Religion and the Public Sphere
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I. What is the Enlightenment?
Three main aspects:
1) Elevation of Reason
2) Belief in Progress
3) Elevation of Experience

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another: Sapere aude! - that is the motto of the Enlightenment (Immanuel Kant What is Enlightenment, 35).

Political Result: American and French Revolution; age of toleration, pluralism, religious freedom, equality etc.

II. Secularism
Main Conception:
Age of Reason against authority particular – religious authority. Enlightenment thus often equated with secularism. Religion no longer belongs to the public sphere but is seen as ‘private’ ‘personal’

Secular state does not depend on religious legitimisation – this lead to the secularisation and in the end democratisation of political powers.

Idea of Equality: All persons have equal access on public argument

III Religion and the Public Sphere
Rawls: Political Liberalism:
In the liberal view, the state guarantees citizens freedom of religion only on the condition that religious communities, each from the perspective of its own doctrinal tradition accept not only the separation of church and state but also the restrictive use of public reason.

‘Public Use of Reason’ – to which all persons have equal access (it is natural)
‘Common human reason forms the basis of justification for a secular state that no longer depends on religious legitimization’
‘For all their ongoing dissent on questions of world views and religious doctrines, citizens are meant to respect one another as free and equal members of their political community. And on this basis of civic solidarity when it comes to contentious political issues they are expected to look for a way to reach a rationally motivated agreement – they owe one another good reasons; The ideal of citizenship imposes a
moral, not a legal, duty – the duty of civility – to be able to explain to one another those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason. This duty also involves a willingness to listen to others and a fair-mindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should be reasonably made’ (Rawls: The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’ in *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64 (765-807): 217. (Habermas (2006))

Equality and religious freedom requires a secular state
However it is not sufficient:
There must be agreement amongst the parties (different religious groups) what can be tolerated and what cannot reasons that all sides can equally accept. This requires a sense of pluralism accepting that there are different positions to our own.

What is required 1) equal participation of all citizens 2) an epistemic dimension of a deliberations that grounds in reason – rationally deliberated reason.

**IV. Habermas’ Critique**

- Only secular reasons count ‘citizens who adhere to a faith are obliged to establish a kind of ‘balance’ between their religious and their secular convictions’ –
- But: True belief is not only a doctrine, believed content, but a source of energy that the person who has faith taps performatively and thus nurtures his or her entire life (2006) 8) i.e. decision making depends on their convictions
- The cognitive burden is unequally distributed between secular and religious citizens. The translation requirement for religious reasons and the subsequent institutional precedence of secular reasons demand of the religious citizens and effort to learn and adapt that secular citizens are spared having to make (2006 13)
- Problem enlightenment accepts ‘tolerates’ religions (i.e. as long as they don’t interfere or undermine secular reason). However, tolerance is a paternalistic conception: i.e. we don’t show respect: ‘The paradox is that each act of toleration must circumscribe the range of behaviour everyday must accept, thereby drawing a line for what cannot be tolerated (Habermas (2004: 6)

We do not need to be tolerant if we are indifferent to other opinions and attitudes anyway or ever appreciate the value of such ‘otherness’. ... e.g. ‘If someone rejects people whose skin is black we should not call on him to be tolerant toward people who look different, for then we would accept his prejudice as an ethical judgment similar to the rejection of different religion. A racist should not be tolerant but overcome his racism (Habermas (2004): 10)
Hence, one should not determine the boundaries of what is tolerated one-sidedly – nobody possesses the privilege of setting the boundaries of tolerance from the viewpoint of their own preferences and value-orientation.

V. Post-Secular Public Sphere
A secularization that does not annihilate is brought about as a kind of translation. That is what the West, as the great secularizing force in the world today, can learn from its own history. Otherwise the West will either appear simply as another crusader on the behalf of a competing religious faith, like the Arab world, or as the traveling salesman of an instrumental reason that subjects all meaning to itself. (Faith and Knowledge)

We need a post-secular democratic public sphere in which participants will be receptive to putative rational content of religious as well as non-religious arguments. Secular citizens should adopt a self-critical attitude towards the limits of secular rationality and strive to be open to the power of religious reasons; ... “The secular citizen must grasp their conflict with religious opinions as a reasonably expected disagreement”. (Habermas (2006) 15)

Religiously minded citizens are required to acknowledge the secular basis of political authority and to accept the validity of core liberal democratic principles such as equality and liberty’

1. We should not challenge religious citizens the right to use religious language in the public sphere
2. We should not deny in advance that religious world views are capable in the participation in truth
3. We secular citizens are equally expected to participate in the translation

Examples:
Religious movements had an impact eg. Martin Luther King - US Civil rights movement

Use of human embryos: ‘So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him’ (Genesis)
We don’t need to be believers to understand what is at issue: The question of autonomy or self-determination and the question of pluralism (i.e. no-one should play God as and subdue another person according to his own purposes)

Because he is the God of creation and redemption in one, this Creator does not have to work by natural laws like an engineer, or in accordance with the rules of a code like an information scientist. The voice of God that creates life communicates from
the outset within a morally sensitive universe. This is why God can "determine" man in the sense that at the same time he makes man capable of freedom and obliges him to be free. Now - we do not have to believe in the theological premises in order to understand the logic that a completely different dependence, presented as being causal, would be involved if the difference assumed in the concept of creation were to disappear and a peer were to take God's place - if, for example, a person were to intervene with his own preferences into the chance combination of his parents' sets of chromosomes without not actually having to assume a consensus at least with the other person concerned. This version raises the question that has occupied me elsewhere. Would not the first person who determines another person as he wishes in his natural essence also destroy those same freedoms which exist among equals in order to guarantee their difference? (Faith and Reason)

Habermas fears the naturalisation of the world and meaning. Science can explain facts but the problem of life remains (morality, value, freedom etc).

The radical form of naturalism devalues all categories of statements that cannot be reduced to controlled observations, nomological propositions or causal explanations; in other words, moral, legal and evaluative judgements are no less excluded than religious ones. As the renewed discussion on freedom and determinism shows, advances in biogentics, brain research and robotics provide stimuli for a kind of naturalising of the human mind that casts into question our practical self-understanding as responsibly acting persons and encourages call for revisions for criminal law (Habermas (2006): 16)

Question:
1) Is Habermas not cherry picking what aspects of religious discourse he wishes to accept?
2) Maybe the problem is a different one. Do science and religion necessarily refer to two distinct and opposed well-defined domains? As Harrion shows the categorisation of science and religion as separate entities only emerged in the 19th century. We cannot therefore refer to a perennial battle between two reified categories of science and religion. Initially religio did not refer to a discrete sets of beliefs and practices but an inner practice and virtue related to justice and scientia was understood as the habit of the soul/mind, a speculative virtue of the intellect (Aquinas). Both refer to a habit of the mind; a moral and intellectual one. Neither excludes the other. It is important to think historically which may allow us to break down the rigid demarcation between science and religion. This, in turn, may help us to reconfigure how we should understand the relation between religion and public sphere. (Cf Harrison (2011)
Selected Bibliography:
Harrison (2011): Territories of Science and Religion Griffit Lectures Chicago University Press
Habermas (1996) : Between Facts and Norms MIT
Habermas (2006) Religion and the Public Sphere; in European Journal of Philosophy