Affect and Emotion in Multi-Religious Secular Societies

Emotions have moved center stage in many contemporary debates over religious diversity and multicultural recognition. As in other contested fields, emotions are often one-sidedly discussed as quintessentially subjective and individual phenomena, neglecting their social and cultural constitution. Moreover, emotionality in these debates is frequently attributed to the religious subject alone, disregarding the affective anatomy of the secular. This volume addresses these shortcomings, bringing into conversation a variety of disciplinary perspectives on religious and secular affect and emotion. The volume emphasizes two analytical perspectives: on the one hand, chapters take an inside perspective, focusing on subjective feelings and emotions in relation to the religious and the secular. On the other hand, chapters take an outside perspective, looking at the role of affect and emotion in how the religious and the secular constitute one another. These perspectives cut across the three main parts of the volume: the first one addressing historical intertwinements of religion and emotion, the second part emphasizing affects, emotions, and religiosity, and the third part looking at specific sensibilities of the secular. The thirteen chapters provide a well-balanced composition of theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches to these areas of inquiry, discussing both historical and contemporary cases.

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Routledge Studies in Affective Societies presents high-level academic works on the social dimensions of human affectivity. It aims to shape, consolidate, and promote a new understanding of societies as Affective Societies, accounting for the fundamental importance of affect and emotion for human coexistence in the mobile and networked worlds of the twenty-first century. Contributions come from a wide range of academic fields, including anthropology, sociology, cultural, media and film studies, political science, performance studies, art history, philosophy, and social, developmental, and cultural psychology. Contributing authors share the vision of a transdisciplinary understanding of the affective dynamics of human sociality. Thus, *Routledge Studies in Affective Societies* devotes considerable space to the development of methodology, research methods, and techniques that are capable of uniting perspectives and practices from different fields.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Affect and emotion in multi-religious secular societies

Christian von Scheve, Anna Lea Berg, Meike Haken, Nur Yasemin Ural

Understanding religion from the perspective of affect and emotion has a long and firm tradition not only in the social sciences and in cultural studies, but also in theology. Ever since the classics in the field, such as Rudolf Otto and Friedrich Schleiermacher, certain types of phenomenal subjective experience have been deemed essential to understanding religion and religious experiences more specifically. This is reflected in conceiving of religion as a "feeling of absolute dependence", as suggested by Schleiermacher (2016/1799), in the concept of the mysterium tremendum (the mystery that repels), as proposed by Otto (2014/1931), or in the works of William James (1997/1902), who in great detail discussed the broad variety of religious experiences. Likewise, research on emotion has been concerned with understanding the specifics of religious emotions as particular types of experiences, similar to political emotions or aesthetic emotions (Corrigan, 2017; Järveläinen, 2008; Roberts, 2016).

This emphasis on the role of emotions in religion and religious experience is paralleled by a more general development in many societies that is probably linked to the new "visibility of religion" (Casanova, 1994), namely the "emotionalization" of religion (Herbrik, 2012; Knoblauch, 2014). Emotions have (again) become a prominent means and modalities through which religion is lived and expressed. Media images of large congregations of believers from different parts of the world gathering for Pentecostal or Evangelical services, singing and dancing in joy, have become as familiar as, for example, the "Nights of the Lights", organized by the *Communauté de Taizé*, or the various religious music festivals, such as the *Alive* festival in Mineral City, Ohio, that have emerged over the past decades in many Western societies. However, processes of emotionalization have also taken place in the official churches, as is evident, for example, through the gatherings of the *World Youth Day*, as organized by the Roman-Catholic church on a bi- or triannual basis. Interestingly, emotions in these examples are usually not so much cherished and sought after because of their individual character, but predominantly because of their potential to create bonds when experienced publicly and collectively, as pointed out already by Durkheim (1995/1912).

These collective articulations of religious emotions are not only relevant in the gatherings and congregations of specific religious communities. They have increasingly come to occupy a place in public discourse, in particular, with respect to the relations between religious denominations and the state, as well as between different religious denominations. The surfacing of emotions here is typically connected to conflicting interests between religious groups and questions concerning the compatibility of different religious practices with the principles of the liberal-secular state. Controversies surrounding Islam in the West, in particular, are often fueled by allegations that Muslims tend to react in highly emotional ways or proclaim injury and hurt feelings when their religion is at stake. These portrayals of emotional excess and outburst seem to stand in contrast to other prevailing notions of religion and emotion, namely, those religious practices of calm, moderation, restraint, and simultaneous fulfillment, often connected to piety.

The role of emotions in these controversies points at two important issues. First, it begs the question of positionality since assessments and evaluations of religious emotions are often articulated from the standpoint of (self-proclaimed) secular or Christian subjects, which in a sense privileges secular and Christian sensibilities over those of Muslims and other denominations. Second, it suggests a perspective on emotion and religion that departs from a view locating emotions as "psychic" phenomena predominantly "inside" individuals, but instead emphasizes the social relatedness and situatedness of emotions. Although this is likewise evident in the "new visibility" and the emotionalization of religion, the context of controversies in multi-religious secular societies seems to require a more fundamental departure from subjective emotional experience in order not only to fully understand religious emotions in social contexts, but also to achieve a comprehensive understanding of their social repercussions.

In theoretical and conceptual regard, this departure is performed by those approaches to emotion that emphasize their social and cultural constitution (e.g., Burkitt, 2014; Collins, 2004). In the context of religion, this is perhaps most strikingly argued for by Riis and Woodhead (2010), who suggest that religious emotions need to be conceived of as emanating from various relations among actors, symbols, and objects. Even more radically, this departure is immanent to affect theories. These theories do not capitalize on discrete emotions, such as anger, shame, or disgust, but rather on relational intensities and capacities of bodies to act (e.g., Fox, 2015; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Regarding religion, the potential contributions of the concept of affect been most convincingly outlined by Schaefer (2015) and his notion of "religious affects".

The present volume sets out to provide insights into this extraordinarily broad spectrum of approaches to religion and to secularity as they are informed by theories of affect and emotion. Emphasizing the role of affect and emotion in multi-religious secular societies, it seeks to bring into dialogue

those accounts that tend to focus on the religious feelings and emotional experiences immanent to a particular religion with those understandings that capitalize on the relational and discursive facets, rendering the former unthinkable without its interdependency with non-religious entities, a view most vividly reflected in the concept of affect. What all the contributions to this volume have in common, though, is that they seek to advance our understanding of the affective and emotional dimensions of religion and the secular in society.

From emotion to affect – from the inside to the outside

The concepts of "religious feelings" or "religious emotions", as they emerged in Christian theology and the phenomenology of religion, have for a long time been associated with individual faith bound to subjective religious experience, as articulated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (2016/1799). Schleiermacher conceived of religion as a "feeling of absolute dependence" that is experienced by the self, in principle independently of the institutions and dogmas of a church. Understandings of religion as an individual feeling or belief are inextricably tied to modern conceptions of a secular self. This is not particularly surprising, given that the Enlightenment and the manifold steps and processes of secularization associated with it, such as the "Principal Decree of the Imperial Deputation" of the Holy Roman Empire in 1803 or the more general loss of significance of church authorities, gave way to the emergence of an "external" critique of religion. Through this critique, a distancing from ecclesial dogmatism has become possible since the nineteenth century, accompanied by a turn toward the individual human beings, their subjective experience, and individual religiosity (see Knoblauch, 1999).

Recent historical and conceptual work in the social sciences and the humanities exploring the evolution on the concept of "emotion", in general, and "religious emotion", in particular, has profoundly challenged the concept of "religious emotions". Some scholars have shown that "emotion" cannot be understood as an analytical category with a trans-historical essence (Dixon, 2003; Frevert, 2014). Instead, these studies have argued that the term "emotion" has only become widespread toward the end of the nineteenth century, along with the emergence of psychology as a separate discipline. The term has subsequently come to replace other previously used terms such as passions, affections, and appetites that often carried – either directly or indirectly – connotations of God or a Divine order rather than emphasizing a self-contained individual. As Dixon (2012) writes, emotions "belonged within a secular, morally neutral, and scientific register. The linguistic shift from 'passions' and 'affections' to 'emotions' thus both reflected and enabled shifts in institutional and intellectual authority" (p. 342). These shifts, among other things, brought a heightened

attention toward observable, physiological aspects of emotions. In light of these historical accounts, questions have emerged concerning current scholarship on religious emotions in secular societies: how can we engage with the concept of "emotion" without reducing them to mere physiological and experiential reactions? How can we conceptually approach the links between feelings and emotions, on the one hand, and the religious and the secular, respectively, on the other hand, without being paralyzed by deconstruction? And how can we establish a common conceptual ground in research on "religious emotions", taking into account the manifold disciplinary, ideological, and methodological differences, for example, between approaches in the sociology of religion and critical secular studies (let alone the different accounts within these traditions)?

These questions are not mere exercises in conceptual and terminological debate, but seemed pressing to us in order to better understand the role of "religious" feelings and emotions in the controversies that characterize multi-religious societies. On the one hand, feelings and emotions as subjective phenomenal experiences seem to play a critical role in these controversies and conflicts since they point at injury and hurt linked to the nexus between religion and the principles of the secular state. On the other hand, feelings and emotions may be misleading concepts in analytically approaching these controversies because they might place undue emphasis on the individual subject, neglecting the social, relational, material, and discursive dimensions of affective phenomena, more broadly conceived.

In our view, this broader conception of affective phenomena – one that might enrich our understanding of pertinent controversies concerning religious feelings and emotions – profits from the (re)consideration of *affect(s)*, as developed in cultural studies and parts of critical theory. The emerging field of "affect studies" provides a range of theoretical approaches that, although closely linked to the concept of emotions, goes well beyond subjective feelings, focusing on affect as a force or intensity that links various sorts of bodies. Most concepts of affect converge on the idea of the ultimate *relatedness* of bodies, their "being positioned", "acted upon", and "acting" in relation to one another. Approaching religious emotions through the concept of affect thus challenges dichotomies between the "rational secular", on the one hand, and the "emotional religious" (which is usually equated with the "irrational"), on the other hand. The concept of affect rather encourages to reflect upon the ways in which "the religious" and "the secular" are constituted in interrelation, each involving practices pertaining to bodies and senses. In that sense, the toolbox of affect theory potentially offers a conceptual alternative to scholarship on religious emotion that (often uncritically) embraces the individualist legacy of what has become the dominant understanding of religious feelings and emotions. It allows us to think in new ways about the religious subject and religious subjectivity in connection to emotion.

This conjecture motivated us to host an international interdisciplinary workshop at the Collaborative Research Center *Affective Societies* at Freie Universität Berlin in November 2016. The workshop's objective was to advance our understanding of affect and emotion in multi-religious societies and to promote insights into the many controversies that revolve around religion and the principles of secular societies. The present volume brings together many of the scholars, who participated in the workshop, includes a number of additional contributions we solicited to further extend the volume's scope, and continues the lively debates we have had at the workshop. The volume shows, so we hope, the potential for a fresh take on issues of secularization and the relationship between "the secular" and "the religious" from an affect- and emotion-focused perspective.

Given the distinct approaches to religion, affect, and emotion, we found it useful to distinguish between scholarship that is predominantly interested in an immanent perspective and those approaches that tend to take a relational perspective. "Immanent" and "relational" in this respect carry at least two different connotations. First, this distinction refers to an emphasis either on the subjective and experiential facets of emotion or on the in-betweenness and relationality of affect. Second, the distinction refers to a specific perspective on religion. Here, an immanent perspective can be said to focus on exploring concepts of feeling, emotion, and affect with regard to a particular religious tradition or practice. Likewise, it can also be understood as referring to the inside the field of religion as such. In contrast, the relational perspective rather looks at how religion is constructed through discourse, in particular by "the secular" as religions' constitutive other. Religious emotions in this perspective cannot be understood without the assumption of a contested secularity and without looking at the role of feelings, emotions, and affect in processes of boundary making between "the secular" and "the religious". Affect and emotion in this view are much more of a public affair and assumed to be constructed from an a priori secular standpoint.

The contributions to this volume can be roughly arranged along this analytical distinction. Although they span a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds – including sociology, theology, history, and religious and regional studies – they converge in taking seriously, either theoretically or empirically, the challenge of understanding affect and emotion in multi-religious secular societies and of initiating dialogue between affect- and emotion-oriented approaches. The contributions in this volume engage in this dialogue in different ways. Some depart from concrete empirical questions – working on different religious traditions or issues of religious/secular boundary making – while others are more concerned with conceptual, theoretical, and historical questions. The contributors do not necessarily share the same concepts of emotion and religion and also do not pursue the same analytical and methodological strategies. For instance, even for chapters engaging in empirical analyses, the authors

often take different methodological approaches: some suggest methods of decoding bodily and symbolic communications within religious contexts. Others aim at translating affect's radical emphasis on relationality into a methodology, collapsing the distinction between feeling rules, emotional expressions, and inner states. Likewise, the contributions cover a broad spectrum of qualitative research methods, including ethnographic methods, narrative and biographical interviews, and participant observation using videography and photo-elicitation. Despite these different methods, all contributions share a common interest in gauging new ways of thinking about the manifold ways in which emotion, affect, religion, and the secular are connected. One of the key purposes of the present volume is to develop a better understanding of the ways in which emotion and affect contribute to the constant reconstruction of "the secular" and "the religious" as – often antagonistic – entities.

More specifically, the chapters in our volume address the following questions: How can we conceive of feelings, emotions, and affect with respect to religion and the secular, and with regard to different religious traditions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism? In which ways can we conceptualize and empirically investigate the affective and emotional relationality between religion and the secular? How can we describe, reconstruct, and deconstruct affect and (religious) emotions in empirical research on religion and multiple secularities? What is the constitutive role of affect and emotion in the construction of secular and religious subjectivities, in particular with respect to different religious traditions? And which disciplinary differences with regard to conceptions on emotion and affect do we need to acknowledge on these inquiries? The volume *Affect and Emotion in Multi-Religious Secular Societies* addresses these and other questions in eleven chapters that are arranged in three main parts.

Part I. Historical intertwinements of religion and emotion

In the first part of the volume, contributions will take a closer look at how varying concepts of emotion and feeling have evolved in close connection to concepts of religion and the secular. At the end of the nineteenth century, radical transformations in the scientific landscape took place that aimed at systematizing and rationalizing research, manifest, for instance, in the establishment of a psychology of mind. These developments were vital in the establishment and imposition of a certain kind of understanding of emotion that emerges in the mind of the individual body. Contributions in the first part of the volume take up on the scholarship on emotions within religious contexts, such as shame and guilt, feelings of emptiness, or hatred of the "other". They trace specific ideas through the work of influential scholars in theology and philosophy, discuss the importance of transformations in the sciences, and investigate specific emotional practices in historical (religious)

contexts. Apart from the rich historical insights, these perspectives invite us to reflect concretely on the historical situatedness of "emotion". Instead of simply "doing away" with emotion, however, contributions in this volume argue that the critical appraisal of "emotion" from a historical perspective represents a vital element in understanding contemporary questions of religion in secular societies.

The first part is introduced by the contribution of John Corrigan, who provides a study of how feelings and emotions travel between the realms of the religious and the secular. The same emotions are often practiced differently in different contexts, such as the secular and the religious. Corrigan explicates this idea with a historical retrospect concerning the feeling of emptiness. Especially in American Christian life, the feeling of emptiness is of central importance for salvation, since it represents, as Corrigan shows, the void that is expected to be replaced by or filled with feelings of fullness through the divine encounter. Religious practices thus often aim at cultivating this feeling of emptiness. Practices of emptying the self, such as different forms of bloodletting, sweating as a result of hard work, or fasting, find equivalents in the secular context, which, however, are performed in significantly different ways, like anorexia, self-harm, and labor. At the same time, the feeling of emptiness in the realm of the secular also lacks the expectation of reaching any kind of fullness.

From a different historical perspective, focusing on anti-Jewish discourses from Northern as well as Southern Europe and from the early Middle Ages to modernity, Francois Soyer in the second chapter of this part shows how medieval and modern anti-Jewish discourses differ and how a newly generated modern type of polemical literature was no longer used to bring about conversion of the Jews, but to bring about legal proceedings against the Jews. In order to achieve this, it is not the hatred of Christians toward Jews that is at the center of attention, but the fear of Christians of the hatred of Jews toward Christians, which is traced back to the instructions of the Talmud. In this contribution, exemplary emotions such as hatred, envy, and fear are discussed from a perspective that addresses emotions as mediated and constructed through discourse.

The third chapter of this part by Stefanie Arel also takes a historical perspective on emotions in the works of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. In her contribution, Arel deals with the fact that Niebuhr addresses in his theological writings feelings of guilt and sin, but neglects the feeling of shame. She aims at emphasizing how shame emerges in Niebuhr's conception of the Christian self, although it cannot be equated with guilt or be detached from embodiment. A key element of her argumentation is the thesis that it is precisely the masking of shame with other affects (guilt, sin, pride, etc.) that promotes the negative qualities of shame, first and foremost the provocation of the potential for violence. In opposing violence, scholars have to figure out the very essence of what lies behind theological linguistics and rhetoric of guilt.

Part II. Affects, emotions, and religiosity

Contributions in the second part of the volume investigate the role of feelings, emotions, and affects not by focusing on their discursive or linguistic dimension but rather by probing their relevance for social life. Using qualitative methods of social research, the chapters highlight the various ways in which actors observe, name, and conceptualize feelings and emotions in religious contexts. They focus on how emotions are communicated and can be interpreted and recognized by others (including researchers) and on how emotions are modulated in different social and cultural contexts, in particular, in religious and secular ones. This second section brings together research from a diverse range of religious backgrounds and traditions, such as festive Christian events and movements, the Sufi tradition in Lebanon, or different Muslim life worlds. Likewise, the chapters represent a broad spectrum of research methods and data to identify and describe emotions in religious contexts. This includes verbal and bodily communications, photography, narrations, rituals, and practices, on the one hand, and techniques of videography, ethnography, photo-elicitation, and interviews, on the other hand. In doing so, the contributions to this part also suggest fruitful theoretical and methodological perspectives for thinking about religious emotions, such as the sociology of knowledge, the philosophy of aesthetics, or the affect theory.

In the first chapter of this section, Levent Tezcan attends to the discourses of Muslim fundamentalism by emphasizing current issues of 'seduction'. Extending Weber's line of thought and instead of conceiving the fear of seduction as culturally given, Tezcan assumes that current Islamic fundamentalism has caused substantial shifts in the Islamic economy of salvation, which results in the notable modulation of affect. These shifts, Tezcan argues, emerge from different dynamics that are related to overcoming the gap between norms and practices as principles of governing social life. He suggests a "pragmatic" and a "fundamentalist" way of dealing with this gap to advance understandings that rest on dominant distinctions, such as traditional vs. modern or secular vs. religious. From this perspective, the secular order in Muslim social life is based, in part, on a pragmatic religiosity and is therefore not in opposition to any kind of religiousness. Tezcan's approach illustrates various practices in Islamic cultures and thus offers a novel perspective on the question of secularity in Muslim cultures.

The second chapter by Maike Neufend explores the issue of emotion and affect in the social practices associated with popular "lived" Sufism. Neufend suggests to understand sensation and perception not as bodily reactions toward an object, but as something that is actively carried out with the aim of producing specific emotions. At the heart of her approach are cultural formations or symbols through which Neufend analyzes the emergence and interconnection of social practices. Religious practices, however, are often

characterized by interactions with what remains invisible to a researcher. Neufend therefore reports on a study that uses photo-elicitation interviews and participant-lead photography that capitalize on interlocutors' practices of interpreting and producing meaning through visuals. Specific gazes are understood as emotional styles when interacting with religious objects. The photographs are thus analyzed as emotional spaces or atmospheres framing emotional patterns and practices that spatialize 'religious' and 'secular' modes of experience.

The third contribution by Meike Haken focuses on understanding religious emotions based on the concept of popular religion. Empirically investigating emotions in the context of specific Christian religious events, she argues that the experience of these emotions can serve as an analytical means connecting micro-level individual religiosity, religious experience, and situated spiritual practices with more macro-level perspectives, for example, of secularization, discourses, and trajectories. Analyzing videographical data that Haken collected at Christian events, for example, the *World Youth Day* in Crakow, Poland, the *Catholic Church Congress*, or the *German Evangelical Church Congress*, she uncovers observable transformations and differentiations in the cultural forms of communication in contemporary religion and religious events. She shows that the religious events she observed feature specific affective orders that serve to produce communality among attendees.

In the fourth chapter, Veronika Zink argues that religious conversions signify a symbolic transformation of the self. By means of conversional reports, people do not only proclaim a change in subjecthood, but they do so by communicatively creating the notion of two distinct modes of being: the post-conversional self that is depicted as having an existential and ethico-emotional surplus in comparison to the former, unconverted mode of being. Looking at narratives of conversion, the chapter aims at reconstructing prevailing ideas of "the secular" and "the religious" by focusing on the way religious converts seal a division between their past, unfaithful, secular being and their newly revealed, inspired, religious self. Zink draws on field research and interviews with members of a Christian evangelical, charismatic movement called the *Jesus Freaks*. The case study serves as a paradigm for contemporary modes of reviving religious beliefs in face of a seemingly secularized age reflecting an ongoing reformation of traditional notions of religiosity and secularity.

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Part III. Sensibilities of the secular

The third part of the volume is primarily dedicated to understanding specific sensibilities of the secular in relation to the religious, bringing together approaches from disciplines such as sociology, cultural studies, and

religious studies. The contributions in this section coalesce on investigating the religious-secular divide under the specific and historically contingent conditions of cultural and social change. They conceive of the secular not only as an outcome of a particular historical process, but also as an ideological backdrop of modernity that is investigated with regard its particular sensibilities, emotions, and feelings. Scholars address the manifold ways in which the "secular" production of knowledge and scientific practice are themselves suffused, sustained, and regulated through feelings and emotions. In addressing these questions, the chapters look at different fields and contexts, such as science, academia, and the public sphere. They shed light on the relatedness of secular and religious subjectivities, which are often produced by hierarchical power relations that tend to marginalize or exclude the religious from public and political realms.

The first contribution to this section by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr departs from the thesis that the most relevant issue in the field of religion at present is neither secularization nor the return of religion, but the drawing of boundaries between "religious" and "non-religious" fields, understood as "secularity". This becomes apparent through the disembedding of religion, that is, the multiplicity of actors in discourse and the variety of claims at authentic religious representation. In contrast to previous constellations, this multiplicity does not aim at institutional equality, but contains an almost infinite number of claims and references that are, among other things, related to a subjective, inner obligation or religious feeling, which is presented as non-negotiable and essential to an identity that is quickly perceived as threatened. Against this background, the chapter discusses how feelings become an important role in religious-secular contestations. Wohlrab-Sahr discusses how they emerge or are provoked when boundaries previously perceived as stable are shifted or transgressed.

In the second chapter of this section, Brigitte Schepelern Johansen investigates the role of emotions and affect in scientific practices. While early and late modern understandings of the scientific endeavor have tended to emphasize the exclusion or bracketing of emotions and affect from science, scholars now discuss how the constitution as well as dissemination and distribution of academic knowledge also rests upon the ability to be affected in particular ways, and hence a specific cultivation of sensibilities. Johansen's paper contributes to such an investigation by exploring the textures and functions of a particular kind of excitement, namely the excitement that arises among scholars and students when discovering and exposing implicit or unrecognized biases (typically framed as religious or ideological) in the work of fellow scholars. This excitement, she argues, is among other things predicated upon a range of splits: between the empirical, factual, or actual, on the one hand, and interpretations, opinions, and beliefs, on the other hand.

Donovan Schaefer in the third chapter of this part discusses the affects that are intertwined with knowledge production. Knowledge is a way of feeling one's way around the world, and there are obvious moments – of

wonder or frustration – where it becomes obvious how knowledge production is suffused with affect. Schaefer argues that these moments are only the most extreme, most visible manifestations of a much larger global system of affects intertwined with knowledge-production, sustaining science at the micro-level. His chapter traces this perspective through the work of three fields of thought: the philosophy of David Hume, the psychology of William James, and contemporary affect theory. These perspectives propose that all endeavors of knowledge production are constituted by an affective connective tissue. This model of science, Schaefer suggests, has direct implications for public narratives of science, religion, and secularism. Using the example of New Atheism and an exploration of the New Atheist Christopher Hitchens, Schafer uncovers the affective dimensions embedded within the "formations of the secular" (Asad, 2003).

The fourth chapter by Anna Lea Berg and Nur Yasemin Ural puts the discursive production of the body in the foreground of the analysis. The starting point is the public reaction to the events of January 2015 when the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* fell victim to a terrorist attack. The sensing WE, which is renounced in these reactions, is regarded as a discursive body, which apparently arises through an affective positioning to the attack, bears a relation to other bodies, and displays a secular process. From the perspective of affect theory, which includes literary works on feelings, the authors take a discourse-analytically stance on one of the core aspects of the volume: the inside/out distinction.

Concluding remarks and acknowledgments

The eleven chapters we gathered in this volume stand for a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the manifold intersections of the religious and the secular, on the one hand, and feelings, affect, and emotion, on the other hand. The contributions provide insights into different facets of these intersections, including historical accounts, inquiries concentrating on specific religious traditions and discursive fields, as well as scholarship on specific secular sensibilities in relation to the religious "other". They encompass both immanent perspectives referring to feelings, subjective emotional experiences, and accounts of specific religious communities and relational perspectives capitalizing on concepts of affect and (discursive) constructions and contestations of the religious and the secular. A key objective of this volume therefore is to provide a better understanding of the ways in which emotion and affect contribute to the constant reconstruction of "the secular" and "the religious" as often antagonistic and antagonizing entities.

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