Section Four, Micro and macro-reflexively managed emotions

Chapter Twenty, Affective dynamics of conflicts between religious practice and secular self-understanding: Insights from the male circumcision and 'Burkini' debates

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Abstract

This chapter proposes an understanding of the emotional dynamics involved in the conflicts between religion and the ideal of a secular public in many contemporary Western societies. This understanding encompasses the relations between societal groups and the recognition of cultural difference, which have proven to be key challenges of many late modern societies. Regarding these emotional dynamics, we suggest a perspective that is not primarily concerned with speculating about people's phenomenal feelings vis-à-vis these debates, but with the discursive construction and political strategies at evoking such emotions as well as with the social ramifications of these religious and secular emotions.

Introduction

In 2012, many countries across the globe witnessed protests against the release of the film *The Innocence of Muslims*, an anti-Islamic film produced by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula. The film was widely perceived as being offensive to Muslims and has stirred both violent and non-violent outrage. Muslim protesters complained that the film ridiculed their belief, was deeply injurious, and perceived as dishonoring and demanded the film be removed from the online platform *YouTube*. The controversy was further aroused when Western commentators claimed the film should be protected by the right to freedom of speech and expression. Contrary protesters claimed that the freedom of speech should not include the freedom to insult and offend. Similar patterns of outrage and debate over the limits of the freedom of speech vis-à-vis religious sensibilities can be found in the publication of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1988, which provoked riots in Pakistan in 1989, after which the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for the death of Rushdie; the publication of Muhammad caricatures in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, which stirred massive worldwide protests in early 2006; or the publication of *Charlie Hebdo*'s Muhammad cartoons in 2015, which drew tens of thousands of Muslim protesters to the streets across the globe. How do these publications become related to emotions of irritation, dishonor, insult, injury, offense, and outrage? Is there anything specifically 'religious' or 'Muslim' about these emotions, as some of these examples might suggest and indeed many in the public debates surrounding these controversies claim? And what are the consequences of these emotions for the dynamics of minority/majority and secular/religious relations in late modern societies?

We may find some of the answers when interpreting the abovementioned artworks and publications within the larger context of the status of feelings, affect, and emotion in controversies arising between religious convictions and worldviews on the one hand and the principles and self-understandings of liberal-secular states on the other hand. They are but the most prominent examples of the way in which 'hurtfulness', 'emotionality', and 'injury' come to play central roles in the discourse on and the treatment of religious practices and claims for recognition in liberal secular democracies over the past decades. Although many disciplines have investigated these lines of conflict from normative, judicial, and political perspectives (e.g., Asad 2003; Mahmood 2015; Nussbaum 2012), feelings and emotions have only recently attracted attention as an important dimension of systematic inquiry (e.g.,

Mahmood 2009). The language of emotionality, hurtfulness, and injury forms both the limits of free speech and religious practice on the one hand, and their legibility, acceptability, and legitimacy within a liberal secular state on the other hand. Claims and demands made in the name of religion are constantly interpreted and labeled as highly affective and emotional, whereas claims regarding secular principles, for example that of free speech, are usually portrayed as reasoned, deliberate and even "affect-neutral".

Looking at these debates, it is almost exclusively religious subjects, who either self-categorise as or are portrayed by others to be hurt and injured. Much less do we find references to emotions in defense of secular subjects and positions. For instance, outbursts of disbelief, astonishment, contempt, and anger in many Western media outlets over the violent protests of Muslims in response to *The Innocence of Muslims* are hardly ever framed in emotional terms, but rather as rational responses to irrational religious behavior. Religious minorities – in this case Muslims in the Western world – are equally held responsible for rendering their injury intelligible and credible to a secular public and / or religious majority (Agrama 2012), which essentially amounts to a request to de-emotionalise, at least in rhetoric.

How can we understand these emotional dynamics that go hand-in-hand with discursive conflicts between religion and the self-understanding of secular publics as one of the main dividing lines in many contemporary Western societies? And what do they imply for the social relations between different societal groups and the recognition and accommodation of cultural difference, which has proven to be a key challenge of many late modern societies? In this chapter, we suggest a perspective that is not primarily concerned with the careful elucidation of people's actual phenomenal feelings vis-à-vis these debates, but rather with the discursive construction and political strategies at evoking emotions as well as with the potential social ramifications of these religious and secular emotions. Analysing these constructions and strategies, we argue, is essential for an understanding of emotions in late modernity more generally, given that attempts at the management of public emotion, at political emotionalisation, and at the incitement or suppression of specific emotions are key to this condition (e.g., George 2016; Pankaj 2017).

'Religious' emotions in historical perspective

It is interesting to note that although 'religious feelings' or 'religious emotions' are frequently mentioned in public debate, the more established meaning is different from its use in discourse. Traditionally, religious emotions can be characterised according to their 'cognitive objects', a 'depth condition', and a 'pragmatic condition', as suggested by Järveläinen (2008). The cognitive object would refer to the objects of religious experience, which basically represent the intentionality of religious emotion. The depth condition takes up ideas from Schleiermacher and Otto, emphasising the relationality of religious emotion, therefore the idea that they rest upon a perception of relatedness between the emoting subject and another entity. The pragmatic condition highlights that religious emotions depend on religious practices and culture.

When religious emotions are mentioned in controversies over religious practices and the principles of the liberal-secular state, they tend to assume a different meaning. As shown in our introductory examples, the notion of religious emotions refers to experiences of injury, harm, ridicule, and vilification that result from being in one or another way linked to a particular faith, religious practice or community. One of the central questions related to this understanding of religious emotions is whether there should be legally guaranteed protection from this kind of harm, which has been a controversial issue throughout Europe in the 19th and 20th century (Frevert 2016). At times, the protection of religious sentiment was considered essential because they were considered part of one's individual rights to well-being and freedom from harm. At other times, religious feelings were to be protected in order to secure the collective order and prevent public outrage (*Ibid.*, p. 34).

Outside the legal sphere, the regulation of the freedom of expression to accommodate religious sensibilities is frequently discussed by civil society organisations who criticise 'blasphemy laws' – laws protecting a (majority) religion from irreverence and offence – as incompatible with the principles of the secular state and demand they be abolished. For example, a consortium of NGOs launched the campaign 'End Blasphemy Laws' in 2015 (International Humanist and Ethical Union 2015). Also, certain public intellectuals (Fourest 2015) and scholars (Bouldoires 2016) in France have demanded a "right to blasphemy" in

Europe, as part of the freedom of expression that should be protected within the democratic polity. Paralleling recent demands within the public sphere, some European countries have abandoned their blasphemy laws, for instance Denmark, in favor of anti-discrimination laws that also cover non-religious forms of offence. This move can be interpreted with reference to specific secular sensibilities which basically form a counterpart to religious emotions in late modern controversies between the religious and the secular.

These historical and legal constellations indicate that religious feelings and emotions are a peculiar and analytically misleading category, because they tend to suggest that emotions are exclusively on the side of the religious and it is exclusively religious subjects that are affected by these debates. Empirically, this is most likely an untenable position. To understand better these debates and controversies, we not only need to understand how, precisely, the attributions of emotions towards religious subjects work, but also to comprehend the feelings and emotions on the side of secular subjects.

Emotions and emotional regimes

To uncover the role of emotions in the religious-secular divide more effectively, a promising initial step is to look at how emotions are explicitly mentioned in discourse using emotions terms and labels. For example, the controversy over a genuinely 'German' culture (*Leitkultur*) vis-à-vis other, in particular Islamic cultures in 1998 and 2015, the debate over the Mohammed caricatures in 2006, or discussions about whether Islam is an integral part of German society in 2010 all make reference to specific emotion words. The Mohammed caricatures in *Jyllands-Posten* and the *Innocence of Muslims* film and the recurrent controversies show the significance that speakers in a discourse ascribe to emotions and to their potential injury. The debate concerning a German *Leitkultur*, that is, the search for dominant and genuinely German values, worldviews, and practices that make up German collective identity, is rife with fear and anxiety over the corrosion of this *Leitkultur* in wake of globalisation and immigration (e.g., Saleh 2017; Thierse 2017).

Furthermore, the articulation of these emotions, in particular feeling offended and insulted, frequently becomes an essential part of collective mobilisation, as is evident in the manifold protests against these artworks and political statements ('Protests in Cairo and Benghazi' 2012; 'Protests over anti-Muslim film' 2012; Kovaleski & Barnes 2012). Importantly, discursively articulated and thus 'collectivised' emotions tell us little about how individuals *actually* feel towards certain artworks. On the contrary, one might speculate that emotions in late modernity are characterised by the drifting apart of (medially) articulated and experienced emotions.

Emotions in these debates are often attributed to (collective) religious subjects as being (unduly) affected and suffering from hurt 'religious feelings'. Likewise, discussions regarding the adequacy and the legal status of certain religious practices, such as the wearing of headscarves, ritual slaughtering, or circumcision, are often framed referring to notions of anger, indignation, and resentment amongst those being confronted with and opposing these actions, as well as notions of anger and injury in the defendants of these practices. The social repercussions of this discursive construction of emotion are manifold, and in the following we aim to emphasise two of them.

First, recourse to 'religious feelings' to some extent constitutes a novel discourse beyond established political language and contributes to the construction of (symbolic) boundaries and cultural identities and the formation of affective communities based on religious and secular beliefs; the possible emergence of communal bonds based on similar ways of feeling and being affected in view of specific events and situations. Discourse on conflicts between religious convictions and secular self-understandings hence strives towards the establishment of particular – and antagonistic – 'emotional regimes' (Reddy 2001) through which the complexity of emotional life is replaced by an almost Cartesian dualism between religious and secular emotions.

Importantly, these regimes also provide insights into the mutual constitution of 'the religious' and 'the secular' within discourse. It becomes obvious how 'the religious' is viewed and constructed only in conjunction with 'the secular' (Mahmood 2015; Asad 2003). Accepting

the view that secularism is no culturally or religiously 'neutral' baseline from which a secular public appraises and evaluates religious practices and beliefs, but instead is in itself an outcome of specific historical constellations that have led to ideas of the separation of state and religion, mostly in the Christian world (Asad 2003), this discourse can be interpreted from at least two different angles.

On the one hand, when speakers in the discourse, representatives of Muslim communities or organisations as well as the secular critics of religion and Islam, ascribe religious pain and injury to 'the Muslims', they do so in view of some secular 'other', either subjects or institutions, which are portrayed as calm, rational, deliberate, and free of affect. In contrast, the Muslim subject is constructed as one with undue religious sensibilities from the perspective of representatives of the secular state. Affect and emotion are cast as characteristic of the religious subject which, looking at the history of Western thought, would exclude reason and rationality.

On the other hand, it is remarkable to see that in cases where representatives of certain faiths demand changes in legal regulations, in particular concerning freedom of expression that put religious sensibilities under special protection, secular subjects as well speak and act in a highly emotional manner. Politicians as well as self-proclaimed representatives of the liberal state tend to voice outrage, indignation, and anger in view of these demands. This likewise applies to cases in which certain religious practices shall be recognised, even though they might clash with legal rulings and existing religious privileges in some cases, such as the wearing of certain kinds of headscarves by public servants, ritual circumcision of underage males or the construction of mosques. The German *Leitkultur* debate is an example at hand. It is firmly rooted in fears and anxieties over the loss of this alleged culture, and these fears and anxieties are essential to the emotional regimes of right wing populist parties and movements, many of them mobilising against the 'Islamisation' of the Occident. They create emotional repertoires of fear that in themselves become sources of community and demarcation.

The religious-secular divide as an affective arrangement

Discourse about emotions and the attribution of specific emotions to individuals and social groups through emotion words reveal the highly politicised emotional regimes and repertoires of the religious-secular divide that operate through symbols and language. We suggest that the religious contestations of the secular and liberal order constitute a specific affective arrangement (Slaby, Mühlhoff & Wüschner 2017) consisting of affective relations amongst discourses, practices, actors, and collectives, which we explain in more detail below. Capitalising on explicit references to feelings and emotions in discourse provides insights on what is said and written about contested religious-secular constellations in predominantly secular publics, and about the emotions and sensibilities that go along with these constellations. However, this says very little about what individuals actually feel and experience in view of these debates. Analysing discourse reveals what speakers say about how people are (or should be) affected by these debates. In fact, these statements and attributions can be interpreted first and foremost as political strategies to legitimate or de-legitimate certain claims. This might be an effective political strategy in two ways. First, an audience might take these attributions of emotions for granted and make decisions or take actions based on these appraisals and modes of making sense of the world. Second, an audience might take up the attributions of emotions and make them, performatively, their very own emotions. In the sociology of emotion, this 'taking up' of emotions has been discussed in theories of collective emotions (von Scheve & Ismer 2013) and collective emotional orientations (Bar-Tal 2001). This speaks directly to the relation between emotions that people actually experience and publicly negotiated, collectivised emotions, and their consequences for different forms of social action, for instance related to integration, belonging, or participation in social movements.

An alternative reading would we be more substantially geared towards a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and subjectivation. In this understanding, one need not exclusively focus on explicit statements concerning emotions that individuals might or might not experience, but on the consequences discourse brings about for forms of self-understanding and self-relatedness. In this regard, it is imperative that forms of subjectivation also encompass a bodily dimension, for which it is not only conceptual thought that matters, but ways of being affected in a non-conceptual and non-symbolic sense (e.g., von Scheve 2017; Slaby 2016).

For this reading, the concept of *affect* can be instructive. Although this concept has many meanings in different disciplines, works within cultural studies conceive of affect as a counterpart to language and discourse and emphasise the critical importance of bodies and their interrelations for the social world. Much of affect theory subscribes to the poststructuralist critique of the liberal, transcendental, and autonomous individual, but departs not from language and discourse – as most poststructuralists would do. Rather, it starts from relations between bodies to suggest a theoretical and process-ontological alternative (Blackman et al. 2008).

The understanding of affect proposed here, however, is more compatible with social science theory and methodology. We understand affect as a 'mode of being' and a continuous bodily orientation towards the world that has meaningful evaluative qualities (cf. von Scheve 2017). The orientation that affect provides is not achieved primarily through linguistic representation and deliberative thought, but through basic cognitive capabilities of the body. Because affect is ubiquitous and continuous (like perception), it is best thought of not as something episodic, but rather in terms of steady fluctuations or in terms of changes in the modes of being and the sensibilities and capacities to act.

Affect works primarily through altering bodies' capacities to act (whereas emotions would include conceptual knowledge, object directedness, etc.). This can happen in various ways, through alterations to cognitive and perceptual processing, to the endocrine and hormonal system, or to autonomous and peripheral nervous system activity. Affect is often – though not necessarily – associated with emotions (and vice versa), and can be conceived of as object-directed 'affective comportments' that are categorised into culturally established and linguistically labeled prototypes, for instance fear, anger, or happiness. The notion of affect proposed here is in some ways related to what others have called 'background emotions' (Barbalet 1998) or 'existential feelings' (Ratcliffe 2009).

An affective arrangement then is a:

material-discursive formation as part of which affect is patterned, channeled and modulated in recurrent and repeatable ways. Such arrangements usually bring multiple actors into a dynamic conjunction, so that these actors' mutual affecting and being-affected becomes a vital part of the arrangement itself. (Slaby, Mühlhoff & Wüschner 2017, p. 7)

These notions of affect and affective arrangements therefore seem fruitful for an alternative understanding of the contested constellations of the religious-secular divide in many contemporary Western societies, because they open up a possibility to come to terms with their non-linguistic and non-significational dimensions. Analysing the role of language in an affective arrangement is of course a non-trivial endeavor, since affect is positioned as in some sense being beyond language and conceptual thought. However, a number of theories are instructive here. Butler's (1997) work on excitable speech offers ways of understanding the performative rather than the conceptual and structural aspects of language and how they contribute to arousing, exciting, and affecting bodies.

Aside from the difficulties of linking affect to language, affective arrangements are also comprised of actions, objects or images, and their potential to affect bodies in different ways still has to be theorised more comprehensively. Whether caricatures of Mohammed or the artistic ridiculing of the Pope during the Cologne carnival actually elicit specific (religious) emotions is debatable. However, that these portrayals affect bodies in specific ways can hardly be questioned. Needless to say, different bodies will be affected in different ways, but as Wetherell (2012) and Seyfert (2011) have suggested, bodies "learn", during enculturation and socialisation, to be affected in specific ways. These "ways of being affected" (as a dimension of subjectivation) form the backdrop for any political or strategic attempt at inciting collective (religious) emotions and are essential elements for thoroughly understanding political cleavages such as contested constellations of the religious and the secular. In the following, we discuss two concrete examples of how controversies between the religious and the secular can meaningfully be investigated using concepts of emotions, affect, and affective arrangements.

Cases and discourses

In this section we discuss two legal cases in France and Germany that concern Muslim cultural practices. Contrary to many studies that focus on the offense of religious sentiments of Muslims, for example, in the search of comprehension and prevention of religious injury, we seek to focus on the legislative processes related to Muslim practices in Europe to better understand the public sentiments and the underlying affective arrangements associated with said controversies. We will look at two controversies in Germany and in France, those over male circumcision and the wearing of 'Burkinis'.

Our choice of controversies is motivated by the fact that the legal bans on the specific practices they involved were implemented over the course of the controversies, but then rapidly repealed. One of our theses is that these revocations resulted from conflicting emotional regimes and affective registers with respect to the bans. Affects generated in these examples certainly are not detached from previous legal rules concerning Muslims that are still in effect or in preparation in Europe. Yet, the rapid alteration of certain rules helps to unveil the paradoxes related to the freedom of religion and core liberal principles in relation to the public order and collective sentiments, which are key concepts in the legal justifications of the bans.

The controversy of ritual male circumcision was sparked in 2012 when the district court (*Landgericht*) in Cologne, Germany, issued a decree rendering 'religiously motivated' circumcision illegal. The court declared ritual circumcision to be a form of 'bodily injury' following a judicial case of a Muslim boy who, after circumcision was carried out, suffered from medical complications. The court ruling has incited a lively discussion involving various actors, for instance politicians, religious representatives, NGOs, and political representatives from Muslim countries and Israel alike. The debate thus was not only prominent in Germany, but also in Turkey and Israel where people expressed concerns regarding the rights of Muslims and Jews in Germany. In countless TV shows, pros and cons of ritual male circumcision were discussed with medical doctors, psychologists, lawyers, religious dignitaries, and secular Muslim public figures as defenders and opponents of the court's ruling. In these discussions, defenders of the ban plead for religious actors to think and act rationally and not emotionally for once. On the other hand, religious representatives, who are usually considered the only legitimate opponents of the ban, were constantly asked within

mainstream media in talk shows, journal articles, and magazines to account for their (Muslim) feelings, experiences, and immediate reactions to the court's decision. Regarding these debates, to which we will return further in this section, Amir-Moazami (2016) argues that the 'secular bodies' operate through a "self-differentiation as a mode of unmarking the secular through the gaze on the marked body of the other", the religious one (p. 166).

Contrary to the circumcision debate that focused on religious practices involving infant male bodies, the ban on the Burkini in France was concerned with adolescent and adult female bodies and their clothing. In July 2016, David Lisnard, major of Cannes in France, issued a municipal decree temporarily banning the Burkini from the city's beaches, describing the garment as being 'of a certain nature that would create risks of disturbances to the public order (crowding, skirmishes, etc.)'. He justified his decision as part of the state of exception measures in France, drawing parallels between the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Nice two weeks earlier, leaving 86 dead, and the Burkini, denouncing the latter as a political symbol and a provocation. The Burkini was a 'beachwear ostentatiously showing a religious affiliation while France and places of religious significance are the target of terror attacks', Lisnard held (Sims 2016). The Cannes decree was adopted in approximately 30 other French municipalities, not only by conservative majors but also by socialist ones.

Contrary to many of the legal regulations that go largely unnoticed, the bans on circumcision and the Burkini rapidly became national and even international affairs involving high-ranking politicians and government officials and the engagement of international media commenting on the (il)legitimacy of the bans. Manuel Valls, then prime minister of France, expressed his understanding and support for the mayor of Cannes and other municipalities. At the same time, however, he emphasised that there would be no application of these rules for the entire French republic. German chancellor Angela Merkel was also involved in the circumcision debate, although contrary to Valls, she was not supportive of the ban, the implications of which we will discuss shortly. In both debates, secularism as a fundamental value of both states was placed at the core of the controversies. Two prominent intellectuals in both countries reacted to the discussion, Jürgen Habermas and Jean Baubérot, criticising the ban and repeatedly emphasising the necessity for dialogue and public discussion.

Despite many ambitions to construct 'the secular' as a religiously neutral practice or a way of being in the world that is free of affect and emotion, in the circumcision debate and the Burkini affair, bans were usually justified through dominant feelings of love and fear at the same time. "If my Jewish education leads to a point that my son asks me one day as a mature and convinced Jew to get him finally circumcised, I will then fulfil his wish with love, pride and pain. But not before", commented Gil Yaron, in his own words "a non-religious Jewish doctor", in an article on the circumcision ritual. This article was written as a response to his sister, who desired to go against tradition, not letting her son be circumcised (Yaron 2012).

This example provides important insights towards an understanding of how emotions such as love, pride, and pain play a crucial role not only in 'religious' reasoning, but also in secular accounts of certain religious practices enacted on the body. According to Yaron, it is through sensing love and with pride and pain with regard to a mature decision of becoming a convinced Jew—which can only come after a certain age—that he can truly exercise his duty as a father. Obviously, love and respect for the bodily integrity and the autonomy of the son also appeared as common secular and liberal arguments during the debate.

Contrary to emotions of love and respect, the Burkini ban revolved mainly around the collective emotions that were expressed in France after the terrorist attacks in Nice. As an example for public intellectuals' involvement, Jean Baubérot—the most prominent expert of French secularism—in an interview takes it for granted that citizens are appalled by seeing women wearing Burkinis at beaches, but this cannot be a reason to legally ban the Burkini. At the same time, however, many commentators have acknowledged that the Burkini has stirred debate for a long time and that one needs to take into account the emotional climate of fear, anxiety, and mistrust that dominated the French public and political discourse after the Nice attacks. Under the impression of these collective 'secular' emotions, the Burkini is easily seen as a political symbol and provocation rather than an expression of specific religious beliefs. The ban can thus be interpreted more as an outcome of emotions like fear, anxiety and mistrust rather than as a consequence of rational deliberation. It also points at the complex

ways in which emotions in the late modern age become sources of (collective) self-understanding and objects of political debate and strategic management at the same time.

These sentimental registers of the secular, as the love and desire for personal autonomy and bodily integrity of liberal subjects, along with an expressed fear of and mistrust in Islam, become fragile in France and Germany through the introduction of elements that belong to other affective and memorial orders. They produce dissonance in relation to the former historical project: the German-Jewish history and Women's emancipation in France. In both cases, the initial legal rulings have quickly been revoked. We suggest that this revoking was in part due to the increasing salience of conflict and dissonance between present and historical emotional regimes, an ambivalence in emotions that might be dubbed characteristic of late modernity.

In Germany, the circumcision ban was revoked only a month after the court's ruling. The prohibition of ritual circumcision rapidly shifted its terrain and increasingly involved not only Muslim but also Jewish religious practice. Some commentators interpreted the ban as an indication of a revival of a dormant German anti-Semitism and it became, even if only implicitly, associated with the Shoah (Brumlik 2012). The ban of circumcision and the debate that followed therefore began to resonate with the collective trauma and affective registers of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. German chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany was ridiculing itself as a "comedian nation" ('Merkel spricht' 2012) and she did not want Germany to be the only nation where Jews cannot live their tradition.

In France on the other hand, and although the ban was strongly criticised by international media from the very beginning, the turning point towards the revoking of the decree was an infamous image of armed police standing next to a woman wearing a Burkini on a Beach in Nice and forcing her to remove the garment. Social and mass media were quick to link those images to those of a police officer issuing a reprimand to a woman at an Italian beach in 1957 because of her wearing a bikini. Through references to and connections with feminism and the discrimination of women, the controversy gained legitimacy as an issue of women's rights while partially freeing itself from the language of terrorism, political symbolism, and

provocation. In the Burkini affair, shame played a prominent role in the emotional vocabulary from then on. "They want to take her clothes off. But they should take off their uniforms! The police of shame" commented the president of the CCIF (*Collective Against Islamophobia in France*), Marwan Muhammed, on Twitter, gaining broad support.

Both of these alternative framings and interpretations that ultimately lead to the revoking of the legal rulings are indicative of the powerful, yet often unarticulated affective relations between actors, symbols, images, and discourses. The change in direction these controversies took can be conceived of as changes in an affective arrangement, that is, changes in the material-discursive formations that pattern and channel affect in specific and recurrent ways and include actors' mutual affecting and being-affected. Interestingly, the two cases also reveal the historicity and deep-seated embodied nature that affective arrangements can take. The conjuring and emphasising of affective relations that disturb and run counter to a dominant arrangement evoke the strong emotional reactions expressed in the above cases. Mistrust, fear, and anger in response to terrorist attacks and the public visibility of religious symbols become concurrent with shame and embarrassment over the legal regulations regarding these symbols and, eventually, lead to alterations in the social world. These competing emotional regimes that are established and negotiated through media and public discourse can be considered politically motivated attempts at establishing sovereignty over citizens' emotions.

Conclusion

Controversies surrounding the place of religion and in particular of Islam in contemporary Western societies are fueled with references to feelings and emotions. More specifically, the hurting and injury of religious feelings and emotions have for some time been at the core of these controversies. Not only hurt religious feelings, but also more mundane emotions such as outrage, anger, and fear characterise debates over, for instance, the principles of the freedom of expression or the wearing of Islamic attire in public. Although a brief historical contextualisation has shown that neither discussions over the injury of religious feelings nor the invocation of blasphemy laws in response to certain transgressions are particularly recent phenomena, it is striking that affect and emotion are predominantly attributed to (or

expressed by) religious subjects – hardly do we find attributions of emotions to non-religious or secular subjects. We have argued that this is, empirically speaking, an untenable position and that there is a need to understand better the emotional dynamics of these kinds of controversies, on the sides of religious subjects as well as for secular subjects. We have argued, on the one hand, that an analysis of articulations of emotions in discourse can provide insights into the collective emotional dynamics of these (and other) controversies and help understand processes of group formation and antagonising. In particular, we suggested that articulations and attributions of emotions in discourse contribute to the formation of specific emotional regimes that are supposed to serve the political interests of the different actors involved in such a controversy. Subsequently, we suggested to not only look at specific emotion words and labels in a text, but to try to come to terms with the more subtle, unarticulated, and bodily affective arrangements that said controversies constitute. Using empirical examples of the ritual male circumcision debate in Germany in 2012 and the Burkini ban in France in 2016, we have proposed that dissonant and even conflicting affective arrangements that are associated with alternative interpretations of both controversies can in fact contribute to the revoking of changes in legal regulations that emanated from the controversies.

More generally, our proposed approach at reading these and other conflicts takes serious their emotional and affective dimension, without merely reproducing what is said and articulated by the different parties in discourse. Instead, treating affect and emotion as fundamental building blocks of social coexistence, they never can be only on one side of any conflict. However, actors articulate and make use of emotions in very different ways and are part of different (historical) affective arrangements that need to be investigated and understood to achieve better comprehension regarding present lines of controversy and antagonism. On a more general account, the changes in and contestations of affective arrangements and emotional regimes we discussed might be interpreted as epitomes of larger patterns of societal change that are evident in late modernity. This would certainly include a multiplicity of appropriations of emotions, from intimate lives to global political struggles, the mediatisation of emotional practices and repertoires, as well as the entanglement of private emotional experience and collectivised emotion. Our approach is first and foremost intended as a methodological position that can be implemented using existing qualitative research methods informed by theorising in the sociology of emotion as well as in affect studies.

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