

The dichotomy between piety and zealotry: Reflections on the relation between religiosity and democratic secularism

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Abstract

It is a mark of the decades we live in that the long-standing relations between politics and religion founded along the axis of liberal-democratic principles have turned out to appear problematical. It seems now an important issue to find out how religiosity should be located within political and social terrain. The cliché that fundamentalism constitutes the limit for tolerating religious demands and movements within liberal-democratic regimes, does not help much. The real problem is how to draw the distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable forms of religiosity, and this distinction is usually drawn wrongly as a matter of weightiness of one's religious convictions in shaping one's way of life. This paper investigates the possibility of making a categorical, rather than a proportional, distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable forms of religiosity through working up a dichotomy between zealotry and piety, which can then serve as the criterion for the acceptability of religious demands and movements within democratic political spheres.

Key words: Democratic Secularism; Piety; Political Theology; Public Reason; Zealotry

1. Introduction

As Jürgen Habermas points out by the opening words to his “Religion in the Public Sphere”, a significant characteristic of the historical period from the end of 1980s to our time is the rise of religious demands and movements in the political scene (Habermas 2006)¹. This historical tendency has taken a new momentum

¹ In this work, Habermas begins with the statement that “religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto, unexpected political importance since the epochmaking change of 1989-1990” (Habermas, 2006:1)

after the brutal incidence known as the September 11. The latter symbolically stamps our age as the one in which long-standing relations between politics and religion founded long ago along the axis of liberal-democratic principles have unexpectedly turned out to appear problematical². In different parts of the world, particularly in western and middle-eastern countries, how religions and religiosity should be located within political and social terrain is now the big deal we face under different guises. More precisely, recently arising religious demands and movements put on the agenda a common question: to what extent are such demands and movements compatible with the principle of the peaceful co-existence of diverse cultural forms, which is the essential reference point of any democratic imagination?

Indeed, one should highlight that an impressive literature discussing the significance of religious freedom within democratic politics has already been developed in the recent times. On the one hand, philosophers such as Richard Rorty (1994), Stephen Macedo (1995), Robert Audi (2000), and Ronald Dworkin (2006) have dismissed the legitimacy of religious claims in the public sphere of liberal-democracies on the basis of approaches that present secularism as the anti-thesis of religious mindset. On the other hand, although they were not completely dismissive of secularism, philosophers such as Cecile Laborde (2008), Kent Greenawalt (2009a; 2009b), and Marta Nussbaum (2010), and Charles Taylor (2011) have suggested that secularism turns out to be problematical when it is not “open”, “accommodationist” or “liberal-pluralist”. They raised the important contentions that a strict separation between politics and religion is exclusionary and unfair on the part of people with religious affiliations, that the principle of religious freedom might come into conflict with the principle of non-establishment, that the very liberal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity require to follow up accommodationist rather than strictly separationist policies towards religious or religiously-inspired expressions and practices in the public realm. Moreover, there have been more radical criticisms of secularism. Authors like Nicholas Wolterstorff (1997), Paul Weithman (2001), Jeffrey Stout (2008),

² How unexpected this shift seemed to the modernist mindset of the typical liberal-democrat is well expressed by Mark Lilla. Lilla argues that “the twilight of the idols had been postponed. For over two centuries, from the American and French revolutions to the collapse of Soviet Communism, political life in the west revolved around eminently political questions. We argued about war and revolution, class and social justice, race and national identity. Today we have progressed to the point where we are again fighting the battles of the 16th century –over revelation and reason, dogmatic purity and toleration, inspiration and consent, divine duty and common decency. We are disturbed and confused. We find it incomprehensible that theological ideas still inflame the minds of men, stirring up messianic passions that leave societies in ruin. We assumed that this was no longer possible, that human beings had learned to separate religious questions from political ones, that fanaticism was dead. We were wrong” (Lilla, 2008:3).

and Veit Bader (2007) have suggested putting away secularism as a constitutional principle in the name of a democratic ethics of sincerity and integrity or an open-ended pluralism.

In this paper, I will question a presumption underlying both pro-secularist and contra-secularist arguments, namely that there is an incongruity between religious mind-set and the secular mindset, which should be ameliorated. Drawing upon the monotheistic-Abrahamic tradition, I will sketch a phenomenology of religious mindset through which I will separate piety as religiosity in the original-proper sense, and zealotry/fanaticism. In the third part, I will think over the political implications of zealotry. I will argue that zealot mindset leads to a vision of politics as political theology (in the Schmittian sense of a struggle between friends and enemies) and thus incompatible with democratic pluralism. The fourth part will investigate the political implications of piety. I will highlight that piety should lead to an endorsement of the kind of civic and reasonable model of politics as it was elaborated by Rawlsian theory of public reason (Rawls, 1993:212-254; Rawls, 1997:765-807). At the end, I will draw the conclusion that, when both are correctly understood, democratic secular politics and religious (pious) mindset are not incongruous, but mutually supportive. Rather than bringing about restrictions to the full enjoyment of the ideals of pious life, democratic political sphere based on the criterion of reciprocity and modern secular law provide the most convenient social-political framework to realize a life of full-fledged piety.

I think a caveat will be proper just before going ahead in the direction sketched in the preceding paragraph. I would like to express that my thoughts in this paper are stimulated by Habermas' idea of the "requirement of translation" (Habermas, 2006:11), as the cooperative tasks of all citizens of a democratic society, and by Rawls' idea of "reasoning from conjecture" (Rawls, 1997:786-787). Habermas argues for the need to translate moral intuitions articulated within religious traditions into a generally accessible language – a need, to the satisfaction of which both religious and non-religious citizens should contribute. He has in his mind intuitions concerning particular events that are of common importance and thus subject to public discussions in a democratic society. This we should do with the intent of improving a common bond of civic friendship, which is essential for a democratic *Rechtsstaat*. In line with this, this paper is designed to highlight not the mindset of the fellows of a particular religious tradition, but the general religious (pious) mindset, in terms accessible to non-religious people as well. The main argument will be that there is no genuine tension between piety and democratic secularism, and thus that sincere commitment to democratic secularism is very probable on the part of religious citizens. Hence, this paper can also be said to consist in "reasoning from conjecture": I will argue from what I

conjecture are religious people's basic doctrines, and try to show that they can endorse secular-democratic framework. I am respectful to the Rawls' provision that "reasoning from conjecture" should be sincere and not manipulative.

2. Piety versus zealotry

When it comes to draw a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of religiosity from the standpoint of a liberal-democratic polity, we see that most of all us, including theorists as well as common people, tend to rely on a distinction based on proportionality. It seems to be usually held that illegitimacy of a religious mindset is a matter of extremism. Indeed, the very use of the catchy-term of "fundamentalism" to designate the undesirable forms of religiosity entails this, because the dictionary definition of fundamentalism is *strict* adherence to the belief. Here the suggestion is that the fundamentalist is distinguished not by the content of the dogma she believes in, but the manner of her attitude towards it: she is the one who is strict rather than moderate in her adherence to the same or similar belief moderately religious people also adheres.

Hence, the important question what forms of religiosity are acceptable is usually passed over on the basis of the presumption that it is basically a matter of weightiness of one's religious convictions in shaping one's way of life, that is, as the opposite of temperateness in holding and practically following up religious convictions. Such a proportional distinction between strict and moderate forms of religiosity does paradoxically work out for the deepening of the tension between religiosity and democratic political life, because it concurs with the way the fundamentalist aims to represent the situation. It implies that non-fundamentalist forms of religiosities are indeed "diluted" forms, while fundamentalist forms represent genuine and uncompromising loyalty to the religious creed. Then, the fundamentalist might claim that a "temperate" devotee is indeed an "imperfect" devotee, i.e. the one who has capitulated in the face of the mundane conditions, of which democratic politics itself is a part³. On the other hand, the fundamentalist can represent herself as a noble figure resisting against any degeneration and impurity amidst the world.

I have just argued that it is practically unwise to reduce the question of the religious demands and movements that are not compatible with the principle of peaceful co-existence of differences into a question of the degree of piety, i.e., that of "over-piousness". Now, it should be underlined that such reduction is wrong as

³ It might be argued that such a claim is a common tenet of contemporary radical-Islamist and terrorist movements such as *Al-Qaeda* and *ISIS*. Such movements are called *tekfirci*, because they presume an authority to declare that people who do not subscribe to their fundamentalist-fanatical vision are indeed unbelievers/infidels.

well. That is, the distinction between acceptable or unacceptable forms of religiosity is not a matter of the degree or proportion of piousness; it is rather a matter of categorical distinction. It concerns the distinction between piety and zealotry (fanaticism).

Piety consists in being a devotee to divine rules and prescriptions. Its essence is subjection in adoration. Such subjection to God in adoration comprises coming-into-terms (i.e. reconciliation) with *Being* as that which God has created. Piety is one's strive for fulfilling the purpose that has been revealed to her/him within the general structure of *Being*. As far as I understand, the monotheistic religions elaborate the purpose in question paradigmatically in terms of the salvation of the soul. That is, the fundamental duty of a Jew, a Christian or a Muslim is to obey God's prescriptions and rules as much as one can, i.e. to be pious as much as one can, which would then be a mark for the fact that God's grace will bring about the salvation of her/his soul.

Hence, the consciousness of subjection is essential to piety. This means that God is always an *external* authority over the devotee. One devotee's claim of an absolute identity with God would be one of the greatest profanities one can ever imagine. This explains why people like Hallac-ı Mansur, a Sufi from 10th century famous with his saying "En-el Hakk" (I am the Truth/God), have been exposed to severest reactions and persecutions by the mainstream currents of religious thought. In fact, Marcel Gauchet, who is well known for his philosophical-phenomenological work on religion, is very helpful at this point. He indicates that religious consciousness is marked with a feeling of "indebtedness toward what goes beyond individual", i.e., a feeling that one is in debt to an external source for the meaning of not only her/his own existence but of the whole *Being* (Gauchet, 1997:22, 34, 68). This feeling of debt leads to what Islamic tradition calls *taqwa* (i.e., a form of self-awareness involving appreciation and reverence before God and his creation) or what Christian tradition calls *charity* (i.e., a disposition that finds good in every creature of God). The lack of this feeling is associated with the most fatal sin in both of these traditions, namely "pride" (*hubris* in Greek, and *kibr* in Arabic).

On the other hand, I think that zealotry precisely consists in transgressing the mode of subjection that defines piety. The zealot transforms herself from being the subject to whom the word of God is addressed to a representative or an agent of God. In such context, the devotee posits him/herself not as the one who should be in the state of *taqwa* before God and the order of beings he has created, but as an actor actively and consciously working for the creation of the divine order of God. In a sense, there occurs identification between the devotee and God; or, at least, the distinction between them blurs. In this way, the mission of God (i.e., the creation of the kingdom of heaven) is, at least, partially entrusted upon

the devotees. One can then point out the mindset of the crusades of Holy Wars or the *mūcahidūn* of *jihād* as the paradigm cases of zealotry. In the history of humankind, such “devotees” represent themselves as commanders or soldiers in a war fought for God’s dominance over the world. In simplest terms, they thought that they were killers (destroyers or purifiers) doing God’s work. Hence, theirs were not the feeling of thankfulness and reverence before God and *Being* but a resentful and revengeful strive for transforming the earth into something allegedly more divine⁴.

Of course, such zealous mindset is opposed on pious grounds in the very traditions of faith the foregoing zealots have claimed to champion. Both the Bible and Quran include many passages that present the paradigm case of piety that is entirely free from zealotry⁵. It seems to me a much more plausible conclusion to derive from such texts that the primary duty of a devotee is to care for the salvation of her own soul in modesty and forbearance and leave the work of setting the world straight to God himself. History provides the evidence that many believing people have indeed derived this pious, and not the zealot, conclusion from the foregoing texts⁶.

Hence, when we start to think that the significant distinction is between piety and zealotry rather than the misleading one between fundamentalism (extremism) and non-fundamentalism (moderates), the problem turns out to be a matter of “categorical distinction”, rather than of “proportion”. That is, we can grasp that the genuine contradiction is not between “the religious” and “the secular”, but between “the folk of the world” and “the purifiers of the world”⁷.

⁴ I think that in our age, zealot mindset seems to be perfectly illustrated by the salafist-islamist political movements. Let me just quote how Sadakat Kadri puts in a nutshell the basic vision Sayyid Qutb, the chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, articulates in his *Milestones*, which can be considered as a manifesto for contemporary Islamic-activism:

A shadow loomed over the world, he [Qutb] claimed, as profound as the *jahiliyya* that had enveloped Arabia before the coming of the Prophet. Only jihad could lift the gloom, and it was both meaningless and defeatist to differentiate between ‘spiritual’, ‘defensive’, or ‘offensive’ struggles. People everywhere had to be allowed to recognize Islam’s truth, and a righteous vanguard (*tali’a*) was obliged to lead humanity towards its liberation. Any person or institution that stood in the way of spiritual freedom would have to be eliminated. ‘No political system or material power should put hindrances in the way of preaching Islam...If someone does this, then it is the duty of Islam to fight him until either he is killed or until he declares his submission’ (Kadri, 2011: 142).

⁵ Just to give striking examples from each tradition, see John 7:53-8:11, and Quran 2:272.

⁶ For a history of Islamic tradition, which makes clear that interpretations of Islam based on the mindset I call piety have been the prevalent ones before the advent of Salafism and the political islamist activism Salafism stimulated in the modern era, I would strongly recommend Sadakat Kadri (2011).

⁷ It should thus be conceded that zealotry is not specific to religious ideologies. It is also the mark of many secular ideologies that are based on the idea that people should be forced to be live in accordance with the insights that an *avant-garde* group hold concerning the “scientific” or “superior”

However, one can raise an objection to the dichotomy I offer here by arguing that religions themselves prescribe for their devotees to struggle for God's dominance over the world. Particularly, religious currents that are under the impact of messianic fanaticism and apocalyptic fervor will raise such objections. Full-fledged answers to such objections require theological debates on the ground of the dogmas of religions from which these objections are raised. For instance, in the case of Islam, it seems possible that one can argue that Allah assigns for Muslims the duty to expand the reign of Islam in the world. Hence, any convincing response to this objection requires demonstrating that the Islamic conception of *jihad* does not involve the prescription that the Muslim devotee should be the active and conscious actor of the process of the realization of God's dominance over the world by means of violent power. However, this is of course a task for theologians and I have no presumption to raise judgments about true Islam or true conception of any religious faith. From the perspective of political and social theory, I can only say that interpretation of the Islamic faith along the lines of piety rather than zealotry is conceptually possible, and history provides much evidence for this possibility if one wish to see.

2. Repercussions of Manichean impact: Schmittian political theology

Even if it would far exceed the scope of this paper to find out a resolution for above-mentioned theological debates in Islam or any other religion, it might suit well to point out a historical incidence in the case of monotheistic traditions. I think that the reason why in some cases "the mission of God" (i.e. the salvation of *Being* through the realization of the Kingdom of the Lord) and "the mission of the subject" (i.e. piety as the expression of the salvation of the individual soul) intermingle is the influence of *Manichaeism* on these religious imaginations with middle-eastern origins. *Manichaeism* posits a cosmology which divides *Being* into two. On the one hand, there is the party of the good/the light/the spirit. On the other hand, there is the party of the evil/the darkness/the matter. The universe is the stage on which these two parties continuously fight against each other for the eternal dominance. Hence, the devotee, as a child of God of the Light, is not simply to appreciate and revere God and *Being* but to dedicate himself militantly to the party of the good struggling for the reign of the good. It is because of Manichean influence that religiosity might lose its defining features such as mercifulness, forgiveness, modesty and forbearance, and turn out to be a disposition comprising hatred, abhorrence, revengefulness, militancy and

way of life. For an interesting observation concerning the influence of modern-vanguardism on political islamist movements, see Kadri, 2011: 143.

fanaticism. That is, Manichean influence explains why the religious disposition might transform from piety to zealotry⁸.

Since Manichaeism stands as the paragon of the politicized form of religiosity, or political religion as such, its political implications should have already been detectable above. Nevertheless, it will worth recalling shortly the remarkably Manichean conception of the “political” elaborated by Carl Schmitt (Schmitt, 1996; Schmitt 2005). This will make even clearer that it is precisely the Manichean impact that makes a particular religious doctrine incompatible with democratic political life of pluralist societies.

As is well known, Carl Schmitt elaborated a conception of the “political” based upon the friend/enemy distinction. Schmittian political imagination suggests that the earth, in its essence, is nothing more than a chaotic space, which makes human life extremely precarious⁹. In order to make their lives bearable, human beings themselves should bring forward norms that would create relatively ordered exclaves within the chaotic disorder of the earth. This is indeed a matter of demarcation and entrenchment of boundaries *via* the use of violent force.

⁸ Manichaeism has more or less influenced all monotheist religions. Particularly, Manichean and more generally Gnostic conceptions had been manifest in earlier period of Christianity. In fact, many suggest that Manichean impact is particularly evident in St. Augustine. For an imaginary dialogue between Augustine and a contemporary of him, in which the Manichean influences in Augustinian Christianity is cleverly interrogated, see Norman F. Cantor, 2004:177-181. Please allow me to quote the full passage where his imaginary interlocutor articulates the accusations directed against Augustine. The following passage, I think, is important not because the accusations against Augustine are true (indeed, they are mistaken to a great extent, as it becomes clear by Augustine’s imaginary response in the latter paragraphs of the same text), but because it describes clearly what happens if Manichean tendencies are not checked within monotheistic religions:

I suppose, Augustine, you know that some of your Christian critics say you are really still a Manichee, that their dualism is still prevalent in your teaching and preaching, lying just beneath a thin surface veneer and still shaping your mentality. It is said you are still obsessed with the problem of evil. While you later came up with an explanation of the evil derived from the Neoplatonists –evil is a falling away from the good that God creates, a perversion of the good creation– they say at hearth you are still inclined, like the Manichees, to divide mankind into two absolutely separate communities, the Heavenly City and the Earthly City. What is the difference between that and the idea of the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness? *It is said you have the hateful disposition of a Manichee, that you are a great hater, Augustine, that you are deficient in Christian charity that finds good in every human being as God’s creature.* They say you are always disposed early on, in any debate, to divide humanity up into the good and the bad, and consign the bad to darkness, like the Manichees (Cantor, 2004:178; italics are mine).

It should be noted that what is called “the hateful disposition of a Manichee” coincides exactly with what I call zealotry, and “Christian charity that finds good in every human being as God’s creature” with what I call piety.

⁹ I would like to note that as to Schmitt’s idea of precariousness of life that call for the establishment of the state with a sovereign power, Schmitt (2008) and Schmitt (2003) are particularly interesting works.

The category of the “political”, in its Schmittian sense, is then related to the activities concerning foundation and maintenance of the orders of friendship (i.e. political entities), in which human beings try to scale down the precariousness of human condition. Any moral and legal normativity, i.e., any system of norms regulating human co-existence, is possible within the framework of such orders. Although the “normal” situation in the orders of friendships is the one wherein norms prevail, they are paradoxically founded upon a demarcation of an ordered realm out of the chaos of the earth *via* the use of violent force.

One should note that Schmittian political vision suggests that any political entity as an order of friendship is not simply founded upon but also maintainable in time only on the grounds of the force articulated in the sovereign, even though such force might mostly remain latent save exceptional situations. This is because any ordered realm within the earth always exists in a condition of fragility. What has been constituted by force might always be challenged by another articulation of force. The paradigm case of “the political” is the serious exceptional moment whereby the order of the realm is challenged by destruction, i.e. the moment whereby the party of order (say, children of the light) comes face to face with the party of chaos (say, children of darkness). Then, a struggle in which all normativity is necessarily suspended should occur.

Although the moment of the political arises as an exceptional moment, Schmitt does not see it as an abnormality in the sense of a deviance. Rather, it reveals the true essence of any political-legal order. This essence lies in the plenary power that we call sovereign power. It is a power to decide upon the very fact that there exists an exceptional state wherein there is an enemy (i.e. the party of chaos) threatening the realm of order, as well as upon what is to be done in such an exceptional state (Schmitt, 2005: 5-15). In other words, the sovereign decision creates the pure moment of the “political” whereby the community of friends (i.e., the party of the good) is to be weld together and mobilized against an alleged radical evil exposing them to the fate of sacrifice and death. This moment represents nothing quite new but a crystallization of the eons-lasting struggle between the good and the evil, which underlies the human condition.

Schmitt is plain in putting forth that his conception of sovereign power was much inspired by the idea of God as he is related to the universe, and that his political theory, like any other political theory, was a political theology at its roots (Schmitt, 2005:32). We should add that both his idea of God and political theory are remarkably Manichean. If we listen to him, all our earthly existence consists in a fierce struggle between the party of order (i.e. the children of light) and the party of chaos (i.e. the children of darkness) among whom a common terrain of normativity, a reciprocal commitment to any shared values or principles, is

inconceivable. As Carl Schmitt was well aware of, there is here a severe assault on the ideals and values underlying liberal-democratic regimes.

4. Piety and civic (reasonable) disposition to politics

While it is an undeniable historical fact that Manichean influence occasionally gets the upper hand in monotheistic religions, it is still arguable that *civic* and *reasonable* approaches based on piety rather than zealotry hold the stronger position in these religions¹⁰. This is not simply because civic and reasonable approaches to religions are widespread and prevalent but more importantly because such approaches are consistent with the very idea of religion as the feeling of debt for the meaning of the existence.

At this point, it will be helpful to remember the wisdom indicated in the parable of the three rings included in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*. In his indirect response to Saladin's question of which of the three monotheistic religions he found representing the truth, Nathan suggests that there is nothing to trouble oneself about the fact of the plurality of claims of truth characterizing the world we live in. Acknowledging such plurality as the very will of God, Nathan further suggests, the devotee of any religion should do his own job, i.e. should be civilized, peaceful, compliant and benignant in order to gain love of God and the people. One should thus leave the mission of God for Him. As a matter of one's faith, one should just acknowledge that the truth would prevail in the world, whenever God wishes. Shortly, the wise devotee should live as someone who has submitted her/himself to God, not as the champion of God. I think that Nathan, the respectful figure of piety as he was imagined by Lessing the Enlightenment philosopher, perfectly illustrates the political implications of genuine piety. He suggests that pious person does not presume the role of the aggressive purifier of the world, but stands as a civilized and peaceful person reconciled with the existing plurality of truth claims in the world, without ceasing to hold on his own faith.

While the genuine piety does not entail the attitude presuming the role of an aggressive purifier of the world, it also does not require a complete resignation in the face of everything going on in the world. A healthy dissatisfaction against the iniquities in our world is verily a part of pious disposition; and such dissatisfaction can most plausibly articulate itself in the form of a specific type of political

¹⁰ Let me note in advance that such an argument will be disagreeing with authors like Peter Sloterdijk who think that fanaticism and zealotry is inherent to the matrix of monotheistic religions. See, Sloterdijk (2009). For Sloterdijk, the very idea of God as "the Highest and the Only" – and the concomitant principle that "a single being can and should rule over everyone and everything" – "leads to an extremism of the will of obedience that is typical of zealous movements" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 86), and thus "a polemogenic potential is inseparable from their existence" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 151).

activism rather than political passivism. This specific type is democratic citizenship based on the idea of public reason as John Rawls elaborated it.

In order to show that piety in the sense defined in this essay is fully compatible with the vision of politics suggested by the Rawlsian idea of public reason, let me first note its one fundamental point of difference from the Schmittian conception of the political, which we found as quite at odds with piety. While the Schmittian conception of the political exclusively focused on the moment of decision, public reason prioritizes more the very process of deliberation than the decision that is expected to be the result of that process. It might be therefore defined as the process of reasoning whereby individuals assuming the role of ideal citizens strive for finding out what will promote the common good in any case of common interest.

Public reason rests upon a family of conceptions of justice, which have two primary characteristics, namely they are liberal and political. They are liberal for the reason that they include a list of certain basic rights, liberties, and opportunities and assign priority to these with respect to any other principles and values (Rawls, 1997:774). They are political by virtue of their three features (Rawls, 1997:776). First, they are *public* in the sense that they do not apply to the whole spheres of life of individuals, even not to their social life in whole, but only to the basic political and social institutions. Second, they are *non-comprehensive* in the sense that they can be represented independently from comprehensive doctrines embedded in the background cultural life of the society. Third, they are *non-metaphysical* in the sense that they are not worked out of pure philosophical reflection by a “philosopher” standing aside the actual political practices and alleging to have access to transcendent-foundational truth that should inform foregoing practices, but from fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a constitutional regime¹¹.

In the sense Rawls uses the term, “political” is the opposite of “private”, “comprehensive” and “metaphysical”. For Rawls, the latter terms designate standpoints based on a particular conception of truth that individuals might have as the guiding principles of their own lives. Rawls suggests that when we try to

¹¹ Here, I should note that, although I appreciate Rawls criticism of the Platonic mode of metaphysics that strives to figure out a realm of truth independent from the world of actual human practices, I am not sure one can explicate the fundamental ideas or presuppositions underlying human practices without engaging into a kind of metaphysics, which I will call a metaphysics of experience as it is found in Kant. Hence, I would prefer to use the term “non-foundational” rather than “non-metaphysical” to make the same point. Yet, this is a debate that should be left for another paper, and I will be following Rawls in using the term “non-metaphysical” rather than “non-foundational” in what follows. For the debates on the possibility of a non-foundational metaphysics in political and ethical theory, which is equally critical of the Platonic mode of metaphysics Rawls dismissed, see Onora O’Neill, 1989 and 1992.

establish human co-existence on the grounds of such private standpoints in contemporary societies marked with a plurality of comprehensive doctrines, the highly probable result is “a relentless struggle for the whole truth” in which adherents of different doctrines face each other along the lines of friend and enemy distinction (Rawls, 1997:766). He thinks that “the zeal to embody the whole truth in politics” cannot be accommodated within any liberal-democratic polity (Rawls, 1997:767).

On the other hand, a political standpoint on justice is based on the criterion of reciprocity derived from the recognition of each person as free and equal. This criterion, which is closely connected to the liberal principle of legitimacy of the exercise of political power, suggests that political co-existence, at least in its essentials, should be founded upon a perspective grounded upon terms (i.e. principles, ideals and values) that might be expected to be endorsed as reasonable by all citizens (Rawls, 1993:217). This replaces the conception of politics understood as a struggle for the whole truth among enemies with a conception of politics as cooperative deliberation for finding out what will be reasonable for all persons in any case of common interest.

In line with this, Rawls suggests, liberal democracies impose upon their citizens the “duty of civility”. In the words of Rawls, the ideal of citizenship imposes a moral, not a legal, duty – the duty of civility – to be able to explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason. This duty also involves a willingness to listen to others and a fairmindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonably be made (Rawls, 1993:217).

Hence, the duty of civility endorses a disposition quite opposite to the partisanship suggested by the Schmittian conception of the political. It prescribes of citizens to act not as champions of the party of truth, but as sincere participants into public discussions in order to find out what is to be reasonable for all and each.

However, it is particularly important to emphasize that the idea of public reason, with its requirement of the duty of civility, does in no way mean to extirpate religiously based or inspired arguments in favor of secular arguments. Rawls thinks that comprehensive doctrines, religious or secular, may partake into political discussions, “provided that in due course proper political reasons... are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support” (Rawls, 1997:784). In fact, for Rawls, the possibility that citizens might come to have the duty of civility with regard to their affairs at public-political realm depends on the condition that their respective comprehensive doctrines endorse such a disposition. For instance, this condition is

satisfied when a comprehensive doctrine prescribes as God's command that the criterion of reciprocity should be respected and no religious dominance should be strived for at the political level. Rawls calls such comprehensive doctrines reasonable, in contradiction to fundamentalist religious doctrines. The latter are, in turn, defined as the doctrines based on the assertion that "the religiously true overrides the politically reasonable" (Rawls, 1997: 806). Such assertion underpins the notorious idea that the political society is a realm to be captured by force in the name of divine truth.

As Rawls glimpses in passing, what is expected of a religious doctrine, if it is to be a reasonable one, is not that it should hold political values (i.e. the politically reasonable) as superior to transcendent-religious values such as the salvation of soul or eternal life (Rawls, 1997: 806). This is impossible for any sincere commitment to any religion. Only if one sees a set of transcendent values as supreme, it is then meaningful to speak of his sincere commitment to a religious creed. However, such commitment need not lead to the dictum that political (i.e., worldly) values should be overridden¹².

I think that this is the point where the dichotomy I suggest between piety and zealotry, and Rawls' distinction between reasonable and non-reasonable (fundamentalist) doctrines come to be mutually supportive of each other. If we consider non-reasonable (fundamentalist) doctrines in the light of the concept of zealotry as the dichotomous counterpart of piety, we will see clearly that they have indeed not to do with the strength of holding to the transcendent-religious values, but with the disposition to the political values. Precisely because fundamentalism (more precisely, zealotry) consists in rejecting any political conception of justice, liberal-democracies that are, by definition, founded upon such conceptions cannot embrace it.

On the other hand, I think, what Rawls calls reasonable religious doctrines can be made more clear as forms of piety that are not disconcerted by zealotry; for, there would be no tension between such forms of piety and the commitment to a political conception of justice. That is, one can be both most loyal to the transcendent values articulated by her religious creed, whatever it is, and most respectful to political values. To argue in a bolder way, there is a positive correlation between piety and public reason based on the criterion of reciprocity and prescribing the duty of civility. Hence, alongside reasonable secular doctrines, reasonable religious doctrines (i.e. forms of piety that are free from zealotry and do recognize the criterion of reciprocity and the duty of civility in political affairs)

¹² The Biblical decree, "then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Luke 20:25), can be interpreted as an instance of how a religious doctrine can recognize political values as values to be respected without giving up its claim that transcendent values are most important.

should be seen as important pillars of the liberal-democratic regimes. It is true the other way around. Adherents of any reasonable religious doctrine (i.e., pious people of all religions, who are not disconcerted by zealotry) are expected to endorse a liberal-democratic political life based on public reason as presented by Rawls.

5. Conclusion

I think that making the distinction between piety and zealotry, in the way suggested in this paper, is very important for the working out a justified resolution of the cases of conflict we come to face within our historical period, i.e. the cases of conflict that have arisen in the form of religious demands against secular-democratic politics. When we can make this distinction, we will see that pluralist democratic politics and modern systems of law with their neutrality in the face of different religious truth(s) do not enforce upon the people the necessity to moderate or dilute their religious identity.

Of course, we should also be clear what democratic secularism is. In my view, it is nothing more or less than the principle of neutrality as it is applied to religious worldviews specially¹³. That is, it is a special instance of ethical neutrality a political-legal order should instantiate. In this vein, we should differentiate secularism from perfectionist zeal of creating an ethical community through using political-legal coercion, no matter whatever character that ethical community might have. Secularism, in this democratic sense, dismisses the use of state-legal power for promoting ethical values of non-religious persons, as well as those of persons subscribed to particular religious doctrines.

This neutralist-secular vision is grounded upon an insight into the nature of political-legal order as the patrolling authority over a social terrain (i.e., civil society) in which individuals set and pursue their individual or associative (i.e., communal) way of life freely. Its constitutive purpose is not to control or shape this terrain in accordance with an allegedly “true” way of life, but to enable and sustain the conditions under which each individual and group can set and pursue their way of life without external coercion of others and the state itself, whatever those ways of life might be, insofar as they do not force others to subscribe into, or to be subservient to, their own ways.

Hence, quite contrary to what its critics misleadingly assumes, secularism, at least the democratic version of it, does not demand that citizens should be committed to certain non-religious ethical values associated with the Enlightenment tradition, namely values of individualism, humanist egalitarianism,

¹³ I elaborated this claim in another paper, titled “Public Religion & Secular State: A Kantian Approach”.

and rationalism. It only demands that they should keep up with the precondition of a peaceful coexistence among persons with different ethical-religious commitment: to recognize that others, too, have the same status they presuppose in themselves. This status is “personality in the strictly legal sense”: a being standing for her ethical and religious ends. When others` status as beings entitled to set and pursue their own ends is refuted, the possibility of a genuinely normative co-existence with them is refuted as well. What remains then is not a political-legal relation but a situation of actual or latent war in which the parties fight for conquering the society so as to turn it into a “realm of virtue” extirpated from divisive others.

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Özet

Dindarlık ve bağınazlık ikilemi: Dinsellik ve demokratik sekülerizm ilişkisi üzerine düşünceler

İçinde yaşadığımız dönemin en belirgin özelliklerinden birisi, liberal-demokratik ilkeler ekseninde belirlenmiş ve uzunca bir süredir kabul görmüş olan siyaset ve din ilişkisine dair sektör modellerin sorgulanmaya başlanmış olmasıdır. Dolayısıyla, günümüz siyasal ve hukuk felsefesi için en önemli sorunlardan birisi, dinselliğin siyasal ve toplumsal alan içerisinde nasıl konumlandırılacağıdır. Köktencilüğün, liberal-demokratik rejimler içerisinde dinsel talep ve hareketlerin hoş görülebilmemesinin sınırını belirlediğine yönelik klişe pek de yol gösterici olmamaktadır. Sorun, kabul edilebilir ve kabul edilemez dinsellik biçimleri arasındaki ayrımın nasıl çözüleceğidir; ve bu ayrım genellikle sorunlu bir biçimde kişilerin yaşamlarını şekillendirirken dinsel inanç ve kanaatlerinin ne oranda belirleyici olduğu üzerinden kurulmaktadır. Bu çalışma, sözkonusu ayrımı, dinsel inanç ve kanaatlerin kişilerin yaşamındaki oransal ağırlığına göndermede bulunmadan kategorik bir biçimde tanımlama çabasını içermektedir. Bu doğrultuda, dindarlık ve bağınazlık ikiliği işlenecek ve bu ikiliğin demokratik siyaset içerisinde dinsel talep ve hareketlerin kabul edilebilirliğine dair genel standartları belirlemekte yardımcı olacağı iddia edilecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bağınazlık; demokratik sekülerizm; dindarlık; kamusal akıl; siyasal teoloji.