus. Zu den metaphysischen Implikationen der Diskursethik von Jürgen Habermas* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 26ff.

¹⁸ Habermas, *PTh I*, 30.

The idea of the whole emerges from a thought developed from the language or grammatical form before reaching the conceptual level and then, the idea is finally deduced. Plato considers the conceptual nature of the whole that resembles the whole order as pre-existing ideas. Therefore, it is the philosophy of Plato. Ideas represent the abstract being. However, Habermas says:

From its inception idealism deceived itself about the fact that the Ideas or *formae rerum* had themselves always contained and merely duplicated what they were supposed to exclude as matter and as nonbeing per se – namely the material content of those empirical individuals from which the Ideas had been read off through comparative abstraction.¹⁹

The two-world-teaching (dualism) in Kant sheds light on this aspect. The priority of the identity against the *difference* and the pivotal role of material within the idea exemplifies the reflexive philosophical thinking of Habermas. This, however, emerges as a key bone of contention Habermas has against Kant. Its systematic expression can be seen in the de-transcendentalizing of the Kantian ethic.²⁰

Daniel observes that according to Habermas, different problems such as the circular nature of the theory of self-awareness, the normative deficits of critical theory, concerning philosophy of conscious could find a solution through the change to *Sprachphilosophie*. Even though Habermas is interested in this philosophical shift of *Bewusstseinsphilosophie*, the practical philosophy of Kant represents the deciding conceptual factor of example for the discourse ethic.²¹

Lastly, the metaphysics of Habermas can be characterized by his *Theoriebegriff* or “concept of theory.” He bases himself very strongly on the principle of Aristotle, *bios theoretikos*, “*Entwurf eines theoretischen Lebens*”, which translates to “outline of a theoretical life.” This perspective nevertheless interprets the discussion about the very strong concept of theory as the confidence of the philosophy as a whole. It provides the ultimate foundation and reasoning for answering certain philosophical questions. Indeed, as a postmetaphysical thinker, Habermas understands that his claim of reasons should be appropriated under this dimension or view.²² This strong concept of the theory refers to the redemptive significance of the contemplative life. As religion proposes different ways to attain salvation, philosophy proposes the way of contemplation (life dedicated to contemplation). *Theory* necessitates a renunciation of the natural attitude towards the world and promises contact with the extra-ordinary. This theory paves the way to the understanding of the orbits in nature as well as the universe and the phenomenon

¹⁹ Ibid, 31.

²⁰ Henrich, *Zwischen Bewusstseinsphilosophie und Naturalismus*, 27.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 29.

of the totality of nature. “In the modern period, the concept of theory loses this link to sacred occurrences, just as it loses its elite character, which is moderated into social privilege. What remains is the idealistic interpretation placed on distancing the everyday network of experience and interests.”²³

1.3 The (Non)-Occidental Approach of Connecting Faith and Knowledge

In the philosophical discussion, according to the western approach, faith and knowledge are treated as two different entities. However, in the eastern approach, especially that of the Indian, both these concepts are treated under the same umbrella of religion. If we closely observe the axial age phenomenon, the Indian axial age seemed to have its cognitive productions mainly ensconced in its intellectual productions which are commonly available in texts of religion and texts of knowledge. Whereas, in the case of Israel, the proclaimed word was primarily considered a religious text. A similar type of philosophical productions, as in the case of Upanishads, is not evident. The west has taken over the traditions of Israel and appropriated them while developing ‘philosophical texts or texts of knowledge’ as a separate entity from that of the religious texts. A western philosopher does not consider the Holy Bible as a philosophical text; rather, it is essentially a religious text. If a western scholar had to search for philosophical texts in the past, he would certainly refer to Greek philosophical texts. The scholastic theology itself is an example that reveals the extent to which they base on Greek texts of philosophy. In the eastern (Indian) regions, one would surely base herself on the (Holy) Upanishads. So much so that westerners went to the extent of claiming:

[...] the widespread view that philosophy and religion merge in the Indian tradition – to such an extent that philosophy as such does not exist or does not have any independent status, and is, to all intents and purposes, identical with religion. There is no philosophy in India, only religion. Oriental philosophy is a contradiction in terms.²⁴

In Christianity, Augustine and Aquinas developed philosophical discourses to strengthen its dogmatic position based on philosophers who were unrelated to the Bible. Therefore, considering this reality, there was a constant need to treat faith and knowledge primarily under two

²³ Habermas, *PTh I*, 37.

²⁴ Charles A. Moore, “Philosophy as Distinct from Religion in India”, *Philosophy East and West*, 11, no. 1/2, (April–June 1961): 1, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1397229>.

different roofs. However, an attempt was gradually made to unite these two disciplines. Yet, in reconstructing the history of philosophy wherein he also finds the genealogy of religion, Habermas brings to light this similar line of thought in which both faith and knowledge could co-exist.²⁵ Therefore, I will briefly describe how the human mind could capture both faith and knowledge under the same premise by stating that true knowledge consists in the recognition of oneself as part of the universal spirit. “In Western philosophy man wants to know reality or the truth, in Indian philosophy, one wants to be or become-to be identical with-that Being or Truth.”²⁶

The concept of the absolute in the history of religion is the most important concept that renders it valid.

What we must not change when thinking of the beginnings of religion is that humans started ritual and an idea of an x such that they believe that (1) something depends on x, (2) x is not in their full control, but (3) x may be amenable to their ritual. The intrinsic goal of their ritual is to secure the goodwill of that believed-in power x.²⁷

Having discovered such a being, religion places itself beyond all societal explanations. It is in this manner that religion keeps itself higher than all societal norms. Therefore, a discussion about the absolute being is considered necessary. There is a gradual growth of the idea underlying this unseen power that controls everything. Or at least as the humans thought that there was a power that can control things that are beyond their control.

The idea of an Absolute refers to an infinite being considered the absolute being and the ground of all beings.²⁸ Various philosophical traditions have tried to establish the principle that all things proceed from this being and everything has its basis in this being. Therefore, it is considered as the absolute being. The Upanishads basically refer to the Being of beings as the Brahman. In other words, the concept of the Absolute is explained in terms of *sat-cit-ananda* translated as “Eternal Consciousness Bliss.”²⁹

Sankara is one of the earliest interpreters of the Upanishadic teaching who sheds light on the concept of Brahman. His teaching is characterized as *Advaita*, which is in contrast to dualism. For him, only Brahman is real and everything else is unreal – *Maya*. Sankara uses the term *Maya* so that the world explains itself rather than he having to make an explanation.

²⁵ Also see: Habermas, *AGPh I*.

²⁶ Moore, “Philosophy as Distinct from Religion in India”, 4.

²⁷ Ulrich Steinvorth, *Secularization* (Hamburg: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 31.

²⁸ Schlenso, *Der Hinduismus*, 117.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 103.

When he says that the creation is a *maya*, he intends to explain it as a condition which is *vielfalt* and something which cannot be explained. He does not want to explain and gives reasons for how the world came into being; instead, he wanted his followers to get rid of this world – *maya* as soon as possible.³⁰ His famous writings, commentaries, and exegesis of the Upanishads are found in one of his famous works known as *Brahmasutrabhasya*. One can give a gist of his entire philosophy in the following phrase: *Brahma satyam, jagad mithya, jivo brahmaiva naparah* (Brahman is real, the world is illusion; the Self is not as Brahman alone). Here, he stresses the importance and reality of Brahman as well as the identification of the self with the Brahman. This statement denies dualism that denies the world or says that the world is false. It is just an illusion, or *Maya*. Thus, he concludes that there is only one reality – the Brahman.³¹

The concept of Brahman could be further characterized into three elements viz., *sat-cit-ananda*. The word *sat* is translated as Being, *cit* as Consciousness, and *ananda* as Bliss. The Brahman, who is Absolute, is projected through the world. Brahman is all-pervasive and exists in every being in the universe. Being is consciousness itself. Consciousness accompanies one's cognitions. Through my subjective consciousness and the objective world, the same Being shines. The ultimate Being that is consciousness is *Brahman* itself. Brahman is the highest transcendental truth in which all subject-object distinction is obliterated.³² In conclusion, the following citation summarises the thought behind the above discussion:

The Indian point of view is opposed to the Western in rejecting reason as the method by which the truth can be known and is related to religion rather than philosophy by the fulfilment of the practical motive, which initiated the philosophical (or religious) quest. The truth is here believed to be an experience rather than a result or form of knowledge.³³

1.4 Co-existence of Glauben und Wissen

Postmetaphysical philosophy, as the term suggests, purports to differ on a fundamental point from the metaphysical worldviews of the Greek philosophers. It is nonetheless, a descendant of Greek philosophy; and Habermas thinks that to understand the relation

³⁰ Torwesten, *Vedanta: Kern des Hinduismus*, 117.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ram Adhar Mall, *Der Hinduismus. Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 19.

³³ Moore, "Philosophy as Distinct from Religion in India", 5.

between postmetaphysical philosophy and present-day religion, we must keep in mind that both of them had their ultimate origins in that same axial age.³⁴

According to Habermas, the genealogy of modern philosophy and religious reforms have a commonality. He opines that both have evolved simultaneously. To emphasise this point, Habermas returns to the concept of Axial Age by Karl Jaspers, which gives him a connection between these two areas. Habermas cites the example of the Jewish-Christian roots for secular values like human rights.³⁵ This process for Habermas is a *Lernprozess*³⁶ that emerges from an attempt to maintain a mutuality between *Glauben* and *Wissen*. Joas, who addresses the sacrality of person, also mentions a similar approach. For instance, a similar thought runs through Hans Joas' discourse on the very concept of sacredness. This is the core aspect of every religion, which has the potentiality of being translated into non-religious circumstances. Hans Joas, in his book, *Die Sakralität der Person*, introduces the topic of human rights in which he attributes the character of sacredness to persons. Moreover, the violation of this person's rights is similar to that of violation of the sacredness in a religious circle. Joas considers the origin of human rights to have existed in the Christian tradition. However, he then accepts that it was invented even before the Christian tradition was laid as its foundation.³⁷ Nevertheless, it is important to mark the process of translation of a religious concept to a non-religious concept. This idea of human rights, however, is deeply embedded in the concept or understanding of the worth of every person.³⁸

In analysing the genealogy of reason, Habermas observes that religion serves as a foundation in which reason has its first elements of appearance.³⁹ The development of human history is rooted in religion itself. The aspect of this reasonable dealing with religion began by his recapture of *Entzauberung* and *Entsakralisierung* of sacred practices. This, in turn, provided the impetus for the application of reason. Habermas observes a *bindende Kraft* between morality and the sacred sphere.⁴⁰ He reconstructs the paradigm change so that religion and philosophy might come to an overlapping origin to discover their common genealogy, which

³⁴ Wolterstorff, "Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue", 92–3.

³⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*, trans: Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 91.

³⁶ Habermas and Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung*, 31–33.

³⁷ Hans Joas, *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 23–62.

³⁸ Ibid. Also see. Habermas, *TCA I*, 79.

³⁹ Habermas, *AGPh I*.

⁴⁰ Klaus Viertbauer, "Von der Säkularisierungsthese zur postsäkularen Gesellschaft", in *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, 11–30. (Darmstadt: wbg, 2017), 13.

also becomes the aim of postmetaphysical thinking so that it contributes to an “aufgeklärten Glauben”⁴¹

Religion becomes a point of departure to the orientation of the life world in which Habermas binds rationality with the linguistification of the sacred. This gives us an occasion for thought. The sacred, which removes certain areas of social organization from thematization, is gradually dissolved into a communicative ethic, the religious forms of reasoning are replaced by discourses, and religion becomes a fossil of the history of rationality.⁴² Furthermore, religious reasons in public are functionalistic in their nature when it comes to the function of rendering meaning in society with regard to morality. Religious members, however, represent or stand as having the potentiality of presenting reasons which are fundamentally moral in nature.⁴³

As far as philosophy takes care of the procedural rationality, it interrogates the arguments in which the validity claim is represented and not the truth of the claim itself. The postmetaphysical thinking, therefore, designates firstly a paradigm change from the theory of truth to validity theory. In this form, the truth appears in the plural and the rationality as a procedure.⁴⁴ Habermas reconstructs this development of these paradigms to reach the shared origin of both philosophy and religion. In this manner, Habermas leans towards the theory of an Axial Age.⁴⁵

Placing the basic structures of consciousness in both faith and knowledge, it could be analysed that they do not stay as opposite poles, albeit with a condition that as long as they rise from the same roots. In establishing the genealogy of faith and reason, Habermas too arrives at this point of agreement. Max Planck says:

Wherever and however far we look, we will not find any contradiction between religion and science, but we will find full agreement on the crucial points. Religion and science

⁴¹ Stephan R. Jütte, “Analogie statt Übersetzung”, *Religion in Philosophy and Theology* 86, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 55.

Postmetaphysical thinking is not the abolition, outbidding or replacement of religion. It does not represent a higher form of rationality than religion per se, but is the philosophical-historical counterpart to enlightened faith.

⁴² Ibid, 50.

⁴³ Michael Reder, “Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Anregungen von F. Schleiermacher und J. Derrida”, in *Moderne Religion. Theologische und religionsphilosophische Reaktionen auf Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Wenzel Knut / Thomas M. Schmidt (Wien: Herder, 2009), 130.

⁴⁴ Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*, 54.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

are not mutually exclusive, as some believe and fear today, but complement and condition each other.⁴⁶

Although it is claimed that knowledge is mostly identified as results of experiments by natural scientists and consequently judges religion as irrational, some natural scientists and physicists disagree. Arthur H. Compton, says: “Far from being in conflict with religion, science has become an ally of religion. Through better insight into nature we also get to know better the God of nature and the role we play in the drama of the cosmic world.”⁴⁷ The relationship between religion and knowledge intrinsically indicates a relationship between state and religion. For Habermas, what lies centrally in this relationship between *Glauben* and *Wissen* is a constructive mutuality from either side, which, however, receives its source from the dictum of the theory of communicative actions.⁴⁸ A careful distinction between these areas is also suggested according to Reder, as he understands that religion remains opaque from a secular reason, which is why translation is proposed as a medium through which religion could be available even to those non-religious members.⁴⁹ However, for Schmidt, it is right to furthermore question as to how a philosophy that is agnostic can reach the path of comprehension of this opacity, which characterizes religion rather than just leaving it to its opacity. To this, he says:

A postmetaphysical, agnostic understanding of religion in Habermas’s sense does not necessarily have to be empty in terms of content. Moreover, it seems to be a one-sided exaggeration of such a postmetaphysical understanding to want to see authentic faithful existence precisely in the independence from general reasons of reason.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Sigrid Hunke, *Glauben und Wissen. Die Einheit europäischer Religion und Naturwissenschaft* (Wien: Econ Verlag, 1979), 252.

Wohin und wie weit wir also blicken mögen, zwischen Religion und Naturwissenschaft finden wir nirgends einen Widerspruch, wohl aber gerade in den entscheidenden Punkten volle Übereinstimmung. Religion und Naturwissenschaft schließen sich nicht aus, wie manche heutzutage glauben und fürchten, sondern sie ergänzen und bedingen einander.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 253–4.

Weit entfernt davon, im Konflikt mit der Religion zu sein, ist die Wissenschaft zum Verbündeten der Religion geworden. Durch bessere Einsicht in die Natur lernen wir auch den Gott der Natur besser kennen und die Rolle, die wir in dem Drama der kosmischen Welt spielen.

⁴⁸ Reder, “Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen”, 130.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁰ Schmidt, “Nachmetaphysische Religionsphilosophie. Religion und Philosophie unter den Bedingungen diskursiver Vernunft”, 26.

Ein im Habermasischen Sinne nachmetaphysisches, agnostisches Verständnis von Religion muss nicht notwendig inhaltlich leer sein. Es erscheint zudem als einseitige Zuspitzung eines solchen

To understand that postmetaphysical philosophy is an approach to religion, it is fundamental to analyse this dialectic between *Glauben* und *Wissen*. Though *Glauben* and *Wissen* stand as two contrasting poles, and they have their own specialities and one can observe a possibility of mutual exchange between these two areas. By bringing this into light, Habermas firstly opens up a possibility of a discussion with one another and secondly, he indicates that religion itself must be able to recognize the scientific authority of reason.⁵¹

nachmetaphysischen Verständnisses, die authentische gläubige Existenz gerade in der Unabhängigkeit von allgemeinen Vernunftgründen sehen zu wollen.

⁵¹ Reder, "Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen *Glauben* und *Wissen*", 131–132.

2 Postsecular

At this point, I begin exposing the socio-philosophical condition that generates postmetaphysical thinking. In order to further understand this thought, various social, religious situations and the role that they play in influencing even the politics and their principles are to be considered as important factors. Thus, it aims at analysing reasons required to engage in a post-metaphysical discourse.

2.2 Postsecular as the Religious Signature of the Present

In Habermas' reflections and analysis about religion and the role of religion in our society today, it is important to discuss the concepts of postsecular and postmetaphysics. Although these terminologies could divert our attention to two different areas, they are interrelated in their philosophical approach. Habermas describes the role of religion in postsecular society under the conditions of postmetaphysical thinking. He does this from an outsider or observer perspective and the participant's perspective as well.⁵²

However, postsecular is a term relevant to those societies which imbibe the character of secular societies in the western understanding of secularism.

Although these societies, measured by empirical data, do not show such an increase in religious vitality that the secularisation thesis is outdated and the society can no longer be understood as secular, the predicate 'postsecular' has a positive sense.⁵³

On the one hand, we need to observe that there is no concrete or visible growth of religion in these societies. In the case of Europe alone, churches are becoming empty by the day. On the other hand, new religious movements are popping up all over either from other parts of the world or other religious movements springing up from within the European context. An individual's search for the

⁵² Ibid, 52.

⁵³ Ibid, 55.

Obwohl diese Gesellschaften gemessen an empirischen Daten keinen derartigen Zuwachs religiöser Vitalität verzeichnen, dass die Säkularisierungsthese als überholt, die Gesellschaft nicht mehr als säkular verstanden werden kann, habe das Prädikat postsäkular seinen guten Sinn.

divine or a religious experience without falling into the traditional religious systems or structures is also a reality. “Habermas notes that the religious system has become more differentiated and is limited above all to pastoral practice, which fits in with the trend of individualised religious practice.”⁵⁴

However, based on such observation, one can say that religion has not lost its significance. It has neither lost its influence and place in the political or public life nor in the lives of the individuals. With these observations, the secularization thesis about religion and the vitality of religion needs to be revised and explained beyond the sheer understanding of secularization as the disappearance of religion.⁵⁵

This is what the term ‘postsecular’ is meant to do: postsecular society is preparing itself “for the continued existence of religious communities in a continuously secularising environment” and no longer assumes that the progressive cultural and social modernisation will take place at the expense of the public and personal significance of religion.⁵⁶

Hans Joas argues that this understanding of postsecular has been deepened with the Habermasian approach in his speech at the Paulskirche. Many intellectuals concluded that secularism would be part of modernity or modernity leads to secularism. It was indeed a very comfortable situation for these intellectuals who did not feel the need to clarify secularism. However, Habermas makes it clear that their expectations are unfortunately not met. This came as a setback (*Schlag*), to this group of intellectuals. To this, he offers help or even a solution to understand this phenomenon.⁵⁷ [...] ‘Postsecular does not then express a sudden increase in religiosity after its epochal decline, but rather a change in the consciousness of those who felt justified in considering religions as moribund. For Habermas, “postsecular” is a society that is preparing for the continued existence of religious communities in a society that is becoming increasingly secularised.’⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid, 56

Habermas stellt fest, dass sich das Religionssystem ausdifferenziert habe und sich vor allem auf die seelsorgerische Praxis beschränke, was zum Trend der individualisierten Religionspraxis passe.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Cf. Footnote 22. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II*, 312.

Dies soll der Begriff ‘postsäkular’ leisten: Die postsäkulare Gesellschaft stellt sich auf das Fortbestehen religiöser Gemeinschaften in einer fortwährend säkularisierenden Umgebung ein und geht nicht mehr davon aus, dass sich die fortschreitende kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Modernisierung auf Kosten der öffentlichen und personalen Bedeutung von Religion vollziehen wird.

⁵⁷ Hans Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 122.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 124.

‘Postsäkular’ drückt dann nicht eine plötzliche Zunahme an Religiosität nach ihrer epochalen Abnahme aus, sondern eher einen Bewußtseinswandel derer, die sich berechtigt gefühlt hatten, die Religionen als moribund zu betrachten.

This interpretation of Joas about Habermas' stand is central to the Habermasian thesis of postsecular. He explains it by stating that it is a change of consciousness characterizing the postsecular phenomenon. Furthermore, Casanova refers to Habermas' definition of postsecular that abandons the modernist understanding of religion as primitive. Based on the previous understanding, as a change of consciousness, Habermas calls it becoming aware of "secularistic self-misunderstanding".⁵⁹ In a modernized scenario where secularism tried to annul to ignore the contents of Judaeo-Christian traditions, Habermas steps up to rescue these meaningful contents that shaped societies. To deal with such an approach, he presents the previous understanding of secularism now as a "rettende Säkularisierung".⁶⁰ He does this by returning to Immanuel Kant and his philosophy of religion.

Just as the latter did not reject the moral content of the Christian tradition, but tried to translate it into a philosophical concept that could also be accepted by those who do not share the religious pre-suppositions, so many now want to save ideas of the Judeo-Christian heritage, such as that of the image of God and of man as a child of God, against the dangers of the unlimited availability of man.⁶¹

2.1 Postsecular as a Process of Recognition

The term postsecular is commonly misunderstood as an era or age that follows the secular age. However, let me begin this discussion by presenting what Habermas means by postsecular. He uses the expression 'postsecular':

... as a sociological description of a shift of consciousness in largely secularized or 'un-churched' societies which have in the meantime adjusted to the continued existence of

⁵⁹ Jose Casanova, "Exploring the Postsecular: Three Meanings of "the Secular" and Their Possible Transcendence", in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 33.

⁶⁰ Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?*, 125.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Wie dieser die moralischen Gehalte der christlichen Tradition nicht verwarf, sondern sie in eine philosophische Begrifflichkeit zu übersetzen versuchte, die Zustimmung auch derer finden kann, welche die religiösen Präsuppositionen nicht teilen, so wollen nun viele gegen die Gefahren einer grenzenlosen Verfügbarkeit des Menschen Vorstellungen des jüdisch-christlichen Erbes wie die von der Gottesebenbildlichkeit und Gotteskindschaft des Menschen retten.

religious communities and expect religious voices to be influential both in the national public sphere and on the global political stage.⁶²

The passiveness of the general secular public towards the existence of a greater and influential religious public has to be now worked through, so that a general change of consciousness might be able to recognize the active presence of various religions in a secularized world. Postsecular is considered to be the religious signature of the present times according to Habermas. It is more than a claim that religion exists in the midst of secular society; rather it is a coordination between secular and religious.⁶³ In his talk about Faith and Knowledge, concepts relating to religion and secular were the central ones. He used these concepts above all concerning the moral content of religious discourse. In this way, he reminded the secular citizens of the importance of religion that contributed to the most important aspect of a just and stable society i.e, morality. He argued that the process of secularization was not just a matter of damage to the religion and its members but also affected democratic liberalism. This is because in a democratic society, a just and righteous society cannot have a robust foundation without having its resources or funding from religion itself.⁶⁴ Thus Martin Stobbe gives a gist of Habermasian postsecular as, “Societies in which religious communities continue to exist in a secular environment and at the same time can transfer the semantic potential of religion into a secular language are now called ‘postsecular’ by Habermas.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, postsecular could be analysed in the following societal reality. Religion, which is transformed in its presentation, is trying to give meaning to the inhabitants of a modernized world. This transformation is more visible in the various forms in which religion currently exists. The organized form of religion viz., Christianity, has experienced a significant decline in the past decades. However, religion, as Charles Taylor points out, is taking different forms. The religious members need not now stick to an organized body to express their faith or practise their faith.⁶⁶ There are more opportunities for them to express their religious spirit in society. The western European and the American/Canadian societies assume great significance in this

⁶² Habermas, *PTh II*, 78.

⁶³ Hans Joachim Höhn, *Postsäkular. Gesellschaft im Umbruch – Religion im Wandel* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007), 15.

⁶⁴ Martin Stobbe, *Postsäkular erzählen* (Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, 2018), 41–2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Gesellschaften, in denen religiöse Gemeinschaften in säkularer Umgebung weiterbestehen und die gleichzeitig fähig werden, die semantischen Potenziale des Religiösen in eine säkulare Sprache zu überführen, heißen nun bei Habermas ‘postsäkular’.

⁶⁶ Also see. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

regard. Though adherence to organized religion is declining, the content and the function of religion is becoming increasingly relevant in the secularized society.⁶⁷ The expression of religion or the phenomenon of religion in a secular world is not just a matter of social reality. It is, however, a cognitive challenge to the modern world of reason. Religion itself is undoubtedly a part of the history of reason.⁶⁸ Postsecular is a story trying to present the connection between today's modernity, its culture of reason, and the age-old phenomenon of religion and its content of reason. The contribution of religion to the society in areas of morality and the social aspect of living together is, however, being brought to the forefront by this project of postsecular.

For Habermas ... the persistence of religion in a continually secularising environment is not just a social fact. It also represents a cognitive challenge for the culture of reason in modernity, which it must at the same time face up to "from within", because the great religions belong to the history of reason itself.⁶⁹

It should also be realized that above all, 'postsecular' does not refer to society in a general manner, rather tries to present its image or self-concept. The concept postsecular is, however, a sociological predicate and it is a counterpart to its genealogical predicate postmetaphysics. This is measured through its role firstly from an observer's role (*Beobachterperspektive*) and then followed by the participant's perspective (*Teilnehmerperspektive*). Thus, it could be said that a postsecular society is a follow-up of a society, whose members come to an understanding within themselves under the premise of postmetaphysical thinking.⁷⁰

2.3 Does Modernity lead to a Religious Erosion Process?

Another perspective of analysing postsecular is to place it against the modern illusionary thinking that religion is deteriorating. In his book, *Gesellschaft im Umbruch*, Hans Höhn

⁶⁷ Stobbe, *Postsäkular erzählen*, 16.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 20.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Für Habermas ... ist das Fortbestehen der Religion in einer sich fortwährend säkularisierenden Umgebung nicht bloß eine soziale Tatsache. Sie stellt für die Vernunftkultur der Moderne auch eine kognitive Herausforderung dar, der sie gleichsam 'von innen' gerecht werden muss, denn die großen Religionen gehören zur Geschichte der Vernunft selbst.

Also see: Jürgen Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 12.

⁷⁰ Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*, Religion in Philosophy and Theology 86, eds: Ingolf U. Dalferth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 55.

discusses various perspectives of religion and its sociological effect in the society.⁷¹ He uses the phrase, for example, the ‘religious erosion process’ to express the current situation in many modernized societies. The Cambridge Dictionary gives the following meaning to the word erosion: “the fact of good quality or situation being gradually lost or destroyed.”⁷² When we discuss the process of religious erosion, it implies that the good quality or a good situation is being adversely affected. In other words, Höhn opines that religion, which has made significant contributions to society, is being destroyed. However, he further points out that it is a one-sided impression, probably indicating the weakening of the established religion, Christianity. He argues in the line of Taylor that religions instead are taking new forms and continue to exist by incorporating elements from other religions from other cultures.⁷³

The prognosis of a complete disappearance of religion due to modernisation has proved to be incorrect on a global scale. The assumption that scientific-technological progress and the emancipation of the political from the religious in the form of a separation of church and state, as well as the conversion of lifestyle to principles of purpose-rational action will lead to the disappearance of religion has been clearly falsified in the most prominent case of such a “modernised” society-USA.⁷⁴

It is also necessary to avoid a general understanding especially among the most modernized or westernized worlds, that the era of religion is over and that we are living in a new era. This could even be considered to be just an imagination against the reality. On the contrary, “Rather, there is also [...] the challenge of a cooperative processing of the consequences of secularisation, which can be attributed to a ‘derailing modernisation’.”⁷⁵

The expression of religion in a secular world is not just a matter of social reality. It is a cognitive challenge to the modern world of reason. It is clear that religion itself belongs to or is a

⁷¹ Hans Joachim Höhn, *Postsäkular. Gesellschaft im Umbruch – Religion im Wandel* (Paderborn, 2007).

⁷² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/erosion>

⁷³ Höhn, *Postsäkular* 26–7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.13.

Die Prognose eines modernisierungsbedingten Komplettverschwindens des Religiösen hat sich im globalen Maßstab als unzutreffend erwiesen. Die Annahme, dass wissenschaftlich-technischer Fortschritt und die Emanzipation des Politischen vom Religiösen in Gestalt einer Trennung von Kirche und Staat sowie die Umstellung der Lebensführung auf Prinzipien zweckrationalen Handelns das Religiöse zum Verschwinden bringen, ist am prominentesten Fall einer derart „modernisierten“ Gesellschaft – USA – eindeutig falsifiziert worden.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 15–16.

vielmehr verbindet sich (...) auch die Herausforderung einer kooperativen Aufarbeitung von Säkularisierungsfolgen, die einer ‘entgleisenden Modernisierung’ zuzuschreiben sind.

part of the history of reason. Postsecular is a story trying to establish the connection between modernity, its culture of reason, and the age-old phenomenon of religion and its interplay with reason. The contribution of religion to society in areas of morality and the social aspect of living together, is, however, being brought to the forefront by this project of postsecular.

If it is more humane way of mutual living together is to be identified, then both the religious and the secular need to work in tandem. Modernity's intention to replace the authority of religion and make its own, can now make a place for religion once again with the process of mutual *Lernprozess*. Above all, the saving appropriation of religion's cultural inheritance can continue so long as its moral relevance continues to be recognized. However, it could not simply mean the continued existence of religious forms of traditions. Instead, it implies a transformation of these into moral traditions.⁷⁶

2.4 Postsecular as a Neutral Space

This point reflects on postsecular as a neutral space in the Augustinian sense of secularism in *De Civitate Dei* as postulated by Jose Casanova. As per Casanova. Habermas was not ready to accept the theory of post-modernism as he claimed that the modernity remains an unfinished project. So, how could he propose postsecular? The word secular is derived from the Latin *Saeculum*, which is interpreted in an Augustinian sense. The idea of the *parousia* is inserted here, in which Christians and non-Christians come together to pursue the common interest of society. Secular in this perspective does not mean being against religion or even the sacred. It cannot be equated with 'profane' according to this original sense of the introduction of the term secular. Secular is just a neutral space, especially in the Augustinian sense.⁷⁷ This is also more in line with the Habermasian viewpoint.⁷⁸ Later, in the medieval times, the term underwent a gradual change in meaning that concretely separated what is currently known as the earthly and the heavenly.⁷⁹ Casanova clearly states that postsecular is not becoming again religious and not in the Habermasian sense.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ibid, 21.

⁷⁷ Casanova, "Exploring the Postsecular", 28.

⁷⁸ In this manner, the Indian understanding of the word is much closer to western comprehension. The western world takes it for granted that the word secular refers to having no religion or distancing oneself from it. But the Indian constitution describes secularism as a neutral space in which there is a commonality of various religions, just like the explanation given by Augustine.

⁷⁹ Casanova, "Exploring the Postsecular", 27–28.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 31.

The City of God written by Augustine could be viewed as an analysis of the situation in Rome. He reads through the pages of history to refute their claim of Christians bringing misfortune to Rome. Augustine implores them to look into the past and confirms that misfortune has nothing to do with the belief in a particular god or abandoning a god. This is indeed how he observes the natural phenomenon of misfortune without attributing it to religious beliefs or superstitions. By enlightening the Romans in this manner, he could avoid prejudicial feelings towards the Christians, who were considered by the Romans to be secularists or who did not believe in their type of gods.⁸¹

2.5 A Reflective Religion

In discussing the concept of postsecular in the Habermasian philosophy it is vital to shed light on religion as a reflective one. So one can begin from asking the basic question, why do we need in the first place a reflective religion? Reflection indicates one's consciousness, which is referred to by Casanova as *stadial consciousness*.⁸² Therefore, when discussing a reflective religion, we are intrinsically discussing the religious practice of a person in relation to the reflective nature of consciousness. This refers to the practice of religion on a conscious level. Religion and its practices as I have discussed in my earlier chapters arose from various social situations with a deep historical background. However, certain religious practices are no more relevant in the present times or they have been proved to be on the wrong path, which does not contribute to the building up of human society. This is precisely why Habermas asks the religious members to be reflective in religious practices and in comprehending beliefs.⁸³ Certain religious beliefs, which are considered to be important by particular religions, are nevertheless destructive opinions, traditions, and interpretations of their scriptures, especially in reference to religious fundamentalists of various religions who believes that certain acts of religion are destined by God.

Habermas observes that modern religions have taken two forms of religious consciousness: Fundamentalism and Reflective faith.

Two specifically modern forms of religious consciousness emerged in addition: on the one hand, a form of fundamentalism that either withdraws from the modern world or

⁸¹ Also see: Ulrike Spohn, "Entprivatisierung der Religion und Postsäkularismus von Jose Casanova bis Jürgen Habermas", in *Staat und Religion: Zentrale Positionen zu einer Schlüsselfrage des politischen Denkens*, eds. Oliver Hildago und Christian Polke (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017).

⁸² Casanova, "Exploring the Postsecular", 33.

⁸³ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 14.

turns aggressively against it and on the other, a reflective form of faith that adopts a relation to other religions and respects the fallible insights of the institutionalized sciences as well as human rights. This faith remains anchored in the life of a congregation and should not be confused with the new, de-institutionalized forms of fickle religiosity that have withdrawn entirely into the subjective domain.⁸⁴

Jose Casanova attempts to enlighten the position of Habermas concerning the term postsecular “as a change in consciousness, as an altered self-understanding of the largely secularized societies of Western Europe, Canada, or Australia.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, according to Casanova:

Post-secular [...] would mean, first of all, becoming reflexively aware of what Habermas calls a secularistic self-misunderstanding. But becoming aware in itself should not be sufficient. It should be accompanied, one may assume, with the overcoming, or at least with some correction of the secularistic self-misunderstanding.⁸⁶

Well, this is what Klaus Müller might also mean as important in a postsecular period: the value of reflectiveness. Klaus Müller, in his contribution to *Glauben und Wissen* symposium, explicitly expresses the danger of a probable destructive nature of monotheism if not for the reflectiveness of this trend in the modern society.⁸⁷ Religion could go into the hands of the abusers and will be hijacked by terrorism. However, due to this vulnerability, religion should stay in close contact with reason⁸⁸

Therefore, both Habermas and Ratzinger are convinced that reason and faith play a complementary role in the universal process of purification. “Without this thrust of reflection, monotheisms in ruthlessly modernised societies develop a destructive potential.”⁸⁹ This might be in, for instance, the Hindu fundamentalist behaviour that demands the return of those citizens – who were converted to other religions like Christianity and Islam – to their home religion of Hinduism. This is called *Gharvapasi*. ‘Return to Home.’ This can also be said about

⁸⁴ Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*, 60–1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

⁸⁶ Casanova, “Exploring the Postsecular”, 33.

⁸⁷ Klaus Müller, “Balancen philosophischer Topographie. Jürgen Habermas über Vernunft und Glaube”, in *Glauben und Wissen. Ein Symposium mit Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagl-Docekal (Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 221.

⁸⁸ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

Ohne diesen Reflexionsschub entfalten die Monotheismen in rücksichtslos modernisierten Gesellschaften ein destruktives Potential.

the Christians who try to convert people with allurements, under which they conceive that they are gaining more souls for Christ and contributing to the growth of their religion.

To avoid the above-mentioned attitudes and many such similar actions of destruction, which would lead to disharmony, Habermas suggests that a reflective religion gives us the occasion to deduce our beliefs with the help of reason. This means that we must deal with one's beliefs from a historical perspective that gives people knowledge about the origins of their religion and their practices. That is why Habermas worked on the aspect of reason concerning religion and its understanding all through his works. "With regard to Émile Durkheim, George Herbert Mead and Max Weber, religion is thematised as the precursor of reason."⁹⁰

This quote teaches us that religion itself is the basis of reason, which ultimately proves that we must infer the contents of reason in every religion to combat the unreflective (fundamentalist) elements of religion. This is brought out in his earlier phase of communicative actions by "*Entzauberung und Entmächtigung des sakralen Bereichs*", which translates to Disenchantment and disempowerment of the sacred realm.⁹¹ The so-called secularized western world still has a strong presence of religious communities. Such a reality is an invitation to begin a dialogue between the non-religious and religious. For a society to function well, the sentimental aspects of various groups are to be taken seriously. Being the basic sentimental aspect of humans, religion has to be considered with all attention. The non-secular agents do not have the right to ignore their presence, because their contribution to society is equal to that of the others. In this sense, Habermas proposes a cooperative work between the two groups.

But where there is no possibility of a common understanding, violence threatens to take over. Against this background, secularisation has become obsolete as a category of interpretation. ... It is therefore important to involve believers cooperatively in the process of public consensus building. Habermas describes this new form of cooperation as postsecular.⁹²

⁹⁰ Klaus Viertbauer, "Von der Säkularisierungsthese zu postsäkularer Gesellschaft", in *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber (Darmstadt: wbg, 2017), 12.

Die Religion wird mit Blick auf Emil Durkheim, George Herbert Mead und Max Weber als Vorstufe der Vernunft thematisiert.

⁹¹ Ibid, 12.

⁹² Ibid, 24.

Wo aber die Möglichkeit zu einer gemeinsamen Verständigung fehlt, dort droht die Gewalt das Ruder zu übernehmen. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat Säkularisierung als Deutungskategorie

Thus, post-secular bases itself on three important basic rules or laws:

Firstly, the religious consciousness must process the cognitive dissonant encounter with other denominations and other religions. Secondly, it must adjust to the authority of the powers of knowledge which hold the social monopoly on world knowledge. Finally, it must accept the premises of the constitutional state, which are based on a profane morality.⁹³

This is how religious citizens are demanded or coerced to take public opinion seriously as opposed to clinging on to their religious convictions, which sometimes violate societal rationality.⁹⁴

ausgedient. ... Deshalb gilt es Gläubige kooperativ in den Prozess der öffentlichen Konsensfindung miteinzubeziehen. Diese neue Form von Kooperation bezeichnet Habermas als postsäkular.

⁹³ Ibid.

Cf., Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*.14.

Das religiöse Bewusstsein muss erstens die kognitive dissonante Begegnung mit anderen Konfessionen und anderen Religionen verarbeiten. Es muss sich zweitens auf die Autorität von Wissenschaften einstellen, die das gesellschaftliche Monopol an Weltwissen innehaben. Schließlich muss es sich auf die Prämissen des Verfassungsstaates einlassen, die sich aus einer profanen Moral begründen.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 24–5.

3 Postmetaphysical as Saving Religion

After providing the layout in which postmetaphysical thinking works, I will further analyse some postmetaphysical patterns. I will especially discuss how Habermas attempts to detect the genealogical roots of religion and philosophy. “Tracing back their genealogies reveal that they originated as ‘appropriations’ or ‘translations’ of religious ideas. Investigating these genealogies *illuminates the occluded history of the continuous interchange between philosophy and religion* over the centuries.”⁹⁵ In the course of this discussion the transition from Rawls to Habermas would be demonstrated. As the background of this research concerns religion and its functioning in the public sphere, the investigation leads us to analyse the religious reasons and their importance in the public sphere. Besides, this part also functions as a defence of religion. According to Wolterstorff, postmetaphysical philosophy is not a new project for Habermas. However, he discovers that there is more to what has been begun in his postmetaphysical thinking work. He describes this as “Habermas’s preoccupation with the relation of such philosophy to religion, and with the relation of both of these to political discourse.”⁹⁶ The various sections in which religion takes a positive stand in the philosophy of Habermas consequently highlights its contributions not only in the spiritual area, which is often related to religion, but also reflects society’s complete dependence on religion. The postmetaphysical thinking of Habermas also allows us to discern how he understands rationality. It goes without saying that his understanding is non-ontological and non-metaphysical. Nicholas Wolterstorff provides a common understanding of this postmetaphysical rationality by pointing out Habermas’ engagement of public reasons⁹⁷ as “reasons that have the power to convince also beyond the boundaries of a particular religious community.”⁹⁸ In this manner, postmetaphysical philosophy clearly distinguishes itself from metaphysical claims, which have produced various worldviews developed by religious rationalists.

⁹⁵ Rees, “Decolonizing Philosophy?”, 223.

⁹⁶ Wolterstorff, “Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue”, 93.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹⁸ Habermas, *BNR*, 245.

3.1 Postmetaphysical Thinking as Translation

I shall firstly expatiate postmetaphysical basically in terms of translation: A translation of semantic contents from religious to secular. Habermas discusses this theme of translation in his book, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II* in reference to Maria Herrera Lima. He also quotes Adorno, who considers that it is very important to translate or transform all theological contents to secular to ensure the survival of religious experiences deeply rooted in history and to safeguard this phenomenon. And for such an activity, a postmetaphysical thinking premise is accurate, according to Habermas. However, he asks whether such activity is desirable.⁹⁹

Habermas originally developed the postmetaphysical thinking in a context where he wanted to go beyond the engagement of metaphysics on a supplementary position to Dietrich Henrich whose thought Habermas characterizes as the *Rückkehr zur Metaphysik*. It was this occasion that allowed Habermas to develop and defend this pattern of postmetaphysics.¹⁰⁰ It refers to an evaluation of a various range of philosophical theories. Two important aspects need to be noted here. He denies the possibility of a speculative metaphysical theory that there is an explanation to everything or reality. However, he refers back to such theories, which are considered to be redundant in the postmodern context.¹⁰¹ Notably, a postmetaphysical approach leans towards an atheistic approach in its methodology.¹⁰² With this perspective, it should, however, try to avoid criticising religion. It should do so; otherwise it could dilute the element of reason in religious traditions of postmetaphysical thinking.

Now Habermas states that a philosophical translation of the religious contents should neither be operated nor driven as just explanatory reductions nor as logical destruction of the semantic contents and the cognitive challenges of religion. It is also important to note here that Habermas distances himself from such traditional concepts of religious philosophy, which were processing their philosophical traditions in response to the criticism of metaphysical traditions of philosophical theodicy. It is not just the emergence of the philosophical idea of liberalism as a response to understand the religious wars. At the same time, it is also necessary to comprehend the genesis of religious philosophy.¹⁰³

The substantial content of both faith and reason could be understood by conducting a detailed analysis of the sources of their content. Religion is, however, engaged with convictions,

⁹⁹ Habermas, *PTh II*, 82–23.

¹⁰⁰ Martin Breul, *Diskurstheoretische Glaubensverantwortung* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2019), 67.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 68.

¹⁰² Schmidt, “Nachmetaphysische Religionsphilosophie Religion und Philosophie unter den Bedingungen diskursiver Vernunft”, 11.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 12.

which are elements that tend to be believed. Contrary to that, philosophy and science engage themselves with elements that can be verified and validated. This difference, which is parallel to both faith and knowledge, could be derived from the historical problem constellation.¹⁰⁴ By analysing the Kantian religious philosophy, Habermas comes to the conclusion that the boundaries between faith and knowledge, religion, and philosophy are to be interpreted in the context of a post-secular situation. To solidify the understanding in this direction, he proposes that both religious and non-religious citizens should be self-critical in their approach towards a religious person. They need to distance themselves from the basic convictions of a religious person so that both the groups will have the possibility of exchanging ideas and reciprocating in a fair manner.¹⁰⁵ These conditions are nevertheless vital for Habermas so that the religious convictions could be translated into a language that can be comprehended by the non-religious citizens.¹⁰⁶

Postmetaphysical thinking could be differentiated beyond the philosophy of conscience and the subjective philosophy of religion. In this sense, it also extends to the political arena. This is seen in the non-metaphysical project of the political liberalism of Rawls. Habermas however, differentiates himself by adopting a cognitive perspective towards religion. He recognizes the semantic power with a deeper cognitive capacity that religion possesses. This religious resource could philosophically translate the underlying reasons into a language which is accessible to all also.¹⁰⁷ How is Habermas different from Rawls? Habermas says: “*aus religiöser Überlieferung kognitive Gehalte zu bergen*”, which translates into salvaging cognitive content from religious tradition.¹⁰⁸ This particular statement reveals the difference that one can have within the religion. On the one hand, there is a religious experience, which is considered something difficult to comprehend in its content for the non-religious persons.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Habermas proposes the possibility of translating the religious language into a more understandable one.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Also see. “Das nachmetaphysische Denken darf nicht der Gefahr erliegen, Glauben und Wissen wieder in eins oder auch nur in eine allzu große Nähe zueinander zu setzen. Religion bleibt für die säkulare Vernunft opak und kann nur durch einen Übersetzungsprozess verständlich gemacht werden.” Michael Reder, “Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen”, 130–1.

However, Habermas tries to bring to light commonalities between religion and philosophy to make both religious and secular to ‘co-work’. In this manner, they accommodate the possibility of a desirable translation, which looks for elements that could be utilized in this exercise.

3.2 Kantian Models for Postmetaphysical Translation

Here, I shall explore various foundational aspects of Kant that contribute to the concept and working of translation, which is nonetheless, further developed under the discipline of post-metaphysics by Habermas. I will briefly present Kant’s basic reflections of the philosophy of religion. This is indeed a connecting cord that reveals how he formulates a premise to the theory of translation through the dichotomy of morality and religion.

3.2.1 A Dialectical Relationship between Moral and Religion

“For Kant, religion is basically nothing other than the recognition of all (moral) duties as divine commands.”¹¹¹ When it comes to looking how close both morality and religion stand together, it is important to refer Kant’s thesis and his antithesis. Kant’s works shed light on dialectic between Religion and Morality. Many Kant interpreters propose the thesis that religion requires morality but not the moral.

Morality ... therefore needs to be able to call upon not merely religion, but, by virtue of pure practical reason, it is itself enough Morality, however, inevitably leads to religion, whereby it expands to the idea of a powerful moral legislator apart from man, in whose will that final purpose of world creation is, which at the same time can and should be the final purpose of man.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Herman Baum, *Kant* (Academia Verlag Sankt Augustin, 1998), 38.

Religion ist für Kant im Grunde nichts anderes als die Erkenntnis aller (moralischen) Pflichten als göttlicher Gebote.

¹¹² Ibid, 50.

Die Moral ... bedarf also zum Berufe ihrer selbst ... keineswegs der Religion, sondern, vermöge der reinen praktischen Vernunft, ist sie sich selbst genug ... Moral aber führt unumgänglich zu Religion, wodurch sie sich zur Idee eines machthabenden moralischen Gesetzgebers außer dem Menschen erweitert, in dessen Willen dasjenige Endzweck der Weltschöpfung ist, was zugleich der Endzweck des Menschen sein kann und soll.

However, there is also an antithesis that suggests morality automatically leads to religion or religion is the basis of morality. The practical guarantee of the existence of God as a moral author of the world and eventually, the world as a moral kingdom in which man lives as a moral being allows us to decipher the consequence the moral law of one's own practical reason at the same time as God's law.¹¹³ This is exactly what Kant suggests as a definition of religion: "Religion is the epitome of all duties as (instar) divine commandments."¹¹⁴ In English, this translates into: Religion is the epitome of all duties as (instar) divine commandments. There are some other Kant's interpreters who find that morality requires religion in order to base itself. Therefore, religion is the foundation of morality. Some interpreters of Kant like Schopenhauer point out that Kant's famous morality theory also lead to the development of a Christian theological branch known as moral theology. E. Brunner attempted to represent the thesis that religion is the basis of morality.

Human rights, the dignity of the person, the commandment to love one's neighbour – these are not natural facts, but postulates that are either completely up in the air or have no power of persuasion, or are rooted in a religious understanding of the human being. Behind the demand for human rights and the principle of personal dignity is the reverence for something higher than nature, the reverence for an authority that gives human beings dignity, has created rights for them and demands love of our neighbours.¹¹⁵

It is claimed that man is a reasonable being who is moral and religious. However, this claim by the philosophers is also controversial due to the conjunction that differentiates both the natures of a person. To reach a consensus in understanding these claims, Kant gives us a sort of clarification:

Religion does not differ in any way from morality in matter, i.e. in object, for it is concerned with duties in general; its difference from the latter is merely formal, i.e. a

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 51.
Religion ist der Inbegriff aller Pflichten als (instar) göttlicher Gebote.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 52.
Die Menschenrechte, die Würde der Person, das Gebot, den Nächsten zu lieben – das sind keine Naturfakta, sondern das sind Postulate, die entweder völlig in der Luft hängen und keinerlei Überzeugungskraft besitzen, oder aber in einem religiösen Verständnis des Menschen begründet sind. Hinter der Forderung der Menschenrechte und dem Prinzip der Personenwürde steht die Ehrfurcht vor etwas Höherem als Natur, die Ehrfurcht vor einer Instanz, die den Menschen eine Würde verleiht, ihnen Rechte anerschaffen hat und von uns die Nächstenliebe fordert.

legislation of reason to give morality influence, through the idea of God generated from this self, on the human will for the fulfilment of all its duties. That is why it is only one and there are no different religions.¹¹⁶

This could be interpreted as projecting or giving us the clarity that a material identity between the two branches and a formal difference must be recognised in trying to understand morality and religion. However, man has these two as a common fundament, the material object of reception. “According to Kant’s conception of their relationship in human reason, morality and religion are mediated anthropologically.”¹¹⁷ His claim is that religion and morality meet at the central part of man’s existence. Accordingly, Kant proposes religion to be reasonable and rational by placing the emphasis on moral obligations. “In order to escape existential senselessness, religion will have ‘man’s duty towards himself’.”¹¹⁸

The relation between morality and religion could be further clarified when we analyse the end purpose of these natures. According to Kant, both the branches lead to the fulfilment of the same moral obligations, i.e., moral itself. All moral actions without an end purpose contradict themselves. Such purpose-oriented actions themselves have a transcendental weight. “Their demand is a priori, i.e. universal and necessary: indeed, it ultimately coincides with the moral law, at least in so far as it is ‘introduced by the law itself’. In this sense ... that for Kant morality and religion are anthropologically linked.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 53.

Religion unterscheidet sich nicht der Materie, d. i. dem Objekt nach in irgendeinem Stück von der Moral, denn sie geht auf Pflichten überhaupt, sondern ihr Unterschied von dieser ist bloß formal, *i. d.* eine Gesetzgebung der Vernunft, um der Moral durch die aus dieser selbst erzeugten Idee von Gott auf den menschlichen Willen zur Erfüllung aller seiner Pflichten Einfluss zu geben. Darum ist sie aber auch nur eine einzige und es gibt nicht verschiedene Religionen.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 53.

Moral und Religion sind nach der Kantischen Konzeption ihres Verhältnisses in der Vernunft des Menschen, also anthropologisch vermittelt.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

Um der existentiellen Sinnlosigkeit zu entgehen, wird Religion zu haben Pflicht des Menschen gegen sich selbst.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 57.

Ihre Forderung ist a priori, d. h. universal und notwendig: ja sie fällt letztlich mit dem Moralgesetz zumindest insofern zusammen, als sie durch dieses ‘selbst eingeführt wird’. In diesem Sinne ... dass Moral und Religion für Kant anthropologisch miteinander verkettet sind.

3.2.2 Translated Categories

Here I present in three different categories the element of religious ethics. These elements are taken from Christianity, which forms the basis of Kantian critique of religion. These categories serve as examples to compare or make clear how we can use religious categories in secular terms. Consequently, I would claim that Kant uses the language of reason. Kant uses a language of morality based on reason and in this manner, he also tries to translate the very Christian principles into a moral domain, which is available beyond the boundaries of religion. By doing so, he attempts to contribute to the moral domain and propose a positive utility of Christian theology. The translation thesis of Hare and Reardon, for instance, sheds light into this model. They investigate how Kant uses religion, especially that of Christian principles in exposing them in moral language equipped within the sphere of reason. According to Hare: “Kant intends to translate the core Christian doctrines into terms that are acceptable to the moral philosopher, and he attempts this translation to show the presence of rational religion within the broader sphere of Christian theology.”¹²⁰

When Habermas says that postmetaphysical philosophy helps in a pluralistic society, it stresses the requirement of a language that is comprehensible by both religious and secular. As religious principles certainly contributed to the growth of moral values in society, they occupy an important place even in the secular area. However, to consensuality of both the parties must be aimed at avoid offence to seculars and at the same time maintaining and protecting the religious values and principles. Therefore, this brief exploration of Kant shows a model that comes closer to making such an exercise possible.

3.2.2.1 *Sin as Bad and Virtue as the Principle of Good*

The terminology used in religious circles to represent what is offensive to both individuals and society is called sin.

Sin is an offence against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as “an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law.”¹²¹

¹²⁰ Chris L. Firestone, and Nathan Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant's Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 72.

¹²¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, III, Life In Christ, Section I, Man's Vocation Life In The Spirit, Chapter one, The Dignity of the Human Person, Article 8 Sin n. 1849 https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a8.htm

On the contrary, virtue represents the goodness and benevolence intended to individuals and society.

Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.¹²²

In this manner, they function as the basic principles of justice. If I concentrate on Christianity or Semitic religious traditions, I would certainly cite the Ten Commandments received by Moses.¹²³ These commandments are descriptions of man's attitude towards oneself, God, the other and society in general. They function as principles based on which the Semitic religions developed their concepts of sin and virtue. One can certainly observe that these categories were developed in a homogeneous society with one religious belief. Therefore, these principles were not just religious principles. Rather they also had a societal function, which could be said to serve a secular function. However, here Kant clearly develops the same principles in secular terms, which could be applied irrespective of particular religious reference. But what he considers as the foundation to these principles is reason. "The sole objects of practical reason are thus the concepts of good and evil. For by the former is meant a necessary object of desire, by the latter of detestation, but both according to a principle of reason."¹²⁴

In Book Two of the Religion, Kant develops a view of Christian doctrines as being symbolic of the conflict of the good and evil principles expressed in man's freely chosen ultimate maxims. Thus, the Devil symbolizes the power of one's own evil choice: Heaven and Hell symbolize the radical gulf between the pure and impure will; the Holy Spirit becomes our confidence in our moral disposition, and Christ symbolizes that moral perfection which signifies the end of creation. Here, it is observed that the language which Kant uses is theological, but he also finds alternatives in his language. These alternatives serve as terminologies which are acceptable

¹²² Ibid, Article 7, The Virtues, n. 1803.

¹²³ Exodus 20: 1–17.

¹²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Die Drei Kritiken*, ed. Raymund Schmidt (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner Verlag, 1952), 225.

Die alleinigen Objekte einer praktische Vernunft sind also die Begriffe vom Guten und Bösen. Denn durch das erstere versteht man einen notwendigen Gegenstand des Begehrens-, durch das zweite des Verabscheuungsvermögens, beides aber nach einem Prinzip der Vernunft.

beyond the limits of religious language. The second example that follows is presented through a Christological language. The two categories of *Böses* and *gutes Prinzip* are explained by making Christ as the ideal personality in comparison with whom these principles are measured.

3.2.2.2 *Jesus: The ideal of Moral Perfection*¹²⁵

In Christianity, “It is Jesus of Nazareth, rather than anybody else, who is the personified version of the rational principle, residing in all rational beings, that turns out to be the basis of our hope for moral regeneration.”¹²⁶ The prototype of perfect humanity in secular terms could be originally intended by the Christian religious groups to project a holy personality. Jesus Christ is the holy Son of God for the religiously oriented persons; however, he is also a personality of perfect human living as suggested by Kant. He makes use of this personality to explain the concept of *guten Prinzip* and its personification.

Kant uses two different terminologies interchangeably: the good disposition and the good principle. These two terms entail the same connotation of presenting the prototype of humanity. This good principle is personified, which is viewed from a cognitive point as trying to capture the idea of an ideal of perfection. However, this comes across as a contrasting idea to what we humans are in nature or at least expressed sometimes as evil or corrupt natures.¹²⁷ In Kantian ideology, humanity is placed in the direction of full moral perfection. Kant puts forth this ideal that needs to be aspired for. This ideal is now to be found in a person, which is called a personified ideal. The materialization of this ideal is concretely expressed by placing Christ as the personified ideal, which he refers to as ‘prototype’ (*Urbild*). He sees this person, in whom moral perfection comes to fulfilment, as the only one capable of pleasing God.¹²⁸

3.2.3.3 *Kingdom of God: The Republic of Virtues*¹²⁹

The expression “Kingdom of God”¹³⁰ found in the Holy Bible was used by Jesus himself. Thus, this phrase fits into a religious circumstance and context. However, the assignment of

¹²⁵ Michalson, *Kant’s “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason”*, 171.

¹²⁶ Firestone and Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant’s Religion*, 154.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 156.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 157.

¹²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), 223.

¹³⁰ Jn. 3:3.

philosophical translation that Habermas proposes is making these religious phrases available to the non-religious contexts as well. That is why I have cited the example of this phrase to demonstrate how it could be possible and above all, with the support of the Kantian approach, which interprets this religious phrase into a non-religious context. This idea underpinning the kingdom of God has a visible structure in our context, the Church, which is considered a community of Virtues (*Tugendgemeinschaft*)¹³¹ “[...] the concept of the church (accompanies) only one function in the development of our morality, namely that we regard what should be as realizable.”¹³² So when I speak of the kingdom of God, the following question arises: who is a citizen of this kingdom or who can become one? Based on the principle of the community of virtues, every ethical human becomes a citizen of this kingdom of God, which, in turn, is translated as an ethical city. For Kant, we are all called to be part of this ethical city and this call is something *ursprünglich*, which means original. It becomes an innate part of us because we cannot be separated from being a moral being and we are disposed to follow the moral laws. Accordingly, the process of entering into the kingdom of God has already begun in us. It continues with the cultivation of own self towards this moral world. In this regard, Kant was able to cite the scripture, which implies the kingdom of God is not a material object that dwells outside of us.¹³³

The highest *Ziel* for man is the moral fulfilment, a pure, unadulterated love for the law. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the three forms of love, respectively. Their veneration is eventually the threefold articulation of each one’s desire of union with the Law. For a reasonable faith, it does not mean anything more than this. For Kant, in presenting the idea of a moral being or a moral ruler, he appeals to our reasoning faculty, which is intrinsically engaged. This places the importance on comprehending what is he to us as a moral being instead of investigating the nature of this moral being (god).¹³⁴ In addition, a rivalry is involved between the members of a just society (*Rechtsgesellschaft*) that compares the society of self-love and virtue with one that entails the following of a moral law out of one’s own volition. This following of a moral law out of one’s own will is identical to the love of God.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Burkhard Nonnenmacher, *Vernunft und Glaube bei Kant*, ed. Friedrich Hermann, Axel Hutter, Christoph Schwöbel and Thomas Buchheim – Collegium Metaphysicum, Bd. 20. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 325.

¹³² Ibid, 326.

[...] der Begriff der Kirche (kommt) nur eine Funktion in der Ausbildung unserer Sittlichkeit zu, nämlich die, dass wir dasjenige, was sein soll, für realisierbar halten.

The concept of the church(s) has (have) only one function in the formation of our morality, namely that we consider that due objectives can be realized.

¹³³ Lk. 17, 20.

¹³⁴ Nonnenmacher, *Vernunft und Glaube bei Kant*, 277.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 328.

Man is obligated to establish a common ethical being, which is materialized into an ethical society. As a consequence, he must also fulfil the obligation to be part of this society. However, this obligation is characterized by its uniqueness which does not direct to the other but rather to one's self. Baumgartner explains it further:

Since the individual is not in a position to abandon the ethical state of 'the public conflict between the principles of virtue', but is nevertheless obliged to promote the highest common good, a duty whose fulfilment is not really within his power.¹³⁶

The interrelatedness of this ethical-moral law and the religious love of God could be seen in the Augustinian understanding of the love of God. For Augustine, the destiny is that God is all (*alles*) in everything (*allem*) (*Omnia in omnibus*). This virtue is founded on the love of God, which cannot be cultivated by man himself. Rather, it is given to us by God. Augustine believed that God is the beginning and end of everything and he is the subject of all.¹³⁷ Kant realizes the profundity of religious texts and therefore, his intentionality to make it available in rational language is palpable. The mechanism that Kant uses is visible in categories of reason expressed in ethical semantics. In this manner, the texts considered by religious as motivating texts find accessibility in a non-religious content too.

3.3 The Functionality of Translation

3.3.1 From Elimination of Religion to Translation

The word '*Aufhebung*' in German gives the meaning of abolition, repeal, of a certain element from the existing conditions. In our sense – within the framework of my present research – the secularistic approach towards religion emerged from the process of secularization that intended to completely eradicate religion from the society beginning with the separation of the state and the church. In this sense, religion was gradually wiped out of the society or at least

¹³⁶ Hans Michael Baumgartner, "Das "Ethische Gemeine Wesen" und die Kirche in Kants Religionschrift", in *Kant über Religion*, eds. Friedo Ricken and Francois Marty (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992), 159.

Weil nämlich der einzelne nicht in der Lage ist, den ethischen Naturzustand, der öffentlichen wechselseitigen Befehdung der Tugendprinzipien zu verlassen [...], es aber doch Pflicht ist, das höchste gemeinschaftliche Gut zu befördern, so handelt es sich hier um eine Pflicht, deren Erfüllung nicht eigentlich in seiner Gewalt steht.

¹³⁷ Nonnenmacher, *Vernunft und Glaube bei Kant*, 329.

attempts were made to push back religion into a private sphere without much public significance. The various anti-religious movements in Europe from the Middle Ages to the 19th century are a clear example of such approaches towards religion. This was supported above all by the elite of society or at least the philosophical schools that regarded religion as an unreasonable element in society. Various elements like rituals, belief in a supernatural power, an organized community of believers, the accumulation of power among the leaders of this community of believers, are some of the important elements opposed by the opponents of religion. However, in opposing these factors they missed the factuality of religion that it grew up with society hand in hand from ancient times onwards. Thus, religion in totality was being suppressed and pushed aside. In this process, society, however, missed seeing the important elements of religion that contributed to the growth of society.¹³⁸

Habermas, on the other hand, points out the importance of religion in society. He moves from the idea of *'Aufhebung'* to *Übersetzung*.¹³⁹ He also calls for a total re-evaluation of the secularization process in society and extracts the value of religion that contributed to society by analysing and putting together some of the important sociologists and their insights about religion and society. He thus proposes this idea of *Übersetzung* to look back into religion as a possessor of treasure that contributes to the growth of the society and provides a basis for various positive elements.¹⁴⁰ According to Schmidt, *Übersetzung* is exposed by Habermas in contrast to Rawls political liberalism. Religion is above all “a potential resource of cognitive insight that can also be philosophically ‘translated’ into the language of public reasons.”¹⁴¹ This theme is especially stressed in his important work, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*.

[...] that religions should be able to translate the semantic content of religious language into a secular language. Religion has an ordering and unifying function for society. It will only be able to take this seriously if it becomes involved in the translation process.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Cf. Hans Joachim Höhn, *Postsäkular: Gesellschaft im Umbruch – Religion im Wandel* (Paderborn, 2007), 17–25.

¹³⁹ Viertbauer, “Von der Säkularisierungsthese zur postsäkularen Gesellschaft”, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*, 14.

¹⁴¹ Schmidt, “Nachmetaphysische Religionsphilosophie. Religion und Philosophie unter den Bedingungen diskursiver Vernunft”, 21–2.

[...] eine mögliche Resource kognitiver Einsicht, die auch philosophisch in die Sprache öffentlicher Gründe ‘übersetzt’ werden kann.

¹⁴² Michael Reder, “Liberal, deliberativ oder dekonstruktivistisch? Rorty, Habermas und Derrida über das Verhältnis von Religion und Gesellschaft”, in *Habermas, und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, (Darmstadt: wbg, 2017), 131.

[...] dass die Religionen in der Lage sein sollten, semantische Inhalte der religiösen Sprache in eine säkulare Sprache zu übersetzen. Religion hat eine ordnende und verbindende Funktion für die

Klaus Viertbauer clearly demonstrates this aspect of translation, which attempts to make religion – having the sacred form – to be available in a postmetaphysical form:

Sakrale Form (Sacred Form)	Nachmetaphysische Form (Postmetaphysical Form)
Der Mensch ist Ebenbild Gottes (Man is made in the image of God)	Er ist ein mit Freiheit begabtes und der Freiheit verpflichtetes Wesen (He is a being gifted with freedom and committed to freedom)
Der Mensch ist Geschöpf Gottes (Man is God's creature)	Der Mensch verdankt sein natürliches Sosein nicht einem anderen Menschen. ¹⁴³ (Man does not owe his natural being to another man)

The following point is a continuation of the above-mentioned process of translation. However, it further attempts to explain the manner in which the sacred could be maintained without losing its essentiality in a secular ambience.

3.3.2 Translating into Secular without removing the Core of the Sacred¹⁴⁴

Habermas reflects on faith and knowledge in reference to an opaque reason. Faith and Knowledge are like two different worlds, namely the religious and the secular. In discussing these two realms, he needs to find a constructive way of dealing with both sides. This is exactly what he aims to do in his theory of communicative actions. Thus, it is vital to make the difference whether we speak with one another or we speak about another. However, this approach needs to be diligently applied without getting mixed up. As both the departments have their respective methodologies, it is to be taken care that, “the rift between world knowledge and revelatory knowledge must not be repaired.”¹⁴⁵

Gesellschaft. Dies wird sie nur dann ernst nehmen können, wenn es sich in den Übersetzungsprozess einlässt.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 23.

¹⁴⁴ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 28.

¹⁴⁵ Reder, “Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen”, 130. Cf. Footnote 7. Habermas, *Bewusstsein von dem, was fehlt* (Anm. 4), 27.
[...] der Riss zwischen Weltwissen und Offenbarungswissen nicht wieder zu kitten ist.

Habermas refers to Hegel by saying that he makes the death on the cross as the centre of a thought that incorporates the positive content of Christianity. The incarnation, for instance, symbolizes the life of a philosophical spirit. The absolute or God in a religious terminology must relinquish himself or reject the self with a consequence that the absolute will experience the power when this self can again work out from the experience of the painful negativity of self-limitation.¹⁴⁶ Notably, in some cases, this process of translation takes over the authority when the content has been delivered from a religious resource.

In postmetaphysical thinking, it is necessary to be aware of recognizing the important religious traditions even in the very most modern societies or even when societies function differently from those of the past. It does not suffice that postmetaphysical recognizes these traditions. Instead, it is necessary to consider them as values in which religious communities have the capacity to provide fundamentally sources for binding societies together. Besides, even the secular societies could profit from them in the face of an economically endangered derailed modernization. If the new ethics do not refer to religious traditions, then they continue to search for a solid basis for the moral values of societies but not definite to find one. This solid basis is required to be a rationalistic foundation for modern societies that could have access to religious traditions, which, in turn, place themselves under strong rationalistic traditions.¹⁴⁷ Übersetzung is considered in this context as something that projects itself as a saving methodology of the religious contents and above all the humane aspects of societal life.¹⁴⁸ Habermas nevertheless, makes an effort in concretising his direction of considering the religious contents as valuable without disregarding the normative religious potential for the present generation through the concept of Übersetzung.¹⁴⁹ In contrast to Kant Habermas sees 'Kirchenglaube' as a source of historical source of inspiration, from which the practical reason must draw the ultimate purpose of a reasonable being.¹⁵⁰

A postsecular consciousness points to a secularistic misunderstanding of modernity in which religion is completely denied its place in the public. However, this approach to religion is transformed through a dialectic that shows the power of expression of the religious traditions,

¹⁴⁶ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 26.

¹⁴⁷ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 282.

¹⁴⁸ Herta Nagal-Docekal, "Ein rettende Übersetzung? Jürgen Habermas interpretiert Kants Religionsphilosophie", in *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13, (Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 243.

¹⁴⁹ Reinhold Esterbauer, "Jürgen Habermas' Rede über die Sprache der Religion", in *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13, (Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 315–6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 308–9.

which form important resources for both religious and non-religious citizens. Above all, it helps them in the normative contents of truth.¹⁵¹

3.3.3 Religion: A Beacon of Motivation

The following discussion could be initiated by posing the question of whether one could deny the motivational power of religion experienced within societies.¹⁵²

[...] In his conversation with Cardinal Ratzinger, Habermas formulates what potential of religion he considers to be involved. In sacred writings and religious overstatements institutions of transgression and salvation, articulated from the saving end of a life experienced as hopeless, have been subtly booked out and kept hermeneutically alive over thousands of years.¹⁵³

Religion has had been motivating societies, be it in a positive or negative way. The human society from ages past has numerous examples of religious people who dedicated their lives to the service of humankind based on their convictions. Various religious societies have been

¹⁵¹ Johann Reikerstorfer, “Eine “Übersetzung”, in der “Übersetztes” nicht überflüssig wird. Jüdisch-christliches Erbe in vernunfttheoretischer Bedeutung bei J. Habermas und J. B. Metz”, in *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler und Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13 (Wien: Oldenburg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 286.

Cf. Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialectics of Secularization*, trans. C. R. V. Brian McNeil. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.

Also see: Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, 137.

¹⁵² Also see: Stephan R. Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*. Religion in Philosophy and Theology 86, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

“A momentous development in Habermas’s thinking about religion came when he was invited to a public dialogue ... advanced the argument that the constitutional democratic state presupposes ethical and moral resources that in itself it cannot secure. It is for this reason that if democracies are to remain vibrant and at the same time not fail to respect equally.” Eduardo Mendieta, “Religion”, in *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 397.

¹⁵³ Reder, “Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen”, 130.

Cf. Footnote 5. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (Anm. 4), 115.

[...] in seinem Gespräch mit Kardinal Ratzinger formuliert Habermas, um welches Potenzial der Religion es sich seiner Ansicht nach handelt. In heiligen Schriften und religiösen Überlieferungen sind Institutionen von Verfehlung und Erlösung, vom rettenden Ausgang aus einem als heillos erfahrenen Leben artikuliert, über Jahrtausende hinweg subtil ausbuchstabiert und hermeneutisch wach gehalten worden.

established in various parts of the world to serve people. This motivation provided by religions could also be experienced in the political arena, where members of society express their political opinions based on their religious convictions. On the negative side of it, we experience the fundamentalist and destructive expression of religion in society. The actions of members belonging to such groups or categories are based on their stern religious beliefs. Therefore, one cannot deny a religion's power to motivate societies. Habermas, too, considers these two elements of religion either as destructive or helpful to society. Above all, he limits himself to Christianity while analysing this phenomenon. For Habermas, a liberal state is bound up within the history of Christianity and its culture. Due to their power to destroy the democratic nature of the state and society, religions which move in the direction of fundamentalism and are engrossed in irrationality are counterproductive to society. Contrary to such religions, he considers, Christianity, at least, in its official teachings seemed to be more helpful and productive to society. It is a religion that serves the democratic nature of the state.¹⁵⁴ "Christianity is the synthesis mediated in Jesus Christ between the faith of Israel and the Greek spirit."¹⁵⁵ That is why it would be important for any religion to have a balance between faith and reason (or philosophy) so that its motivational power could be used constructively.

Religions in general also motivate cultures in their approach towards social milieu and beliefs. Consequently, Habermas recognizes the importance of Christianity and Judaism and their contribution to the European system and culture. Their contribution could in no way be denied owing to their focus on the equality of all members before God and their emphasis on the freedom of every individual. Habermas had to voice out his opinion against Heidegger, precisely because Heideggerian principles and convictions led to the concretization of Nazi ideology, which stands opposed to the principle of equality of human beings in front of God.¹⁵⁶ In case of instability in society through a loss of political credibility, society needs to hang on

¹⁵⁴ Esterbauer, "Jürgen Habermas' Rede über die Sprache der Religion", in *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler und Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wiener Reihe. Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13 (Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 310.

¹⁵⁵ Klaus Müller, "Balancen philosophischer Topographie. Jürgen Habermas über Vernunft und Glaube", in *Glauben und Wissen. Ein Symposium mit Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Rudolf und Nagal-Docekal, Herta Langthaler, Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13 (Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007), 217. Cf. Footnote 3: Ratzinger: Europa – verpflichtendes Erbe für die Christen, in: König, Franz / Rahner, Karl (Hgg): *Europa. Horizonte der Hoffnung*. Graz – Wien – Köln: Böhlau 1983, 61–74, hier 68.

Das Christentum ist die in Jesus Christus vermittelte Synthese zwischen dem Glauben Israels und dem griechischen Geist.

¹⁵⁶ Große Kracht, Herman-Josef, "Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe. Jürgen Habermas und die Öffentlichkeitsansprüche der Religion", in *Moderne Religion?*, eds. Knut Wenzel / Thomas M. Schmidt (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 62.

to a source that gives them some form of credibility and stability. At this juncture, Viertbauer rightly points out that Habermas refers to religion as a saving element.

In the community life of the religious communities (...) something can remain intact which has been lost elsewhere and cannot be restored with the professional knowledge of experts alone (...) it is about a secularising (...) release of religiously encapsulated potentials of meaning.¹⁵⁷

3.3.4 The Potentiality of Semantic Contents of Religion¹⁵⁸

Religious language has the capacity to produce inspiring semantic content, which goes beyond the power of a philosophical language. This powerful potentiality is expressed through a combination of rationalistic content that runs through expressions that represent various existential issues. As long as religion maintains it, philosophy will not be able to replace it anyway, even in its postmetaphysical content.¹⁵⁹

Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially concerning vulnerable forms of communal life. In corresponding political debates, this potential makes religious speech into a serious vehicle for possible truth contents, which can then be translated from the vocabulary of a particular religious community into a generally accessible language.¹⁶⁰

The highest priority of Judaeo-Christian language is to be a resource for the humane meaning of life, and consequently, it has the theological responsibility to establish justification for the elements of truth in these institutions.¹⁶¹ Theology or religion has the power to express the innermost experiences of human beings. The language used in the scriptures demonstrates

¹⁵⁷ Klaus Viertbauer, “Religion in der Dialektik der Aufklärung”, *Stimmen der Zeiten* 144 no. 6, (2019), 430.

Im Gemeindeleben der Religionsgemeinschaften (...) kann etwas intakt bleiben, was andernorts verloren gegangen ist und mit dem professionellen Wissen von Experten allein auch nicht wiederhergestellt werden kann (...) Es geht um eine säkularisierende (...) Entbindung religiös verkapselter Bedeutungspotentiale.

¹⁵⁸ Also see: Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*, 55.

¹⁵⁹ Große Kracht, “Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe”, 66.

¹⁶⁰ Habermas, *BNR*, 131.

¹⁶¹ Nagal-Docekal, “Ein rettende Übersetzung?”, 243.

that depth – the profoundness of semantic power, which has the capacity to express various aspects of human life – especially, that of human suffering, which could be explained and given meaning in the light of a transcendental experience. Scriptures, as in the case of Israel, preserve human history coupled with instances of revelation and human comprehension of these moments. These expressions of various existential situations highlight the cognitive potentiality and human worth. They have the capacity to articulate the self-reflection of the divine. A performative function is visible by analysing how the negativity of human experiences that could lead to frustration and create an atmosphere in which one would not be able to understand one's situation could be converted through religious language into terms and expressions of a positive and constructive approach. One such example is the life of Job in the Christian scripture. For a religious reader, the depiction of his life is definitely a strong ray of hope. It is a purely human experience that could be attributed to anyone, either to a person of faith or not. In the bible story, it is the religious terms and expressions that add meaning to Job's suffering and becomes the source of his morale. His utterly desperate situation could be relatable even to a modern man who claims himself to be in a secular person. Nonetheless, as the human mind perpetually seek answers and meanings, we have a reservoir of such content that only religion can possess, according to Habermas.¹⁶²

It could be said that religious language has the potential to express the development of humanity in its various sensitivities and consciousness. The second part of the dissertation deals with the role religion has played in becoming an instrument for speech development in human beings. Religions often have the nature of contributing towards human history and traditions and in particular, their speech (Robert Bellah). This semantic potentiality of religion protects various communitarian dimensions within our society. Its emphasis on communitarian living is directed towards the development of cultures and the use of rationality in making progress towards modern societies. Therefore, the semantic power of religion could be considered as a great contributor towards the movement of modernization and modern societal life.¹⁶³

Habermas considers that the translation of religious traditions, which unambiguously have a semantic potentiality takes the form of rational argumentative language of secular philosophy. This mechanism becomes indispensable for the modern generations to be able to understand the religious contents well and to make the traditions live further. He questions the possibility for the concreteness of this translation without it causing a loss of the normative substance. "The process of a critical appropriation of essential contents of the religious tradition is still in

¹⁶² Große Kracht, "Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe", 66–7.

¹⁶³ Reikerstorfer, "Eine "Übersetzung", in der "Übersetztes" nicht überflüssig wird," 287. Cf. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, 13.

progress, its outcome difficult to predict.”¹⁶⁴ Habermas also observes that if philosophy takes up the assignment of translating the religious contents more or less, then it would become sheer intellectualism.¹⁶⁵

3.3.5 Concept of *Tat Tvam Asi*: An Expression of Religious Semantic Neutrality

The concept of *Tat tvam asi* serves as an example of how the semantic contents of religion reach beyond its faith contents. The detrimental nature of this concept forms the basis for the conception of man and the transcendental reality that brings the results as expected by Habermas. This concept explains the basic nature of humanity in relation to a metaphysical reality that forms a religious foundation. However, what we can observe in analysing this concept is the neutrality of language, which is exactly what Habermas desires. The applicability of this concept goes beyond the particularity of religion and culture, which thus equates itself to the philosophical nature of its idea. This demonstrates the opaqueness of religious experience and the clarity of reason that appears through the concept of *tat tvam asi*.

As the author(s) of the Upanishads – which contain mostly these metaphysical discourses – are unknown, we need to refer to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciple Swami Vivekananda, in order to comprehend these great writings. Through their exposition, they have attempted to bring the teachings of the Upanishads very close to society. The following citation elucidates what the Upanishads are:

The very essence of Vedanta is indicated by its name. Externally, “Veda-anta” only means “end of the Vedas”, which is a purely factual reference to the final scriptures of the Vedic literature, namely the Upanishads.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Große Kracht, “Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe”, 66–7.

Der Prozess einer Kritischen Aneignung wesentlicher Gehalte der religiösen Überlieferung ist noch im Gang, sein Resultat schwer vorauszusagen.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Cf. Footnotes: 39–43. Habermas, *Metaphysik nach Kant*, 34; Habermas, *Einheit der Vernunft*, 85; Habermas, *Exkurs: Transzendenz*, 141; Habermas, *Gespräch über Gott und die Welt*, 191.

¹⁶⁶ Torwesten, *Vedanta: Kern des Hinduismus*, 14.

Auf das eigentliche Wesen des Vedanta weist schon sein Name hin. Äußerlich bedeutet „Veda-anta“ zwar nur „Ende der Veden“ womit zuerst einmal rein sachlich auf die abschließenden Schriften der vedischen Literatur hingewiesen wird, nämlich auf die Upanishaden

The foundation and basis of the Vedas and the Upanishads are the Brahman self, which is indestructible and timeless in its creation. This type of conception about the Vedas and Upanishads automatically differentiates itself from religions of revelation like the Israelite religion or other monotheistic religions. In monotheistic religions, a clear historical perspective plays a very important role because the prophets receive the message in a historical context. Contrary to that, the Upanishads do not give us a historical account of the appearance of a God who imparts his message to particular humans. Such types of instances can be found in later mythology. The Upanishads are discourses about the divinity, *das Göttliche*.¹⁶⁷ However, unlike monotheistic religions, the *Upanishads* does not deal with ethical laws and commandments dictated by a God. They are more concerned with teaching people how to strive to be able to realize the presence of the divine in themselves. In other words, mysticism and self-realization are a hallmark for it. Consequently, one has in one's lifetime to realize this divinity in oneself and try to achieve it.¹⁶⁸

The actual healing doctrine of the Upanishads culminates in the famous insight in which all correspondences converge. *Tat tvam asi* – That (highest divine reality) is you yourself! – Everything else is a preliminary step towards this highest truth, it is a preliminary stage where the outer is still connected with the outer, the sense organs with different natural forces and divine entities – however much these may already belong to the inner world.¹⁶⁹

The Indian classical writings are mainly referred to in Upanishads. They deal with the basic idea of presenting the absolute in a monistic sense, which is monism. The word *atman*, for example, gives the basic conception of understanding the true self of the individual being, which is identical with the absolute being. This absolute being is called the *Brahman*. The concept of immanence is very much in this idea present as Brahman is considered to be *Urgrund* of everything transcendental and immanent. “In the Upanishads, Brahman is naturally mentioned as the first and last source of the universe: At the beginning of this world was ‘Brahman’, the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 25.
The divine

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 26.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 21.

Die eigentliche Geheimlehre der Upanishaden gipfelt in der berühmten Erkenntnis, in der alle Korrespondenzen zusammenlaufen. *Tat tvam asi* – Das (höchste göttliche Wirklichkeit) bist du selbst! – Alles andere ist ein Sich-Vortasten zu dieser höchsten Wahrheit, es sind Vorstufen, auf denen noch Äußeres mit Äußerem verbunden wird, etwa die Sinnesorgane mit verschiedenen Naturkräften und göttlichen Wesenheiten, so sehr diese im Einzelnen auch schon der Innenwelt angehören mögen.

‘primeval ether’.¹⁷⁰ In this sense, one can comprehend the basic idea of monism referring to the unity of all beings. Therefore, the two important concepts of the Upanishads are *Brahman* and *atman*. *Brahman* can mean to be a ‘power’, *Macht*, which is not just immanent rather above everything. However, with time, it began to be understood as the creator who was responsible not just for what is called mundane or earthly but also for the godly, the *Göttliche*: Gods were created by this *Brahman*, so was the whole of creation. Nevertheless, “in the Mundake-Upanishad *Brahman* is called God *Brahman*, the creator of the universe, the ‘guardian of the world’, who is first from the gods.”¹⁷¹ Yet, there are also instances where one would not exactly be able to describe or tell who this *Brahman* is. Great kings and seers tried to understand this *Brahman* and some of them portrayed *Brahman* as Language, others as Life-giving Breath or Spirit, still others as the Seeing, the Hearing, the Thinking, or as the Heart.¹⁷²

There is, however, another aspect of understanding *Brahman*. The concept of *Atman* or the identification of *Brahman* with *Atman*. *Atman*, as the individual and personal source of all *Urgrund*, is transcendental and can be identified with the all-encompassing spiritual cosmic source, the *Brahman*. The word *atman* is translated in German as *das Wesentliche* or the Essence. It could be understood as the most important or that which is the essence of the human being. Naturally, the word *atman* can be easily identified with the German word ‘*Atem*’, which means ‘breath’ as it is the essence of the life of all creatures. Thus, *atman* could also be representative of the essence of the universe or, in other words, the Universal soul.¹⁷³ Sometimes, the word *atman* is also used to merely denote the human soul. But the Upanishads give us a wider understanding of this concept. When Gautama Buddha was posed with the question of what *Brahman* is and what *atman* is, his reply was this: the universal *atman* is not just what we can identify as multiple appearances, but rather a single entity that is expressed through multiple appearances. He further identifies this *atman* with the inner consciousness and human knowledge, which is ultimately the source of all creation.¹⁷⁴ A certain Yajnavalka, when asked by his

¹⁷⁰ Schlensog, Stephen *Der Hinduismus* (München: Piper Verlag, 2006), 116.

In den Upanisads ist denn auch ganz selbstverständlich von *Brahman* als dem ersten-letzten *Urgrund* und des Universums die Rede: Am Anfang dieser Welt war ‘*Brahman*’, der ‘urzeitliche Äther’.

¹⁷¹ Johann Figl, *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 561–2. [...] in der Mundake-Upanishad wird *Brahman* als, Gott *Brahman*, der Schöpfer des Alls, der Hüter der Welt bezeichnet, der von den Göttern zuerst.

¹⁷² Schlensog, *Der Hinduismus*, 116–7.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 111.

¹⁷⁴ Here below is the citation of the above discourse: “Fünf Hausherren treten hier an den Lehrer Gautama heran mit der Frage: “Was ist unser *Atman*, was das *Brahman*?” Darauf legt jeder von ihnen seine Ansicht über den *Atman* dar und jeder sieht ihn in einer ganz bestimmten Erscheinung (im Himmel, in der Sonne, im Wind, im Raum etc.). Gautama dagegen lehrt sie, dass sie den universalen *Atman* nicht nur in einzelnen, von ihnen selbst verschiedenen Objekten oder Erscheinungen sehen

contemporaries to explain Brahman, replied as such: “Truly, this great unborn soul, endless, immortal, fruitless, is Brahman ... the soul (atman) that pervades everything ... is Brahman. This identification of the brahman and the atman, that is the soul, expressed in the famous dictum *tat tvam asi* – that is you ...”¹⁷⁵ This identification of the Brahman and the atman is thus expressed in the famous dictum ‘*tat tavam asi – das bist du*’.¹⁷⁶ Throughout human history, seers and monks have worked strenuously in understanding this eternal soul. The conclusion of their search is supposed to have brought them the knowledge that this Brahman and the soul which is identified cannot be found outside of oneself. It is within the self that one finds this great soul. And the process of arriving at this stage of self-knowledge is known as *jnana*. There is a story of a certain Maharshi (sage) who was unable to understand the real truth of *Brahman* even after studying the sacred texts. Provided below is the discourse that passed between him and his teacher, which shows how he was enlightened:

‘Bring forth a nyagrodah fruit there!’

‘Here it is, venerable one.’ ‘Split it!’ ‘It is split, venerable one.’ ‘What do you see in it?’ ‘These fine looking seeds, Venerable.’ ‘Split one of them now!’ ‘It is split, venerable.’ ‘What do you see in it?’ ‘Nothing, venerable one.’ ... ‘This fine thing, my dear one, which you cannot see, out of this fine thing the great Nyagrodha tree was created. Believe it, my dear. And what this fine thing is, that is the essence of everything here (of the whole world), that is the truth, that is the Self (atman), that is you, Svetaketu.’¹⁷⁷

dürften, sondern dass diese Erscheinungen immer nur Teile oder einzelne Aspekte des Atman sind: der Himmel ist sein Kopf, die Sonne sein Auge, der Wind sein Atem der Raum sein Körper, etc., der Atman selbst aber ist anders. Er ist klein wie eine Spanne und zugleich unendlich groß! Das heißt, mit keiner noch so umfassenden kosmischen Erscheinung lässt sich der Atman angemessen und erschöpfend beschreiben, denn er ist mehr: Er ist die Seele, der „innere Lenker“ des Menschen, Träger von Bewusstsein und menschlicher Erkenntnis, und er ist zugleich jener schöpferische Urgrund, welcher der gesamten Welt der Erscheinungen zugrunde liegt und diese durchdringt.” Schlenso, *Der Hinduismus*, 114.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 118.

Wahrlich, diese große ungeborene Seele, unvergänglich, unsterblich, fruchtlos, ist Brahman, ... die Seele(atman), die alles durchdringt, ... ist Brahman.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 178–119.

‘Bring dort eine Nyagrodah-Frucht (Feige) herbei!’ ‘Hier ist sie, Ehrwürdiger.’ ‘Spalte sie!’ ‘Sie ist gespalten, Ehrwürdiger.’ ‘Was siehst du darin?’ ‘Diese fein erscheinenden Kerne, Ehrwürdiger.’ ‘Spalte nun einen von ihnen!’ ‘Er ist gespalten, Ehrwürdiger.’ ‘Was siehst du darin?’ ‘Gar nichts, Ehrwürdiger.’ ‘... Dieses Feine, meine Lieber, das du nicht erblickst, aus diesem Feinen ist so der große Nyagrodha_baum entstanden. Glaube es, mein Lieber. Und was jenes Feine ist, das ist das Wesen von allem hier (der ganzen Welt), das ist die Wahrheit, das ist das Selbst (atman), das bist du, Svetaketu!’

The above description is an example of the concept of *Tat tvam asi* and represents how religious language incorporates itself into a neutral language. In this description, we find that which is simultaneously a part of a religious text as well as a philosophical one. Moreover, this concept goes beyond the theological framework of one specific religion as it ultimately deals with one person and one's inner-self. Therefore, it could be argued that the acceptance of this 'religious' concept does not put dogmatic barriers and demands that require one to be a believer of a particular faith. Texts such as these fulfil the condition of neutrality of religious language in the public sphere as they are more available and acceptable to members of a different faith or those who do not believe in any particular faith as well. Within the Indian context, texts such as these that integrate a postmetaphysical reason with regard to religion could help in reconstructing a religious approach that is free from the gaps in the current understanding of religion. I would say that such an approach would help unearth the lost treasure that exists within the subcontinent.

3.3.6 Religious Base of Human Rights

The translation of the image of man in the likeness of God into the equal and absolutely respectable dignity of all human beings is just such a saving translation. Beyond the boundaries of a religious community, it opens up the content of biblical concepts to a general audience of people of different faiths and non-believers.¹⁷⁸

Christianity has laid the foundation for what we understand as 'Human Rights' in the modern world. In comparison to Christianity, Hinduism does not, however, explicitly express one's rights. Within the Indian context, the consciousness of exercising one's rights came into being after the Indian Independence movement. It was also during this period when the people of lower-classes became more aware of their rights for equality within a society. It is important to consider the Jewish roots concerning human rights dating back from the Abrahamic or the mosaic times. The Jewish law was framed within a context of slave and master relationships. It provides a lot of sanctions with regard to the freedom of the slaves and their rights.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the concept of human rights dates back to such an ancient period. Although clear

¹⁷⁸ Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und Religion* (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 32.

Die Übersetzung der Gottesebenbildlichkeit des Menschen in die gleiche und unbedingt zu achtende Würde aller Menschen ist eine solche rettende Übersetzung. Sie erschließt über die Grenzen einer Religionsgemeinschaft hinaus den Gehalt biblischer Begriffe einem allgemeinen Publikum von Andersgläubigen und Ungläubigen.

¹⁷⁹ Exodus 21: 1–11.

indications do not exist in most religions, Joas identifies connotations of such ideas, which serve as the basis of human rights in our modern times:

[...] there are attempts in all major religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity and Islam – to make emphatic statements on the dignity of the human being, of all human beings, and on the duty to help those who suffer, whoever they may be, to gather them together and declare them the origin of human rights.¹⁸⁰

Habermas emphatically exposes that Europeans would lack any firm foundation if it were not for Judaeo-Christian roots for human rights.

Thus, I do not believe that we, as Europeans, can seriously understand concepts like morality and ethical life, person and individuality, or freedom and emancipation, without appropriating the substance of the Judeo-Christian understanding of history in terms of salvation.¹⁸¹

By stating this, Habermas refers to the monotheistic religions as the basis for ethical responsibility. In a scenario when the status of religions has changed and the profane world looks for an outside meaning or resources, it is necessary to look up to these religions, which serve as foundations for the non-religious world to build upon its ethics.¹⁸² When we speak about human rights in the history of the western world, we cannot but refer to the Catholic Church and its involvement in actualizing human rights. It could be traced back to the French revolution wherein the Catholic Church's role is very relevant. It was an occasion for religion to question itself about rights when it had been attacked at that time. The papal documents, which followed in the years thereafter, supported and laid more foundation for the concept of human rights and dignity based on the scriptures. They emphasized that man is formed in the image of God and thus every individual has a right to dignity from the time of their birth. And the church considered itself as the interpreter of God's will.

¹⁸⁰ Hans Joas, *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 23.

[...] gibt es Versuche, in allen großen Religionen – Hinduismus, Judentum, Buddhismus, Konfuzianismus, Christentum und Islam – emphatische Stellungnahmen zur Würde des Menschen, aller Menschen, und zur Pflicht, Leidenden, wer immer sie seien, zu helfen, zusammenzutragen und diese zum Ursprung der Menschenrechte zu erklären.

¹⁸¹ Habermas, *PTI I*, 15.

¹⁸² Große-Kracht, "Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe – Jürgen Habermas und die Öffentlichkeitsansprüche der Religion", 65.

The Pope reaffirmed his statement with the explicit reference to the “human dignity”, which the liberal democratic movement had also made the basis of its proclamation of human rights ... From the Catholic point of view, however, man possessed this dignity only through the creative act of God, which made him a person.¹⁸³

*Pacem in Terris*¹⁸⁴ proposes different connecting factors that could be found in the document. In the very first place, the document addresses all people of goodwill, irrespective of creed, race, nationality etc., and above all, the people who seek peace. It highlights the dignity of the human person and gives him a very important place while considering dignity as a significant foundational principle for living a harmonious life. It seeks to understand this Christological perspective of the person in other religions too. The document tries to highlight the relation between obligation or duty and rights, “*unauflösliche Beziehung zwischen Rechten und Pflichten*” (*indissoluble relationship between rights and duties*).¹⁸⁵ The concept of human rights is, thus, basically founded upon this principle of *imago Dei*.

One such translation that salvages the substances of the term is the translation of the concept of “man in the image of God” into that of the identical dignity of all men that deserves unconditional respect. This goes beyond the borders of one particular religious fellowship and makes the substance of biblical concepts accessible to the general public.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Daniele Menozzi, “Kirche und Menschenrechte, Von der Französischen Revolution bis zur Gegenwart”, in *Menschenrechte in der katholischen Kirche, Historische, systematische und praktische Perspektiven*, eds. Martin Baumeister, Michael Böhnke, Marianne Heimbach-Steins and Saskia Wendel (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018), 94–95.

Der Papst bekräftigte seine Aussage mit der ausdrücklichen Bezugnahme auf die „Würde des Menschen“, die auch die liberaldemokratische Strömung zur Grundlage ihrer Proklamation der Menschenrechte gemacht hatte ... Aus katholischer Sicht besaß der Mensch diese Würde allerdings nur durch den schöpferischen Akt Gottes, der ihn zur Person machte.

¹⁸⁴ Catholic Church, “Peace on Earth: Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII, ‘Pacem in Terris’”, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1963.

¹⁸⁵ Hansjörg Schmidt, “Menschenrechte als Grundlage interreligiöser Sozialethik: Philosophische, katholisch-theologische und islamische Positionen im Dialog”, *Amos International* 7, no. 2 (2013), 4.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Paul Gleason, “From Jürgen Habermas to George Lindbeck: On Translating Religious Concepts into Secular Terms”, *JSR (Journal of Scriptural Reasoning)* 15 no. 1 (March 2016). <https://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/files/2016/03/GLEASON-READY-FOR-PUB.pdf>.

Cf. Footnote 17. Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization*, 45. For more on Kant’s role in translating the *imago Dei* into ideas about autonomy and human rights, see: *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 63.

Habermas connects it to Kant's idea regarding equality of human dignity. He draws on more distinctly the image of God, which could be translated as the identical dignity of all people who deserve unconditional respect.

Placing the interaction of religion and reason under the term 'translation' does not entail that there is a one-to-one relationship between semantic units, as in natural languages. The project of returning to the origin of the two complementary forms and of finding adequate translations reaches beyond the semantic to the pragmatic level, as the example of translating the monotheistic concept of *imago Dei* into the key concept of a universalistic morality, human dignity, shows.¹⁸⁷

By such expressions, the idea of religion could be accessible to the general public without reservations. As human rights are necessary within a society, they need to be protected by references as such so that they might find a significant basis. At present, we also witness human rights and human dignity being violated in various parts of the world due to a fundamentalist representation of religion. However, Habermas tries to show the very opposite of that as he identifies the origins of human rights and human dignity in religion.¹⁸⁸ In this manner, contrary to the fundamentalist approach towards religions, a deeper religious understanding of human rights would help us protect the rights of the vulnerable. It could be stated that all religions safeguard the dignity of the human individual in different ways. Different religions express this differently while emphasizing different aspects surrounding the importance of a human being. This could be based on them having the status of being the children of God (in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), or their manifestation of the Divine (in Hinduism), or the common and original nature of human beings and their desire for happiness (in Buddhism). Thus, for Habermas, the genealogy of human rights could be traced back to the understanding of human dignity, which becomes a moral source.¹⁸⁹ Habermas elucidates on it from his concept of "linguistification of the sacred". As a result, human dignity is universally rational and morally justified.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Habermas and Theology* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 115.

¹⁸⁸ Habermas, "The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere", 63.

¹⁸⁹ Tobias Renner, *Postsäkulare Gesellschaft und Religion: Zum Spätwerk von Jürgen Habermas*, Freiburger Theologische Studien, Bd. 183 (Freiburg: Herder, 2017), 331. Cf. Footnote 509: Habermas, Jürgen: Das Konzept der Menschenwürde, 13–38.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 331.

3.3.7 “Common sense” as the Third Party between Science and Religion

Common sense is a concept that could be derived from our daily lives. It is concerning our social relationships and our responses to various situations in life. This happens in the context of an intersubjective area. Persons who have learned to grow up responding to the given norms of the society also can respond outside the given normative frameworks within a republic and democratic society. This common sense is intrinsically related to the consciousness of a citizen.¹⁹¹ Common sense becomes more meaningful in the background of secular decision-making and debates. While partaking in these discussions or debates, one has to distance oneself from one’s personal worldviews, but rely on another criterion that is attainable to all citizens. In this manner, common sense becomes a middle path.¹⁹²

Common sense is introduced by Habermas as a concept that stands between religion and science. And he names it as a third party, “which paves its own way between science and religion”.¹⁹³ In explaining the various perspectives and views of secularization, Habermas refers to a type of thought that makes an effort to substitute religion through reason, which could be placed as an equivalent. The other type of thought considers modern thought as a discredited one. So, these two views, according to Habermas, fail to understand the issue.

Therefore, such a position cannot befit a post-secular society. Consequently, Habermas suggests common sense as a third party that would play a *zivilisierende Rolle* in a democratic scenario.¹⁹⁴ This approach of Habermas appears to be an overlapping idea with the concept of dialogue as *Lernprozess*. According to this concept, every group should be allowed to express their views and everyone could learn from one another. So, he describes it as a “mental state of a polyphonic public”.¹⁹⁵ Common sense has to distance itself from the secular and the religious groups and take the place of an observer to understand both sides of the argument. However, common sense should be ready to be enlightened by science or *Wissenschaft*. Though common sense needs to depend on science to make conclusions, it is not required for it to depend completely on empirical or natural sciences way of reasoning. Instead, it has the capacity to form its own impressions of human actions. And exactly at this juncture, Habermas sees a special meaning and relevance of religion due to its ability to maintain or protect the values, which is

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 145.

¹⁹² Ibid, 148.

¹⁹³ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 13.

[...]die zwischen Wissenschaft und Religion einen eigenen Weg bahnt.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

[...] mentale Verfassung einer vielstimmigen Öffentlichkeit.

not possible in other areas.¹⁹⁶ He considers it to be important that this translation takes place in an area, which is the ground area of human experiences (or the society) that he names as *vorpolitischen Raum*. Translation begins at this level and then proceeds to the political level where it has the capacity of being administered.¹⁹⁷ “Religious content and traditions can only be preserved in the process of social decision-making if there is a cooperative translation process in the pre-political sphere.”¹⁹⁸

4 Re-viewing Postmetaphysical Philosophy

Hence, the Habermasian postmetaphysics is neither a branch of philosophy that has overtaken the past (what is called metaphysics) nor does it encourage an attitude of overlooking or judging the metaphysical criteria. Instead, postmetaphysics is a philosophical engagement of dialogue. Postmetaphysical rationality does not categorize itself as a method and approach that ignores elements of metaphysics or metaphysical areas. Rather it takes an approach of discursive rationality that facilitates entry into a dialogue.

Therefore, postmetaphysics uses rationality that accommodates rather than ignores, opens up dialogues and values potential rather than being stubborn. Ultimately, it characterizes itself as a wise person who wishes to learn from the experiences of the other rather than upholding a strong belief in oneself as a perfect being. Postmetaphysical religion means a reflective religion that enters into a dialogue in knowing its secular counterpart and is ready to recognize the rationality of science, and at the same time, contributes to its growth as well. Just as Habermas affirms that the idea of postmodernism is to be seriously considered; because the project of modernity itself is not yet over and is a work-in-progress, postmetaphysics also should not be considered as an era of atheism or as only that which goes beyond the metaphysical rationality. Rather as explained above, postmetaphysics helps the metaphysical religion to consider and reflect on its own ways and functioning. In other words, this is to say that postmetaphysics is not going beyond metaphysics. Rather, it enables religion to go back to look into its origins. To emphasize the nature of postmetaphysical philosophy, I would like to repeat the clarification given by Jütte R. Stefan: “Postmetaphysical thinking is not the abolition, outbidding or

¹⁹⁶ Renner, *Postsäkulare Gesellschaft und Religion*, 147.

¹⁹⁷ Wolterstorff, “Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue”, 105. Cf. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, 131.

¹⁹⁸ Renner, *Postsäkulare Gesellschaft und Religion*, 148.

Religiöse Inhalte und Überlieferungen können nur dann im Prozess gesellschaftlicher Willensbildung erhalten bleiben, wenn es zu einem kooperativen Übersetzungsprozess im vorpolitischen Raum kommt.

replacement of religion. It does not represent a form of rationality higher than religion per se, but is the philosophical-historical counterpart to enlightened faith.”¹⁹⁹

Habermasian commitment to religion is expressed in his new publication that brings into light the solid reconstruction of the rational tradition of religion. In this manner, it is made clear to both religious and non-religious members of society the substantial and profound rational traditions of a religion that became the foundations of human society. “With a nod to Emil Durkheim, George Herbert Mead and Max Weber, religion is thematised as the preliminary stage of reason.”²⁰⁰ Now, postmetaphysical philosophy has taken up that task of bringing into light this rational side of religion to combat its dark side manifested through religious fundamentalism in the public sphere. Through an engagement with postmetaphysical philosophy, religions that have lost their rational perspectives in practice can once again have the opportunity to become self-reflective. “Religion could go into the hands of the abusers and will be projected under the sign of terrorism and exactly because of this vulnerability, religion should, however, stay in close contact with reason.”²⁰¹ When Habermas uses postmetaphysical philosophy to unmask or disclose religion of its rational traditions in our times when religion is losing its originality, it is indeed obvious that he is giving a call to the religions to go back to their roots. He exposes the aspect of self-criticism and reflectiveness of religion especially by his discourse on axial age movements, whose sole purpose was to lead the religious members to a reformative understanding which ignores the existing religious practices and thus called back a form of reflective religion.

¹⁹⁹ Jütte, *Analogie statt Übersetzung*, 55.

Das Nachmetaphysische Denken ist nicht die Aufhebung, Überbietung oder Ablösung der Religion. Es stellt keine gegenüber der Religion per se höhere Rationalitätsform dar, sondern ist das philosophiegeschichtliche Pendant zum aufgeklärten Glauben.

²⁰⁰ Viertbauer, “Von der Säkularisierungsthese zur postsäkularen Gesellschaft”, 12.

Die Religion wird mit Blick auf Emil Durkheim, George Herbert Mead und Max Weber als Vorstufe der Vernunft thematisiert.

²⁰¹ Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, 14.

PART V: SECULARISM AS POSTMETAPHYSICAL *MODUS OPERANDI*

To continue from where I have begun in the previous chapter – the exploration of Habermas’ religious philosophy – a reference to secularism serves as an example to demonstrate the functionality and rationality of postmetaphysical thinking that plays an essential role in his analysis of religion in the present times. In this chapter, I will attempt to present the secularist approach towards religion, in other words, I will consider what postmetaphysical philosophy could contribute towards religion with the help of Hans Joas and Charles Taylor. Basing myself on the views of these two authors, I shall attempt to bring together various aspects of understanding secularism, which is an important element for religion to be able to look into itself. Thus, the postmetaphysical approach of self-critique and its take on epistemic stances is more clearly expressed in understanding secularism. Towards the end of this chapter, I will get back to the epistemic stances expected in the public sphere. I am stating the case for religion at this point – that religion has not lost its function even within the profane sections of society. This argument or case stands against the convictions that religion is irrational and is an instrument of disharmony and fundamentalism in society.

1 How does Secular Reason Function for Religion?

The logic of the secularist approach to religion could be analysed considering in mind its critical method in its engagement with religion. In the following discussion, I would like to demonstrate the functionality of secular reason within the premise of religion. This is elucidated by exposing the transformation of religion concerning secularistic rationality and its influence. To put it in other words, religion is continuously taking newer forms and progressing or repositioning itself within society. Charles Taylor's discussion on this theme serves as a groundwork for me to build upon this discussion to expressively indicate that religion is blooming in the present scenario. Inevitably, this discussion also concerns itself with American societies, which are generally considered to be secular. Anyhow, Indian society's perspective towards religion – in the light of secularism as a constructive instrument – could be questioned through an exposition of a newer approach towards religion. Nevertheless, the constructive secularism that will be dealt with in the following passages – with emphasis on the neutrality of the state's position with regard to the religious presence in society – is not just limited to the Indian understanding of secularism.¹

1.1 Re-reading Secular

In the earlier parts of my thesis, I tried to present the genesis of religion and the various streams of analysing religion based on its sociological perspectives. We have discussed the origins of religion described by Durkheim, which is intrinsically related to the views of Habermas on religion. It could be argued that religion, which was once the centre of man's life, is being replaced by newer ideologies in many parts of the world. This replacement is due to the present understanding of religion from a secularist perspective, which either ignores or wishes to dispense religion from society. This section will, consequently, deal with this secularist view towards religion which surmises its downfall. However, I agree strongly with Habermas and

¹ Bhargava, "An Ancient Indian Secular Age?", 188.

his contemporaries like Charles Taylor or Hans Joas who disagree with this notion and recognize the blooming of religion within a secularized context.²

Based on historical experiences, many of the European states have expressed explicitly the separation of religion from politics and even the wish to completely eradicate religion from social life. The banning of religious symbols is a matter of controversy in many European and American societies. On the other hand, it can be noticed that the members of various religious groups wish for the presence of religious symbols in public spaces. Whether these citizens themselves are aware of the reasons for a general ban on religious symbols is a matter of obscurity. One can also observe that the modern European states have become more pluralistic in the recent past about accommodating believers of Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. These religions, unlike Christianity, have hardly undergone the process of secularization, which comes through in their lack of comprehension of the position of the state's secularity or of the public nature of secularity. The European nations, which were for a major part of their history Christian in culture and nature, apparently wish no signs of religion in public spaces to avoid its powerful re-emergence in society.³ To the European nations, an awareness of those citizens belonging to "foreign religions" becomes a part of a mutual learning process. This helps them comprehend the reasons that lie behind the secularistic nature of the state (which is again dependent on their historical background and the reason their policies avoid the extravagant public expression of religion). The theory of neutrality as analysed by Charles Taylor gives us a reason for a secularistic state to ban religious symbols in society.⁴

A godless society or denial of the ultimate reality is what we commonly hear or discussed when we talk about the theme secularism, which is a most commonly accepted view. Or, to put it otherwise, secular as opposed to sacred. However, this following discussion sheds light on understanding secularism not as a moment in history, in which, religion dwindled, rather it is an age in which religion takes a new turn. The traditional understanding of religion or religion taking for granted as part of one's life is no more the obvious situation. Charles Taylor's views on exposing the secular pave the way to having a positive outlook on secularism. From a pessimistic view of looking at religion as a

² Based on the works of Charles Taylor's, *A Secular Age* (2007) and Hans Joas', *Die Macht des Heiligen* (2017). Habermas refers to this idea in his writings, *Glauben und Wissen* (2001) and more recently in his response to various authors compiled in *Habermas and Religion* (2013).

³ Charles Taylor, "The Meaning of Secularism". The debate about religious symbols in France and Germany: The hanging of the crosses in public offices is a debate in recent Germany. Or even the banning of headscarves in France.

⁴ Taylor, "The Meaning of Secularism", 25.

problem in a secular world, there is another outlook in which the secular age could be considered from a theistic point of view.

Contrary to views mentioned above, my claim is that religion is the yardstick in a secularist society to seek resources through which modern society can hold fast to human values. The reality that religion blooms within a secular society surely includes factors such as the particularity of cultural logic. As religion is viewed and discussed within a public sphere in the Habermasian sense, it is important to analyse how the epistemic stance will be effective in bringing to the surface of the public sphere the intellectual aspect of religion. It will in turn contribute to the emancipation process that had been the central ideology of both axial and enlightenment periods.

1.2 Positioning Postmetaphysical with Secularism

I analyse here the various approaches towards a secularist attitude and a clearer and distinct standpoint of Habermas about secularism. As the key concept of this chapter is secularism, I shall begin with a citation from Thomas Schmidt who differentiates what Habermas has in mind concerning secularism, which will help us to comprehend secularism⁵ from a different perspective.

[T]he way from the equation of societal modernisation with secularisation, toward a cautious view of a permanent coexistence of secular and religious convictions, tending toward cooperation. According to Habermas, neither the progressive, optimistic understanding of secularisation as a linear process of progress nor the conservative, pessimistic model of secularisation as the expropriation of religious ideas, captures the present social reality in which religious communities continue to exist within a secular milieu.⁶

⁵ Here I do not limit secularism that refers to the general understanding of separation of church and state that consequently secularized religious goods. It is to be understood widely in the sense of a critique of religion, which uses secularistic rationality in attaining a purer and genuine form of religion. Often, within the European context, the word secular misleads one to understand it as an agent that is against religion. On the contrary, I will be attempting to explain its deeper significance concerning Religion.

⁶ Thomas M. Schmidt, "The Semantic Contents of Religious Beliefs and their Secular Translation. Jürgen Habermas' Concept of Religious Experience", in *Religion: Immediate Experience and the Mediacy of Research; Interdisciplinary Studies in the Objectives, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion*, eds. Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Christopher P. Scholtz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 175.

This part of my thesis is an attempt in connecting the postmetaphysical with secularism. The postmetaphysical approach, as we have discussed, gives a direction in which both the religious and the secular ideologies will have an opportunity to look onto the bright side of each other mutually. The postmetaphysical rationality accommodates a dialogue between *Glauben* (Faith) and *Wissen* (Knowledge) which is concretised in a secularist ambience. It is equally a context wherein the secular reason poses itself as a challenge to religious rationality. Postmetaphysical thinking, which is agnostic in its nature, poses a critique of the self-reflective attitude towards religion. This particular characteristic of self-reflection could be explained through the process of a secularist outlook in society. According to Schmidt, Habermas uses the notion of immanent transcendence to express his newer understanding of religion that differentiates itself from the earlier form.⁷ This transcendence from within “denotes the systematically central relationship between the facticity of local validity claims and their transcontextual generalised normativity ... This distinction underlines the fact that postmetaphysical reason, which cannot take the place of faith, must remain abstinent.”⁸ This could be regarded as the summary of postmetaphysical thinking through which an epistemic attitude is produced.

The Indian society needs to learn from the west in this regard because an epistemic attitude towards religion or an intellectual religion resulted in a changed western society. A close analysis of western societies shows that they became models to the world for modernism and attitudes of emancipation. If the west is ready to learn from Indian values based upon ancient traditions, then India should also be ready to be receptive to learn from the western past that led to its current modern growth. This itself could be seen as a characteristic of postmetaphysics, that is, a mutual process of learning involving both secular and religious views, in which the religious also make space to the authority of science. Religious India, perhaps, has to submit itself to the secular reason through which it might know itself better and at the same time should aim at ‘*aufgeklärten Glauben*’. “The religious person too must ... be willing to correct her view and be open to rational critique. In short, she must acknowledge the general requirements of reason.”⁹ However, I argue here that it is an epistemic attitude towards religion that indeed contributed to the growth of the modern emancipatory society. Therefore, the discussions on the secularist attitude of the west towards religion in this chapter contribute to my research in supporting the thesis for a need for a rationalistic religion in combating non-epistemic attitudes of religion.

Linguistification of the sacred: this becomes a primary aspect to claim the differentiation of Habermasian inspection into secularization. This concept, which has been captured from Durkheim by Habermas, operates in making the sacred which was in the area of untouchable

⁷ Ibid, 177.

⁸ Ibid, 178.

⁹ Ibid, 180.

or unreachable to something tangible that occurs in our daily lives. However, this led to the justification of Habermas' discursive theory of communication, including the possibility of the sacred law expressed through the consensus and common will of the members. In this manner, he gives more power to the public sphere where this communication takes place fundamentally.

Secularisation understood as the linguistification of the binding forces of the sacred and the disenchantment of world views, forms the precondition for the proceduralisation of moral justification, political legitimation and social integration as understood in the context of discursive rationality.¹⁰

Secularism could also be traced back to the axial-age movements. In the sense of Charles Taylor's view of secularism, it all started by doing away with any sort of mediation between an individual and the divine.¹¹ This, pointedly, questions the position of the church or any other religious institution that claims to be the important mediator between God and man. As I have mentioned in the first chapter about the religious movements, their aim and goal were analogous. They denied hindrances that strained the relationship between an individual and the divine. These religious movements were sceptical about the religious authorities or the priests who claimed their special position within their religion. Secularism could also be understood in this manner, as something that denies this mediation. Instead, it looks for an experience, a direct divine experience. In analysing this view, Taylor tries to portray the age of secularism as an age or era in which religion itself is getting transformed. This process of transformation is visible in various ways of societal transformation, too.¹²

However, countries like India have a different understanding and outlook on secularism. One of the reasons that lead to such a perspective could be that it has not undergone the process of secularization in the "western sense of denial of religion". How could one address the theme of secularism in a society where religion plays a vital role and is deeply essential to the lives of the people? Indian societies are clear examples to demonstrate the major role that religion plays in one's daily life. It has, however, in the recent past also become the central theme of politics and civic life. The political system has been influenced by religious backing or religious reasoning, which goes against the principle of separation of state and religion.¹³ Religion with-

¹⁰ Ibid, 175–6.

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 473ff.

¹² Ibid, 505ff.

¹³ Minhaz Merchant, "The Politics of Religion", *India Today*, December 10, 2015, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20151221-india-today-40th-anniversary-minhaz-merchant-the-politics-of-religion-820988-2015-12-10>.

in the Indian culture cannot be seen from a perspective of disenchantment (*Entzauberung*); instead, it remains profoundly enchanting. Therefore, in such a context, it is naturally difficult to speak about a godless secularism. So, then what would be the best way to interpret secularism? At this juncture, could a hypothesis be brought into being where both European and Indian secularism could meet each other? Does an Indian attitude towards religion be helpful in understanding secularism in the west without excluding religion?

1.3 Secularity as an Option

Secularization, secularism and secularity: These three terms are sometimes interchangeably used and consequently one may fail to observe hardly any distinction between these terms. Secularization is a process in which the church and the state were being separated and it is mostly understood in the early European context where the church and state have functioned almost like one institution. It could be difficult for people of non-European or non-western backgrounds to grasp this phenomenon because a similar pattern of the union of state and church was not part of their culture or history. Secularism is the phenomenon or attitude of the moderners, especially those in societies that were previously purely religious, for whom the question of faith had played a central role. The word is used in reference to those members of a society who were previously either believers or came from a family of believers who now consider themselves either as atheistic or agnostic. And, the last word, secularity stands for the attitude of such persons.¹⁴ According to Casanova, it gives the sense that “the concepts of secularization and secularity make sense as an analytical framework for a comparative research agenda that aims to examine the historical transformations of all world religions under conditions of modern structural differentiation.”¹⁵ Joas further elucidates Taylor’s concept by pointing out that just as we have an option in our world to be religious – to believe –¹⁶ there is

¹⁴ Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burckhardt, “Revisiting the Secular” (Leipzig: Leipzig University, HCAS, DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, March, 2016). https://www.multiple-secularities.de/media/multiple_secularities_research_programme.pdf.

¹⁵ Ibid. 13. Cf. Footnote. José Casanova, “Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad”, in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, eds. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁶ Here it is to be observed that Joas derives through the term *ergriffensein* or the option to believe. In the process of experiencing faith, we are sometimes just captivated by a *divine being*, in which case, there is no possibility for me to believe something rather I am by nature of this *ergriffensein* had to believe. To such a phenomenon I wish to present the example of Moses. He grew up in the courts of Pharaoh without the knowledge of the Hebrew faith. As a result, he did not have an option either to deny the existence of the Hebrew God because he was unaware. But the moment of the Burning Bush

also an option not to believe. This is called the possibility of not believing. This idea had gained popularity during the 18th and the 19th centuries of the European enlightenment period.¹⁷

In an analytical exploration about the Ernst Troeltsch, Hans Joas reaches to the explanation of figuring out secularity as an option, which is of course also proposed by Charles Taylor in his *Magna Carta, A Secular Age*. Reductionism of religion through various explanations like that of psychological or even pathological reasons certainly makes way to the secular option: “(T)hey presuppose the ascent of a secular option”.¹⁸ In analysing Taylor’s writings, clarity of the idea of ‘Reform’ is discovered by Joas, which has already existed in the Catholic Church during the middle ages. The founders of various mendicant orders were in this sense also considered as reformers. Their assent on following the Gospel and living a life in accordance to it was a move towards the genuine following of the Gospel, which would only be a result of depriving religion of all its elements of magicity, or in other words, the idea is similar to the concept of disenchantment.¹⁹

Secularity is not a necessary condition of the universal society. It is understood according to the context and the region. Secularity is also not the general rule of society. Instead, it is just another option to religion. Secularity can be considered not as an absence of religion but as just another phase of history. The traditional religions, which were the trademark of the societies, are probably disappearing but the essence of religion is taking newer forms. This is what Charles Taylor also focuses on. Secularism, in this sense, is not an element that drives away religion from society but something that presents faith as another option in society.

1.4 Intrinsic Goal versus Extrinsic Goal

An analysis of secularism that exists today in our societies refers to the attainment of a goal by the individuals in the sphere of religiosity. Religion, as I have explored it until now, laid the

could be explained as a perfect example of being caught by a divine experience. After this experience into which he was caught, he did not have an option not to deny or not to believe. Hans Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004).

¹⁷ Hans Joas, “Die säkulare Option. Ihr Aufstieg und ihre Folgen”, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 57, no. 2 (2009). doi:10.1524/dzph.2009.0025/

¹⁸ Hans Joas, “The Independence of Religious Phenomena: The Work of Ernst Troeltsch as a Template for the Study of Religion”, in *The Anthem Companion to Ernst Troeltsch*, ed. Christopher Adair-Totteff (Anthem Press, 2017), 26.

¹⁹ Joas, “Die säkulare Option. Ihr Aufstieg und ihre Folgen”, 297.

necessary base for me to view it more profoundly as a sociological element. However, a wider outlook paves the way to analyse this secularist phenomenon in two different perspectives: within an extrinsic and intrinsic goal. The first one has already been explored through the definition of Durkheim. It ultimately has as its preference a normative character that leads to order in society, which is given by religion. This order considers the ethics of society and values such as justice, righteousness and civic order. As opposed to this, the intrinsic goal places its primary on the individual. Ulrich Steinvoth argues in connection to this in accordance with Weber:

[...] religion constitutes itself as a cosmos of more and more consciously recognized autonomous values of its own. It discovers its intrinsic goal in the task of finding the right relation to the absolute. From a pure well being of the society, which was the extrinsic goal of religion, the perfection of religion now is measured only by the intrinsic goal [...] from the well being of the society to the individual's right relation the absolute.²⁰

The preference for this intrinsic goal in our society is based on the philosophy of authenticity. Regardless of that, what is important for an individual is the personal relationship that they have with the absolute being. The secularization process is more aligned towards this particular subject as the central aspect through which organized religion is liable to be side-lined or suspended. More and more individuals, as Charles Taylor analyses in his work, are leaning towards a personal experience of the individual, which would then be able to give them the satisfaction of being a religious person. However, the common understanding of a religious person as being affiliated to a particular established religion is definitely taking a different conception. This is because a person might not want to affiliate themselves to any particular religion and still can be called a religious person now.

1.5 Religious Liberalism as the Prerequisite of Secularization

As per the above discussions, I have tried to demonstrate that secularization is not a condition in which either faith or religion disappears. It is a process that moves society in another direction, a direction towards modernity through the instrumentality of rationality. The traditional forms of religion and faith have changed substantially and continue to do so as they take new turns. However, one important aspect in their change is the rationality that an individual applies to her religion. Ulrich Steinvoth considers:

²⁰ Ulrich Steinvoth, *Secularization* (Hamburg: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 32.

[...] a secularization that revolutionized societies and religions as comprehensively as it did in the west was possible only, where science, art, commerce, politics, and religion conquered sphere autonomy. It was their sphere autonomy that, as Weber recognized, made the unique rationality possible that distinguished the west from other civilizations.²¹

In the following discourse, I would like to establish the fact that one requires freedom as the prerequisite in the process of secularization. Freedom creates an opportunity that leads to a different idea of the absolute and equally reinforces the sphere of autonomy of the individuals.

1.5.1 Secularized Idea of the Absolute

With relation to the argument that secularism is a western affair, Ulrich Steinworth brings forth the argument about the Weberian distinction of the world religions. He categorizes the world religions into three. The first is the type of religion that accepts the world and the second, the type that denies or rejects the existing world. This attitude of rejecting or fleeing from the world, *Fuga Mundi*, represents both occidental and oriental cultures. But we can observe that within the world-rejecting religions, the Middle East (Judaism) and the West (Christianity) have better chances of the move towards secularization owing to their conviction of not just rejecting the world but also wanting to change the world; which becomes the third type of religion.

Ulrich Steinworth, in contrast to Weber's distinction of religions, proposes that the attitude of the people towards their abilities is important. In the process of secularization, it is important to consider the usage of one's potentialities or abilities; "It seems more appropriate to distinguish religions by their attitude toward the use of our abilities."²² Religion can be an instrument promoting secularization²³ or even preventing it. It is dependent on whether religion presents an idea of the absolute that opens up the horizon to use abilities in autonomy and authenticity.²⁴ The idea of the absolute that is presented by religions is often seen as an obstacle to the process of secularization. Here, it is to be observed that the secularized idea of the absolute allows individuals to use their abilities and appeal to authenticity. But when religion presents an absolute that prevents the individuals from using their own abilities, then it would merely

²¹ Ibid, 176.

²² Ibid, 175.

²³ The term secularization that I use in this context does not refer to a godless society or a tendency against the divine presence. Rather I use this term here in the sense of secularism becoming a means or agent in perfecting the religion.

²⁴ Steinworth, *Secularization*, 177.

push the society either back to its primitiveness or the society would be stagnated. This type of religion identifies a conservative model that becomes a hindrance to social development. Ulrich Steinworth cites the example of India: “Indian religion favoured conservatism and prevented the development of social change that might have provided opportunities for using the various human abilities in autonomous action spheres. So, there was not sufficient stimulus for secularization either.”²⁵ An appeal to the absolute through authenticity and autonomy is a phenomenon in the secularized world.

To give an example, artists and philosophers generally consider the foundation of their craft in association with the authenticity or autonomy that they exercise. However, it is nature that provides them with the opportunity to analyse the world from an open perspective that would lead to the development of society. Religion, here, plays a very important role because it shapes the social thinking of the citizens. When a religion presents an absolute that would stand as an opposition to the process of social changes, it should be placed as a religion that compels its adherents to subject their abilities and powers to its authorities.²⁶

1.5.2 The Autonomy of Sphere Agents

The impression of the secularized idea of the absolute is followed by the autonomy of the sphere agents. This sphere autonomy requires a conducive ambience where its agents can flourish. This sphere autonomy is an understanding that arises from a secularized idea of the absolute, which I have already discussed in the previous section. It gives validity for the sphere agents, like artists, scientists, politicians or even religiously gifted persons, to help society in some way or to be a spokesperson for it.²⁷ The sphere agents have exercised much appeal to the autonomy and have had the circumstances to exercise their freedom in the western societies. Above all, there is a collective phenomenon one can observe in these societies that one could work towards. On the contrary, non-western societies had found it difficult to create a situation for these sphere agents to flourish. They are either stifled, as Ulrich says, by the authorities themselves or possibly grounded on the conservative religious attitude that does not allow them to be productive and contribute positively towards the modernity of the society.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 175.

²⁷ Ibid, 176.

²⁸ I use modernity in the sense of not technical advancements rather a society being aware and working towards the emancipation of its members.

However, it is indubitably observed that the autonomy of the sphere agents is radically based on the type of the absolute that is presented in a particular society. But why would I stress the autonomy of these sphere agents in our modern secularized society? I find that the activities of these sphere agents contribute to the development of any particular society in its various fields. It could be said that the most important value in society is human dignity. This (human dignity) is fostered through these sphere agents through the production of their ideas. Philosophers constitute one such example of sphere agents as they have the potential to transform society by protecting and advocating human values, especially that of human dignity.²⁹ If there are religions that do not explicitly speak of human dignity and demonize certain classes of societies, the sphere agents could take it upon themselves to produce adequate arguments against such inhuman tendencies as they are not affiliated to these particular religions. But if they live in a society where they do not have the right to place their arguments because of conventional religious thought, then the way towards freedom and dignity of individuals is also at stake. “To fight for their autonomy, sphere agents need faith in their right to pursue their intrinsic goals, faith in authenticity. Such faith can be supported by religious ideas of an absolute if the ideas allow individuals to appeal to them.”³⁰

²⁹ The philosophical traditions in various cultures in the modern period laid foundations for innovative ideas such as protecting the society from its religious burdens, where human dignity was at stake. Even in India, the philosophical trends gave a new outlook of society through the Reformers of society. Examples such as Raja Rammohan Roy challenged the practices of the deadly practise of Sati.

³⁰ Steinworth, *Secularization*, 176.

2 Varieties of Modern Religion

2.1 Taylor's Threefold Analysis of Secularism

Charles Taylor traces back the story of secularism to the beginnings of Christendom. It is mostly seen from a Christian perspective or within the circles of Christianity. He refers back to the early times of Christianity when the church distinguished itself from the worldly.

Secular, itself is a Christian term, that is, a word that finds its original meaning in a Christian context. *Saeculum*, the ordinary Latin word for a century, or age, took on a special meaning as applied to profane time, the time of ordinary historical succession, which the human race lives through between the fall and the Parousia.³¹

This mode of comprehension of the term 'secular', however, depends on a Christian outlook. Further explained, this term distinguishes itself from the worldly affairs to that of the other-worldly. In earlier times, Christians were a sect of religious people awaiting the Parousia or the second coming of Christ. Christians considered themselves as those who should keep themselves away from this world, which was deemed profane because of its sinful activities.

Over time, this nuance of the meaning of secular took another direction in the context of a multi-confessional society. After the reformation in Europe – both in Germany and England – various confessions of Christianity arose within European society. These confessions created a commotion within the society that gave rise to religious wars. Therefore, within this context, the public standpoint was expected to be a neutral one that does not favour a particular confession but rather strove to achieve peace in a multi-confessional context. Furthermore, in modern times, secularism tries to project a complete separation of the state and the church, where “the state upholds no religion, pursues no religious goals, and religiously-defined goods have no place in the catalogue of ends it promotes. This is one of the meanings of the principle widely accepted in the west today of the separation of church and state.”³² This could be considered as an extreme reaction by the state in modern times as it ignores the religious citizens and their role in society. However, this position of the state has also been analysed as a positive

³¹ Rajeev Bhargava, *Secularism and its Critics* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31–2.

³² *Ibid*, 34–35.

one: "Here the goal is not to make religion less relevant to public life and policy, in the name of an independent ethic, but rather to prevent the state from backing one confession rather than another".³³ Here, I will be analysing the three types of secularism that Charles considers. He goes beyond the understanding of the separation of state and church to an elementary and substantial level. This analysis presents how religion today could be analysed against the background of secularism.

2.1.1 Phenomenal Change

Contemporary western societies are a perfect example to expose this change further. The statistics of the churchgoers and of believing Christians show us that the numbers have drastically come down. There is a fear in many of the western societies that religion is on the way to its complete disappearance. The closing down of the churches or even their sale to be converted either as living apartments or in the worst-case scenario, as clubs. The regular Sunday attendance by believers is now limited to a certain age group, which is mostly, the elderly. Church had indeed played a very significant role in the lives of the people. Religion was once the prime element of society where all activities of people were centred. Taylor gives the example of parishes, which were the models of local governing bodies. They were both the centre of the spiritual and the social lives of the people. "In those societies, you couldn't engage in any kind of public activity without encountering God."³⁴ In other words, the disappearance of religion from the public sphere is a phenomenal change.

2.1.2 Profound Change

In relation to the phenomenal change, one can also observe a change in the attitude of people towards religion and religious beliefs. While we can consider the disappearance of religion from the public sphere as a phenomenal change, the change surrounding the problem of belief is a profound one. To believe in a supernatural being, God, was not a matter of difficulty in pre-modern times. However, to believe in a transcendental Being or any God or a particular religion today is a matter of difficulty. This is what Taylor says: "Secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice."³⁵ This can be observed as a central and important

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

factor for the disappearance of religion from the public sphere. The reasons for this disbelief could be attributed to the modern-day scientific and technological developments. Science has an explanation for the mysterious aspects of religion and, consequently, replaces the concept of a transcendental being. I would like to connect this change and further discuss it through the theory of disenchantment or *Entzauberung*.

[...] but in our societies, the big issue about religion is usually defined in terms of belief. First Christianity has always defined itself concerning creedal statements. Secularism ... has often been seen as the decline of Christian belief; and this decline as largely powered by the rise of other beliefs, in science, reason, or by the deliverances of particular sciences: for instance, evolutionary theory or neurophysiological explanations of mental functioning.³⁶

This profound change thus implies a problem, a difficulty or an uncertainty which leads to an agnostic attitude towards the conception of a divine presence. However, Taylor invites us to think of secularism, not as a system of beliefs, principles or mode of organizing state and society (though it certainly includes these things as well): "... but instead as a matter of human experience in the most profound sense."³⁷

2.1.3 Optional Change

Religion was once a part of every individual, which is not the case today. "The shift to secularism in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace".³⁸ Here, Charles is portraying the present-day scenario of religion incorporating the western perspective. This view could also be seen as one-sided because in the non-western parts of the world, the situation and state of religion is different. Religion or belief in God is not yet an option as Charles points it out to be in the eastern part of world. Nevertheless, he also recognizes this phenomenon of the non-western world and cites American society as an example where religion occupies a major role in

³⁶ Ibid, 4.

³⁷ Wendy Brown, "The Sacred, The Secular, and the Profane", in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), 87.

³⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

society through and through. Thus, he places our society in this third sense, where religion becomes one among many other possibilities.

So, what I [Taylor] want to do is examine our society as secular in this third sense, which I could perhaps encapsulate in this way: the change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.³⁹

2.2 Secularism as a Transformed Religion

Based on the analysis that Taylor gives about the state of religion in our modern world, I would like to further my discussion in viewing secularism not as a period of godlessness, but as a period in which religion is undergoing transformation from its traditional roots. With the gradual disappearance of the institutional religions in the western world – which is where it has its grounding – one could surmise the fall of religion or the beginning of its termination. However, Charles fights this case through his explication that religion has been taking a new form by being transformed. He does not consider secularism as an element that leads to atheistic tendencies. Neither does he consider it as a total disappearance of religion in society.⁴⁰ He understands it as an opportunity that leads to transformation. This transformation is visible in the public expression of faith and religion as in the previous times. His argument, in this case, can be read in the following lines: “many are looking for a more direct experience of the sacred, for greater immediacy, spontaneity, and spiritual depth.”⁴¹

2.2.1 Transcendence to Immanence

The idea of immanence, as opposed to transcendence, fits the idea of secularization in the sense of experiencing the transcendence in the normality of life. This is a vital part of the secularized world. Especially, based on this phenomenon, religion is being transformed or is being fostered

³⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁰ Justyna Miklaszewska, “The Idea of Immanence in Charles Taylor’s Philosophy of Religion”, in *The Sources of Secularism*, eds. Hasse Hämäläinen and Anna Tomaszewska (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 36.

⁴¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 506.

in various other forms than the conventional ones. This thought of philosophical stream had been attributed to Spinoza, whose philosophy takes a very important turn in presenting the transcendent. He found the divine presence within the immanent frame. “We come to understand our lives as taking place within a self-sufficient immanent order”.⁴²

The primitive approach to the divine was to find it in an unknown cosmos who becomes automatically mysterious and indefinable for the believers. The present disenchanted world is accompanied by the replacement of a porous or absorbent self with a buffered self, where things are kept at a distance, and a situation in which depths once located in the cosmos is now placed firmly within the world.⁴³

The following points refer to this approach of the modern believers who consider religion as something filled with dogmas and doctrines, keeping tremendous distance between the concept of the soul seeking an agent and the transcendent. This also implies that religion is being deprived of its element of belief in an unseen transcendent being and is proceeding to be reduced to a daily existential situation. However, this particular notion towards religion could also be an opposing factor for the very concept of belief in a transcendent being and, thus, the normal understanding of a religion which places a divine being as the centre of its functionality.

The separation of religion from the sphere of beliefs reduces religion to the context of our everyday life, with its customary behaviour, tradition, and social rules. Undoubtedly, this, and has always been, an important part of religious life, but according to Leszek Kolakowski, religion will not survive in a world in which no saints are demonstrating their deep faith and living according to this faith.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, one needs to question whether this stream of thought poses even more difficulty to the very foundation of ethics within a religious context or whether this could even deny completely the transcendental when one seeks only the immanent. Therefore, the very idea of immanence is to be understood within the context of Hindu philosophy. How could one find a God elsewhere when one does not find Him here on this earth within the daily life situations? It also seems correct to me to find this idea of a transcendental God pictured as an immanent divine in the Judaic religion. For example, God was more of an immanent being within the

⁴² Miklaszweska, “The Idea of Immanence in Charles Taylor’s Philosophy of Religion”, 37.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 40–1.

history of Israel than a transcendental being. The history of Judaism demonstrates that Yahweh was constantly communicating to the people of Israel through the kings and prophets and, in the course of time, he has also communicated through his son. Thus, the idea of an immanent God can also be traced back to Judaism, in addition to Greek philosophy. This Judaic religious history, therefore, depicts a divine being who is perceived to be both immediate and personal.⁴⁵

2.2.2 Spirituality versus Religion

According to Taylor's description of secularism, the traditional and the institutional religion is disappearing.⁴⁶ However, religion today takes its form to seek a more direct experience of the divine than in its conservative sense. Organized religion with its traditional set of rules might not be a possibility for many but an experience of the transcendental being or the divine. This religion is not understood in the sense Durkheim proposes; rather it should be understood as a move towards spirituality. It could be asserted that spirituality heralds an era that deals with the well-being of both soul and body, thus representing a holistic approach. This involves the individuals search for a divine experience or for a sense of personal divinity. Taylor describes this actuality by differentiating between spirituality and religion. "Spirituality is an inner feeling ... religion tells you what to do and when to do it when to kneel, when to stand up, all of that stuff".⁴⁷

On the other hand, Charles also analyses the present generation's inclination to seek a communitarian sense in the religions that they follow. This inclination arises because these communitarian centres allow individuals to have an experience. Consequently, this experience can be said to lead one to the divine or the sacred. One is drawn to religious practices through one's own spiritual life. But one finds this spiritual life through various practices, which may not be directly related to the official religious institutions or confined to the ethos of the established conventional religions. They might reach to the regular religious practices by taking inspiration from experiences that they might have gained in the past by going on a pilgrimage or even from meditative or prayer groups, etc. As Durkheim points out, these experiences share similarity to the religious experiences people underwent in the axial age. An example from our modern times would be our participation in great events like the World Youth Day or the funerals of great personalities or Taizé centres.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ref. to Biblical history of the prophets.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 508.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 517.

And what has perhaps not sufficiently been remarked is how this dimension of religion, which goes back to its earliest forms, well before the Axial age, is still alive and well today, despite all attempts by reforming elites over many centuries to render our religious and /or moral lives more personal and inward, to disenchant the universe and downplay the collective.⁴⁹

Despite of its confinement within the territories of an organized body, religion can still provide for individuals circumstances in which their search could be continued. However, contrary to an organized religion, which already has certain norms to limit the individual search to, spirituality is a sphere where individuals can exercise their personal search in an unconstrained manner. “Foucault set out a definition of spirituality as the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself to have access to the truth.”⁵⁰

Spirituality has based itself on the concept of freedom: to set oneself free from the organized bodies and fundamentally embody “a trend toward disaffiliation concerning religious organizations.”⁵¹ This is exactly what Taylor is also intrinsically trying to posit. Though he does not name it, we could call this generation the generation of seekers, which shares similarity with the title of a book by Ward Clark Roof. He refers back to the period of 1960s as a period in history that opened up many ways to spirituality.

The 1960s were an era of expanding horizons. Opportunities opened up for people growing up then that was far greater than anything their parents had known-career options, changing gender roles, new family types, choices of lifestyles ... They are still exploring; but they are exploring in new, and, we think, more profound ways ... they move freely in and out, across religious boundaries; many combine elements from various traditions to create their own personal, tailor-made meaning systems. Choice, so much a part of life for this generation, now expresses itself in dynamic and fluid religious styles.⁵²

2.2.3 Diffusive Religion

This is an overlapping idea that I want to present here. Although partially the basic idea of diffusive religion is present in the points made above, I wish to extend this argument to the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kerry A. Mitchell, “The Politics of Spirituality: Liberalizing the Definition of Religion”, in *Secularism and Religion-Making*, eds. Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandir (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126.

⁵¹ Ibid, 128.

⁵² Ibid, 129.

individual who wishes to be part of an institutional religion. The previous section outlined that people seek a sort of spirituality in order to have a divine experience. In other words, they deny the established or organized religion and find their own way of experiencing the divine. However, in the context of diffusive religion, it is not the case. Diffusive religion creates an opportunity for an individual to rediscover their traditional religion. The funerals of famous monarchs, memorial services held for terrorist attacks etc., could be considered as examples for this. These ceremonies could be said to give the individuals a sense or feeling of religiosity. To explain this phenomenon, Charles borrows the term, 'vicarious religion' from Davie:

What she is trying to capture here is the relationship of people to a church, from which they stand at a certain distance, but which they nevertheless in some sense cherish; where they want to be, partly as a holder of ancestral memory, partly as a resource against some future need (e.g., their need for a rite of passage, especially a funeral); or as a source of comfort and orientation in the face of some collective disaster.⁵³

2.2.4 Shared Religion

This is a type of religion that is mostly seen within the context of immigration. American society could be taken as an example for this along with some of the European countries at present. This is, of course, not only a phenomenon in these societies but rather a common occurrence in most of the cosmopolitan societies. A common factor, which they often search for, is found in religious gatherings. Church has often been the centre for such strength. But this is not always the case. This shared religion in the context of migrants poses a problem for secular societies. This shared sense of religion could lead the individual migrants into ghettos as this could create a possibility for them to be victimised through religious fundamentalism. For the immigrants, this could even create a sense of separation or alienation from the majority of society and they could be in turn labelled as the minority group. Ultimately, this could further problematise the integration of migrants into a given society.

2.2.5 Religion – Nationalism

Nationalism is a term that reminds many westerners of the period of Hitler. Individual citizens were allured to unite in this period through another powerful force besides religion. This spirit

⁵³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 522.

of “nationalism” overtook religion, which had been considered up until then to be the force that united people. And the consequences of this nationalism, as history has shown us, were indeed gruesome.⁵⁴ But, there are examples that affirm a nation could be united in the name of religion in order for it to have a national identity instead of race. Taylor provides Ireland, Poland and even India as examples of such nations.⁵⁵

This phenomenon remains important in the modern world, although from a faith perspective one might be ambivalent about it. Because there are a gamut of cases, from a deeply felt religious allegiance, all the way to situations in which the religious marker is cynically manipulated to mobilize people.⁵⁶

With regard to Ireland and Poland, Catholicism is the major religion that gives the native people their national identity: being catholic and being Irish, or being catholic and being Polish is ingrained with their sense of self. Recently, this sense of a national identity based on religion has also been emerging in India. However, in this case, it is slightly different from that of Ireland and Poland. In the case of these two countries, we do not hear about the suppression of the minority groups or their persecution. However, in the Indian scenario, it is different as being Indian and being Hindu seem to be necessary in the present to evade persecution. Suppression of the minority communities such as those following Islam and Christianity has become the target of the so-called nationalists. In this case, religion is alive but it is still being “cynically manipulated to mobilize people”.⁵⁷ Such type of active religion has little to do with the aspect of the inner search for the divine. The quest of the individual for the sacred or the union with the sacred is completely wiped away; and the exterior goal I have mentioned earlier seems to be the only vital aim of this type of religion.

⁵⁴ In reference to Nazi Regime.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 513.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 515.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

3 Intrinsic Role of Religion

Here, I would precisely deal with the basic relationship between civil society and religion. It is a further analysis of how both religion and society are interwoven with each other, irrespective of the existing secularist attitudes. I intend to further establish that religion serves as the nucleus of society in materializing its sense of morality, justice and righteousness. The following evaluation attempts to prove that through the exposition of religion as a point of reference for various societal realities. The analysis will focus on how religion is considered against the speedy and visible growth of secularist attitude to the extent of discarding religion in the public spaces. It will further consider the secularist claims regarding the fall of religion and how such false notions could be corrected through an epistemic understanding of secularism.

3.1 Could Modernity weaken Religion?

Joas argues against the concept or idea that modernity leads to secularity.⁵⁸ Moderners have believed, according to Joas, that religion has lost its ground and it is on its way to disappearance.⁵⁹ Adding to this, he points out that we need to enquire into the common prejudicial understanding in society that modernity leads to secularism. Joas strongly argues against such claims.⁶⁰ This is because secularism is not a thing of the present-day society; secularism is an idea that has existed even from ancient times (*ref. to prophetic times, reforms in religions*). This could be more concretely elaborated with the example of Christianity. It was a term initially

⁵⁸ Hans Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 25.

“Auf der einen Seite beobachten wir gerade in der Mitte Europas einen noch keineswegs abgeschlossenen Prozess der Entkirchlichung, der häufig als Ausdruck einer allgemeinen Säkularisierung gedeutet wird; auf der anderen Seite zeigt sich in vielen Teilen der Erde eine Zuwendung zur Religion, die man eher als Merkmal einer Desäkularisierung deuten könnte (...)”

⁵⁹ Klaus Müller, ““Bildverbot” oder: Wie ein theologisches Missverständnis zum philosophischen Mythos wird”, in *Die Zehn Gebote: ein widersprüchliches Erbe*, ed. Hans Joas (Köln: Böhlau, 2006), 33–36.

⁶⁰ Hans Joas, *Faith as Option* (California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 23.

used within a pure (Christian) religious circle referring exclusively to the transformation of members of religious orders into ‘secular priests’.⁶¹

Joas explains modernization as a reality that had also been an element of the past. If modernization means a matter of “economic growth and scientific-technological improvements ... then modernization has occurred in every historical period – to varying degrees, certainly, but not just in recent times”.⁶² Nevertheless, he gives reasons for why we can expect modernization to weaken religion.

Religious faith may be understood in an essentially cognitive sense as immature or insecure knowledge, as pseudoscience or a misguided attempt to solve cognitive problems. Religious faith may also be understood as an expression of hardship-material want, social and political repression, the unbearable meaninglessness of cruel twists of fate, or existential insecurity.⁶³

So, in such conditions, modernization could overtake religion. Modernization also includes an improvement in the area of research and that can give answers to all sorts of religious behaviours from a psychological point of view.⁶⁴ Modern sciences are also able to explain various phenomena in religion, which were not previously explained due to a lack of research and knowledge. Other conditions or structures such as cultural homogeneity or the educational system – which is surrounded by authoritarianism – were important to transmit religious traditions and faith within a particular context. These conditions are being replaced in the present-day society. European cultural homogeneity, in particular, has undergone drastic changes over the last few decades and there is much pluralism within their culture and values now. With the increase in immigration to Europe by people of different cultures, it is no longer plausible to consider a European society to be culturally homogenous.⁶⁵ Even the educational system is not anymore characterized by the age-old authoritarianism. Students and scholars exercise more freedom liberally now and are encouraged to be free thinkers without fearing punishment for what they think and write.⁶⁶ No religious watchmen will be a threat to their lives, which was not the case during the past ages when they were hunted down for anti-religious

⁶¹ Ibid, 10.

⁶² Ibid, 12.

⁶³ Ibid, 15.

⁶⁴ Cf. Michael A. Arbib and Mary B. Hesse, *The Construction of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 105–126, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511527234.007.

⁶⁵ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 15.

⁶⁶ Cf. Doris Moreno Martínez, “Inquisitions” trans. Gretchen Starr-LeBeau in *Judging Faith, Punishing Sin: Inquisitions and Consistories in the Early Modern World*, eds. Charles H.

writings.⁶⁷ Joas continues to assert that no such conditions could weaken religion; on the contrary, religion could be weakened through the politicisation of a particular religion or it should entail *new risks of religious exclusion*.⁶⁸ What he means here is that when religion is connected to national identity and engages itself for political gain, then it could be a problem. This is because “if national and confessional identity are closely related, then following the achievement of national independence, it is difficult for a confessional minority not to be identified with the old repressive power. This is applied, for example, to Protestants in independent Ireland”.⁶⁹ Another example that could be presented here is the case in America. America is widely considered to be the most modern society in the world. However, one can also experience a vigorous growth of different religions within their society. There are also societies other than America and Europe that are much modern but yet retain religious activities.⁷⁰ There have been also claims by sociologists asserting that the postcolonial societies would gradually lose the presence of Christianity with the departure of the colonisers. Nevertheless, the empirical data from the countries in Africa, Asia and America show that the colonial religions continue to exist and with even more vigour than among the colonisers themselves. Owing to such realities of other modernized societies, Europe stands as a matter of exception for secularization. Therefore, he concludes that secularization often occurs even without modernization.⁷¹ The religion which was supposed to be a matter of experience between the divine and the individual, in fact, became a matter of law. Religious practices were laws that burdened the people. Church has acted till today as a lawgiver that sometimes forgets religion could be a matter of personal experience, as well. Therefore, if people consider it to be a law that needs to be followed, it could automatically follow with a phenomenon of a decrease of religion and a tendency towards secularism or by distancing oneself from the institutionalized religions.⁷²

3.2 Religion for Contemporary Values

Whether religion is required for the process of imparting values is often debated, mostly in the westernized nations. Habermas’ argument uncovers this puzzle through recognizing the basis

Parker and Gretchen Starr-LeBeau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 167–179. doi: 10.1017/9781316492659.014.

⁶⁷ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 17–20.

⁷² *Ibid.*

of religion that has contributed to the moral growth of the society. For the society to uphold values such as justice and righteousness – which in turn provide the opportunity and chance for every individual to have his right – a motivational factor is required. This motivational factor gives the members of the society the impulse to orient their actions towards a commonly accepted norm that promotes equality. To promote such actions, Joas proposes the need for religion. “Values have a value. Their social relevance is more strongly emphasised, and thus a corresponding (new) value education must also be (re)profiled.”⁷³ Besides, we also see this aspect very much stressed by Habermas when he speaks of religious basis that could help societies by informing their values.⁷⁴

(In doing so) even people who do not belong to any church themselves and who have never developed an inner relationship to Christian beliefs emphasize the responsibility of the churches for the formation of value convictions and attitudes. The description of society in the Federal Republic [of Germany] with the characteristics of multiculturalism is widespread, but no less widespread is the awareness that a society which has become religiously plural needs unifying values and norms.⁷⁵

In a multicultural society, various religions serve the role as motivational factors to their members to live a value-based life. Values in society are linked to one’s convictions and what one learns in its surroundings. This implies that an active role of cognitive acts is involved in this process of forming one’s values. Furthermore, it is explained through the example of integration within a society in the context of multiculturalism. One’s religious convictions are rather helpful in forming personal views on values. If a person belonging to a particular religion recognizes the relevance of this religion in his personal life, he will be able to join a very long and living tradition. This is like belonging to a chain of believers who share the same faith.⁷⁶ “From this tradition, which is constantly being critically reflected, a standard emerges, along which

⁷³ Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?*, 67.

Werte haben einen Wert. Ihre gesellschaftliche Relevanz wird stärker betont, und somit muss sich auch eine entsprechende Werterziehung (neu) profilieren.

⁷⁴ Habermas, *PTh I*, 15.

⁷⁵ Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?*, 25.

(Dabei) wird auch von Menschen, die selbst keiner Kirche angehören und ein inneres Verhältnis zu christlichen Glaubensüberzeugungen noch nie entwickelt haben, die Verantwortung der Kirchen für die Ausbildung von Wertüberzeugungen und Werthaltungen mit Nachdruck hervorgehoben. Verbreitet ist die Beschreibung der bundesrepublikanischen Gesellschaft mit den Merkmalen der Multikulturalität; doch ebenso verbreitet ist die Feststellung, dass gerade eine religiös plural gewordene Gesellschaft verbindender Werte und Normen bedarf.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

one can succeed in finding one's own identity and value."⁷⁷ However, it is observed that it is not so much important to just imitate the way the predecessors had lived, which involves the *Art und Weise*, rather one should also arrive at the competence to cull-out the contents of these values that have an on-going connection from the traditions. The values are to be rediscovered in a given context, which will consequently become different in appearance and practises too. "But a potential of orientation, kept possible and open through religious affiliation complements and enriches the process of value education."⁷⁸

Religion motivates various values in society like that of compassion, which implies something along the lines of feeling one with the other or to be one with the other. It is about feeling one with the other person in moments of pain or suffering. It is a value that arises from an empathetic impulse. "Compassion is seen 'as a feeling and an attitude that urges action'". Religion offers the motivation for such an understanding of "compassionate" action."⁷⁹ Related to such a value one can speak of charity or love for the neighbour.⁸⁰ The love for neighbour is more commonly widespread as a central concept or tenant within Christianity. "The honest and deeply felt interest in the other – in religious terminology, charity – is the basic impulse from which value education should be centrally determined."⁸¹ Joas gives importance to this in the role of religion and religious traditions, which promote such values. It could be noted that the fact that religions do promote such values themselves is a clear indication that they are, in general, essential for forming values in a society. Religion has the capacity not just to promote them but rather to keep these values continue irrespective of time and space.

Whether this motivation is required in order to promote values in society could be further debated in the light of Joas' arguments. It does not just suffice to have a cognitive exchange or discussion with regard to values. Instead, it needs to be recognised that a religious point-of-view for such values gives more weight and expression to them. Moreover religious

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Aus diesem stets neu kritisch reflektierten Traditionsgut erwächst ein Maßstab, an dem entlang die eigene Identitäts- und Wertfindung gelingen kann.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Aber ein Potential der Orientierung, das in der religiösen Bindung offengehalten und ermöglicht wird, ergänzt und bereichert den Prozess der Werterziehung.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 88.

Compassion wird gesehen als Gefühl und als Haltung, die zum Handeln 'drängt'. Religion bietet den Motivationsgrund für ein so verstandenes 'mit-leidens' Handeln.

⁸⁰ Mt 23: 36–40.

⁸¹ Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?*, 88.

Das ehrliche und tief empfundene Interesse am Anderen – religiös gesprochen: die Nächstenliebe – ist der Grundimpuls, von dem her Werterziehung inhaltlich zentrale Bestimmung erfahren sollte.

contribution could be seen as a prerequisite for such cognitive dialogues and discussions. On the other hand, we should also be careful in dealing with the religious motivations behind actions as religious fundamentalism emerges from non-reflective religions. “Religion, which contributes to value education, must be an enlightened, reflective and pluralistic religion/religiousness.”⁸² Ultimately, it is argued that fundamentalism is a burden to the society and, above all, becomes a hindrance in maintaining values that contribute to the positive growth of society.

Religion has a central place in forming the values because it has the experience that it prompts from tradition, which is again related to the historical perspective of its origin. From a historical perspective, religion is an element of society that grew simultaneously with society as I have demonstrated through the preceding chapters.⁸³ The scriptures themselves give us examples of how the experiences of human beings have been passed on from one generation to the other generation (*Book of Wisdom*). They have always protected, promoted and taken sufficient interest in passing knowledge to the following generations. It is also important to note that their personal experience with God did give them the foundation and orientation in forming these values and in promoting them. Their basic orientation, thus, goes back to their divine experience. Therefore, this experience that religion offers is, unquestioningly, valuable and contributory to society.⁸⁴ “Religion thus provides a wealth of experience, its code of values as a benchmark. Religion offers value education this dimension of orientation.”⁸⁵ It could also be said that the formation of values through the help of religion definitely helps one to appreciate the value and importance of every single person. However, it should not lead to an egoistic understanding of oneself; it should rather build a consciousness to reach out to other people, which is expressed through its focus on altruistic nature. “What is needed is a religion that strengthens the self-esteem of the individual without making it selfish. From one’s personal self-awareness the view must be widened to the value of every other person.”⁸⁶

⁸² Ibid, 93.
Religion, die zur Werterziehung beiträgt, muss eine aufgeklärt-reflektierte und pluralismusfähige Religion / Religiösität sein.

⁸³ Joachim von Soosten, “Kommunikation und Religion”, 275.

⁸⁴ Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?*, 93–4.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 93.
Religion stellt also einen Erfahrungsschatz, ihren Wertekodex als Maßstab zur Verfügung. Religion bietet der Werterziehung diese Dimension der Orientierung.

⁸⁶ Ibid.
Es bedarf einer Religion, die das Selbstwertgefühl des Einzelnen stärkt, ohne egoistisch zu machen. Vom eigenen Ich-Bewusstsein muss der Blick geweitet sein auf den Wert jeder anderen Person.

3.3 Is religion an Indispensable Element to Society?

In answering this question, I would like to refer to the societal experience that contained religion as an element of strength to moral values. This intrinsically indicates the need for religion in our society owing to the growth it has provided throughout human history. This is because religions are not just newly invented institutions. Complex knowledge and experiences from generations have been passed on to them and a deep inner experience of the divine has produced the growth of values in society.⁸⁷ It has its foundation basically in human experience. And this religious experience is further made stable and worked on through the communication process between people.⁸⁸ One can also refer to the different stages that Robert Bellah mentions in his development of religion in human history.⁸⁹ However, without a social construction of the individual experience, it might not have been stabilized. So, it is important to recognize that religion in our modern world is a sort of reconstruction of the various religious experiences of the past or the different models of transcendental experiences of human beings.⁹⁰

Experience of the Self-transcendence. This means experiences in which a person rises above him- or herself, but not – or at least not necessarily – in the sense of moral self-mastery, but rather in the sense of being carried beyond one's own personal boundaries, being gripped by something which lies outside oneself. This self-transcendence is therefore basically described as being drawn out of oneself. This is what is expressed by the traditional German word, *Ergriffensein* (*being seized*).⁹¹

As man is, by nature, a being who has an inclination towards the transcendental, religions facilitate a person to access this spiritual need or craving. It does so by helping the person

⁸⁷ Hans Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?*, 17.

⁸⁸ Karl Gabriel, "Religion und Menschen im Kontext der Gesellschaft. Religionssoziologische Perspektiven", in *Mensch – Religion – Bildung. Religionspädagogik in anthropologischen Spannungsfeldern*, eds. Thomas Schlag, Henrik Simojoki (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014), 308.

⁸⁹ Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁹⁰ Gabriel, "Religion und Menschen im Kontext der Gesellschaft", 310.

⁹¹ Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?*, 17.

Erfahrung der Selbsttranszendenz. Dies bedeutet: Erfahrungen, in denen eine Person sich selbst übersteigt, nicht aber, zumindest zunächst nicht, im Sinne einer moralischen Überwindung ihrer selbst, sondern im Sinne eines Hinausgerissenwerdens über die Grenzen des eigenen Selbst, eines Ergriffenwerdens von etwas, das jenseits meiner selbst liegt, einer Lockerung oder Befreiung von der Fixierung auf mich selbst. Diese Selbsttranszendenz ist zunächst also nur bestimmt als eine Richtung weg von sich selbst, wie es ja in dem etwas altväterlichen deutschen Wort „Ergriffensein“ schön zum Ausdruck kommt.

with the collective experience of the transcendental of the previous generations, which are stored through traditions in religion. Joas highlights this aspect of religion as an important and much-needed element of society. It is not just a need that fulfils our physical wants, but rather a deeper aspect of one's self-experience.

'Need' is here being used in a special sense, for 'need' cannot imply that belief is useful for any further purpose; it must signify something intrinsic to belief. It must be connected to the experience, which we call belief. The question is not, is religion useful for something, rather, could we live without the experience, which is articulated in faith and religion. If this is the right question then we should look exactly what is the experience actually and in which multiple forms it takes place.⁹²

Joas also considers this need to belong to a religious group as something natural to human beings. Thus, this natural need has to be given a chance to be put into practise in society by the support of the state. Religion cannot just live by itself when it is not supported or protected by the state. It grows and brings its experiences within the framework of a society, which can then be opened for its growth and contribution towards humanity. "From this point of view, it is therefore a task and obligation for state and society to give all citizens the opportunity of religion and to position it clearly in constitutional documentation of state and society."⁹³

Habermas also outlines similar arguments – for which he received the Friedenspreis – giving the reason why secular citizens should take an interest in the heritage of religion.⁹⁴ Values like solidarity or social systems that contribute to the betterment of human life in our societies need to be *begründet*. For these values to be presented to society with a certain amount of

⁹² Ibid, 16–7.

Wir müssen das „braucht“ in der Frage anders wenden. Das „brauchen“ kann sich nicht auf ein Jenseits des Glaubens beziehen, seine Nützlichkeit für etwas, sondern muß etwas meinen, das dem Glauben selbst eigen ist. Es muß etwas mit der Erfahrung zu tun haben, die wir Glauben nennen. Nicht „Ist die Religion zu etwas nütze?“ ist also die Frage, sondern „Können wir ohne die Erfahrung leben, die im Glauben, in der Religion artikuliert wird?“ Wenn dies aber die richtige Frage ist, dann müssen wir genauer hinsehen, was für eine Erfahrung dies eigentlich ist und in welch vielfältigen Formen sie auftritt.

⁹³ Ibid, 97.

Von diesem Standpunkt aus bedeutet es daher Aufgabe und Verpflichtung für Staat und Gesellschaft, allen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern die Chance auf Religion zu eröffnen und diese klar in konstitutionellen Staats- und Gesellschaftsentwürfen zu positionieren.

⁹⁴ Der Stiftungsrat Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels hat den Philosophen und Soziologen Jürgen Habermas zum Träger des Friedenspreises 2001 gewählt. Die Verleihung fand am 14. Oktober 2001 in der Paulskirche, Frankfurt a. M., statt. Die Laudatio hielt Jan Philipp Reemtsma.

credibility, it is required to find a source that is credible. Such sources can be found within religious discourses. Habermas draws upon the role of religion in social movements. Norman Birnbaum speaks of such motivations as generally unacknowledged.⁹⁵

3.4 Religious Influence on Violence

Joas sites the various atrocities that have taken place in the history of mankind. In his reflection about religion and violence, he brings out the point that secular-minded people, too, are dangerous to society. He has difficulty in accepting the fact that religion causes violence. For him, the most heinous crimes of the past century are committed by the so-called secularists who had distanced themselves from religion. This could also have been motivated by the claim that religion is a hindrance to society.⁹⁶

When properly analysed, violence itself could have various reasons. Religious violence does not necessarily need a religious motive, but it responds to other aspects of the society.

[...] much of conventional research on violence is structured in such a way as to imply that what matters most are the perpetrators' specific sociostructural traits, such as social disadvantages, which make it rational to use violence against the better-off or oppressors, or perhaps against scapegoats or in such a way as to raise public awareness through the shocking nature of their acts.⁹⁷

But it is an undeniable reality that there is an element of violence that takes place within the sphere of religion. Historical religions such as the Judaic religion has perpetuated their monotheistic principles even to other Semitic religions. However, this unitary principle of monotheism becomes an element of difference among other non-monotheistic religions that propagates violence. Such violent positions are more evident in the Indian history with the advent of Islam. Just as religion contributed to the growth of society, it has also become the occasion for violence and conflict. The claim of superiority of one religion or religious tradition over another is a constant phenomenon that is visible even in our present times.

Hans Joas argues that religion is required for the essentials of society. The religious formation of a human person contributes to the formation of values in human society. Therefore, we need to recognize that the values have value in themselves. Religion is considered as an

⁹⁵ Habermas, *PTh II*, 84–5.

⁹⁶ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 102.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 104.

important element in the formation of human values because of its special contribution in this area so that human values will have better values.⁹⁸ Religion is not a sort of concept that is beyond history. Rather, it is the historical and biographical aspect of religion as well as its advocates who are its very being. In other words, no religion can be just erased from its historicity.

⁹⁸ Joas, *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?*, 67.

4 Reasoning Religion with a Secular Attitude

A postmetaphysical proposal, which is the centre of my thesis, could be achieved through secular rationality. This chapter uses this approach to achieve the results that postmetaphysical thinking considers a religious attitude of self-reflexivity. The proposal of disenchantment analyses this element of self-reflection within the sphere of religious traditions. Consequently, the following discussion will concentrate on how religion purifies itself, analogously, to secular approach. In the process of secularization, it is observed that there is a critique of religion from an outsider's perspective. However, here I emphasize a critique of religion that takes place through disenchantment from an insider's perspective.

4.1 Secularizing Religion through Disenchantment

The concept of disenchantment is one of the important concepts in the debates concerning secularism and religion. This concept expresses itself through an already existing phenomenon dating back to the prophetic times.⁹⁹ It is a continuing discussion and provides a renewed understanding of this attitude in society towards religion. The term *Entzauberung* is used mainly in the areas of religion and secularism. Moreover, it is projected as a reason for secular attitude in the western world. However according to Joas, "Max Weber's term 'disenchantment' cannot be simply equated with 'secularization'; he was essentially concerned with the 'demagification' of religion, but saw a personal striving for salvation as inevitable."¹⁰⁰

Entzauberung, based on Weber's description and Joas analysis, is an attitude of modern thinkers who try to aim for the perfection of religion. There is an apparent misconception that modernization automatically leads to secularization.¹⁰¹ However, the following discussion

⁹⁹ The Holy Bible speaks of the Prophets who have been instruments of the Yahweh in proclaiming the message of retribution against the injustice that endured within the circles of institutionalized Judaism. The temple authorities and the kings were often the centres of this criticism by the prophets. Whenever the essence of religion and Yahweh's message was at stake, prophets appeared in the society to rescue religion from its false enchanting presentation.

¹⁰⁰ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

will shed light on this phenomenon and argue against such attitudes. The *Zusammenarbeit* of both modernization and the secular spirit gives way to a genuine religion, which is the aim of authors like Joas and Habermas. “Modernization must go hand in hand with secularization.”¹⁰² The role of science is, however, at the heart of this process, trying to de-transcendentalize religion.¹⁰³ As I have been often referring to religion as an ideology that sometimes becomes a burden to the individual and society owing to its duplicity and diversion of itself from its roots, *Entzauberung*¹⁰⁴ had been ever since working towards the purification and perfection of religion. In this following chapter, I would like to discuss mainly the concept of *Entzauberung* and contrast it with the modern world’s attitude towards religion.

Joas’ claim of the ‘power of the holy’ in analysing the history of *Entzauberung* is essential to recognize the substantial power that the presence of religion has in society. This observation is quite noteworthy and important for the religious members of society because their presence and contribution towards society and the world at large are given credit for after the storm of secularistic period,¹⁰⁵ at least in Western Europe.

Entzauberung tries to interiorize¹⁰⁶ the previously transcendental aspects of society. It enables a more human-centred world and tries to live in this world and work for the development of this world.¹⁰⁷ In eastern traditions, one can see a phenomenon very contrary to this. The eastern worlds are more centred on the transcendental or the other-worldly. This attitude of the individuals gradually decrease their interest in visualising modernity. Once we stop visualising modernity, we do not work towards it. The individuals who live in this kind of a fantasy world may not be a contribution towards the modernization of societies.

Eventually, the disenchantment in the religious field leads religion to relieve its essentials from the cover of magic and takes its real nature away from it. In other words, *Entzauberung*

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ John Brooke, “Science and Religion”, in *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 739–71, doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521572439.033.

¹⁰⁴ Referred to the moment in every age when Religion has been used as a scapegoat and religious practices have become a burden. In this context, the moment refers especially to the Judaic prophetic times.

¹⁰⁵ It is a reference to the 18 and the 19 centuries in Europe. This also refers to the communist era in Europe, which almost considered the disappearance of religion in the European world.

¹⁰⁶ Here, I mean the incorporation of the aspects of religion and God as part of human life. In other words, it implies the experience of the divine in a tangible manner through human experiences.

¹⁰⁷ The concept of altruism. Also see: Leslie Stephen, “Altruism”, in *The Science of Ethics*, Cambridge Library Collection – Philosophy. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 219–63. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139136679.007.

The aspect of service to fellow beings in the name of religion or a result of the religious teachings is more exposed by the western religion than the eastern or Indian religious attitude. However, this cannot be ultimately judged instead it is a controversial phenomenon that is seen in both the cultures.

aims at the decline of the aspect of magicality attributed to religion.¹⁰⁸ The shift of the religious goal from just an achievement of the sociological purposes to the achievement of an intrinsic goal by working with oneself is one of the key ideas proposed by Max Weber through his theory of *Entzauberung*.¹⁰⁹

4.1.1 *Entzauberung*: A ‘Deconstruction’ Concept

The concept of *Entzauberung* could be understood as a deconstruction process. Hans Joas, in his recent work, *Die Macht des Heiligen*,¹¹⁰ tries to give an elaborate explanation about this concept as a process of deconstruction using three important terms that constitute the whole concept of *Entzauberung*. They are: *Entmagisierung*, *Entsakralisierung* and *Enttranszendentalisierung*.¹¹¹ These terminologies are referred obviously in the context of religion and its nature. Using these terms, Joas attempt to deconstruct three important aspects of religion by depriving it of its *magicality*, *sacrality* and *transcendentality*. In the course of history, religion has been considered or viewed as something that has a power, which could not be explained in human or societal terms. It was positively considered as mystical or mysterious and magical. This kind of identification of religion also missed its sociological meaning. Therefore, this approach is aimed at rendering a lost or renewed meaning to sacrality and transcendentality. Nonetheless, with this *ent* approach, religion is no more sacred in the sense that it is something to be set apart from the society, rather it regains its original functionality in society.¹¹²

The concept disenchantment in itself – without any philosophical or thematic relevance – was not an invention of Weber himself. Instead, it has its roots in the old and middle standard (*Alt- und Mittelhochdeutschen*) German. The German word *Entzauberung* is used in reference to *bezaubern* and *verzaubern*. In this manner, the word *Entzauberung* expresses its contradictory meaning.¹¹³ The words *bezaubern* and *verzaubern* belong to the same roots of the word ‘*Zauber*’, which means magic, spell or charm; the German Langenscheidt dictionary gives the word ‘enchantment’ as its meaning or translation. However, as the word *Entzauberung* is used to oppose what is magical or enchanting and is translated to English as disenchantment. There are different sources from which this concept could have been taken

¹⁰⁸ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Hans Joas, *Die Macht des Heiligen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 207.

¹¹² Durkheim, *The Elementary forms of Religion*. Also see: Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action II*, 50.

¹¹³ Joas, *Die Macht des Heiligen*, 208.

by Weber. This word has been interpreted in various contexts and fields. To cite one, Joas refers to a Catholic theologian, Peter Wust, who claims Weber to be the intercessor of modernity. He explains that this concept of *Entzauberung* could be elaborated by replacing it with three other concepts: “Disenchantment with desecration, de-divinization and de-Christianization.”¹¹⁴ These also demonstrate the nature of deconstruction that is observed in the idea of disenchantment.

4.1.2 Demagification of Religion

Joas sees the theory of actions as basically involved with the interpretation of the usage of this concept of disenchantment. He explains further why this theory is so essential for understanding the latter:

Weber lays an enormous importance to address the magical oriented actions having the character of a subjective rationality. Magic is apparently an invention of religion, which had a subjective purposive rationality at work. The idea of magic appears non reasonable in the light of modern science. It doesn't become directly clear to the observer. So it is the duty or the assignment of the scientific analysis to uncover such subjective meaning of the magical actions.¹¹⁵

However, disenchantment, whose aim and goal is a subjective orientation towards transcendence, plays a minute role with regard to the sense of magic for an individual. About this sort of understanding, the word enchantment hardly has any meaning that refers to: “a weakening or disappearance of religion.”¹¹⁶ The basic discourse here is related to the change that takes place within the religion in connection with this disenchantment of the world. Therefore,

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 214.

Entzauberung mit Entweihung, Entgöttlichung und Entchristlichung.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 216–7.

[...] weil Weber größten Wert drauf legt, dem an magischen Vorstellungen orientierten Handeln subjektiv zweckrationalen Charakter zuzusprechen. Wie sich im Weiteren noch deutlicher zeigen wird, sieht Weber in der Magie als einer Grundsicht der Religionsentwicklung gerade vornehmlich subjektive Zweckrationalität am Werk. Weil die magischen Vorstellungen im Licht moderner Wissenschaften als unbegründet oder nicht zielführend erscheinen, wird dies dem Beobachter oft nicht unmittelbar deutlich. Damit gehört es zur Aufgabe wissenschaftlicher Analysen, den subjektiven Sinn des magischen Handelns aufzudecken.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 217.

[...] einer Schwächung oder einem Verschwinden von Religion.

putting this approach of disenchantment on the same side with secularism would be a false approach.¹¹⁷

The aspect of magic as it is attributed to religion by Weber could be analysed in reference to the various superstitious beliefs of people. It is a basic attitude of denial towards the attribution of magical power to the sacraments. He emphasizes on “*die Ablehnung der sakramentalen Magie als Heilsweg*.”¹¹⁸ The appearance of the concept of disenchantment apparently has to do with the sociological aspects in the history of religion and, especially, signifies the need for an intellectual religion.

Weber needed a synonym that would capture all that which refers to a non-privileged class of society. However, he considers not just the materially poor as the non-privileged, rather those, whose lives are dominated by a spiritual penury or need.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, Joas concludes that this inner need of a person is for unity with oneself, with others and with the whole of cosmos.¹²⁰ Disenchantment has to do with the pushing back of magic within the realm of faith. It could only be undertaken by a power that would be able to explain its phenomenon. This power, according to Joas, is the intellectualism that Weber attributes to intellectuals.¹²¹ Intellectualism, thus, strives to push back the magic that is obvious within religion. But this pushing back or putting away of the element of magic through intellectualism does not in any way lead to any sort of weakening of the faith. It is to be noted that this approach does not consist of “*Ein Automatismus der Diffusion des Intellektualismus*.”¹²² However, a movement of opposition could be expected equally from the intellectual elites and the non-privileged classes as well. Nevertheless, this could play a role in distancing the intellectuals from carrying out the magical religion or lead to more insistence from other classes of society.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Joas, *Faith as Option*, 14.

¹¹⁸ Joas, *Die Macht des Heiligen*, 223.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 218.

Weber braucht ... einen Gegenbegriff zu all den Bezeichnungen, die auf das Leben von nichtprivilegierten Schichten zielen oder derjenigen Privilegierten, die über keine Muße verfügen. Er will über diejenigen Menschen sprechen, die sich nicht hauptsächlich mit äußerer Not herumschlagen, sondern in deren religiösem Leben innere Not dominiert.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 218.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 219.

¹²² *Ibid*, 220.

¹²³ *Ibid*.

4.1.3 Prophetic Disenchantment

Joas cites Weber's retreat towards the Prophetic times, which was indeed characterized by this process of *Entzauberung*. He attempts to establish a connection or have a comprehensive understanding between the prophets and the reformation. Apparently, they both share the characteristic of being opposed to the concept of magic or enchantment of religion. "Prophecies have brought about the disenchantment of the world and thus laid the foundations for our modern science, technology and capitalism."¹²⁴ There is a sort of process in these two movements: Prophets and Reformation. In the history of semitic religion, the earlier disenchanting process was started by the prophets. However, it did not last or had any continuing effect and probably could be the reason why there had to be another reformation. If this idea of demagification – *Entmagisierung* – was not at all a matter of concern for many Catholics or Protestants or even non-Christians, then this process of *Entmagisierung* would not be a matter of any importance in history.¹²⁵ In this way, he associates the necessity for intellectuality that would free social lives. This process is thus extended outside religious circles as well.

The prophets were more concerned about the genuineness of religion.¹²⁶ Though the prophetic activity initiated this process of *Entzauberung*, we can definitely know through the scriptures that this was not a process that led to 'the secularism' in our common understanding of the denial of God. Instead, it was a process that demanded people to orient themselves towards the genuineness of religion. Weber considers a priest as a magician at the confession and therefore this theory of disenchantment allows him to present or propose it as "die Ausschaltung der Magie als Heilmittel."¹²⁷ However, the radical disenchantment of the world is nothing more than what could be called the asceticism of the inner-self or inner world. This idea is deeply rooted not only in the prophetic teachings but in the teachings of Hinduism as well. Self-purification and following the divine with a sincere heart are considered very important in these teachings. The prophetic disenchantment could also be considered in association with what I have mentioned in the previous chapters that discussed prophetic movement. On one hand, the ecstatic character was natural to the prophetic attitude. On the other hand, it is to be taken note of that this prophetic *ecstasy* does not claim to be similar to that of pathological ecstatic experiences. Prophecy is understood as a divine experience that only some people could have. This experience was expressed naturally in an ecstatic manner, which includes

¹²⁴ Ibid, 229.

Prophetien haben die Entzauberung der Welt herbeigeführt und damit auch die Grundlage für unsere moderne Wissenschaft, die Technik und den Kapitalismus geschaffen.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 225–6.

¹²⁶ Refer to the Christian scriptures.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 226. (The salvation lies in doing away with the magical element of Religion)

emotional speech. The content of this speech was regarded as God's message for the people, and it was indeed conveyed in that manner. Furthermore, according to Joas, Weber places this prophetic actions or history within a political context, which is an important perspective. Prophetic presence and their actions were related to the daily conditions of the people of Israel and their struggle to be or not to be a part of a political scenario. Though the prophets expressed themselves as enemies of this religious magification, the history of Israel in the post-prophetic periods shows that it was not successful in repressing this magic. "Magic did not disappear from popular culture in Israel any more than anywhere else."¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the purpose of the idea of *Entmagisierung* through the prophets has been preserved in the prophetic books. Maybe this whole process could not achieve the required goal of *Entmagisierung* of their religion, but it led them to a deep sense of reverence and awe towards the holiness of God. Thus, what was radically important through this movement was to raise consciousness towards the genuineness of religion and the purpose of it.¹²⁹

It is noteworthy to observe that Klaus Müller has inserted the theme *Entzauberung* under the title "*Aufklärung bei den Propheten*".¹³⁰ He specifies in that part the speciality of the genuine prophets who aim at disenchanting the concept of gods. The appointed prophets by the kings, who were called the *beamteten Propheten* could not do this job. This is how the genuine prophets have been differentiated from the others: these prophets were adamantly strong to defend the true God in the face of all other petty gods that Israel was ready to worship. The prophets were utterly powerful in their critique that they compared these gods to ashes.¹³¹ Such comparison arose as the so-called petty gods' idols were made out of wood, which could also be used to light fire and thus be turned to ash after their consumption. Thus, they would stress the vanity of Israel's attitude towards these gods. Instead, they stressed that the people of Israel must realize the reality of the true God.¹³²

The Judaic History indeed projects a communitarian aspect – a communal sense of being together as a people of God. But we need to observe that in the whole history of a people, there have always been individuals who indeed played an important role: beginning from Abraham, Moses to every individual prophet. This collective aspect of Israel is now undergoing a paradigmatic change by prophets like that of Jeremiah, who stresses on the individual's relationship with God. However, prophets like Jeremiah also points out the importance of every

¹²⁸ Ibid, 270.

[...] die Magie in Israel ist so wenig wie irgendwo jemals aus der Praxis der Massen ganz verschwunden.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 265–70.

¹³⁰ Klaus Müller, *Glauben Fragen Denken III* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2010), 333–5.

¹³¹ Prophet Elijah demonstrated this phenomenon in the Old Testament of the Bible. I Kings 18: 16–46

¹³² Müller, *Glauben Fragen Denken*, 333–5.

individual's disposition towards Yahweh. "Therefore the Torah makes possible not merely the existence of a society but at the same time also the formation of individuality."¹³³

Interestingly, as Joas cites Weber's comparison of the prophetic times to *Entzauberung*, we could once again derive from this analysis that secularism is not godlessness,¹³⁴ which has become a general understanding. Instead secularism could be exposed as a true search for trying to find oneself and thus find fulfilment in life. This is an intrinsic ideology that Joas uses to describe Weber's disenchantment: "This is the idea that in the age of the Old Testament prophets, roughly, two and a half millennia ago, a process began which can be seen as a preparatory process for this modern secularization."¹³⁵

4.1.4 Disempowerment of Religion

The term *Entmachtung* in German refers to the deprivation of power. It could refer to the people in power who through – say, for instance, revolutionary movements – were deprived or thrown out of their power.¹³⁶ This term could also be considered in connection to religion. The ability of science in explaining away the mysterious aspects of the world has taken away religion's previously held power. Religion had explanations based on the scriptures. However, the scientific researches in natural sciences and the religious sciences resulted in depriving the might and power that religion exercised on the individuals.

Weber sees the process of the radical *Entmagisierung* not just as a radical form of religion but he identifies it as a necessary condition for the emergence of the spirit of capitalism through which the development of new science and technology is possible. Joas points out the position of science in the process of *Entzauberung* by Weber as the effect of science on religious meta-physical worldviews. This effect of science on religion does not intend to repress or repel faith in magic. Rather, it implies a change of the world in a causal mechanism, which implies, in turn, a change in worldview.¹³⁷

¹³³ Ibid, 335

[...] Die Tora ermöglicht ab da nicht mehr nur die Sozialität, sondern ineins damit die Bildung des Individuums.

¹³⁴ Miklaszewska, "The Idea of Immanence in Charles Taylor's Philosophy of Religion", 36.

¹³⁵ Hans Joas, "Die Macht des Heiligen", *Deutschlandfunk*, October 19, 2017, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/hans-joas-die-macht-des-heiligen.886.de.html?dram:article_id=398429.

Das ist die Vorstellung, dass im Zeitalter der alttestamentlichen Propheten, also sagen wir ganz über den Daumen, vor zweieinhalb Jahrtausenden, ein Prozess eingesetzt hat, der als Vorbereitungsprozess dieser modernen Säkularisierung aufgefasst werden kann.

¹³⁶ Ref. to the dethroning of the monarchy and the ecclesiastical powers in the French revolution.

¹³⁷ Joas, *Die Macht des Heiligen*, 229–30.

This process obviously includes the *Enttranszendentalisierung*, which implies *Immanensierung*. A transcendental being who was considered to be outside human existence is through this process brought into the midst of human life. The interpretation of this kind receives more acceptance in a secular world,¹³⁸ where the immanent is often sought after rather than the transcendent.¹³⁹ In other words, the transcendent is experienced in the immanent. With such an idea one could claim the *Entmachtung der Religion* through the process of *Entzauberung*.¹⁴⁰

4.1.5 Desacralization

The word ‘sacralized’ indicates the most important element of religion. The nucleus of every religion is supposed to be sacred and thus creates a sense of awe and veneration. The process of disenchantment, however, worked to take away the status of sacredness of a religion. Through the magification and enchantment of religion, the earthly objects were given the status of sacredness, which according to both prophets and reformers, is not the right attitude. The prophets preached against such an attitude of the people of Israel who wanted to ‘experience the sacred’ very tangibly. They spoke against such an attitude because that takes away the sacredness that belongs only to the transcendental being. Joas argues that this attitude of limiting the sacredness to the transcendental being was the prime activity of both the prophet and the reformers.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ For my purpose I refer to the comprehension of secular world as not a space of denial of the rather it refers to a genuine attitude of seeking the divine experience and to understand.

¹³⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 506.

¹⁴⁰ The *Entmachtung* is misunderstood as weakening religion. However, this process according to me attempts to bring the divine or the transcendent to the immanent sphere, as a result, religion gains more power. The reason is obvious because religion presents now a divine being that is closer to human’s daily life. Religion becomes more authentic, which drives more members to its folk than reduce. This approach might reduce the power of the institutionalized religions, which exercised both temporal and spiritual power over its members and in the society in general. But it can, however, increase the members or believers in private circles. Or it implies the privation of religion/faith.

¹⁴¹ The Reformers’ story of Martin Luther (1483–1546) makes it clear that there was an attempt time and again to teach the people of the vanity of making the earthly things sacred. Here below is a citation of from Joas, that sheds more light into the term sacred.

Jetzt ist der Punkt aber, den man an den Reformatoren vielleicht noch deutlicher machen kann als an den Propheten, dass diese Magiefeindschaft verbunden war, also wirklich logisch intern verbunden war, mit einer Hochsteigerung der Vorstellung von der Heiligkeit Gottes. Also, nichts Irdisches darf in sich heilig sein, nichts Irdisches trägt in sich magische Kräfte, heilig ist nur der große und transzendente Gott.

Das heißt aus der Entmagisierung folgt nicht etwa eine totale Entsakralisierung, sondern das Sakrale wird als ausschließlich im Transzendenten beheimatet gedacht. Wenn jetzt solche Vorstellungen vom

‘Sacralised’ is a term that refers to a religious sphere or all that is sacred. This sacredness is, evidently, about a god who is holy as opposed to profane. The scientific explanations of the world based on rationality deracinated God from being part of this sacredness. Thus, emerges the idea that a being or controller of the universe is unnecessary.

It was science itself, and nothing less than science, that proposed in the late seventeenth century a quite different kind of fate for the father: a form of migration, an exile into inaccessibility from the visions of ordinary people to a place outside the universe, from where, in the now-familiar image of the clock-winder, he first set and then kept an inert universe in motion.¹⁴²

This process of *Entsakralisierung* has also deracinated the immanence of God. The world, nature and the universe were understood as having the presence of a divine being through which a sacredness was attributed to these. This removal of the presence of a divine being not only just desacralized the world, but also made it difficult to base a sound ethical argument founded on the profaneness of the world or even to maintain indifference to sacrality. The negative side of the period of enlightenment that removed God and his immanent presence from this world created a contrary conception of the nature and the sacred presence of God in nature: “The

transzendenten Gott, etwa durch die Aufklärung und durch die Verbreitung eines naturwissenschaftlichen Weltbildes, sagen wir mal im 18. Jahrhundert, schwächer werden, dürfen wir meines Erachtens für diesen Prozess nicht denselben Begriff verwenden. Es geht ja jetzt offensichtlich nicht um die Zurückdrängung von Magie, jetzt geht es um die Zurückdrängung von Transzendenzvorstellungen. Wenn wir beides Entzauberung nennen, sieht es so aus, als wäre da eine Kontinuität. Die Kontinuität ist aber nicht vorhanden, sondern es wird in dem aufklärerischen Prozess das in Frage gestellt, was das entscheidende Gegengewicht gegen die Magie war.

Hans Joas, “Die Macht des Heiligen”, Deutschlandfunk, 9.10.2017. https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/hans-joas-die-macht-des-heiligen.886.de.html?dram:article_id=398429

(Now, however, the point that can perhaps be made more clearly in the Reformers than in the Prophets is that this magic enmity was connected, that it was really logically connected internally, with a heightening of the idea of the holiness of God. So, nothing earthly may be holy in itself, nothing earthly carries magical powers in itself, holy is only the great and transcendent God.

This means that demagification does not lead to total desacralization, but the sacred is thought to be exclusively at home in the transcendent. If now such notions of the transcendent God, for example through the Enlightenment and the spread of a scientific view of the world, let us say in the 18th century, become weaker, I think we must not use the same term for this process. It is obviously not a matter of pushing back magic, but of pushing back transcendence.

If we call both disenchantment, it looks as if there is a continuity. But there is no continuity, the enlightened process questions what was the decisive counterweight against magic.)

¹⁴² Akeel Bilgrami, “What is Enchantment?” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 147.

removal of God to a place of exile definitively converted an ancient and spiritually conceived conception of nature into something brute and desacralized.¹⁴³

Hans Joas argues that religion has not disappeared in the modern age. He demonstrates with various examples that modernity and the lie of secularism could not take religion away from human existence. What is important for Joas is the power of religion in its genuineness. That is why when he presents the theory of disenchantment, he is also trying to expose it as a theory that is not against religion. Instead, he uses it to ‘demagify’ religion. For this purpose, he explains secularization with reference to it as a phenomenon that occurred during the prophetic period. The same could be said of the various reformative movements that helped religion to discover its origins. In this way, he ultimately uses it to aim at the perfection of religion. Thus, the above discussion gives us an idea of how religion is considered and analysed both in the present and the earlier times in the face of secularized societies. This perspective of Joas becomes supportive in making a postmetaphysical stance towards religion as valid since a post-metaphysical approach also includes critical analysis towards religion and enables it to take a rationalistic position. This also includes one of the aims of the method of reconstruction that tries to appeal to elements of past in the process of a rational reconstruction of religion.

4.2 Epistemic Proposals

In the following discussion, I shall refer to the three proposals made by Habermas, which are known as epistemic proposals. They are presented in the light of religion’s role in the public sphere in his work, *Zwischen Naturalism und Religion*.

For purposes of public discourse in a plural society, Habermas demands that the religious person consider her faith reflexively, see it from the point of view of others, and relate it to secular views. Though this requires a cognitive capacity that not all religious people have, it is not one intrinsically contrary to religion and equivalent demands are placed on all citizens by the ethics of public discourse.¹⁴⁴

I aim to respond to the various problems caused due to religious irrationality in order to reconstruct various elements of rationality within a religion. This particular chapter has dealt until now the concept of secularism that treats religion from a rationalistic

¹⁴³ Ibid, 148.

¹⁴⁴ Craig Calhoun, “Secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere”, *Hedgehog Review* 10, no. 3 (2008): 17, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42645/>.

perspective, including genuine practices of religion. Secularization, which is commonly believed to be an enemy of religion, offers an outlet for religion to undergo an interiorization and subjectivisation.

Religious worldviews and traditions were transformed into constructions that do both at once: criticize tradition and reorganize the released material of tradition according to the principles of formal law and the exchange of equivalents (rationalist natural law). In this sense, secularization as the rationalization of religion also means that, besides preserving and transmitting traditions, institutions and practices, religious worldviews paved the way for challenging them and innovating them.¹⁴⁵

By focusing on the rationalistic approach, I do not intend to exclude what is unique to religion. It is surely argued that faith cannot be always considered exclusively from the point of rationality. Instead, faith includes basic elements of personal experience and relationships as well as theological concepts such as grace. A philosopher's perspective that seeks to understand religion purely from a rationalistic perspective could only lead to frustration. However, by leaving room for thought as postmetaphysics suggests, by having dialogues that could facilitate an approach to religion from a religious perspective, hypothetically, will establish the ratio of religion differently. An epistemic stance, as Habermas suggests, within the discourse of postmetaphysical thinking aims exactly at such understanding. A closed analysis of the secularization theory in Habermasian tradition exposes a secularized life or world rather than the secularization of the state.

I shall try to expose this epistemic stance that plays a vital role in the reasoning of religion. The word 'epistemic stance' is self-explanatory as it points out to a position based on the epistemological approach towards any particular element, in this case, it is religion. The basic discussion on faith and knowledge lays the foundation in developing such an approach towards religion. As my research is situated in the context of religion in the public sphere, these different types of epistemic stances provided by Habermas are important in public reasoning. The public sphere is the area where religion makes its appearance influencing naturally the societal lives. Consequently, this epistemic approach comes from the understanding that religion, especially, in Europe possesses a 'changed consciousness'¹⁴⁶ ever since the European reformation and enlightenment period. This change of consciousness is described by the sociologists as

¹⁴⁵ Javier Aguirre, "Secularization/Postsecularism", in *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 406, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316771303.105>.

¹⁴⁶ Habermas, *BNR*, 136.

the ‘modernization of religion’¹⁴⁷ or religions taking a modern position. However, Habermas names various challenges that have been posed which back up the reasons for this transformation or modernization. They are “religious pluralism, the emergence of modern science, and the spread of positive law and secular morality.”¹⁴⁸

This epistemic approach according to Habermas must take place in our times. However, it should also take place within the religious traditions themselves and that is why it is considered as a theological responsibility to the society. This is exactly the crux of my thesis and research. In the application of Habermasian postmetaphysical philosophy, the impetus that he gives to various religious traditions to look into their truth and validity claims reflectively becomes vital in the Indian context. By specifying such a philosophical-theological exercise he aims at reasoning religion. “This arduous work of hermeneutic self-reflection must be undertaken from within the perspective of religious traditions. In our culture, it has been accomplished in essence by theology and, on the catholic side, also by an apologetic philosophy of religion that seeks to explicate the reasonableness of faith.”¹⁴⁹

Thus, I will further investigate the three epistemic stances that Habermas proposes concerning religion in the public sphere.

4.2.1 Epistemic Stance to Other Religions

One can see that Habermas distances himself from euro-centrism. European history has assumed an universally accepted societal set-up for the past few centuries due to which Christianity hardly had any occasion to debate itself with other faiths. Or, as the pages of western history say, it discarded the presence of other faiths and became hostile toward them. One cannot deny the fact that Christianity not only failed to welcome other faiths but also even worked towards the eradication of different traditions and faith other than what was ‘Christian’. However, with the modernization of European societies and economic globalization, this singular domination and truth claims came under serious scrutiny. This led to the advent of western

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid,137. Cf. Footnote 46. I (Habermas) am indebted to correspondence with Thomas M. Schmidt for the characterization of a non-agnostic philosophy of religion devoted to the self-enlightenment of religion that, unlike theology, does not speak “in the name of” a particular revealed religion, yet does not merely speak as “its observer” either. ... Friedrich Schleiermacher played an exemplary role on the Protestant side. He made a careful distinction between the role of the theologian and that of the apologetic philosopher of religion (who draws on Kant’s transcendental idealism rather than on the Thomist tradition) and united both in his person.

societies becoming ever more open to other faiths and their truth claims. One cannot forget here the openness of the Catholic Church that became an active member or even an initiator of such actions that involved discourses with other religions.¹⁵⁰ Though Habermas brings it out in our times, initiatives of such dialogues and attempts at discovering the truth in other religions were not alien to the Catholic church owing to its missionary encounters with other faiths and the involvement of missionaries who became agents of these encounters.

Religious citizens must develop an epistemic stance toward other religions and worldviews that they encounter within a universe of discourse hitherto occupied only by their religion. They succeed in this to the extent that they relate their religious beliefs in a self-reflexive manner to the claims of competing doctrines of salvation so that they do not jeopardize their exclusive claim to truth.¹⁵¹

This encounter with other religions and traditions that emerges from discursive rationality, however, cannot be forced upon members of other religions. It is a need that has to be discovered by religious members themselves through self-reflection. This is what is recognized as “a genuine learning process.”¹⁵² This serves as an important element for my research, which aims at the *vorpolitischen Raum*, where religion can gain the capacity of transforming itself in the public sphere.

4.2.2 Epistemic Stance towards the Internal Logic of Secular Knowledge

To comprehend this stance, one must be able to (first) observe two different elements. One is the article of faith and the other is secular knowledge. Now, Habermas claims that an epistemic stance and an analysis of the internal logic of secular knowledge will only help the religious to realize that religion cannot come into conflict with secular knowledge. This brings out, once again, the rationalization of society as analysed by Durkheim, which includes religion as its nucleus.

This epistemic stance allows us to revert back to the axial age characteristic of reasoning. In both cases, the similarity lies in the precedence of rationality or reason. What secular knowledge internally engages with is rationalistic development. In the case of axial age or religious

¹⁵⁰ Regular Interreligious Meetings at Assisi initiated by John Paul II and continued by Benedikt XVI and Francis.

¹⁵¹ Habermas, *BNR*, 137.

¹⁵² Christina Lafont, “Religion and the Public Sphere”, 242.

movements, believers were urged to become aware of reason or be reasonable in their faith. The prophets intrinsically followed the same principle of being rationalistic in their beliefs and practices by steering the people from ritualism to a transcendental relationship with God. The same phenomenon could be seen in all the different axial areas.

Furthermore, religious citizens must develop an epistemic stance toward the internal logic of secular knowledge and the institutionalized monopoly on knowledge of modern scientific experts. They can succeed in this only to the extent that they *conceive the relationship between dogmatic beliefs and secular knowledge* from their religious viewpoint in such a way that the *autonomous progress of secular knowledge* cannot conflict with articles of faith.¹⁵³

The internal logic of secularism mainly demands the capacity to formulate questions in reference to human activity in society. This, obviously and primarily includes, the religious self of a person. The axial age witnessed the emergence of intellectuals who were not among the known groups such as kings and priests but were outsiders from a secular (societal) point of view. They analysed human life and posed questions.¹⁵⁴ Ultimately, these questions had to be answered within a religious purview that project the singularity of the basis of both the secular and the religious. In other words, how could one articulate the cooperation between religious and secular reason, which happens through translation?¹⁵⁵

4.2.3 Epistemic Stance towards the Priority of Secular Reasons in Politics

In the formation of laws for citizens, politics adhere naturally to secular reason so that it can maintain the secular nature of a democratic society. In such cases, it is the responsibility of religious members to make space for politics to refer or base itself on secular reasons.

Secular reasons are basic and vital for the modern states owing to their characteristic feature of pluralism. In reference to India, where the state is determined to be secular in accordance with the Constitution – that is, the former adheres to secular reason as opposed to religious reason – both the citizens as well as the political leaders ought to conceive the importance of

¹⁵³ Habermas, *BNR*, 137.

¹⁵⁴ Robert N. Bellah, “What is Axial about the Axial Age?” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*, 46, no. 1 (2005): 74, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23998793.

¹⁵⁵ Schmidt, “The Semantic Contents of Religious Beliefs and their Secular Translation, Jürgen Habermas’ Concept of Religious Experience”, 179.

secular reason. Such a disposition guarantees both the religious and the secular citizens their space. Meera Nanda's¹⁵⁶ arguments against the religious reasons taking over the Indian public sphere could be supplemented through this standpoint. The epistemic stance is an attitude and disposition that gives preference to the scientific methods which are currently in vogue to contribute to the modernization of human society. I do not intend to argue here the elimination of religion or the modernization of society, but propose a combined working of these two areas.

Why are secular reasons in politics to be considered or given priority over religious reasons? Secular reasons primarily hold onto science as points of reference, which are empirical and go beyond any one particular religion. This itself forms the foundation of neutrality of the state. In differentiating between *Glauben* und *Wissen*, Schmidt argues that religion offers its reasons with connection to revelation, which could be the only element that is seen by philosophy and *Wissen* as posing an argument against the validity of its rationality. It is fundamentally based on the experience of the individual and also derives its legitimacy from this experience of revelation, which is called heteronomy. In natural science, this phenomenon remains as unverifiable. "Philosophy and science are about reasonable and public beliefs, religion about private and therefore latently opinions not grounded on reasoning."¹⁵⁷ In any case, both these areas have their borders, which is to be noted and responded accordingly. This could be seen as an expression of each one's contribution to society. Though religion is not strictly considered by secular reason as a scientific entity, by considering the autonomy and identity of religion for its basic contribution to human existence, there develops mutual respect for one another. Thus, both have their areas of functions or assignment, which is what the word *Arbeitsteilung*¹⁵⁸ denotes. "However, this division of labor is both necessary and constitutive for the modern world."¹⁵⁹

In the face of religious fundamentalism that rises from political favouritism, strict adherence to secular reasons in the executive body of politics is, unquestioningly, a positive stance or solution to the acts of religious fundamentalism in society. But we need to ask the question

¹⁵⁶ Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward. Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*, 52–93.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas M. Schmidt, "Glauben und Wissen: Religiöse Epistemologie und spekulative Religionsphilosophie", in *Interesse am Anderen*, ed. Gerhard Schreiber, 385. München: De Gruyter, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110661170>
Philosophie und Wissenschaft handeln von vernünftigen und öffentlichen Überzeugungen, die Religion von privaten und daher latent unvernünftigen Meinungen.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 386.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Diese Arbeitsteilung ist allerdings für die moderne Welt zugleich notwendig und konstitutiv.

of whether strict adherence of the state to secular means will annihilate or eliminate religion from the public sphere. In the Habermasian sense, it does not.

The “methodological atheism” that he once believed was required of philosophy as a rational discourse as late as “Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World”, an essay in which he acknowledged the limits of linguistification, has since given way to a tentative hope that reason and religion can learn from each other. That would imply that at least some religious discourse might be translated into rationally redeemable truth claims after all. In any case, Habermas ventures that religion might just remain an indispensable complement to moral reason with the understanding that only it can provide hope for a redeemed, reconciled, and fulfilled life.¹⁶⁰

However, secular reason serves as a partner for the religions that provide impetus for the need to hold on to rational traditions. As it is mentioned in the above citation, secular reason cannot ultimately turn out to be a provider and resource for human situations; rather it is only religion that can become an agent and source having the functionality of meaning.

¹⁶⁰ David Ingram, *Habermas. Introduction and Analysis* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 322.

PART VI: Postmetaphysical Approach to Public Religion in India

The following chapter is a crystallization of the Habermasian philosophy of religion in reference to the Indian public sphere. The central theme until now has been the problematization of religion as something lacking rationality in the public sphere; the socio-philosophical approaches that would address and lead to a consensus towards resolving this outlook have also been discussed. The spirit of reformation has served as an example and was exposed through the discourse on secularism that made rational elements of religion available to society. However, as mentioned above, this chapter attempts to bring into dialogue and analyze elements of rationality between religion in India and Habermasian principles.¹

Evidently, when the two elements –, namely, religion and reason – find a way towards synthesis, it could initially lead to an emphasis on the importance of religion to society. Furthermore, religion can also pave a way for a modernistic or emancipatory outlook by unearthing its hidden rationalistic nature. “Religious foundation of ethics was a defining issue for Hindu Indians; an attitude which was provoked at least in part by Christian and Utilitarian criticisms of their religious and social norms.”² This section will further demonstrate how Max Müller brought into light the reformatory character of Upanishads. Thomas J. Green capsulizes this reflection of Müller in the following quote:

[...] Upanishads were the foremost example of religion stripped down to its essentials. The ‘object’ of Upanishads was to cleanse religion by showing ‘the mischievousness of all ritual performances’ and condemning ‘every sacrificial act which has for its motive a desire or hope of reward’; finally, the Upanishads would teach that there is no hope of salvation and deliverance, except by the individual Self recognising the true and universal Self.³

¹ The usage of the word religion is a generalized term that includes the existing religions of India.

² Thomas J. Green, *Religion for a Secular Age. Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 13.

³ Ibid, 104. Cf. Footnote 117. Max Müller, “Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India (1879), 340–41.

Models such as these form the nucleus of this chapter in order to expose the challenges posed by Habermas to Religion within an Indian context.

In the early years of the new millennium, there was a trend and movement in all the Catholic Religious Orders as the world celebrated 2000 years of Christ's presence in the world. These Orders' intentions were to call their members for a return to the roots. There were workshops, seminars, etc., concentrating on looking back into the roots of each Order that would then help them to revive their lifestyle. Though it is just an example that could be sceptically looked at with regard its relevance into a philosophical area, it does reflect a postmetaphysical approach.

Unlike that of the west, Indian religion was never laid out to be an institutional type of religion. Just as Habermas finds it not right to have a functional understanding of religion in the line of secularization, the Indian concept of religion has never had any part in such an understanding of religion.⁴ It goes beyond that. However, India has in its past, unfortunately, lost this original understanding of religion through its contact with the colonizers and their idea of religion. As a consequence of imitation of the colonizers' idea of religion,⁵ the country has lost its substantiality and profoundness in the past few centuries. This is the reason why I want to stress this connection between Habermasian postmetaphysical philosophy and the 'original' Indian religion in this chapter. Habermas's approach comes closer to the Indian understanding of religious philosophy, which is based more on discursive than instrumental rationality. Hence, examples such as Gandhi – who uses a similar methodology of Translation of Habermas and presented to civic society the idea of freedom movement from the ancient sacred Indian texts – are an addition to this chapter; together with some of the important religious reformers of the modern age in India who have also pointed out this truth of religion. By doing so, I try to expose the relevance of Habermasian postmetaphysical thought in the Indian context. The aim is also to demonstrate that in order to exercise postmetaphysical logic towards religion, Indians do not have to look for outside sources, rather they need be aware of the internal sources which are available.

⁴ Wolterstorff, "Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue", 93.

⁵ Here it is to be noted that I am not referring to the aspect of faith of Christianity. Rather I am underlining the aspect of an institutional religion from an external perspective.

1 Significance of the Habermasian Approach to the Problem of Religion

Basing his argument on Kant's principle, the universal principle of right, Habermas argues that every individual can claim his or her own right but at the same time should also be aware of and value the other's rights. Only in this case is there a mutual respect and acceptance of every individual's right. This serves as the foundation for a liberal constitution which guarantees equal liberties for every citizen. In other words, it becomes a universal law that guarantees the right and freedom of every individual.⁶ However, this autonomous nature of individual rights does not lead to an end in itself, but rather "serves as a means to safeguard the equal private autonomy of members of society."⁷ This equality of treatment could be a concern in India as the country contains people of various religions and cultures who have their own convictions with regard to ethical lives based on their religious backgrounds and beliefs. Every religion can be said to contribute to the way its members live but it is the state that guarantees individuals their right to live based on their cultural and religious convictions. However, the state also makes sure that these convictions do not affect or restrict the liberty of other individuals. It is, in fact, the moral law of the state to aim for everyone's equal interest.⁸

This kind of moral theory refrains from committing itself to substantive conceptions of an exemplary way of life that are supposed to be authoritative for everyone. Having become "formal" in this respect, morality is exclusively associated with the idea of equal respect and consideration for each person. This idea of equality also crops up in the positive, compulsory, and individualistic form of modern law in the conception of "equal treatment" and "human dignity".⁹

While dealing with the pluralistic scenario in India, it is valid and important to focus on the point mentioned above. Such an approach is worth in the midst of a complexity of situations. One needs to aim at how members of various communities could be granted liberty in order to

⁶ Habermas, *BNR*, 271.

⁷ *Ibid*, 271.

⁸ *Ibid*, 272.

⁹ *Ibid*.

exercise their faith and present their reasons for social ethics. “The spirit of postmodernism is plural, but not non-binding. The motto of postmodernism is: be religious and let be religious.”¹⁰ As Europe has found its valid foundation in Judaism and Christianity for ethical and moral values as well as for the protection of human rights in the modern world, it is imperative for the Indian society to give more weight to its own religious scriptures. By doing so, it would be able to contribute and conscientize the citizens on moral values and, above all, to concentrate on the protection of human rights. This is, however, an assignment that is to be taken with utmost seriousness. In order for a society to enjoy an atmosphere of ideals such as righteousness and justice, it needs to base itself on solid and vital elements of the ancient scriptures of the land. This is because they provide an amount of deposit on which the society can base itself.

For the normative self-understanding of modernity, Christianity has functioned as more than just a precursor to a catalyst. Universalist egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love.¹¹

1.1 Philosophical Mediation

In the face of growing conflicts between religious fundamentalists and radical secularists – and in line with his broader philosophical project – AGPh (*Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*) is a historical appeal for a tolerant, self-reflective democratic politics based on rational dialogue mediated by open secular translation.¹²

A philosophical mediation is a necessary agent for our society which is currently unconsciously driven to religious forces both in a negative and positive manner. As mentioned above, a

¹⁰ Ram Adhar Mall, *Buddhismus, Religion der Postmoderne?* (Hildesheim: Edition Collage, 1990), 103. “Der Geist der Postmoderne ist plural, nicht jedoch unverbindlich. Das Motto der Postmoderne ist: religiös sein und religiös sein lassen”

¹¹ Matthias Fritsch, “Sources of Morality in Habermas’s Recent Works”, in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Calhoun Craig, Mendieta Eduardo and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 278.

Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality, Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 148.

¹² Peter J. Verovsek, “Habermas Politics of Rational Freedom: Navigating the History of Philosophy between Faith and Knowledge.” *Analyse & Kritik* 42, no. 1 (2020): 194. <https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2020-0008>.

Habermasian methodology would serve as point of reference for finding solutions to dealing with issues such as religious fundamentalism and radical secularism.

In treating metaphysics in relation to Dieter Henrich, Habermas analyses that Dietrich returns to metaphysics denying or maintaining matter as opposed to spirit.¹³ According to Habermas, Henrich is one of the strongest advocates of metaphysics and claims he tries to deal with this common project “to vindicate its validity in the face of analytic materialism”¹⁴. Habermas points out Henrich’s concern to return completely to metaphysics denying or maintaining matter as opposed to spirit. This is, of course, basically a return to the platonic tradition. Henrich, through his work, tries to define the modern view regarding a conscious being and how it can maintain itself. The self-realization of this conscious life can only be reached through metaphysics and thus, he connects metaphysics to modernity.

Habermas responds to his colleague under three various sections: metaphysics, anti-naturalism and the theory of subjectivity.¹⁵ He considers metaphysics as ontological from the ancient Greek philosophical point of view. “Metaphysics had emerged as the science of the universal, immutable, and necessary, the only equivalent left for this later on was a theory of consciousness that states the necessary subjective conditions for the objectivity of universal synthetic judgments *a priori*”.¹⁶ In this manner, Habermas sheds light on the shift of the terminology from *metaphysics* to *consciousness* in Kant’s critique of reason. However, there might be some opposition to retaining the term metaphysics based on the ancient Greek philosophy that deals with the theory of two worlds.

Habermas refers to philosophy and its role as an “interpreter” rather than as a “stand-in” one. According to him, the theoretical role of philosophy should provide an occasion for more profound differences in opinion. We can see Habermas’ shift in his position towards metaphysics from this. However, Habermas retains the role of philosophy as that which helps people to have a life that is “conscious and controlled”.¹⁷ He gives a concrete method for using the ancient religious wisdom and philosophical traditions. I assume that he has, in this context, already conceived the theme of *appropriation*.¹⁸ For he says:

¹³ I have oriented this discourse on a reading based on the exposition given by Daniel C. Henrich. Cf. Part IV: Habermas’ Religion II.

Daniel C. Henrich, *Zwischen Bewusstseinsphilosophie und Naturalismus. Zu den metaphysischen Implikationen der Diskursethik von Jürgen Habermas* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 26ff.

¹⁴ Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking I, Philosophical Essays*, 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue”, 100.

[...] philosophy is still faced with the task of taking the answers of the tradition, i.e., the sacred knowledge of religions and the mundane knowledge of cosmologies developed in the high cultures, and appropriating them within the narrowed and sharpened spotlight of what can still convince the daughters and sons of modernity with good reasons.¹⁹

Although there is a sort of disagreement about this appropriation of the ancient truths, Habermas sees that the European ideologies of morality, freedom and emancipation cannot be understood without the Judaeo-Christian religious foundation.²⁰ It is hard to say exactly what position Habermas takes in dealing with metaphysics. He tries to elucidate on the different theories of the ancient as well as that of Kant's positions. He basically tries to analyse the new modern philosophical situation and the trends: "[...] what remains for philosophy, and what is within its capabilities, is to mediate interpretatively between expert knowledge and an everyday practice in need of orientation."²¹ But one cannot jump into any conclusion as he clearly states that there can be metaphysics no longer in the sense of 'conclusive' and 'integrating' thought.²²

It is important to note that Habermas gives way to the conception that philosophy truly deals with the question of the whole. In contradiction to Henrich, Habermas posits that the world religions do not take the place of the Usher (*Platzanweiser*); rather together with philosophy they hold the position as the Placeholder (*Platzhalter*). He notices that there is a constant invention of ideas in philosophy. This sort of understanding of the concept of philosophy can still serve to contribute to the challenges in the postmetaphysical societies. Through this attitude, Habermas however, proclaims a gesture of farewell from philosophy but he does not share the view of a philosophy which strives after a sort of systemic character. He differentiates between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics, which is a further development of philosophical ideas, which simultaneously move away or turn away from Kant and Hegel. Pragmatism and Hermeneutic discourse decline the deciding premise of the consciousness philosophy, *Bewusstseinsphilosophie*. Here, Habermas tries to find a connecting point between Pragmatism and Hermeneutics for developing his philosophical thinking. Henrich tries to understand the concept of philosophy as a search to understand the ultimate reality, "*umfassende Erklärung des Wirklichen im Ganzen*" and thus basically giving religion the upper hand over philosophy, "*Philosophie zugleich als Nachfolgerin der Religion*."²³

Besides the difference in opinion of the concept of philosophy and its role, Dieter (according to Henrich Daniel) continues with the clarity of the concept of metaphysics. Dieter clarifies

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking I, Philosophical Essays*, 15.

²¹ Ibid, 18.

²² Ibid.

²³ Daniel C. Henrich, *Zwischen Bewusstseinsphilosophie und Naturalismus* (Bielefeld: Transcript. 2017).

that his intention is “to clarify a concept of metaphysics linked to the project of modernity.”²⁴ At the same time, Dieter is of the opinion that “Habermas in his own theoretical enterprise wrongly believes he is dispensed from thinking tasks for which even today there is no better title word than ‘metaphysics’ ”.²⁵ Consequently, it is observed that he sees no alternative for this metaphysics in relation to the modern. Habermas, on the contrary, does not see a sort of – what could be called as an – integration between metaphysics and modernity. He finds out an integrative thinking in the project of modernism without relating it to metaphysics. Above all, he calls this philosophizing as *nachmetaphysisches Denken* (postmetaphysical thinking). “Habermas therefore sees the feedback of the problem-solving strategy to the consciousness-philosophical understanding of the concept of self-consciousness as a relapse into metaphysics.”²⁶ This out-dated concept of self-consciousness of Henrich’s forces itself to the restored attitude against the modernity on the whole.

Dieter’s special status of knowledge impels him to use the phenomenon of self-consciousness in order to indicate the necessity of metaphysics towards the project of modernity. It is unthinkable for Dieter not to strive after metaphysics. Therefore, Dieter considers Habermas’ way of philosophizing in the line of *nachmetaphysischen Denken* as a bad metaphysics. Habermas represents a form of naturalism which is not satisfactory to the understanding of man, because, “the (naturalism) works towards the self-distance of conscious life, because in the end, by handing over the resolution of those primary conflicts to the individual and natural sciences, man is dispensed from an essential task”.²⁷

This special form of presenting knowledge by Dieter Henrich is already an indication of social sciences’ relation to the property of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysical thinking, according to Habermas, is the claim of exclusive knowledge which is not to be questioned beyond. Daniel, however, claims that the specific knowledge which, according to the philosophy

²⁴ Ibid, 32.

[...] einen Begriff von Metaphysik (zu) verdeutlichen, der mit dem Projekt der Moderne verbunden ist.

²⁵ Ibid.

Habermas in seinem eigenen Theorieunternehmen zu Unrecht sich von Denkaufgaben dispensiert glaubt, für die uns auch heute kein besseres Titelwort als ‘Metaphysik’ zur Verfügung steht.

²⁶ Ibid, 34.

Die Rückkoppelung der Problemlösungsstrategie an das bewusstseinsphilosophische Verständnis des Selbstbewusstseinsbegriffs begreift Habermas daher als Rückfall in die Metaphysik.

²⁷ Ibid, 35.

(E)r (der Naturalismus) wirkt hin auf die Selbstdistanzierung des bewussten Lebens, weil der Mensch letztendlich durch die Übergabe der Auflösung jener Primärkonflikte an die Einzel- und Naturwissenschaften von einer ihm essentiellen Aufgabe dispensiert werde.

of consciousness, the subject acquires of himself through self-consciousness appears as an example of that particular form of certainty which Habermas conceives as ‘metaphysical’.²⁸

Habermas sees in Dieter’s criticism of natural sciences a reverse-tendency, which is a sort of neo-conservative attitude. In this way, an attempt is made to reach a scientific analysis of the surmounting or conquering of the fallibilism, through the reference to a theory of self-consciousness. This type of thought pattern corresponds to a rehabilitation of metaphysical thinking and may not have any place in modernity. For Habermas, the concept of self-consciousness takes a new turn in relation to this boundary or demarcation as opposed to the consciousness philosophy and its political implication. After all, Habermas combines a changed concept of self-confidence with the claim to leave behind the metaphysical aspects of Dieter’s theory.²⁹

Furthermore, the *Theoriebegriff*, which is used by Habermas in order to characterize his comprehension of metaphysics could be of use to us in this context of philosophical mediation. He bases himself very strongly on the principle of Aristotle’s *bios theoretikos*, “*Entwurf eines theoretischen Lebens*”. This perspective interprets the discussion about the very strong *Theoriesanspruch* as the confidence of philosophy as a whole. It gives the ultimate foundation and reasoning for answering certain philosophical questions. Indeed, as a postmetaphysical thinker Habermas understands his claim of reasons should be appropriated under this dimension or view.³⁰ This strong concept of theory refers to the redemptive significance of the contemplative life. As religion proposes different ways to attain salvation, philosophy proposes the way of contemplation (life dedicated to contemplation or *bios theoretikos*). Theory demands a renunciation of the natural attitude toward the world and promises contact with the extraordinary. This theory paves way to the understanding of the orbits in nature and universe and the phenomenon of the totality of nature. “In the modern period, the concept of theory loses this link to sacred occurrences, just as it loses its elite character, which is moderated into social privilege. What remains is the idealistic interpretation placed on distancing the everyday network of experience and interests.”³¹

²⁸ Ibid, 34.

²⁹ Ibid, 36.

³⁰ Ibid, 29.

³¹ Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking I, Philosophical Essays*, 37.

1.2 Discursive Rationality: an Alternative to Apologetic Religions

The apologetic nature of presenting religion in our times is apparently a dangerous attitude that could be argued to cause more disintegration to human societies. Therefore, the relevance of its public manifestation is to be carefully analysed and questioned. The word ‘apologetic’ comes from the Greek word, *apologia*, meaning speaking in defence. It is a religious discipline of defending religious doctrines.³² In the given times, social media becomes one of the main forums where a lot of apologetic content is freely being uploaded. There are hardly any restrictions to put a stop to or examine the contents of religious material on social media. The greatest problem is that many of these religious apologists are still seekers who are not sure of a path. On the other side, we also find apologists who are learned men and women.³³ In both the cases, the emotional status of the individuals who are taken up by these apologetical performances poses a danger. One needs to ask the question of how the world is currently working at in order to bring peace from a religious point-of-view? One best method that I would propose based on Habermasian postmetaphysical methodology is to question the need, the importance and relevance of apologetical performances on a public forum. An apologetic approach obviously aims at establishing the fact that one’s own religion is the final path that offers the ultimate truth. Consequently, it negates all other paths of religions. Because of this, in most cases apologetical performances demand an acceptance of (or conversion to) a particular religion while maintaining hostility towards the others. Blatantly, human history tells us that such attitudes are dangerous to the growth of a pluralistic society as they do not leave scope for pluralism. Mall refers to Friedrich Hölderlin, who questions the validity of one and only religion containing the truth.³⁴ We know that owing to globalisation, pluralism has become the model of our present-day societies, which demand to leave space and scope for the other. This implies that we need to question apologetic attitudes in our times and propose, instead, discursive attitudes which would take the methodology of mutual learning and result in the avoidance of the ultimate truth claims. When one is in this way directed towards a discursive approach towards religion, it also leads one to discover

³² Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “apologetics”, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apologetics>.

³³ Refer to Dr. Zakir a popular Muslim Preacher. Or even many evangelicals who constantly establish the truth of their faith in reference to other religions.

³⁴ Ram Adhar Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg, Eine interkulturelle Perspektive* (Freiburg: Karl Albert, 2013), 212. Friedrich Hölderlin schreibt unter der Überschrift “Wurzel alle Übels”: “einig zu sein, ist göttlich und gut; woher ist die Sucht den/Unter den Menschen, das nur einer und einer nur sei?”

common elements in various religions. While making a comparative study of Christianity and Islam which are both monotheistic in nature, Indian religious reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy or Ramakrishna Paramahansa would help the reader to find out that this element of monotheism exists even in Hinduism. Thus, they do not become apologists but rather contributors to a discursive and dialogical comprehension of various religious traditions.

He [Ramakrishna] repeatedly testified from his own experience that all religions are capable of leading people to God. He was a monotheist and a renewer of the Vedanta teaching. Anyone who is willing can realise God. For him God has many names and knows infinite forms. By whatever name we call on God, he hears our call.³⁵

1.3 Constructivism against Fundamentalism

Hindu dharma embraces a universal religion and that is why Rabindranath Tagore, a philosopher from the Bengal School of modern philosophy, expresses his dissatisfaction with the idea of one faith and religion. "If ever such a catastrophe should befall mankind, that his only religion would flood everything, God would have to provide for a second Noah's Ark to save his creatures from spiritual annihilation."³⁶

However, fundamentalist attitudes are apparently different to this as they represent mostly apologetic attitudes. When it comes to religious fundamentalism, one cannot but refer to many such fresh examples. Examples may be cited from India in 2008 when the Christian minority was brutally attacked in Odisha by Hindu fundamentalists or the death of Graham Steins and his children or the attack on the Kashmiri Pandits. These share similarity to the recent fundamentalist events in the west, namely in France where the fundamentalists again identify to a specific religion; in their case, Islam. In both the cases, the fact that religion is the motivating factor is transparent. But there is also another side to it when we see that virtues such as forgiveness, attempts towards reconciliation among various religious groups, mutual respect

³⁵ Ram Adhar Mall, *Der Hindusimus, Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 102.

Er (Ramakrishna) bezeugte immer wieder aus eigener Erfahrung, dass alle Religionen in der Lage sind, die Menschen zu Gott zu führen. Er war ein Monotheist und ein Erneuerer der Vedanta-Lehre. Jeder, der willens ist, kann Gott realisieren. Für ihn hat Gott viele Namen und kennt unendliche Formen. Mit welchem Namen wir auch Gott anrufen, er erhört unseren Ruf.

³⁶ Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg, Eine interkulturelle Perspektive*, 212. Wenn je eine solche Katastrophe über die Menschheit hereinbrechen sollte, dass eine einzige Religion alles überschwemmte, dann müsste Gott für eine zweite Arche Noah sorgen, um seine Geschöpfe vor seelischer Vernichtung zu retten.

for one another despite the differences based on caste, colour, race, etc. are also motivated by religious principles.

The insight that vibrant world religions may be bearers of “truth contents”, in the sense of suppressed or untapped moral intuitions, is by no means a given for the secular portion of the population. A genealogical awareness of the religious origins of the morality of equal respect for everybody is helpful in this context. The occidental development has been shaped by the fact that philosophy continuously appropriates semantic contents from the Judeo-Christian tradition, and it is an open question whether this centuries-long learning process can be a continued or even remains unfinished.³⁷

For Habermas, it is very clear that religion is an agent that has a performative function in societal matters. Through the potentiality that religion has, it equally generates among its followers and non-followers immense attitudes of motivation.

Even today, religious traditions perform the function of articulating an awareness of what is lacking or absent. They keep alive 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 and their profane truth contents were set free?³⁸

In reference to today’s fundamentalist attitudes, especially in India, Mall says such attitudes imply a very narrow approach and understanding of India’s religious traditions. It centrally refers to a closed interpretation of its heterodoxy.³⁹

³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “The Political”. The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology”, in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta, Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 27.

³⁸ Habermas, *Naturalism and Religion*, 6.

³⁹ Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 212.

“Der heutige Hindu-Fundamentalismus impliziert eine gefährlich enge Auslegung von Heterodoxie in Indien. Heterodoxie muss heute positiv besetzt werden, denn wer vor Heterodoxie Angst hat, liebäugelt mit einer Orthodoxie, die neben sich nichts anderes gelten lässt.”

1.4 Reflective Religion based on its ‘*Telos*’

Firstly, this part of discourse on reflective religion is an extended discussion to what I have mentioned in Part IV about the same. Taking Habermas’ proposal on the importance of a reflective religion to our modern times, the following discussion will focus from an Indian perspective the possibility of such a reflective religion. Habermas does not use the Buddhist category of meditative reflection that contributes to the attitude of a reflective religion. However, he makes an elaborate exposition on Buddhism in his latest publication, which comes under axial age reflections. A reflective religion⁴⁰ in India is a necessary attitude of the people. One might question the need for such an attitude. Owing to the manner that the members of various religions practice their religions, it is obvious that this aspect needs to be stressed. Let us consider, for example, the various fundamental attitudes of religious members in various parts of the world and, in particular, India. For Habermas, a reflective model of religion is based on rationality that affects our life and the world at large. This rationality contributes to the renewal of cultures and socialization in a more meaningful manner. Thus, “[...] individuals are motivated to criticize received wisdom and also capable of taking responsibility for life choices, reconciling conflicting demands of diverse social roles, and forging a life history that makes sense.”⁴¹

The origin and purpose of religion in general has been cited by Habermas in reference to Durkheim. In the course of time, apart from this origin due to the cognitive development of the religious members, the production of various scripts came into existence, which is in itself a proof of human intellectuality and the fact that human society needs to live and deal with his fellow men. The sacred scripture *Bhagavadgita* is considered as one of the most important texts of Hinduism. It gives its members a certain impulse and knowledge about being a human being and the wisdom needed to be able to respond to various situations of calamities.

Reflective religion could also be presented as a ‘meditative religion’. The life of Gautama, the young prince who turned towards meditation, was enlightened so that he could review his old religious practices. The path to reflective religion began by questioning primarily the existing practices and finding the true meaning of these practices. Buddha is supposed to have considered giving his own interpretation of the writings of the ancient texts such as the Vedas. He himself did not lead any violent protests in reflecting these texts. Nonetheless, reflective manner taught him the way to *ahimsa* and showed him the way to understand the previous eras through meditation. “The path itself is marked by steps of a reflexive process to overcome the

⁴⁰ Klaus Müller, “Balancen philosophischer Topographie. Jürgen Habermas über Vernunft und Glaube.”

⁴¹ John F. Sitton, *Habermas and Contemporary Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 68.

blindness of individuation process of knowledge, which should lead to enlightenment through meditative exercises, i.e. by disciplining body and mind.⁴² On the contrary, one could note that the reforms in other religions, such as Christianity, took place in a bloody manner. It was a reaction without reflection and consideration.⁴³ The reformation period stands as a witness to the aggressiveness expressed by both reformers and those in authority as well. However, we hear in the modern times that even the followers of reflective movements like Buddhism, too, take part in aggressive protests and bloody battles.

Bhagavad-Gita, *Ramayana*, the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the teachings of Buddha are the most important texts of ancient India before it came into contact with other religions. These texts obviously speak more about the internal aspect of reflection of the human person. In the Habermasian sense, even though it is not so extensively discussed what it means to have a reflective religion, the Indian background with such texts gives us a wider perspective of what it means to be reflective and the purpose of such reflection. Human existence is at the centre of these texts as they constantly refer to the type of life a human person needs to live. Let us take the example of the Bible, which mostly depicts the history of a nation or a race and conveys the message of God through events. The texts of India are philosophical in the sense that their concern is with the human person and how he or she achieves his or her original self. They are not mainly event-oriented, apart from the two epics *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana*.

Habermas' proposal for a reflective religion is a purpose-oriented methodology for a religious attitude. Being a social philosopher, whose concern is what philosophy can do for the society, this proposal lays foundation to an elite and reflective society. It is important for me to concentrate on this aspect of reflective religion because it has a massive impact on the social milieu. The current Indian situation tells us that there is an increase in the superstitious following of religions. The massive increase in certain religious practices that are obviously linked to superstition exist not only in Hinduism but in other religions like Islam and Christianity as well and could be regarded as a cultural factor. So, it could be proposed that religion, in general, is highly superstitious in India in comparison to other parts of the world.

When religion itself is not able to help its members reflect, educate themselves and impart the origin and purpose of their own religion, it might lead to the question of whether religion truly

⁴² Jürgen Habermas, *AGPh I*, 362.

Den Weg selbst markieren Stufen eines reflexive die Verblendung der Individuierung überwinden den Erkenntnisprozesses, der über meditative Übungen, also über eine Disziplinierung des Körpers und des Geistes, zur Erleuchtung führen soll.

⁴³ It is a reference to the aftermath of protestant reformation. Also refer to religious wars, which are basically interconfessional.

contributes to the betterment of the society. One could even question whether such a religion contributes more towards corruption rather than the improvement of society. A rationalistic outlook towards religion also leads to a rationalistic society which will even have the capacity and power to question not just aspects of religion but even issues related to the civic life. The church teaches its members of the fruits obedience can bring to one's spiritual life. And this obedience is applied to all areas of life enabling members to question the existing system. It begins from the level of Parish where questioning the priest is against the virtue of obedience to that of the hierarchy of the Church to the religious orders where obedience is much-demanded. Such blind obedience weakens a person's capacity to be rational and consequently their ability to approach religious practices with a rationalistic view.

Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was an intellectual who envisioned India to be an intellectual society; he made an attempt to establish his vision and conviction by looking back to the religious sources of India.

Nehru's focus, even at this early stage of the nationalist movement, remained the goal of seeking to locate the intellectual sources of democracy in India's vast arsenal of religious and philosophical writings. He was realistic enough to appreciate the need to ground the aspirations of the emerging India in the nation's own self-understanding rather than turning to western justifications. Accordingly, religion was examined in terms of its capacity to engender openness, freedom, tolerance, and reasonableness.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Lamin Sanneh, "The Future of Secularism and the Promise of Diversity in India – A Historical Perspective", in *The Future of Secularism*, ed. T. N. Srinivasan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16.

2 The Functionality of Epistemic Religion

Substantially, it is to be noted that postmetaphysical models use religion and do not discard it. As it was discussed in the chapter on secularism, postmetaphysical approach was employed in order to place religion on its original path. The following examples that I use are models found in India, which also employed this postmetaphysical approach to make religious content available within a social scenario. Underlying this attempt, these models lay stress on 'openness', which is considered one of the most important characteristics of a postmetaphysical approach. This led them to engage in dialogue with Christianity that contributed to their postmetaphysical approaches. Their discussions and engagement with other religions also provided them an occasion to look into the contents of their own religion. This even led them to be visionaries for propagating a universal religion. Sometimes it appears that in a research like this, we are becoming agents in creating a universal religion and simultaneously also reinventing the old religion – humanism. Postmetaphysical research, on the contrary, has its speciality in placing religion at the centre in all its importance. Owing to the already existing openness and plurality within Hinduism, the religion has got immense capacity to adapt to postmetaphysical logic. If postmetaphysical approach is an attempt at saving religion within a secularistic society, which denies its voice and its presence owing to its western historical background, then I would suggest a Hinduistic approach. "(Müller) ... believed that a study of the development of Indian religion could yield a universally valid schema of religious growth, thus suggesting that the monistic teachings of some of the Upanisads, or something similar to them, would be the highest development in the progress of any religion."⁴⁵

2.1 Bengal School of Religious Reasoning

A 'reform within the existing religion' is an expression used by the followers of a particular religion who are beginning to question the existing forms of that religion. It indicates man's intellectual capacity to enquire into the meaningfulness of the various practices of religions. This, obviously, needs to give way to rationality in the process of thinking about the existing forms. Therefore, looking back at the practises of religious reformers would be of great use

⁴⁵ Green, *Religion for a Secular Age*, Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta, 87.

to the present generations if we wish to understand the reality and truth of religions. I shall make an attempt at presenting the important reformers of India in the part that follows. These personalities have made their contributions to Indian society in the area of religion, thus contributing their influence on the social practices of the society. A similar phenomenon – clearly, from the axial age – has been described by Habermas as a ‘revolution in thought’. This type of revolution enlightened the people to move towards a higher level of their cognitive capacity and view various sociological and religious elements from a rationalistic point of view.

The axial-temporal revolution of thought, which prepares itself in the social and cognitive developments of the Near Eastern advanced civilizations, takes the form of monotheism in Israel; in ancient Judaism the moralization of the sacred leads to the idea of the legislation of a transcendent God.⁴⁶

The school of Bengal’s revolutionary thought with regard to religion and its relation to society was one of the leading expressions of Indian religious thought. Not only did it deal with reforming religion but it also created a national spirit that planted seeds of struggle for Indian Independence Movement. Religion became the foundation for these members to build their principles of freedom and independence. Therefore, in the following section, I will make a comparative analysis of sociological engagement of religion, or in other words, the secularization of belief.

2.1.1 Secularization of Belief

A similar attempt such as that of Habermas has already been done by Vivekananda who appeared in the beginning of an era when the western world was being overcome by the secularistic attitude. Vivekananda interpreted *Vedanta* largely in the way that he did because he believed that the only rationally defensible basis for religion against materialism could be found in the ‘pure’ monism of *Vedanta*.⁴⁷ Intellectual and rationalistic approach towards religion bear the essentiality of a postmetaphysical religion. In this case, I would like to present Brahmo Samaj and its impacts here. To comment on the beginning of Brahmo Samaj:

⁴⁶ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 274.

Die achsenzeitliche Revolution des Denkens, die sich in den sozialen und kognitiven Entwicklungen der vorderorientalischen Hochkulturen vorbereitet, nimmt in Israel die Gestalt des Monotheismus an; im antiken Judentum führt die Moralisation des Heiligen zur Idee der Gesetzgebung eines transzendenten Gottes.

⁴⁷ Green, *Religion for a Secular Age*, 113.

Brahmo scientists were among the first modern scientists in contemporary India; Brahmo philosophers waged a relentless struggle to denude Hinduism of its “Excesses” at the same time as they reconstructed the “authentic” Hindu tradition by endowing it with an intellectual respectability on a par with other major religious traditions.⁴⁸

Brahmo Samaj laid the foundation to what we call today a modern India. It was created during the period of 1772 and 1830 at the gates of British capital in the city of Calcutta in India. Just like the flow of trade that flourished in India during that time, radical western philosophical ideas also found a sudden influx. “By serving as avenues linking the regional elite with the dynamic civilization of contemporary Europe, the Orientalists contributed to the formation of a new Indian middle class and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia.”⁴⁹

They were attracted by western thought and saw an opportunity that would lead them to purify Hinduism and produce “an optimistic vision of mankind’s future.”⁵⁰ It was a very fitting invention to the then Indian society, which had always been highly theistic unlike the west which exercised some amount of choice in such matters. “Unitarians and Brahmos with a Unitarian bias, though they attacked the orthodox tradition, advocated social improvement, and struggled for progress, did so as theists in the name of God.”⁵¹ Science was not to be alienated from religious thought. However, we – the moderners – have the tendency to “misread secularism into the methodology of science, the philosophy of science, and even into the psychohistory of the scientific mind and personality. Too infrequently are we reminded that the paradigms of history are relative, that science may have metaphysical roots, and that scientific geniuses such as Newton and Einstein were religious men.”⁵²

2.1.2 Dialectics of Religion

In order to arrive at a solution for a philosophical problem, the method of dialectic is considered as an important agent. This tradition of establishing the relative truth as objective truth through the means of logical arguments is undoubtedly found in different religions. As mentioned earlier, my aim here is to explicitly expose the possibility of a dialogue between *Glauben*

⁴⁸ David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 44.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 43.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

and *Wissen* in the line of Habermas. In this manner, both parties will be eligible to recognize each other as rationalistic components and for my case, religion is also given more credit by becoming an area of openness to science. Consequently, I take the example of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to arrive at the given case.

Roy's methodology in reforming his own religion was developed through his contact with many scientific adventures and inventions of the western world. This, inevitably, aroused in him a desire to have a critical approach towards Hinduism and its practices. What Habermas calls today a mutual learning process, could be found in Roy's approach. "Ram Mohan Roy was [...] a critical modernist who sought to combine Vedanta with modern scientific culture."⁵³ He envisioned an ever-deepening pluralistic situation to reinterpret *dharma* from a rationalistic perspective. The word *dharma* (which is translated to the western world as 'religion') is the highest form of rationalistic expression. He comes to this conclusion by putting "egalitarian religion ethics"⁵⁴ as the foundation of his argument. Shankara's commentary on *Vedanta Sutra* coupled with the *Upanishads* served as vital sources from which Roy derived what is called the model of rational and ethical theism.⁵⁵

Rammohan Roy points to ... the connection with the Supreme Being is to be experienced in one's existence in the ordinary world. To that end, a rational form of worship, without the worship of images or any other externalities, had to be developed. Religious belief had to lead to a moral attitude of service in society and tolerance for the adherent of all traditions.⁵⁶

Ram Mohan Roy fought vehemently against the evil practice of *sati*.⁵⁷ He was able to do that because of the education and enlightenment he received about various religions and their practices. Sati was one of the vilest practices in Hinduism and he had to strike at its very roots with the help of others who supported this cause. It was mainly through the combined effort of a Christian missionary and Roy that the practice was put to an end. Schouten cites a leading newspaper of that time which says: "The manner in which he fought sati showed how the zeal of the Christian missionary and the idealism of the Hindu reformer could be combined to strike at the roots of a social malaise".⁵⁸

⁵³ David L. Gosling, *Science and the Indian Tradition, When Einstein met Tagore* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Green, *Religion for a Secular Age*, 80–81

⁵⁶ Jan Peter Schouten, *Jesus as Guru, The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India*, trans. Henry and Lucy Jansen (Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2008), 9.

⁵⁷ The practice of sati demands that the wife enters the flames of fire at the moment of her dead husband's cremation.

⁵⁸ Schouten, *Jesus as Guru*, 12.

Roy was also able to establish Brahmo Samaj, which means ‘the society of Hindus’. This movement could be understood in our modern terms as a religious reform movement. He considered Hinduism as a monotheistic religion, which gave him the impulse to free the Hindus from all sorts of superstitious beliefs and burdens. Roy’s views as a free thinker were published in his famous Persian book, *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* (A Gift to God). He propagated his views on religion especially by outlining the connecting point of all religious or fundamental teachings.⁵⁹ He worked very strenuously to take Hinduism back to its roots. According to him, there is only one God in Hinduism who is the creator and sustainer of his creation. This God is eternal, unchangeable and unending. It is quite obvious that every religion has plenty of unimportant elements; however, that should not be the criterion to judge a religion as false. Moreover, these elements do not necessarily confirm the essence of a religion. Hinduism is also not an exception and has elements such as these.⁶⁰

But the One of Hinduism is beyond all forms, and it can incarnate in human forms. Roy was strictly against the veneration of images, did not believe in pilgrimages, sacrificial rites and many other ceremonies. It is only a matter of starving the One and cultivating the virtues of ‘charity’, ‘benevolence’, ‘respect’ and ‘harmony’ in order to strengthen the common bond between people of different races and religions. For Roy, India was a multi-religious country in this sense.⁶¹

2.1.3 Mutuality of Religious Traditions

The concept of dialogue and learning from one another as proposed by Habermas⁶² had an anticipated activity within the Indian context and ushered in new philosophic-theological expressions of Christianity. Similar approaches occasioned mutual openness to various religious traditions. This also implies recognition of the rationalistic activity of the other and the other’s

⁵⁹ Mall, *Der Hinduismus: Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen*, 100.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 101.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Das Eine des Hinduismus ist aber jenseits aller Gestalten, und es kann sich in menschlichen Gestalten voll inkarnieren. Roy war strikt gegen die Bilderverehrung, hielt nichts von Pilgerfahrten, Opferriten und vielen anderen Zeremonien. Es gilt nur, das Eine zu verehren und die Tugenden “Nächstenliebe”, “Wohlwollen”, “Achtung” und “Harmonie” zu kultivieren, um so das gemeinsame Band zwischen Menschen verschiedener Rassen und Religionen zu stärken. Für Roy war Indien in diesem Sinne ein multireligiöses Land.

⁶² Habermas, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung*, 31–33.

perseverance towards attaining the truth. In this manner, it totally opposes the principle of truth existing only in one religion and instead focuses on the elements of revelation as available in various traditions. One of the best examples is that of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay.⁶³ He was a Bengali thinker and philosopher who was a Hindu by birth and later turned towards Christianity. His attempts at achieving a Hindu-Christian religious ideology were unfortunately not encouraged by the church in Rome. I shall present his approach in which the principle of mutuality of religions was underlaid. Upadhyaya's attempt with *advaitic* philosophy was to discover in an Indian context the relevance of the Gospel of Christ to a Hindu. It was not a private attempt; rather it emerged in the pluralist scenario of his society. It was a philosophical interaction that he made with the existing traditions in the context of his home.⁶⁴ He asserted his theological approach by returning back to the origins of Hinduism, which he hoped, would open the way that would lead to Christian faith. Upadhyaya was enthusiastic about the idea of how Greeks found the degrees of truths manifested in the incarnated logos. In a similar manner, he envisioned the usefulness of *vedantic* philosophy for making a basis for understanding and interpreting Christian faith within a local context.

We must fall back upon the Vedantic method in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen. In fact, the Vedanta must be made to do the same service to Catholic faith in India as was done by the Greek philosophy in European. The assimilation of the Vedantic philosophy by the Church should not be opposed on the ground of tis containing certain errors.⁶⁵

The case of Upadhyay certainly serves as an example for and opens up a possibility towards finding out elements of truth in various religious traditions. Above all, it helps in analysing a rationalistic approach in presenting the truth of God through a religion.

⁶³ Based on a statement given by the Indian Theological Association in 2007, <http://www.itanet.in/ITA%20Statements2007.html> Refer also: Parapally Painadath, Sebastian Jacob eds. *A Hindu-Catholic: Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's Significance for Indian Christian Theology* (India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008).

Also see: Sean Doyle, *Synthesizing the Vedanta* (Bern: Peter Lang Publications, 2006).

⁶⁴ Biren Kumar Nayak, "Christology of Bramhabandhab Upadhyay in An Advaitic Framework", *Asia Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (April 2008): 107–125. https://www.academia.edu/6575542/THE_CHRISTOLOGY_OF_BRAHMABANDHAB_UPADHYAY_IN_THE_LIGHT_OF_ADVAITIC. Cf. Footnote 4: Tennent presents Upadhyay's theological thought as: Vedic Tradition, philosophical theology of Sankara's Advaitic Vedantism and Indian Cultural context. See Tennet, *Building Christianity*, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Cf. Footnote 17: Upadhyay advocates in favour of the use of *Vedanta* in interpreting the Bible and Christian message and be restated for the Hindu minds. See Upadhyay, "The Clothes of Catholic Faith", 124.

2.2 A Gandhian Position

Dr Martin Luther King in the American world and Mahatma Gandhi in the eastern world were models to demonstrate that a Habermasian process of translation has had its success. They were examples of revolutionaries in the modern world and were able to save the world of theirs with a strong religious background. Both were believers and had access to scriptures during their role as civil leaders and were above all great practitioners of their belief systems. One was a Christian pastor and the other a guru who founded a religious ashram. Both of them engaged themselves in Independence movements, which included and demanded respect and dignity of all. However, I would like to deal with here Gandhi's ideology as it pertains more to the theme of my research. This is primarily to demonstrate how Gandhi has made use of religion to achieve his so-called secular goals. "The authoritative concepts of the Gandhic philosophy of life are also the values he finds in Hinduism."⁶⁶

Gandhi had based himself very much on the Hindu traditions. The concept of *satya*, *ahimsa* and *dharma* is fundamentally found in the various traditions of Hinduism. The *Vedas* helped him develop concepts like *satya* (truth) and *rita* (the moral order of the whole nature).⁶⁷ Gandhi was a personality in whom the combination of religion and politics could be seen very clearly. His religion or his identity as a Hindu was essential for him in order to be effective in his political career too.

The politics of Gandhi is the application of his Hinduism to the situation of India at that time. His novel means of fighting foreign rule – his method of non-violent revolution – is nothing more than a new interpretation of the spirit of Hinduism. Gandhi is first a Hindu and then an Indian, and he even goes so far as to say that he is more willing to give up Indian freedom or independence than his Hinduism.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mall, *Studie zur indischen Philsoophie und Soziologie, zur vergleichenden Philosophie und Soziologie*, 125.

Trans. Die maßgebenden Begriffe der Gandhischen Lebensphilosophie sind zugleich die Werte, die er im Hinduismus vorfindet.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 126.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 131.

Die Politik Gandhis ist die Applikation seines Hinduismus bezüglich der damaligen Situation Indiens. Sein neuartiges Kampfmittel gegen die Fremdherrschaft – seine Methode der gewaltlosen Revolution – ist nichts anderes als eine neue Interpretation des Geistes vom Hinduismus. Gandhi ist zuerst ein Hindu und dann ein Inder, und er geht sogar soweit, daß er eher bereit ist, die indische Freiheit bzw. Unabhängigkeit aufzugeben als seinen Hinduismus.

Gandhi's interest in spiritualising the politics of his time was to live again the dream of the ancient Indian tradition of *Ramarajya*. This is a concept derived from Ramayana, a religious text of Hindus written by Valmiki. According to this text, in the kingdom ruled by the righteous king, Rama, values of truth, justice, and righteousness were the most important of all. Gandhi took it upon himself to return to this concept of *Ramarajya* from his religious texts and to present it to his contemporaries.⁶⁹

The Mahabharata and Ramayana, the two books that millions of Hindus know and regard as their guides, are undoubtedly allegories as the internal evidence shows. That they most probably deal with historical figures does not affect my proposition. Each epic describes the eternal duel that goes on between the forces of darkness and of light. Anyway, I must disclaim any intention of straining the meaning of Hinduism or the Gita to suit any preconceived notions of mine. My notions were an outcome of a study of the Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, etc.⁷⁰

Gandhi's political action could be said to be nothing but the concept of *karma yoga* materialised.⁷¹ Through this method, he makes an attempt at bringing both the secular and the sacred onto the same platform. His commitment towards the freedom struggle is obviously a secular one but such a secular inducement was also supported by his deeply-set religious learning and convictions. Indisputably, the results of his political endeavours bear witness to all this. It is not to be overlooked that he had always presented himself as the follower of strict *vedantic* Hinduism. He placed God in the centre of his freedom struggle and also placed extreme importance to the truth of non-violence in achieving freedom. Once again, I would like to reiterate here the necessity for a reflective religion – one that exists not only in the way that Habermas conceptualises it but also within a meditative reflection, which is characterised through an Indian pattern visible in Gandhi's methodology. Thus, the connection between God and man is made to be irrefutable and consequently validated. Incontrovertibly, we seek after truth and this search, according to Gandhi, is very much identical to the principle of *ahimsa* or the non-violent path that would achieve freedom from oppressors.⁷² Therefore, Mall suggests that one can name his anthropology as an experimental one. Gandhi is a combination

⁶⁹ Michael Blume, *Satyagraha Wahrheit und Gewaltfreiheit – Yoga und Widerstand – bei Gandhi* (Gladbach: Hinder & Deelmann, 1987), 63.

⁷⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. Duncan Ronald, (London: Faber and Faber Limited.), 38–9.

⁷¹ Karma Yoga: Dies ist der Weg der Gottesrealisation durch Handeln, durch die Tat. Das Handeln kann geistiger, körperlicher oder sprachlicher Natur sein. Mall, *Der Hinduismus*, 53.

⁷² Mall, *Indische Philosophie-Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 302.

of a traditionalist who stands on the ground of faith, religion and scriptures and a reformer or a proponent of enlightenment.⁷³

2.2.1 *Satya*

As Gandhi tries to realize his secular cause based on his religious convictions, he considers it as a search for truth. The word *satya* is translated as ‘truth’. His concept of truth is related to the *upanishadic* understanding of truth as the only path that leads to triumph. That is why when we analyse the Indian national flag, we find that the motto that lies behind it is *satyam eva jayate*, which means ‘truth alone triumphs’. *Satya*, however, for Gandhi is not a logical truth – in the sense of a function – “*einer Eigenschaft einer Aussage*” (a characteristic of a statement).⁷⁴ According to this, morality is the basis of all things and truth is the substance of all morality. His understanding of truth is a process of development in relation to the realization of self. Just as Jesus is supposed to have said, ‘I am the truth’, by which statement he means that he identifies truth with himself; for Gandhi, truth and God are identical. He places truth equally with conscience as truth is the inner voice. The highest principle to which truth refers to is the correspondence of thought and word as true.⁷⁵ To adore God, then, would be to adore him only as truth.

The word ‘Satya’ (Truth) is derived from ‘Sat’ which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why ‘Sat’ or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, names of God such as King of Kings or the Almighty are and will remain more usually current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized that ‘Sat’ or ‘Satya’ is the only correct and fully significant name of God.⁷⁶

It also needs to be mentioned that the disidentification of truth with law is not within Gandhi’s philosophical horizon as the highest Law, for him, is identified with truth itself. By doing so, he comprehends that there is a power that unifies and binds all the things together. The term *Rita*

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Mall, *Studie zur indischen Philosophie und Soziologie*, 124–5.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 39.

is an expression of this power – that which constitutes the eternal and divine order. Otherwise, in secular terms it is defined as the solidarity with all the creatures.⁷⁷

Furthermore, this solidarity is exposed in terms of love that has a binding power. Though love can be expressed in egoistic or altruistic ways, it is primarily the latter that generates and promotes life. This sociological anthropology of Gandhi, if we observe closely, has a religious basis or can even be said to be motivated purely by his religious convictions. Thus, one cannot deny the spiritual element that existed in his principles, which were obviously materialized in his civic and secular life.⁷⁸

2.2.2 *Ahimsa*

Another concept of Gandhi's that could be used in order to further comprehend the process of translation is *ahimsa*. The word, *ahimsa*, is translated to English as 'non-violence'. It originates from the idea of equal respect for all creatures and the whole of creation. This concept even led – with the introduction of Jainism in the later period – to the practice of vegetarianism in India.⁷⁹ This was because consumption of meat was considered sinful according to the idea of *ahimsa*. "According to the Manusmṛti, *ahimsa* is the foremost among the *dharmas* that are common to all. It is included in the yoga of mind control. *Ahimsa* means much more than what is meant by non-injury; it implies not doing harm to others even by thought or word."⁸⁰

Gandhi apparently derived this concept from Mahavira, Buddha and also Jesus as these were the progenitors of the religions that emphasize values such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), *karuna* (compassion), *nächstenliebe* (charity).⁸¹ *Ahimsa* is a core value for all Indian societies, including many tribal and religious communities across the land. *Ahimsa* is deeply-rooted in the daily lives of Indians and it is extended to the food habits of many Indians, which is indicated by the tradition of vegetarianism among some Hindus.⁸² Besides the saying, *satyannasti paro dharmah* (truth is the highest dharma), there is another saying in reference to *ahimsa*: *ahimsa paramo dharma*, that is, *ahimsa* as the highest dharma. This idea goes back to Upanishads and

⁷⁷ Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 304.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Neerja Arun Gupta, "Views on Hindu Dharma by M. K. Gandhi", (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2018), 278–287.

⁸⁰ Svami Sarasvati and Chandrasekharendra Pujyasri, *Hindu Dharma The Universal Way of Life* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995), 702.

The word *dharma(s)* in this context need to be more understood as law.

⁸¹ Blume, *Satyagraha Wahrheit und Gewaltfreiheit – Yoga und Widerstand bei Gandhi*, 62.

⁸² Ibid, 63.

outlines that the law of not hurting other creatures is based on the concept of the unity of all life. *Ahimsa* is amongst one of the five ethical virtues presented by Chandogya Upanishad.⁸³

Gandhi, also called as the father of the Indian nation, took up this concept of *ahimsa* in his political philosophy. As it is obvious that Gandhi took the primary role in the independence movement in India, he had to develop a philosophy that would let his voice be heard and gather followers for the cause of independence. Being a highly religious and philosophical person, he took heed to religion and its teachings, especially that of Hindu texts. The Bible also had an influence on him, especially the Beatitudes part of the New Testament. However, he formulated his political agenda of fighting against the British in the form of *ahimsa*, or non-violence. He did not want to take the path of arms and violence; rather, he followed the non-violent method in order to achieve Independence for India. His method of protesting through *Satyagraha* is an example for this in which he employed the two basic principles of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

2.2.3 *Satyagraha* as Synthesis

The word *satyagraha* is commonly identified with one of the great Indian movements, the Independence Movement against the English Raj.⁸⁴ It had been inspired at that time by Gandhi's concept of *satya* or truth as I have mentioned above. This concept is to be understood basically within a spiritual context, which outlines the necessity of actions such as *satyagraha*. Even though it has its origins in a spiritual and religious context, it is vividly experienced within a sociological or communitarian context. Once again, we see here the amalgamation of the secular and the sacred which cannot be stated differently. They can even be argued to be intrinsically interdependent. The literal meaning of the word *satyagraha* is "holding on to the truth."⁸⁵ Thus, it is not just a means to an end but it is the goal and the means encapsulated into one. Therefore, one can even interpret it as *karma yoga* as it orients itself towards action. But the field and context where this is applied is a field of conflicts.⁸⁶ *Satyagraha* was employed by Gandhi in a context of struggle for emancipation in South Africa.

He believed that *Satyagraha* can be used to resolve conflicts ranging from domestic disputes to international issues. The possible areas of conflict resolution include interpersonal conflicts, social conflicts, citizen–state conflicts, legal disputes, industrial disputes,

⁸³ Paul Deussen, *Chandogya Upanishad III 17.4*. (Wissenschaftl. Buchgesellschaft, 4, 1963), 144.

⁸⁴ The Dhandi March or Salt *Satyagraha*, 12 March 1930 to 29 August 1931.

⁸⁵ Ramakrishna Rao Koneru, *Gandhi's Dharma* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2018), 176.

⁸⁶ Blume, *Satyagraha Wahrheit und Gewaltfreiheit – Yoga und Widerstand bei Gandhi*, 283–4.

and international disputes. The ideal outcome of Satyagraha is one where the parties divided in a conflict are united in resolving it by sharing the truth.⁸⁷

It is implicit that by employing *Satyagraha*, physical violence against the adversary has no place; a *satyagrahi* takes upon himself or herself the pain from the adversary as a form to endurance to achieve the result. “Self-suffering in *satyagraha* is directed toward the moral persuasion of the opponent. Self-suffering means voluntary injury to the self to persuade the opponent to become empathetic to the sufferer’s situation and concerns.”⁸⁸

Therefore, *satyagraha* is a technique that involve three principles – namely, truth, non-violence and suffering. Gandhi uses this technique purely in a social context to achieve the goals set by him with regard to the freedom struggle.⁸⁹ One could observe here that the philosophical exercise he is trying to practise is similar to that which Habermas calls translation and appropriation of religious concepts towards a secular society.

2.3 A Critical Appropriation of Religion

The idea of critical approach anticipates his (Habermas) more recent reflections on learning from religion, in which he emphasizes religion as a reservoir of meaning that can serve as a semantic source for postmetaphysical philosophy and social theory, as well as for the citizens of modern secular states.⁹⁰

Ahimsa was a religious concept developed especially in Hinduism. But it could be translated as a concept that would be appealing to members of all religions. Gandhi, throughout his Independence Movement, had members from all religions as his followers. Even though these concepts were essentially Hinduistic in nature, they could be integrated and presented as common concepts so that members of every religion would find them relatable and similar to those in their faith. Moreover, Gandhi did not enforce Hinduism or his faith on his followers and his closest friends were also from other religious backgrounds. In other

⁸⁷ Koneru, *Gandhi’s Dharma*, 178.

⁸⁸ Devi Akella, “Satyagraha: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict Management”, *Journal of Workplace Rights* 14, no. 4 (January 2009): 505, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274344783_Satyagraha_The_Gandhian_Philosophy_of_Conflict_Management.

⁸⁹ Mall, *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg*, 304.

⁹⁰ Maeve Cooke, “The Limits of Learning: Habermas’ Social Theory and Religion”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (2016): 695, doi: 10.1111/ejop.12099. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ejop.12099>.

words, it could be said that Gandhi used an intellectual language that was appealing to all the members.

[...] this theme is to the fore in his (Habermas) writings, where he emphasizes the importance of religion as a semantic resource for postmetaphysical philosophy and social theory ... Thus in an essay on Kant, he describes religious traditions as possible reservoirs of meaning that are capable of exercising an inspirational force on society as a whole.⁹¹

Gandhi used a civic language that could convert religious concepts and convictions towards the societal usage. He recognized the religious deposit of the nation and applied it to societal governance in order to achieve his aim of independence and then to avoid corruption and establish an elite and equal society. Likewise, according to Kanchana Mahadevan, Ambedkar, too, proposes a critical outlook towards religion. “[...] so that it is compatible with freedom, equality and fraternity. Conversely, he also critiques modern interpretations of freedom, equality and solidarity from the perspective of the Buddhist religious ideal of solidarity.”⁹²

The religious treasure of Indians is mainly the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. Therefore, they are to be considered as literature of wisdom and experience of a nation and not of a particular religion. They form the earliest writings of the subcontinent and are highly intellectual in their nature and remains deeply philosophical and religious in our modern times. It is in these writings that we see the quest of the human mind and the nature of an argumentative India. Modern Indians, however, fail to see them as the production of human intellect that need not necessarily belong to any religion as such. There is no reason why these texts should be monopolized by Hindus; it is only the emergence of various religions in India that led them to be categorized as religious texts. It is, nevertheless, not an easy task to convert them into a national hegemony or national literature. The very fact that Buddha took elements from this literature is a sign that they are the basis of a cultural philosophy rather than a particular religion. On account of a similar reality, Habermas puts emphasis on becoming aware of religious deposit. “As he (Habermas) sees it, secular translations of religious projections of successful forms of life can continue to inspire us, and encourage us to make tentative efforts at cooperation with a view to bringing about social change for the better, even without the certainty of divine assistance.”⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid, 696.

⁹² Kanchana Mahadevan, “Rethinking the Post-Secular and Secular with Habermas and Ambedkar”, *Cahiers d’Etudes Germanique* 74, (2018). 114, <http://journals.openedition.org/ceg/2976> ; doi: 10.4000/ceg.2976.

⁹³ Cooke, “The Limits of Learning: Habermas’ Social Theory and Religion”, 696.

3 Reasoning Religion in Public: The Habermasian Challenge to Indian Religions

Through the results of my research, the following part opens up and leads to further themes of research. A critique forms the basis of an extended knowledge. This is what I have been trying to achieve through my research. Various forms of societal developments in the western world form a basis to critique the existing practices, especially that of religious approaches and thinking.

The need to critique is one of the important factors that contributes to a healthy religion especially within a public sphere. What lacks in the Indian context is a continuing and renewed critique of religious traditions and a renewed way of thinking that has been very much a part of the early Indian religion. In the case of Christianity, it is widely accepted that theology is not just a sacred study but also a critical study of faith and its traditions. Every generation produces its critique based on its belief systems, dogma, faith and philosophical and theological propositions. To give an example, Thomas Aquinas – who was considered as one of the important fathers of the church and believed to be the master of theology and a pillar of catholic dogmatic traditions – has also been critically analysed. His teachings are not considered any more as absolute but are rather open to criticism. This is how Christian theology expresses its openness to newer forms and understanding of its own faith, religious traditions and practices. More examples could be given with regard to Christianity so that it opens ground for discussion to understand various themes pertaining to daily human life in our time.

This is what theology does. In the same manner, writings from various religious leaders as well as religious texts from India should be exposed to criticism. That would enable us to reach a newer understanding and do away with what is not necessary. The following points indicate various areas where such exercise is possible.

Indeed, the overall tone of Habermas' recent writings on religion, in which he places emphasis on regeneration of the semantic fabric of society as a *whole*, suggests that what he has in mind is not just *moral* regeneration, in the narrow sense of providing resources for

regulating interpersonal conflicts, but also ethical regeneration, in the sense of providing resources for life-practices that foster human flourishing.⁹⁴

Kanchana Mahadevan argues that “Indian secularism is not a critique of religion or an “Enlightenment fundamentalism” as it is in the West, but rather accommodates both faith and reason.”⁹⁵ Could this also be considered as the real reading of Habermas? Though Habermas has a western outlook, the procedure of his philosophy of religion was to bring about a common platform for both faith and reason to co-exist. In this way, he comes closer to an Indian understanding of secularism. But that should not satisfy or do away with the challenge that Habermas poses even to a highly religious society. But what is more substantial in the analysis between Habermas and Ambedkar is the critical approach towards one’s own religion. In this context, “Ambedkar’s arguments, neglected by Indian academic debates on secularism, are significant. An architect of the Indian constitution, and a member of the erstwhile ‘untouchable’ caste of India, he negotiated both religious faith and reason by making traditions critical while reconstructing them.”⁹⁶

However, my propositions here are basically concentrated on academic centres which become instruments of and largely have their engagements to form religious public opinion. The state only acts on the secondary level when something becomes a public issue. Therefore, I wish to narrow my engagement with local religions in the public sphere and avoid mixing those with the political scenario in India that includes the State extensively.

3.1 Public Theology

All theology is public discourse; that is, theologians internalize the claims, questions, themes, challenges, needs, rhetoric, nature of argumentation, understandings of truth, views on meaning and relevance, norms of communication, plausibility structures, criteria of adequacy and models of rationality from particular publics, such that they do their theology primarily (although seldom exclusively) with that audience or public in mind, whether it is the public of society, academy or church.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid, 699.

⁹⁵ Mahadevan, “Rethinking the Post-Secular and Secular with Habermas and Ambedkar”, 110.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁹⁷ Dirkie Smit, “Notions of the Public and Doing Theology”, *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 3 (2007): 443, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-12341559>. https://brill.com/view/journals/ijpt/1/3/article-p431_10.xml?language=en.

In order to initiate reasoning of religion, I shall start with the proposal of public theology. In reference to the previous parts of my paper, the central theme of which aims at the debate of religion in the public sphere has been mentioned in the Introduction. Here, I shall go into detail what public theology constitutes. On the whole, public theology enables us to engage in discussions about religion that affects our day-to-day lives. This public debate enables us to reason with our religious traditions and beliefs that shape our communitarian and pluralistic world. No conflict based on religion is a remote occurrence but is built on a series of convictions and debates that influence or lead to such events. Therefore, public theology has a role to play in building up events which do not lead to destruction but rather to construction. And in the following points I will be able to enumerate different methods that could be considered feasible in making this public theology a possibility.

Julio describes distinctly the public character of theology.

Theology cannot, in contemporary society, have the luxury of the privatized isolation of individual religiosity, or the ineffective security of denominational confessionality. Theology has to be public to actually be theology. Theology, when in fact it is theology and not merely doctrine, has a public dimension that cannot be denied or hidden; it cannot be restricted to sanctuaries, nor to the new 'holy of holies' of the temples and their priesthoods. The privileged place of theology today is the public square; the place of the struggle for justice; the place of struggle for the humanity of human beings; the place of struggle for the ecological citizenship of all beings living on planet earth; the place of struggle for the freedom to be, as a counterpoint to the pseudo-freedom to have and to consume more and more.⁹⁸

Theology's presence in the public sphere is not a new theme. For example, a trend like that of liberation theology already comes closer to such a phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is to be questioned how "theology should participate in public life."⁹⁹ The plain ideology of merely having a religious voice in the political sphere is not sufficient. In dealing with public theology, Felix Wilfred clearly states that in Asia public theology is more concerned about the public than theology itself. Furthermore, such an approach is a suitable one for a religiously pluralistic society in which Christianity does not have its monopoly.

⁹⁸ Julio Paulo Tavares Zabatiero, "From the Sacristy to the Public Square, The Public Character of Theology", *International Journal of Public Theology*, 06, (Jan 2012): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-12341559>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The Theology envisaged here is not the kind that will confine itself within the Christian community, but one which will have an import for all the actors in public life. It does not mean that we impose a Christian theology on others, which, obviously, will be counterproductive. Rather, Asian Public Theology will be one that will be inherently interreligious in nature.¹⁰⁰

Public theology has its significance to members of all religions. So, when I propose public theology, I refer to the kind of theology that could spring from any religion and has the intention of having its role within the public sphere in order to address issues concerning a pluralistic community. It is important to differentiate the stage of rehearsal and the stage of performance. According to Felix, theology functions as the ‘stage of rehearsal’ and the motivating forces help the individuals to become actors on the stage of performance.¹⁰¹ Also, the application of this public theology, principally, is not limited to any community; rather it has the effect of functioning positively within a pluralistic society. “Moreover, in Public Theology we address and interpret the truths of faith in such a way that they become meaningful to people around us. Even Christology could be so interpreted and explained that a person who is not a Christian by religious belonging will find the discourse meaningful.”¹⁰²

Another important aspect of public theology is associated with the role played by intellectuals and the responsibility attached to their ability. It is the responsibility of these public intellectuals to initiate and discuss the role of religion and its influence in relation to society.

As public intellectuals, our function is that of the emancipation and empowerment of citizens for the full and free exercise of democratic citizenship. In our information-based societies, where the most needed knowledge is hidden and denied to the majority of the population, public intellectuals must fight against such concealment and, along Gramscian lines, struggle against an educational system that does not prepare adequately for freedom, but for submission to the system.¹⁰³

However, it needs to be said that these public intellectuals need to have the necessary sensitivity to understand the realities of daily life and the problems of their civic life. This requires

¹⁰⁰ Felix Wilfred, *Asian Public Theology: Critical Concerns in Challenging Times* (Delhi: Tercentenary Publications, 2010), xi.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹⁰³ Zabatiero, “From the Sacristy to the Public Square, The Public Character of Theology”, 68.

them to not limit themselves to paths and members of their faith but to be open to an inclusive horizon.

Such compassion challenges theology to transcend the limits of the scientific mode of production, without sacrificing the cognitive-intellectual rigour that constitutes theological knowledge. While discernment demands a lived Christian faith that transcends the limits of specifically Christian discourse, in search of a creatively pluralist vision of a just and peaceful society.¹⁰⁴

The resurgence of religion in the public sphere paved way towards concretely developing a critical approach towards religions in general. This sort of approach could only be actualised in a society through an intellectual engagement with religion in the public sphere. Therefore, the need for public theology cannot be denied and should be deemed as a methodology to analyse the religious societal problems.

The following points open up opportunities through which public theology could be made possible and available to people. Undoubtedly, public theology offers more meaning and nuance to the presence of religion in case it is misled or misunderstood by both believers and non-believers. It would help them to go into details of religion and its phenomenon so that it could lead to a better understanding of religious practices and its role in society.¹⁰⁵

A case study of the street pastors in Britain is an example that shows actions motivated by religious principles are not always destructive but can also be constructive for society. This case study clearly demonstrates that the members of this group of street pastors were motivated by their religion to protect the nightlife of certain members. They offered support and protection from criminal actions that occurs during night time to these members. Though their actions were motivated by their faith, they did not explicitly expose themselves as religious through the use of religious symbols. Moreover, they also took these occasions to engage themselves in the discussion and reasoning of religion with a positive outlook.¹⁰⁶

Public theology can mean a lot of variations in its expressions. However, to be more precise: Theologians engage in specific forms of doing public theology- from the endless list of options available – because of sociological reasons, because of their situatedness,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 67.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Van Putten, Overeem Patrick and Ronald Van Steden, “Where Public Theology and Public Administration Meet, Reflections on Jürgen Habermas’ Post-Secular Turn.” *International Journal of Public Theology* 13, no. 1 (2019): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-12341559>. https://brill.com/view/journals/ijpt/13/1/article-p5_2.xml?rskey=TyvOqA&result=9.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 23.

contextuality, embeddedness, accountability to and responsibility for particular social constituencies, whether believers, churches, academic settings, or political environments and convictions.¹⁰⁷

3.2 Critique as a Hermeneutic Responsibility

What does hermeneutics actually do? One could say that hermeneutics helps one to understand. As per the difference between exegesis and hermeneutics, the latter is concerned with the general understanding; whereas exegesis is limited to scriptural texts, especially that of bible. As for my purpose here, it would help to support the understanding of the meaning of objects or reality or the phenomenon of religion. I aim to understand religion within a given context in a manner that constructs our societies.

[...] the classical discipline of hermeneutics, which engages itself with the art of understanding the texts. When our reflections correspond to the direction of truth then hermeneutic will be able to present the problem totally different than what has been generally spoken of or even spread by the media in our modern world. Hermeneutic enables us to have a broader look into and understanding that it includes the complete sphere of a particular problem. It enables to understand the meaning 'sin' of the text.¹⁰⁸

Hermeneutics also brings together theory and *praxis*. The initiator of such hermeneutics, especially during the time of romanticism, is Schleiermacher who asserted that he hates all theory not born from *praxis*.¹⁰⁹ "Understanding cannot be understood simply by talking about it. Rather, it must become accessible within the horizon of methodical analysis, and this business is the business of reflection."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Dirkie, "Notions of the Public and Doing Theology", 447.

¹⁰⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik I. Wahrheit und Methode, Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*. Bd. 1. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1990), 170.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 3. "Ich hasse alle Theorie, die nicht aus der Praxis erwächst".

¹¹⁰ Christian Bermes, Reduktion und Verstehen. Husserls Phänomenologie und die Hermeneutik. Bd. 10, in *Hermeneutische Phänomenologie – phänomenologische Hermeneutik*, (Frankfurt a. M. Main: Peter Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2005), 24.

Das Verstehen nämlich lässt sich nicht verstehen, wenn schlicht darüber gesprochen wird. Es muss vielmehr im Horizont einer methodischen Analyse zugänglich werden, und dieses Geschäft ist das Geschäft der Reflexion.

The importance of hermeneutical responsibility is vital as “to understand a tradition is a similar process with understanding a person in a conversation. Thus, hermeneutics can be seen in a dialogical sense, in which we open ourselves, not only to receive the message of other, but in a sense of transforming our consciousness after the contact with him.”¹¹¹ What does it mean, then, to go beyond hermeneutics in order to understand or interpret religion? Teodor Negru understands Habermas this way:

With this method of depth Hermeneutics Habermas rejects universal hermeneutics of Gadamer in two ways. First, because he considers that Gadamer’s dialogic model of hermeneutics is insufficient to grasp the psychopathological distortion of communication ... Secondly, because theorizing the systematically distorted communication what implies the depth hermeneutics, Habermas called into question the ontological self-conception of hermeneutics which Gadamer explicates following Heidegger.¹¹²

Why should there be a discussion about a hermeneutic responsibility at all? Owing to the motivational power that religion has, it is a major and important responsibility to interpret this motivational power in order for it to lead towards constructive human societies. The following points concretely brings out on whose shoulder this responsibility falls upon. Habermas has rightly brought this out in his thesis with regard to religion as a basic factor of society. Religion can be said to give meaning to human life in its various situations, which could be impossible otherwise. From this perspective, the interpretative responsibility that it carries is enormous. A religious fundamentalist attitude has at its roots, the undisputed and unopposed teaching of religious leaders. The leader’s word is the highest command for a religious fundamentalist that they would obey unquestioningly. Hermeneutic responsibility here involves an awakening impulse of an individual, especially when inhuman practices like war and violence are being justified by religious writings.

Violence is present in all religions, and has been seen as necessary for the realization of religious goals. Religious violence has taken many forms, some as extreme as the practice of animal or human sacrifice, the righteous and often excruciatingly cruel punishment envisaged for sinners, the exorcism of spirits and demons, the killing of witches or apostates, and in ascetic violence against the self. More broadly, every religion has a vision

¹¹¹ Teodor Negru, “Gadamer-Habermas Debate and Universality of Hermeneutics”, *Cultura International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* 4, no. 1(2007): 115, https://philarchive.org/rec/NEGGDA?all_versions=1.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 118.

of divinely legitimized violence under certain circumstances: the holy war of the Christians, the just war of the Jews, and the jihad of the Muslims.¹¹³

Sadly, if these religious writings are not re-contextualized and re-interpreted, then it would not be possible to reach a newer comprehension of religion. India prides itself on the fact that in spite of outwardly Islamic or Christian influences, it has retained its traditions based on ancient religious scriptures. Even though it is a matter of pride, it is something that needs further reflection. This attitude projects the stagnation of culture, philosophy and religious thinking which become hurdles to modernity or development¹¹⁴. My propositions outline a renewed understanding of religion and its texts. Considering the fact that religion is part of one's life and it stands behind everyone's lifestyle, it is a prerequisite that citizens have a religious education that is critical of one's faith, beliefs and traditions.

The very example of political elections in India shows how drastically they are based on religion. The major percentage of Indian politics makes oppositions using religion. Moreover, they confuse religion and nationalism by identifying nationalism with religion. Attitudes such as these, unfortunately, affect the very democratic values of the nation. "If we really want to understand the impact of religious nationalism on democratic values, India currently provides a deeply troubling example."¹¹⁵

The most notorious religious conflict of the generation that shook the nation was the Godhra incident of 2002. The conflict arose between two important religions groups, the Hindus and Muslims. As the local government was a Hindu-led party that showed extreme favouritism towards the members of their religion, they justified the events that occurred. It was one of the nasty political conflicts in the subcontinent and it could be noted that it began as a religion-based communal problem that resulted in the deaths of many. The religious problem arose from the Hindus' claim that a certain land was the birthplace of a God of theirs, which in the subsequent years went into the ownership of the Muslims. The supposed defilement of one's God is the basic problem here. This was, however, not observed by the religious leaders who never wanted to have rationalistic conversations about it without favouring extremist attitudes. On the contrary, they actively supported the prejudices and fuelled the communal feelings that lay beneath it. "Gujarat provides a vivid example of the bad things that can occur when a leading political party bases its appeal on a religious nationalism wedded to ideas of

¹¹³ Krishna Kumar, "Religious Fundamentalism in India and Beyond", *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 32, 3 (2002): 29, <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol32/iss3/10>.

¹¹⁴ The word development could be more appealing in comparison to the term modernity, because the term modernity is more often identified or associated with western civilization.

¹¹⁵ Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 1.

ethnic homogeneity and purity.”¹¹⁶ One could claim that this is an incident that occurred years ago and may not be of relevance today. However, it was proven not to be the case as the Indian Supreme Court has found this time (2020) to pass its verdict on the incident under the political rule of the same political leader who is now the Prime Minister of the country. There are positive claims that at least the issue has been settled; but these claims submerge the fear of whether such prejudiced judgements could affect the nation’s integrity and secular nature.

3.3 Proposition to Initiate Habermasian Principles

This part reflects on the various propositions that are to be made towards the end of my research. In order to make the Habermasian principle or the philosophy of religion realistic on the Indian soil, I wish to propose the following areas where it could be done. The following section details how it could be done within a completely religious milieu. There are different areas that could concretely make these principles available. The aim of these proposals is to spread awareness of what is missing in public religion.

3.3.1 Critical Religious Study

“The academic debate on Indian secularism neglects a critical hermeneutics of religion. It highlights India’s spontaneous coexistence and overlapping of religious communities in the light of which secularism de-absolutizes faith and valorises religious pluralism.”¹¹⁷ The reality is that religion is found in almost every educational institute in India based on the managers of these institutions. Christian schools, without a doubt, have regular Christian instructions in most of their institutions. Likewise, the schools managed by Hindus and Muslims also have adopted the same manner. Teaching of religion is part of their private curricula, even if it is not approved by the government officially. Incidentally, local governments have overlooked it and, at the same time, we often hear of school authorities being attacked based on this reality. What is indeed the need of the hour is to introduce a common religious education with a neutral language that would accommodate and initiate an analytical approach towards one’s own religion.

If religion plays an important role in the lives of Indians and influences very strongly the political and social lives, then it is in these classrooms that religion has to be discovered in a

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 2.

¹¹⁷ Mahadevan, “Rethinking the Post-Secular and Secular with Habermas and Ambedhkar”, 112.

constructive manner. It is the classroom that could show the path of critique towards religion and its role in the public sphere. Many are apparently afraid that a critical approach towards studying religion would lead Indians to the European fate of religion being highly side-lined. However, this is an attitude that would not give one an opportunity to have a critical outlook towards one's own faith and religion. Even though, excellence in scientific areas is evident within the Indian society, the real contemporary need of the time is the ability to be critical towards one's beliefs and philosophical approaches to both public and private lives. A real radical religious life comes from a desire to live one's religion radically. On the contrary, any religious act that goes against one's religion is not an act of radicalism but the result of ignorance of one's own religion. Such attitudes can be addressed by having or receiving a critical religious education. When it comes to religious education in academic centres, especially schools, there is a tendency to introduce scriptural catechetical studies of a particular religion. This, of course, would be of no help towards the development of a critical view. Instead, a study of religion in general without these should be of much value.

Ambedkar suggests a philosophical approach to the study of religion. The teachings of specific religions, not encompassed by an over-arching philosophy, need critical assessment. A descriptive and normative study, philosophy of religion differs from the comparative approach that holds all religions as equally worthy.¹¹⁸

The Council of Europe had a position earlier based on the idea of a laity that does not discuss religion as a public issue. This principle considers religion as a private matter that need not require debate on the public level; however, this approach was changed later. A certain space had been created in the council that sought to include studies of religion in its policy with regard to its educational programme. What is to be observed here is the intentionality behind the introduction of religious studies into the educational policy. This move was taken after 2002 because the new millennium, undoubtedly, experienced more religious conflicts in pluralistic societies.¹¹⁹ Examples of such incidents are not lacking as well. There have been a lot of stereotypes created through the media leaving no space but to make religious studies a necessary one. "Education is the key way to combat ignorance and stereotypes. School and university curricula should be revised, as a matter of urgency, so as to promote better understanding of the various religions ... as an essential part of the history, culture and philosophy of humankind."

¹¹⁸ Ibid,114.

¹¹⁹ Robert Jackson, "The Council of Europe, Human Rights and Education about Religions and other Worldviews", in *Values, Human Rights and Religious Education*, eds. Jeff Atley, Leslie J. Fancis and David W. Lankshear (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 51.

(Council of Europe, 1999) This is just a stepping-stone for considering the issue of religion in the modern world. In the later years, especially with the twin tower attack in USA, it became obvious that there is a pressing need to take the matter far more seriously.¹²⁰

Jackson analyses the type of institutions which express their nostalgic nature by promoting older ways and by imparting education based on a single faith. This, he especially delineates with regard to Christian education in the schools in Britain. These are called faith-based schools. Nevertheless, there are faith-based schools which are even models of dialogue and create space for the exchange of ideas about various religions. They initiate attitudes which “... respect the voice of the child and maintain a stance of openness to others in society ...”. These can be obviously considered as primary steps towards legitimate and inclusive education centres. “The view was advanced that all schools should promote social justice (including religious tolerance), knowledge about religions, the development of pupils’ skills of criticism and independent thinking as well as dialogue and interaction between young people from different backgrounds.”¹²¹ Though Jackson’s views are mainly based on a European society – which was beginning to come into terms with multi-ethnicity, cultural and religious set-up – this typology of religious education is even applicable to the Indian context. A pluralistic atmosphere is obviously not a new situation in India, but what is important is a more conscious academic education about the reality of the societal forms within India.

The common school should not be a secularist school, but an inclusive school. It has the potential to be a forum for dialogue between students and teachers from different religious and non-religious backgrounds and for providing pupils with the skills to interpret, reflect upon and gain insight from different worldviews. It should also provide pupils with opportunities for debating issues of religion, culture, morality or citizenship and for encounter and exchange with people having different views and commitments.¹²²

3.3.2 Religious Authorities

With regard to religious authorities, I would like to state that in all the religions mainly the priests play a very important role. Whether be it in metropolitan set-up or in a rural set-up, it is the priest who is considered to be the authority for every religion. The important factor

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Robert Jackson, *Religious Education for Plural Societies, The Selected Works of Robert Jackson* (Third Avenue: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 211.

¹²² Ibid, 216–7.

is then to analyse how open and ready the religious authorities are to initiate such principles. Religious authorities should have a more principle-oriented attitude rather than an egoistic and power-oriented one. The latter attitude will not allow the authorities to update and check themselves with modernistic thinking in order to contribute to the growth of society. Principles such as ‘emancipation through religion’ and ‘reformation’ apparently will not play a role in their vision if it is limited.

The title of this section on reasoning religion implies a methodology of rationalistic approach towards religion. However, it is to be carefully observed that sometimes reasoning religion is only done with regard to another’s religion and not one’s own. This itself is a form of apology. But in a pluralistic society, reasoning religion implicates reasoning one’s own religion and the formation of a critique of one’s belief systems rather than the Other’s. To cite a part of the Gospel: ‘why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye when you have log in yours?’ This is actually a logical approach and will, firstly, help in avoiding religious conflicts based on careless comments, which often lead to violence. Secondly, it helps pluralistic communities to grow in a mutual manner by having the shared goal of reasoning religion.

When religious authorities use public forums to make addresses, they are essentially obliged to follow this sort of attitude and duty. As the public sphere forms the thought of the public, an ‘attentive language’ is to be expected wherein the sentiments and emotions of the members of various religions are to be taken into consideration so as not to hurt them.

3.3.3 Centres of Religious Formation

Why do I consider centres of religious formation as important places wherein the Habermasian principles could be discussed? It is because we could agree, indubitably, that these centres produce candidates who shape the religious opinion of the believers. India is considered as one of the countries with the highest population of people affiliated to religion. People frequenting religious places, engaging themselves in religious activities, debating religion on social media, engaging in hate-crimes based on religious differences, etc. are not strange activities to the Indian community. These signify the need for the professional propagators of various religions to respond to such incidents using a critical perspective.

The philosophical disciplines are to be taught in such a way that the students are first of all led to acquire a solid and coherent knowledge of man, the world, and of God, relying on a philosophical patrimony, which is perennially valid and taking into account the philosophical investigations of later ages. This is especially true of those investigations, which exercise a greater influence in their own nations. Account should also be taken

of the more recent progress of the sciences. The net result should be that the students, correctly understanding the characteristics of the contemporary mind, would be duly prepared for dialogue with men of their time.¹²³

Candidates who prepare themselves to be official propagators are to be introduced to a Habermasian methodology that accommodates a self-critical perspective of one's own religion. In a religiously pluralistic milieu, these members have the duty to form the religious opinion of their members, thus nourishing a spirit of acceptance and appreciation of pluralism. In order to better direct the religious opinion of their members, they themselves are to be primarily introduced to such methods during the years of their formation. Fortunately, a systematised formation programme is available in many of the religions. But whether a critical study of one's own religion is also made available is yet to be checked. Nevertheless, here I limit myself to the Christian and Catholic formation centres with regard to such approaches. Do they see the necessity and possibility of such a critical study?

The recent works of Habermas published in 2019 clearly indicates that to understand religion and the way it works within a society, we need to undertake a critical study of religion, and above all, it has to be done from its sociological perspective because it has never grown alone. Even though philosophy has tried to distance itself from religion to follow a secular path, one cannot speak of it without reference to religion. In this manner, Habermas brings out the rationalistic elements of religion, which have been denied by some secularists. Therefore, studies similar to these contribute to the formation of the candidates.

3.3.4 Religious Gatherings as Public Sphere

This research is aimed at presenting a typology of religion in the public sphere that will reasonably coexist with a healthy religiously pluralistic society. If the case envisages a democratic and religiously pluralistic society, then what follows is the development of a critical study of their contents. Such a study would bring various concrete elements in religious and philosophical texts that would contribute towards the goal. As Maureen points out Habermas' intention with regard to religion in the public sphere goes beyond Rawls' 'proviso' that allows religious citizens to present their reasons in the political field. Though they might be reasonable, they need not be acceptable to other members; thus, they remain in a domain of conflict and are called as

¹²³ V. The revision of ecclesiastical studies. 15. Decree on priestly training *Optatam Totius* proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html.

“irreconcilable tensions”.¹²⁴ However, Habermas means “Instead, in view of the entrenchment they cause it is the task of reason to call all sides to self-reflection and to initiate a process in which antagonistic perspectives can learn from each other.”¹²⁵ As per Habermasian intentionality, one need not take away religion from the public sphere but adopt it within a newer approach of its existence in society. Naturally one cannot deny its contribution to society, but one cannot also deny the negativity that it endorses occasionally in society.

Habermas’s position shows its Kantian colours by calling for a distinction between moral reasons that can be shared by religious and non- religious fellow citizens, and different world-views, religious or secular, which the neutral state will leave undecided. What is new is that for him now the comprehensive doctrines corresponding to each of these world-views do not have to be silenced; indeed, they are asked to articulate and offer themselves in an open-ended conversation.¹²⁶

While contextualizing Habermas within the Indian religious setting, I have mentioned religious spaces as the public sphere. It had been argued that religious space is indeed a public sphere that is often not considered or recognized as it is. As per my result, a rationalistic existence of religion is one of the stages of religion in the public sphere. The debate of religion in the public sphere is obviously a wider field that cannot be just limited to the point of rationality. Other discussions like the political aspect of religion in public sphere refer to its relation to the democratic nature of the state and its secularistic expression. However, this requires another field of discussion beginning from the stage that recognizes the aspect of rationality in religion. It even further leads to discussions such as religious freedom and its political significance and could even concentrate on case studies such as concrete religious conflicts and their analysis in various societies.

The challenge that lies here is to *recognize* that religious places often form the public opinion, sometimes even without being aware of it. It is more obvious in the case of Christianity where the churches are not just places for ritualistic religious practices, but also places where the religious teachings are disseminated verbally. In churches, the scripture is interpreted and spoken to the worshippers on a constant basis when they gather. This is true for Islam and partially true for the Hindu temples as well. In case of Hindu temples, the activity of

¹²⁴ Maureen Junker-Kenny, “Between Postsecular Society and the Neutral State: Religion As A Resource for Public Reason”, in *Religious Voices in Public Spaces*, eds. Nigel Biggar and Linda Hogan (Oxford: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2009), 59.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

proclamation of scriptures and their interpretation is not so regular in comparison. However, there is an obvious presence of a number of religious gatherings formed in order to listen to the various freelance gurus – which is again a common occurrence in India. It could also be compared to a number of Christian sects whose pastors gather on regular basis. These religious gatherings, in fact, do not have any purpose in connection to educating its members in their scriptural texts or in leading to discourses pertaining purely to their spiritual interests. Additionally, they include elements and themes that relate to social and political life of the country that are even discussed in vehement tones. These are also example of events that have an apologetic nature, which attract large crowds not only physically but also through the social media.

Religious claims and discourses basically contain a dogmatic authority, which gives them the credibility to certain validity claims. According to Habermas, this sort of dogmatism is inevitable. The authority that these dogmatic principles of religion possess is unquestionable as they form its very bedrock. These dogmatic claims are given to the religions and is based on their insights on intersubjectivity.¹²⁷ Consequently, when religious gatherings mix up dogmatism with their exclusive or apologetic interests within a religiously pluralistic society, it leads to the formation of a political public opinion of its adherents which is not limited just to a spiritual realm. Reasons behind such fundamental dogmatism are not easily changeable even when they are confronted with good intentions. Because they form the centrality of a believer's faith – thus contributing to their basic ethical and moral convictions – attacking that would be a very difficult task. Nevertheless, it is a reality that takes place in our societies. Therefore, could the postmetaphysical approach not be a challenge to public religion in India?

Through the recognition of rationality of religion, it has become obvious that we are on a safer ground than those before us to further proceed with discussions pertaining to religion. From a European perspective, the discussion on rationality in religion has been a matter of debate ever since the time of Reformation. In the same vein, one cannot deny the pre-existence of a reformative spirit on the Indian soil – which had already been demonstrated through the exposure of the axial age – and not just limit its existence to Europe. However, in Europe this has been gradually capsualized within academic areas. Though this reformative philosophy coupled with the enlightenment history has indeed influenced and led to the freedom struggle movement from colonisers in India, it has gradually disappeared in the following years. Ideas such these could not be further unearthed because of this as well. One of the best examples that

¹²⁷ Maeve Cooke, “Violating Neutrality? Religious Validity Claims and Democratic Legitimacy”, in *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta und Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 445–6.

I could cite within the Catholic religion is the event of Vaticanum I & II. It has hardly been left out of the seminary classrooms. Their religious gatherings still become centres of promotion of an euphoric religion which neglect the intellectual aspect of religion. Therefore, my research is highly oriented towards the Indian context, which sometimes has to begin from the ground level and this may not be the case for the western societies.

IV Conclusion – Towards a Critique of Religion

Towards the conclusion of my thesis, I am obliged to take into consideration some of the brutal atrocities based on religion that shook our societies.¹ These series of tragic events have triggered one of the societies which gave rise to the idea of secularism in the sense of total separation of church and state. One cannot turn a blind eye towards the gruesome attacks motivated by ‘religion’ and the consequent repercussions. Primarily, the research had the objective of a study that was concerned about religion and its role, especially in Indian public sphere. Taking into consideration the current performative character of religion, I felt a need to undertake this study analysing its role and influence in the public sphere.

Therefore, the research is aimed at deepening the knowledge about religion from a socio-philosophical perspective through an extensive study of the Habermasian philosophy of religion. Simultaneously, the aim was to conscientise the readers about the importance of recognizing the rational fund that religion possesses. In order to engage in a discourse with this problem, I proposed a Habermasian philosophy of religion as an alternative to the existing conception of religion’s role in the Indian public sphere.

1 Why Habermas?

This research has revolved around the methodology of making the concept of rational religion available and actively present in our civic societies in opposition to what we understand as the fundamentalist or terroristic religion. The expression, ‘rational religion’, is of course not a new approach, rather it has been in usage since the reformative ages, which always concentrated on a rational approach towards religion. However, the difference in my work lies in having found a methodology that analyses how this rational religion could be made a possibility to the public sphere. To this end, I have used Habermas’ postmetaphysical philosophy that underlies in reasoning with religion.

Habermas, however, bases his critique of religion by placing postsecular societies as a point of reference, ultimately leading it to become a euro-centric perspective, or in other words, a

¹ In reference to Paris attacks based on religious terrorism, which took place in October 2020.

western standpoint. Religion in the non-western world takes up more of an anthropological position and cannot be limited to a sociological or normative interpretation. For instance, Talal Asad's religion is not just a normative concept but it basically includes the experiences of individuals, which influences their religious attitudes in public.²

Habermas being agnostic is not a suitable agent to address the matters of religion objectively and could be considered as a controversial intellectual. This would perhaps lead to a confusion on our part to place him in any particular category. Firstly, as an agnostic intellectual, he cannot have an access to the opaque nature of beliefs and thus he cannot question the validity of his contribution towards religion. Secondly, he only addresses the issue as an outsider, or as merely an observer who probably may not be in a situation to personally comprehend the religious actions of a religious person. Thus, his contribution could be viewed by the religious sections of society as a deficiency that cannot present a case for religion. Furthermore, when he says that the European society could not be what it is without Judaism and Christianity, he establishes the basic need of religion in society; whereas at the same time, he refuses to be a part of this religion which he esteems as important. This situation was nonetheless clarified by his statement that he is tone-deaf to religion (*religiös unmusikalisch*). Although Habermas is in a position to enlighten religious problems philosophically within the public sphere, it is obvious that the anthropological aspect of religion – which can only be experienced through one's faith – is not within his competence.

Nevertheless, Habermas remains as an option to make this research relevant in our times, when the power of religion is rapidly increasing both within the secular and non-secular societies. Thus, the exploration of Habermas' philosophy of religion was demonstrated through the reconstruction of the element of rationality that is overshadowed either by a fundamentalist interpretation of religion or by a highly misunderstood secularism that denies the existence and engagement of religion in society.

As Florian Uhl observes, Habermas' basic conviction that communicative rationality will substitute religious rationality sooner or later is certainly not his present position. He tends to see more light and positive elements in religion in his later writings.³ In order to arrive at placing religion in a safer area of rationality, the method of reconstructing its rational heredity is vital. This is the reason why this research began primarily by demonstrating the *zusammenwachsen* of religion and rationality of society. This, of course, has been basically projected by highlighting the theory of the axial age, which formed one of the foundations of my thesis. In

² Jonas Jakobsen, "Secularism, Liberal Democracy and Islam in Europe: A Habermasian Critique of Talal Asad", *Contraste, Revista de Filosofia*, 20 (2015): 113–125 114. 22 December 2020. doi: <https://doi.org/10.24310/Contrastescontrastes.v20i3.2419>.

³ Florian Uhl, "Vom Ritual zur Sprache", 256–57.

trying to raise awareness about the importance of religion in society, Habermas clearly mentions that modernity has to reconcile itself with religion, instead of pushing it away or placing it under the roof of the non-rational. Therefore:

In speaking of complementary intellectual formations, I am expressly rejecting two positions: first, the blinkered enlightenment which is unenlightened about itself and which denies religion any rational content, but also second, Hegel's view for which religion represents an intellectual formation worthy of being recalled, but only in the form of a "representational thinking" (*vorstellendes Denken*) which is subordinate to philosophy.⁴

Nevertheless, Habermasian methodology is often expressed as rational reconstruction, which was also the steering principle of my research. As Pedersen expresses, Habermas uses this method –

... without it always being equally clear what is meant. [...] Reconstruction is being performed in the sense that he starts with earlier theorists or theoretical positions, picks these apart, corrects them for errors, and puts them back together again.⁵

To the western problem of an excessively secularistic attitude and to the Indian problem of excess in religion, this thesis tries to bring about a balanced methodology that could be applied within both contexts. It works equally in a situation where religion is ignored (because it has been falsely accused of its irrationality) through the exposition of its rational inheritance and in a situation where religion leads to communal irrationality through highlighting the history of purifying religion from its irrational practices and approaches.

2 Resurgence of (Negative) Religion

The starting point of my research was to recognize the resurgence of religion in our times. Even in the so-called secular western nations there is an obvious resurgence of religion, which is sometimes expressively visible not only through the increase in the presence of various religions but also through religious terrorism. One might suppose through the emergence of societies distancing themselves from religion that we have passed the age of apologetics. On the contrary, today we see it in various forms and these have been explained through reactionary modernism

⁴ Habermas, "An Awareness", 18.

⁵ Pedersen, Jørgen, "Habermas' Method: Rational Reconstruction", 482.

and militant truth claims.⁶ These religious apologetics use the public sphere to spread their personal opinions as public opinions. There are scholarly apologetics who lead discussions or invite members of other religions to make their case by defying other religions. Unfortunately, this is not the way to a spirit of dialogue but rather only increases a spirit of agitation.⁷

History teaches us that similar negative discussions in the past, for example in Christianity, have led to a lot of human misery as well as the persecution and destruction of cultures and histories. So, it is worth questioning whether such apologetic discussions are still valid in our present day world. If a person is truly striving to establish peace through religion, it would be basically important to avoid apologetic discussions and truth claims. Instead, only by basing oneself on the *spirit* of one's religion could a profound contribution be made to the society.⁸

The proposal made by Habermas through postmetaphysics is one that uses such methodology. It avoids fundamentalist truth claims and enters into a dialogue that occurs through communicative rationality to establish a consensus. Since it is not the prerogative of a single religion to possess the truth, postmetaphysical thinking facilitates the acceptance of other religions with respect. This may not demand one to forsake one's own religion because each religious group has found its divine expression in its own milieu. Thus, in this manner it also creates space for interreligious dialogue based on philosophical discourse.⁹

3 Critiquing Public Religion

According to Habermas, the principles of public sphere mandates that one cannot confine religion to a private sphere; rather it occupies a larger space and stage for its performative

⁶ Another very modern form of this problem could be attributed to social media – which is available faster than one could imagine in the earlier times – that discusses religions freely. Those involved in these discussions range from an ordinary believer to a sceptical philosopher and an apologetic theologian. There are all sorts of people who discuss religion publicly. Thus, already a public opinion of religion is now being formed through a storm of confusions based on individual convictions, which find small groups to large audiences what is called as 'likers'. Opinions about religion, which are not scholarly, are stunningly the most accepted or viewed videos that form public opinion in a very rapid speed.

⁷ However, one cannot deny the efforts being made by scholars and leaders of various well organized religious institutes towards reconciliation and peace through a spirit of dialogue and not by being apologetic. The signing of peace treaty between the Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi (2019) is an example of how church and official Islam are making attempts towards a spirit of dialogue. Cf. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

⁸ This has been explained by giving an exposing of religious movements and their contribution to human society.

⁹ Also see: Habermas, *AGPh I*, 110–174.

character to become tangible. This denotes that the private religious experiences and convictions are expressed through opinions that shift from a private sphere to a public sphere. By exploring various social organizations such as *varna* (caste) system in India, this public nature of religion has been established. The fact that every religious gathering or forum moulds various opinions of the members was expressed through the analysis of religious meetings. The opinions that arose from such assemblies range from dogmatic religious views to socio-political ideologies. Every religious public sphere can be said to represent the performative character of religion. "Religion is not primarily reflected in a world view, but is embodied in the practice with which the community of believers performatively testifies to the content of their faith."¹⁰ While contextualizing Habermas within the Indian religious setting for the purpose of my study – in part one and then towards the end of part five – I have tried to expose this characteristic of religion, which is also its most important element. It could be argued that true religion cannot only be projected in public terms, but it has many other phases, including for example, a personal transcendental experience. However, this is where I limited the scope of my study. With regard to my research, religion that is expressed and visible in the public sphere is what played the central role.

The analysis of religion's presence in public, especially within the Indian context in comparison to the West, has been the revolving idea of my study. Therefore, the core of my argument was to aim at a reasonable and rationalistic religion; particularly, when it makes its public appearance. This naturally involves the role of state that has the responsibility to support it in order to fulfill the principle *sarva dharma sambhava* (equal respect to all religions).¹¹

The constitutional state must not only act neutrally towards worldviews but it must also rest on normative foundations which can be justified neutrally towards worldviews – and that means in postmetaphysical terms. The religious communities cannot turn a deaf ear to this normative requirement. This is why those complementary learning processes in which the secular and the religious sides involve one another come into play here.¹²

My thesis has been an attempt at finding a way for a reasonable religion in public. Therefore, it has required a critical approach to deal with the innate sociological factors of religion and its mechanisms, which is expressed as follows by Habermas, "... because religions are not only

¹⁰ Ibid. 192.

Religion spiegelt sich nicht primär in einem Weltbild, sondern verkörpert sich in jener Praxis, mit der die Gemeinde der Gläubigen die Inhalte ihres Glaubens performative bezeugt.

¹¹ Refer to Part I, 3.3.1. Political Neutrality.

¹² Habermas, "An Awareness", 20–1.

absorbed in the cognitive dimension of world views, but were constitutive for the structuring of early socio-cultural forms of life as a whole and have therefore attracted the interest of social theory from the very beginning”.¹³ Religion at its earlier stage was not just like any other societal element, rather it was the very nucleus of society; it could even be stated that the human society today is a product of religion. All public life has been basically steered by societal norms that have been given the status of sacrality, which in their later phase, has achieved a further status as a separate entity that preserved these norms. And, thus we have the institution of religion. However, individual transcendental experiences could not be definitely separated from this sphere and they had to become the foundations or sources of authority to religion. Thus, while I do not deny the centrality of transcendality as being the holder of religion, it is important to realise that the composite fusion of these two elements is the reality of religion today in the public sphere. So, in order to deal with such a reality the Habermasian approach is seemingly fitting and develops a critical standpoint. His approach towards philosophy is non-hierarchical and that is important. The dialectical approach is obviously an open approach that allows people to express their views and facilitates various ideas to flow in. It evidently implies a dialogical method that engages itself in the exchange of ideas without sticking to the old models. There is may not be any absolute way; but, at least, the dialogical method allows us to approach and discuss various issues with a spirit of openness. Habermas’ idea of reflective religion has served as an impetus for its application within the Indian context. Well, one might and should ask: which religion in particular? My response to this is that religion in general. The religions that are still the instruments of superstition and pull the masses backward in their societal lives.

4 Genealogy of Religion and Reason through the ‘Axial Age’

The dialectics of *Glauben* and *Wissen* mark the *mise-en-scène* of the intentionality in discovering the genealogy of religion and reason. Following the postmetaphysical approach, in order to combat the problem of religion, my study started with an analysis of the Durkheimian understanding of religion. This brought about the results that expose the genealogy of religion contributing to a simultaneous growth of cognitive elements in society. This part disclosed the

¹³ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 182.

[...] weil Religionen nicht nur in der kognitiven Dimension von Weltbildern aufgehen, sondern für die Strukturierung der frühen soziokulturellen Lebensformen im Ganzen konstitutiv gewesen sind und daher von Anbeginn das Interesse der Gesellschaftstheorie gefunden haben.

idea about how one cannot separate religion and society because all societal rationality has emerged from what we call today as religion. Furthermore, in order to support this argument, the concept of religious rationality has been explored through the concept of the axial age. The discussion on the axial age was intended to lay a foundation for understanding the mechanics of postmetaphysical approach to religion. For Habermas, 'modern reflexive religious belief' or what he calls as 'postmetaphysical philosophy' has its roots in 'axial intellectual formations'.¹⁴ By dedicating a large section of a chapter to the axial age, I attempted to demonstrate how religions and their founders strove towards its rationalistic presentation. "Post-metaphysical thinking tends to miss the element that is characteristic of religion and constitutive for a religious understanding of the world, as long as it only looks at the cognitive structures that emerged in the worldview revolution of the Axial Age."¹⁵

Through the investigation of various religious movements, namely prophetic ones like Christian and Buddhist, diverse elements of rationalistic attitudes were exposed. Through a repeated emphasis on reasonable religious practices, whether it is in the Judaic sphere or the Indian context, it has been made clear that the intentionality of the religious founders was far from inhuman fundamentalist and destructive religious notions. They, on the contrary, demanded a reflective exercise of religion based on sound human cognition and reason. Thus, "Axial Age initiates the independence of thinking and reflection".¹⁶ Such an approach is also characterized by its revolutionary thinking as it follows a critical path by questioning basically the existing religious practices. What is more fundamental to recognize here is that Habermas, through his rational reconstruction, tries to find rationality not outside of religion, but within it – and it forms the integral part of the cognitive growth of religion.¹⁷

Both Habermas and Benedict see religion as a resource of reason. Because of this, both of them disagree with the modernistic application of reason, which they consider as naïve. Instead, they open up discussions allowing modernity to consider reason from a broader perspective.¹⁸ The essentiality of comprehending religion that is founded on axial methodology will be further clarified in the following section that considers secularism.

¹⁴ Rees, "Decolonizing Philosophy? Habermas and the Axial Age", 221.

¹⁵ Habermas, *AGPh I*, 192.

Das nachmetaphysische Denken neigt dazu, das der Religion eigentümliche, für ein religiöses Weltverständnis konstitutive Moment zu verfehlen, solange es nur die kognitiven Strukturen in den Blick nimmt, die in der Weltbildrevolution der Achsenzeit hervorgetreten sind.

¹⁶ Gordon, "Axial Age." 24.

¹⁷ Habermas, *Religion and Rationality*, 158.

¹⁸ Friedo Ricken, "Postmetaphysical Reason and Religion", in *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Jürgen Habermas et al, eds. Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt. Trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 55.

5 Secularization as a Research Programme

Modernity (or modernization) is understood as a process of rising above the existing situation. It helps us to go towards a better functioning of the society and aims for better life situations. However, when modernity does not reach its goals or correspond to such an understanding, then it is to be observed that it leads us backwards into the past and concentrate on the negative practices of antiquity instead on the betterment of life. If the substance of humanity is at stake owing to religious reasons that are supported by the state, then such reasons are to be questioned.¹⁹ Furthermore, the different perspectives of secularism – the Indian and western – also contribute towards analysing the meaning of secularism, which is not anymore Eurocentric. Rajeev Bhargava presents Indian secularism in the sense of neutrality, which differs from the western understanding of secularism. Thus, it contributes to extending the horizon of the research programme of secularism beyond the West. “The concepts of secularization and secularity make sense as an analytical framework for a comparative research agenda that aims to examine the historical transformations of all world religions under conditions of modern structural differentiation.”²⁰

This research has moved from the common understanding of the historical event of secularizing the produce of the church to observing secularization from different perspectives based on the concept of *Entzauberung* by Hans Joas as well as the analysis of secularism in the light of Taylor’s arguments. These discussions have brought into light how religion could work towards its genuine self. The loss of the sociological meaning of religion and its role in constituting an individual’s self, have been analyzed so as to propose a possibility for regaining the purpose and origin of religion. This part has demonstrated that a critique of religion has not come from outside but rather from within – having its roots already in the prophetic disenchantment – which possesses the capacity for universalizing morality. Thus, it can be said to denote the Habermasian character of self-reflective religion.²¹

The application of such an approach is not only useful to religious circles; rather it is useful even to the secular public sphere, which becomes the stadium of its (religious) performance. Habermas expresses this universal character through his proposal of an epistemic stance towards other religions and the internal logic of secular knowledge and also by acknowledging the priority of secular reasons in politics.²²

¹⁹ Große-Kracht, “Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe”, 71.

²⁰ Wohlrab-Sahr, “Revisiting the Secular”, 13. Cf Footnote 35: José Casanova, “Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad”, in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, eds. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 19.

²¹ Habermas, “An Awareness.”, 21.

²² Habermas, *BNR*. 137.

6 Formative usage of Religious Deposit

Owing to its rational inheritance and contribution to cognitive growth, religious reasons obviously function for the growth of society. However, it does not effectuate unconditionally that society employs religion in order to produce constructive results. Therefore, a Habermasian approach towards religion has demonstrated how this rational inheritance of religion could be implemented for public life. It has been exposed centrally through the concept of translation.²³ It is, however, not a one-to-one translation, but rather a postmetaphysical approach, which encourages us to look for the availability of semantic contents and deposits that could be translated. Consequently, it accommodates the availability of religious content to both religious and non-religious members. In the case of India, it tries to build up concepts that are available and useful to members of all religions, thus becoming a methodology that can prove its functionality in a religiously pluralistic society. For this purpose, various examples were given from the Indian context, especially in the last section where figures such as Gandhi and members from Brahma Samaj experimented with translation.

Postmetaphysical reason has the ability to translate semantic contents of religions into universally accessible discourses, though it must be emphasized in this context that it is always a matter of individual contents which do not extend as far as the core of faith as a whole.²⁴

By stating that Europe cannot think of its societal moral life without the Judeo-Christian foundations, Habermas firmly asserts the vitality of religion. This is the very deposit of religion enjoined with the philosophical contribution. In a similar manner, through my research it has been shown that India is also formed on such religious deposit. Furthermore, to demonstrate the same, an emphasis has been laid on the *upanishadic* texts owing to their universalistic nature which does not limit them to particular religion. These ancient texts became sacred for the members of the society who grew up with them. Unlike the mythological texts, they concentrate more on the human beings and their constant striving towards a transcendental being. The greatest fund that one can find in the Indian Upanishads is the dictum *tattvamasi* which means 'that thou art'. This kind of a realisation has the potential to lift up a human being from all sorts of evil acts in the world and to make him a noble person. This is the great motivation principle that it gives to the people. The realization of this dictum is what is required at least for the people of India. Such a realisation can lead to the ousting of evil inclinations like

²³ Also see. Friedo Ricken, "Postmetaphysical Reason and Religion", 53.

²⁴ Ibid, 57.

selfishness, discrimination in the name of caste, creed, race, colour, etc. Western understanding of religion mainly has to do with its systemisation through the safeguarding of people's beliefs as proclaimed by an authority. On the other hand, an Indian understanding of religion based on *dharma* emphasises the need for freedom in worshipping a deity when a person feels the need to do so in accordance to his or her spiritual self. It becomes more a free worship (without any rules for it) in that case.

Therefore, lastly, a critical study of religion surely allows one to understand the concept of God and religion's genesis in the human society. Such a critical study done with the help of sociologists will enlighten even a religious-minded person to see through the perils of fundamentalism. A reflective critical study of religion will enable them to have an open discussion about areas pertains to religion. That will always leave a room for productive scepticism towards what is considered the absolute truths of religions. This research thus further opens up the problem in order to question whether a critical perspective of religions is available in the Indian society. It also questions religious education and whether it allows one to be critical towards of one's own beliefs and traditions.

V BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADCOCK, Cassie S. *The Limits of Tolerance-Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- AGUIRRE, Javier. "Secularization / Postsecularism." In *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta, 406–410. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Accessed on 27 May 2010. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316771303.105>.
- AHMED, Ziauddin & Ahmad, Z. "The Concept of Jizya in Early Islam." *Islamic Studies* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1975): 293–305. Accessed on 21 April 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20846971>.
- AINSLIE, T. Embree. "Religion, Communalism, and Security in Post-Independence India." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*, eds. Chris Seiple, R. Denis Hoover and Pauletta Ottis, 226–237. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- AKELLA, Devi. "Satyagraha: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict Management." *Journal of Workplace Rights* 14, no. 4 (January 2009): 503–523. Accessed on 09 November 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274344783_Satyagraha_The_Gandhian_Philosophy_of_Conflict_Management.
- ALBERT, Hans. "Die dualistische Metaphysik von Jürgen Habermas. Eine kritische Untersuchung seines nachmetaphysischen Denkens." *RMM Perspectives in Moral Science*, Vol. 0, (2009): 109–120. Accessed on 24 June 2020. <http://www.rmm-journal.de/>.
- ANWANDER, Anton. *Die Religionen der Menschheit*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1927.
- ARBIB, Michael A. and HESSE, Mary B. *The Construction of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Accessed on 25 March 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511527234>.
- BAHR, Ehrhard. "In Defense of Enlightenment: Foucault and Habermas." *German Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1988): 97–109. Accessed on 14 May 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1430836.
- BASHAM, Arthur Llewellyn. *The Origin and Development of Classical Hinduism*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- BAUM, Herman Alois. *Kant: Moral und Religion*. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1998.
- BAUMGARTNER, Hans Michael. "Das 'Ethische Gemeine Wesen' und die Kirche in Kants Religionschrift." In *Kant über Religion*, eds. Friedo Ricken and François Marty, 156–167. Münchener philosophische Studien Band 7. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992.
- BELLAH, Robert N. *Religion in Human Evolution*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011.
- BELLAH, Robert N. "Confronting Modernity. Maruyama Masao, Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor". In *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun, 32–53. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- BELLAH, Robert N. "What is Axial about the Axial Age?" *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*. 46, no. 1 (2005): 69–89. Accessed on 4 July 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23998793.

- BERMES, Christian. *Reduktion und Verstehen. Husserls Phänomenologie und die Hermeneutik*. Bd. 10. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2005.
- BHARGAVA, Rajeev. "An Ancient Indian Secular Age?" In *Beyond the Secular West*, ed. Akeel Bilgrami, 188–214. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. Accessed on 04 July 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/bilg17080.11.
- BHARGAVA, Rajeev. *Secularism and its Critics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- BHARGAVA, Rajeev. *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- BIELEFELDT, Heiner. "Was sind Menschenrechte?" *Una Sancta* 62, (2007): 130–139.
- BILGRAMI, Akeel. "What is Enchantment?" In *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun, 145–165. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- BLUME, Michael. *Satyagraha. Wahrheit und Gewaltfreiheit – Yoga und Widerstand bei Gandhi*. Gladenbach: Hinder & Deelmann, 1987.
- BREUL, Martin. *Diskurstheoretische Glaubensverantwortung*. Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2019.
- BROOKE, John. "Science and Religion." In *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Roy Porter, 739–761. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Accessed on 26 March 2019. DOI:10.1017/CHOL9780521572439.033.
- BROWN, Wendy. "The Sacred, The Secular, And The Profane." In *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun, 83–104. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- BRUCE, Steve. *Secular Beats Spiritual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- BUHREN, Frank. *Kant und die Diskursethik*. Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2010.
- CAIAZZA, John C. *Religion, Violence, and the Secular State*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017.
- CALHOUN, Craig. "Secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere." *Hedgehog Review* 10, no. 3 (2008): 7–21. Accessed on 14 April 2020. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42645/>
- CASANOVA, Jose. "Exploring the Postsecular: Three Meanings of "the Secular" and Their Possible Transcendence." In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 27–48. Cambridge: Polity, 2013.
- . "Welche Religion braucht der Mensch? Theorien religiösen Wandels im globalen Zeitalter der Kontingenz." In *Handlung und Erfahrung*, eds. Bettina Hollstein, Mathias Jung and Wolfgang Knöbl, 169–190. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2011.
- CHAMPAKALAKSHMI, R. "Sankara and Puranic Religion." In *Ancient to Modern*, ed. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube, 49–86. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- CHOUKROUNE, Leila, and PARUL Bhandari. "Understanding the Modern in India." In *Exploring Indian Modernities, Ideas and Practices*, eds. Leila Choukroune and Parul Bhandari, 1–20. Singapore: Springer, 2018.
- CLOTHEY, Fred W. *Religion in India. A Historical Introduction*. Routledge: New York, 2006.

- CONLON, Frank F. "Speaking of Caste? Colonial and Indigeneous Interpretations of Caste and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Bombay." In *Ancient to Modern*, eds. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube, 291–311. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- COOKE, Maeve. "Die Stellung der Religion bei Jürgen Habermas." In *Religion, Moderne, Postmoderne – Philosophisch-theologische Erkundungen*, eds. Klaus Dethloff, Ludwig Nagl und Friedrich Wolfram, 99–120. Berlin: Parerga, 2002.
- . "The Limits of Learning: Habermas' Social Theory and Religion", *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (2016): 695, doi: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ejop.12099>.
- . "Violating Neutrality? Religious Validity Claims and Democratic Legitimacy." In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 249–276. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- DHAVAMONY, Mariasusai. *Hindu-Christian Dialogue*. Amsterdam: Radopi, 2002.
- DISSE, Jörg. *Kleine Geschichte der abendländischen Metaphysik*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001.
- DURKHEIM, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press, 1995.
- DURKHEIM, Émile. *The Sociology of Religion*. 2010. Accessed on 10 November 2017. <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/durkheim6.html>
- EISENSTADT, Shmuel Noah. "The Axial Age Breakthrough in Ancient Greece." In *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt, 29–39. New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1986.
- EISENSTADT, Shmuel Noah. *Kulturen der Achsenzeit*. Trans. Ruth Achlama and Graviella Schalit. Nördlingen: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1987.
- ESTERBAUER, Reinhold. "Jürgen Habermas' Rede über die Sprache der Religion". In *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler und Herta Nagl-Docekal, 299–321. Wiener Reihe. Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13. Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007.
- FIGL, Johann. *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.
- FIRESTONE, L. Chris, and Nathan Jacobs. *In Defense of Kant's Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- FISCHER, Peter. *Philosophie der Religion*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht UTB, 2007.
- FLASHAR, Helmut. *Aristoteles: Lehrer des Abendlandes*. München: C.H. Beck, 2013.
- FLOWER, L. Robert. "Mythos and Logos." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 131, (2011): 45–66. Accessed on 26 Oct. 2020. DOI: 10.1017/S0075426911000048.
- FORNARI, Emanuela. *Modernity out of Joint: Global Democracy and Asian Values in Jürgen Habermas and Amartya K. Sen/Emanuela Fornari*. Trans. Philip Larrey & Silvia Cattaneo. Colorado: The Davies Group Publishers, Aurora, CO, 2007.
- FRITSCH, Mathias. "Sources of Morality in Habermas' Recent Works." In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Calhoun Craig, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 277–300. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

- FURSETH, Inger. “The Return of Religion in the Public Sphere? The Public Role of Nordic Faith Communities.” In *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere*, eds. Fredrik Engelstad, Hakon Larsen, Jon Rogstad and Kari Steen-Johnsen, 221–237. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.
- GABRIEL, Karl. “Der aktuelle Diskurs über Säkularität und Moderne in der Soziologie.” In *Säkularität und Modernes*, eds. Karl Gabriel and Christoph Horn, 78–96. Grenzfragen Bd. 42. München: Karl Alber, 2016.
- GABRIEL, Karl. “Religion und Menschen im Kontext der Gesellschaft, Religionssoziologische Perspektiven.“ In *Mensch – Religion – Bildung. Religionspädagogik in anthropologischen Spannungsfeldern*, eds. Thomas Schlag, Henrik Simojoki, 308–317. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. *Hermeneutik I. Wahrheit und Methode, Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*. Gesammelte Werke Bd. 1. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1990.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. *Hermeneutische Entwürfe, Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.
- GAITANO, Norberto Gonzalez. “Public Opinion in the Church, A Communicative and Ecclesiological Reflection.” *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016): 173–205. Accessed on 30. März 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2016.1238559>.
- GLEASON, Paul. “From Jürgen Habermas to George Lindbeck: On Translating Religious Concepts into Secular Terms.” *JSR (Journal of Scriptural Reasoning)* 15, no. 1 (March 2016): Public Scripture. Accessed on 02 November 2019. <https://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/files/2016/03/GLEASON-READY-FOR-PUB.pdf>
- GORDON, E. Peter. “Axial Age.” In *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy, and Eduardo Mendietta, Allen, 24–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- GOSLING, David L. *Science and the Indian Tradition. When Einstein met Tagore*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.
- GREEN, Thomas J. *Religion for a Secular Age*. Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.
- GROSSE-KRACHT, Hermann Josef. “Offene Fragen im Universum öffentlicher Gründe. Jürgen Habermas und die Öffentlichkeitsansprüche der Religion.” In *Moderne Religion?*, eds. Thomas M. Schmidt and Wenzel Knut, 55–91. Freiburg: Herder, 2009.
- GUHA, Ramachandra. “The Multiple Tragedies of the Kashmiri Pandits.” *Hindustan Times (New Delhi)*, September 8, 2019. Accessed on 11 February 2020. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/the-many-tragedies-of-the-kashmiri-pandits/story-8QKwIRf8ZrsfxhXlqwUEMM.html>.
- GUSFIELD, Joseph R. “Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change.” *American Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 4 (1967): 351–362. Accessed on 19 May. 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2775860.
- HÖHN, Hans Joachim. *Postsäkular. Gesellschaft im Umbruch – Religion im Wandel*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007.
- MIKLASZWESKA, Justyna. “The Idea of Immanence in Charles Taylor’s Philosophy of Religion.” In *The Sources of Secularism*, eds. Hasse Hämäläinen and Anna Tomaszewska, 35–51. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

- HABERMAS, Jürgen. “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology.” In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 15–33. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- . “A Philosophy of Dialogue.” In *Dialogue as a Trans-disciplinary Concept. Martin Buber’s Philosophy of Dialogue and its Contemporary Reception*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr, 7–20. *Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums* Bd. 3. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
- . “An Awareness of What is Missing.” In *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age. Jürgen Habermas et al.*, eds. Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt. Trans. Ciaran Cronin, 15–24. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.
- . *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie, Die okzidentale Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen*. Bd. I. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019.
- . *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity, 2016.
- . *Communication and The Evolution of Society*. Trans. Thomas Mc Carthy. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- . “Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights”, *Metaphilosophy* 14, no. 4 (July, 2010): 464–80. Accessed on 13 November 2020. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24439631>.
- . *Glauben und Wissen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001.
- . “Modernity: An Unfinished Project.” In *Habermas and The Unfinished Project of Modernity. Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, eds. Maurizio Passerin d’Entrevès and Seyla Benhabib, 38–59. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- . *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Trans. Christian Lenhardt und Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990.
- . “Noch einmal: Zum Verhältnis von Moralität und Sittlichkeit.” Vortrag an der Universität, Frankfurt a. M., 19 June 2019. Accessed on <http://habermas-rawls.blogspot.com/2019/06/video-habermas-lecture-on-moralitat.html>.
- . *Postmetaphysical Thinking I, Philosophical Essays*. Trans. William Mark Hohengarten. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992.
- . *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- . *Religion and Rationality, Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*. Polity Press, 2002.
- . “Religion in Public Sphere.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (April 2006): 1–25. Accessed on 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x>
- . *Sprachtheoretische Grundlegung der Soziologie*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2009.
- . *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick Lawrence Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
- . *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity, 2017.
- . *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. II. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1981.
- . *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen and RATZINGER, Joseph. *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und Religion*, Freiburg: Herder, 2011.

- HABERMAS, Jürgen and RATZINGER, Joseph. *Dialectics of Secularization*. Trans. C.R.V. Brian McNeil. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen and THOMAS, Levin Y. “The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment.” *New German Critique*, no. 26 (Spring–Summer, 1982): 13–30. Accessed on 13 May 2020. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/488023.
- HANGES, James Constantine. “Durkheim and Early Christianity.” In *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today*, eds. Thomas A. Idinopulos and Brian C. Wilson, 143–162. Köln: Brill, 2002.
- HARNACK, Adolf. *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten: Die Mission in Wort und Tat*. Bd. 1. Leipzig: Heinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1906.
- HARRINGTON, Austin. “Habermas and the ‘Post-Secular Society’.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 10, no. 74 (2007): 543–560. Accessed on 28 February 2019. DOI:10.1177/1368431007084370.
- HARVEY, Peter. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Eds. Charles S. Prebish, Damien Keown. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007.
- HASAN, S. Nurul. *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India*. Edited and Introduced by Satish Chandra. New Delhi: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2005.
- HAWLEY, John Stratton. “Sanatana Dharma as the Twentieth Century Began.” In *Ancient to Modern*, eds. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube, 312–336. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- HAYES, John Haralson. *Amos the Eighth Century Prophet: His Time and His Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- HENRICH, Daniel C. *Zwischen Bewusstseinsphilosophie und Naturalismus. Zu den metaphysischen Implikationen der Diskursethik von Jürgen Habermas*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017.
- HEREF, Jeffrey, “Reactionary Modernism, Some Ideological Origins of the Primacy of Politics in the Third Reich”, *Theory and Society* 10, no. 10 (November 1981): 805–832. Accessed on 23 March 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00208269>.
- HILPERT, Konrad. *Die Menschenrechte: Geschichte – Theologie – Aktualität*. Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1991.
- HUNKE, Sigrid. *Glauben und Wissen, Die Einheit europäischer Religion und Naturwissenschaft*. Wien: Econ Verlag, 1979.
- INGRAM, David. *Habermas Introduction and Analysis*. New York: Cornell Univerity Press, 2010.
- INWAGEN, Peter Van. *Metaphysics*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009.
- IROEGBU, Adolphus Chinwe. *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*. Hamburg: Kovač, 2007.
- JÜTTE, Stephan R. *Analogie statt Übersetzung. Religion in Philosophy and Theology* Bd. 86. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016.
- JACKSON, Robert. *Religious Education for Plural Societies. The Selected Works of Robert Jackson*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.
- JACKSON, Robert. “The Council of Europe. Human Rights, and Education about Religions and other Worldviews.” In *Values, Human Rights and Religious Education*, eds. Jeff Atley, Leslie J. Fancis and David W. Lankshear, 47–68. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018.
- JAKOBSEN Jonas. “Secularism, Liberal Democracy and Islam in Europe. A Habermasian Critique of Talal Asad.” *Contraste, Revista de Filosofia*, 20 (2015): 113–125. Accessed on 22 December 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24310/Contrastescontrastes.v20i3.2419>.

- JASPERS, Karl. *The Origin and Goal of History*. Trans. Michael Bullock. London: Yale University Press, 1953.
- JOAS, Hans. *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz*. Freiburg: Herder, 2004.
- . *Braucht Werterziehung Religion?* Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007.
- . *Die Macht des Heiligen*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017.
- . "Die Macht des Heiligen." Deutschlandfunk, October 19, 2017. https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/hans-joas-die-macht-des-heiligen.886.de.html?dram:article_id=398429.
- . *Die Sakralität der Person, Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012.
- . "Die säkulare Option. Ihr Aufstieg und ihre Folgen", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 57, no. 2 (2009): 293–300. Accessed on 04 August 2019. DOI:10.1524/dzph.2009.0025/ Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster.
- . *Faith as Option*. California: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- . "The Independence of Religious Phenomena: The Work of Ernst Troeltsch as a Template for the Study of Religion." In *The Anthem Companion to Ernst Troeltsch*, ed. Christopher Adair-Toteff, 25–36. London: Anthem Press, 2017.
- JOHNSON, Pauline. *Habermas Rescuing the Public Sphere*. London/NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.
- JONES, Robert Alun. Excerpt from Robert Alun Jones. *Émile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1986. Accessed on 1 July 2017. <http://durkheim.uchicago.edu/Summaries/forms.html>.
- JOWETT, Benjamin. "Politics". In *Aristotle's Politics: Writings from the Complete Works, Bk 1, Sec. 1253 a1.*, ed. Jonathan Barnes. UK: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- JUNKER-KENNY, Maureen. "Between Postsecular Society And The Neutral State: Religion as a Resource for Public Reason." In *Religious Voices in Public Spaces*, eds. Nigel Biggar und Linda Hogan, 58–84. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . *Habermas and Theology*. New York: T&T Clark, 2011.
- KÜENZELN, Gottfried. *Die Wiederkehr der Religion*. München: Olzog, 2003.
- KANT, Immanuel. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre. Metaphysik der Sitten. Zweiter Teil*. Newly ed. Bernd Ludwig. Philosophische Bibliothek Band 430. Hamburg: Meiner, 2017.
- . *Die Drei Kritiken*. Ed. Raymund Schmidt. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1952.
- KELLNER, Douglas. "Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy." In *Re-Imagining Public Space*, eds. Boros D and Glass J. M., 19–43. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Accessed on 27 February 2020. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137373311_2.
- KELLY, Keskue. *Prophetism, Prophecy and Oracles in the Roman Empire*. London: Routledge Focus, 2018.
- KONERU, Ramakrishna Rao, *Gandhi's Dharma*, Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2018. Accessed on 08 November 2020. DOI:10.1093/oso/9780199477548.001.0001.
- KOPF, David. *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of The Modern Indian Mind*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979.

- KUMAR, Krishna. "Religious Fundamentalism in India and Beyond." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 17–33. Accessed on 11 February 2020. <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol32/iss3/10>.
- LAFONT, Christina. "Religion and the Public Sphere: What are the Deliberative Obligations of Democratic Citizenship?" In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 230–249. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- LALONDE, Marc P. *Critical Theology and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.
- LAMB, Bernard Charles. *Human diversity: its nature, extent, causes and effects on people*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd, 2016.
- LANGE, Christian. *Eine kleine Geschichte des Christentums*. Darmstadt: Der Lambert Schneider (WBG), 2012.
- LARA, Maria Pia. "Is the Postsecular a Return to Political Theology?" In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 72–91. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- LEFTOW, Bryan. "Aquinas, Divine Simplicity and Divine Freedom." In *Metaphysics and God. Essays in honor of Eleonore Stump*, eds. Kevin Timpe, 21–38. London: Routledge, 2009.
- LOVE, Ronald S. *The Enlightenment*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2008. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com> Created from ulbmuenster on 2020-04-27 08:17:53.
- LUSHABA, Siyabonga. "Development as Modernity, Modernity as Development." Senegal: CODESRIA: 2009. Accessed on November 11, 2020. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com> Created from ulbmuenster on 2020-04-27 08:34:12.
- LUZ, Ulrich. *Jesus oder Buddha*. München: Beck, 2002.
- MÜLLER, Klaus. "Habermas und die neue Metaphysik. Konvergenzen und Divergenzen mit Dieter Henrich und Michael Theunissen." In *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, 104–124. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017.
- MÜLLER, Klaus. "Balancen philosophischer Topographie. Jürgen Habermas über Vernunft und Glaube." In *Glauben und Wissen. Ein Symposium mit Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagl-Docekal. Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13, 216–237. Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007.
- . *Glauben Fragen Denken*. Bd. III. Münster: Aschendorff, 2010.
- . "'Bildverbot' oder: Wie ein theologisches Missverständnis zum philosophischen Mythos wird." In *Die Zehn Gebote: ein widersprüchliches Erbe*, ed. Hans Joas, 33–46. Köln: Böhlau, 2006.
- MACDONELL, Arthur Anthony. "The Early History of Caste." *The American Historical Review* 19, no. 2 (January, 1914): 230–244. Accessed on 08 August 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1862285>
- MAHADEVAN, Kanchana. "Rethinking the Post-Secular and Secular with Habermas and Ambedkar." *Cahiers d'Etudes Germaniques*. 74, (April 2018): 103–118. Accessed on 19 February 2020. <http://journals.openedition.org/ceg/2976>; DOI: 10.4000/ceg.2976 DOI: 10.4000/ceg.2976.
- MAHAJAN, Gurpreet. "Contextualizing Secularism: The Relationship between State and Religion in India." In *Secularism, Religion and Politics. India and Europe*, eds. Peter Losonczy and Walter Van Herck, 36–56. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2015.

- MALL, Ram Adhar. *Buddhismus. Religion der Postmoderne?* Hildesheim: Edition Collage, 1990.
- . *Der Hinduismus. Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997.
- . *Indische Philosophie – Vom Denkweg zum Lebensweg. Eine interkulturelle Perspektive.* Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2013.
- . *Studie zur indischen Philosophie und Soziologie, zur vergleichenden Philosophie und Soziologie.* Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1974.
- MALL, Ram Adhar and HÜLSMANN, Heinz. *Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien, Europa.* Bonn: Bouvier, 1989.
- MARTINELLI, Alberto. *Global Modernization. Rethinking the Project of Modernity.* New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005.
- MARTÍNEZ, Doris Moreno and STARR-LEBEAU, Gretchen. "Inquisitions." In *Judging Faith, Punishing Sin: Inquisitions and Consistories in the Early Modern World*, eds. Charles H. Parker and Gretchen Starr-LeBeau, 167–79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Accessed on 25 March 2019. DOI:10.1017/9781316492659.014.
- MENDIETA, Eduardo. "Religion." In *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta, 394–399. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- MENOZZI, Daniele. "Kirche und Menschenrechte. Von der Französischen Revolution bis zur Gegenwart." In *Menchenrechte in der katholischen Kirche, Historische, systematische und praktische Perspektiven*, eds. Martin Baumeister, Michael Böhnke, Marianne Heimbach-Steins and Saskia Wendel. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018.
- MERCHANT, Minhaz. "The Politics of Religion." *India Today*, December 10, 2015. Accessed on 04 July 2018. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/coverstory/story/20151221-india-today-40th-anniversary-minhaz-merchant-the-politics-of-religion-820988-2015-12-10>.
- Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "Apologetics." Accessed on November 10, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apologetics>,
- MICHAELS, Axel. *Der Hinduismus.* München: C.H. Beck, 1998.
- MICHALSON, Gordon. *Kant's "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- MILLS, Jon. *Inventing God.* New York: Routledge T aylor and Francis Group, 2017.
- MITCHELL, Kerry A. "The Politics of Spirituality: Liberalizing the Definition of Religion." In *Secularism and Religion-Making*, eds. Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandir, 125–140. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- MOORE, Charles A. "Philosophy as Distinct from Religion in India." *Philosophy East and West* 11, no. 1/2 (1961): 3–25. Accessed 24 Oct. 2020. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1397229.
- NAGAL-DOCEKAL, Herta. "Eine rettende Übersetzung? Jürgen Habermas interpretiert Kants Religionsphilosophie." In *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagl-Docekal, 93–119. Wien: Oldenbourg Akademie Verlag, 2007.
- NANDA, Meera. *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India.* London: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

- NAYAK, Biren Kumar. "Christology of Bramhabandhab Upadhyay in An Advaitic Framework". *Asia Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (April 2008): 107–125. Accessed on 31 October 2020. https://www.academia.edu/6575542/THE_CHRISTOLOGY_OF_BRAHMABANDHAB_UPADHYAY_IN_THE_LIGHT_OF_ADVAITIC.
- NEGRU, Teodor. "Gadamer-Habermas Debate and Universality of Hermeneutics." *Cultura. International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* 4, no. 1 (2007): 113–119. Accessed on 07 November 2020. https://philarchive.org/rec/NEGGDA?all_versions=1.
- NIGAM, Aditya. *The Insurrection of Little Selves*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- NONNENMACHER, Burkhard. *Vernunft und Glaube bei Kant*. Eds: Friedrich Hermanni, Axel Hutter, Christoph Schwöbel and Thomas Buchheim. Collegium Metaphysicum, Bd. 20. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- NOVETZKE, Christian Lee. "Religion and the Public Sphere in Premodern India." *ASIA, Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques* 1.72, no. 01 (2018): 147–76. Accessed on 16 April 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2017-0055>.
- NUSSBAUM, Martha Craven. *The Clash Within. Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- PADEN, William E. "The Creation of Human Behavior; Reconciling Durkheim and the Study of Religion", in *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today*, eds. Thomas A. Idinopulos and Brian C. Wilson. Köln: Brill, 2002.
- PAULINE, Johnson. *Habermas Rescuing the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.
- PEDERSEN, Jørgen. "Habermas' Method: Rational Reconstruction." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 38, no. 4 (December 2008): 457–85. Accessed on 11 November 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393108319024>.
- POLLEY, Max E. *Amos and the Davidic Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- PRAMANIK, Swapan. "The Sociology of Religion in India." In *The Sociology of Religion in India, Past, Present and Future*, eds. Ferdinando Sardella and Ruby Sain, 59–72. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, 2013.
- PUJYASRI, Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Svami. *Hindu Dharma The Universal Way of Life*. Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995.
- PUTTEN, Robert van, Patrick Overeem and Ronald van Steden. "Where Public Theology And Public Administration Meet, Reflections on Jürgen Habermas' Post-Secular Turn." *International Journal of Public Theology* 13, no. 1 (2019): 5–24. Accessed on 28 October 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-12341559>.
- RANJAR, Clifard Sunil. *Be merciful like the Father*. Roma: G&BP, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017.
- REDER, Michael. "Liberal, deliberativ oder dekonstruktivistisch? Rorty, Habermas und Derrida über das Verhältnis von Religion und Gesellschaft." In *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, 125–144. Darmstadt: WBG, 2017.
- . "Religion als kulturelle Praxis an der Grenze zwischen Glauben und Wissen, Anregungen von F. Schleiermacher und J. Derrida." In *Moderne Religion, Theologische und religionsphilosophische Reaktionen auf Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Thomas M. Schmidt and Knut Wenzel, 128–153. Wien: Herder, 2009.
- . *Religion in säkularer Gesellschaft*. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2013.

- REES, Huw Dafydd. “Decolonizing Philosophy? Habermas and the Axial Age.” *Constellations* 24, no. 2 (2017): 219–231. Accessed on 26 May 2020. Doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.12267.
- REIKERSTORFER, Johann. “Eine ‘Übersetzung’, in der ‘Übersetztes’ nicht überflüssig wird. Jüdisch-christliches Erbe in vernunfttheoretischer Bedeutung bei J. Habermas und J. B. Metz.” In *Glauben und Wissen*, eds. Rudolf Langthaler und Herta Nagl-Docekal, 283–298. Wiener Reihe, Themen der Philosophie, Bd. 13. Wien: Oldenburg Akademie Verlag, 2007.
- RENNER, Tobias. *Postsäkulare Gesellschaft und Religion*. Freiburger Theologische Studien. Bd. 183. Freiburg: Herder, 2017.
- REUTER, Hans-R. *Religion und Gesellschaft*. eds: Karl Gabriel and Hans Reuter. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010.
- RICKEN, Friedo. “Jürgen Habermas und Kants Religionsphilosophie.” In *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer, Franz Grube, 31–41. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017.
- RICKEN, Friedo. “Postmetaphysical Reason and Religion”. In *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age. Jürgen Habermas et al*, eds. Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt. Trans. Ciaran Cronin, 51–58. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.
- RISTOW, Sebastian. “Frühes Christentum in Gallien und Germanien: Nachhaltige und unterbrochene Christianisierung in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter.” In *Christianisierung Europas: Entstehung, Entwicklung und Konsolidierung im archäologischen Befund*, eds. Orsolya Heinrich-Tamaska, Niklot Krohn, Sebastian Ristow. 73–94. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012.
- SALA, B. Giovanni. “Die Lehre von Jesus Christus in Kants Religionsschrift.” In *Kant über Religion*, eds. Friedo Ricken und Francois Marty, 143–155. Münchener philosophische Studien Bd. 7. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992.
- SANNEH, Lamin. “The Future of Secularism and the Promise of Diversity in India. A Historical Perspective.” In *The Future of Secularism*, ed. T.N. Srinivasan, 114–123. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- SARASVATI Svami, Pujyasri Chandrasekharendra. *Hindu Dharma. The Universal Way of Life*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995.
- SCHABERT, Tilo. “Prophecy in Politics: The Voice of Plato.” In *Propheten und Prophezeiungen. Prophets and Prophecies*, eds. Mathias Riedl and Tilo Schabert, 41–53. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005.
- SCHIRRMACHER, Thomas. *Fundamentalism. When Religion becomes Dangerous*. Eds. Thomas K. Johnson and Ruth Baldwin. Trans: Richard McClary. Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013.
- SCHLENSOG, Stephen. *Der Hinduismus*. München: Piper, 2006.
- SCHMIDT, M. Thomas. “Die Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen, Zur Genealogie des nachmetaphysischen Denkens bei Jürgen Habermas.” *Communio. Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* 49, (2020): 192–205.
- . “Glauben und Wissen: Religiöse Epistemologie und spekulative Religionsphilosophie.” In *Interesse am Anderen*, ed. Gerhard Schreiber, 383–402. München: DeGruyter, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110661170>
- . “Nachmetaphysische Religionsphilosophie. Religion und Philosophie unter den Bedingungen diskursiver Vernunft.” In *Moderne Religion? Theologische und religionsphilosophische Reaktionen auf Jürgen Habermas*, eds. Wenzel Knut and Thomas M. Schmidt, 10–32. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009.

- . "The Semantic Contents of Religious Beliefs and their Secular Translation, Jürgen Habermas Concept of Religious Experience." In *Religion: Immediate Experience and the Mediacy of Research. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Objectives, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion*, eds. Hans-Günter Heimbrock und Christopher P. Scholtz, 175–188. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.
- SCHNETTLER, Bernd. "Alltag und Religion." In *Religion in der modernen Lebenswelt*, eds. Birgit Weyel und Wilhelm Gräb. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.
- SCHOUTEN, Jan Peter. *Jesus as Guru, The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India*. Trans. Henry and Lucy Jansen. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2008.
- SHEEDY, Matt. "Religion in the Public Sphere: The Limits of Habermas's Proposal and the Discourse of 'World Religions.'" *Illumine: Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Graduate Students Association* 8, no. 1 (2009): 3–20. Accessed on 9 October 2019. <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/Illumine/article/view/2943>, <https://doi.org/10.18357/illumine8120092943>.
- SIEPEN, Wolfgang. *Weg der Erkenntnis – Weg der Liebe*. Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1992.
- SITTON, F. John. *Habermas and Contemporary Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- SOOSTEN, Joachim von. "Kommunikation und Religion, Obsoleszenz und Affirmation von Religion in der Theorie von Jürgen Habermas". In *Religion als Kommunikation*, eds. Volkhard Krech, Hermann Tyrel and Hubert Knoblauch. 273–300. Religion in der Gesellschaft Band 4. Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 1998.
- SMIT, Dirkie. "Notions of the Public and Doing Theology." *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 3 (2007): 431–454. Accessed on 28 October 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156973207X231716>.
- SPOHN, Ulrike. "Entprivatisierung der Religion und Postsäkularismus von Jose Casanova bis Jürgen Habermas." In *Staat und Religion: Zentrale Positionen zu einer Schlüsselfrage des politischen Denkens*, eds. Oliver Hildago und Christian Polke, 397–414. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017.
- STEPHEN, Leslie. *The Science of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Accessed on 26 March 2019. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139136679.007.
- STEINVORTH, Ulrich. *Secularization*. Hamburg: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- STOBBE, Martin. *Postsäkular Erzählen. Religion und Unzuverlässigkeit im Roman der Gegenwart*. Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, 2018.
- TAKATURA, Ando. "The Origin of the Concept of Metaphysics." In *Metaphysics: A Critical Survey of its Meaning*. Dordrecht: Springer, 1974. 3–16 Accessed on https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1974-3_2.
- TAYLOR, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- . "The Meaning of Secularism." *The Hedgehog Review, Critical Reflections on contemporary culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 23–34. Accessed on 04 July 2018. http://iasculture.org/THR/archives/Fall2010/Taylor_lo.pdf.
- THOMAS, Pradip Ninan. *Strong Religion, Zealous Media, Christian Fundamentalism and Communication in India*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2008.
- THUNDY, Zacharias P. *Buddha and Christ*. Leiden: Brill, 1993.
- TORWESTEN, Hans. *Vedanta: Kern des Hinduismus*. Olten: Walter Verlag, 1985.

- UFFE, Ostergaard. "Reactionary modernism and Nazism in Germany: Inevitable Destiny or Chance?" *German Studies Newsletter*, no. 5 (1985): 45–50. Accessed on November 11, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23733944>.
- UHL, Florian. "Vom Ritual zur Sprache – Von der Sprache zum Ritual. Jürgen Habermas' Beitrag zur Religionsphilosophie." In *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, 256–270. Darmstadt: WBG, 2017.
- UHLIG, Helmut. *Buddha und Jesus*. Bergisch Gladbach: Gustav Lübbe Verlag, 1997.
- VARSHNEY, Ashutosh. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- VELASSERY, Sebastian. "Faith, Ethnicity and Nationalism: St. Thomas Christians in India." In *Living with Religious Diversity*, eds. Sonia Sikka, Bindu Puri and Beaman G. Lori. 17–36. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016.
- VEROVSEK, Peter J. "Habermas Politics of Rational Freedom: Navigating the History of Philosophy between Faith and Knowledge." *Analyse & Kritik* 42, no. 1 (2020): 191–217. Accessed on 11 August 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2020-0008>.
- VIERTBAUER, Klaus. "Von der Säkularisierungsthese zur postsäkularen Gesellschaft." In *Habermas und die Religion*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber, 11–30. Darmstadt: wbg, 2017.
- VIVEKANANDA, Swami. *Vedanta*. Ed: Swami Chetanananda. Trans. Kurt Friedrichs. München: Otto Wilhelm Barth, 1989.
- WAKANKAR, Milind. *Subalternity and Religion. The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South India*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- WARD, Keith. *Religion – gefährlich oder nützlich*. Trans. Bernadin Schellenberger. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 2007.
- WILFRED, Felix. *Asian Public Theology: Critical Concerns in Challenging Times*. Delhi: Tercentenary Publications, 2010.
- WILSON, Thomas A. Idinopulos and Brian C, eds. *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today*. Boston: Brill, 2002.
- WIRTZ, Markus. *Religiöse Vernunft*. Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2018.
- WOHLRAB-SAHR, Monika and BURCKHARDT, Marian, "Revisiting the Secular", *DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. Leipzig: Leipzig University, HCAS, March, 2016, September 2017. Accessed on 8 April 2019. <http://ul.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A16726/attachment/ATT-0/>.
- WOLTERSTORFF, Nicholas. "Postmetaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue." In *Habermas and Religion*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 92–114. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- ZABATIERO, Julio Paulo Tavares. "From the Sacristy to the Public Square, The Public Character of Theology." *International Journal of Public Theology* 6, no .1 (Jan 2012): 56–69. Accessed on 28 October 2020. DOI: 10.1163/156973212X617181.

VI GLOSSARY

1.	Advaita	Single; p. 214
2.	Ahimsa	Non-violence; p. 380
3.	Bhagvadgita	A Hindu Scripture and mythological narrative; p. 51
4.	Brahma	The Absolute; p. 265
5.	Brahmins	Priestly class; p. 66
6.	Dalit	A member of Indian society placed into the lower classification of caste system; p. 22
7.	Dharma(s)	The Indian word to represent the western concept of Religion; p. 49, p. 381
8.	Maya	Illusion; p. 214
9.	Puranas	Mythic texts; p. 62
10.	Ramarajya	Kingdom of Rama; p. 377
11.	Sarva dharma sambhava	Equal respect to all religions; p. 120
12.	Sanatana dharma	Eternal religion; p. 52
13.	Satya	Truth; p. 378
14.	Tat tvam asi	That thou art; p. 262
15.	Upanishad	Ancient Indian philosophico-religious texts; p. xvi
16.	Varna	Caste; p. 64
17.	Vedas	Ancient Indian Religious Texts; p. 170

Jürgen Habermas' development of the concept of postmetaphysics does orient us to engage in a dialogue between faith and knowledge that paves way to engage in a discourse concerning religion in public sphere, especially in India. Eventually, my thesis reconstructs various socio-philosophical religious traditions, whose aim is to provide a discursive methodology in treating non-reflective expressions of religion. Thus, it accentuates on the hermeneutic responsibility of contemporary society to recapitulate the fundamental, rational, reformative and emancipatory traditions of religion, which are gradually being lost or ignored in a post-secular society.

Born in Visakhapatnam, South India, Suthi began his academic career as a basis for his formation to be a Catholic priest belonging to the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor. After completing Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Theology, he was encouraged to enter a PhD programme in Germany at Westfälische-Wilhelms University, Münster (2015–2020), which he successfully completed at Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main (2021).

www.wbg-wissenverbindet.de
ISBN 978-3-534-40702-6



wbg Academic