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The Postsecular and Rethinking the Political

Postseküler ve Siyasal Yeniden Düşünmek

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ABSTRACT

The notion of postsecularity has come to the fore in recognizing the neglected significance of religion and belief in terms of their normative, social and political contributions to the individual and collective lives of contemporary times. The literature of postsecularism, essentially, takes issue with the normative-political problematique of coexistence of diverse beliefs in the political community. In this respect, Jürgen Habermas joins the term of postsecular consciousness to be able to deal with the persistence of religiosity and faith in modernized societies and seeks ways to include religious reasoning and moral intuitions into the public sphere and will-formation of the political community. However, he ends up restricting religious moral and political contribution strictly to the general public sphere and ultimately civil society. This article argues that the inadequacy of his postsecular orientation has to do with his idea of the political, which ignores contestation and pluralization in relation to the very foundations of the political. The article also claims that the postsecular turn in political theory fulfills its promises, if it opens the relationship between the secular/immanence and the religious/transcendence to diverse/plural interpretations, and simultaneously contest the political as ontology among subjects of diverse beliefs in the political community.

Keywords: The postsecular, habermas, public sphere, religion, ontology, the political



1. Introduction

The notion of postsecularity has come to the fore in recognizing the neglected significance of religion and belief in terms of their persistent normative, social and political contributions to the individual and collective lives of contemporary times by critically rethinking the conventional understanding/discourse on the dialectics of the secular and the religious. Postsecular interventions originating from various disciplines in general decodify the secularist conviction that not only constructs itself the natural, humanistic and universal way of thinking, being and acting but also conceals and misrepresents the meaning, place and power of religion and faith for subjects' being in the world. Through these critical interrogations, the literature of postsecularism, specifically, takes issue with the normative-political problematique of coexistence of diverse beliefs and life-worlds in the formation of modernity that has shaped Western secularity. Therefore, by contextualizing the modern secular historically, analytically and comparatively, it becomes possible not only to identify the various historico-social developments, agents and institutions in the process of secularization but also to recognize the political moments of secularism by exploring multiple responses for the normative-political question of diversity/plurality in beliefs and identities.

In this respect, Jürgen Habermas joins the term of postsecular consciousness to be able to deal with the persistence of religiosity and believing in modernized societies and seeks ways to include religious reasoning and moral intuitions into the political agenda in public sphere and will-formation of the political community. He requires religious subjects to articulate themselves through secular reasoning and language in the public sphere which is also solely able to determine the politics of the state. Thus, he ends up treating transcendental consciousness and believing dependent to the secular and restrict religious moral and political contribution strictly to the general public sphere and ultimately civil society. By this rather limited inclusionary move, Habermas may prevent the reasoning, judgments and normative/political experience of diverse beliefs from participating in the constitution of the systems of law and the political. However subjects of diverse belief should be allowed to critically engage with each other as free and equal over the ethical and normative principles for the political articulation of their co-existence in the historico-social world. For this to happen, the democratic state and its related concepts of political community, public space etc. should be susceptible to possible moral and political contributions of the religious subjects with having distinct comprehensive worldviews on the condition that the principle, medium, terms and extent of these contributions and participation should not be identified once and for all but stay indeterminable and contestable. This article argues that the postsecular turn fulfills its promises, if it opens the relationship between the secular/immanence and the religious/transcendence to diverse/plural interpretations and simultaneously contest the political among subjects of diverse beliefs in the political community.

This article is organized as follows. In the first section, I will first briefly look at postsecular interrogations in contemporary social and political thought. By so doing, I lay out some fundamental critiques of secularization paradigm, and thereby outline the postsecular agenda by identifying its problematizations, temas, questions and claims. In outlining the postsecular agenda, I specifically focus on Habermas' idea of postsecularism and look into Habermas' interpretation of why postsecular conditions need to be taken into consideration seriously as it in itself phenomenologically reflects contemporary historico-cultural life worlds. The second section explores the Habermasian idea of how cultural, social and political manifestations of religion could be cognitively and morally conceptualized and understood. Most importantly, this part critically engages with Habermas' inclusion of religion into the public political sphere by reconstructing the rela-

tionship between religion and politics within his postmetaphysical thinking. The third section looks at the tensions and limits of the Habermasian idea of postsecularism in terms of the political problematic of coexistence of diverse religious and secular beliefs. This section questions whether or to what extent Habermas' attempt at the translation of religious insights into discourses on social and political life makes it possible for diverse individual/collective subjects to realize their idea of the good drawing from particular metaphysical/religious understandings. In the conclusion section, by drawing on insights of post-foundational political thought I argue for bringing contestation, plurality and diversity into the very concept of the political which should be regarded as the constitutive element for the postsecular.

2. The Postsecular Condition

For the last three decades, there has been a growing scholarly interest in the relevancy, significance and place of religion in contemporary societies across a variety of research areas from philosophy, religious studies and anthropology to social theory, political philosophy and international relations. This literature takes into consideration the persistence of religion not only in private lives but also in the public sphere and calls for thorough investigations of reasons, dimensions and terms of non-negligible fact of religion in an especially socio-political world (Mendieta, & VanAntwerpen, 2011). In order to do this, it is necessary to critically deal with the secularisation thesis, that is based on the strict demarcation of the religious and the secular. The secularisation thesis has dominated the social sciences as the foundational principle for social scientific research and practice and been taken for granted for some as the unquestioned assumption. It basically consists of a set of claims, the gist of which, is that there has been a decline in religiosity in terms of its political, social and normative power in individual and in public matters for the last few centuries. It explains the fading away of any transcendental/sacred references with modernisation in the individual and public spheres (Bruce, 2002). In this perspective, modernisation refers, among other characteristics, to social differentiation, rationality, individualism and democratic politics/sovereign state each of which has its own unique contribution to the declining of religiosity as belief system and to the profanization of life-worlds and social relations (Bruce, 2008, pp.147-150).

Put it simply, the more society modernizes, the less it eventually becomes religious.¹ The power of religion in the lives of individuals and communities decreases as the overall modernization processes penetrate into the cognitive, ethical, cultural and political life worlds. In other words, there are layers of secularization, such as cognitive, moral, and social, each of which is having its correspondent equivalent in the profanization of the society. As Habermas puts it succinctly, the secularisation thesis could be brought together under the three assumptions (2008, pp. 17-18). First, the prevalence of scientific mind and rational thinking in conjunction and dialectic with the massive development of technology and science promoted the conviction that the factual/empirical structure of reality and being "can be causally explained" without referencing the authority of theological/religious sources. Second, as society becomes differentiated within distinct areas of relationships each of which functions in a specific independent role, such as law, ethics, economy, politics, civil society etc. religious convictions and practices are becoming more re-

1 It is important to note that secularism is a controversial, multi-dimensional and complex idea. There are diverse and competing views and exist nuances and critical differences among them. The one that I have used in this paper is the most common, dominant and often has latent usage. In this sense I will use it for its analytical function in order to be able to discuss the subject matter more clearly without implying that this is the only, right and ultimate usage.

stricted to private/individual matters of faith. This consequently leads to the diminishing influence and control of religion with its comprehensive contents over collective lives and public matters. And thirdly, industrialization and the formation of the sovereign state brought stable systems of order, right and welfare which provide individuals with much more self-confidence and capability to be able to grapple with the possible experiences of risks, ambiguity, crisis and insecurity in their worldly lives.

A growing literature aims at comprehending the dialectics of the secular and the religious both theoretically and empirically by critically rethinking the issue of secularism, and thereby its most common conceptualization, namely the secularisation paradigm. These critical interrogations are conducted with regards to philosophico-analytical, ethico-political and historical-social dimensions of secularism in conjunction with its distinct manifestations and plural interpretations sensitive to the contexts of time and space (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, & VanAntwerpen, 2011). For example, Casanova argues that (2011, pp.54-74.) since secularisation has been a very ambiguous, complex and contested concept, its different connotations and diversing discourses should be distinguished. He thinks that first, it refers to the “decline of religiosity” in terms of comprehensive belief systems and religious institutions and practices in contemporary societies, second, “the privatization of religion” as representing private beliefs and subjective convictions, and finally, “the differentiation of the secular spheres” of ethics, politics, economy etc. from religion. In addition to the significance of the analytical distinction, Casanova points out the misrepresentation of secularization as a historical necessity, continuous progress, the normative ideal or universal condition which, he thinks, penetrates, even if in different degrees, to the three connotations of the term. From this line of critique, he argues for comparative interrogations sensitive to historical-cultural contexts, thereby exploring multiple forms and diverse interpretations of the possible relationships between the religious and the secular (Casanova, 2007, pp.7-9). More importantly, Casanova criticizes one of the central tenets of secularization, namely the privatization of religion, by arguing for the continuing and growing public significance of religion not just as an empirical fact but also its conceptual/philosophical validity and normative power in public lives of contemporary societies (Casanova, 1994). The implications of “de-privatization of religion” go beyond the scope of civil society being considered as informal and pre-political background culture. It is more than that, as it is, in fact, a constitutive element of contemporary collective lives and public sphere, specifically politics and state due to its normative, cultural, political potentialities (Casanova, 2008).

A critical look into secularism, also, necessitates a thorough investigation of the dialectics of the religious and the secular within the specific context of the formation of modern Western secularity (Asad, 2003). Asad convincingly shows how the secular and the religious have been the co-constitutive of the modern (secular) condition. This co-constitution, however, has been uneven and hierarchical. As the secular has been prevalent due to the superior position in this hierarchy, the religious has been not just externalized, mistified, denaturalized and devalued but, also, re-defined and reconstructed in accordance with the philosophical, ethical, political priorities of the secular. In this process, the secular thrives as the authority, the ultimate itself that the religious as a system of belief, practice and institution was once supposed to represent in pre-modern times. In other words, the secular as the metaphysics itself forms its own conditions of being, thinking and acting by defining the naturalized idea of existence, reason, morality, and the rational and individual-right based concept of public sphere, politics and state. In this sense, the exploration of certain cultural-social contexts of the modern secular and thereby the politics of secularism be-

comes a necessity (Hurd, 2008). Taylor concurs with this argument when he defines secularism as “the response of the democratic state to diversity” within the specific context of formation of European modernity. Keeping this political dimension in mind rather than specifically about religion-state relation, the term is originally designed to tackle the problem of co-existence and self-governance of multiple, plural and diverse religious and non-religious subjects and communities. It should be noted that this original problematique constituting its political moment, which is to be discussed in the following as the subject-matter of the article, shows its link with the moral order, social imagination and idea of the good (Taylor, 2011, p. 36).

In this context, Taylor sheds light on the secular and its political constitution in the modern West by exploring its phenomenological-existential dimension. From this perspective, Western secularity has evolved due to the transformation of the experience of believing. Its distinctive form refers to an “immanent frame” in which religiosity and faith are just one of plural belief systems, the metaphysical worldviews and social imaginaries with their own concrete experience of being in the historico-social world (Taylor, 2007). This means that “the belief in God, or in the transcendent in any form, is contested; it is an option among many; it is, therefore, fragile...” (Taylor, 2011, p.49). For Taylor, this type of secularity developed in two stages. First, the distinctions between the natural and supernatural, the immanent and the transcendental, the profane and the sacred, the worldly and the other-worldly etc. emerged. Accordingly, the belief in the natural, immanent and profane came to be considered plausible, the ultimate source of validity and self-sufficient for apprehending beingness in the world and thereby, for collective life. This experience in the reasonable and natural life is the basis of the immanent frame in which modern individuals find rationales, meanings and values for their judgements and actions. In concrete terms, the public sphere, democratic state and free market were substantiated within the moral order and social imaginary made possible by and embedded within the immanent frame. Moreover, in this immanent frame any validity claim about the divinity, transcendental or God and participation in the correspondent insitutional, collective and practical determinations require to be justified, explained and legitimated in/through the immanence itself. This subjective, uncertain and denaturalized conception of the religious/sacred has been possible only within the Western secularity thanks to the its modern interpretations and experience of the traditions (Taylor, 2011, pp. 50-51).

Jürgen Habermas participates in the debate on the postsecular condition by observing the historico-cultural phenomenon that the significance of religion has come to the fore in the global scale for the last three decades. He argues that the empirical-sociological manifestations of religion cannot be underestimated or devalued as its penetration goes beyond the phenomenological sphere of contemporary socio-political reality. To concretize the issue at hand, he first underlies the fact that religion plays a continuing presence and persistent role in conflicts, terrorism and fundamentalism all over the globe. Conservative movements within the nationally and transnationally organized religious community and institutions expand and get powerful not just in the cultural-social sphere but also in the political arena. Habermas considers the existence of diverse forms of fundamentalism as the second sign of the contemporary religious vibrancy. Both within monotheistic religions and spritual/mystical movements there is a tendency of fundamentalism which leads them to refuse and challenge the modern world in their own different ways. This shows ultimately tensions, contradictions, divergences etc. between the religious and the modern secular. Finally, the contemporary world witnessed an increased role of religion in violence, conflict and war taking place in different parts of the globe. The movement of religious rights in the US, the conflict between India and Pakistan, and various cases of violence in the Middle East are cases in point (2008, pp.18-19).

In addition to this “negative consequences” of contemporary manifestations of religiosity for the public lives, Habermas pays careful attention to the constitutive dimension of religion in contemporary public spheres. He observes that religion becomes much more influential in the national public sphere and make contributions to public debates in relation to diverse issues of collective life. Religious organizations and worldviews act as “communities of interpretations” by providing religious communities and believers with reasons and motivations with regard to public issues, political agenda and will formation in secular societies. Habermas, also, talks about the crucial consequences of critical encounters between ethnicities, cultures, communities within the common public sphere of globalized world whose identities are closely linked with diverse religions, beliefs and faiths. More concretely, minority groups, refugees and immigrants have forced particularly developed secular societies to come to terms with plurality of faiths and diverse ways of living. For Habermas, these last two sociological-political developments have a crucial significance for and reflections on our collective lives. This is especially the case because the sociological-political predicament necessitates having to deal with the normative question of how it is possible for multi-cultural and multi-religious societies to coexist peacefully on the global scale as well as in the national political space (2008, pp.20-21).

In this framework, Habermas criticises the secularism thesis by specifically focusing on this question and the “postsecular consciousness”, as he proposes, provides for the analytical-ethical resources to be able to tackle the problematique of the political dimension of secularism. According to Habermas, the concept of postsecularism contains both sociological-cultural and cognitive-consciousness connotations, that both reflect and are a result of the experience, accumulation and learning of modern Western societies. As a sociological predicament, the postsecular is used to describe the certain condition/phase of contemporary societies in which religious groups still exist and religious traditions and faiths continue to be effective in public lives within different settings and various degrees. The term also includes a cognitive dimension which refers to “altered self-understanding of the secularized societies of Western Europe, Canada or Australia” (Habermas, 2010, pp.3-4). A public awareness that religion will not fade away even if society is modernized is best captured by this cognitive dimension. Thus, postsecularity means “a change in consciousness” embedded within the postsecular society, which is the result of the contemporary socio-cultural and ethico-cognitive developments as identified above that modern societies have experienced. As both empirical and cognitive, the postsecular is substantiated in the normative problematique of “how believing and unbelieving citizens interact with one another politically” (Habermas, 2006a, p.258). This is what postsecularism should actually problematize and take into serious consideration as it articulates the political constitution of the secular in the first place. And as such, this problematique is what this article will specifically focus on by critically dealing with the concept of postsecular in Habermas’ post-metaphysical thinking in which it is encountered more explicitly his idea of religion and its normative-political contents (Habermas, 1992, 2002, 2008b).

3. Religion in the Public Sphere in The Habermasian Postsecularism

Habermas’s main interest lies in the reappraisal of the fact of religion and its normative-political contents with regard to the public sphere in contemporary societies. As the concept of postsecularism implies, the power of religion does not just manifest itself as an empirical-social fact but also has cognitive, normative and political dimensions (Habermas, 2008, p.108). Habermas takes into account seriously the crucial importance of religion and faith in peoples’s reasoning, normative convictions, political ideas and public opinions while they have still been experiencing

their collective lives within a secular life-form constituted by worldly scientific knowledge, ethics, institutions and practices. “Cultural and societal secularization should be understood as a twofold learning process, one that requires both Enlightenment traditions and religious doctrines to reflect upon their respecting limits” and “...to be a complementary learning process both sides can, for cognitive reasons, then take seriously each other’s contributions to the controversial themes in the political sphere” (Habermas, 2006a, pp. 252, 258). In postsecular society where secularized life-form has increasingly dominated public consciousness needs to, as he puts it, “epistemologically adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities” (Habermas 2006b, p.15). The question is how subjects both individual and collective could express, determine and fulfill their self-understandings drawing from a certain faith, religion and metaphysical commitment within secular public life as equal to non-believers and thereby without encountering any exclusionary treatment. The question at stake is about “cognitive views and normative expectations” that both believers and non-believers must hold in their co-habitation and in relation to their interactions in the common political space (Habermas, 2006a, p.252). Moreover, for Habermas, without causing any detriment to the principle of state neutrality with regards to faiths and religious traditions, and any specific attachment to any certain idea of good life, the matter at stake is how public political space is to be re-formed by reinterpreting the relationship between the religious and the secular in the contemporary societies of diverse beliefs and plural life forms.

Habermas, therefore, critically rethinks the secular assumptions of the public sphere, democratic government and constitutional state. In other words, in order to include religious subjects into the public space and political debate with their distinct identity claims, the reevaluation of the liberal democratic politics, constitutional state and political ethics is necessary. From this line of thinking, he argues that for the contemporary state to be truly constitutional and democratic, it must fulfill two requirements (2008, pp. 22-23). While the state provides its citizens with equal freedom of religion including its practices in the public sphere, religious communities should interact and live with each other in the public sphere without isolating themselves from the rest of society. In other words, religions with their subjects, institutions and practices have legitimacy and are equal participants in and of the common public sphere. Religious individuals can have the opportunity to participate in the law-making and political will-formation in the public sphere as the equal citizen of the political community. They consider themselves equal in co-law-giving to their collective lives in which subjects realize their individual rights and freedoms. By using communicative channels and other public mediums, religious people can be a “transformative force in the center of a democratic civil society” (Habermas, 2011, p. 25). In harmony with this universal public sphere with free equal citizens, individuals also preserve their religious and cultural attachments and reproduce without hindrance their collective identities. They realize the rights of citizenship within the context of their particular identities which provide subjects with the frame and resources for judgement and acting in the public sphere. This is why Habermas says that the inclusion of ethnic, religious, cultural minorities and communities into the public sphere is the precondition of this double requirement (2008a, pp. 23-24). This is the case because the manifestation/determination of difference/otherness, both individual and collective, is possible only with the constitution of political community, namely the universal public sphere. Thus, subjects fulfill equality, rationality and freedom by participating in the system of rights, politics and law while still experiencing their distinct and particular collective identities.

These conditions characterize the modern political space with its specific social-cultural predicaments. In this sense the postsecular consciousness is something learned from experiencing

modernity where secular individuals encounter, interact and live together with believers and religious ones. As Habermas puts it, this requires “...to adopt self-reflexive critical stance toward the limits of enlightenment.” (2008b, p.112). This assent is also a necessary corollary of the neutrality of state. For this, the state is assumed to be neutral towards to all of the diverse religious understandings without excluding them from the political arena. While the state does not prioritize any certain religion, it does not prevent religious contribution to the collective lives of the political community (2008a, p. 28). Moreover, neither a religious worldview nor a secularized understanding penetrate the state all the way down (2008b, p.113). However, the crucial point here is the distinction that Habermas insists to make while he delicately separates the “political public sphere” from “the state institutions”. The former refers to the sphere of public political life where individuals and communities, including and specifically religious ones, indiscriminately partake in the law-making and political debates which, in principle, are supposed to be accessible to everyone of the political community. The latter indicates to the state institutions in which the formal bodies of court, bureaucracy, parliament etc. make, decide and implement the law and policy independently from religious groups and civil society. As he claims it clearly, “The ‘separation of church and state’ calls for a filter between these two spheres—a filter through which only ‘translated,’ i.e., secular, contributions may pass from the confused din of voices in the public sphere into the formal agendas of state institutions.” (2008a, p. 28).

Habermas’ suggestion of the inclusion of religion into the public sphere is a challenge for secularism, since it has to deal with the religion with its possible reflections in/for the public life and secular subjects need to treat non-secular and religious subjects in the social and political agora as equal (2008a, p. 29). Nevertheless, this requires not just the acceptance of the manifestation of religion in the historico-cultural life world and socio-political formation but also metaphysical, epistemological and ethical contents of religion. This is in the first place why, as discussed above, Habermas insists on the necessity for secular individuals to adopt postsecular consciousness. Individuals cannot divide themselves into two distinct personalities of the secular/profane and religious/sacred. They do not act, judge and decide at times in accordance with secular reasoning and justifications, and at others with religious thinking and convictions. They often want to express themselves in the public life with their religious worldviews and identities which provide them with pertinent meaning, substance, reason and/or value for action, judging and thinking. Also, it is the source of rich moral intuitions, ethical bonds, social and civic responsibility etc. all of which have a crucial influence on and contributions to people to live together in society, interact within public sphere and contest over the political (2008a, p. 28).

At this point, it would be better to look closely at Habermas’ idea of religion which reflects his notion of postsecularism through which to pluralize and diversify the democratic politics by inclusion of (non-secular) others/difference. For him, religious traditions as a belief system and institutional structure contain truth claims, moral insights, and ethical sensitivity that have constitutive roles of communication, thinking, ethics, communal life and politics (2002, pp.147-167). Semantic contents of religious worldview have also contributed to the constitution of modern philosophical reasoning, ethical principles, social solidarity and political imagination in various ways. In this sense, the notions of will, equality, freedom, responsibility, autonomy, justification etc. have origins in the metaphysics of the monetheistic religions and specifically, the secularization of Christian theology in the West (Habermas, 2011, p.27 and 2006a, p.258). He particularly emphasizes “moral intuitions and contents” in the religious conviction and discourse which are closely related to “...differentiated possibilities of expression and sensibilities for misspent life,

for societal pathologies, for the failure of individual life plans and the deformation to be seen in distorted life contexts.” (Habermas, 2006a, p. 257). Furthermore, these moral and social insights include truth claims, epistemic validity and reasons that can be formulated as justified arguments and claims in relation to political issues in the public sphere. Habermas (2002, p. 76) states that “... whoever puts forth a truth claim today must, nevertheless, translate experiences that have their home in religious discourse into the language of a scientific expert culture-and from this language retranslate back into praxis.” For him, this rearticulation transforms the religious discourse from the particular meaning and specific truth contents limited to only believers to the universally/publicly accessible language open to (secular) public in principle containing everyone. As stated above, the crucial point here is that “the truth content of religious contributions can only enter into the institutionalized practice of deliberation and decision-making if the necessary translation already occurs in the pre-parliamentarian domain, i.e. in the political public sphere itself” (Habermas, 2006b, p.10).

Nevertheless, the meaning, subject, function and methods of this translation have been a very contested issue among diverse thinkers (For example Rawls, 2005, pp.435-490). It is not possible to enter into details of the debate. It would be sufficient only to touch on Habermas’ position which also plays a very crucial role in his account of the postsecular and the religion in the public sphere. In order not to create an extra burden for believers but still sticking to the translation requirement which will be problematized in the following, Habermas proposes that both believers and non-believers have responsibilities and should work together for the translation requirement. Believers need to try to rearticulate religious truth claims, epistemic insights and moral intuitions within justified claims, reasoned arguments and sound explanations which are open and intelligible for the general public and secular subjects. Non-believers must reflect on, interpret and communicate with the meaning, sensibility and insight embedded within the religious worldview and lived experience so that its articulation in public/secular language gets completed (Habermas, 2011, pp. 26-27 and 2006b, p.11). Habermas seems to think that there is a neutral universal language, namely the secular, accessible to everyone on the structure and content of which individual and collective subjects coming from different ideas of the good can agree. Indeed, they are able to enter dialogue with, speak to and communicate with each other through the “secular mode of speaking” without leaving their particular identities (Habermas, 2006a, 258). By imposing the requirement of “respecting the precedence of secular reasons” (2006b, 15), Habermas comes to assume the secular language/discourse as given, neutral and universal which contains potentialities to be able to bring together coherently plural/multiple metaphysics, faiths and worldviews (Taylor, 2011, pp.34-60) This assumption needs to be critically inquired further, specifically because it has significant consequences for the problematique in which this article is particularly interested.

4.The Limits of the Postsecular Public Sphere

Habermas’ inclusion of religion into public political discourse does not capture the power, significance and place of religion in both individuals’ lives and the collective public sphere in their entirety. More importantly, the limitations and tensions in his notion of postsecularism have crucial implications for the concept of the political which is supposed to be designed in the first place to handle with the problem of co-existence of free and equal individual and collective subjectivities embedded within diverse beliefs, moral orders and socio-political imaginaries. The relatively restricted toleration of faith/religion in the public sphere and political discourse is here the case because he has taken an uncritical stance towards secular public reason and liberal ethics,

both of which in Habermas' account seem given, unquestioned, universally valid and normatively superior. In relation to this but also as an independent point, he separates the state, its agency and structure from the broader public sphere in which religion is just one competing idea of the good. Thus, he restricts the power and place of religion strictly with civil society and socio-cultural area with only limited political significance. By assuming the independent/neutral nature of the state, he comes to give crucial place to the requirement of translation in favour of secular reason but at the expense of religious reasoning. As he excludes contestation, difference and agonism from the political itself, he prioritizes agreement and consensus for the public political life which is actually shaped by the certain idea of the good. This article argues that the relationship between the religious/transcendental and the secular/immanence should remain contested and needs to be interpreted in accordance with the diverse and multiple contexts and worldviews. Therefore, the political is to be redefined, evaluated and reconstituted inconclusively by the contestation of religious and secular ideas. This could provide both religious and secular subjects with the medium and possibility to realize their individuality/universality and collectivity/difference at the same time in their socio-political life-worlds consisting of and without excluding plural and diverse religious or secular identities.

Even if Habermas questions the strict distinction between the religion and the secular by critically engaging with the secularism thesis, he still considers the relationship between the religious/sacred and the secular/profane in a dichotomous and hierarchical way. For example, when he talks about "...distinction between a secular mode of speaking, which requires itself to be generally accessible, and a religious mode of speaking, which depends upon the truths of revelation." (2006a, 257), it appears even ontologically and epistemologically a duality of the religious and the secular. In other words, there is "a 'worldly' domain basically immune from 'the other-worldly' intrusion, a realm of 'immanence' categorically opposed to religious 'transcendence' (Dallmayr, 2012, p. 964). From this "two-worldly" perspective as Dallmayr (2012) rightly calls it, the secular is specifically about humanity by reflecting and stemming from the generic, universal and natural qualities. Its substance and meaning is rationally conceivable, expressible and accessible for everyone and thereby linguistically communicative. However, the religion is particular to believers as its reality depends on the belief, doxa and conviction that are attributed or constituted by believers themselves. Its epistemological and cognitive structure are irrational in some sense because of its unaccessible truth claims and thereby not properly communicative in discursive and reasoning enterprises among the public. Therefore, the religious thought necessitates much more specific and extra work to translate, formulate and articulate itself within the discourse, argument, practice and institutions of the (secular) public life. This priority of the secular/immanence over the religious/transcendence clearly explains the reason why Habermas points out the requirement that "for the religiously attuned citizens he or she self-critically determines the relationship between faith and knowledge from the perspective of a general knowledge of the world." (Habermas, 2006a, p. 259).

Most importantly, while the secular with these whole connotations of humanly, truth-giving, rational, neutral, discursive and communicative could be made public and social in the historical-cultural life-worlds, the religious with the reverse qualities is essentially insufficient and in some sense improper for the collective lives and political sphere. It ultimately lacks the necessary cultural and political contents for the rational constitution of life-worlds. On the contrary the historical and cognitive potentials of the secular have the resources and criteria by which individuals can establish a rational, equal and free political community as the unity of individual and collective self-determination. Likewise, for Habermas, the constitutional state, the democratic

government and the liberal political ethics are seen as the public determinations and the embodiments of the secular in the historical-cultural world through which the religious are to be assessed, categorized and questioned. As he puts it (2006a, p. 253) “the constitution of the liberal state is self-sufficient with regard to its need for legitimation, that is, that it can draw upon the resources of a set of arguments that are independent of religious and metaphysical traditions”. In his thinking, the liberal-democratic state as constituting the public/collective life in a specific formation has its own independent legitimating normative power for the political ethics in general and the ideal political community in particular without requiring any further justification. Indeed, this independent validity status is often considered, defined and even constituted simultaneously through the expense, delegitimation and exclusion of the possible moral, public and political contributions of the religious/transcendence.

Nevertheless, as Dallmayr argues, the religious/transcendence/sacred/other-worldly and the secular/immanence/profane/worldly can not be ultimately and fully separated as they are mutually inclusive and are pre-conditions of possibility for each other. As the etymology of *saeculum* demonstrates, the term “basically refers to the necessary time dimension of human experience- a temporality which inevitably permeates both reason and faith, both worldly cognition and religion (thus undercutting their presumed contrast).” (Dallmayr, 2012, 964). This view counters the idea that there is an epistemological discontinuity, cognitive hierarchy or communicative incommensurability between secular and religious reasonings. Since religious understandings are embedded within lived experience and concrete life-forms, hence its existential dimension with hermeneutical character, their utterance and meanings are accessible, intelligible and public. Therefore, the very requirement of their translation in the public sphere needs to be contested as it is already political, social and ethical contents/concreteness. From this viewpoint, the liberal-democratic public sphere itself reflects a questionable idea of good life with its individualist power and interest maximizing subject. Postsecularity has to be redefined so that religious or non religious subjects with other-regarding virtue ethics work indiscriminately together for social justice (Dallmayr, 2012, pp. 968-973).

5.Ontology and The Political

What is problematic is Habermas’ proposition that constructs a direct link and inseparable connection between the secular reason as such and the liberal politics and state in which faith has been given a limited power, defined position and thereby categorically, an uneven status in terms of its epistemological truth claims, normative insights and social-political identification. The proposition assumes a necessary and natural continuity from the secular, public reasoning to the liberal political ethics and the constitutional-democratic state. In other words, Habermas claims that the liberal-democratic state and the secular public sphere, which is in essence the manifestation of a certain moral order and an idea of the good, meets completely the goals that diverse religious and non-religious subjectivities aim to achieve in the political life. The Habermasian proposition restricts the democratic state and the public sphere with a certain moral order, namely rationally justifiable communicative ethics substantiated through the certain idea of deliberative democracy by simultaneously excluding diverse secular imaginations, and religious ethical and political contributions. Consequently, what his idea of the political aims at is the communicative and discursive consensus that is supposed to go beyond contestation, pluralization, agonism and conflict in public communal life. This consensual account of the political, ultimately, can not do justice to diversifying worldviews and life-forms, the fact of which should be considered as the foundational moment of the realm of the political at the first place.

As Mouffe (2006, p. 326) states, “it is a mistake to imagine that there is a single correct, universal way of envisaging liberal democracy”, since the ethical and normative principles which realize the constitutional democratic state vary, multiply and pluralize depending on society embedded within certain worldviews, and hegemonic struggles. Indeed, political interpretations of freedom, justice, democracy and constitutional state have been much pluralized due to diverse lived experiences, sociological forms and institutional structures in the modern West. For example, Honneth (2014) convincingly shows that individual freedom as the normative ideal of modernity has been interpreted and articulated within the three notions of legal, reflexive and social freedom. Each notion of freedom, in turn, offers its own distinct conceptions of justice and political order. Likewise, for Honneth the reality of freedom objectifies itself socio-institutionally in the mediums of personal relationships, the market economy and the democratic will-formation in which individuals recognize each other as legal, moral and social bearers of freedom. In the same vein, Charles Taylor (2004) argues that liberal ideals of individuality, liberty, equality have been substantiated in the modern cultural institutions of the market, civil society and the democratic state. This political interpretation of the community of mutual beneficiaries of equal individuals hinges on, from the beginning, an ontology of beingness in the world animated by certain ideas of moral order and social imaginaries.

This means that Habermas’s notion of the political is just one of the diverse interpretations of freedom, individuality, morality and community embedded within certain life forms, cultural-historical practices and institutional structures in the modern West. But also, more importantly, his idea of the political consisting of public reason, communicative ethics and liberal-democratic state have the imprint of certain ontological presuppositions in its very constitution. Indeed, as Connolly (1995, pp. 1-41) convincingly argues, this is not surprising at all since every political interpretation is necessarily ontological. Put differently, ontopolitical interpretation is essentially a transcendental quality of human life. As thinking and understanding are embedded into a lived ontology, human communal life is experienced and evaluated ethically in the forms of diverse and plural ways. Therefore, for Connolly plurality, diversity and difference need to be considered as the unfounded foundations of the political. Without taking into account the pluralizing, and diversifying constitution and determination of the political, every attempt at fixing the political with a certain ontology, it may make exclusion, disrespect, injustice, violence, domination etc. prevalent among subjects and communities with diverse moral-philosophical worldviews in political life.

This point requires us to take seriously the relationship between ontology and the political. Indeed, ontopolitical has been recently much discussed within the writings of the various authors coming from diverse theoretical lineages (For a detailed discussion Marchart; 2007 and White; 2009). The gist of this ontological turn in political theorizing is that our ethical-political behaviours, experiences, decisions and judgements in the collective life are inseparably connected to our presuppositions and premises on the meaning of our beingness in the world. Ontological investigations, therefore, problematize the attitude that takes for granted the place and significance of our conceptions of Being on the explications/interpretations of subjectivity, morality, sociality and the political. In this sense, it explores the essence, structure and functions of foundations and grounds upon which the political is thought, imagined, actualized and institutionalized in the historico-social world (Vincent; 2004). Details of how ontology is defined and what its relationship with the political in this ontological turn literature is beyond the scope of this article even if these questions have very crucial consequences on political thinking and practice. Nevertheless, it could be helpful to substantiate the issue to some extent. For example, Stephen K. White

(2009, p.811) explicates his weak ontological stance, which grounds his political theorizing, as figures of the self, other and the beyond human, and also as existential universals of language, mortality, natality and the sources of the self. William Connolly (1995, p.17) classifies contemporary political imaginations under the matrix of four basic ontological categories: mastery, attunement, collectivity and individual. While mastery/attunement has to do with the telos or direction of human life in relation to nature and Being, collectivity/individual refers to which one is the primary unit or referent point in acting, thinking, ethics and identity. Furthermore, drawing on postfoundational thought Marchart's political ontology (2007, pp.1-35) consists of essential antagonism leading to hegemonic struggles among political identities for discursive constitution of the social the final ground of which is necessarily absent and contingent.

If Taylor's argument (2011, pp.41 and 56) is taken into consideration thoroughly, i.e. that diversity of beliefs with the aim of achieving their equal and free co-existence in the political community is the foundational normative and political question that modern secularity is supposed to develop a solution, then achieving this goal through certain political/institutional projects should be open to contestation among diverse interpretations. Mouffe's notion of agonism as defining the political can be helpful here since it captures the constituting moment that multiple identities drawing from certain cultural and social life-forms interact, dialogue and struggle with each other over the hegemonic articulation of the ethical-normative ideals (2006, 326). In a similar vein, for Connolly (1995, pp.15-16) the irreducibility and infinity of the contestation in the political realm determine the postsecular public sphere in which secular and religious onto-political interpretations engage with one another in the co-constitution of identity/difference. What needs to be cultivated among these ontopolitical orientations is the ethics of agonistic respect which grounds democratic ethos by providing the terms of conditions for the coexistence of contesting identities with diverse ontopolitical standpoints.

Otherwise crucial intervention with promising significant possibilities, the Habermasian postsecularism, by delimiting the political life, prevents diverse subjects and communities from constructing plural interpretations and imaginations of the ideal political community. It does not envisage the difference sensitive ethical responsibility through which subjects exert on determining themselves as free and equal with particular identities in self-other relationships. Neither does Habermas' notion of the political allow identities with diverse worldviews and life forms to construct plural interpretations of its ontological presuppositions. Nevertheless, by bringing ontology into the political and recognizing the fact of different ontopolitical interpretations in the postsecular public life, it might be possible to appreciate contestation, negotiation and pluralization as constitutional moments of the political as well. This ontology sensitive approach appreciates not just only a consensual moment but also the agonistic and contested dimension of the political. It helps envisaging diverse meanings, interpretations and potentialities already embedded in the very constitution of the political. Thus, subjects with diverse worldviews and beliefs can be in the best place to develop a critical political practice and agency in the postsecular conditions. Consequently, this rethinking of the political as ontology has significant consequences of how increasingly diverse societies in the contemporary world can live together without compromising their fundamental (religious and secular) beliefs that in turn constitute their particular individual and collective identities.

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