Affective Dynamics of Public Discourse on Religious Recognition in Secular Societies

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Acknowledgment

Debates about the status and recognition of religious minorities in contemporary Western societies frequently evoke the notion of "religious feelings" or "religious emotions", although it is hardly ever clear what these feelings and emotions are, who actually experiences them, and what their social and individual consequences are. In this chapter, we seek to develop a conceptual framework that capitalizes on sociological and cultural studies theories of affect and emotion to better understand the dynamics of these debates and their repercussions for the politics of integration and recognition. Focusing on the case of Germany, the debates in question commonly center on, firstly, (immigrant) Muslims and their religious practices and beliefs and, secondly, on the value and reach of secular institutions, in particular the freedom of speech and expression, and the protection from blasphemy.

In recent years, the public sphere in Germany has arguably been transformed by debates and movements related to these questions. Right-wing populist movements or political parties and the threat of terrorism seeking justification in the realm of religion have been crucial for these developments. In the wake of these transformations, the tone and intensity of public debates have also changed, in particular when it comes to discussions of the modes of social coexistence in view of cultural and religious diversity. Feelings like fear, hate or indignation uttered and attributed to oneself or others in public discourse have come to fuel affective dynamics that seem to challenge the long established and taken-for-granted discursive and political practices. These affective upheavals of public discourse can thus be regarded as a phenomenon deeply rooted in larger public and political developments whose resonances can be identified looking at the affective dynamics within discourse itself. They are paradigmatic examples for what others have termed "affective publics" (Papacharissi, 2014; Lünenborg, this volume) or "emotional publics" (Rosas & Serrano-Puche, 2018).

Drawing on analyses of selected debates in German public discourse, we suggest that when it comes to issues of freedom of expression, emotions are almost exclusively (self)attributed to collective religious subjects as being (unduly) affected and suffering from "hurt" religious feelings. In contrast, the secular subject is frequently portrayed as rational, deliberate, and largely free from emotional bias. Interestingly, in view of the German discourse, the "religious" and the "secular" in these debates seem to stand synonymously for "immigrant" (often Muslim) and "native" (predominantly Christian or secular) populations. This picture changes when it comes to the accommodation of Islamic practices, such as the wearing of headscarves, Zabihah, or circumcision. Here, non-Muslims are portrayed by referring to notions of outrage and indignation as consequences of being exposed to these practices, whereas the Muslim subject is constructed as appalled and indignant over questioning the legitimacy or appropriateness of these practices.

This argument is developed by first illustrating pertinent issues in the current public debate in Germany regarding multiculturalism, recognition, and the accommodation of religious diversity. In a second step, we discuss recognition as an inherently affective concept and outline how the nexus between affect and recognition is mediated by language. We then review existing works that have been dealing with questions of affect and emotion in multi-religious societies, in particular with regard to blasphemy and the religious-secular divide. In what follows, we first propose four analytical perspectives that contribute to an understanding of these affective dynamics and, second, provide examples from our own research. We close with a conclusion and a discussion of the proposed approach.

Multiculturalism and Recognition

Research on multiculturalism and religious plurality has been looking primarily at different kinds of tensions between liberal secular values and religious practices, traditions, and convictions of various sorts. Although this research fundamentally deals with matters of cultural and religious pluralism, issues related to Islam and the accommodation of Muslims have dominated in both the public and political debates as well as in the scholarly discussion (Fetzer & Soper, 2005; Koenig, 2005; Adida, Laitin, & Valfort, 2016). This conflict, on the one hand, involves calls for the legal and cultural recognition of Islam and its related practices (as regards, for example, education, architecture, or apparel). On the other hand, it concerns the refusal, in particular, of group rights for religious or cultural minorities or the restriction of individual rights with reference to a liberal-secular ideal of the modern state (Nussbaum, 2012).

These debates have long incited controversy in Germany, especially with regard to Islam and the "new visibility" of religion (Casanova, 1994; Hjelm, 2015). Liberal constitutions and multicultural policies invoked over the past 30 years have placed "the individual and collective practice of religion under special protection" ever since, as Joppke (2013, p. 410, our translation) notes. At the same time, however, substantial concerns about political and cultural essentialism, misrecognition, discrimination, and exclusion have remained (Modood, 1998). Political actors have frequently criticized representatives of religious communities for not recognizing basic principles of a liberal and secular constitutional state. For their part, religious leaders continuously allege that Islam and its practices are not being recognized by German politics and society, much in contrast to other, more privileged religions (Fetzer & Soper, 2005).

In addition to the legal and political implications (which multicultural policies and shifts in the understanding of citizenship have more or less been successful since the 1980s; see Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2009), these conflicts are characterized by the fact that subjective

feelings are increasingly brought to bear. The importance of categories such as feelings, injury, piety, or tactfulness, which are ascribed legal significance in many cases, is demonstrated by vivid debates about the freedom of expression and blasphemy, the wearing of headscarves, and gender equality (Joppke, 2013; Mahmood, 2009). All of these are hardly ever restricted to the rational and deliberate exchange of arguments, as normative accounts of the public sphere would ideally have it. On the contrary, polemical and personal escalations and references to subjective sensitivities clearly show that the contest over hegemonic interpretative patterns regarding belonging, difference, and recognition is conducted in a rather confrontational manner, especially concerning religious matters. The "shrill dissonances" ("schrille Dissonanzen" in German, Habermas, 2001, p. 14) of this public controversy may also be attributed to the fact that there are conflicting estimations of the relationship between secular nation-state regulations and policies, on the one hand, and the demands for legal and cultural recognition, on the other.

In this specific political and cultural constellation, the principle of mutual recognition, which is constitutive of social coexistence in a liberal state, runs the risk of being invalidated. An overly rigid secularism denies the intrinsic right to religious convictions, languages, and practices, which, however, also persists under the conditions of a secularized public sphere (Nussbaum, 2012). This refusal can be perceived by members of religious communities as an injury vis-à-vis their convictions, feelings, and identities. It can also be exploited for political reasons to construct such feelings at a collective level (George, 2016). This can eventually lead to social closure and a questioning of the very foundations of social life, which becomes articulated in concepts of willful disintegration and segregation, carrying corresponding semantics of delineation. Despite its notable relevance, however, hardly any systematic analyses

have been carried out on the subjective and affective dimensions of this struggle for religious recognition.

Language and Recognition

While cognitively dissonant encounters with other denominations and religions (Habermas, 2001, p. 14) have attracted substantial attention, the emotional and affective basis of religious struggles for recognition has mostly been neglected. This is all the more surprising, since different facets of research on multiculturalism and multicultural recognition emphasize self-relations, social interactions, and identities—and reciprocal and affective recognition play a central role, along with cultural (Taylor, 1993), legal (Kymlicka, 1995), and structural (Fraser, 1996) differences. How can we then understand this nexus between recognition and emotion in public discourse? As a starting point, Honneth's (1992) theory of recognition can be instructive because it specifically focuses on the affective dimension of recognition and, simultaneously, the conflict-ridden downside of misrecognition, i.e., forms of disrespect and denied recognition (Honneth, 1992, p. 212) and the attendant feelings of humiliation (Habermas, 2001, p. 11). According to Honneth (1992, pp. 213–214), experiences of disrespect are so deeply rooted in the affective experience of human subjects that it is ultimately the catalyst for the struggle for recognition. This is because the experience of disrespect is usually accompanied by negative emotional responses like anger and contempt (Honneth, 1992, p. 219), which give the struggle for recognition its fundamentally affective character. Although ("positive") intersubjective theories of recognition offer an appropriate conceptual framework for the analysis of religious feelings and injury, they nonetheless tend to neglect matters concerning the structural and discursive production of such feelings. On the other hand, ("negative") theories of intersubjectivity (e.g., Butler, 2001) allow addressing the asymmetry and power-relatedness of

the conditions for recognition that are expressed in hegemonic discourses and structural-institutional power relationships (cf., Celikates, 2007; Jaeggi, 2006). However, neither mutual nor asymmetric recognition have been studied empirically in the context of discursive struggles for religious recognition in view of their affective structure.

To understand this linguistic-discursive dimension of the affective dynamics of struggles for religious recognition in public discourse, theories of "linguistic disrespect" (Herrmann, Krämer, & Kuch, 2007) and the rhetoric of injurious speech are particularly instructive. These theories can contribute to conceptualize issues of the emotional and affective structure of recognition from a linguistic and discourse-analytical perspective. They offer a valuable understanding of disrespectful and injurious speech not primarily in terms of its *contents*, but rather in terms of its *performative* as well as *material structure*, i.e., the performative and bodily character of hurtful utterances (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; MacKinnon, 1994; Butler, 1998; Brokoff & Walter-Jochum, 2019). These works generally take recourse to speech-act theory and are located at the intersection of legal and political-institutional discourses. As an analytical heuristic, the theoretical distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts (Austin, 1962) seems particularly promising in this regard. From a perlocutionary standpoint, potentially injurious language may be ascribed to the violent effects of hurtful speech that are legally taken to be an incitement of hatred and violence. From an illocutionary standpoint, however, it may be ascribed to the violence and affective power of language itself (Bens, 2019). In other words, it is (allegedly) the words themselves that can "affect" and "harm" the addressee. This is all the more significant given the understanding of affectivity in these works, since injurious language itself is taken as a "bodily action" (Butler, 1998, pp. 21, 200). The rhetoric of hatred, as influenced by "strong affects", is an adequate example of language

characterized by bodily forces and affects (Gehring, 2007, p. 213). Although analyses of this affective dimension of injurious speech in the context of religious recognition are largely absent from the literature, studies that connect "religious sentiment" (Baatz, Belting, Charim, Kermani, & Saleh, 2007, p. 26)—particularly on the side of Muslims—to the establishment of new fields of discourse are productive in this regard. This research goes beyond the established (Western) political language to look at the production of identity and the formation of "transnational" (Baatz, Belting, Charim, Kermani, & Saleh, 2007, p. 30) affective communitization.

Religious Emotions, Hurt Feelings and the Principles of the Secular State

Although the larger discursive structures and affective dynamics of struggles for recognition have not yet been investigated in detail, religious emotions, injury, and hurt feelings have frequently been discussed in relation to the principles of the liberal secular state. In many Western countries, religious practices, such as the wearing of headscarves or ritual circumcisions, have led to conflicts with legal norms and the cultural self-understanding of the secular state for some time. Furthermore, artistic confrontations with religious issues have given rise to public conflicts with religious communities, as the example of the controversy over the "Mohammed caricatures", published in 2005 in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, demonstrates. These conflicts are often carried out with reference to "religious emotions" on the side of (parts of) the Muslim community. To understand the role of religious emotions in conflicts over the accommodation of Muslims and Islamic practices, it is imperative to distinguish between religious emotions as an "emic" and "etic" concept, to borrow analytical terminology from Anthropology (e.g., van de Vijver, 2015). Emic concepts in this case refer to the ways in which a term or concept is used within a certain culture or context, i.e., the public discourse on Muslim integration and accommodation. Etic concepts, on the other hand, are

researchers' analytical concepts that may or may not be in alignment with the field's emic concepts.

"Religious feelings" or "religious emotions" as emic concepts are supposed to be experienced *qua* religious identity, denomination, or belonging and thus are held to be a yardstick of cultural difference, symbolic boundaries, and recognition. Looking at the respective discourse, the actual religious dimension of emotions is often neglected in favor of some ethnic, national, or cultural category membership, i.e., religious emotions are broadly attributed to individuals that have immigrated to Germany from countries with a predominantly Muslim population or have ancestral ties with such a country. Furthermore, religious emotions are supposed to arise in view of a variety of situations and eliciting conditions, first and foremost in view of political or artistic references to Islam in ways perceived as criticizing, ridiculing, or derogative. This includes artistic expressions and representations regarding Islam as well as political discussions on the legal status of certain Islamic practices, such as the wearing of headscarves.

Religious feelings and emotions as an etic, i.e., scientific category have a long and broad history that can be reviewed here only in a fragmentary fashion (see the essays in Corrigan 2008a for an excellent overview). The sociological and more broadly the social scientific literature has been attending to the concept of religious emotions in at least two highly distinct ways.

On the one hand, religious emotions have classically been investigated as specific modes of phenomenal experience related to religious beliefs and practices, transcendence, and the sacred more generally. Corrigan (2008b) notes that the classical writers that have been concerned with the nexus of emotions and religion, such as Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Schleiermacher, William James, or Émile Durkheim held that "human emotionality was a constituent element of religious

life" (Corrigan 2008b, p. 7) and that some kind of feeling is indeed essential to religion. The more recent research in this tradition has primarily been concerned with accounting for the large amount of scholarship on emotion that has been developed in philosophy, psychology, and parts of cognitive science over the past decades to better understand the role of emotion in religion (e.g., Riis & Woodhead, 2010). In an attempt at identifying and categorizing the different aspects of religious feelings and emotions, Järveläinen (2008) has suggested that they can be characterized according to their "cognitive objects" a "depth condition", as well as a "pragmatic condition". The cognitive object refers to the objects of religious experience (for example "the divine") as in other kinds of emotional experiences and basically represents the intentionality of religious emotions. The depth condition takes up ideas from Schleiermacher and Otto and emphasizes the relationality of religious emotion, i.e., the idea that they rest upon a perception of relatedness (e.g., "dependency" in Schleiermacher's account). Finally, the pragmatic condition highlights that religious emotions depend on practices and culture.

On the other hand, religious feelings have for a long time been investigated in the context of issues related to blasphemy and freedom of speech. In this tradition, religious feelings have rather been considered feelings that arise when confronted with blasphemous acts, where blasphemy is generally considered as "great disrespect shown to God or to something holy" or as "something said or done that is disrespectful to God or to something holy", as the Merriam-Webster[1] notes. In modern times, blasphemy has almost always been considered in relation to legally imposing limitations on the principle of free speech, and since Mill's argument in *On Liberty*, this limitation is hardly ever justified by claims for freedom from religious offence. In many cases, these limitations rather apply to speech that is "directed to inciting or producing

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[1] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blasphemy

imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action" (Danchin, 2010, p. 7). Irrespective of this, the European Court of Human Rights holds that "the right to free speech may be limited on the basis of the right to respect for one's religious feelings and the freedom to hold and practice a religion" (Dacey, 2012, p. 66; EuroParl, 2013, p. 52). The main reason, however, why blasphemy in many societies today is a criminal offence is not the protection from offence and the injury of "religious feelings" (see, e.g., Ramdev, Nambiar, & Bhattacharya, 2016; Statman, 2000) but rather because it is a suitable means for the incitement of religious hatred, group defamation, and social upheaval (e.g., Frevert, 2016).

This second perspective is particularly informative when investigating blasphemy in the context of issues pertaining to multiculturalism, recognition, and the accommodation of Muslims in liberal-secular societies (e.g., Ross, 2012; Grenda, Benke, & Nash, 2014; Dacey, 2012). A notable part of this research has identified the "static secular-religious binary" and the "purportedly incommensurable divide between liberal and Islamic values" (Danchin, 2010, p. 8) as questionable points of departure for successfully addressing the questions and challenges. In particular, Mahmood (2009) has argued that the religious in these constellations can only be understood in relation to the secular and that it is imperative to understand "what constitutes religion and a proper religious subjectivity in the modern world and what practices may be necessary to make this kind of injury of religious pain not mute but intelligible within the discourse of liberal rights" (Danchin, 2010, p. 10). In Mahmood's (2009) perspective, this does not only include an understanding of different subjectivities and forms of subjectivation, but also the embodied nature of the religious and the secular subject more generally and the "affective structures" that these subjectivities entail and how they constitute embodied sensitivities towards specific ways of being harmed or injured.

Four Analytical Perspectives

Investigating the affective and emotional dynamics of debates that involve religious sensibilities clearly needs to go beyond a classical understanding of religious emotions as a specific kind of individual experience. Instead, these dynamics are at play at different levels that need to be taken into account to form a comprehensive picture. This includes the field of public discourse in which claims for cultural and religious recognition as well as for the principles of the secular state are articulated and negotiated. This also includes an understanding that is not bound to specific religious denominations, but rather emphasizes multiple relations between "the religious" and "the secular" as two substantially interlinked categories. And finally, this understanding also needs to account for the collective and political dimensions and repercussions of affect and emotion in these debates. To achieve this understanding, we suggest four analytical perspectives which we outline in the following.

First, the role of religious feelings—and affect and emotion more generally—in contemporary discourse on multiculturalism, recognition, and the accommodation of Muslims can be accounted for by looking at how emotions are explicitly made the subject of this discourse. The controversy over a German "Leitkultur" (1998-2000 and again much more forcefully since 2015 in view of the accommodation of refugees mostly from Islamic societies), debate regarding caricatures of Mohammed since 2006, or the discussions about whether Islam and its related practices are an integral part of German society (2010) all prominently feature articulations, attributions, and evaluations of feelings and emotions. In particular, the controversy over the Mohammed caricatures demonstrated the significance that is ascribed to religious feelings and their injury, as well as their potential for transnational mobilization. Also in the debates about the wearing of headscarves or about the participation of Muslim girls in physical

education classes, affective categories such as tactfulness, piety, and shame are frequently invoked. These invocations carry a range of different semantics, from expressing subjective or collective experiences of actors who articulate these emotions, to debates about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain emotions (see D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000, for a philosophical discussion), to the attribution of specific emotions to different actors, groups or abstract entities. These articulations not only carry normative and moral judgments, but also contribute to processes that outline different forms of subjectivity, such as contouring a specifically "religious" or "secular" subject.

Second, in addition to identifying the ways in which emotions appear in the debates in question, it seems worthwhile to look at the extent to which the recourse to religious feelings qualifies as an entirely novel kind of discourse that operates beyond established political language. This kind of discourse might well make an original contribution to the construction of boundaries and cultural identities and the formation of affective communities (Zink, 2019), i.e., the emergence of communal bonds based on comparable ways of feeling and being affected in view of specific events and situations. At the same time, these affective communities would produce social exclusion and demarcation. This perspective to some extent rests on the assumption that emotions can be collective, i.e., that they are shared by many individuals in response to some idea, act, or object (von Scheve & Ismer, 2013). It would also open up the possibility to investigate emotions, individual or collective, as deliberately and strategically produced by speakers in a discourse. The concept of "emotional regimes" (Reddy, 2001) reflects these usually political attempts to establish norms and rules of emotions in specific domains of social life. Religious emotions are thus not only relevant in view of how they are elicited and

constructed, but also with regard to their political and cultural repercussions (e.g., Mahmood 2009).

Third, the affective characteristics of the public discourse on multicultural recognition give rise to the task of differentiating, at a conceptual level, the linguistic-discursive forms of the expression of "negative emotional reactions" (which Honneth established with a view to social relations and misrecognition), as they often feature in what is widely known as "hate speech". Conceptually, the distinction between indignation, contempt, and hatred seems to be particularly relevant to better understand this discourse: while indignation is a relatively direct, although culturally mediated response that is often connected to forms of political commitment (thus also having a positive connotation), contempt and hatred represent negative modes of affective responding. In the case of contemptuous speech, feelings of cultural superiority often tend to prevail. By contrast, in the case of hateful rhetoric, it is necessary to look at whether and to what extent it is based on (unacknowledged) experiences of helplessness, despair, and a lack of opportunity. Toward this end, a "functional" account of hate speech can be informative. The (overlapping) analytical understandings of hate speech that are essential to this discourse include, firstly, hate speech as it is primarily understood in Anglo-American countries in terms of the legal category of "hate speech", referring to forms of discriminatory speech on the individual, group, and institutional level. Secondly, hate speech can be an affective (and defensive) response to the challenges and issues of globalization and cultural plurality. Thirdly, hate speech can be conceived of as speech deliberately used for the purpose of the incitement of hate and group defamation. This is reflected in a linguistic and discourse-analytical point of view, according to which two dimensions of hate speech can be distinguished that also have different legal and political significance. On the one hand, the deliberate evocation of hatred through language aims

at bringing about certain effects and outcomes (perlocutionary dimension). On the other hand, words themselves can be "permeated" with hatred, which they "enact" on the linguistic level at the very moment of expression (illocutionary dimension).

A fourth analytical perspective that may contribute to comprehensively grasping the role of religious feelings and emotions concerns the ways in which debates about multiculturalism and religious difference are actually *affectively experienced* in people's everyday lives. This in particular concerns groups of actors who are addressed in the respective discourse and their subjective interpretations of these debates and their consequences for cultural identity and the sensing of community belonging, be they migrant (minority) groups or groups affiliated to a culturally or discursively constructed majority. On the one hand, one can assume that the discursive negotiation of the status of religion in German society frames and transmits—as per the specific frames or patterns of interpretation—conflicts of recognition (e.g., Snow & Benford 1988). Discourse analysis, however, provides little information about how the addressed groups and actors (Muslims for most part of the discourse, but also other actors involved), affectively experience debates about, for example, the Mohammad caricatures or the wearing of headscarves in everyday life. Indeed, a closer look at the subjective experiential world seems especially worthwhile given the fact that emotions such as indignation, injury, or insult are frequently attributed in discourse to the Muslim population as a collective emotional state and as evidence of the moral dubiousness of political or legal decisions. Hence, developing an understanding of whether and how denied religious and cultural recognition or critique of Islam and Muslims are interpreted as being disrespectful or offensive and produce affective dissonances is an important cornerstone of the proposed analytical approach. This includes an examination of how the relevant debates change people's identification with (transnational) religious communities on the

one hand, and with liberal-secular principles and notions of citizenship and national identity on the other hand. Also, it seems important to consider what circumstances other than a specific public discourse (e.g., biographical socialization) influence the experience or denial of affective recognition.

Given these analytical perspectives, there is a broad range of potential methodological approaches and concrete methods to address the affective and emotional dynamics of debates over religious sensibilities. In our own research (Walter-Jochum, Berg, & Ural 2018; Berg & Ural, 2019; Ural, 2019) we have subscribed to different methods of discourse analysis. They allow for an analysis of publicly negotiated interpretations and classifications regarding religious emotions and collective notions of recognition and the commensurability of religious practices under the aegis of a secular legal system. Depending on the approach to discourse one takes, this strategy might essentially focus on how religious and secular subjects are constructed in discourse as part of a larger secular-religious *dispositif*, as in the Foucauldian understanding of discourse (e.g., Diaz-Bone, 2015). This is also mirrored by analytical approaches inspired by speech-act theory as well as by post-structuralist accounts that capitalize on linguistic utterances regarding their performativity. Works discussing the connection between language and violence, as briefly summarized above, are examples of this perspective. An approach to discourse might also include, however, different forms of subjectivation or approximations thereof, rendering social actors and their subjective and intersubjective experiences part of the analysis (e.g., Keller, 2013).

Investigating Affect and Emotion in Debates over Religious Sensibilities

This section seeks to provide a range of examples from ongoing research of how the four theoretical perspectives outlined above can be used to investigate ongoing public debates over

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religious sensibilities and cultural recognition. Our intention here is not provide in-depth accounts of specific debates, but rather to outline a broader overview of possible approaches at investigating the role of affect and emotion in these debates. Furthermore, these examples provide concrete accounts of how publics can be understood as decidedly "affective publics" (Papacharissi, 2015; Negt & Kluge, 1993; Dahlgren, 2018). Looking at the present controversies over the accommodation of Muslims and Islamic practices in Germany, our own research has primarily attended to religious emotions as *discursive* phenomena in the sense that political, civic/secular, and religious actors talk and write about these emotions and their potential injury in different public spheres. In these speech acts, the emphasis lies on the "vulnerability" and the "safeguarding" of self- or other-attributed religious emotions and on the rhetoric of indignation, contempt, and hatred and their repercussions for social integration, multicultural accommodation and experiences of belonging. Our examples are primarily drawn from commercial news media as key arenas in which political debate becomes publicly accessible (e.g., Butsch, 2007).

Blasphemous speech

"Religious emotions" in an emic understanding are emotions that are discursively attributed to members of religious communities or individuals with a specific religious faith and supposed to arise in view of situations or events (speech acts, legislations and court rulings, artistic expressions) that call into question, ridicule, or misrecognize people's religious identity, beliefs, and convictions. In contemporary German debates, questions concerning Islam are almost exclusively discussed in conjunction with issues and challenges related to cultural and ethnic differences and immigration, which is why the lines between "being a Muslim" and "being an immigrant" are constantly blurred. Our own research shows that in most of the recurrent public debates, in particular those concerning the freedom of speech and expression,

"religious emotions" are hardly ever publicly discussed in connection to acts of blasphemy, although they can be analytically framed as blasphemous and are indeed frequently interpreted as such by parts of the Muslim community. Quite the contrary, actions that are supposed to incite religious emotions on the side of Muslims are often, but not exclusively, portrayed as either speech acts or artistic expressions falling under the rubric of the freedom of expression, or are characteristics or actions of secular state institutions. This is evident in the debates following the publication of Michel Houellebecq's novel *Submission* (Walter-Jochum, Berg, & Ural 2018), in the news coverage and debates in the aftermath of the attacks on the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in 2015 (Berg & Ural, 2019), and in the debates concerning the public broadcasting of the satirical poem *Schmähgedicht* (vituperative criticism) by German TV-Comedian Jan Böhmermann, dedicated to the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Ural, 2019). Considering actions of secular state institutions, the controversies regarding the legal status of male circumcision in Germany or the wearing of the so-called "Burkini" at French public beaches come to mind (von Scheve & Ural, 2019). In these cases, the debates center around the claim that in a secular society, religious believers need to come to terms with and accept values like the freedom of speech and expression, gender equality, and a certain understanding of the relationship between the (female) body and the public, which can possibly lead to hurt and injury. It is hardly ever blasphemy in the narrower sense that is at stake here. However, these civil liberties and values are often portrayed as being incompatible with Islam, since Muslims are allegedly unable to cope with their "religious feelings", being injured by others on the grounds of the freedom of art and expression.

This is an interesting observation insofar as in the few cases in which religious emotions are discursively expressed by or attributed to members of other faiths (e.g., Christians),

believers' demands for the protection of their religious feelings are hardly ever framed as calling into question the fundamental institutions of the liberal-secular state. Rather, these claims are interpreted in the "classical" frameworks of Blasphemy and quickly set aside with remarks that protection from offence is to be weighed less important than freedom of speech. Hence, the present discourse in a certain way contributes to inflating alleged differences between Muslims and principles of the liberal-secular state, and at the same time constitutes a specific construction of the Muslim subject within this state, one that is not only overly "responsive" to certain speech acts and other actions (so are other religious subjects), but is at the same time fundamentally at odds with foundational principles of the liberal-secular state.

Affect: religious and secular

A second interpretation of these extant debates concerns the discursive constitution of "the religious" and "the secular". In line with the works of, for instance, Mahmood (2015) or Asad (2003), it becomes obvious how "the religious" is viewed and constructed only in conjunction with "the secular". Taking serious insights that the secular does not constitute a "neutral" baseline from which a liberal-secular state views and appraises practices and belief systems within its legal and political reach, 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, debates over religious sensibilities and cultural recognition can be interpreted from at least two different angles.

On the one hand, when speakers in discourse, representatives of Muslim communities or organizations as well as the critics of religion and Islam, ascribe religious pain and injury to "the Muslims", they tend to do so in view of a secular "other", either subjects or state institutions, which are—willingly or not—portrayed as calm, 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 (see Ural & Berg, 2019; Berg & Ural, 2019; Walter-Jochum, Berg, & Ural 2018). Affect and emotion hence are characteristic of the religious subject, and it is certainly no co-incidence that being "overly emotional" has historically been attributed exclusively to women in states of hysteria, i.e., in almost pathological conditions. Likewise, taking historical framings seriously, "the emotional" in the Western world is traditionally seen as and sometimes even defined in its opposition to, reason and rationality (Barbalet, 1998).

On the other hand, in cases in which representatives of certain faiths demand changes in legal regulations, in particular concerning freedom of speech and expression that put religious sensibilities under special protection and shall contribute to the recognition of Muslims, the *secular* subject is portrayed as highly affected and emotional. 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 are supposed to be recognized, 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, circumcision, or the building of mosques (von Scheve & Ural, 2019). When Muslim representatives demand legal recognition and cultural accommodation of these and other practices, "secular affects" are frequently aroused in critics of these demands. Within the realm of the New Right, resorting to feelings of fear related to Islam or an alleged Islamization of secular societies can be observed as an important political strategy based on feelings associated with the secular state and its principles (Diefenbach & von Scheve 2019).

From speech acts to collective emotions

A third interpretation arising from our suggested analytical perspectives rests on the distinction between the concepts of affect and emotion. On the one hand, the examples illustrated above are exclusively discursive in nature, i.e., they reflect what is said and written about the recognition and accommodation of Muslims and Islamic practices in the liberal-secular state and about the emotions and sensibilities that go along with this. On the other hand, this is hardly telling in view of what people *actually* feel and experience in view of these debates. Analyzing discourse reveals what speakers *say* how people are affected by these debates, which might be an adequate representation of their actual feelings and emotions—or not. In fact, these statements and attributions can be interpreted first and foremost as political strategies to legitimate or de-legitimate certain claims in the struggle for recognition and political power, making the public sphere a realm of affective negotiations with an impact going beyond discourse itself. This might be effective in two ways. First, an audience, for instance legislators or citizens, might take these attributions of emotions for granted and make decisions or take actions based on these appraisals. Second, an audience might take-up and incorporate these attributions of emotions and make them their very own emotions. People might be affected by certain acts and events in rather fuzzy ways, harboring diffuse feelings and sentiments. Discursive attributions can channel these diffuse feelings, linguistically categorizing them into discrete emotions, such as fear, indignation, shame or resentment, that carry widely shared cultural meanings.

In the sociology of emotion, this "taking up" of emotions has been discussed in theories of collective emotions (von Scheve & Ismer, 2013), collective emotional orientations (Bar-Tal, 2001), or emotional regimes (Reddy, 2001), to name but a few. This would be one way in which discursive attributions of emotions have consequences for different forms of social action, for instance issues related to integration, belonging, or collective behavior, such as participation in

social movements. Zink (2019) has argued that this contributes to the emergence of "affective communities", i.e., the formation of social collectives that are similarly affected by discourse.

This line of reasoning can be extended by applying a frame of reference that is more clearly geared towards a Foucauldian understanding of discourse. Although the status of social actors is debated within this frame of reference, the concept of subjectivation includes the notion that discourse always contributes to the formation of subjectivities. Following this understanding, it seems obvious to not only focus on explicit statements concerning the emotions that actors might or might not experience, but also 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 so much language and conceptual thought that matter, but ways of being affected in a non-categorical or non-representational sense (e.g., von Scheve, 2017; Slaby, 2016).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have outlined an analytical approach at investigating the affective and emotional dimensions of contemporary debates in many Western societies concerning religious sensibilities and cultural recognition. These conflicts and controversies are often analytically framed as cognitively dissonant encounters, although there are abundant references to feelings and emotions in these debates, for instance regarding hurt feelings and religious injury. This is surprising since these conflicts are often discussed within the framework of theories of (multicultural) recognition, many of which consider recognition—and misrecognition—to be inherently affective phenomena. Looking at these debates from an emotion-focused perspective can draw inspiration from related scholarship, for instance on blasphemy and religious hatred and on relations between the secular and the religious. Based on these insights and a discussion

of select existing approaches, we have suggested four analytical perspectives to investigate the affective dimension of these debates: the explicit articulation of emotion in discourse; conceiving of these debates as a novel kind of discourse beyond established political language; understanding the "functional" aspects of hate speech by emphasizing the linguistic-discursive specifics of the articulation of negative emotional reactions; and the extra-discursive repercussions of these debates for actors' subjective phenomenal experiences. To illustrate these perspectives, we have provided insights into some of our own research on the subject matter, capitalizing on blasphemous speech, religious and secular affect, and collective emotions. Further developing these perspectives and analytical examples that predominantly focus on discourse and language, general conceptions of how language may affect bodies beyond linguistic meaning and conceptual thought seem a promising avenue for future inquiry. Butler's (1998) work on hate speech is already path breaking in this regard. Likewise, the work by Denise Riley (2005) on *Language as Affect*, Marion Acker's, Anne Fleig's, and Matthias Lüthjohann's chapter in this volume, and the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts discussed above can be instructive here. Given this conceptual background, the material dimensions of discourse are likely to play a vital role in these (and other) public controversies, since it matters whether one is confronted with something that is written in a newspaper article or with a massive material-discursive setting comprised of very different media, as it has been the case, for example, in the context of the *Je suis Charlie*-movement following the attacks in 2015. In such cases, the affective resonance of the public debates we discussed points at a phenomenon that reaches far beyond the discursive realm, transforming the ways in which groups and individuals interact and thereby shape politics and society. It thus seems necessary to account for this material dimension of discourse in a more comprehensive fashion to better grasp discourse's

affective potential. Challenges of course arise from an understanding of discourse as a predominantly language-based phenomenon. However, discourse also includes actions, objects or images, and their potential to affect bodies in different ways has been more comprehensively theorized as of yet. 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 socialization, to be affected in specific ways. In our view, these "ways of being affected" (as a dimension of subjectivation) form the backdrop for any political or strategic attempt at inciting collective (religious) emotions.

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