

CHAPTER 19

.....

COMMUNICATIVE REASON AND RELIGIOUS FAITH IN SECULAR AND POSTSECULAR CONTEXTS

.....

JACOB L. GOODSON

THE German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas issues two claims about secularity: “First, traditional worldviews and objectifications lose their power and validity *as myth, as public religion, as customary ritual, as justifying metaphysics, as unquestionable tradition*” (1970: 98). Within secularity, these features of the “traditional worldviews” get “reshaped into subjective belief systems and ethics which ensure the private cogency of modern value-orientations” (98–99). Secularity requires “traditional worldviews” to become privatized and subjective.

Habermas’s second claim about secularity is this: “Second, they [traditional worldviews] are transformed into constructions that do both at once: criticize tradition and reorganize the released material of tradition according to the principles of formal law and the exchange of equivalents (rationalist natural law)” (1970: 99). Secularity provides a constant critique of traditional beliefs and ways of life, but it employs traditional categories in order to find working principles for political and societal purposes. The constant critique of traditional beliefs and ways of life are not dismissive, in a wholesale way, of religious traditions; rather, secularity keeps a check on what is useful and nonuseful from religious traditions for the majority of the population.

This chapter describes Habermas’s usage of the terms “secularity,” “secularism,” and “postsecularism” and explains how Habermas’s usage of these three terms is best understood in relation to his philosophical theory of communicative rationality. The shift from secularism to postsecularism is based on the fact that the latter allows for better communication between religious believers and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

SECULARITY, SECULARISM, AND POSTSECULARISM

.....

Habermas identifies secularism as the societal process of making decisions with as much impartiality as possible. He writes that secularism requires offering judgments “that can

be impartially justified in the light of generally accessible reasons, in other words, that can be justified equally toward religious and nonreligious citizens and citizens of different confessions” (2008: 122). Impartiality concerns decisions and judgments; partiality concerns persons. When there is a conflict between a person’s religious convictions and impartial decisions and judgments, then laws and policies must be developed and understood according to the impartial decisions and judgments (see Habermas 2008: 129). This is neither problematic nor violent toward religious believers provided that religious citizens are “supposed to . . . accept the constitution of the secular state” (Habermas 2008: 129). Secularism allows for impartiality, and the impartiality achieved through secularism provides its own justification for secularism.¹ One way to narrate Habermas’s philosophical development is to say that, at one point, he held the position described here but no longer believes it (Thomassen 2010: 154–157). Another possible interpretation of Habermas’s philosophical development is to recognize that this argument is John Rawls’s defense and understanding of secularism—which provided a constant and reliable conversation partner for Habermas but was never explicitly adopted by Habermas.² For present purposes, there is no requirement to defend one interpretation against the other. What matters here is to reflect upon the shift from secularism to postsecularism.

For Habermas, postsecularism names “an awareness of what is missing” (2010: 15–23). Akin to Immanuel Kant’s account of the limitations of reason in the name of reason, Habermas’s postsecularism limits secularism in the name of secularity. Usually, Habermas does not tell personal stories as part of his philosophical arguments. In “An Awareness of What Is Missing,” however, readers are stunned by the insights that Habermas provides based upon the narrative—and his reflections on that narrative—of Max Frisch’s funeral. During this funeral, Habermas tells us, Frisch has written out some words spoken by his widow. Frisch thanks the congregation of St. Peters in Zurich for the hospitality of his coffin without requiring the use of “Amen!” Struck by these words in this particular setting, Habermas reflects on this narrative: “the ceremony [is] a paradoxical event which tells us something about secular reason, namely that it is unsettled by the opaqueness of its . . . apparently clarified relation to religion” (2010: 16). He continues, “At the same time, the church . . . also had to overcome its inhibitions when it allowed this ceremony, given its secular character ‘without an ‘amen,’ to take place within its hallowed halls” (16). Habermas concludes, “The philosophically enlightened self-understanding of modernity stands in a peculiar dialectical relationship to . . . theological self-understanding” (16). This theological self-understanding intrudes “into this modernity as the most awkward element from its past” (16). This experience of Frisch’s funeral leads Habermas to this distinction: secularism names the process where religious believers and secular citizens talk *about* one another whereas postsecularism names the process where religious believers and secular citizens talk *with* one another. In order to talk *with* one another, Habermas proposes: (a) “the religious side must accept the authority of ‘natural’ reason as the fallible results of the institutionalized sciences and the basic principles of universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality” (2010: 16); (b) “secular reason may not set itself up as the judge of concerning truths of faith, even though in the end it can accept as reasonable only what it can translate into its own, in principle universally accessible, discourses” (16).

In his dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), Habermas writes:

The expression “postsecular” does more than give public recognition to religious fellowships in view of the functional contribution they make to the reproduction of motivations

and attitudes that are societally desirable. The public awareness of a post-secular society also reflects a normative insight that has consequences for the political dealings of unbelieving citizens with believing citizens. In the postsecular society, there is an increasing consensus that certain phases of ‘modernization of the public consciousness’ involves the assimilation and the reflexive transformation of both religious and secularist mentalities. If both sides agree to understand the secularization of society as a complementary learning process, then they will also have the cognitive reasons to take seriously each other’s contributions to controversial subject matters in the public debate. (2006b: 46-47)

First, postsecularism ought to go beyond mere recognition that religious believers remain within modern, secular society. Second, postsecularism ought to seek “assimilation,” “consensus,” and “reflexive transformation” for both religious and secular citizens. Third, agreeing upon secularization as a “complementary learning process” leads to a higher quality of disagreements pertaining to “controversial subject matters in the public debate.” Although the grammar of Habermas’s sentence reads as a conditional statement (if x then y), his argument works only when we take it as a biconditional statement (x if and only if y): if and only if religious believers admit to secularization as a “learning process,” then the disagreements on controversial issues will achieve a higher quality. While postsecularism displays “an awareness of what is missing”—that is, the presence, positions, and reasons of religious believers—religious believers also *must* display an awareness of secularization.

This chapter proceeds along the lines of the good, the bad, and the ugly. After explaining Habermas’s theory of communicative rationality, I then offer the following investigations: Habermas’s defense of religious faith (the good); his reflections on religious faith in its extreme form of religious fundamentalism (the bad); and his criticisms of both religious-based violence (the ugly) and the American response to religious-based violence found in the “War on Terror.” The chapter concludes by explaining Ratzinger’s theological endorsement of postsecularism, which we find in his engagement with Habermas in *The Dialectics of Secularization*.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION VERSUS COMMUNICATIVE REASON

The theories of communicative action and communicative rationality are related by an adjective, but, ultimately, they have differing functions and divergent purposes (Edgar 2006: 21–26). Scholarship on Habermas’s theories of communicative action and communicative rationality tends to use these phrases interchangeably, which is a mistake. I find that there are three key differences: (a) communicative action concerns and describes the everyday life or ordinary experiences of present-day citizens; (b) communicative action is context-dependent whereas communicative rationality is an obligation or responsibility of the most intellectual or “rational” citizens—especially scholars in college and university settings; and (c) communicative rationality, not communicative action, leads to and requires discourse ethics.

Habermas's theory of communicative action and his theory of communicative rationality are not interchangeable phrases; readers can have one without the other, and the theories do not necessarily depend upon one another. Communicative action concerns how two or more individuals relate to one another in everyday (nonacademic) interactions—namely through body language and patterns of speech. Communicative rationality is a philosophical theory that seeks to explain (a) the peacefulness of argumentation involving both disagreements and agreements and (b) the logical tools required to repair broken forms of argumentation and engagement (see Goodson 2011). Communicative action addresses what people do within society, whereas communicative rationality advances debates concerning the role of objectivity and reason in the natural sciences versus the social sciences. According to Habermas, the natural sciences generate monological-based claims developed through instrumental reason whereas the social sciences proceed along a course closer to the hermeneutical task where there is a necessary give-and-take through argumentation, conversation, and debate. The intersubjectivity of communicative rationality leads to temporary judgments of objectivity. Objectivity is not defined in an Aristotelian sense of correspondence with objects but as the result of a long process of argumentation and scholarly debate where there is a “better argument” that can be considered final—and, therefore, temporarily objective—until the next generation of scholars reopen investigation. The natural sciences need the argumentative and communicative methods found within the social sciences, and the social sciences ought to be more serious about in-depth and purposive investigations.

Communicative reason leads to Habermas's theory of discourse ethics in order to maintain standards of goodness and truthfulness within the process of argumentation, conversation, and debate (see Habermas 2001: 76–88). Communicative action relies more on the claims and methods of traditional moral theories than it does on discourse ethics. In his early work, the notion of “the ideal speech situation” functioned as the ultimate standard for communicative rationality; this notion of an ideal standard does not remain in his later thinking.

Habermas again takes a decidedly Kantian turn in his discourse ethics and seeks to apply both “the dignity test” and “the universalization test” to communicative reason. The dignity test guides the theory of communicative rationality because it reminds participants to not use other interlocutors as a means to your own intellectual end. The universalization test serves the theory of communicative rationality because it leads to moral consensus: a moral decision is valid if and only if every individual affected by the decision consents to it in some way. (Habermas remains somewhat vague concerning what he means by “consent” here.) The dignity test relates to the other participants in the process of communicative reason while the universalization test reaches those within society that academic decisions will impact—both in the present and in the future. The role of the universalization test explains why Habermas cares so much—in his twenty-first-century writings—about religious believers and theological reasoners: they, too, have to be able to consent to the conclusions and findings of the process of communicative reason.

One of the difficulties of reading Habermas's work is that he fails to distinguish between communicative action and communicative reason. At times he uses them interchangeably while providing neither explanation nor justification for doing so. Within the contexts of secularity and postsecularism, however, communicative rationality becomes the more complex of the two.

THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

Communicative rationality serves as a correction to subject-centered rationality (Habermas 1990a). What is the correction? In Habermas's words:

The change of paradigm from subject-centered to communicative reason . . . encourages us to resume . . . the counterdiscourse that accompanied modernity from the beginning. . . . It must be made clear that the purism of pure reason is not resurrected again in communicative reason. (1990a: 301)

Communicative rationality builds from the arguments that comprise Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* but avoids Kant's own subject-centered epistemology.

The college or university setting becomes the primary context where communicative reason is achieved and modeled. Habermas writes:

"Rationality" refers in the first instance to the disposition of speaking and acting subjects to acquire and use fallible knowledge. . . . Subject-centered reason finds its criteria in standards of truth and success that govern the relationships of knowing and purposively acting subjects to the world of possible objects or states of affair. By contrast, as soon as we conceive of knowledge as communicatively mediated, rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition. Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentative procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic harmony. (1990a: 314–315)

We can infer from this passage that the task or vocation of the academic professor concerns maintaining constant communication among and between disciplines.

Scholars in the natural sciences ought to maintain their goals for "propositional truth" and "normative rightness" but should do so in a communicative relation to scholars working in the social sciences. Scholars in the social sciences should continue their examinations of "subjective truthfulness" and "aesthetic harmony" but should do so in a communicative relation to scholars working in the natural sciences. One of the goals of academic life, therefore, is to achieve a coherent, consensus-building, and unifying discourse where scholars are freed from their own subjectivities and work toward particular conclusions reached through the process of communicative rationality. In order to achieve this goal, scholars need to (a) cultivate a "decentered understanding of the world" and (b) participate in the process of a "pragmatic logic of argumentation" where research, teaching, and writing lead to normative judgments of which can be shared through the particular conclusions reached through the process of communicative rationality across disciplines.

The specific role of the philosopher, within academic life, is to serve as an interpreter between the natural sciences and the social sciences (Habermas 1990b). The role of the "public" intellectual, or "public philosopher," is to translate the conclusions and results from the natural sciences to the greater public—and perhaps for purposes of public policy. Secularity must be the ground for the philosopher to do his or her job well, because the translation assumes neither metaphysical nor religious foundations. Within postsecularism, however,

the translation must remain open to religious interpretations. Secular citizens and thinkers ought to view these religious interpretations as an important part of the process of communicative rationality and not shut down the contributions made by religious citizens and thinkers. Although the primary context for communicative reason is the college or university setting, it reaches beyond the academy as well:

Communicative reason makes itself felt in the binding force of intersubjective understanding and reciprocal recognition. At the same time, it circumscribes the universe of a common form of life. Within this universe, the irrational cannot be separated from the rational in the same way as, according to Parmenides, ignorance could be separated from the kind of knowledge that, as the absolutely affirmative, rules over “nothing” . . . [M]istakes, crimes, and deceptions are not simply without reason; they are forms of manifestation of the inversion of reason. The violation of claims to truth, correctness, and sincerity affects the whole permeated by the bond of reason. There is no escape and no refuge for the few who are in the truth and are supposed to take their leave of the many who stay behind in the darkness of their blindness, as they day takes leave of the night. Any violation of the structures of rational life together, to which all lay claim, affects everyone equally. (Habermas 1990a: 324–325).

Since the terrorist attacks in America on 11 September 2001 (Borradori 2003: 25–81), Habermas has reached beyond the academy in order to perform his own observations from this passage with serious and sobering reflections on religious faith, religious fundamentalism, and religious-based violence. Habermas sets a norm, for academic philosophers, to reach beyond the academy and think about religious traditions and theological reasoning as part of the philosophical task in the twenty-first century.

THE GOOD: RELIGIOUS FAITH IN POSTSECULAR CONTEXTS

Although Habermas seems to initially endorse Søren Kierkegaard’s radically subjective view of faith at the beginning of *The Future of Human Nature* (Habermas 2003: 1–15; Junker-Kenney 2011: 129–131), his positive view of religious faith mostly concerns what religious traditions offer to the secularity. In the conclusion to *The Future of Human Nature*, Habermas advances three proposals concerning faith within public and secular life. These three proposals constitute Habermas’s descriptions of the practices involved between religious believers and nonreligious citizens within postsecular contexts.

First, Habermas observes that only religious believers are expected to (a) divide their identities into public and private and (b) translate the language and logic of their religious convictions into the language and logic of secularity to create sympathy for their proposals and views beyond their religious community (2003: 109). We should not celebrate this fact about modern, secular life because it places religious believers at a disadvantage in public contexts. Habermas argues that nonreligious citizens ought to find ways to reduce the disadvantages imposed on religious believers: “only if the secular side, too, remains sensitive to the force of articulation inherent in religious languages will the search for reasons that aim at universal acceptability not lead to an unfair exclusion of religions from the public sphere”

(2003: 109). If religious faith continues to cause a split identity for religious believers within secular life, then secular life will suffer for it. Habermas concludes this first proposal with both deontological and utilitarian arguments for why secular life must be more inclusive of taking seriously the faith of religious believers. Deontologically, secular life should not automatically exclude those speakers and writers who present their arguments and proposals from their particular faith perspectives because we must treat every citizen with absolute dignity. Habermas also presents a utilitarian argument for why we ought to include religious faith within communicative rationality and public debates: the failure to include faithful religious believers within secular life diminishes the common good because it eliminates helpful and interesting arguments—what Habermas labels as “resources of meaning” (Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Second, secular reasoning loses substance in its thinking when it simply translates religious reasoning from the language of faith to a more generic and allegedly universal vocabulary (see Habermas 2003: 110). Habermas finds that “something was lost,” for instance, when “sin was converted to culpability, and the breaking of divine commands to an offense against human laws” (2003: 110). When religious ideas are reduced to secular euphemisms, they lose their meaning and resonance. He desires to reflect upon the language and logic of faith and how it shapes religious reasoning in substantive ways. Habermas acknowledges that faith creates meaning in ways that nonreligious reasoning simply cannot achieve (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Third, Habermas argues that all citizens within secular life have an obligation to read and study traditionally sacred texts (Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Qur’an) for purposes of comprehension and profundity: not necessarily through the lens of religious faith (see Habermas 2003: 114) but in order to engage with the reasoning of religious believers (see Adams 2006: 234–255). The point of his proposal concerns how nonreligious citizens can maintain their “distance from religion without closing [their view] to the perspective it offers” (Habermas 2003: 113). Traditionally sacred texts ought to be read and studied by all citizens within secular societies (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Habermas argues that, for religious believers, faith should not be about *self*-assertion but *faithfulness* to one’s religious tradition. Religious traditions provide the faithful with particular ways of reasoning about their everyday lives. The faithful should not seek for the nonreligious within secular life to agree with them, but both religious and nonreligious citizens in secular contexts ought to expect and seek communicatively rational engagements with one another. Nonreligious citizens, within secular life, can and should engage with religious believers on their terms if those terms are made explicit and held to public standards of reasoning, and religious believers within secular life can and should engage with nonreligious citizens if those terms also are made explicit. For both types of citizens, reasoning from traditionally sacred texts allows for this communicatively rational engagement because interpretations of passages found within traditionally sacred texts can and should be offered in self-critical, self-evaluative, and self-reflective ways. Interpretations of passages found within traditionally sacred texts discourage speech-acts of self-assertion. Finally, religious believers cannot and should not expect others to base their convictions on faith alone; the nonreligious, within secular life, cannot and should not dismiss traditional claims involving faith as a prerequisite for the beliefs and convictions of the citizens who are religious believers (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

THE BAD: RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Habermas finds that the kind of religious fundamentalism we have in the world today is a “modern phenomenon,” by which he means that it is a particular kind of reaction unique to modern secularity. He thinks that it is a mistake to call premodern movements or modes of thinking “fundamentalist.” In principle, he has no objection to religious traditions promoting or turning toward their spiritual or theological sources. Rather, religious fundamentalism becomes problematic because it fails to be “self-reflexive” and neglects to “distinguish between religion, secular knowledge, and politics” (Habermas 2006a: 12). Religious fundamentalism, exclusive to secular knowledge and secular politics, is contingent on the mainstream existence of modern secularity. Habermas writes:

We use [the adjective fundamentalism] to characterize a mindset that stubbornly insists on the political imposition of its own convictions and reasons, even when they are far from being generally acceptable. This holds especially for religious beliefs. However, we should not confuse dogmatism and orthodoxy with religious fundamentalism. Every religious doctrine rests on a dogmatic kernel of belief. (2006a: 10)

Religious orthodoxy “only becomes fundamentalist when the guardians and representatives of the true faith ignore the epistemic situation of a pluralistic society and insist—even to the point of violence—on the universal validity and political imposition of their doctrine” (2006a: 10).

What is the proper response to religious fundamentalism? Philosophically, the proper response is for those citizens within the secular West (Europe and the United States) to *not* respond to fundamentalism in the reactionary ways that characterize the fundamentalist response to secularism. “For only the egalitarian individualism of a rational morality that demands mutual recognition, in the sense of equal respect and reciprocal consideration for everybody, is ‘universalistic’ in the strict sense” (Habermas 2006a: 23–24). His proposal concerns a notion of “tolerance.” When Giovanna Borradori asks Habermas if the categories of “friendship” and “hospitality” are better, morally, than the notion of “tolerance”—because of the condescending and paternalistic nature of “tolerance”—Habermas never addresses the categories of “friendship” and “hospitality” in his answer. Habermas addresses fundamentalism in strictly political terms, not on ethical nor moral terms. Habermas says:

The policies of the present . . . US government are guided by the image of a unipolar world on which superpower hegemony alone can avert the risks of fundamentalism . . . and impose political and economic modernization throughout the world. The European states have to choose between accepting the place within the framework of a “coalition of the willing” which Washington assigns its allies on this scenario and reinforcing the collective decision-making power of the EU [European Union] with the aim of promoting a ‘reconstruction of the West’ under conditions of relative importance. (2006a: 74–75)

Fundamentalism must be handled politically, not morally, according to Habermas. Friendship and hospitality are moral categories; for Habermas, tolerance is the best that we can do. Habermas seems to think that a moral approach would be too reactionary, rather

than distant and reasoned, which might lead us to respond with the same problematic zeal found within fundamentalism.

When addressing fundamentalism, from a strictly political perspective, we must keep in mind two different but equally important points. Habermas writes:

On the one hand, we must take a clear stand against fundamentalism, including Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, and, on the other, we must acknowledge that fundamentalism is the child of disruptive processes of modernization in which the aberrations of our colonial history and the failures of decolonization played a decisive role. (2006a: 111)

First, religious fundamentalism does not apply to Islam alone within the twenty-first century; we must become alert to Christian and Jewish forms of fundamentalism as well. Second, we ought to recognize the missteps of colonialism—which allowed for contexts of oppression and suffering for those who now find comfort in the causes of “religious fundamentalism.” Once we keep in mind these two important points, then we can consider the political options that we have for moving forward within the twenty-first century (Aguirre 2012: chs. 5–7).

THE UGLY: RELIGIOUS-BASED VIOLENCE

The bad turns into the ugly: religious fundamentalism often fuels religious-based violence. When this occurs, Habermas argues that we are faced with two political options for addressing religious-based violence: either (a) through military strategy and empire-like ambition, as demonstrated by the United States’ response to the religious-based violence of Al-Qaeda, or (b) through a collective union—modeled on the European Union—that polices religious fundamentalism when that fundamentalism turns into “terrorism” through the violation of human rights and societal peace. Habermas thinks these are the options available to us, in the twenty-first century, for addressing and negotiating religious-based violence.

According to Habermas, there are three central problems with the military response carried out by the United States’ War on Terror (see Bush 2001: 65–73): (a) the targets are always on the move: if there are no specific targets, then traditional military strategies cannot be successfully applied to fighting terrorism; (b) as an ideology, or an “ism,” terrorism and the threats it poses are not concrete enough to frame them for clear political thinking about terrorism: the threat of terrorism is not concrete enough to address it as a problem that can be solved by one nation-state on its own; and (c) any War on Terror would be an unconventional war: the fight is against a “network,” not a “nation-state.” Habermas’s response to the language of the War on Terror begins with these remarks:

The global terror that culminated in the September 11 attacks . . . exhibits the anarchistic traits of an important revolt against an enemy that cannot be defeated in any pragmatic sense. Its only possible effect is to shock and alarm the government and population. Technically speaking, our complex societies offer ideal opportunities for concerted disruptions of normal activities because they are highly susceptible to interferences and accidents. These disruptions can produce major destructive effects with a minimum of effort. Global terrorism is extreme both in its lack of realistic goals and in its cynical exploitation of the vulnerability of complex systems. (2006a: 13–14)

The complexity of the modern, globalized world makes Western society susceptible to attacks by terrorist networks. While the ultimate goals of terrorist networks remain “unrealistic,” the possibility of arbitrary attacks continues to be a real threat. Habermas calls these random attacks “cynical” because, while the attacks are intended to make political and theological statements, by design they are not reparative but destructive.

Habermas distinguishes between terrorists and what he calls “ordinary criminals.” Terrorism “differs from private matters in that it merits public interest and demands a different kind of [moral] analysis from that of murder committed out of jealousy, for example” (2006a: 14). If terrorism differs from ordinary crime based on the involvement of political and public interests, then does our moral analysis of terrorism require thinking in terms of war? Habermas answers this question by saying that he considers “Bush’s decision to call for a ‘war against terrorism’ a serious normative and pragmatic error” (14). The normative error Bush’s declaration committed was that it elevated the “criminals to the status of enemies in war,” and the pragmatic error is “one cannot conduct a war against an elusive ‘network’ if the term ‘war’ is to retain any precise meaning” (14–15). According to Habermas, the category of terrorist fits somewhere between “ordinary criminals” and “enemies in war.” He still calls them “criminals” but recognizes that, because of the political and public interests involved, they are more than “murderers.” This “more than,” however, does not warrant equating them with enemies at war, political soldiers, or warriors.

Habermas thinks of terrorism in terms of how it disturbs the peacefulness of society through the disruption of our norms of communication. Habermas claims, “if violence begins with disruptions in communication, once it has erupted it is possible to determine what went wrong and what needs to be repaired” (2006a: 15–16). Habermas finds that terrorism requires careful and serious political analysis. He disdains any Rambo-like approach to terrorism where solutions are found in making “tough heroes.” According to Habermas, a correct response to terrorist activity should not further disrupt the norms of communication; ultimately, responses to terrorism need to repair the disruptions of communication and rationality caused by terrorist attacks rather than continue those disruptions—or, worse, create further disruptions. This is a case in which the distinction between communicative action and communicative rationality plays out in politics: communicative rationality comes to the rescue when disruptions occur in communicative action.

Traditionally, just war theory provides the reasons and strategies for responding to religious-based terrorism. Just war theory cannot and should not be employed in secular and postsecular contexts, according to Habermas. Concerning the problems of just war theory, Habermas’s argument can be summarized as follows: (a) because the War on Terror is not a war, terrorism should be addressed as a police action rather than through military strategies (however, terrorists should not be treated as “ordinary criminals”); (b) working toward “a globally inclusive commonwealth” will require thinking of all conflicts as “internal” problems, rather than external ones, and this will mean the abolition of war in the twenty-first century; therefore (c) just war theory is neither applicable nor viable for addressing conflicts in the twenty-first century.

Habermas thinks that we should develop an international police force to address twenty-first-century conflicts rather than make decisions prescribed by just war theory. The European Union provides a model for how international law, without its shared foundations with just war reasoning, can be realized.³ Habermas makes the case that since 1928, the *jus ad bellum* (justifications for going to war or the reasons based on justice for declaring

war) have lost their validity for thinking about war. Where we find ourselves now, according to Habermas, is that we think of war in terms of legal and illegal wars—as opposed to just and unjust wars—which Habermas finds as a promising development (see Habermas 2006a: 102). Just war theory provides a *moral* framework for thinking about war, which means that just war theory is neither needed nor viable in the twenty-first-century postsecular context.

What replaces just war theory? In order to answer this question, Habermas turns toward Immanuel Kant's proposal for "perpetual peace." According to Habermas, Kant claims that the "abolition of war is a command of reason" (2006a: 121). If this claim is right, then in addition to no longer being viable, the just war tradition blocks the command of reason by keeping us from "securing peace." While the just war tradition claims to encourage and exercise practical reasoning, it actually discourages practical reasoning by Kantian standards. Habermas writes, "Practical reason first brings the moral veto to bear against systematic killing" (2006a: 121). Just war reasoning is not a legitimate form of practical reasoning since it encourages and/or leads to acts of killing. Within the just war tradition, practical reasoning mandates solving problems of oppression and violence through "systematic killing"—which is not a valid exercise of practical reasoning on Habermas's and Kant's terms.

Within the twenty-first century, just war assumptions concerning the externality of problems become obsolete. The just war tradition puts forth the argument that war is necessary for addressing external problems: the problems located in other nation-states. Within the twenty-first century, however, we are moving toward "a globally inclusive commonwealth." In such a commonwealth, there are no "external" problems; problems only occur within the functioning commonwealth of nations. Consequently, all problems are handled as internal problems—which nation-states address through the use of a police force. Habermas concludes: "What had hitherto been military conflicts would assume the character of police actions and operations of criminal justice" (2006a: 123). We no longer need militaries, only an international police force.

Habermas's final argument against just war theory returns to his earlier reflections on the problems with the language and logic of "the war on terrorism." He argues:

What is new is not the terroristic intent, nor even the type of attack. . . . The novelty lies in the specific motivation, and even more so in the logistics, of this form of privatized violence which operates globally but is only weakly networked. The "success" achieved by the terrorists in their own eyes since September 11, 2001 can be explained by a variety of factors, two of which merit particular attention: first, the disproportionate resonance with which the terror meets in a highly complex society suddenly aware of its own vulnerability, and, second, the incommensurate reaction of a highly armed superpower that deploys the technological potential of its army against non-state networks. The terrorists' calculation aims at a "success" in direct proportion to the anticipated "military and diplomatic, domestic-legal and social-psychological consequences of the attacks." (2006a: 172)

The implication of this argument is that just war reasoning is not equipped to fight against the forms of "privatized violence" that terrorist attacks embody. By definition, just war reasoning cannot handle privatized violence because it deliberately addresses *bellum* instead of *duellum*. Perhaps this tension calls attention to a more fundamental problem with just war reasoning: some of the most complex and intractable conflicts are responses to "private" organizations and not between nation-states. If just war reasoning does not provide us with a

way to think about the suffering inflicted by private organizations, then it becomes obsolete in the globalized twenty-first century.

According to Habermas, there are two conditions necessary for the potential for peace in the global world depends on two steps: (a) “the Kantian project [toward international peace] can only continue if the US [United States] returns to the internationalism it embraced after 1918 and 1945 and once again assumes the role of peacemaker in the evolution of international law toward a ‘cosmopolitan condition’” (2006a: 117); (b) all nation-states ought to recognize their sovereignty, not in terms of a possession of power for waging war but in terms of a “self-obligation of peaceful[ness]” through sovereignty (157).⁴

For perpetual peace to become “permanent world peace,” we should seek for “the complete constitutionalization of international relations” (Habermas 2006a: 121). Both Habermas and Kant, however, remain skeptical about the functionality of “a world republic”—which is why Kant defended, in his time, the notion of “a league of nations” (see Kant 1983: 107–140). Habermas, however, criticizes Kant’s notion of “a league of nations” and turns toward the development of the United Nations as a more realistic alternative because in its conception the United Nations intended to be inclusive: “In contrast with the structure of a League of Nations composed of a vanguard of states that already possess liberal constitutions, the United Nations was designed to be inclusive from the beginning” (Habermas 2006a: 165). The United Nations remains the best we have, according to Habermas, for peace among the nations.

Finally, in an interesting turn of moral logic, Habermas approvingly says that the United Nations embodies “the ‘unity of nations,’” found in the work of the late medieval/early modern Roman Catholic just war theorists Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez (see Habermas 2006a: 165). According to Habermas, the United Nations aims to serve as a political body that realizes the constitutionality necessary for achieving perpetual peace. Furthermore, the United Nations will provide the strategies and tools required for addressing conflicts around the globe through an international police force. Habermas expects nation-states to begin large-scale demilitarization efforts and contribute energy and funds to the policing efforts of the United Nations. While violence will remain in the world, the promised result will be a world without war.

A THEOLOGICAL ENDORSEMENT OF POSTSECULARISM

The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion accessibly presents a process of communicative rationality through the written arguments of Habermas and Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). In this final section, I focus on Ratzinger’s contributions to this dialogue as a way to introduce both a theological endorsement of postsecularism and a theological response to secularization.

In his dialogue with Habermas, the first question that Ratzinger addresses is: What is the task of philosophy within postsecular contexts? Habermas’s answer to this question was to reiterate that philosophers play the role of “interpreter” among and “stand-in” between academic disciplines, as well as philosophers translating the content of the natural sciences

to the ordinary language of the greater public (see Habermas 2006b: 38–39). Both of these tasks contribute to the ongoing process of communicative rationality (see Junker-Kenney 2011: 67–80). Ratzinger argues that it remains

the responsibility of philosophy to accompany critically the development of the individual academic disciplines, shedding a critical light on premature conclusions and apparent ‘certainties’ about what man is, whence he comes, and what the goal of his existence is. To make the same point in different words: philosophy must sift the non-scientific results with which it [philosophy] is often entangled, thus keeping open our awareness of the totality and of the broader dimensions of the reality of human existence—for science can never show is more than partial aspects of this existence. (2006: 57)

Ratzinger shares Habermas’s understanding that the task of philosophy concerns navigating and negotiating the different proposals that come from various academic disciplines. For Ratzinger, philosophy constantly reminds other disciplines of the limitations regarding the types of knowledge that they produce. Philosophy also filters nonscientific results from scientific results ensuring a balance between the scientific and nonscientific claims that help us describe “the reality of human existence.”

One implication of Ratzinger’s reasoning is that the claims made from religious studies and theology likewise must be accountable to the sifting of philosophy. If this implication is an accurate representation of Ratzinger’s thinking, and I think that it is, then there is surprisingly very little difference between Habermas’s well-developed theory of communicative rationality—and philosophy’s role within the twenty-first-century academy—and Ratzinger’s own thoughts concerning the role of philosophy within the twenty-first-century academy. In his book titled *God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, Ratzinger argues that biblical interpretation ought to ground itself in a proper science of interpretation (see Ratzinger 2008: 91–126). Ratzinger identifies quantum theory as the field of science that provides the proper foundation for interpretation and contends that philosophy can help navigate these uncharted waters between biblical interpretation and quantum theory (see Ratzinger 2008: 91–126; see Goodson 2015: ch. 3). This surprising claim suggests even further that Ratzinger requires philosophy to mediate the arguments made by theology.

The second question addressed by Ratzinger in his dialogue with Habermas is: What is the task of politics within secular contexts? Ratzinger claims that it “is the specific task of politics to apply the criterion of law to power, thereby structuring the use of power in a meaningful manner” (2006: 58). Ratzinger’s reflections on this answer should complicate the urge for practicing Roman Catholics, in the context of secularized America, to join the Tea Party movement:

It is not the law of the stronger, but the strength of the law that must hold sway. Power as structured by law, and at the service of the law, is the antithesis of violence, which is lawless power that opposes the law. This is why it is important for every society to overcome any suspicion that is cast on the law and its regulations, for it is only in this way that arbitrariness can be excluded and freedom can be experienced as a freedom shared in common with others. Freedom without [government and] law is anarchy and, hence, the destruction of freedom. (2006: 58)

Ratzinger thinks that the primary goal of politics is to strike the proper balance between law and power. Ratzinger raises the interesting political question: “How does law come into

being, and what must be the characteristics of law if it is to be the vehicle of justice rather than the privilege of those who have the power to make the law?” (2006: 59). He responds to his own question by arguing that the “law must be, not the instrument of the power of a few [especially the wealthy], but the expression of the common interest of all,” which “seems . . . to have been resolved through the instruments whereby a democratic will is formed in society, since all collaborate in the genesis of the law” (59). Ratzinger’s arguments are much closer to Habermas’s political philosophy than the neoconservative worry pertaining to the constant and necessary corruption of power.

Like Habermas, Ratzinger maintains that democracy is the best form of politics. In Ratzinger’s words: “[A]s a sheer matter of fact, the guarantee of a shared collaboration in the elaboration of the law and in the just administration of power is the basic argument that . . . democracy [is] the most appropriate form of political order” (2006: 59). True social democracy, which develops and maintains the proper balance between law and power, remains difficult to achieve but well worth the pursuit (see Ratzinger 2006: 59–61). Unlike Habermas, Ratzinger actually displays less optimism about the promise of late medieval and early modern Roman Catholic arguments concerning natural law and the “law of the nations.” Habermas argues that the United Nations embodies the argumentative goals of de Vitoria and Suarez concerning how natural law reasoning leads to law shared by “the nations.” Ratzinger claims that the Roman Catholic Church mistakenly has used natural law reasoning as a blunt instrument (see Ratzinger 2006: 69). Ratzinger eschews natural law reasoning, within politics, which signals his contribution to this post-secular dialogue (see Ratzinger 2006: 67–72).

As a conclusion to his dialogue with Habermas, Ratzinger agrees with Habermas’s proposal for postsecularism—especially Habermas’s emphasis on (a) “the willingness to learn from each other” and (b) imposing “self-limitation on both sides” (Ratzinger 2006: 77). Ratzinger challenges religious believers to allow their beliefs “to be purified and structured by reason” (77). Furthermore, he contends that postsecularism mandates both Christian theology and secular rationality to discover and/or invent concrete practices of “intercultural” inclusion in order to avoid “succumbing to a false [sense of] Eurocentrism” (79).

In his most recent book, *A Reason Open to God*, Ratzinger distinguishes between “healthy secularism” and the “internal secularization” of Europe. While he does not employ Habermas’s phrase “postsecularism” in *A Reason Open to God*, it seems that his own phrase “healthy secularism” points toward the same features of postsecular contexts. Ratzinger writes, “The healthy secularism . . . does not in fact imply closure to transcendence or a false neutrality with regard to those moral values that form” one’s religious faith (2013: 161). Not all forms of secularism, however, are “healthy”: according to Ratzinger, the “internal secularization” of Europe remains a threat to religious faith as understood by the Roman Catholic Church (see Ratzinger 2013: 189).

Secularist contexts invite disengagement between citizens who are religious believers and those who identify as nonreligious. Both Habermas and Ratzinger have become discontent with this fact about secularism. What Habermas calls postsecularism allows, encourages, and invites deeper and more substantial engagements between religious and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century. Ratzinger finds himself in agreement with Habermas’s postsecular vision for the globalized world of the twenty-first century. Therefore, postsecularism provides the proper context for the process of communicative

rationality to occur between religious believers and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Morgan Elbot and Quinn McDowell served as research assistants for this chapter, and their work contributed both helpful summaries and original insights into the literature. Morgan also offered several editorial comments and suggestions, and she prepared some of the sections for publication. I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Woodburn for his careful editorial comments and stimulating questions on earlier drafts. Rev. Geoff Boyle, Rev. Peter Jacobson, and Rev. Phil Kuehnert provided attentive and charitable responses to the arguments presented here. As usual, John Shook makes me a better thinker and writer than I imagine for myself.

NOTES

1. For a quite different description of secularism, consult James Smith's rendering (2014: ch. 4).
2. This argument is found in Habermas's essay, "Religion in the Public Sphere," which is an extended discussion of John Rawls's political philosophy that ends with Habermas distancing himself from Rawls's defense of secularism. Habermas says, "Rawls developed his 'Theory of Justice' into a 'Political Liberalism' because of his growing recognition of the relevance of the 'fact of pluralism.' He deserves the immense credit of having addressed the political role of religion at an early date. Yet these very phenomena can trigger an awareness of the limits of normative arguments in a supposedly 'free-standing' political theory. For whether the liberal [and secularist] response to religious pluralism can be accepted by the citizens themselves as the single right answer depends not least on whether secular and religious citizens, from their respective points of view, are prepared to accept an interpretation of the relationship between faith and knowledge that first makes it possible for them to treat one another in a self-reflexive manner in the political arena" (Habermas 2008: 147).
3. Habermas writes: "the EU [European Union] is itself an example for how the European nation-states have come to terms in a productive way with their belligerent past. If this project, which has now entered the phase of constitution-making, is successful, the EU could even serve as a model for 'government beyond the nation-state'" (2006a: 54).
4. In the section titled "Peace as an Implication of Law-Governed Freedom" (Habermas 2006a: 121–123), Habermas elucidates the Kantian project of perpetual peace: "For Kant . . . , law is not merely a suitable *means* for establishing peace between states; rather, he conceives of peace between nations from the beginning in terms of legal peace" (121). Habermas continues his explication of Kant's philosophy: "From Kant's republican perspective [by "republican," Kant means representatives of the people who maintain legal order], there is instead a conceptual connection between the role of law in promoting peace and role of a legal condition that citizens can accept as legitimate in promoting freedom" (121). This means, from Habermas's perspective, that the project of "perpetual peace" is commanded by "practical reason" because there is a "cosmopolitan extension"

of conditions concerning “civil liberties” being “secured within the constitutional state” (121). Because perpetual peace is commanded by practical reason, sovereignty obligates nation-states to seek out and work toward international peace. Therefore, the “cosmopolitan condition” simply requires “the condition of peace made permanent” (121).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Nicholas. 2006. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Aguirre, Javier. 2012. “Postmetaphysical Reasoning and Postsecular Consciousness: Habermas’s Analysis of Religion in the Public Sphere.” PhD diss., Stony Brook University, New York.
- Borradori, Giovanna (ed.). 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bush, George W. 2001. “Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress.” In *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush, 2001–2008*, 23–36. http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.
- Edgar, Andrew. 2006. *Habermas: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.
- Goodson, Jacob. 2011. “What Is Reparative Reasoning? Jürgen Habermas’s Philosophy, Practical Reasoning, and Theological Hermeneutics.” *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 10(2). <http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/volume-10-no-2-december-2011-public-debate-and-scriptural-reasoning/what-is-reparative-reasoning/>.
- Goodson, Jacob. 2013. “Can Christian Theologians Reason Post-Metaphysically? Jürgen Habermas and the Semblance of Intellectual Virtue.” In *Groundless Gods: The Theological Prospects of Post-Metaphysical Thought*, edited by Eric Hall and Hartmut von Sass, 75–95. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick.
- Goodson, Jacob. 2015. *Narrative Theology and the Hermeneutical Virtues: Humility, Patience, Prudence*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1970. *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*. Translated by Jeremy Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1990a. “An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason.” In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, 294–326. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1990b. “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter.” In *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson, 1–20. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2001. “Remarks on Discourse Ethics.” In *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, translated by Ciaran Cronin, 9–111. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2003. *The Future of Human Nature*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2006a. *The Divided West*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2006b. “Pre-Political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?” In *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, translated by Brian McNeil, 19–47. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.

- Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. "Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the 'Public Use of Reason' by Religious and Secular Citizens." In *Between Naturalism and Religion*, translated by Ciaran Cronin, 114–147. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2010. "An Awareness of What Is Missing." In *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, 15–23. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Junker-Kenney, Maureen. 2011. *Habermas and Theology*. London: T&T Clark.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1983. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. Translated by Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 2006. "That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-Political Moral Foundations of a Free State." In *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, translated by Brian McNeil, 53–80. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 2008. *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 2013. *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education, and Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.
- Smith, James. 2014. *How (Not) to Be Secular*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.
- Thomassen, Lasse. 2010. *Habermas: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York, New York: Bloomsbury.