

Abstract

This thesis is comprised of three articles, all of which seek to answer the question of how religious reasons for political action are excluded in the public sphere. They answer this question in three ways, corresponding to what I take to be three forms of exclusion: a political kind, an epistemic kind, and a testimonial kind. Supporters of ‘the standard view’ of political liberalism have traditionally argued that these are acceptable and justified forms of exclusion. I argue, in contrast to these views, that such forms of exclusion are unfair. More positively, I suggest that religious reasons for political action ought to be included politically, epistemically, and testimonially, in a way that is consistent with the project of political liberalism. In the first article, I argue for this conclusion by reinterpreting John Rawls’s view on the role of religious reasons in public. I argue that while Rawls does exclude religious reasons in one way—in his claim that they lack justificatory power in a distinctly political sense—he includes them in another. On my reading, Rawls saw the expression of such reasons as fundamental to citizens in their capacity to know themselves, and one another, and in this way, they can encourage community and civic friendship. In the second article, I engage with a debate that arises post-Rawls, concerning the accessibility, or lack thereof, of religious reasons. In that debate, I argue, contra the standard view, that religious reasons are epistemically accessible. However, unlike current accounts, I argue that in order for citizens to understand and ultimately include the religious claims of their fellow citizens, it is not enough for those claims to be grounded in various sources of justification. Citizens must also understand the emotional thrust of such claims, and the messages they are embedded in more broadly. Finally, in the last article of my thesis, I argue that we exclude religious citizens as ‘knowers’ of their own religious testimony when we treat them with epistemic injustice. To better include them, I suggest that we treat such testimonies with epistemic justice, particularly the testimonies of those who face multiple axes of oppression.

Keywords

Religious Reasons; John Rawls; Exclusion; Deliberative Democracy; Public Reason; Justification; Accessibility; Emotion; Rhetoric; The Jeremiad; Religious Identity; Epistemic Injustice

Summary for Lay Audience

Are religious citizens excluded, in some way, in secular environments? That is, are they excluded in those environments which exist outside of their churches and other religious spaces, such as the political sphere, because of their distinctly non-secular beliefs and practices? If they are, how exactly should we make sense of that exclusion? And is this exclusion *wrong*? These are some of the questions that I raise and answer in this thesis. Imagine, for instance, that I believe my government ought to have certain policies and laws that protect the environment, and combat climate change, because I believe that God calls us to be stewards of the earth. The earth, I think, does not fully belong to us, and we should treat it as such. I then go and vote on the basis of this religious reasoning, since I take it to be an expression of the deepest commitment in my life— my faith. We should wonder: am I wrong to vote on these grounds? If I then explained my reasoning, about us being stewards of the earth, to another citizen, particularly one of a different faith or of no faith, would that citizen even *understand* me? And if they were unwilling to listen to me, or they treated me with prejudice because of my religious identity (and perhaps other aspects of my identity), might they be harming me in some way? In answering these questions, I ultimately argue that a religious reason for political action like this, the one about stewardship, but also others, ought to be included in our public deliberations in a distinctly political sense (a public sense), an epistemic sense (concerning justification), and a testimonial sense (concerning knowledge and the communication of that knowledge).

Acknowledgments

Part of my dissertation involves thinking and theorizing about the value of community. This value was only made real to me by and with a loving community of friends, family, and mentors. You all made this work what it is, and made me who I am. Thank you.

To my partner in philosophy and in life, Jordan Desmond: your invaluable input into the ideas found in this dissertation has helped me beyond measure. Most importantly, your presence and humor kept me grounded, and has been a constant source of joy to me during these precious years that we've both spent becoming academic philosophers.

To my supervisors, Richard Vernon and Dennis Klimchuk. Richard: your supernatural patience with many drafts of these papers deserves more thanks than I can give. Your probing questions, genuine curiosity, commitment to this project, and your warmth and wisdom, has made me a better philosopher than I ever could have imagined. Looking back on the writing process, I see now that you were always telling me exactly what I needed to hear, even if it took me awhile to see fully what that was. Dennis: your insightful feedback, brilliant fine-tuning of ideas, inclination to draw distinctions (in the face of my constant need to make connections), detailed comments, and song recommendations, supported and challenged me greatly. All along the winding journey of the PhD, you both inspired me, made me feel capable of always improving, and made me feel human. I hope to pass on to students of my own the kind of inspirational mentorship I had the privilege of having in you both. Thank you also to my committee member, Carolyn McLeod. The detailed feedback you gave me on drafts of the third chapter of my thesis made me a better writer. What is more, the many courses I took with you not only opened my eyes to all that academic feminist philosophy has to offer, but showed me what it means to be a simultaneously strong and caring feminist philosopher in practice. Finally, thank you to Charles Jones, whose helpful feedback made my first chapter substantially better.

To my family: Thank you for listening to me discuss religion and politics and feminist philosophy with you. Remarkably, you understood my aims in this project all along. Thank you to my dad, Jack, especially. Barely a day went by without you telling me how proud you are of me, for accomplishments big and small. I will never forget that. Not many people get to say that about their dads. And thank you to my mom, Sandi, for always calling and picking up my calls. I wish always to emulate your positive and caring spirit. Thank you

to both my parents, for imbuing in me the values that are quite literally the topic of this dissertation. I will always be grateful for your unending support and genuine interest in my research.

Thank you also to my sisters, Meghan, Jen, and Erika, for being my best friends, always. I cannot imagine life without each one of you. And thank you to my dear philosophy pals, Tim, Lindsay, Emily, and Amy (among others) for laughing and crying (and sometimes even writing) with me. Your friendship made this process worth it.

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Preface

In the “State, The Church, and The Citizen”, Robert Audi states that “[t]he question is not whether religion and politics can be mixed; they *are* mixed and will continue to be mixed. But there is much to be said about what constitutes a good mixture and about how to achieve a democratic harmony in producing it”.¹ How religion should be integrated into politics is far from obvious, clear, or settled. Perhaps this is unsurprising. In a pluralistic liberal democracy, comprised of many different religious and non-religious worldviews, we may never fully agree on what a good mixture of religion and politics should look like.

Nevertheless, in this dissertation I argue that a good mixture is possible, and is determined according to how we understand the exclusion of religion from democratic politics. The position I take stands in contrast to the ‘standard view’. On that view, we find that religious citizens are excluded from participating in democratic politics *as religious* citizens. This in part results from such citizens being expected to exclude a certain class of *reasons* from guiding their political decisions and actions—namely, religious reasons. In arguing against this view, I ask: *how* are religious reasons, and the citizens who hold them, excluded in our political deliberations? And what is *wrong* with this exclusion?

I conceive of this exclusion in three ways: in a distinctly political or public sense, in an epistemic sense, and in a testimonial sense. My dissertation is thus composed of three articles, each of which answers these questions, concerning how religious reasons and the citizens who hold them are excluded, in different ways. I ultimately argue that these forms of exclusion, accepted by the ‘standard view’, are wrongful forms of exclusion. The upshot is that we ought to include religious reasons politically, epistemically, and testimonially. Of course, each form of exclusion and each corresponding form of inclusion overlap. They are, after all, *all* political, since this is a project of political philosophy. But the point of distinguishing between them is to better define the varied ways in which we can hope to have a ‘good mixture’ of religious

¹ Robert Audi, “The State, the Church and the Citizen,” in Paul J. Weithman (ed.), *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997, 38

deliberation in political life. Let me now describe more precisely (A) the debates that I am taking part in, and (B) why I am focused on religious reasons in particular, before describing (C) the connections between the debates, and the specific arguments I make in each of the three articles that compose my thesis.

A. *The Debates*

Audi's comment on the role of religion in politics is part of a larger conversation that has its origins, at least in its contemporary form², in John Rawls's theory of political liberalism. Rawls asks: "how is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines"?³ Part of Rawls's answer to this question comes out in his account of public reason. It is this debate, centering on the idea and duty of public reason, that structures the first two articles of my dissertation. Let me briefly explain that debate now.

Rawls thinks that it is through public reason that we form a common point of view by which we can justify laws and policies to one another as citizens who share in equal coercive power over one another. It is this form of reason, 'public reason', which does the justificatory work. It does so by appealing to shared political values, like freedom and equality, and by being composed of forms of reasoning and kinds of reasons that are also shared, or 'shareable', by all citizens. Public reason is thus best described as the moral or civic duty to make political decisions about fundamental questions of justice by considering reasons that *anyone* in one's society *could* accept (whether or not they indeed accept them).

It is thus the duty, the moral and civic duty of giving public reasons, or appealing to 'public reason', that is at issue in the first two chapters of my dissertation. This is because the duty of public reason apparently asks citizens to *exclude* religious reasons for political decision making, at least as the *sole* grounds justifying those decisions. Religious reasons, in contrast to public reason, depend on what Rawls calls non-public

² The debate goes back much further. See Gaus, "Contemporary theories of liberalism public reason as a post-Enlightenment project".

³ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), xviii

‘comprehensive doctrines’, including religious comprehensive doctrines, which contain values, sources of authority, and ways of reasoning that citizens will inevitably and permanently disagree over. Vulnerable to such deep disagreement, these views cannot then be the bases of justification for coercive laws and policies, which all citizens author in a liberal democracy, and which have normative authority over all. This is the main thought underlying why ‘the standard view’ of public reason is generally thought to exclude reasons that are rooted in religious comprehensive doctrines.

B. Why Religious Reasons?

Why am I focused on religious doctrines and reasons though? After all, other comprehensive doctrines, like Kantianism or Utilitarianism, are similarly excluded by Rawls and other public reason theorists. I focus on the religious case not only because many faith-friendly scholars have taken part in the public reason debate, but for three more specific reasons:

First, it is perhaps more obvious that sources of authority can conflict (e.g., God vs. the State), and can conflict greatly, when religious comprehensive doctrines are on the line.

Second, religious citizens might be especially committed to their views and their religious sources of authority, which would understandably be thought to encompass and give direction to both their private and political lives. Indeed, these ‘lives’ might be inseparable for religious citizens. Religious commitment might then at times lead such citizens to act in ways that *go against state authority* (as when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. engaged in acts of civil disobedience because he believed segregation went against God’s law), and according to reasons that non-religious citizens *may not fully understand* (as when someone says that life is sacred), or in ways that they *do* understand but nonetheless *disagree* with (as when someone declares that the sacredness of life warrants opposing the legalization of abortion). I won’t offer a taxonomy of the many kinds of religious reasons citizens might use here, but these few instances reveal what I mean when I am discussing religious reasons for political action.

Third, I focus on religious reasons to expand the scope of what an ordinary citizen might think of when they think of what religious citizens care about politically, or even what they *could* care about, and why. Religious citizens, like all citizens, care a great deal about what values are being upheld in their political community, and they want a say in what these values are, even by simply using their voice through their vote. But these values, the reasons for them, and the specific political issues they are connected to, are more expansive than is typically assumed. What is more, stereotypes over what religious citizens are like, and what they believe, are rampant. I want then to dismantle the false stereotype that all religious citizens have illiberal political leanings, or care only about certain political issues, like abortion, or medically assisted dying. I do not deny that some, even many, religious citizens care about these issues. However, I aim to reorient the reader's focus toward issues and stances that are often forgotten in our public political culture, by *both* religious citizens as well as non-religious citizens, especially those who listen to only the most strident religious voices in their society.

Again, religious citizens care about a wide variety of political issues and take a wide variety of stances toward these issues. Many religious citizens care about the poor, the disenfranchised, the voiceless or unrepresented, and in general, about matters and entities unseen, which might include unborn fetuses, but also non-human animals, the environment, subjects of torture, refugees, those who commit criminal acts, and the like. They care about what Rawls called 'the worst-off'. But the religious citizens who care about these issues are often not as noticeable or vocal as religious people with less liberal interests or views. Part of my aim here is thus to give a louder voice to some of these diverse issues and entities and the religious people who care about them.

I limit my analysis, particularly in the second and third article of my thesis, to one specific kind of concern: racial and gender injustice. This is exemplified in my focus on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in article two, and Sojourner Truth in article three, who fought against racial segregation, and slavery and sexism, respectively, on the basis of Christian reasons and values, like God-given freedom and equality. By looking at these examples, I intend to more generally encourage the idea that while religion and politics will always be mixed, they are mixed in varied ways, by a diversity of citizens, some of whom themselves are the marginalized or unseen. And although the public culture in many

liberal democracies today may lack such noteworthy examples of portraying racial or gender (in)justice, for instance, explicitly on religious grounds, many marginalized citizens still nevertheless *rely on* their religious beliefs to make sense of and act against their marginalization, exclusion, oppression, and the suffering that accompanies it.

C. The Connections

Let me now briefly state more directly the moves made in the articles that compose my thesis. To return to the public reason debate I began with, I start my dissertation by getting clear on what Rawls's account of public reason said with respect to religious reasons. I consider how such reasons might be excluded under his view. Ultimately, I argue that while Rawls's view does exclude religious reasons in one way, it does not exclude them in another. And it is important to emphasize this, since the shaping force of this interpretation in political philosophy, that Rawls excluded religious reasons full stop and on good grounds, has been profound. The idea characterizes what has come to be known as 'the standard view' of public reason in political liberalism.

But I also want to emphasize that getting clear on what Rawls said is not simply an interpretive exercise for the sake of historical accuracy. The task is important because it should remind us that the theorist largely responsible for the state of the current debate on the role of religious reasons was not as uncharitable or uninterested in religion as it may seem—again, he does exclude religious reasons, but only as depriving them of justificatory power, and only compared to the justificatory power of public reasons. Giving and hearing religious reasons in public can still, I argue, help us know one another better, which is important for political community and civic friendship, even under Rawls's view. This novel interpretation of Rawls thus paves the way for us to see why religious reasons are important in ways 'beyond justification'.

The public reason debate has, of course, evolved considerably since Rawls, who wrote his 'Idea of Public Reason Revisited' over 30 years ago.⁴ One recent development has been to consider the ways in which religious reasons are not simply *not* 'shareable',

⁴ Rawls, John. "The idea of public reason revisited." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 765-807.

but in a more basic sense, are *not accessible*. That is, religious reasons are also thought to be excluded because they are in some way incomprehensible or unintelligible to non-religious or different religious citizens. So, after discussing Rawls in my first article, I move on to consider this sub-debate on the ‘accessibility’ of religious reasons. This debate takes seriously how different sources of justification, such as natural theology, mystical perception, and testimony, can ground religious claims, making them accessible to anyone, at least in principle. However, as in the first article, I argue here that a focus on justification alone doesn’t get the value of religious reasons quite right. We must cast our sights elsewhere. Ultimately, I find casting our sights on emotion to be one fruitful way of describing how religious reasons can be accessible, at first as a matter of justification, but then in ways beyond it, and in ways that are no less meaningful or important.

Finally, I finish by, in my third article, considering a topic that has yet to be taken seriously in the deliberative democracy literature, and even less in debates on public reason: epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice concerns how epistemic agents can be doubted in their capacity as knowers, and thus treated with injustice with respect to what they know. This idea shows a further way in which religious citizens and their political claims are excluded from the public sphere. Theorists in this debate too, as in the accessibility debate, are concerned with the epistemology underlying our communicative exchanges. However, the epistemic injustice literature (that I focus on) has less to do with justification. Instead, accounts here focus on epistemic agents as knowers, especially concerning their own experience, and as conveyers of testimony. An epistemic injustice occurs when agents are diminished in their credibility because of negative prejudicial stereotypes operating against them and their testimony. Although it is only just bearing fruit, there is a growing literature on how the *religious* subject can be treated with prejudice that results in an epistemic injustice. In response to this growing literature, I develop the idea that religious subjects can be treated with epistemic injustice in distinct ways with respect to their social identity and their worldview, which includes a religiously informed political worldview. Here, I focus not just on the political sphere, but on secular environments more broadly. I ultimately argue that religious people can have their testimony excluded from such environments according to how their religious

identity intersects with other aspects of their identity, such as race and gender. At the same time, such testimonies might be valuable precisely because of the way in which a religious worldview can shape and be shaped by one's race or gender, and may provide a citizen with the tools to fight against oppression on the basis of their race or gender. It is also perhaps worth noting that I do not focus on religious *reasons* in this third article as strictly as I do in the first two, since I am focused on religious testimony more broadly (which can contain reasons). However, doing so allows me to explore testimony in ways that isn't possible in my second article on accessibility, wherein testimony is raised as one kind of epistemic grounding, but for the most part set aside.

Finally, although the first two articles are more tightly connected, as they fall more squarely within the public reason debate, I take the last article on epistemic injustice and religious identity to be an exciting topic of import for the deliberative democracy literature. My aim with it is twofold: I hope to get political liberals to see that the inclusion of religious testimonies can have feminist motivations and outcomes, and in turn hope to get feminist philosophers to see that the inclusion of religious reasons for political action is consistent with the central aim of many feminist projects concerning oppression and exclusion.

Overall, my aim in all three articles is to expand the scope of what public reason and deliberative democracy debates are and should be about. I aim to push the boundaries beyond a traditional concern with justification (although this occupies some of my attention in chapter two), and thereby open debate to other epistemically rich sources of meaning and ways of knowing, such as understanding one another, relying on emotion in our evaluative judgements, the function of rhetoric, and even the role of dress in our communicative exchanges.

1 Chapter 1: Rawls and Religious Reasons

Abstract

In this paper, I challenge the traditional reading of John Rawls's theory of public reason. Rawls is often criticized for excluding religious reasons from public deliberation because such reasons lack the appropriate kind of public justificatory power required to ground laws and policies in a liberal democracy. I maintain that although religious reasons are indeed not justificatory on their own under Rawls's view, the positive role he gives such reasons is often overlooked and undertheorized. I thus parse out what this positive role is exactly. I argue that religious reasons help religious citizens know themselves and be understood by others, and they even help non-religious citizens know themselves better, too. This is not insignificant. Such knowledge of both ourselves and our fellow citizens, brought about by the sharing of reasons that depend on our deeper comprehensive doctrines, is in fact how we become who we are as social beings under Rawls's view. Moreover, including such reasons is an important part of the story for how citizens can be in political community and can have civic friendship.

Key words:

John Rawls; Public Reason; Religious Reasons; Knowledge; Community; Civic Friendship

1.1 Introduction

Is the public expression of citizens' religious reasons for their political decisions and actions important? If it is, in which ways is it important? And for whom? Answers to these questions have not always been clear. One (albeit negative) answer comes from the tradition of political liberalism. In that tradition, it is thought that we ought to prioritize reasons to justify our political decisions and actions, like our vote, that any other citizen could reasonably be expected to understand and accept. That is, we ought to prioritize *public* reasons. Religious reasons would then seem to play a limited, perhaps even negative, role in our public deliberations, since they cannot be reasons that all could understand or accept.

John Rawls's theory of public reason is widely accepted as the catalyst of this line of thinking in its current form. Rawls asks citizens to refrain from relying on religious reasons to justify laws and policies over fundamental matters of justice. Since the articulation of his view, Rawls's influence has been profound. Many have continued to think that, while religious reasons might be the most genuine or important reasons to the religious citizen who holds them, their importance cannot be prioritized *publicly* in the way such citizens might want them to be.⁵

Complicatedly, however, Rawls's own thinking about the permissibility of religious reasons in public changed. Most notably, in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", where Rawls introduces the "wide view" of public reason, Rawls claims that citizens *can* use religious reasons to support a political conception of justice, so long as they are ready to give public reasons in due course.⁶ Yet, despite this seemingly significant change to his view, it remains unclear what positive role religious reasons then play in Rawls's account, or if there is room for them to play an even stronger role, given Rawls's intention to include them more.

⁵ The impact and prevalence of this thought is perhaps best revealed in its name as the "The Standard View". Others who hold the standard view are Robert Audi, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Larmore, Steven Macedo, and Martha Nussbaum. As Eric Gregory remarks, Rawls's political philosophy more generally "set the course for contemporary debates about the role of religion in public life" (181). Eric Gregory, "Before the original position: The neo-orthodox theology of the young John Rawls", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, no. 2 (2007): 179–206.

⁶ "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited." Essay. In *Political Liberalism*, 440–90. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1600311>.

In this paper, I aim to better articulate the positive role that Rawls gives to religious reasons. In the process, I hope to join those scholars who have more generally begun to challenge the idea that Rawls's political liberalism is characterized by a disregard for religion.⁷ Indeed, Rawls seems to have, according to recent scholarship, cared a great deal about religion, in his own life and in and through his moral and political philosophy.⁸ Still, what exactly this means with respect to the widened space he came to give religious reasons in public is not clear.

My argument will be that while Rawls does not give religious reasons a strong justificatory role, religious reasons are nevertheless essential for citizens to *know* themselves and one another qua citizens for the sake of political community, in Rawls. This is no small matter. Knowledge of others, by way of the expression of religious reasons, helps *religious and non-religious* citizens, in practice, *become who they are*.

What is the point of this argument? After all, many other theories have been offered since Rawls's that have, we might think, more adequately accounted for the inclusion of religious reasons in public deliberation. Jürgen Habermas offers one.⁹ And other non-Habermasian theories of public reason have also departed from Rawls's paradigm to include religious reasons more expansively by doing away with the condition of agreement or consensus over a 'shareable' set of reasons, which Rawls's account of

⁷ For an example of a similar attempt at more charitably interpreting Rawls's interest in religion, see Patrick Neal, "The Liberal State and the Religious citizen: Justificatory perspectives in political liberalism." In *Rawls and Religion*, pp. 133-151. Columbia University Press, 2014. For other interesting arguments that articulate the religious (or spiritual) roots underlying Rawls's work, See Gregory 2007, 200, Berkowitz 2009, Habermas 2010, Wright 2012, Bok 2017, Nelson 2019, and Lefebvre 2021. For instance, as Berkowitz writes, there is the "possibility [...] that the mature Rawls relied upon but suppressed the religious understanding of human nature that gives life to his liberalism" (88, 2009). For a recent attempt to show how Rawls's view can be made to be more congenial with liberation theology, see Zegarra 2023.

⁸ For those who have sought to show the many ways Rawls cared about the role of religion in public life generally, see *Rawls and Religion: the case for political liberalism* by Daniel Dombrowski, 2001, and the various articles compiled in *Rawls and Religion*, edited by Tom Bailey and Valentina Gentile, 2014.

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the public sphere", *European journal of philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1-25. To be sure, Habermas's translation proviso, that religious citizens translate their religious reasons into secular reasons, may seem equally as restrictive as Rawls's public reason requirements. However, the responsibility Habermas places on non-religious citizens to help in this translation processes makes his view more inclusive. What is more, Habermas also acknowledges that citizens should "be allowed to express and justify their convictions in a religious language if they cannot find secular 'translations' for them" (10).

public reason seems to require.¹⁰ Still others simply reject requirements of public reasoning altogether, arguing that citizens should be able to hold and give religious reasons with few or no restrictions.¹¹ So, why attempt to reinterpret Rawls's view to show that it does and could include religious reasons more substantially? What can we gain from this?

First, I think that such an approach reveals what Rawls's intentions might have been in remedying his original idea of public reason to be more inclusive of religious reasons. Second, I think there is hope in creatively locating new ways for the Rawlsian paradigm to maintain its relevance in the resurgence of religious outlooks being renegotiated, by some political liberals, as deeply relevant to matters of justice. Part of this resurgence has been to appreciate how much Rawls himself cared about religion in different ways throughout his life, particularly in light of the relatively recent publication of his BA thesis, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*.¹² Lastly, at a time of increasing polarization and lack of connection and understanding between religious and non-religious citizens, seeing how Rawls's inclusion of religious reasons can strengthen political community should be encouraging; one of our greatest political philosophers cared about such connection and understanding.

To make this argument, I will proceed as follows. First, in section 1.2, I explain Rawls's idea of public reason as it is most commonly understood, including (1.3) Rawls's revised idea of public reason, the "wide view". In section 1.4, I ask how we can read Rawls as more inclusive of religious reasons than he is typically thought to be. To back up my interpretation of Rawls, in section 1.5, I re-examine the wide view with a close reading that focuses on citizens' knowing one another, both in their use of religious reasons and public reason. In section 1.6, I explain how this shows that religious reasons do not threaten public reason. Instead, their expression is part of the story for how

¹⁰ Convergence theories of public reason, for instance, claim that citizens may justify their political views solely from within their religious doctrine. Reasons that rely only on a religious doctrine will still meet a test of public reason structurally if the rules or principles they give rise to ultimately converge with, or share in, the same resulting justification. For some prominent examples of convergence views, see Gaus and Vallier, 2009, Gaus 2012, Vallier 2014.

¹¹ For a sample of such views, see Greenawalt 1995, Wolterstorff 1997, Stout 2004 Chpt. 2-4, Smith 2010, Waldon 2010.

¹² John Rawls, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith: with "On my religion"*, (Harvard University Press, 2010).

citizens achieve a coordinate fit between their comprehensive doctrine and political conception of justice. Then, in section 1.7, I flesh out what this coordinate fit looks like more positively. To achieve this fit, which does not just *give rise* to religious reasons but *depends on* their development and expression, citizens need to know themselves and know one another in public, or at least have opportunities for this knowledge. Lastly, I will then argue that such knowledge, for religious and non-religious citizens, can strengthen (1.8) community and (1.9) civic friendship, helping citizens become who they are as social beings, something Rawls did not consider in enough detail.

1.2 Public Reason: The Basics

Let's begin with an overview of public reason as Rawls sees it. I will begin by outlining some core defining features: public reason as an *ideal*, i.e., which imposes a duty on citizens, and as an *idea*, i.e., which comprises the kinds of reasons and ways of reasoning characteristic of a democratic people.¹³ These features hold across Rawls's original and revised versions of public reason. I will afterwards overview those aspects that came to change in Rawls's account.

Public reason *as an ideal* is an "ideal conception of citizenship", which imposes a moral "duty of civility" on citizens.¹⁴ It requires citizens to give, or be at the ready to give, reasons for political action over fundamental political questions that their fellow citizens could reasonably accept.¹⁵ Such fundamental political questions concern constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice: which religions ought to be tolerated, who should hold the right to vote, who should hold property, and so on.¹⁶

¹³ There is some debate about whether the 'ideal' or the 'idea' best characterize Rawls's public reason. As Lister notes, "public reason can be construed as an animating ideal of political liberalism, or simply a social norm governing the application of principles of justice assumed to be already on hand" (162). Andrew Lister, "Public reason and reciprocity", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2017): 155-172.

¹⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 217

¹⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 217. Rawls also mentions that part of the duty of civility is "a willingness to listen to others and a fairmindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonable be made" (217).

¹⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 227; Constitutional essentials are summarized succinctly by Jonathan Quong, who refines Rawls's more lengthy description as "a. The principles that structure the government and political process (e.g., rules determining who may vote, and whether a system is parliamentary or presidential). And b. The basic rights and liberties of citizens"; matters of basic justice are those matters that concern "the principles that determine the distribution of important goods such as income, wealth, opportunities, and

Rawls thought such questions can be settled by way of public reason insofar as they can be deliberated about *together*, from a *common* point of view, and according to a *shared* set of values and standards, that *all* citizens could reasonably accept.¹⁷

But what makes public reason a *duty*? The *ideal* of public reason as a duty seeks to address the problem of political legitimacy that is at the heart of Rawls's political philosophy. For citizens to exercise coercive power over one another, via laws and policies, in a way that has normative authority, citizens must be able to understand and accept the justification that grounds the use of coercive power.¹⁸ That is, such power needs to be *justified* to all citizens in order to be *legitimate*.¹⁹ The *ideal* of public reason then, as a duty, is fulfilled when, in light of our shared coercive power over one another as free and equal citizens, "we sincerely believe that the reasons we would offer for our political actions, may reasonably be accepted by other citizens as a justification of those actions".²⁰ Although Rawls thought that public reason as an ideal is modelled most directly by the courts,²¹ he still believed that it is a moral duty for all citizens insofar as they share in coercive power over one another.

So much for public reason as an *ideal* that, when fulfilled, justifies the use of political power. That ideal, however, rests on the broader *idea* of public reason, which is Rawls's way of explaining how such a duty is *possible*. Rawls claims that public reason "is the reason of free and equal citizens" and is "characteristic of democratic people".²² As such, it expresses how citizens relate to one another as free and equal. By adhering to public reason then, Rawls thinks we also uphold the civic relationship we stand in with one another in a liberal democracy. That is, not only is public reason a civic duty, but it is the very expression of a reciprocal and distinctly public relationship between citizens. As

positions of power that are not already covered by the constitutional essentials". Jonathan Quong, "On the Idea of Public Reason", *A companion to Rawls* (2013): 266.

¹⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 213; It is this common point of view, and citizens' willingness to take it up provided that others do the same, that captures the spirit of the ideal public reason, of "how things might be", as Rawls puts it.

¹⁸ Rawls, *PL* 217

¹⁹ Quong, "On the idea of Public Reason", 266

²⁰ Rawls, *PL*, xlv

²¹ Rawls, *PL*, 231

²² Rawls, *PL*, 442; 213.

Rawls states, “the role of the criterion of reciprocity as expressed in public reason . . . is to specify the regime as one of civic friendship”.²³

Further, in fulfilling their civic duty, citizens are expected to rely on certain (a) *kinds* of reasons or justifications and (b) *ways* of reasoning. Regarding (a), the idea that public reason is itself marked out by *kinds* of reasons that citizens *could* agree on, Rawls has in mind here reasons that could support a political conception of justice. This conception makes up the content of public reason—Rawls’s favoured conception of justice being ‘justice as fairness’— which specifies our basic rights, liberties, and opportunities. What citizens’ *reasons* to determine what these principles are exactly will differ, and citizens will therefore also hold different conceptions of justice. However, they will nevertheless be constrained by what they imagine could be *publicly* acceptable reasons for a distinctly *political* conception of justice, in part because the content of such reasons *concerns* the *public* good, and not only a citizen’s individual good or their comprehensive doctrine.

Now, what of (b), the ways of reasoning? Rawls says that a liberal political conception of justice will itself include “guidelines of inquiry that specify ways of reasoning and criteria for the kinds of information relevant for political questions”, which Rawls notes are arrived at by “presently accepted general beliefs and forms of reasoning found in common sense, and the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial”, as found in the public political culture.²⁴ The main idea here is that public reason must be reasoning common to all and accessible by all in order for reasons to have normative authority.

Finally, the idea of public reason is also importantly defined by what it excludes. Both (a) and (b) stand in marked contrast to *non-public* reasons and ways of reasoning.²⁵

²³ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. xlix; As Andrew Lister states, “In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls used the term ‘reciprocity’ to refer to the principle of public reason, as well as to the psychology of responding in kind” (“Public Reason and Reciprocity, 158). Lister is discussing the views of Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 374–5. Thus, reciprocity would seem to be both critical to the ideal and idea of public reason.

²⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 223-224, 154

²⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 220. Put well by David Reidy “[w]hat distinguishes public from non-public reasons is the source of their force and authority. Non-public reasons derive their force and authority from sources which citizens may reasonably reject in a free and open society. Public reasons, by contrast, derive their force and authority from sources which citizens may not reasonably reject” (50). David Reidy, “Rawls’s wide view of public reason: Not wide enough,” *Res Publica* 6 (2000): 49-72.

Non-public reasons are those that depend on a comprehensive doctrine, such as a religious doctrine, which are developed in the associations (like churches) that make up the “background culture”, as opposed to the institutions that compose the “public political culture”.²⁶ Non-public reasons are unsuitable for public justification because they will have varying and even conflicting “standards of correctness and criteria of justification” (for instance, the criteria in physics will be different from those of theology, or the criteria between different theologies will be different).²⁷ So, reasonable citizens will understand that using (only) non-public reasons as justification in the public forum is unreasonable. This is because such “standards of correctness”, although beneficial to citizens’ different ways of life, and one of the great strengths of a pluralistic liberal democracy, will always be disputed, and so should not be used to justify coercion.²⁸ That is, citizens will recognize what Rawls calls the burdens of judgement, which are those “sources, or causes of disagreement between reasonable persons”.²⁹ Importantly, they recognize the *consequences of accepting* the burdens of judgment such that they recognize that must rely on something beyond their comprehensive doctrines to form a distinctly *public*, or political, conception of justice.³⁰ This ‘something’ is the composed of the kinds of reasons and ways of reasoning just described, which Rawls takes citizens to have a capacity for, and which make the *ideal* of public reason both desirable and possible.

²⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 220

²⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 220. Rawls also says that there is only one public reason, and many non-public reasons (442).

²⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 220

²⁹ Rawls, *PL*, 55. That is, reasonable citizens can acknowledge that various sources of our judgments (what Rawls calls the ‘Burden of Judgements’) will cause us to disagree. Such burdens might be, instance, conflicting evidence or different overall life experience, which will inevitably lead to the formation of different comprehensive doctrines. *Accepting this* means that one refrains from demanding that one’s fellow citizens accept the basis of one’s *own* comprehensive doctrine as true, since “this is a claim that all equally could make”, given that everyone is inclined to think their own doctrine is true (61). Acknowledging these things, and making one’s comprehensive doctrine be constrained by these burdens of judgment, makes a doctrine reasonable under Rawls. Reasonable comprehensive doctrines do not get forced on others, else they are unreasonable. To be sure, like the idea of ‘reasonable’ more generally in Rawls, the idea of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine is not altogether clear. Here is one apt description, however: Rawls states that “we recognize that our own doctrine has, and can have, for people generally, no special claims on them beyond their own view of its merits. Others who affirm doctrines different from our own are, we grant, reasonable also” (60).

³⁰ Rawls, *PL*, 55-61. Public reason only applies to the public political culture for Rawls, and most strictly, to the public political forum. Citizens are otherwise free to discuss their political views, even about constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, in the background culture, however they see fit.

1.3 Public Reason: The Wide View

From this overview of public reason, it would seem that Rawls clearly distinguishes non-public reasons, which are rooted in a comprehensive doctrine, from public reasons, whose normative force stems from generally accepted truths that can be found in the public political culture. It would thus seem clear which reasons are permissible in our public deliberations, and which aren't. However, Rawls complicates this division by introducing what he refers to as the "wide view of public political culture" in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited".³¹ Here, Rawls suggests that the public political culture can be more inclusive of reasons that rely on citizens' comprehensive doctrines. I will now outline three ways in which he makes his view "wider", with a focus on the upshot Rawls's wide view has for religious reasons specifically.³²

The first way in which Rawls changed his view of public reason was to claim that religious reasons—among others that emerge from a comprehensive doctrine—could be included in public deliberation not only as a response to grave injustice, but even when society is well-ordered.³³ In Rawls's original account, Rawls limited the use of religious reasons to societies that contained profound inequality and disagreement about

³¹ Rawls, *PL*, 462

³² Although I focus on religious reasons, my argument does not necessarily say that there is anything special about distinctly religious reasons as opposed to reasons that emerge from other comprehensive doctrines. At least, I leave open the question as to whether religious reasons are themselves special.

³³ Rawls, *PL*, 247-251. In his original framing of public reason, Rawls suggests an "inclusive view", as distinguished from an exclusive view, the latter of which excludes religious reasons altogether, and "the open view", which fully permits religious reasons with no constraints. Rawls opted for the inclusivist view in the original framing because he thought that it was "more flexible" in its capacity to account for changing social conditions. But Rawls's "inclusive view" nevertheless has conditions: the permissibility of religious reasons depends on how historically necessary they are. They are *most* permissible when society is *not* well-ordered, as when a society contains profound inequality and disagreement about constitutional essentials. In these conditions, religious reasons can help bring about a well-ordered society. Rawls's example is the abolitionists and their claim that "slavery was contrary to God's law", and, similarly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s arguments against segregation in the Civil Rights Movement (249). Rawls acknowledges that the abolitionists would have agreed that their religious reasons ultimately "supported political values of freedom and equality for all, but that given the comprehensive doctrines they held and the doctrines current in their day, it was necessary to invoke the comprehensive grounds on which those values were widely seen to rest. Given those historical conditions, it was not unreasonable of them to act as they did for the sake of the ideal of public reason itself" (251). Religious reasons are, alternatively, *least* permissible when society *is* well-ordered, i.e., when it is "not stirred by any deep disputes" (248).

constitutional essentials, such as segregation.³⁴ Unlike his former view then, Rawls's 'wide view' allows religious reasons *whenever* they can be said to support a political conception of justice.³⁵

More specifically, Rawls claims that this "wide view" has two aspects: the first aspect is Rawls's "proviso", and the second is his "positive reasons" clause.³⁶ Let me briefly flesh these out.

Beginning with the proviso, Rawls grants that "reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that, in due course, proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support".³⁷ In this way, the proviso ensures that public reasons are still freestanding. That is, they are sufficient in themselves, and do not *depend on* citizens' comprehensive doctrines. They instead act as a "module" that can fit into any reasonable comprehensive doctrine.³⁸

But what exactly does the proviso demand of citizens? When should public reasons be given? Rawls is vague about this, because he claims that the "proviso must be worked out in practice", rather than specified by concrete rules in advance.³⁹ Rawls also claims that *how* the proviso will work will "be determined by the nature of the public political culture". This "calls for good sense and understanding", but of what exactly, it is unclear.⁴⁰

In the second aspect of the wide view, Rawls says something a bit more curious. He states that "there may be positive reasons for introducing comprehensive doctrines into

³⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 248

³⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 462. Blain Neufeld also observes that "compared to the inclusive view, the wide view does not require that citizens try to assess the likely long-term effects of the introduction of their (reasonable) comprehensive doctrines into public political discussion, as long as the proviso is satisfied". "Public Reason." *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon* (2015): 669.

³⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 462

³⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 462

³⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 145

³⁹ Rawls, *PL*, 462

⁴⁰ Rawls, *PL*, 462-463. Rawls gives few guidelines for what such religious reasons should be or how citizens should present them. Other than the requirement that they emerge from *reasonable* comprehensive doctrines, such reasons can be expressed however the speaker wants to express them (there are no obvious restrictions) and they needn't even be logically sound or supported by evidence.

public political discussion”.⁴¹ Namely, by giving reasons rooted in reasonable religious doctrines, citizens strengthen the reasonable political conceptions of justice that those doctrines are said to support.⁴² That is, religious reasons can be given *in order to support* “the democratic ideal of public reason”, and to show one’s fellow citizens that one’s religious views are capable of supporting this ideal “for the right reasons”, that is, for a genuine commitment to fair terms of social cooperation.⁴³ Rawls references Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s reliance on the idea that segregation went against God’s law. King reasons that we are made in the image of God, and have God-given human dignity, to support the idea of racial equality.⁴⁴

In summary, what is clear is that whatever else Rawls thinks the more positive role they play, religious reasons must be given *in support of* a political conception of justice.

1.4 The Problem

Before I get to my view on the positive role of religious reasons in Rawls, it is worth briefly noting why his revised view might be unsatisfying still, particularly for the faith-friendly critic. Rawls’s revised view is still typically considered “one of general exclusion tempered by exceptions”, or a “partial inclusivist” one.⁴⁵ As such, as Paul Weithman writes, “Rawls’s guidelines of public reason are sometimes said to show that he is deeply suspicious of comprehensive doctrines, especially religious ones, or that he thinks religious political argument is inherently destabilizing”.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Rawls, *PL*, 462

⁴² Rawls, *PL*, 463. Rawls admits that it is also partly that citizens will “normally have practical reasons” for making religious reasons “acceptable to a broader audience”.

⁴³ Rawls, *PL*, 463. As Meena Krishnamurthy describes it, “Rawls is concerned not with simply general compliance, but with compliance for the right reasons. That is to say, he is concerned with citizens’ wholehearted and willing adherence, adherence that represents complete sincerity and commitment, to the principles of justice rather than reluctant adherence that results as a part of a *modus vivendi* or from some type of coercion” (262). See Meena Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls’s arguments for equal political liberty and its fair value: on our higher-order interests”, *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 2 (2012): 258-278.

⁴⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 464, n.54.

⁴⁵ That is, Rawls is thought to lean *more* towards the exclusion of religious reasons in his earliest articulation of public reason, but eventually leaned *more* toward inclusivism (hence the partial inclusion of religious reasons) in his revised view. Phillip Quinn, “Political Liberalism and their Exclusions of the Religious.” In *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 35-56. American Philosophical Association, 1995.

⁴⁶ Paul J. Weithman, *Rawls, Political Liberalism and Reasonable Faith*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016):162.

Why is this exactly? I will not survey the many responses to Rawls.⁴⁷ Here are just a few salient ones: critics have argued that religious reasons are still not afforded justificatory weight in the same way public reason is, on Rawls's view, and this is a problem.⁴⁸ It wrongly keeps such reasons in the background culture, or still essentially 'privatized', which may go against the freedom of those citizens who think it a matter of faith and integrity to publicly express their religious commitments.⁴⁹ Others have argued that public reason, on its own, is incomplete without reference to metaphysical, religious, or ethical explanations, and so is not as autonomous or freestanding as Rawls thinks it is.⁵⁰ Finally, especially important to my aim later on when discussing community, it is also thought that Rawls "ignores the real possibility of using religion, religious symbols, religious narratives and religious arguments to achieve social unity or build political coalitions".⁵¹

On the other end of the spectrum of those interpreting and responding to Rawls, some theorists maintain that Rawls appropriately excludes religious reasons, or they argue that his view is not exclusive enough.⁵² For instance, Robert Audi argues that citizens ought to be motivated by distinctly secular reasons, something that Rawls does not explicitly suggest.⁵³ I won't focus in detail on these views either.

Instead, I want to ask: Can the wide view be read more closely (in some places) and expanded on (in others) to accommodate religious reasons more purposefully, as Rawls seemed to hope it could in revising his view? And if it can, how exactly can we view religious reasons as, if not possessing independent grounds of justification, still having

⁴⁷ Some examples are Reidy 2000; Eberle 2002; Weithman 2002; Stout 2004, 67–85; Moran 2006; Pallikkathayil 2019

⁴⁸ As Jeffrey Stout puts it, on Rawls's view, even with his proviso, "You have not fulfilled your justificatory obligations until you have handed over real cash", where the "real cash" are public reasons, as opposed to religious reasons (Stout 2005, 69).

⁴⁹ See Wolterstorff 1997

⁵⁰ See Reidy 2000

⁵¹ Weithman, *Reasonable Faith*, 31

⁵² See Audi 1997. Charles Larmore also writes, "[i]n the forum where citizens officially decide the basic principles of their political association and where the canons of public reason therefore apply, appeals to comprehensive doctrine cannot but be out of place ... at least in a well-ordered society" (386-387). Charles Larmore, "Public Reason" In *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, 368–93, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521651670.011>. Additionally, Quong argues that we ought to expand the scope of public reason beyond Rawls' scope, which is limited to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice ("On the idea of Public Reason", 192–220).

⁵³ Audi, 1997; and Quong 2011. Quong argues that we ought to expand the scope of public reason beyond Rawls' scope, which is limited to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice (192–220).

sufficient value and importance under Rawls's revised view, and to political liberalism more generally? What is this value exactly?

My attempt going forward will be to specify how religious reasons can be important in ways beyond justification in Rawls.⁵⁴ Rawls is seen as unduly exclusionary of religious reasons *only when we focus on religious reasons as lacking justificatory power in public*.⁵⁵ This is of course no small matter, since public reason is often thought to be centrally concerned with justification. However, public reason is also about upholding a distinctly reciprocal kind of a *relationship* between citizens, and it also has as its basis the condition that citizens will achieve—are expected to achieve—a coordinate fit between their comprehensive doctrines and a political conception of justice. These are not unrelated ideas; to achieve this coordinate fit, we need to know quite a bit about those with whom we stand in relation as citizens, and we simultaneously must make ourselves known—what issues we care about politically and what reasons we use to support those issues—for others to do the same. We come to know about *our* political views *and* that of others, however, when we form and express them publicly, *with others*. This is important, since, as I will argue later, the very formation and expression of religious reasons is part of how religious citizens in fact *become who they are as citizens*, in Rawls. More radically, knowledge of religious reasons is even part of how non-religious citizens become who they are, too.

⁵⁴ Weithman, *Reasonable Faith*, 158. To be sure, some have indeed taken up this interpretative task, since in agreeing or disagreeing with Rawls's idea of public reason depends in part on getting what Rawls said right. Paul Weithman's extensive work on Rawls has, for instance, sought to articulate why Rawls included religious reasons in order to make their role more clear. Weithman argues that "Rawls endorses qualified inclusivist norms of public reason to solve the assurance problem, avert the threat of a generalized prisoner's dilemma and show how justice as fairness can be stable for the right reasons". I not disputing Weithman's analysis, which also includes an exceptional defense of a contextual view of public reason he takes Rawls to be giving. I am instead specifying in detail, in a way that has not been done yet, how knowing other citizens is integral to the assurance problem.

⁵⁵ In this sense, I follow Paul Weithman's observation that while "[a]ssertions of religion in politics are assertions of political views that are thought to be true [...] they are also assertions of a valued *self-conception* in the face of great insecurity about one's own religious identity and commitment" (*Reasonable Faith*, 167). Developing and sharing our reasons (religious or otherwise, although I focus on the religious), I argue, is a way of *knowing* and giving expression to that religious identity and commitment. That is, it gives expression to who we are and (what may amount to the same thing in public debate) what we care about. And to know and give expression to who we are is something *anyone* in a liberal democracy would want the opportunity to do, religious or not, which is how non-religious citizens can also come to see the value of religious reasons.

1.5 A Closer Reading

Before we get to this conclusion, let me first explain a bit further an important component to Rawls's idea of public reason that we left off with, which will structure my analysis going forward. This is the idea that public reason depends on citizens being able to achieve a coordinate fit between their comprehensive doctrine and political conception of justice. Rawls writes that, in attempting this "coordinate fit among political and other values", the political conception of justice acts as a module that can "fit into and be supported by various reasonable comprehensive doctrines that endure".⁵⁶ Rawls states that they will view such a conception "as *either true or reasonable*, depending on what that doctrine allows".⁵⁷ Otherwise, Rawls leaves open how citizens are expected to achieve this fit, stating that "citizens individually decide for themselves in what way the public political conception all affirm is related to their own comprehensive views".⁵⁸ The result is, nevertheless, an "overlapping consensus". Citizens will overlap in their affirming a family of liberal political principles, and family of reasonable political conceptions of justice, as opposed to their diverse and incommensurate conceptions of the good.⁵⁹

Why is this coordinate fit needed? And what does it have to do with public reason? The idea of a coordinate fit is Rawls's answer to how a well-ordered democratic society can be stable and unified over time. What is more, it is important that, for the sake of *assurance* that others are freely committed to fair terms of cooperation for the right reasons, citizens' commitment is publicly *known*. That is, an overlapping consensus is itself common knowledge. Thus, its relation to public reason is in part an idea of

⁵⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 17, 12

⁵⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 386, italics added

⁵⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 38

⁵⁹ To be sure, a conception of the good is not the same thing as a comprehensive doctrine, but they are intimately related. A comprehensive doctrine is the larger category. Comprehensive doctrines are composed of a set of beliefs that *range over* many values, and these values coherently connect one's religious views and one's political views (as well as moral and metaphysical views). As Pete Murray explains it, in *Theory* Rawls is concerned with a pluralism of conceptions of the good, but in *Political Liberalism*, "Rawls deepens the idea of a pluralism of conceptions of the good with that of a reasonable pluralism of comprehensive doctrines as a natural outcome of the free exercise of reason over time" (Pete Murray, *Conception of the Good*, Cambridge Lexicon, 131). Sometimes I refer only to conceptions of the good in an effort to point more directly to those values and ideas that are part of one's religious doctrine.

publicity.⁶⁰ Public reason makes *known* our commitment to principles of justice, even while we may disagree about their precise interpretation.

Let's now turn back to the wide view of public reason to see how citizens can come to know not only others' commitment to fair terms of cooperation via public reason but, as the wide view would seem to allow, also know one another's religious reasons in the formation of an overlapping consensus. From here on out, I will structure my analysis by way of focusing first on citizens' comprehensive doctrines (and the conception of the good contained within it) and then their political conception of justice (and our capacity for a sense of justice that makes this conception possible).⁶¹ I do so to uphold the idea that the positive role of religious reasons is not detached from their being given *in support of* a political conception of justice.

1.5.1 The Wide View Again: Comprehensive Doctrine

Recall Rawls's description of the second aspect of the wide view concerning the "benefits" of introducing comprehensive doctrines. Rawls states that the "benefits of the *mutual knowledge* of citizens' recognizing one another's reasonable comprehensive doctrines brings out a positive ground for introducing such doctrines".⁶² What is that positive ground? Again, Rawls says that there is something about citizens "mutual *knowledge* of one another's religious and nonreligious doctrines expressed in the wide view of public political culture" that reassures citizens that "the roots of democratic citizens' allegiance to their political conceptions" is strong and is for the "right reasons".⁶³ This assurance comes when citizens are not just aware that others are freely committed to a political conception, but that the reasons for such conceptions "lie in their

⁶⁰ For an overview of how Rawls's account of public reason emerged from his idea of publicity in Theory of Justice, see Larmore, "Public Reason".

⁶¹ A capacity for a conception of the good and a capacity for a sense of justice are related in their both being what Rawls calls our 'two moral powers', corresponding to the respective ideas of the rational (as in, our rational life plan) and our being reasonable (generally, willing to compromise with others), which together make up the moral conception of the person. The connection between the two moral powers and *public reason* is made explicit by Rawls in several places. But here is just one instance that gets to the heart of the matter: Rawls states that "as reasonable and rational, and knowing they affirm a diversity of reasonable religious and philosophical doctrines, [citizens] should be ready to explain the basis of their actions to one another in terms each could reasonably expect that others might endorse" (*PL* 218). Citizens, it is assumed, must *have* conceptions of the good, and life plans informed by these conceptions, in order for us to have a need to abide by fair terms of cooperation in the first place.

⁶² Rawls, *PL*, 464; italics added.

⁶³ Rawls, *PL*, 463 italics added

respective comprehensive doctrines”.⁶⁴ Mutual knowledge, it would seem, is a positive benefit that results from sharing religious reasons.

Rawls goes on to then specify two more forms of discourse that are also important for the expression of religious reasons in the wide view, but which do not themselves constitute public reasons. Rawls mentions declaration, where we simply “declare our own comprehensive doctrine”.⁶⁵ An example is declaring the good Samaritan parable in the Gospel, which Rawls claims can be articulated with reference to public reasons.⁶⁶ The other form of discourse is conjecture, where we try and argue, on behalf of the accepted beliefs of *others’* doctrines, that “despite what they may think, they can still endorse a reasonable political conception”.⁶⁷

Later on, in briefly discussing the Catholic Church’s stance on the issue of abortion, Rawls also emphasizes that while public reason does not always lead to full agreement from citizens, “citizens *learn* and profit from debate and argument, and when their arguments follow public reason, they *instruct* society’s political culture and *deepen their understanding* of one another even when agreement cannot be reached”.⁶⁸

Further, we see that these remarks are consistent with Rawls’s original account of public reason. There, Rawls claims that political leaders of opposing parties can express commitment to political values by presenting their comprehensive doctrines. In fact, he says that this can be “*the best way* to strengthen that ideal” of public reason.⁶⁹ Citizens, in turn can be assured that their representatives are not simply agreeing to a modus vivendi, and “[t]his *knowledge* surely strengthens mutual trust and public confidence”, making up a “vital sociological basis” for public reason.⁷⁰

Again outside of Rawls’s direct remarks in the wide view, Rawls states in *Justice as Fairness* that in addition to fostering stability, introducing reasonable comprehensive doctrines into the public sphere “gives citizens a deeper *understanding* of their several points of view”.⁷¹ Giving reasons from our reasonable comprehensive doctrine, “has the

⁶⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 463

⁶⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 465

⁶⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 465

⁶⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 465

⁶⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 481; italics added

⁶⁹ Rawls, *PL*, 249; italics added

⁷⁰ Rawls, *PL*, 249; italics added

⁷¹ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 90; italics added

advantage of *informing [citizens] where they come from*, so to speak, and on what basis they support the public political conception of justice”.⁷²

Finally, in *Theory*, Rawls states that our mutual respect for one another is shown in “our willingness to see the situation of others from their point of view, from the perspective of their conception of the good” and that “to respect another as a moral person is to try to *understand* his aims and interests from his standpoint and to present him with considerations that enable him to accept the constraints on his conduct”.⁷³

In sum, Rawls suggests that even knowledge of our and others’ comprehensive doctrines, and the conception of the good within them can foster trust and assurance to citizens’ commitment to a political conception of justice. More specifically, religious reasons that come from our comprehensive doctrine are a valuable resource for us to publicly know and better understand the different points of view of our fellow citizens.

1.5.2 The Wide View Again: Political Conception of Justice

As already intimated, Rawls also acknowledges that the demand of public reason itself relies on and produces knowledge too. Why is this?

First, to be able to offer distinctly public reasons, citizens are expected to have a “general knowledge” of “plain truths” necessary for deciding principles of justice that are “accessible to citizens’ common reason”.⁷⁴ In part this might mean knowledge of our government, but also of our public political culture more broadly. Rawls says, in his original account, that we “have an intimate and inexpressible knowledge of [our society and culture], even though much of it we may question, if not reject”.⁷⁵ But, he says, “deliberative democracy also recognizes that without widespread *education* in the basic aspects of a constitutional democratic government for all citizens and without a public *informed* about pressing problems, crucial political and social decisions simply cannot be made”.⁷⁶ The court aids greatly in this, since “the court’s role here is part of the publicity

⁷² Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 90; italics added

⁷³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), pp. 337– 38.; italics added

⁷⁴ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 90; italics added

⁷⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 222

⁷⁶ Rawls, *PL*, 449; italics added

of reason and is an aspect of the wide, or *educative*, role of public reason”.⁷⁷ The reasoning of the court is the model of public reason, and the kind of reasoning ordinary citizens should emulate in forming a political conception of justice through the ideal of public reason.⁷⁸

Lastly, Rawls suggests that citizens are expected to develop their opinion through deliberation, and this too reveals that knowledge of others is important for the formation of a political conception of justice. Rawls states that “political opinions [...] are not simply a fixed outcome of [citizens’] existing private or non-political interests”, but citizens “suppose that their political opinions may be revised by discussion with other citizens”.⁷⁹ Again, knowledge of others through deliberation is integral for forming a political conception of justice, indeed it seems important for the very development of our sense of justice, particularly insofar as we can take in new information in order to form new opinions through conversation with others and the knowledge they provide us.

1.6 Knowledge, and Dispelling Worries

Rawls’s emphasis on how religious reasons—and public reasons— gives us knowledge of one another is, in general, underappreciated. But we can be more precise about what Rawls is saying here. Rawls’s remarks suggest at least three roles that religious reasons have as they relate to knowledge (*what* knowledge exactly I will specify below), some of which have been overlooked by both supporters and critics of Rawls. I will discuss these roles now, not as part of my positive account, but to dispel the idea that religious reasons in Rawls’s view might threaten public reason (which some have even considered ground a community-based view of public reason that in part depends on

⁷⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 236; italics added

⁷⁸ Rawls, *PL*, li; Yet, Rawls also thought that ordinary citizens were relatively less bound by the demands of public reason than judges and public officials. Why did he think this? Certainly, judges have a professional obligation to be impartial, but this relative leniency for ordinary citizens in part may not be unrelated to knowledge. The court may educate citizens in how to reason toward fair terms of agreement, but only ordinary citizens can educate the court, make know specific issues and new ways of thinking about them public. As Rawls states in the introduction to *Political Liberalism*, our political conceptions of justice will change according to our changing culture: “social changes over generations also give rise to new groups with different political problems”, as such, it is a good thing that the content of public reason is not fixed.

⁷⁹ Rawls, *PL*, 448

seeing such reasons as a threat to community).⁸⁰ I, although it is perhaps already clear, reject this interpretation. I follow more closely Paul Weithman's view, in that I aim to emphasize that the "claim that Rawls endorses guidelines of public reason because of hostility toward or fear of religion is a serious misreading".⁸¹ I'll list my points to remedy this misreading in order of most to least obvious.

The first and most basic role that religious reasons play is that they afford citizens an explanatory richness of one another's views that they would not have otherwise. *They inform*. Although they cannot offer a full understanding, they reveal to others the deeper source of our political stance and therefore give some understanding of where we are coming from.⁸²

I take this explanatory power to be rather obvious. But why this explanatory power *is important*, why it is important that we *inform others and are informed of* the deeper source of our commitment to fair terms of cooperation, gives rise to another consideration. As Paul Weithman sees it, it is crucial for stability and assurance; citizens must *know* that others will abide by fair terms of cooperation, and not defect, nor do so over time. This knowledge is not revealed through public reason alone, however. It is formed when citizens come to see how their own comprehensive doctrine could support a political conception of justice and be assured that others will likewise have secure grounding for their own conception of justice.⁸³ As such, it matters that religious reasons are informative because they are part of *how* citizens know that others will comply with

⁸⁰ One view that posits this is given in R. J. Leland, Leland, R. J. "Civic friendship, public reason." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2019): 72-103. Leland states that "offers an alternative community-based justification of public reason, on which the principle is justified as a means of realizing a valuable relation of friendship among citizens of liberal democracies. Civic friendship is threatened by the moral, religious, and philosophical pluralism that arises among reasonable citizens in a free society. Compliance with public reason helps establish and maintain civic friendship despite this threat, which gives citizens strong reason to comply with the principle" (73).

⁸¹ Weithman, *Reasonable Faith*, 162.

⁸² The explanation of our view also clearly garners trust, according to Rawls. Trust is, after all, only possible when we feel as though we really have a sense that we know the genuine, and deeper, ideas of those with whom we associate, and not *just* that they will abide by a duty of civility. But although this point on trust is important, it deserves a fuller treatment that I cannot give here.

⁸³ That is, they must be assured that others will not act solely on the basis of their individual good. Rawls is thus providing a solution to the destabilizing effect of the prisoner's dilemma. To give a solution to this dilemma, Rawls thought that citizens must follow fair terms of cooperation *freely*.

fair terms of cooperation, and such “compliance must itself be a matter of public knowledge”.⁸⁴

Second, I think Rawls’s remarks about knowledge in the wide view go beyond compliance solely as a matter of civic duty, which, if everyone fulfills, ensures stability and assurance. Recall that public reason is also the expression of a reciprocal *relationship* between citizens. This should prompt us to wonder: if the idea of public reason is revised by Rawls to incorporate complementary non-public reasons, e.g., religious reasons, in the wide view, shouldn’t *those reasons too* express some kind of reciprocity between citizens? Citizens are certainly not *required* to give religious reasons, of course, and these reasons will always reflect disagreement. However, once they are in the public political culture, and if citizens are *assumed or even expected* to give non-public reasons, and have mutual knowledge of them as the deeper to source one another’s commitment to fair terms of cooperation, is there not some kind of mutual or reciprocal exchange occurring with respect to these non-public reasons? Recall that Rawls says twice that citizens will have “*mutual knowledge*”⁸⁵ of one another’s comprehensive doctrines. We should at least wonder, then, why reciprocity must be limited in Rawls’s view so as to characterize only public reasons, as some have emphasized⁸⁶, given his intent to widen the scope of what is important in public deliberation. It would seem that, perhaps not as an ideal but at least as a social norm (as part of how Weithman sees Rawls’s idea of public reason)⁸⁷, knowledge of non-public reasons *can* be given *in kind* if citizens will be expected to share the deeper and comprehensive reasons for their commitment to a political conception of justice.

To be sure, this might seem to be a radical re-interpretation of the kind of reciprocity Rawls is discussing, but it is not, so long as reciprocity is in part “the psychological tendency to respond in kind”, rather than only a criterion of justification.⁸⁸ Still, we can simply make the weaker claim that communicating religious reasons, at the very least, *does not conflict* with the kind of reciprocity public reason relies on. Religious reasons do not threaten or detract from the reciprocity of public reason as responding in

⁸⁴ Weithman, *Reasonable Faith*, 157

⁸⁵ Rawls, *PL*, 463, 464; italics added

⁸⁶ Lister, “Public Reason and Reciprocity”.

⁸⁷ Paul Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism?: On John Rawls’s Political Turn*. (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 21–3, 28. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195393033.001.0001>. Lister, “Public Reason and Reciprocity”, 158.

⁸⁸ Lister, “Public Reason and Reciprocity”, fn. 158.

kind. (I also think something similar could be said about respect, since I take it that offering religious reasons does not disrespect our fellow citizens according to the wide view, but I will set that idea aside).⁸⁹

Third, and lastly, if we describe the role of religious reasons as *merely* explanatory of our views, we don't quite capture the kind of joint and distinctly *public* activity that could *produce* such reasons. That is, it leaves us open to the interpretation that Rawls has in mind only that such reasons *emerge solely from* the reflection done *outside* of the public sphere, in our relevant associations, like the church or university, which we then bring to the public sphere in order to explain our views to others. This would seem apparent in Rawls's emphasis that citizens have the freedom to develop non-public reasons for political action in non-public associations, and need not fulfill the requirements of public reason in these spaces. But what the wide view suggests, I think, is that the very development *and* expression of religious reasons can also occur in tandem, and *in public*, too. Notably, such an activity does not merely inform or communicate to others our views, but helps *us* figure them out, in a way perhaps only possible with the presence of those quite unlike ourselves, who don't have the same language and the norms assumed within our respective associations. This is made clear by Rawls's remark that our "political opinions [...] are not simply a fixed outcome of [citizens'] existing private or non-political interests".⁹⁰ Again, this assumes that we will not simply carry forward views we have already developed in the background culture and inject those into the public political culture. Instead, we will form and revise our views in the public political culture and develop the "mutual knowledge" necessary to understand them and their relation to other people's views in that culture. Even stronger: I want to suggest, later on, that others help us *become* who we are as citizens in the sense that they complete us, under Rawls view. I will expand on this in the final section of this paper.

Before specifying my positive account of the role of religious reasons in Rawls, I want to put aside a worry the reader might still have at this stage. It's not yet clear what kind of 'knowledge' occurs in the process of developing and expressing religious

⁸⁹ This is made clear by Rawls, I think, when he says that "to respect another as a moral person is to try to *understand* his aims and interests from *his* standpoint" (*TJ*, Revised Edition, 297).

⁹⁰ Rawls, *PL*, 448

reasons. And yet, specifying the kind of knowledge at stake may seem to conflict with Rawls's idea of the burdens of judgement.

To address this worry, it is important to make clear that Rawls was not concerned with *religious knowledge*, at least not in *PL*, and neither am I. By religious knowledge, I mean the kind of knowledge garnered from revelation, theological writings, or mystical or spiritual experience—the kind often thought to be required to be a believer. The reason why religious knowledge itself cannot be a part of why religious reasons have public and political value in Rawls's wide view is that the idea of (indeed, the very existence of) religious knowledge is heavily disputed. More specifically, allowing the value of religious reasons to hang on the existence of religious knowledge (as either a condition for such reasons, or the result of such reasons) conflicts with the burdens of judgement. The burdens of judgement are the many and varied sources of our disagreements and are that which constrain our political agreement. One result of these sources is that citizens will inevitably have different understandings of what constitutes specific forms of knowledge—unless these are 'uncontroversial' claims of science— particularly those bodies of knowledge, like religious knowledge, that relate to what they may claim to be 'the whole truth', as Rawls puts it.⁹¹ So, religious knowledge would seem off the table for explaining what value religious reasons can with respect to public reason. They must have some agreed upon, non-controversial, bases for their political value.

But I still think knowledge is important to explaining this value. The kind of knowledge I have in mind, and what I think Rawls has in mind, need not be controversial. It is knowledge *of how citizens achieve (or could achieve) a coordinate fit between their comprehensive doctrine and political conception of justice*. This includes knowledge of various conceptions of the good—situated within a comprehensive doctrine— and knowledge of various ways to understand justice, including knowledge of the actual injustices in one's society, as part of developing a sense of justice—which can give rise to a political conception of justice.⁹² In essence, this is knowledge of what citizens care

⁹¹ Rawls, *PL*, 447.

⁹² Faik Kurtulmus, 2020. Kurtulmus argues that it is compatible with Rawls's view (if Rawls had been more explicit about a fair distribution of *opportunities* for knowledge) that "[i]n order to form a conception of the good life and to revise it rationally, people need knowledge of various conceptions of the good life, the knowledge that is relevant to evaluating them, and various intellectual skills" (822). No amount of wealth or other goods can make up for a lack of knowledge about what one needs to do to

politically about, and why, i.e., on what religious basis. And it is this kind of knowledge, as Faik Kurtulmus points out, that *any* citizen needs to pursue whatever their rational life plan may be, and knowledge they need to coordinate these life plans with others.⁹³ This knowledge is both necessary *to understand and respond to* religious reasons, but also, given what I just stated in the previous section, *it also emerges from* working out religious reasons with others. Let's flesh this out now.

1.7 A Positive Role for Religious Reasons

Rawls thinks he should refrain from prescribing how citizens should achieve a coordinate fit between their political and other values. He states that “it is left to each citizen, individually or in association with others, to say how the claims of political justice are to be ordered, or weighed, against non-political values”.⁹⁴ (This is mirrored in his lack of guidelines in the wide view, where he states that citizens must work out the proviso in practice and give whichever religious reasons they find suitable).

It is here where I think Rawls goes wrong. At least, I think he wrongly underestimates the space that he himself gives citizens to work out a coordinate fit in his wide view. It is one thing to be left to have a choice over how to achieve this coordinate fit in part by having a choice over which associations one wants to belong to—it is quite another to be left without sufficient opportunities to effectively do so *in public*. But again, I think this is exactly what space the wide view is meant to provide: opportunities for us to know our views and others' in a distinctly public way, as citizens, by way of expressing our religious reasons. That is, the public political culture itself provides opportunities for knowledge of one another to be accumulated and disseminated, developed, and grown, and accessed via citizens *as* citizens (rather than, for instance,

execute one's life goals, or even determine what those goals might be. Denial of, or inequality in, the distribution of these intellectual resources would constitute both a distributive and epistemic injustice, since citizens would not reliably or equally have access to the information necessary to plan and pursue their lives. The same goes for those resources required to develop a sense of justice. So, concerning the reasonable, i.e., to develop a sense of justice, “citizens should know about the experiences, needs, and conditions of other citizens”, such as what the current distribution of income and wealth in one's society is (822). “The Epistemic Basic Structure.” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 37, no. 5 (2020): 818–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12451>.

⁹³ Kurtulmus, 2020.

⁹⁴ Rawls, “Reply to Habermas” in *PL*, 386

only *as* churchgoers or students). In my analysis going forward, as before, I will start by discussing comprehensive doctrines, and the conception of the good contained within in, then a political conception of justice, and the sense of justice required for this conception.⁹⁵ I will do so by stating the more positive role religious reasons play for (a) religious citizens in the development of their comprehensive doctrine, and then their political conception of justice, and then turn to the positive role such reasons have for (b) non-religious citizens with respect to the same categories. I will then consider, in the final section, the value of religious reasons for (c) religious and non-religious citizens, together, for the sake of strengthening community and civic friendship.

1.7.1 Knowledge and Religious Citizens

1.7.1.1. Conception of the Good

The positive value religious reasons have for religious citizens lies in allowing them the opportunity to experiment with their own conception of the good, and what this conception means in a community of others. Now, we might think that part of what limits Rawls in articulating this idea, as Meena Krishnamurthy points out, is that Rawls *over-intellectualizes* what it means to rationally pursue one's life plan. Let's look at that view now, again keeping in mind that a conception of the good falls within a comprehensive doctrine.

Krishnamurthy argues that Rawls over-intellectualizes conceptions of the good when he emphasizes that they need to be protected by liberty of conscience.⁹⁶ In doing so, he neglects to explain how developing a conception of the good includes the ability to

⁹⁵ So, while Michael Sandel, for instance, argues that “for Rawls we need justice because we cannot know each other well enough” because of some “epistemic deficit” we have in our “cognitive access to others” (Sandel 1982: 172), I am arguing that, on the contrary, for Rawls, justice and the process of public reason in fact seems to depend on some amount of cognitive access to others, and religious reasons play an important role in this cognitive access.

⁹⁶ Meena Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls’s Arguments for Equal Political Liberty and Its Fair Value”, *Social Theory and Practice* 38, no. 2 (2012): 268-269. <https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract201238215>.

“rationally pursue” it.⁹⁷ But to actually do this, to rationally *pursue* one’s conception of the good (and not just develop one in thought only), requires some experimentation.

As Krishnamurthy puts it, “[e]xperience is essential to forming [and pursuing] a rational conception of the good because it gives me access to information that is new and different from what I acquire when I simply think about what is best for me”.⁹⁸ Krishnamurthy states that this information is qualitative, or is information based on “what-it-is-like” to experience something.⁹⁹ For instance, “to appropriately determine whether literature and music are parts of my conception of the good, [...]it is essential to pick up books and to read them, to try my hand at a variety of instruments, to hear a variety of music, contemporary and classical.”¹⁰⁰ The same can be said for religion, because “[w]ithout putting religious customs and traditions into practice—without actually going to church services, or praying, for example—I cannot appropriately determine which (if any) religious conceptions are most rational for me.”¹⁰¹ Krishnamurthy’s remarks thus tell us that being able to practice one’s religion is critical for *knowing* whether it is a good fit for oneself. Knowing one’s religion cannot *precede* practicing it, since to know what-it-is-like one *needs to* practice it.

But what does what-it-is-like experience with respect to one’s religious beliefs and practices say about the potentially positive role of religious reasons in Rawls? It suggests that *by expressing* those beliefs, citizens do not just gain knowledge of what their conception of the good is and what it is like to pursue it. They can gain a better understanding how those the beliefs that inform a conception of the good can cohere or come apart from the beliefs of others, which gives one a better understanding of one’s own beliefs and conception in turn. This occurs when one has the opportunity to articulate one’s view to others, defend it, use one’s imagination to guess how others might understand or argue against it, or how they could reasonably reject it. These forms of reasoning all take practice, too. Reason-giving is a sort of practice. And insofar as religious citizens must make sense of how their conception of the good could comport with a political conception of justice alongside other citizens, it is compatible with

⁹⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 19

⁹⁸ Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls”, 269

⁹⁹ Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls”, 269

¹⁰⁰ Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls”, 269

¹⁰¹ Krishnamurthy, “Reconceiving Rawls”, 269

Rawls's view that citizens be able to work this out with the relevant what-it-is-like experience of learning how to articulate their views with others.¹⁰²

So, we can take Krishnamurthy's view further. We can state that the religious person, like all persons, gains self-understanding by *expressing* their conception of the good, and the comprehensive doctrine that supports it, in public. That is, living out one's conception of the good may be particularly informative for citizens' *self-understanding by expressing it in public*. To be sure, I do not mean here to further over-intellectualize what it is like to develop a conception of the good. Instead, I take this to be the uncontroversial point that part of living out our rational life plan, as political philosophers know very well, often involves reasoning about it with others, and hopefully others who are not like us in all respects, i.e., those outside of our associations.¹⁰³

1.7.1.2 Political Conception of Justice

Second, religious reasons have value for the religious citizens by giving them the opportunity to develop, interpret, and apply to their changing surroundings a political conception of justice, and thereby further develop their sense of justice. To parse this out, we may continue with Krishnamurthy's line of thinking and ask: do religious citizens also need what-it-is-like experience to develop this capacity (for a sense of justice) and thereby be in a position to understand and form a political conception of justice? And how do expressing religious reasons help with this?

Again, Krishnamurthy argues that one indeed needs the "what-it-is-like" experience that comes with participating in political life in order to feel a sense of ownership over one's political decisions.¹⁰⁴ Our capacity for a sense of justice is an essential part of ourselves, and when this essential part of ourselves is joined with our

¹⁰² What is more, remember that Rawls is interested in *reasonable* comprehensive doctrines, so we should wonder how one is supposed to know whether one's own doctrine is indeed reasonable without engaging in the deliberation that would yield this kind of knowledge.

¹⁰³ To be sure, what it-is-like experience might turn out to convince a religious citizen that their own religious beliefs are indeed *true or correct*, or otherwise provide them with religious knowledge. But my point is not that religious citizens must live out their beliefs in order to convince themselves or others of their *truth*. This might be a fruitful outcome for some citizens, and it is not incompatible with Rawls's idea of public reason that this occurs. However, my point is that what-it-is-like experience of one's religious beliefs, practices, and how these relate to others', help religious citizens better understand how all of these aspects of their faith fit together, and fit alongside others, in public life; such citizens need not accept the truth of any particular doctrine to engage in this understanding.

¹⁰⁴ Krishnamurthy, "Reconceiving Rawls", 263

political decisions, then we will feel that our decisions are also a part of ourselves—they belong to us. Having a sense of ownership in these decisions will in turn promote stability and loyalty to the political community, since others will know that we genuinely, through our practice(s), support a political conception of justice. To be sure, this commitment may often get expressed by way of giving a particular interpretation of how the principles of justice ought to apply, for instance, how laws and policies can actually uphold freedom and equality. And these interpretations indeed will inevitably need to be re-examined over time; commitment, I take it, does not mean sticking to our interpretations without being open to revising them and changing our mind. Nevertheless, *expressing* these interpretations and the commitments they rely on with religious reasons, in order to show support a political conception of justice, can be an important way for the religious citizen to *show themselves and others* what their commitments amount to for the time being.

There might be a worry here: making arguments is obviously an important and assumed part of public reason and public deliberation more broadly. However, *knowing how* one's faith connects to a political conception of justice may not always be fully articulable or able to be expressed in the form of robust argumentation. This may partly be because of the seemingly ineffable basis of religious beliefs themselves, or a lack of formal education (particularly, in religious literacy) in the background culture. And yet by *not* expressing their religious reasons through argumentation, citizens may risk appearing unreasonable, since they might not then assure others that their religious values could support a political conception of justice, and that they are committed to fair terms of cooperation.

Is this a problem? I don't think so. It is compatible with Rawls's understanding of the positive value of religious reasons that having a sense of ownership over one's political decisions can be expressed in all sorts of ways, not *just* the articulation of religious reasons. For instance, citizens might reveal their political values through charity work, environmental care, or general community participation. They also may either strive to reconcile their political and religious views, and come up dry, or they may want to challenge generally accepted political values in their political culture; still, such citizens can nevertheless *express* their commitment to (some) political values in

alternative ways (like charity work). Importantly, there is still then *political* value in religious citizens *showing* their commitment to justice through these avenues, even if they cannot or do not have the habit of distilling these values into articulate religious reasons for political action. This idea is, at least, *compatible* with the wide view simply providing citizens the *opportunity* to know their own and others' religious reasons. It is not, I take it, that they *must* present them in this way.

1.7.2 Knowledge and Non-Religious Citizens

Let's now consider how religious reasons can play a positive role in the lives of non-religious citizens under Rawls's view. The question we can explore to flesh this out is: how are non-religious citizens made better off by having at least the *opportunity* for knowledge of their fellow citizens, which might include hearing their religious reasons, but also seeing such reasons (if only implicitly or indirectly) acted on and lived out? Here are two responses.

In the first response, non-religious citizens will want the opportunity to see what conceptions of the good are available for *themselves*. Knowledge of religious citizens' conceptions of the good and the comprehensive reasons they rely on in public expands these opportunities. The second response is that religious reasons can also expand a non-religious citizens' sense of justice, determine a political conception of justice, and show how this fits together with various conceptions of the good. More specifically, religious reasons can illuminate particular issues to the non-religious citizen, give them weight that they otherwise wouldn't have, and explain why some issues may have a greater proportional effect on religious citizens.

1.7.2.1 Conception of the Good

The first response, that non-religious citizens will want opportunities for knowledge of what conceptions of the good are available by way of hearing religious reasons, requires making clear how such knowledge would be available to citizens given the limits of knowledge in Rawls's original position (OP). The idea here is that while in the OP citizens will *not know* what their specific conception of the good will be (indeed,

they will not know that they are non-religious or religious—these categories won't apply), they will nevertheless want to ensure that they *will have* knowledge of various conceptions of the good when they come out from behind the veil of ignorance. That is, they will want to make an informed choice over what their conception of the good *could be*, and will want to know that they will have opportunities to develop and exercise whatever this conception turns out to be, which *might* be situated in a religious comprehensive doctrine.

One particular reason for this, as Andrew Koppelman frames it, is that the parties in the OP will want to ensure and specify the details of their liberty of conscience.¹⁰⁵ This is because, Rawls says, citizens “cannot take chances” with whatever “dominant religious or moral doctrine” might happen to hold in their society; to “gamble in this way would show that one did not take one’s religious or moral convictions seriously, or highly value the liberty to examine one’s beliefs”.¹⁰⁶ So, importantly, even non-religious citizens would want to ensure their own liberty of conscience, and they will want to ensure this by securing those resources and opportunities to know of the various religious views in their society.

But the question is, for us, how exactly can *knowledge* of religious citizens *and their reasons for political action* be of positive value to non-religious citizens? After all, representatives in the OP do not know the details of themselves or the actual views of others in their society. They do not even know whether they are religious or non-religious; they are shielded from this knowledge via the veil of ignorance. However, it is important to remember that the limits on what we know changes throughout the stages of Rawls’s theory. That is, degrees of ignorance change throughout the stages of Rawls’s four-stage sequence. The four-stage sequence is Rawls’s idea for how the principles of justice are to be specified and institutionalized. As Leif Wenar writes, “[t]hrough this four-stage sequence, the veil of ignorance that screens out information about society’s general features gradually becomes thinner, and the parties use the new information to decide on progressively more determinate applications of the principles already agreed

¹⁰⁵ Koppelman, Andrew. “A Rawlsian Defence of Special Treatment for Religion.” Essay. In *Religion in Liberal Political Philosophy*, edited by Laborde Cécile and Bardon Aurélia. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: 40-41.

¹⁰⁶ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed, 181

upon”.¹⁰⁷ So, while citizens might be ignorant of all but very general facts about their society at the beginning of the four-stage sequence, in the OP, limiting specific religious reasons and the values they support as justificatory *on their own*, religious reasons and values may be increasingly specified and more important throughout the four-stage sequence.

Let me explain this in more detail. In the first stage, in the original position, citizens are indeed ignorant of the moral details of their lives that could be exploited for their own advantage, like their natural assets or intelligence, or their religious beliefs (or lack of religious beliefs).¹⁰⁸ Instead, putting these facts aside, and so reasoning from a position of equality, Rawls thinks that citizens would arrive at the two principles of justice that compose his favored political conception of justice, justice as fairness.¹⁰⁹ However, while citizens are ignorant of the specific moral features of themselves and others, they *do* know general facts of their society.¹¹⁰ They know that society is composed of a variety of conceptions of the good, knowledge they will eventually use to form and revise their rational life plan, and it is expected, of course, that citizens will have a great interest in forming and revising that life plan. It is reasonable to expect, then, that citizens in the original position will want to ensure opportunities to know and develop a conception of the good that informs that life plan, whatever it may be. So, we should expect that these opportunities will include *knowledge of* different religious conceptions of the good.

So far this doesn't say too much about the positive role of *religious reasons* for non-religious citizens though. The positive role becomes more explicit after the first stage of the four-stage sequence. After the OP, there is a constitutional stage, legislative stage, and a fourth and final stage in which the principles developed in the OP are applied.

¹⁰⁷ Wenar, Leif, "John Rawls", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/rawls/>>.

¹⁰⁸ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 118. Rawls says that we do not know our “place in society, [their] class position or social status; nor [do they] know [their] fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like. Nor, again, does anyone know [their] conception of the good, the particulars of [their] rational plan of life, or even the special features of [their] psychology.”

¹⁰⁹ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 118, 53. The two principles are, first, the principle of equal basic liberties, and the second, composed of two parts, is composed of a) the principle of fair equality of opportunity and b) the difference principle.

¹¹⁰ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 119; Rawls says that citizens know “whatever general facts affect the choice of the principles of justice”, of which there is no limit; these might specify things such as “principles of economic theory” and “the basis of social organization and the laws of human psychology”.

While “[t]he entire process, however, must unfold within public reason”, religious reasons, as themselves informative, may play an increasingly prominent role alongside the general increase in knowledge throughout these stages.¹¹¹ And religious reasons will become more and more important depending on how specified the principles of justice become. For instance, in specifying how liberty of conscience would be interpreted and applied, the use of religious reasons to understand cases of conscientious refusal are crucial. All citizens, non-religious citizens included, are better off knowing what sorts of religious reasons might ground claims to such refusal in order to figure out the limits of freedom of conscience *for everyone*.

Much more could be said about the four-stage sequence than I have room for here. However, it is worth addressing at least one worry to make the point clearer: the demands of public reason could make it so that any reasonable citizen could come to reject religion as a good in these later stages of the four-stage-sequence; they may use public reason to reasonably think (even if this is a minority view) that preserving religion and religious values is not itself a good. Why think then that reasonable non-religious citizens, even with the details of the religions in their society, would want to ensure opportunities for the use of religious reasons that rely on a religious conception of the good if they reject religion itself as a good?

Koppelman argues that even if the good or goods of religion are contestable, “[t]he exigency of these goods is nonetheless a general fact about human psychology, at least in our society”.¹¹² Citizens might not agree that, or understand how, religion is a good; it may always remain somewhat opaque to non-religious citizens, as the burdens of judgement remind us. As Koppelman puts it, “[w]e are in our depths opaque to one another”.¹¹³ Yet, it is important to remember that “we are similar enough to know where the deep places are likely to be”, and what are *generally accepted* goods point to those deep places that we share.¹¹⁴ In light of the importance of these deep places and the goods

¹¹¹ As Miriam Ronzoni explains, “that is to say, the parties justify proposals to one another using premises and standards that all citizens in a pluralistic society may reasonably endorse, rather than controversial views about what is ultimately true or of value” (Ronzoni, Miriam. 2014. “The Four-Stage Sequence.” In *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, 290–92. Cambridge University Press, 290. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139026741.079>).

¹¹² Koppelman, “A Rawlsian Defence”, 36

¹¹³ Koppelman, “A Rawlsian Defence”, 36

¹¹⁴ Koppelman, “A Rawlsian Defence”, 36

they hint at, citizens, as Rawls says, ““must keep themselves free to honor” the choices over which goods to pursue then, whether the goods be religious or not.¹¹⁵ Thus, non-religious citizens should see under Rawls’s view that religious conceptions of the good are valuable, whether or not they see specifically how they are good themselves. What is more, they should also see why religious citizens might want to rely on such reasons to then specify and apply the principles of justice in later stages of the four-stage-sequence, *with the use of religious reasons*, which reflect certain religious goods.

In summary, religious reasons play a positive role in the lives of non-religious citizens because either they *will* want religious conceptions of the good as options available when behind the veil of ignorance, or they will want such conceptions available as the veil gets thinner, in part in order to cooperatively interpret and apply the principles of justice alongside religious citizens who may rely on religious conceptions of the good to do so.

1.7.2.2. Political Conception of Justice

The second reason I think religious reasons play a positive role for non-religious citizens under Rawls’s view is that such reasons can expand non-religious citizens’ sense of justice, and thereby aid in the creative ways citizens make compatible their comprehensive doctrine and political conception of justice. They can do so in three ways: by expanding the scope of justice, by engaging with religious citizens on their own terms, i.e., through conjecture, and lastly, by helping non-religious citizens understand acts of conscientious refusal.

To begin, part of what can develop our sense of justice is being exposed to different understanding of entities as subjects of justice as *indeed subjects of justice*, thereby expanding the scope of justice. For instance, many religious people care about, and want to speak on behalf of, those entities that do not always have a voice, or have limited representation: enemy combatants, the distant poor, future persons, but also unborn fetuses, the climate, non-human animals, children.¹¹⁶ One explanation for this is

¹¹⁵ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 181.

¹¹⁶ Patrick Neal, “Rethinking the Public Use of Religious Reasons” Essay. In *Rawls and Religion*, edited by Tom Bailey and Valentina Gentile, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 118.

that religious citizens already have a general interest in ‘the unseen’, like God, the spiritual realm, prophets, etc. As Patrick Neal remarks, “in religious moral systems, obligations to entities beyond the political community often include nonhuman and nonnatural entities. God, “the church”, the honor of this or that prophet, human souls, holy texts” and the list goes on.¹¹⁷

To be sure, representing a holy text vs. a non-human animal in public debate are, as Neal also grants, very different political acts. Yet, what they hold in common is that they both explain and/or motivate a shared interest in such entities. For instance, the environment is one such entity that cannot directly speak for or represent itself. It is seen by some as God’s creation, and we are stewards of God’s creation, and so we should protect God’s creation. Our planet, some might think, is not our own, and we cannot treat it in a way as if it is. This is a profound reason for political action. But importantly, it has the potential to expand the non-religious citizens' understanding of what religious citizens care about, while at the same time putting such cares on the political agenda for *everyone*. Such reasons about stewardship may therefore expand non-religious citizens’ scope of justice, who may not believe in the religious reasons themselves, but can develop a new appreciate for, for instance, the environment, in light of being exposed to them.

Of course, non-religious citizens do not necessarily need to accept that what religious citizens consider to be under the scope of justice really ought to be under the scope of justice. However, the point is that if they at least have the opportunity to be informed on religious citizens’ political views, and the entities they care about representing, they are in a better position to deliberate about these issues. They may then even use the form of discourse Rawls calls “conjecture”.¹¹⁸

To engage in conjecture, citizens use the worldview and generally accepted principles of their fellow citizens to grapple with and challenge a particular interpretation of a principle that comes from within a citizen’s comprehensive doctrine. For instance, non-Christians could refer to the story in Deuteronomy where God blesses Israel with manna from heaven in order to challenge Christians whose political views are rooted in the prosperity gospel. Those who believe in the prosperity gospel generally think that we

¹¹⁷ Neal, “Rethinking the Public Use of Religious Reasons”, 108

¹¹⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 465

are entitled to reap what we sow—we are entitled to benefit from our own hard work, particularly in financial terms. And if what we sow, our wealth and possessions, is ours, what we reap shouldn't be redistributed through taxation, for instance. But this ignores the idea that manna, as explained in Deuteronomy, is a *gift* from heaven, and gifts are undeserved and cannot be earned. Thus, manna, as wealth and possessions, may not strictly speaking belong to the one who works for it.¹¹⁹ Moses writes, “He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ *But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth*”.¹²⁰ One could also cite Luke, such as the verses, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15); or “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

The non-Christian, if they knew this story, could argue not only that the prosperity gospel is misguided, on terms the Christian might accept, but could even argue that Rawls’s view supports the biblical idea of an equal distribution of goods, including wealth (unless inequalities can be to the benefit of the worst off).¹²¹ Surely this point has promise of changing the Christian’s mind more effectively than offering a public reason that does not engage with the Christian on their own terms. At least, if public reason *alone* does not work, citizens know that they can rely on conjecture in order to assure other citizens that they are willing to discuss issues of justice from their point of view.

¹¹⁹ Still, one must work for manna in the sense that it initially had to be gathered and was often redistributed to those who gathered less, partly because it could not be stored)

¹²⁰ Deuteronomy. 7:16-18, italics added.

¹²¹ Rawls might disagree with this reasoning, and the case of redistribution of wealth is also just one example; other examples might be using conjecture to show Christians why they ought to care about the environment, and non-human animals, on biblical grounds. other examples might be using conjecture to show Christians why they ought to care about the environment, and non-human animals, on biblical grounds. Moreover, the case about the distribution of wealth could be made without the religious reference. However, the religious reference does more than merely communicate a moral point. When a religious reason is given by a religious citizen, it shows the non-religious person where *the religious person* is coming from to arrive at the moral point. More than this, I think in many cases it can show who the religious person *is*, since it reveals what they care about, and we are, at least politically, what we care about, and what we are committed to.

More than this, they can, in the process, better understand religious citizens' own reasoning. They work out these reasons together.

Finally, a third answer to how religious reasons play a positive role for non-religious citizens is that in knowing them, non-religious citizens are then able to see the high stakes of an issue for religious citizens. The idea is most obvious with respect to religious reasons for conscientious refusal, or what Rawls also refers to as "witnessing" or "bearing witness".¹²² In such cases, although religious citizens *could* appeal to the public values of freedom of conscience alone to justify their conscientious refusal, using reasons that rely on their own specific religious doctrine can at times *best make known* what it is about their doctrine that specifically might warrant their exemption from a particular act (e.g., Religious reasons for a sabbath, to excuse oneself from working on Sundays).

Of course, one might wonder: does conscientious refusal go against the spirit of public reason? Doesn't a person who engages in conscientious refusal show others that they are *not* committed to a political conception of justice that could be held by all? Rawls is surprisingly open to the possibility that citizens who conscientiously refuse can in fact still abide by public reason. He grants that "those bearing witness can accept the idea of public reason", as when "Quakers accept constitutional democracy and abide by its legitimate law, yet may reasonably express the religious basis of their pacifism".¹²³ Most notably, Rawls states that in cases like these, citizens "feel they must not only let other citizens *know* the deep basis of their strong opposition but must also bear witness to their faith by doing so".¹²⁴

1.8 Community, and Citizens as Social Beings

The final point I wish to make in this paper comes as a cumulative implication of the arguments in the previous sections, concerning first religious citizens and then non-religious citizens. That is, when we combine the idea that religious reasons have value for religious citizens because they help them know themselves and their political

¹²² Rawls, *PL*, 466, fn. 57

¹²³ Rawls, *PL*, 466, fn. 57

¹²⁴ Rawls, *PL*, 466, fn. 57

commitments, and likewise for non-religious citizens, the importance of religious reasons come into clear view as forming part of the very *relationship* between citizens, and who they are as social beings. Earlier I argued that religious reasons do not go against the spirit of reciprocity underlying Rawls's public reason. But now we can make a stronger argument. Religious reasons are valuable because they have the potential to foster community in a distinctly political sense, and in a way that is difficult, perhaps even impossible, without knowledge of one another. Rawls did not argue for this directly. Indeed, his idea of civic friendship is remarkably thin and unspecified. So, this argument is not an interpretation of what the wide view or Rawls's political liberalism explicitly allows, but is what I believe Rawls should have said, given the value he attributes to religious reasons, and to explain how citizens become who they are. By this, they become who they are in a political sense—citizens become who they are qua citizens and social beings, and not (necessarily) in a metaphysical sense.

To make this argument, I will draw attention to three places that Rawls shows a commitment to the value of community in our knowing ourselves and one another. In doing so, I argue that to make sense of the way Rawls included religious reasons, we must see Rawls's commitment to reasoning about our own good and the common good we share *with others*, in the limited idea of *political* community (or as I will consider at the end, out of a sense of civic friendship) found in *PL*. The point is that allowing religious citizens to rely on religious reasons could be, for Rawls, a further way in which citizens develop as social beings. Once again, religious reasons have no small role to play. Their formation and expression are part of how citizens come to be who they are, how they come to be complete, and how they compete others.

It is worth noting that this may appear, at least initially, to be a rather radical view. After *A Theory of Justice* was published, a well-known 'communitarian criticism' was levelled against Rawls's view of the self by Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor. The objection, particularly Sandel's version, argues that Rawls's *Theory* hung on an untenable view of the self as "unencumbered", since it asks citizens to view themselves as somehow prior to their aims and interests.¹²⁵ Citizens, Sandel thought, are not

¹²⁵ Michael Sandel, "The procedural republic and the unencumbered self", *Political theory* 12, no. 1 (1984): 81-96.

unencumbered, but are constituted by their aims and interests. However, it is by now acknowledged that this kind of criticism greatly misunderstands the nature of Rawls's project, at least in *Theory*.¹²⁶ Indeed, Rawls's commitment to a more social conception of the self, developed in community, is revealed in several works throughout his lifetime. Here are a few instances:

To begin with what is perhaps the most striking case, Rawls is thought to show his most overt commitment to the value of *both* community and religion in the theological pursuits of his bachelor's thesis, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith: An Interpretation Based on the Concept of Community*. In the thesis, Rawls argues that our relation to God is a relation between subjects, rather than one which treats God as an object.¹²⁷ Rawls thought that it was in our relation to God as a person, in our integration into the community of God as triune (God, Son, and Holy Spirit), that we ourselves become persons. As Rawls says, "individuals become persons insofar as they live in community" with God *and others*.¹²⁸ The very meaning of faith for Rawls in fact is to have an inner state that is "properly integrated into community", whereas "sin is the destruction, annihilation, and repudiation of community".¹²⁹ Importantly, our relationship to God does not stand apart from our relation to others on Rawls's view; our relationship to God is mirrored in our ethical relations to others, both of which Rawls saw as hanging on interpersonal connection, and on community. Rawls states that "proper ethics is not the relating of a person to some objective 'good' for which he should strive but is the relating of person to person and finally to God".¹³⁰

We might wonder: why care about what Rawls says in his bachelor's thesis?¹³¹ As Jurgen Habermas notes, understanding these sympathies toward religion reveals not just

¹²⁶ See Thomas Nagel, "Progressive but Not Liberal," 47, note 3, and the associated text, and Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, pp. 151, 156, 158 and 162.

¹²⁷ The radical nature of the idea is expressed by Rawls as a rejection of the purported 'naturalistic' faith advocated for by Augustine and Aquinas, a curious idea in its own right, but not one that is necessary to dive into here.

¹²⁸ Rawls, *Brief Inquiry*, 112

¹²⁹ Rawls, *Brief Inquiry*, 122

¹³⁰ Rawls, *Brief Inquiry*, 114

¹³¹ Introduction, 4; Owing to his youth at the time, we might be inclined to write off the view as the undeveloped thoughts of a philosopher at the very beginning of his academic journey. However, we do well to note, as Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel do, that Rawls's thesis is an "an extraordinary work for a 21-year-old"; and to read it is "a moving experience" (Introduction to a "Brief Inquiry into the meaning of sin and faith", 4).

biographical details of who Rawls was or what his faith-based commitments were, or even what they might have continued to be (Rawls eventually ‘abandoned’ his faith, but seemingly came to reject only some versions of Christianity)¹³², but they reveal essential features of Rawls’s political ideas; as Habermas writes, “It is as if one were examining the religious roots of a deontological morality” and that “from his theological beginnings, Rawls was familiar with the procedure of reconstructing a kind of implicit knowledge that is only accessible from the participant perspective”.¹³³ And as Mackenzie Bok similarly observes, the question is not then ‘what was or is Rawls’s faith?’ but concerns “how his writings on Christian ethics and on philosophical metaethics intertwine in one continuous moral project”, which is “centered on seeing persons as embedded in a community of universal mutual recognition”.¹³⁴ The point here, then, is not one about Rawls’s own faith either, as interesting as this might be. It is really a point about Rawls’s appreciation of community early on, and how this appreciation can be found in various ways in his life’s works. As I am showing in this paper, one such way is on the value of religious reasons in political deliberation.

Let’s move forward then. In a poignant passage in Part III of *Theory*, Rawls states that although people are “left free to determine their good” and that others’ views are “merely advisory” in this process, a “variety in conceptions of the good is itself a good thing”, and a variety of conceptions is crucial to our own development.¹³⁵ Why is this? Rawls claims that a variety of conceptions of the good, and the diverse natural talents and abilities that come along with these conceptions, cannot be realized by one person. But this is a good thing; we actually benefit from and take pleasure in knowing this. That is, we “want our plans to be different”, Rawls says.¹³⁶ In recognizing our different life plans,

¹³² Rawls writes that he, since his time in the war, thought of himself as “no longer orthodox”, and lead to “an increasing rejection of many of the main doctrines of Christianity” (On my Religion, 263). As Andrew Lister observes, “While the mature Rawls was not a believing Christian, ‘anti-Pelagian Christianity was the Christianity he didn’t believe in’. Andrew Lister, 2022. Theology, Desert, and Egalitarianism. *The Journal of Politics*, 84(3): 1528

¹³³ Jürgen Habermas, 2010, The ‘Good Life’—A ‘Detestable Phrase’: The Significance of the Young Rawls’s Religious Ethics for His Political Theory. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 18(3): 443, 449

¹³⁴ Mackenzie P. Bok, 2017, “To the Mountaintop Again: The Early Rawls and Post Protestant Ethics in Postwar America,” *Modern Intellectual History* 14 (1): 155 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000268>.

¹³⁵ Here, Rawls seems to be echoing the wisdom of John Stuart Mill, according to whom it is in the collective interest of a society to allow its members to pursue a variety of life plans and projects.

¹³⁶ Rawls, *TJ Revised Ed.*, 393

it is “as if others were bringing forth a part of ourselves that we have not been able to cultivate”.¹³⁷ Well stated by Wayne Proudfoot in his interpretation of Rawls, just as “[n]o human being is capable of realizing all of his or her capacities” it stands that “no one can realize the capacities of the human race as a whole”.¹³⁸ This twofold idea is made explicit in Rawls’s statement that “[w]e need one another as partners in ways of life that are engaged in for their own sake, and the successes and enjoyments of *others* are necessary for and complementary to *our own good*”.¹³⁹ Putting attention to passages such as these not only shows the communitarian arguments against Rawls to be misguided, or at least not as strong as once thought, but Rawls’s picture of the person appears to rely on a distinctly social conception.¹⁴⁰

That said, there is one problem with how Rawls’s idea of the social self as existing in community applies to his political liberalism. Rawls came to think that at least a robust idea of community at the political level was impossible. That is, unlike the good, which is developed in associations and in community, Rawls states that “the situation is quite otherwise with justice”.¹⁴¹ With justice, we do not seem to benefit from our differences, but instead benefit when our differences are (at least politically) constrained, and when we come to agreement over the principles of justice, and achieve an overlapping consensus over political conceptions of justice.¹⁴² That such differences

¹³⁷ As a result, this thought shaped Rawls’s well-known idea of desert. As Lister notes, “that the distribution of natural talents is morally arbitrary and that inheritance of scarce productive capacity does not by itself ground a claim to superior economic reward” (1537). What is more, “Rawls’s mature position on desert is thus explained if not justified by its roots in the specific form of Christianity he once espoused and never fully abandoned” (1537 Lister). Quoting Eric Nelson, *The Theology of Liberalism*, (Nelson 2019), p. 72. Nelson argues that Rawls’ anti-pelagian roots differentiate him from other liberals, because of the view’s denial of free-will and individual responsibility. This, it is argued, formed Rawls’s understanding of desert, which was similarly not based on free-will or individual responsibility. Rather, like our salvation, which “came by God’s grace, not by any merit on our part”, economic reward cannot come from our individual merits. (Lister, 1528).

¹³⁸ Wayne Proudfoot, "Rawls on self-respect and social union", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 5, no. 3 (1978): 263

¹³⁹ Rawls 1999: § 79: ‘The Idea of Social Union’, p. 458

¹⁴⁰ Roberto Alejandro, "Rawls's communitarianism", *Canadian journal of philosophy* 23, no. 1 (1993): 75-99. Alejandro states that, “In open contrast to those arguments, the Rawlsian individual appears as one who needs a community of shared interests which provides standards of worthiness and allows him to preserve his self-esteem: associations and communities provide 'a secure basis for the sense of worth of their members'" (80).

¹⁴¹ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 394

¹⁴² Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 394

could not then establish *political* community is confirmed by Rawls when he says in *PL* that “liberalism rejects political society as a community”.¹⁴³

That said, it is not as though Rawls completely abandoned the role of community in the development of the self by the time he wrote *Political Liberalism*. It is, rather, that political society becomes a ‘social union of social unions’; but this does not undermine our need for one another.¹⁴⁴ As I have sought to show in this paper at least, the public use of religious reasons promotes knowledge of ourselves and of other citizens, and this knowledge in turn enriches public deliberation. This is especially so in the process of achieving an overlapping consensus, where we bring our conception of the good and political conception of justice into harmony; we do this while appreciating the different ways that others achieve this harmony. It may just be that the *explanation* of our very need for one another, although this need itself is *common* to all, may be additionally conceptualized by each of us in our own way, according to our different conceptions of the good.

1.9 Civic Friendship

As a final consideration, we can perhaps best see the role of religious reasons as strengthening community by way of strengthening civic friendship in *PL*, an idea that Rawls does not develop.¹⁴⁵ Recall Rawls’s statement that “the role of the criterion of reciprocity as expressed in public reason . . . is to specify the regime as one of civic friendship”.¹⁴⁶ But since I have shown that public reason alone is not enough for citizens to know one another, and that comprehensive doctrines do this important work, I think we should conceive of civic friendship as similarly more expansive to go along with Rawls’s wide view. That is, we can think of civic friendship as expanded to include understanding one another’s comprehensive doctrines.¹⁴⁷ Including these doctrines then

¹⁴³ Rawls, *PL*, 146, fn

¹⁴⁴ Rawls, *TJ*, Revised Ed., 527

¹⁴⁵ For additional reasons I won’t get into here, Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach points out that “Despite all its advances, a lacuna remains at the heart of Rawls’s account of human sociability” (790). Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach, 2014. “Social Union.” In *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, 788–90. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139026741.207>.

¹⁴⁶ Rawls, *PL*, xlix

¹⁴⁷ This goes against the interpretation of community found in Leland 2019.

is not a threat to civic friendship, just as it is not a threat to reciprocity. That is, sharing our comprehensive doctrines does not detract from civic friendship. And again stronger than this: it makes possible the secure social basis needed for political stability and assurance. Even stronger: sharing our diverse views can complete us, and in *that* way foster a kind of friendship that brings out the fullness of who we are individually, mirrored in the fullness of what individuals add to societies diverse views collectively.

How so? Take the thought expressed by C. S. Lewis about friendship: “in each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets.”¹⁴⁸ And in friendship, “to divide is not to take away”.¹⁴⁹ Of course, Lewis states, there are practical considerations which “set limits to the enlargement of the circle; but within those limits we possess each friend not less but more as the number of those with whom we share him increases”.¹⁵⁰ In essence: the more friendships we have, so long as they are intentional friendships, the richer those individual friendships can become.

We might think that *civic* friendship is similar in this respect. Just as having more friends does not diminish the quality of our friendships, but in fact brings out parts of ourselves that could not be brought out otherwise, the diverse views of those in our community bring out parts of our political selves that could not be brought out otherwise. Again, we “want our plans to be different”, says Rawls.¹⁵¹ In recognizing our different life plans, it is “as if others were bringing forth a part of ourselves that we have not been able to cultivate” on our own.¹⁵² But likewise for our *religious reasons for political action*; we may want *these* too to be taken seriously, but still different. In our relations to other citizens, then, we express and operate with a sense of civic friendship when we not only show commitment to public reason, but when we explain to others our religious reasons for political action, if we have them. These not only show who we are in a deeper sense, so that others can know what we care about, which may also help them understand

¹⁴⁸ Clive Staples Lewis. *The Four Loves*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis, *The Four Loves*

¹⁵¹ Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 393

¹⁵² Rawls, *TJ* Revised Ed., 394

what *they* care about— they help us become who we are, together. This applies even to non-religious citizens. Sharing them helps complete us, individually and collectively.

1.10 Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that religious reasons on Rawls's account, while not justificatory on their own, are still crucial for helping us know ourselves and others. Further, they are an important part of living in community, as civic friends, with our fellow citizens.

But it is also important to emphasize what I have not done. I have not showed that the use of religious reasons means that citizens should abandon public reason requirements. If citizens use religious reasons with the aim *just* knowing *themselves*, or only those in their associations, it might seem as though they should *only* use those reasons that best reflect their views and their self-understanding, however idiosyncratic this may be. Maybe they should even abandon any attempt to find reasons they can imagine others accepting (public reasons).

Nothing here suggests that Rawls would say citizens should do that. I have argued that religious reasons help citizens know one another and themselves, but only when used to support reasons all others could accept. This follows from Rawls's expectation that citizens harmonize their comprehensive doctrine with a political conception of justice. To be sure, it might be true that religious reasons can help us know one another even when they shirk public reason requirements, perhaps under some other interpretations of Rawls's view. This might be right, but it is not a point I have tried to defend here.

What is more, my interpretation of Rawls is compatible with the fact that citizens may live in a moment of time when religious reasons could do an exceptional amount of social heavy lifting, could be especially salient and impactful in bonding us to one another, depending on the public political culture we find ourselves in. But importantly, we may only know what these moments are *because* we had the opportunity, or indeed endeavored *to* articulate our religious reasons, and know ourselves and others by way of these reasons, and so learn from past instances of their use. Rawls was sympathetic to the historical moments where citizens experimented with religious reasons in public (e.g., Abolition and The Civil Rights Movement), and which would turn out to have had

profound impacts on how we collectively understand the public values of freedom and equality today. He was also clear that the public reason proviso cannot be settled in advance, perhaps precisely because we may not know which political problems are on the horizon, which historical moment we are in exactly, or which religious reasons may stick. Thankfully, it is fortunate for us that Rawls left us the tools in his paradigm to work out what this could look like in practice. We get to bring Rawls with us in spirit, and better know him and his views in the process.

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2 Chapter 2: The Accessibility of Religious Reasons

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the current debate on the accessibility of religious reasons, as it exists within the public reason literature, has insufficiently identified what it is that makes a religious reason accessible. In this literature, it is asked: what makes a religious reason for political action accessible to those who do not adhere to the faith from which the reason is derived? The dominant response from faith-friendly scholars has been that religious reasons are accessible when we can epistemically assess them. The epistemic sources of Christian mystical perception, natural theology, and testimony, for instance, are thought to show various ways to ground religious reasons, such that any non-believer can, *in principle*, assess them.

I want to challenge the idea that ‘in principle’ accessibility is sufficient for understanding what it is that allows citizens, religious and non-religious, to meaningfully grasp religious reasons in public. I argue that for citizens to really understand religious reasons, citizens must access such reasons emotionally. To articulate this, I begin by adding a new epistemic source to the existing literature, one that appears to provide a convincing way in which believers’ religious reasons are epistemically grounded. On this route, emotions justify religious beliefs. For instance, when the believer has an experience of God as loving, the emotion of that experience then indicates and characterizes who the giver of the emotion, God, *is* (i.e., a loving God). However, this idea faces limitations similar to the other epistemic sources I explore, which warrants, I think, a new way of understanding the accessibility of religious reasons.

I ultimately argue that emotion is still epistemically salient to the accessibility of religious reasons, but in a way that I take to be more appealing to the political liberal than current accounts. This route still concerns emotion, but focuses instead on how religious reasons are communicated with emotion through rhetoric. As an example, I home in on the Jeremiad, a religious rhetorical device such as the one Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used to communicate his religious reasons against racial segregation. Such a rhetorical device, I argue, elicits an emotional response from the hearer in a way that makes the reasons contained within the device accessible in two different senses: a non-deliberative

and a deliberative sense. Either citizens do not need to epistemically assess the religious reasons contained within the message to understand its importance, and to act on it immediately (the non-deliberative sense). Or, as I explore more in-depth, citizens can use the emotion imbued in and through the Jeremiad (as with other rhetorical devices or messages) as judgement-forming (the deliberative sense). As many philosophical theories of emotion agree on, emotions are evaluative. But here I explore in a novel way how emotions can help us to evaluate religious claims and the political issues they address to better engage in political deliberation. More specifically, I argue that citizens can ‘think with feeling’ to access their fellow citizens’ religious reasons, especially to understand the thrust, salience, and stakes at issue in the features of the political landscape that such reasons are about.

In either case, the focus on emotion sheds light on what makes religious reasons accessible in a way that is more satisfying than current accounts, and still acceptable to the political liberal.

Key words: Religious Reasons; Accessibility; Justification; Emotion; Rhetoric; Jeremiad

2.1 Introduction

What does it mean for a religious reason to be accessible? More specifically, what makes a religious reason for political action accessible *to those who do not adhere to the faith from which it is derived*? This question is important, since theories of political liberalism beginning with John Rawls have predominantly rested on, or at least have responded to, the idea that religious reasons for political action are paradigmatic instances of *inaccessible* reasons, and so should be excluded from our political deliberations.¹⁵³ As such, religious reasons, for many political liberals, fall outside the scope of public reason, at least in part because of this inaccessibility. However, some critics of this idea have argued that religious reasons are not as inaccessible as they may seem. They have attempted to show that such reasons are epistemically grounded in various ways so as to be, “in principle”, epistemically *assessable* by anyone, and so epistemically *accessible* to anyone, religious or not. The upshot of has been that religious reasons can be permissibly included in the scope of our public deliberations, at least in part by this criterion (even if more criteria are required).

I agree with these critics that religious reasons are not inaccessible “in principle”. However, in this paper I argue that mere in principle accessibility is insufficient to explain how meaningfully accessing our fellow citizens’ religious reasons requires accessing the emotional thrust of such reasons, or at least getting us *closer* to accessing their emotional thrust.

I will make this argument by bringing a new route of accessibility into the accessibility debate. This route takes seriously the role of emotion in our epistemic evaluations of one another’s claims. Ultimately, I suggest that emotion can make the thrust, or ‘salience’, of religious reasons intelligible *in a way that they would not be otherwise*, which matters if we think it is important that citizens get a sense that they really do understand the religious reasons of their fellow citizens, whether they are believers or not. Thus, part of the aim here is to get away from the idea that our reasons for political action are *either* accessible *or* inaccessible. They can be *more or less* accessible.

¹⁵³ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005)

The plan is as follows. In section 2.2, I begin by laying out the problem of accessibility, and why religious reasons are thought to be paradigmatically inaccessible. In section 2.3, I turn to three kinds of epistemic sources that theorists believe can generate accessible religious reasons: Christian Mystical Perception, Natural Theology, and Testimony. I then, in section 2.4, express three worries about the ‘in principle’ accessibility that these sources rest on. As a response, I suggest in section 2.5, that we first try out one other source of justification that has been underexplored. In the religious case, this is the idea that emotion can justify beliefs because they are “about what they are about”, where emotions, such as the emotion of peace, are also *about the cause (God)* of the emotion of peace.¹⁵⁴ As much as I take this to convincingly track the way many religious citizens actually ground their religious beliefs, I ultimately think this theory to be limited in the same way I take current epistemic sources to be. As such, these limits warrant that we explore a different way in which religious reasons can be accessible, beyond sources of justification. In section 2.6, I then offer a test case to show how emotion still matters, not directly, as a source of justification, but as a way for citizens to understand their fellow citizens reasons ‘with feeling’, so to speak, so that they can understand the weight of their claims, the color of their messages, their motivational impact, and so on, whatever the situation may allow. In this test case, I home in on the religious rhetorical device of the Jeremiad, which I suggest can allow citizens to access one another’s religious messages, and the reasons they contain, in two senses: they can be accessible even when they (seem to) exclude epistemic assessment altogether, by being uncompromising and closed to deliberation. *Or* they can position the us ‘think with feeling’ about such reasons and the political issues they are about, and therefore better allow us to more effectively evaluate them, and so deliberate about them. In section 2.7 I dive into how the emotion inherent to rhetoric more generally positions us to think with feeling, and so is an important part of the story for accessing the religious claims of our fellow citizens. Finally, in section 2.8, I address three worries about the use of emotions in public dialogue. I then conclude with a brief statement about what my analysis might say about the accessibility requirement.

¹⁵⁴ Robert C. Roberts, “Emotions as Access to Religious Truths,” *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (1992): 90.

2.2 The Problem

Let's begin with the problem. Why do reasons need to be accessible in our public and political lives? And what is it about religious reasons that makes them seem inaccessible?

It is often thought that reasons are the justificatory back bone of what counts in favor of laws and policies that are, by their nature, coercive. So, if reasons can justify that coercion, they must in some way be acceptable, shared or shareable, or accessible to citizens.¹⁵⁵ It is worth noting that these three qualifications, while closely related, are distinct. I will not focus on them in depth. However, briefly getting clear on their distinctions helps us get clear on what accessibility itself is.

First, acceptability is the condition that reasons must actually be accepted by a current polity for that polity to have justified reasons.¹⁵⁶ As Kevin Vallier describes it, such a standard is more empirical, than normative. The condition of being 'acceptable' "dubs a reason public based on what members of the public *do* accept rather than what they have most reason to accept".¹⁵⁷

The second property, shareability, is what John Rawls endorses when he argues in favor of public reasons that *could* be accepted by all citizens.¹⁵⁸ That is, Rawls argues that we should offer reasons we can *imagine* any citizen reasonably accepting, based on shared evaluative standards, and by assuming citizens are reasonable and rational. This is, on Rawls's view, what makes such reasons suitable candidates for justifying political coercion. Conversely, to give reasons we *cannot* imagine others assenting to cannot justify such coercion. For instance, if I thought that the primary reason for abolishing the

¹⁵⁵ Kevin Vallier, "In Defence of Intelligible Reasons in Public Justification," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 66, no. 264 (April 2015): 599 These three conditions may not be exhaustive.

¹⁵⁶ For an example of this view, see James Bohman and Henry S. Richardson, "Liberalism, Deliberative Democracy, and 'Reasons That All Can Accept'*,*" Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (2009): 253-274.

¹⁵⁷ Vallier, "Intelligible Reasons", 600. The idea that we can find shared reasons that all, in a pluralistic liberal democracy, actually do accept, has faced much skepticism. As Gerald Gaus puts it, "[g]iven the actual disagreement in our Western societies over liberal ideals, it is manifest that justificatory liberalism cannot explicate 'publicly acceptable' principles as those to which each and every member of our actual societies, in their actual positions, actually assent. If that is the test of public justification, justificatory liberalism is most unlikely to vindicate substantive liberal principles". Gerald F. Gaus, *Justificatory Liberalism an Essay on Epistemology and Political Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁵⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 162 and 376.

political use of torture was because, when we torture someone, we do not treat their life as sacred, I would be giving a religious reason that I *could not* reasonably, on Rawls's account, imagine everyone accepting.¹⁵⁹ This is because we cannot reasonably expect other citizens in a pluralistic liberal democracy to accept our religious reasons as a public basis of justification as consistent with respecting them as free and equal citizens, who are free to pursue their own doctrine, and equal in this respect. Even if we think our religious reasons are justificatory according to our own faith, as a *normative*, rather than empirical matter, Rawls thought that public reason best respects citizens as free and equal (or so the traditional reading of Rawls has maintained).

Finally, theorists have also recognized that *before sharing* in such reasons, or *in replace of* sharing such reasons, citizens need to first *understand* such reasons if they are to be considered public. This is generally what is meant by 'accessibility', although the precise idea of accessibility is cashed out differently by different scholars. For instance, in Cécile Laborde's recent account, accessing one another's reasons is a necessary condition "for public deliberation to be possible at all", and is "an epistemic desideratum, in the sense that it sets out conditions of knowledge and understanding".¹⁶⁰ This understanding makes accessibility a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for public deliberation. Laborde's desideratum can also rule out secular reasons, too, if they do not meet the relevant conditions of accessibility.¹⁶¹ In contrast, the way Robert Audi understands accessibility is that reasons need to be comprehensible in public, and to be comprehensible, they need to be secular.¹⁶² This is partly because, he thinks, "justifying

¹⁵⁹ The example of torture is given and grappled with in Jeremy Waldron's "Two-Way Translation: The Ethics of Engaging with Religious Contributions in Public Deliberation," *Mercer Law Review*, 2012, 846.

¹⁶⁰ Cécile Laborde, *Liberalism's Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 121. Concerning accessibility as a requirement for public reason, Laborde states that "public reason stricto sensu (qua accessibility) is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the law's liberal quality" (123). Explaining why accessibility is nevertheless important, she states that "it is one thing to be coerced in the name of reasons one does not understand (such as life is a gift of God) and quite another to be coerced in the name of reasons that one does not agree with but can engage with (such that the idea that consent in assisted suicide requests cannot be reliable ascertained) (122).

¹⁶¹ Laborde, *Liberalism's Religion*, 125.

¹⁶² As Paul Weithman understands him, "Audi thinks that citizens must be prepared to offer one another secular reasons because he thinks they must be prepared to offer one another "intelligible" reasons and only secular reasons are intelligible" in Paul J. Weithman, *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 177. This is in part a product of Audi's theological commitments. He claims that we should "expect God to structure us and the world so that there is a (humanly accessible) secular path to the discovery of moral truths, at least to those far-reaching ones

coercion implies intelligibility of a certain kind” (elsewhere calling intelligibility “comprehensibility”)¹⁶³ since “an adequately informed, rational adult citizen” needs to see for themselves the reason-giving force that underlies that coercion.¹⁶⁴ But not all non-religious citizens can see the reason-giving force of religious claims, particularly when these are “ultimately grounded in God's nature or commands”.¹⁶⁵ Jürgen Habermas also holds a requirement of accessibility, but cashed out in terms of language. He states that “all enforceable political decisions must be formulated in a language that is equally accessible to all citizens, and it must be possible to justify them in this language as well”.¹⁶⁶ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson likewise argue that citizens should “press their public claims in terms accessible to their fellow citizens”.¹⁶⁷

The general idea expressed by Audi, Laborde, Habermas, and Gutmann and Thompson, among others, has been called the “accessibility requirement” of public reason, and has been thought of as “[t]he most common property that determines whether a reason is public” and “perhaps the most popular epistemic constraint” for public justification—, hence its great importance.¹⁶⁸ Distilled succinctly by Christopher Eberle, the requirement can be defined more precisely as: “A citizen’s rationale R counts as a public justification for a given coercive law only if R is publicly accessible”.¹⁶⁹ The upshot, for the scope of public reason, is that reasons that are inaccessible are barred from

needed for civilized life” (Audi, Robert, 1997, “The State, the Church and the Citizen,” in Paul J. Weithman (ed.), *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 49, and asks, “Why would God compound the incalculable loss suffered by rejecting one's Creator with the impossibility of even discovering how one should behave in the absence of such a supreme authority? If the freedom preserved by the religious ambiguity of the world is so valuable, should we not expect God to provide for access to rational standards, discoverable by secular inquiry, for the proper exercise of that freedom?” (Audi, 49).

¹⁶³ Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157

¹⁶⁴ Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 158

¹⁶⁵ Robert Audi, 1997, 49

¹⁶⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): pp. 1-25.

¹⁶⁷ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Frank Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement: Why Moral Conflict Cannot Be Avoided in Politics, and What Should Be Done about It* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1997), 57

¹⁶⁸ Kevin Vallier, “Against Public Reason Liberalism’s Accessibility Requirement.” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8, no.3 (2011): 367. <https://doi.org/10.1163/174552411X588991>.

¹⁶⁹ Christopher J. Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 255.

entering the “justificatory pool”.¹⁷⁰ (Of course, more requirements may be needed, but I will not focus on those here).

The crux of the accessibility issue, then, is that not only do religious reasons seem, at least on the face of it, to be reasons we cannot reasonably expect our fellow citizens in a pluralistic liberal democracy to accept or share in, i.e., they do not have this ‘shareable’ quality, but they seem to be reasons that we cannot even reasonably expect our fellow citizens to understand, in some sense of the term.

Why is this exactly? One way of capturing the worry here is that religious reasons contain an appeal to a supernatural authoritative force that is itself inaccessible, and perhaps paradigmatically so, to non-believers or different believers.¹⁷¹ Compare this to the force of reasons in moral arguments. These reasons, even if embedded in comprehensive doctrines (like Utilitarianism or Kantianism), seem to depend on the force of reason alone, which anyone can access. In contrast, at some point, (at least some) religious reasons are ultimately grounded in something supernatural or extra-human, which cannot obviously be accessed by just anyone using their capacity for reason. This is expressed well through Abner Greene’s ‘secret box metaphor’. Green states:

Imagine, for a moment, a group of citizens that has access to a box that contains evidence supporting a certain argument for a particular law. Suppose that group relies in the political process on the contents of that box but denies other citizens access to that box and its contents. We should exclude such shenanigans from politics because some citizens have access to the source of authority backing the law, while others are excluded from that source of authority.¹⁷²

This secret box metaphor is meant to reveal the absurdity of relying on an “extrahuman source of normative authority” that is “beyond the scope of human

¹⁷⁰ The term “justificatory pool” is used by Marilyn Friedman, “John Rawls and the Political Coercion of Unreasonable People” in Victoria Davion and Clark Wolf. *The Idea of a Political Liberalism : Essays on Rawls*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 16.

¹⁷¹ Robert Audi also contrasts religious reasons from secular reasons by reference to authority. He states that a secular reason is, “roughly, one whose normative force, that is, its status as a prima facie justificatory element, does not (evidentially) depend on the existence of God (for example, through appeals to divine command), or on theological considerations (such as interpretations of a sacred text), or on the pronouncements of a person or institution qua religious authority” (278). Robert Audi, “The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 18 (1989): 278.

¹⁷² Abner Greene, “Uncommon Ground,” *a review essay on John Rawls's Political Liberalism and on Ronald Dworkin's Life's Dominion*, in *George Washington Law Review*, 1994, 62, no. 2, p.659; In Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 255.

experience” as justification for a particular law or policy.¹⁷³ To be sure, Greene acknowledges that not all religious arguments seem to rely on this kind of authority; they can resemble moral or philosophical arguments and share in the same authority of reason as such. Still, it is those “special relationships that the Believers have with that source of authority and that other citizens might not have” that prevents other citizens from accessing religious reasons that *depend*, if only in part, on this ‘special relationship’.¹⁷⁴ Now, with an understanding of why our public reason giving needs to be accessible, and why religious reasons seem to be inaccessible, let us consider some recent efforts to respond to the charge of inaccessibility leveled against religious reasons.

2.3 Solutions: Three Epistemic Sources of Justification

Faith-friendly critics have argued, on various grounds, that the secret box is not so secret after all. On such views, the religious reasons, and the religious beliefs that give rise to such reasons, can be accessed by anyone, ‘in principle’. I will now survey just a few of these arguments, focusing on the epistemic sources of Christian Mystical Perception (CMP), natural theology, and testimony that purport to ground religious reasons. Why focus on these sources? It would seem that sources of justification are key to understanding accessibility as more than mere bare intelligibility, since, as Vallier points out, “even the most absurd arguments can be understood”.¹⁷⁵ This is important if such reasons are to enter the justificatory pool. To enter, they must “involve some small degree of justification to the public reasoning of citizens”.¹⁷⁶ While this may be correct, I will go on to argue that such sources are still insufficient for citizens to access the emotional thrust, or ‘salience’ of religious reasons, especially when we look at how they are used in practice. For now, let’s look at the sources.

2.3.1 Christian Mystical Perception

¹⁷³ Greene, “Uncommon Ground”, 659; In Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 255

¹⁷⁴ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 255

¹⁷⁵ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 370

¹⁷⁶ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 370

We can begin with Christopher Eberle's argument, and his focus on Christian Mystical Perception as one source of justification. In *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, Eberle argues that the secret box metaphor doesn't hold.¹⁷⁷ This is because, he thinks, not all citizens need to actually have that 'special relationship' to a religious source of authority for the reasons that are generated from that relationship to be accessible to them. Instead, for an argument containing religious reasons to be accessible, it must only be *possible* for agents to *assess* the arguments that are derived from a relationship to that authority.¹⁷⁸

How might this work? Eberle homes in on one particular epistemic source, theorized primarily by William Alston, called Christian Mystical Perception (CMP).¹⁷⁹ Eberle takes CMP to be a test case to show how religious beliefs can be accessible *in theory*. CMP is the view that religious experiences have a perceptual nature, and one can form warranted beliefs about God by perceiving God, not unlike the way one forms beliefs about physical objects by seeing them.¹⁸⁰ As Alston puts it, "[t]he experience, or, as I shall say, the perception, of God plays an epistemic role with respect to beliefs about God importantly analogous to that played by sense perception with respect to beliefs about the physical world".¹⁸¹ Further, perceiving God is thought to result in certain beliefs, e.g., that God has certain characteristics or attributes, or is or has performed certain actions. For instance, Eberle references one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s conversations with God as an example. In his biography, King says:

And it seemed at that moment that I could hear an inner voice saying to me, 'Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo I will be with you, even until the end of the world.' . . . I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*. 256

¹⁷⁸ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 256-257.

¹⁷⁹ William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹⁸⁰ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 241

¹⁸¹ William Alston, "Perceiving God," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 655

¹⁸² Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 241-242. Martin Luther King, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: IPM Intellectual Properties Management, Inc., 2001).

King's experience and communication with God presumably reveals that God *is* just, *is* a comforter, is speaking with him, etc. Most importantly, Eberle thinks that such communication with God should be, *like our other sense perceptions*, taken as at least initially reliable, and so "presumptively innocent".¹⁸³ That is, if it is anything like our other sense perceptions, which are accepted as veridical unless shown to be otherwise, mystical perception should likewise be "innocent until proven guilty".¹⁸⁴ Of course, mystical perceptions must ultimately be scrutinized according to how they comport with "biblical interpretation and moral reflection" and be epistemically assessed accordingly.¹⁸⁵ This makes it so mystical perception is not immune from criticism. At the very least, if mystical perception *doesn't* cohere with commonly held beliefs about "God's character and past activities", it can be disconfirmed.¹⁸⁶ Eberle offers a much more complex account of the doxastic criteria necessary to evaluate these beliefs based in CMP than is necessary to flesh out here. The upshot, for our purposes, is simply that CMP appears to give rise to accessible religious beliefs, just as "perception, introspection, memory, testimony" etc. do, because we do not have clear grounds to outright reject mystical perception.¹⁸⁷

To be sure, Eberle admits that, in practice, CMP might not actually be popular, especially with respect to its political import. That is, religious citizens may not actually tend to report that CMP is primarily what guides them to, for instance, "support restrictions on abortion, or oppose capital punishment".¹⁸⁸ However, just because citizens do not have a habit of relying on CMP, or referencing it in public, does not mean it is not *in principle* accessible. Eberle thinks that this simply means that citizens happen to not conceive of their beliefs in these theoretical, or 'perceptual' terms, just as someone who doesn't study environmental science happens to not have a deep, theoretical understanding of climate change. However, we do not think scientific explanations of climate change are inaccessible *in principle* when some people either choose to not study them, or whose circumstances did not or do not encourage them to do so.

¹⁸³ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 244

¹⁸⁴ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 244; Alston, 1993.

¹⁸⁵ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 243

¹⁸⁶ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 243

¹⁸⁷ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 245

¹⁸⁸ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 251

Eberle ultimately claims that “surely it is possible for any human being to perceive God”.¹⁸⁹ Because it is possible for any human to perceive God, to develop this capacity, the political import for *citizens* is the following:

[M]ystical perception is thoroughly democratic in the relevant sense: just as any citizen enjoys cognitive capacities he *could have* employed to understand and evaluate the scientific theories that bear on specific coercive laws even though he can’t in fact, any citizen can perceive God in that he enjoys cognitive capacities that he can employ to perceive God even though he does not.¹⁹⁰

The upshot is this, for Eberle: If acceptance of CMP is the hard case, as it seems to be, and we can show that even the hard case makes religious reasons accessible in principle, this suggests public reason liberals should also be open to other, less controversial grounds for belief.¹⁹¹ Religious reasons, generated from these less controversial grounds, are sure to also be accessible.

2.3.2. Natural Theology

As I will eventually go on to affirm, I think Eberle is right to acknowledge that while we might be able to assess religious reasons in principle if we employed the relevant cognitive capacity, our environments will make it so this is more or less easy for certain individuals. However, I don’t think Eberle take this thought far enough. In the meantime, it is now worth turning to a criticism that has already been leveled against Eberle’s reliance on CMP to defend the accessibility of religious reasons, as articulated by Kevin Vallier.

Vallier claims that Eberle’s reliance on mystical experience, based in reformed epistemology, rests on too substantive an epistemic commitment, one that political liberals are unlikely to accept.¹⁹² So, Vallier’s response has been to explore other, more

¹⁸⁹ Christopher J. Eberle, “Liberalism and Mysticism,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 13, no. 1 (1996): 209

¹⁹⁰ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 260; italics added

¹⁹¹ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 240

¹⁹² Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 368. It is worth noting that, as I see it, Vallier doesn’t get Eberle’s view here quite right. Eberle claims to be making a case for the accessibility of CMP because it is the hard case, and not necessarily because his view *relies on* CMP itself. Even though I take it that Vallier’s criticism doesn’t accurately capture Eberle’s intention in discussing CMP, I nevertheless think we should

ordinary, sources of justification as the basis upon which religious reasons can be accessible. Even though he ultimately rejects the accessibility requirement, for reasons which I won't explore in depth here, we can focus on those two epistemic sources Vallier takes to be more congenial to the public reason liberal's case for making sense of how religious reasons could be accessible: natural theology and testimony.¹⁹³ Although Vallier takes these sources to be related, let's start by looking at them independently, beginning with natural theology.

Unlike CMP, natural theology grounds itself in those faculties that are thought to be "natural" to all humans. This includes relying on one's capacity for rationality. One can use one's ordinary rationality to make or understand, for instance, an argument for the existence of God, as opposed to relying on any mystical faculty or way of knowing; one need only to use their natural capacity for rationality to *see whether the religious argument holds*, and anyone can, if suitably idealized, do this. So, for instance, Vallier raises the example of an argument against abortion that depends on premises that can be assessed by any non-religious person. Any non-religious person can, for instance, evaluate the premises that one has reason to believe God enjoins souls to body, and conception is an obvious candidate for when this enjoining first occurs.¹⁹⁴ One does not need to have a revelatory experience to see that this could be true, as many citizens believe to be the case.

Being capable of assessing an argument in natural theology means, of course, that citizens may reject such arguments. What matters, according to Vallier, "is that each premise in the argument can be evaluated and assigned positive epistemic status", though only by citizens who are sufficiently idealized in various ways.¹⁹⁵ That is, depending on the level of idealization we accord to citizens' capacities for rationality, information, or coherence between beliefs, we can generate suitably accessible arguments.¹⁹⁶ And while

consider Vallier's alternative epistemic sources as important insofar as these may move us closer to how actual citizens do in fact justify their religious beliefs.

¹⁹³Vallier ultimately rejects the accessibility requirement on the basis that "*either the accessibility requirement is so loose that it is trivial or so restrictive that it is implausible*" (2011, 368).

¹⁹⁴ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 376

¹⁹⁵ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 378

¹⁹⁶ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 371. This means, of course, that even reasonably well-informed citizens, who make *invalid* arguments, and so are not maximally rational, are included.

Vallier notes that while arguments in natural theology might appear rather sophisticated, they can “[require] relatively little cognitive equipment”, and so “will count as accessible across a large range of idealization values”.¹⁹⁷ I will give a more detailed example of such an argument below.

2.3.3 Testimony

The second kind of epistemic source Vallier considers is testimony. Even if we think that arguments in natural theology are still too sophisticated to count as accessible, testimony can help fill in the gaps. Those who do not understand an argument in natural theology in full can rely on the religious testimony of others who do. What is religious testimony? Vallier takes an expansive view, defining it as “any statement or utterance concerning the action of or communication with supernatural agents”.¹⁹⁸ This covers statements in the Bible or Torah, for instance, since they are sacred texts that record the testimony of individual encounters with supernatural agents. To help flesh out the epistemic role of religious testimony, Vallier considers an example: Teresa is someone whose belief that homosexuality is impermissible depends on accepting the following:

- (i) The Bible is the central communication of God to humanity
- (ii) The Bible is therefore infallible.
- (iii) The Bible teaches that homosexual practices are morally impermissible
- (iv) Therefore, homosexual practices are morally impermissible (Vallier, 380)

On the basis of these reasons, Teresa believes homosexual practices should not be legal. Is this argument *inaccessible*? Vallier surmises that part of why some people may find the argument inaccessible is because they simply, for whatever reason, disagree with premise (i).¹⁹⁹ But this is different from more simply understanding the argument, and at the proper level of idealization, anyone non-Christian can understand it. Part of this

¹⁹⁷ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 372

¹⁹⁸ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 380

¹⁹⁹ Vallier states that “it appears that the standard reasons for believing premise (i) are ones that are not accessible to those who reasonably disagree. Sometimes people believe the proposition for no reason at all, or merely through testimony” (2011, 381).

response thus relies on what Vallier has already said about natural theology, since, after all, one can, *in theory*, assign positive epistemic status to each premise by relying on the testimony of others, such as theologians, who *have* argued in their favor through sophisticated arguments. So, again, while premise (i), that “the Bible is the central communication of God to humanity” might seem inaccessible to non-Christians, theologians and philosophers have long argued (1) that God exists, (2) that God’s existence entails his goodness, (3) that “a good God would communicate with and aid His creatures”, and (4) the best case we have of this is the bible.²⁰⁰

How exactly is testimony functioning here? It seems that, because of the reliable religious testimony of various theologians and philosophers, and the arguments that they develop, Teresa’s own testimony here can indirectly depend on these figures and arguments, thus rendering *her* testimony, *relying* on the reliable testimony of others, (supposedly) accessible.

Finally, Vallier claims that reasons derived from testimony are accessible in another way. He argues that “moral testimony and religious testimony are epistemically symmetrical”, and moral testimony is clearly accessible.²⁰¹ Like religious testimony, “[o]ur moral judgments seldom arise from pure reason; instead, we form many moral beliefs based on the norms those around us already accept”, especially friends and parents, but also priests and spiritual mentors.²⁰² Key, here, is that we believe these testimonies to be reliable often because we trust such persons more generally; when they are “honest, well-informed, level-headed and (at least) tacitly [employ] a reasonable standard of evidence”, we rightly infer that this also applies to the way they assess evidence for moral matters.²⁰³ And just as we trust the testimony of our friends with respect to moral matters, we ought to grant that religious citizens, perhaps unable to assent to arguments in natural theology on their own accord, can trust those who display competence and reliability with respect to religious matters.

²⁰⁰ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 381

²⁰¹ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 382

²⁰² Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 382

²⁰³ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 383

As an example, Vallier considers Claude, an underprivileged black man living in Alabama in 1955.²⁰⁴ Claude's pastor is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his sermons, King gives a religious reason to his congregation in favour of boycotting the segregation constitutive of the Montgomery bus system. His reasoning is that "segregation is an affront to their humanity because God created men with equal dignity".²⁰⁵ Despite "not entirely understanding King's reasoning", Claude trusts King's understanding of the bible, and goes through with the boycotting.²⁰⁶ When asked to explain this to his friend Bobby, Claude defends his trust in King. Bobby says, in response, "I'm sorry, but you have just given me an inaccessible reason. I'm not a Christian and I don't much trust pastors when it comes to morality. By offering such a reason, you're disrespecting me by asserting your authority to change the law without giving me a reason that I can access".²⁰⁷ Clearly, Vallier claims, "Bobby's reaction to Claude seems obtuse and even bizarre".²⁰⁸

Overall, Vallier takes himself to have shown that religious reasons can be accessible since citizens, at the appropriate level of idealization, can either assess them for themselves, or they can trust in the religious testimony of others who offer more sophisticated reasoning. What is more, like Eberle, Vallier eventually arrives at the idea that the accessibility requirement, which was "practically crafted with religious reasons in mind", does not appear to exclude any religious reasons on grounds of accessibility, and so it is unclear what work the requirement is doing.²⁰⁹ More specifically, since "*either the accessibility requirement is so loose that it is trivial or so restrictive that it is implausible*", it should be rejected.²¹⁰ The clearest route for the political liberal is then to develop a new conception of idealization by which we can structure the requirements of public reason, according to Vallier, because "[t]he search for a new understanding of accessibility seems like a dead end".²¹¹

²⁰⁴ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 384

²⁰⁵ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 384

²⁰⁶ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 383

²⁰⁷ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 385

²⁰⁸ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 385

²⁰⁹ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 386; Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 239.

²¹⁰ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 368

²¹¹ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 386

2.4 Limitations of Current Accounts

Contrary to Vallier's conclusion, I don't think that the search for a new understanding of accessibility is a dead end. There is at least one underexplored way of seeing accessibility that we should examine before we give up. The route I propose focuses on emotion. If we are to follow the path that Eberle and Vallier have laid out for us, we can see emotion as, first, one additional way of justifying religious reasons. However, as I will explore below, I think there is an even more promising way of seeing emotion as instead aiding in the accessibility of religious reasons by way of rhetoric, which I take to be more likely accepted by the political liberal. Before I get to this new route of accessibility though, let us first see why we might want a new route in the first place. That is, let us see why current routes are limited in their explanations of why religious beliefs and the reasons they give rise to are indeed accessible.

To be sure, Eberle and Vallier's depictions of accessibility are important to the extent that they emphasize how religious beliefs and corresponding reasons can be considered rational. This addresses, I think, the very real tendency for non-religious citizens to see religious claims as on less stable epistemic ground than non-religious claims, and, as Jeremy Waldron points out, addresses the tendency for non-religious citizens to "assume they know what a religious argument is like", which is not just "a crude prescription from God, backed up by threat of hellfire".²¹² As Eberle frames it, "given the high regard in which we moderns typically hold rationality, if religion is to thrive, or even survive, in the modern world, its adherents must make good on the claim that their commitment to religion is rational".²¹³

2.4.1 The Propositional Content Worry

Despite the promise of these views, though, I nevertheless think that too heavy a focus on rationality, expressed in the form of *in principle* assessability, doesn't get the picture of accessibility quite right. It might be true that religious citizens' reasons can be

²¹² Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations of John Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007): 20.

²¹³ Eberle, *Religious Conviction*, 15.

grounded in CMP, natural theology, or testimony, but even while these epistemic sources make it so religious reasons are justified in theory, this doesn't explain why citizens may nevertheless still have a sense that they do not *really* grasp their fellow citizens' religious reasons, despite the reasons containing or giving rise to an argument that is perfectly coherent in the sense of being epistemically assessable (minimally or maximally) or based in justified trust.

Why is this? First, one way of seeing the limits of these views, Vallier's reliance on natural theology in particular, is in terms of the limits of assessing *propositional content*. For instance, I might be able to intellectually understand Teresa's proposition that homosexual practices should be banned in part because the bible's claims are infallible (Vallier's example), but it is just as reasonable to expect that I nevertheless will not *really* grasp this claim if I don't *feel* the thrust of the argument on the whole (what this "thrust" means exactly, and what resources and experiences are required to feel the thrust of an argument, will be explored in my analysis on rhetoric). As Wilfred Cantel Smith writes, anyone "can know all about a religious system, and yet may totally miss the point", and this no doubt applies to religious arguments as well.²¹⁴

Why is this exactly? Describing accessibility in terms of assessing propositions alone doesn't account for the lived experiences individuals bring into their reasoning, experiences that would render religious propositions meaningful, not to mention compelling or even convincing (but since we are focused on accessibility, we need not go this far; we are not at the level of acceptability or shareability). Without such experiences, there may be nothing for the non-religious citizen to latch onto, in their own world, that would make religious reasons have that kind of sticky quality that would allow them to really grasp them.²¹⁵

Second, while propositional content might be what makes a religious reason *in principle* assessable by anyone, this doesn't address the pressing concern that while citizens might be *capable* of understanding religious reasons, they may nevertheless be *unwilling* to do the work of rendering them comprehensible for themselves in the

²¹⁴ William A. Nord., 1995. *Religion & American Education : Rethinking a National Dilemma*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 217.

²¹⁵ For a similar line of thinking, see John Horton, "Reasonable Disagreement," in *Multiculturalism and Moral Conflict*, ed. Peter Stirk and Maria Dimova-Cookson (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010): 67

meaningful way just mentioned; that is, they may nevertheless be unwilling to engage with such reasons as live options in the relevant political debate. So, while such reasons might have good epistemic grounds, it is, as Jeremy Waldron argues, really this lack of willingness that is at issue.²¹⁶

Third, when we focus on propositional content, it seems that we are also limited to framing religious reasons as *either* inaccessible *or* accessible, depending on whether we *can or cannot* assign positive status to the claims of our fellow citizens. However, our intuitions suggest, I think, that there is gradient of accessibility to religious reasons, such that they can be *more or less* accessible, depending on those other factors that render epistemic assessment a living process for citizens. Again, what these factors are will be discussed below.

2.4.2 The Burdens of Judgement Worry

To be sure, one explanation for why non-religious citizens do not always take religious claims in public seriously is no doubt partly because of epistemic vices, such as intellectual arrogance or close-mindedness (which, of course, can just as easily afflict the religious citizen). However, as prevalent as these vices may be, they are not the only obstacles for epistemic assessment. As John Rawls recognizes, even reasonable people's use of reason is structured according the many normal "hazards involved in the correct or conscientious" use of it.²¹⁷ Such hazards, e.g., like one's overall life experience, being what Rawls called the "burdens of judgement".²¹⁸ So, *reasonable disagreement* is disagreement that is not necessarily coloured by epistemic vices, but instead is an inevitable and persistent condition.²¹⁹

What I'm claiming here is that not only does reasonable *disagreement* arise from our being differently positioned to assess arguments, subject to the burdens of judgement, but we are similarly and inevitably burdened even at the level of *understanding* one another's claims in the way they are intended by the reasoner. The burdens of judgement

²¹⁶ Waldron, "Two-Way Translation", 861.

²¹⁷ Rawls, *PL*, 55

²¹⁸ Rawls, *PL*, 55-56

²¹⁹ Rawls, *PL*, 56; 52-57

make it so we may always, despite being *capable* of intellectually assessing religious arguments, not *fully* see the arguments in the way different religious citizens want them to be seen, with a particular force (or a particular liveliness, or color), even without epistemic vices at play. This is particularly true of the so-called ‘burden’ of “overall life experience” that Rawls mentions, which may or may not provide the groundwork for religious reasons to be meaningful, perhaps owing to the individuals own explicitly religious or lack of religious experiences over the course of a lifetime. Again, what this suggests is that we may want a notion of accessibility that captures my recasting of Rawls’s worry, one which can explain that while we cannot *fully* access one another’s claims, we can *partially* do so. What is more, this partial accessibility may be sufficient for including such claims into the justificatory pool, as I’ll suggest at the end.

2.4.3. The Disanalogous Testimony Worry

To be sure, one might still think that Vallier’s idea of testimony is a promising solution to the problem of inaccessibility here. First, reliance on testimony suggests that citizens may not need to assess religious reasons at all, at least, not formally, to access one another’s religious reasons. One simply needs to trust others who *can* do that assessment, as Vallier claims. Second, for a reason Vallier doesn’t consider, testimony can be communicated in a variety of ways, and so the role of testimony in making our reasons accessible implies that there is perhaps something important to the *way* we grapple with, arrive at, and express our reasons with others. Third, even if testimony is relevant as a source of justification, we might still think that trust in the relevant source of authority depends heavily on some experiential and emotional component. That is, even if we aren’t acquainted with the arguments (even if they check out ‘in principle’ according to those in positions of authority) we must, importantly, *feel* that we trust others before we can take their testimony seriously.²²⁰

²²⁰ I won’t argue for this in detail. However, the general idea is supported by many philosophers who think that trust is itself an emotion, or resembles an emotion, rather than a belief, or merely a belief. See Ronald De Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987); Robert C. Solomon and Cheshire Calhoun, “Cognitive Emotions?,” in *What Is an Emotion?: Classic Readings in Philosophical Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Rorty Amélie, in *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley

What about the analogy between moral testimony and religious testimony? Can this save Vallier's account, and explain how religious arguments are made meaningful in our reason-giving? While it might be the case that moral and religious testimony could be sufficiently epistemically similar in that both be traced back to a rich history of reputable sources (Aquinas, Kant, etc.), the issue with the analogy is that religious testimony, at least as Vallier defines it, still traces back to a religious testimony, which is a "statement or utterance concerning the action of or communication with supernatural agents".²²¹ This is at odds with moral testimony. Although utterances concerning the supernatural could be distilled in the form of arguments of natural theology, those arguments seem to still depend on someone, down the line, having some kind of experience (as non-mystical as this may be) that would feed the arguments in a way that might not be the case for moral arguments. The analogy thus breaks off when the non-believer is inevitably stopped short from really understanding what communication with supernatural agents could consist in, since they will not (even though they *could*, in principle) experience *this* for themselves. If they did, or if they have had such experiences and continued to recognize their authority, it is likely they would hold a different set of beliefs—they *would believe*. Ultimately, since religious testimony must at some point rely on witnessing the action or communication of supernatural agents, it isn't clear why this will render religious reasons accessible in the same way moral argumentation is accessible, given the non-believers lack of experience with and belief in the supernatural.

For arguments sake, however, let's grant that moral and religious testimony can be sufficiently similar. We might think that moral testimony also requires some experiential component in order for it to similarly be felt, and so grasped, in the way religious testimony could be. For instance, personal experiences with racism, or poverty, or other unjust forms of treatment, may ground our receptivity to some moral testimonies over others, making them more accessible than they otherwise would be. For instance, as John Horton argues, "If my personal experience leads me to think that serious poverty is a particularly terrible condition, the *full force* of this is not something that can necessarily

(Calif.): University of California Press, 1980), and especially Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996): pp. 4-25.

²²¹ Vallier, "Accessibility Requirement", 380.

be exhaustively explicated through a series of propositions about poverty”.²²² The full force of a moral argument is bound to contain some “affective dimension”, Horton argues.²²³ Applying this thought to the communication of testimony, we might think that, as I will argue shortly, the affective component of an argument is important for citizens to both arrive at and communicate their religious reasons, just as it would be crucial for any non-religious citizen’s moral reasons.

At this point, I’ve presented a number of criticisms to current accounts of accessibility, but what is their upshot? I want to suggest that ‘in principle’ accessibility alone does little work to explain what makes a series of propositions meaningful, or trust in the testimonies that rely on these propositions even (if indirectly) possible. If the requirement that religious reasons should be accessible is to have import into our actual political communities, we cannot stop at the rationality and justification of beliefs in principle. As Waldron sees it, the issue with religious reasons is not the “ ‘can’t’ of unintelligibility; [rather] the issue is the ‘won’t’ of intellectual refusal”.²²⁴ Again, this doesn’t mean we have to take a dive into an analysis of the epistemic vices afflicting citizens. Rather, since I take it that the issue of religious reasons is still about intelligibility (framed here as accessibility) thinking of accessibility and “intellectual refusal” together requires us to consider what mechanisms or conditions *can* position citizens to, can *invite them into*, being able to meaningfully engage with such arguments. What makes these arguments not merely *in principle* plausible, but lively enough that non-religious citizens can get a sense that they really are grasping what religious citizens are claiming (again, even if they ultimately reject these claims)? And what conditions could allow non-religious citizens the opportunity to get *closer* to how religious citizens access their reasons, at least in some small way, and without non-religious citizens bearing too great an epistemic burden?

²²² John Horton, “Reasonable Disagreement,” in *Multiculturalism and Moral Conflict*, ed. Peter Stirk and Maria Dimova-Cookson (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 67.

²²³ Horton writes that “affectivity can influence not only what we believe, but also how passionately we believe it, which may underpin our conviction, and our subjective sense of certainty in relation to it - something that can clearly be of seminal importance in political contexts” (2010, 67).

²²⁴ Jeremy Waldron, “Two-way translation: the ethics of engaging with religious contributions in public deliberation.” *Mercer L. Rev.* 63 (2011): 861.

2.5. Accessibility and Emotion

Given the limitations of *in principle* accessibility, it is worth exploring a new way of understanding accessibility. The route I want to explore focuses on emotion. This involves two parts. First, I will explore emotion as a source of justification in itself in order to see if emotion can fit the picture that Vallier and Eberle lay out, i.e., simply as another kind of epistemic source that grounds religious beliefs. I then suggest that even if this route is plausible, and rightly captures how religious citizens view and experience the meaning of their beliefs, it remains only a plausible grounding for believers, and does not yet explain what could make these beliefs accessible to non-believers. So, it is still insufficient to account for how the non-religious citizen can be positioned to epistemically evaluate their fellow citizens religious claims in the first place.

We do not have the space to survey all philosophical theories of emotion, which disagree about their nature, and the relation between emotions and beliefs. However, we can nevertheless assess one prominent theorist's account, specific to how emotion can justify religious beliefs (or, as Robert Roberts more strongly frames it, can be the basis of truth and knowledge).²²⁵

2.5.1 Emotion as Justification

On this view, Robert C. Roberts argues that Christian emotion can “play a fundamental role of access to the central Christian truths about God, the world, and ourselves”.²²⁶ For instance, “[j]ust as the normal access to the proposition, ‘These leaves

²²⁵ Roberts uses the terms truth and knowledge, instead of mere belief, because he rightly acknowledges (1) that knowledge is more epistemically praiseworthy than mere belief, which seems wanting of direct experience that we would typically claim gives rise to knowledge. This is evident when Christians say, for instance, they “*know* the glory of God”, rather than simply believe in it. Moreover, (2) knowledge that comes from relying on the testimony of others, as when we “might know, on authority from the saints of [our] community, that the heavens declare the glory of God”, is still less strong than the knowledge that comes with direct experience (84). Roberts calls the former “mere Christian knowledge” (84). But emotions in direct experience give us “normal Christian knowledge” (84). That is, Roberts proposes, “a very important and probably the central form of Christian experience is the Christian emotions: For the central truths of Christian faith, *the most fundamental (normal, perfect) epistemic access is such emotions as joy, gratitude, contrition, hope, and peace*. These ground normal Christian knowledge, as contrasted with mere Christian knowledge” (84).

²²⁶ Roberts, “Emotions as Access”, 90

are green,' is to see the leaves with one's own eyes, so the normal access to the proposition, 'Jesus died for your sins,' is to *feel* gratitude and peace and other emotions".²²⁷ This is reminiscent of Eberle's description of CMP, the difference being that one's propositional knowledge of the central Christian truths is accessible distinctly via one's emotions. It is as if one perceives such propositions through one's heart, as when Paul states you can have "the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which [God] has called you".²²⁸

Roberts, more specifically, argues that the role of emotions, like hope, are to construe states of affairs in a certain way. In this way, our felt emotion has intentional content analogous to that of perception. But instead of our seeing grass *as green*, for instance, we "see" (we *feel*) states of affairs as imbued with a certain kind of value or importance. That is, it is a part of the nature of emotions not to just describe how we feel, nor to just make factual claims about the world, but to see those facts as valuable or important in some felt way. Roberts gives the following proposition as an example: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself".²²⁹

- 1) The world (I, we) was alienated from (in rebellion against, at war with) God
- 2) God has reconciled the world (me, us) to himself: we are no longer at war with him
- 3) The war was scandalous, despicable, miserable, wretched
- 4) The peace that God has established between us and himself is glorious, precious, splendid.²³⁰

Roberts thinks that propositions 3 and 4 express concerns (repugnance at being alienated from God, or a "desire for the war's end"), while propositions 1 and 2 express truths that are inextricably tied to the concerns.²³¹ That is, if 1 and 2 are true, as they are thought to be in Christianity, then "the states of affairs that obtain if they are true have the weight or importance ascribed to them in propositions 3 and 4".²³²

Further, on Roberts' account, by perceiving God emotionally, i.e., by experiencing a particularly Christian version of peace, joy, gratitude, contrition, etc., and

²²⁷ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 84. *Italics added.*

²²⁸ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 84. Ephesians 1.18-19a.

²²⁹ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 87.

²³⁰ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 87

²³¹ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 87

²³² Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 87

these emotions lead one to *believe* certain states of affairs obtain that have a particular importance, namely, the importance God ascribes to them. So, grasping the states of the affairs *and* their importance come as a package deal with emotionally perceiving God.²³³ Put differently, to *truly* grasp the propositions above, one has to see them with the eyes of one's heart.

Now, what does this tell us about the accessibility of religious reasons? More specifically, how can emotion actually justify one's religious beliefs? The idea that emotions can have justificatory power might be unintuitive, because, first, an emotional perception of God and what God deems important doesn't seem to show that such states of affairs are, in fact, the case. That is, emotions do not obviously have the same causal grounds as our other modes of perception. After all, one can have the emotions of peace, joy, forgiveness, etc., without thinking that God causes these emotions in oneself. At least, emotions do not obviously seem to be caused in the same way grass causes us to see grass as green, at least from the perspective of the non-believer.

Second, it may seem like emotions cannot be justificatory because they can be misplaced. For instance, just as we may believe the stick in the water is bent, when it is in fact not bent, emotions, like beliefs, can get the world wrong (e.g., feeling angry when you think someone has purposefully tripped you, when they in fact tripped you accidentally; or feeling fear after watching a horror film, and so reading into every noise you hear the belief that someone has broken into your home; or grieving for a disproportionately long time).²³⁴ In sum, our emotions do not always track states of affairs and their value correctly all the time.

To address this, Roberts argues that some emotions are different; they are "about what they are about".²³⁵ That is, they can be tied up with their causes in a way that makes them disanalogous to sense perception. And this seems likely if the emotions, as we are exploring here with religious emotions, are in some sense *about* their creator. As Roberts states, "given the intimacy [...]between the experience of (say) joy or peace and that of the presence of God, it isn't at all implausible to suppose that in some particularly saintly instances of these emotions God's agency in causing the experiential content of the

²³³ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 87.

²³⁴ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 91.

²³⁵ Roberts, "Emotions as Access", 85

emotion is one of the things the emotion is an experience of ”.²³⁶ Thus, believers would seem justified in believing what their emotions tell them in at least some saintly instances of certain emotions, namely, about God’s existence and/or characteristics of God (as peace-giver, as loving, etc.).

However, on Roberts’s view, this is only likely if one already believes, and the emotions then seem to play the role of making those beliefs more or less concrete. So, it is not clear the same process occurs for non-believers. Roberts thus doubts the “apologetic usefulness” of so-called “Christian emotions”, since while “emotions may give us access to truths, they do so only within a conceptual framework” (one which non-believers would not share).²³⁷

2.5.2 Limitations to Emotion as Justification

The strength of Roberts’s view is that it aptly pinpoints the deep relevance of emotional experiences that colour, even seem to justify, believer’s beliefs. This, for instance, makes sense of the widely held Christian idea that God *is* love, and when one experiences God, one experiences love (and maybe vice versa). Here, the experiential nature of emotion confirms what our emotion tells us about the world, and about God. Robert’s view appears to help us then, since he offers an epistemic source that is, while notably different, still along the same lines as the story Vallier and Eberle tell. Emotion is here just another epistemic source that reveals why believer’s beliefs are justified.

The question is whether such justification can extend to the idea of non-believers accessing religious beliefs and the *political reasons* they give rise to on grounds of emotion. Like Vallier and Eberle’s views, Roberts’s theory also runs into limitations at this level. Even if his theory tracks ordinary religious citizens’ ways of justifying their beliefs, this will nevertheless be too epistemically rich to be acceptable to the public reason liberal. That is, Roberts’ theory is vulnerable to Vallier’s worry that emotion, like CMP, contains too many “epistemically substantive commitments”,²³⁸ after all, surely the non-religious person is not going to accept that God causes emotions in us if they won’t

²³⁶ Roberts, “Emotions as Access”, 91

²³⁷ Roberts, “Emotions as Access”, 92.

²³⁸ Vallier, “Accessibility Requirement”, 386.

accept that God causes mystical experiences in us. (They are unlikely to have the relevant experience in either case). So, it's unclear how exactly Roberts' view could be yield accessible religious reasons to the non-believer (which Roberts himself acknowledges).

Roberts' view seems to get us back to where we started then. Recall that I said in principle accessibility is limited insofar as it insufficiently describes the kind of experience needed to allow for citizens to meaningfully access one another's beliefs. Although religious citizens may be inclined to access truths about God via the emotions, we cannot reasonably expect non-religious citizens to be moved by these same emotions—or at least, not in quite the same way—even if it is possible, in principle. We cannot expect them to be moved without accounting for the conditions in which this is practically possible, and in a way that is distinct to religious reasons for political action. It is these conditions that I want to turn to now.

2.6 Rhetoric

Since in principle accessibility is insufficient to make sense of how religious reasons can be accessible, where do we go from here? Can emotion still provide a way for religious reasons to be accessible, in a different sense? I think it can, but in ways beyond justification. One distinct way in which emotion has invaluable political use (and one way that certainly is not novel in its own right) is through rhetoric. The emotions found in the rhetoric of our speech, in the communication of our reasons for political action, may turn out to be central to the understanding of our fellow citizens claims.²³⁹ Such views harken back to Aristotle, but have presently found their way back into the deliberative democracy literature. This is in no small part because of feminist philosopher, Iris Marion Young, who challenges the focus in deliberative democracy literature on argumentation.²⁴⁰

Young notes a few examples of the parts of speech that can compose rhetoric: “[h]umor, word- play, images, and figures of speech”, their purpose being to “embody

²³⁹ The examples I rely on are mainly speech in formal settings, i.e., ‘speeches’. But I mean speech in a broader sense, to include the rhetoric we use even in interpersonal communication, and in written text.

²⁴⁰ See Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

and color the arguments, making the discussion pull on thought through desire”.²⁴¹ Rhetoric reminds us that citizens do not just deliberate. They do not just share reasons. They do other things in political communicative exchanges. Still, much of what I will say bears on the exchange of reasons for political action.²⁴²

I will draw on Young more later when discussing non-deliberative accessibility. But for now (and since we cannot survey the history of philosophy and rhetoric) what is novel to consider here is how *religious rhetoric* in particular might work. In the case of religious rhetoric I will explore, the form and content of a religious message fuse together, and can, I will argue, yield sufficiently accessible religious reasons. Notably, this addresses the worries I discussed earlier, in my criticism of accounts of accessibility. Rhetoric works in part by affecting those who are not necessarily clouded by prejudice or bias. They may be reasonable citizens, who simply lack the relevant life experience to fully understand their fellow citizens’ claims. But they can be brought closer to understanding religious reasons, through rhetoric; rhetoric ‘pulls on thought through emotion’, we might say, and specifically through the *emotional experience* that rhetoric affords the hearer. That is, the emotion that rhetoric elicits positions citizens from different perspectives to be pulled or invited into a message. To be sure, rhetoric might also prompt both *accepting* and *acting* on the religious reasons within a message, but, of importance here, the emotion that rhetoric elicits can first help us *understand* the message, and the reasons within it, or at least come closer to doing so. It can at least give citizens the opportunity for having some relevant experience, thus giving us the ‘experiential component’ that I found to be lacking in current accounts on the accessibility of religious reasons.

Now, what does this look like exactly? Well, we have already noted one figure who gave religious reasons for political action: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But now we can view his religious reasons from a new angle. It is worth noting that King himself was aware of the power of rhetoric to bridging rational argument and emotion together, enabling citizens to engage with and respond to religious reasons that proclaimed racial segregation to be a sin, and against God’s law. Meena Krishnamurthy calls King’s

²⁴¹ Young, “Inclusion and Democracy”, 71

²⁴² Young, “Inclusion and Democracy”, 107

attempt to bridge the rational and emotional together King's craft of the "sensible sermon" (King's famous *Letter From Birmingham Jail* being one instance of this kind of rhetoric).²⁴³ King of course *convinced* a great many white and black Americans, Christian and non-Christian, to join the Civil Rights Movement, and even convinced white clergymen to take up the very religious reasons against segregation that he was pressing. This too is in part because of his effective rhetorical strategies, which relied on many different emotions, like shame, hope, and love.²⁴⁴ But, again, since we are focused on accessibility, we can see the value in rhetoric's role as first enabling *understanding*, and not the further step of *convincing*.

How does rhetoric elicit understanding? It can do this by positioning us to take religious reasons seriously, such that we can then grapple with them as real contenders in the political debate at hand. Even if we ultimately reject the reasons presented through rhetoric, we have nevertheless felt their pull, know what it *would be* to accept those reasons, and can engage with those reasons meaningfully, because we experience for ourselves something close to what religious citizens experience when *they* are moved by these reasons.

Let me parse out, more specifically, what I mean when I say that rhetoric can help invite us to understand one another's religious reasons better. (Again, this takes for granted that religious reasons can be *more or less* accessible, since I assume understanding comes in degrees). I'll first describe, in some detail, the precise rhetorical device that I think tells us something quite interesting about the role rhetoric can play in the accessibility of religious reasons. This is the rhetorical device of the jeremiad. A jeremiad works as a prophetic indictment, inducing the listener (through speech or text) to emotions, enabling them to turn away from immoral behavior. The jeremiad shows us how reasons can be accessible in two senses: 1) they can be accessible even when they preclude epistemic assessment altogether, by being uncompromising and firm, not open

²⁴³ Meena Krishnamurthy, "Martin Luther King Jr. on Democratic Propaganda, Shame, and Moral Transformation," *Political Theory* 50, no. 2 (2021): 307.

²⁴⁴ For a discussion of King's use of love, see Alexander Livingston, "'Tough Love': The Political Theology of Civil Disobedience," *Perspectives on Politics* 18, no. 3 (April 2020): pp. 851-866. For one on shame, Krishnamurthy, "Democratic Propaganda". For a discussion of hope, specifically as a part of the rhetorical device of the Jeremiad, see Cathleen Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

to evaluation, and able to be acted on immediately *or* 2) when they invite or compel the listener to understand the story behind such reasons, such that the listener is positioned to epistemically assess such reasons in a sufficiently similar way to how the believer intends them to be assessed (although, likely not in the exact same way). In the first case, the jeremiad and the emotions it relies on reveal that epistemic assessment is not even a necessary condition for the accessibility of religious reasons. In the second case, epistemic assessment is a necessary condition, but occurs only when we use emotion to evaluate religious reasons and the political claims they give rise to. Let me expand on these two arguments now, beginning first with a more detailed description of what the jeremiad is.

2.6.1 The Jeremiad

As stated, the specific rhetorical device I find to be illuminating of the accessibility of religious reasons is the jeremiad. Named after Jeremiah from the Old Testament, a jeremiad is a lamentation and a prophetic indictment. The speaker or author of the jeremiad laments what they see as the moral downfall of their community, and speaks out, indicting that community, just as Jeremiah indicted the people of Israel for violating their obligations to God.²⁴⁵ The jeremiad is meant to therefore condemn those who have failed to live up to their promises (I will say a bit more about these promises shortly), and asks such people to seek forgiveness over these broken promises, which are treated as a crisis deserving immediate action. Thus, part of the form of the jeremiad is not just to have one's audience, one's community, *feel* shame over their behavior. It also inspires them to turn away from such behavior. The jeremiad instils these emotions through notably uncivil, fiery, emotional language, meant to make visceral the gravity of the moral state at hand. In sum, the prophetic language of the jeremiad "can be a necessary rhetorical tool to combat entrenched social evil in the community, to shake

²⁴⁵ Jeremiah "excoriate[d] the people [of Israel] for violating their fundamental obligations before God, thereby opening the whole community to devastating punishment" (Kaveny, "4). These breached obligations were primarily idolatry (the focus of the book of Hosea) and neglecting the poor (the focus of the book of Isaiah) (Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 135).

persons out of indifference, to direct scarce resources of attention and concern toward fundamental social issues, rather than matters that wrongly seem to be more urgent”²⁴⁶

Now, what makes this form of indictment *prophetic*? The jeremiad is a prophetic indictment in part because it was historically used by prophets in the bible. But it is also a warning of, a ‘prophesizing’ of, the darkness that lies ahead if society does not ask for redemption and does not stop its sinful behavior. Here’s an example of the prophetic part of a jeremiad from King’s speech urging for the end of the Vietnam war in 1967:

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. *If we do not act*, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.²⁴⁷

At the same time, it is also recognized that the Jeremiad promises a future of hope, love, and freedom, *if* members of one’s community turn away from their misdeeds. Here is King again, in the same speech:

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing -- embracing and unconditional *love* for all mankind. [...] Let us *hope* that this spirit will become the order of the day.²⁴⁸

And again, emotion is of the utmost importance here. One *feels* failure for living up to one’s promises, *feels* hope for the future, and *feels* a love of one’s community such that one is willing to stand with them in combatting the injustices at issue.²⁴⁹

As noted, the language used in the jeremiad is fiery, but it can also be outright searing, bitter, or harsh. And the tone is by no means accidental to the moral message.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 331

²⁴⁷ Martin Luther King, “Beyond Vietnam—a Time to Break Silence”, Riverside Church, New York City, 4 April 1967. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>

²⁴⁸ King, “Beyond Vietnam”.

²⁴⁹ For more on how King’s famous I have a Dream Speech contained the jeremiad, see Elizabeth Vander Lei, and Keith D. Miller, “Martin Luther King, Jr.’s” I Have a Dream” in Context: Ceremonial Protest and African American Jeremiad”, *College English* 62, no. 1 (1999): 87. Italics added. The African American Jeremiad is thus thought to have a threefold structure of promise, failure, and prophecy: that is, “a consideration of the freedom *promises* in America’s founding documents, a detailed criticism of America’s *failure* to fulfill this promise, and a *prophecy* that America will achieve its promised greatness and enjoy unparalleled happiness”

As Cathleen Kaveny states, “form and substance are intertwined” in the jeremiad.²⁵¹ It is part of the very point of motivating others to see their wrongdoing and act on it that one speaks in a way that is (or is perceived as) uncivil or impolite in order to communicate the seriousness and high stakes of the moral evil occurring. An example of this harsh language is found in a portion of a sermon from Obama’s former pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Wright states:²⁵²

The government gives them drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing ‘God Bless America.’ No, no, no, God damn America, that’s in the Bible for killing innocent people [...] God damn America for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme.²⁵³

Wright’s words are meant to shocking and uncivil. They call upon God to punish America for the way it has treated “citizens as less than human”.²⁵⁴ Given their uncivil character, it might be surprising that jeremiads have had a “flexible” and “durable” history in American political culture, beginning with its arrival in the Massachusetts Bay colony founded by America Puritans in the 1620s.²⁵⁵ However, part of why the jeremiad is thought to work—why it might elicit a meaningful reaction from the audience that hears it— is that it is not only a lamentation and condemnation but, as noted, is also a *reminder*. It reminds the audience of a shared commitment, promise or ‘covenant’, that they have endorsed, but broken. As Michael Walzer notes, “the prophets don’t invent obligations for the people; they remind the people of the obligations they already have and know they have” and tell them when they have not fulfilled these obligations.²⁵⁶ Which covenant, containing which obligations exactly? This covenant was once cast as

²⁵⁰ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 5

²⁵¹ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 126

²⁵² This sermon got public attention from ABC and other reviewers, one of whom remarked that Wright was an “American-bashing racist”, whose “appeals to racial bitterness President Obama will transcend.” (Mark Steyn, “Uncle Jeremiah”). As Kaveny also notes, “doubtless the controversy surrounding Wright’s fiery words stems in part from a broad cultural unfamiliarity with important forms of African American preaching” (361).

²⁵³ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 360

²⁵⁴ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 360

²⁵⁵ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 130

²⁵⁶ Michael Walzer, *In God’s Shadow Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012): 13

an agreement between God and His people, and relied on reference to scripture, but the idea of covenant has changed throughout recent history. It can now also primarily be about the covenant between citizens and their nation, with reference to the nation's founding documents, like Americans and the 'covenant' brought about by the Declaration of Independence, and the promises found in those documents.²⁵⁷ Interestingly, it may also involve reference to both scripture and these founding documents, blurring lines between both kinds of covenants, to God and to the Nation.

It may be surprising that the jeremiad has had such a sustained history given that it is part of its form to be a *denunciation*, rather than *deliberation*, and states matters of wrongdoing in the form of an *uncompromising* indictment. That is, quite unlike deliberation, which is a mode of discourse that assumes either interlocutor may change their mind, the point of a jeremiad is not to make a claim that is up for debate (and so the speaker themselves may be unwilling to change *their* mind). The claim is therefore akin to a legal complaint, which takes for granted that the law is correct. It deals only with whether the defendant actually breached the law, and what type of penalty they should incur if they did.²⁵⁸ It does not grapple with whether the actions were wrong.²⁵⁹

There is much, much more that could be said about the rich history of the jeremiad. I will finish with two points about how it's history in America has changed shape. The American form of the jeremiad originally blossomed in a small and religiously homogeneous community, the Puritans in the New England Bay Colony, beginning in the 1620s. Its use has since transformed alongside an increasingly pluralistic (religious and otherwise) America. In America today, the covenant is no longer structured by Puritan thought alone, but, again, is in part structured by the bible, alongside the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which together are thought to reflect America's fundamental values (for instance, for freedom and equality). Describing the African American jeremiad for instance, Kaveny notes that "African Americans made the

²⁵⁷ Kaveny writes that "A jeremiad may be full of sound and fury, but its rhetorical power is thwarted if it does not and cannot appeal to a broadly accepted account of the national covenant or basic law of the country" (230).

²⁵⁸ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 175

²⁵⁹ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 175

jeremiad their own in order to protest against the radical sins of slavery and racism, which violated *God's covenant with America*".²⁶⁰

What is perhaps less surprising is that the Jeremiad has proven to be a double-edged sword. It has not only been a vessel for hope but has caused disharmony and fractures in American culture. For instance, it was employed both by abolitionists *and* those who sanctioned slavery, was employed during debates around the Vietnam war, and prominently in issues concerning torture and assisted dying.²⁶¹ More recently, it shows itself in the speech of political conservatives who "have chastised the country for practices such as abortion and sexual immorality".²⁶² Some, but not all, of these uses have unfortunately involved condemnation *with* contempt, which Kaveny argues makes them unsuitable for public use. However, Kaveny acknowledges that the jeremiad can still maintain a vital role in our contemporary public dialogues and speeches, with qualifications. I do not have the space to flesh out all of these qualifications here, but, among other things, Kaveny argues that the jeremiad ought to be communicated with humility; prophets must stand *with* their community, and not act as if they themselves are God, standing over and above others.²⁶³

Overall, the jeremiad can be particularly useful in its ability to motivate citizens on matters of social justice, where deliberation has stifled action. That is, the jeremiad has the potential to operate like "moral chemotherapy" to political deliberation that has become corrupt or "unhealthy", or that which slows down response time during moral crises.²⁶⁴ Jeremiads can rightly shock the political system when it needs to be shocked and bring it back to 'moral health'.

2.6.2 Jeremiad Analysis

Now, what does all this talk of a non-deliberative rhetorical device like the Jeremiad say about the accessibility of religious reasons? On the one hand, it seems like presenting a religious reason for political action in terms of an indictment of one's

²⁶⁰ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 358

²⁶¹ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 3

²⁶² Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 3.

²⁶³ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*. 373-418

²⁶⁴ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 287

community should not be accessible precisely because citizens will not be positioned to *assess* it epistemically (and therefore not be positioned to deliberate between arguments). Although it is of course possible to *disagree* with the claims presented in a jeremiad, it's very nature purposely does not leave room for deliberation or disagreement. Again, it is defined in part by it's being an uncompromising proclamation and complaint. So, it seems, at least on the face of it, *not* designed for epistemic evaluation.²⁶⁵

On the other hand, if our intuition nevertheless suggests that the jeremiad is, in some way, a form of political and religious speech that contains accessible religious reasons, I think this suggests that we should venture to understand accessibility in a new way. This new way takes seriously the 'package' religious reasons are presented in as integral to their accessibility.

Like Eberle's test case of accessibility, Christian Mystical Perception, the jeremiad is an appropriate test case because it is the hard case. This means that I am not necessarily advocating for the use of jeremiads in political speech, or suggesting that most religious speech is like this. Rather, it means that if the jeremiad can make forms of political speech and the reasons they contain accessible, then surely other, less controversial rhetorical devices could do the same. And I do indeed want to show that casting the jeremiad as '*inaccessible*' runs hard against our intuitions. For instance, Jeremiah Wright's words, as part of his reasoning that America ought to care more about the poor, are clearly intelligible. More than that though, by relying on the rhetorical device of the jeremiad, religious reasons can overcome the limitations of *mere* intelligibility that I described above, cast as 'in principle' accessibility. I suggested Vallier and Eberle's accounts of accessibility face this problem of insufficiently describing how religious reasons can have that 'sticky' quality that we think is the necessary for meaningful understanding. That is, the jeremiad can also make religious claims meaningfully *felt* by its listeners.

²⁶⁵ That is, one could argue that being determinate or uncompromising doesn't mean that such claims are not open to epistemic assessment. One could, after all, reject the uncompromising claim being made. However, there is an important sense, as Kaveny notes, in which the claims do not really amount to, or are not really composed of, arguments at all; they are distinct in their nature as prophetic discourse, where such "discourse "use[s] language, metaphors, and symbols that are directed to the 'heart' as well as to the 'head'" (246-247). This tells us, I think, that while such discourse is accessible, it is practically not open for epistemic assessment, by virtue of it being not open to deliberation.

Let me be more specific. We can understand the accessibility of the jeremiad in two different ways: first, the jeremiad can make religious reasons accessible according to its non-deliberative features. It is thus a test case for showing that, even when arguments are not, strictly speaking, epistemically assessable, not even “in principle”, they can still be emotionally accessible. However, secondly, we might also think that, since the jeremiad is not void of reason itself—it still *gives reason* for action—the emotion contained within it and prompted by it can nevertheless play an important role in structuring our deliberations. How it does this, exactly, I will explore below.

2.6.2.1 Non-Deliberative Accessibility

So, let’s begin by looking more closely at the first claim, at the jeremiad’s non-deliberative form as grounds for accessibility. My main point here is that even according to its non-deliberative features, and even when it doesn’t contain a clear set of premises that can be assigned positive epistemic status, the jeremiad is nevertheless accessible.

In Kaveny’s analysis, she notes that “the jeremiad is moral discourse; it is not, however, *deliberative* moral discourse”.²⁶⁶ She also notes that “[t]he prophet usually does not make an argument; rather, he demonstrates, he shows, he tells”²⁶⁷. Beyond the jeremiad, philosophers and political scientists have more generally taken interest in forms of discourse that are not deliberative. They have therefore challenged the focus on the deliberative (rational, reflective) subject that dominates the deliberative democracy literature.²⁶⁸ Here are a few such theorists and their views:²⁶⁹

As noted earlier, Iris Marion Young argues that citizens do not just deliberate; they use creative ways to discuss their concerns over injustices, ways that sometimes shirk the deliberative and argumentative process, since it is often these very political

²⁶⁶ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 5-6

²⁶⁷ Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 246-247

²⁶⁸ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 2002.

²⁶⁹ This sampling of views is nowhere near exhaustive of all the political scientists or philosophers who have written on emotion, or emotion in our political deliberations. What is more, these views do not represent the entirety of the authors’ arguments.

processes that have excluded their voice.²⁷⁰ So, citizens instead rely on protest or, Young notes, appeal to emotion in attempts to make their claims heard.²⁷¹

Additionally, political scientist George Marcus argues extensively that the idea that citizens are emotionless deliberators is fundamentally wrong. Marcus instead argues in favor of the “sentimental citizen”²⁷², who uses “pre-conscious habits of judgement, choice and action” to make political decisions, which are rooted in emotion.²⁷³ Part of the reason these habits, rooted in emotion, remain largely excluded from the deliberative democracy literature, however, is in part the idea that emotions themselves are seen as *inaccessible*. As Marcus notes, “emotion is mysterious in its foundations”.²⁷⁴ Unlike reason, which we can access and which can access knowledge, emotion is seen as preconscious, and so *arational* or irrational. It is not under our full control, and so is an insecure basis for our political judgements.²⁷⁵ Thus, those writing on deliberative democracy favor reason as the legitimate basis for our political judgements. Marcus, however, challenges these assumptions about emotion as an insecure basis for our political judgements. He argues, instead, that emotions govern our rationality. As such, our emotional processes are in the driver’s seat in our political judgements. However, this isn’t such a bad thing.²⁷⁶ Emotions are particularly important order for citizens to make quick judgements about their rapidly changing political circumstances.

²⁷⁰ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 107

²⁷¹ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 107

²⁷² George E. Marcus. *The Sentimental Citizen: Emotion in Democratic Politics*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press (2002).

²⁷³ Summarized by Calhoun, Cheshire. “Reliable democratic habits and emotions.” *Passions and Emotions* (2013): 213.

²⁷⁴ Calhoun, “Reliable”, 131.

²⁷⁵ Marcus argues that “it has been widely held that emotion—except for some “good” emotions, most typically empathy—is not an acceptable foundation for judgment because, though potent, emotion is held to be at best arational, though more often irrational. Further, emotion is mysterious in its foundations. That is, we cannot be confident that we grasp our own emotions’ sources, let alone the causes of emotion observed and hidden in others. This has the unfortunate consequence of leaving affective states largely inaccessible for introspection or shared inquiry” (131-132, 2012). George Marcus, “Reason, Passion, and Democratic Politics: Old Conceptions—New Understandings—New Possibilities”. In *Passions and Emotions* (NYU Press, 2012), 127–88.

²⁷⁶ With respect to rhetoric, further inspiration to articulate the role of firm commitment and rational assessment comes from Marcus’ comments that, “The role of language is quite different when it is used in the service of the preconscious articulation of convictions and when it is used in the service of deliberation. [...]. If rhetoric takes two forms, one that articulates the various defenses suited to solidarity and one suited to engaging deliberation, much as citizenship in general takes two forms, then we have different practices to explore, not one” (166)

Relatedly, as philosopher Ronald De Sousa frames it, emotions help our quick judgements by “controlling the salience of features of perception and reasoning” and so work by “circumscribing our practical and cognitive options”.²⁷⁷ For example, being afraid of an intruder in our home allows us to focus on the sights, sounds, etc., that are valuable for us to confront the intruder, and in the process, block out those irrelevant features in our landscape that might get in the way of our doing so. Emotions, as it were, do the necessary preconscious work for us to be able to make quick judgements.

The upshot of a view like Marcus’s and De Sousa’s for us is that we shouldn’t regard all religious reasons, and the way they are communicated, as inherently inaccessible when they are not fully available to our conscious, reflective thought. Of course, as we saw, the Jeremiad’s non-deliberative nature seems to appeal to just that part of ourselves, our preconscious and unreflective nature, that is immediately and emotionally responsive. But clearly, the Jeremiad is no less meaningful or coherent because of this. That is, even if we aren’t entirely sure how it draws on our emotions, exactly, or even if the Jeremiad doesn’t appear to invite critical reflection about the wrongs that it claims are wrongs, it still presents political reasons for action that are accessible. In fact, it is quite clear, I think, that *unlike* the examples of in principle accessibility that Vallier and Eberle present, the Jeremiad can present religious reasons for political action that are immediately and emotionally accessible, perhaps not with respect to our capacity to assess the validity or truth of it as an argument (although I explore this possibility below), but to our hearts.

For instance, part of why we might think King’s use of the Jeremiad relied on citizens pre-conscious judgements (for now, equating these judgements with emotions) is that King used shame to rouse citizens from their subconscious ideologies of racism during the Civil Rights Movement. Shame gets to the heart of citizens’ affected ignorance.²⁷⁸ A sense of shame could meet that ignorance at its subconscious level. It could allow white moderates in particular to feel that they have done something wrong according to their own values in equality and freedom, for instance, and failed on their own promises to uphold these values. The emotions could thus “*remind* white moderates

²⁷⁷ Ronald De Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, 172

²⁷⁸ Krishnamurthy, “Democratic Propaganda”, 308

of the moral community and commitments they share in with Black people and with God”.²⁷⁹

So, at least according to the non-deliberative aspects of the Jeremiad, the pre-conscious power of emotion may tap into our subconscious beliefs to overcome implicitly held ideologies that prevent us from taking religious reasons more seriously than we otherwise would.

2.6.2.2. Deliberative Accessibility

One worry with relying fully on preconscious emotion is that it can, however, and as Peter Goldie puts it, “skew[...] the epistemic landscape” in negative ways.²⁸⁰ That is, while it can make us attentive to features in our landscape that are worthy of attention (like civil rights issues), it can also dispose us to be too narrow in our focus, in a way that does not illuminate, but distorts states of affairs. For instance, when we continually look for evidence that immigrants are dangerous, because of a felt but *ungrounded* sense of fear, we may be skewing the epistemic landscape in ways that lead us away from the truth about our states of affairs.

Even with this risk, however, emotion is nevertheless also acknowledged by many theorists in the philosophy of emotion to play an integral and inescapable role in structuring our rational thinking (what I will put under the umbrella of “deliberation”). So, while the former, non-deliberative view can be thought of as tracking the idea that emotions are *primarily* non-cognitive, this second view I will now explore tracks the idea that emotions are *primarily* cognitive, i.e., do not circumvent deliberation, but rather put us in a better position to more effectively deliberate²⁸¹. To be in a better position to more effectively deliberate, we must have access to, I will argue, those evaluative features of our political landscape that could help us understand our fellow citizens reasons for political action, and particularly, their religious reasons.

²⁷⁹ Krishnamurthy, “Democratic Propaganda”, 325

²⁸⁰ Peter Goldie, “Misleading Emotions.” In *Epistemology and emotions*, pp. 149-165. Routledge, 2016.

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²⁸¹ Marcus, *Sentimental Citizen*, 7. I say primarily because Marcus believes that emotion is not *only* preconscious. He also believes that “people are able to be rational because they are emotional; emotions enable rationality” (7).

In light of this distinction between deliberative and non-deliberative roles for emotion, let's look at another way in which the emotion imbued in the Jeremiad can shed light on the accessibility of religious reasons. Again, we might want to posit that while the Jeremiad may initially be accessible in a non-deliberative sense or posit that some parts of the Jeremiad are non-deliberative, its ability to communicate the thrust of a religious message cannot be reduced to or dependent on unreflective feeling alone. Still, it is not void of reason itself. As Kaveny notes, "the jeremiad *is moral discourse*", and its purpose is still to give moral reason for political action.²⁸²

So, another way of looking at the role of emotion in making religious reasons accessible is seeing emotion as making reason and rational reflection *possible*, and *structuring* the very evaluations of our own and one another's reasons, rather than coming before reason, or standing in its place. This, fortunately for us, is compatible with much of the literature on the philosophy of emotion in its current standing, which holds a consensus that emotions are not unconnected to reason in the sense that emotions are (at least partly) cognitive, or *evaluative* in nature (even if they also are accompanied by unreflective feeling).²⁸³ They tell us about the world. Emotions are, as Robert Solomon puts it, intelligent.²⁸⁴ Let's now flesh out this thought, drawing on theories of emotion that are notably less controversial than Robert Roberts' view, which was confined to a Christian picture of how emotions reveal distinctly Christian truths. The following accounts are ones I take to be much more likely to be accepted by the public reason liberal.

Cheshire Calhoun, for instance, argues in favour of the evaluative view of emotion, contrasting her stance with Marcus's. She argues that feeling does not precede thinking, as a kind of pre-conscious state, partly on the evidence that we can train or control our emotional responses, as Aristotle thought.²⁸⁵ While we might not be able to will or

²⁸² Kaveny, *Prophecy without Contempt*, 5-6.

²⁸³ Andrea Scarantino and Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotion/>>.

²⁸⁴ Robert C. Solomon, *True to our feelings: What our emotions are really telling us*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

²⁸⁵ Calhoun, "Reliable", 220

terminate emotion, we do “take our emotions to be responsive to features of the world, particularly evaluative features”.²⁸⁶

Further, in a particularly prominent cognitive theory of emotion, Robert Solomon argues that emotion consists, in part, of judgements (as opposed to emotion as merely a physiological feeling or reaction), and often are constituted by many, interlocking judgements.²⁸⁷ Importantly, Solomon’s argument is that emotions do not just tell us something about ourselves, and about what we feel (or even what we think), but they are *directed* judgements; they have intentional objects and tell us something about the world. For instance, they tell us that something we feel fear towards *is* dangerous, or that something we feel in awe of really *is* awesome. As Solomon writes, “When I am indignant, I believe that “*This is wrong!*” I am not just saying that I don't like it, or that it offends me. When I say that something is immoral, I am decidedly not just saying “I disapprove of it” nor am I simply urging others to do so as well [...]. I am saying, with a good deal of emphasis, “*this is wrong!*” and its wrongness need not have anything in particular to do with me, my tastes, or my personal values”.²⁸⁸

How does the evaluative view of emotion shed light on a rhetorical device such as the Jeremiad, and the accessibility of religious reasons? One thought is that a religious reason given through the Jeremiad is not merely understood because of a pre-conscious unreflective habit or reactive to a feeling. (Although, this is one way in which citizens might access the religious reasons given through the Jeremiad). Instead, emotions allow us to understand, *enable* or *structure*, the political features of the world that the Jeremiad is trying to draw our attention to; the indignation at the moral wrong of segregation, which the African American Jeremiad expresses, tells us that segregation *really is* wrong. The shame felt by the citizen then indicates that they really are responsible. So, the Jeremiad may point to features of the world that we can then epistemically grapple with in various ways.

²⁸⁶ Calhoun, “Reliable”, 220; In a liberal democracy, Calhoun thinks that our emotions can be attuned toward the emotion that political liberals tend to care most about: respect.

²⁸⁷ Robert C. Solomon, "On emotions as judgments", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1988): 183-191. Solomon states that “[t]he aim of a cognitive theory of emotions is not to reduce the drama of emotion to cool, calm belief but to break down the insidious distinctions that render emotions stupid and degrading and eviscerate cognition” (190). For another prominent cognitive view, see Nussbaum 2004.

²⁸⁸ Solomon, *True to our Feelings*, 207-208.

I will explain how emotion can work in and through the rhetoric of our political reasons more, shortly, but to get there, let me first offer one final philosophical theory of emotion that more precisely defines how our emotional response tells us about features of the world in an epistemically relevant way.

2.6.3 ‘Thinking with Feeling’

Peter Goldie argues that emotions are evaluative, but argues specifically that we *feel towards* evaluative properties of the world, or, as Goldie puts it, we ‘*think with feeling*’.²⁸⁹ In thinking with feeling, an emotional experience can change the contents of the objects toward which our thoughts are directed. For instance, think of the judgement that ice is dangerous.²⁹⁰ Goldie argues that when we have an experience of slipping on ice, we come to see the ice in a new way. Not only is ice dangerous, but it *should be feared*. Moreover, the emotion of fear in fact changes our very idea of ice, the content (not the referent) of the idea, such that fear does not merely tack onto a pre-existing idea of ice as shiny, hard, made of water, etc. That is, it is not just that our attitude about ice changes; rather, as Goldie says, “the new way of thinking [about ice] subsumes and transforms the old way of thinking, so that the new way of thinking cannot be decomposed into old experience plus something added, any more than one’s seeing for the first time the duck in the duck-rabbit picture is decomposable into the old way of seeing the picture as a rabbit, plus something added”.²⁹¹ The result is that “the whole, indivisible, experience is different”.²⁹² The upshot is that while we can understand the concept of ice without having an experience of slipping on ice, the emotional experience of slipping on ice allows us to grasp the concept more completely. We really know what it means that ice is dangerous in a way that both can’t be undone, and couldn’t come from rational reflection alone.

²⁸⁹ Peter Goldie, "Getting Feelings into Emotional Experience in the Right Way", *Emotion Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 232-239.

²⁹⁰ The example is originally raised by Goldie in Peter Goldie, "Emotions, feelings and intentionality", *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2002): 235-254.

²⁹¹ Goldie, "Getting Feelings", 234; Also in Goldie, "Emotions, feelings and intentionality", 20.

²⁹² Goldie, "Emotions, feelings and intentionality", 20

Like the judgement theory of emotions that Solomon offers, thinking with feeling plays a role in evaluating the objects of our attention, particularly insofar as they direct our attention to objects that we judge to be *important*. Certainly, a function of the thinking with feeling view is that it explains how, practically, emotion helps us navigate the world more easily. We must put grippy shoes on, sprinkle salt on the roads, and avoid going on lakes that are only blanketed in a thin layer of ice if we want to avoid ice's dangers. And we are more incentivized to do this when we have a direct experience of slipping on ice. The experience of slipping on ice allows us to think with feeling in discerning ways.

The applicability of Goldie's view becomes evident for us in particular when we think of the object of our intention not as a material object, like ice, but as a political object, such as those "events, issues, facts, individuals, groups, and entities in general, that have political relevance".²⁹³ As Benedetta Romano argues, by "feeling towards political objects, that is, by thinking-with-feeling about the evaluative features of those objects, a different understanding of those features is brought about".²⁹⁴

2.6.4 Accessing the Thrust of Religious Reasons

Now, if emotions are evaluative, and even evaluative in the specific 'thinking with feeling' way that I just explained, what does this mean for the role of emotion in our ability to better access *religious reasons* and their role in political life? The reader might think that I have jumped the gun here. Isn't focus on the salient features of our political lives to miss the point of interrogating our reasons for political action? And not the importance or value of the issues themselves?

One way of answering these worries is to think about issues that may be put on the political agenda, seen as serious issues with high stakes, precisely for religious reasons.

Here's an example, given by Jeremy Waldron. Waldron argues that the political use of torture is an absolute wrong, and religious reasons can explain this wrong.²⁹⁵ That

²⁹³ Benedetta Romano, "The Epistemic Value of Emotions in Politics," *Philosophia* 46 (2018): 590

²⁹⁴ Romano, "The Epistemic Value", 602

²⁹⁵ Waldron, "Two-way Translation", 865.

is, a Christian worldview can explain why torture is never permissible, since this perspective makes the claim that we are directly transgressing against God themselves when we torture another human being. The *stakes* of torturing are then made high, higher than what some people might think of is on the line in the political use of torture. As Waldron points out, some think the matter turns on pragmatic reasons about homeland security or their nation's reputation. But the idea that the political use of torture is a *moral evil* makes pragmatic reasons seem extremely deficient. Asking citizens to consider that torture is also "a sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness" brings something different, something morally and religiously weighty, into the mix.²⁹⁶ Regardless of whether the non-believer believes in the Holy Ghost, however, Waldron argues that they now must confront both the moral *issue* of torture, but also confront the specific religious reasons for torture which *make* torture an absolute moral wrong. Although Waldron doesn't describe his view in these terms, such an understanding of torture as an absolute wrong may be an instance of Goldie's 'thinking with feeling'. By thinking with feeling about torture (say one sees pictures of political prisoners being tortured), one may then be open to reasons for *why* such torture *is wrong*, as one's feelings suggest it is. What is more, one may be unable to see torture differently, as something every permissible, when one sees for oneself what it is like for someone to be tortured. One cannot, unsee it; so, one cannot undo its weight in political deliberation.

Another way of framing the access to religious reasons I have in mind here is that citizens can access, with emotion, the thrust of each other's political claims. What does the word thrust here mean? One meaning of thrust is that I see the overall force of your argument; I understand its weight, particularly compared to other arguments, for the same issue or for other issues, and might even see it as supremely weighty compared to them. This way of capturing the thrust of a religious argument is probably rare, but it is not impossible. For instance, again with Waldron's example of torture, I might see the weight of the idea that "when we torture another, we torture God themselves" because I can imagine not only that the upshot is comprehensible, but that the force of the argument is itself strong. The same idea could apply to cases of euthanasia, abortion, or the status of non-human animals, where if God exists, issues in which we harm or even kill others

²⁹⁶ Waldron, "Two-way Translation", 865

seem to be supremely important. The stakes in our decisions are very high. So, accessing religious reasons might in part be accessing the overall thrust of the argument such that one doesn't merely grasp its upshot, but grasps the *weight* of the reasons themselves. Again, this doesn't mean that one must *accept* or agree with the weight, but simply that one feels it, and this feeling is factored into one's political deliberations and evaluations.

The problem is, since thinking with feeling requires some experience, e.g., like the experience of slipping on ice, citizens do not always have the relevant experience that is necessary to think with feeling about every political issue. For instance, in my lifetime, it is unlikely that I will experience all of the following: what it is like to be an immigrant, to suffer rising sea levels that flood my home, to live in a heavily polluted area, have an abortion, be subject to torture, suffer a traumatic and painful health crisis, or make decision about aiding in a medically assisted death. I may never experience any one of these events directly, let alone all of them. So, does that mean that I cannot think with feeling about them, politically? If I am not directly affected by them, or even if someone close to me is not directly affected by them, will I not be able to really understand these issues emotionally, and the reasons that address and make sense of them?

This should strike us as odd. Citizens do not need to have a direct experience with politically relevant events in order to understand their thrust, or to generate or understand reasons that explain their political import. Citizens just need to see the thrust of the reasons, and one important way in which they can be positioned to do this is through the emotional experience provided by rhetoric, even religious rhetoric.

2.7 Accessing Religious Reasons *Through* Rhetoric

Rhetoric can *position* citizens to think with feeling. That is, religious reasons can aid in the accessibility of our fellow citizens' claims, e.g., that torture is wrong, when we are positioned to feel their thrust more than we otherwise would, and rhetoric, as I stated earlier, is one way in which such reasons can be presented to us with feeling. The Jeremiad is one specific form of this. Again, even if we ultimately reject the reasons presented through the emotion underlying some forms of religious rhetoric, that rhetoric at least gives us the *opportunity* to feel the high stakes and salience that the reasons try to

convey, such that we can catch a glimpse of what it *would be* like to agree to them, or to better know what it really is that we are rejecting. To this last point, William Nord's words on religious education are relevant here. He writes:

Indeed, it is only when we can feel the intellectual and emotional power of alternative cultures and traditions that we are justified in rejecting them. If they remain lifeless and uninviting this is most likely because we do not understand them, because we have not gotten inside them so that we can feel their power as their adherents do²⁹⁷

We can then engage with the reasons meaningfully because we experience *for ourselves* something *close* to what religious citizens experience when *they* are moved by these reasons, by experiencing a sort of mirrored emotional response via rhetoric.²⁹⁸

Recall Horton's worry that propositional content is void of its "*full force*" when citizens do not have some affective dimension to make propositions 'stick'.²⁹⁹ Rhetoric might not get citizens to always see the *full* force of citizens' reasons, but they can mirror that affective dimension, such that citizens do not need to have had a direct experience with poverty, racism, sexism, territory displacements, or other tragic conditions (and certainly do not need to themselves have had a religious experience), which give rise to distinct moral perspectives. Instead, citizens can experience some close approximation, feeling-wise, of these conditions and the reasons that make sense of the kinds of claims these conditions give rise to. Fiery language, vivid images, song, story-telling, even scripture and stories of prophets, are all part of this process of accessibility.

Finally, now that I've surveyed some of the non-deliberative and deliberative dimensions of religious rhetoric through the device of the Jeremiad, it is worth stressing that both have valuable import for understanding how religious reasons may be accessed in different ways. Some claims, especially those articulating a crisis, may be appropriately accessed with unreflective feeling alone. This makes it so we can assimilate new information, understand events, and getting primed for action rather quickly. Other claims, again depending on the political issue at hand, might require more

²⁹⁷ Nord, "Religion and American Education", 201.

²⁹⁸ I think this mirrored emotional response might be most evident in the emotion of empathy, but could occur, in theory, with any emotion.

²⁹⁹ John Horton, "Reasonable Disagreement," 67

deliberation, but still ‘with feeling’. And *all* claims are bound to require appeals to different emotions, which might find expression in different ways across democratic cultures. Key is that citizens, in either deliberative or non-deliberative religious claims, can use emotion to meaningfully access religious reasons, at least by being, first, in a position to do so. Rhetoric can put us in that position.

2.8 Worries

Let me finish by remarking that there are, of course, worries about the use of emotion in our deliberative and non-deliberative political communications. I will survey just three worries.

First, the emotion imbuing rhetoric will not guarantee that religious reasons will be accessible to all people. However, citizens’ capacity for emotion can be idealized to the extent that we can reasonably expect most citizens to use in emotion in their evaluations of one another’s reasons for political action. That we will use emotion in evaluating religious reasons is therefore no exception. We will, whether we like it or not, bring emotion into most (perhaps every) judgement we make. So, it is not a matter of whether we will or won’t use emotion in our political and religious judgements, but *when* and *how* we ought to use it, and to what *degree* we can expect others, speakers or listeners, to use emotion to render reasons accessible. What is more, it is important to acknowledge, as Martha Nussbaum does in writing on political emotions, that expecting citizens to be emotional beings is compatible with their idiosyncratic expressions of these emotions; a capacity for emotion is, as she states, compatible with expecting citizens to “love, mourn, laugh, and strive for justice in specific and personal ways”.³⁰⁰

Second, one might worry about the role of negative emotions in making religious reasons accessible. Certainly, political life is rife with negative emotions, such as “anger, fear [...] disgust, envy, guilt” as well as contempt, hatred, bitterness, and rage.³⁰¹ Some,

³⁰⁰ Martha C., Nussbaum, *Political Emotions* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 382-383. For a lengthier discussion of the compatibility of the ideal and real, see pages 383-385.

³⁰¹ Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 1-2.

like Nussbaum, also think shame falls into this category.³⁰² There are two responses to this. The first is that, if we are to accept that these emotions are indeed negative, and ought to be constrained, it is compatible with political liberalism that we constrain them; for instance, it is reasonable to expect citizens to direct their emotions and their emotional appeals in political dialogue in a way consistent with respecting their fellow citizens. Second, we might want to deny, as Solomon does, that emotions are either wholly positive or negative. We may instead acknowledge that our understanding of emotions themselves is structured by our context, and their fittingness with the political issue or reasons at hand. For instance, anger is not always bad; As Solomon says, “It can be “righteous,” and it can sometimes be right”.³⁰³ And sometimes anger can rightly express something about our circumstances that really is wrong, is an injustice, and which warrants anger. Our religious reasons should be able to communicate such important emotions, even when emotions *seem* to disrespect others because they are uncivil compared to relatively calm forms of deliberation. Using anger to express indignation does not disrespect someone in the same way using shame to humiliate or degrade them does.

Finally, it might be thought that the use of emotion to access our fellow citizens’ religious reasons risks being coercive or manipulative, rather than more innocently enabling citizens’ reasons to be understood. This worry seems to unfortunately plague the use of religious reasons in particular. As Michael Walzer notes, there is an all too common association between an excess in zeal or passion and religious identification in political life, and we might worry that such passion can wrongly compromise religious citizens capacity to freely decide for themselves what their political opinions are.³⁰⁴ They

³⁰² Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*.

³⁰³ As Solomon puts it, “Anger, for example, is not just a burst of venom, and it is not as such sinful, nor is it necessarily a “negative” emotion. It can be “righteous,” and it can sometimes be right. Love is not always good and virtuous, and it is not always “better to have loved.” Love can be foolish and destructive as well as wonderful. Shame and embarrassment involve harsh and humbling self-images, yet they are essential to our social consciousness and well-being. Such emotions can be more or less appropriate and ethically proper, depending on the person and his or her circumstances, and they are complex in a way that would not be possible if we were to understand them simply as “feelings.” (Solomon, *True to Our Feelings*, 3).

³⁰⁴ Michael Walzer, “Passion and Politics,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28, no. 6 (2002), at p. 617.

may be swept up in the zeal of those loud, ‘passionate’, religious voices in their society, even if such voices are a minority within a religious tradition.

However, emotion is not by its nature manipulative. Using emotion to communicate our religious reasons has the power to invite and welcome in our listener, instead of force them to endorse certain reasons against their better judgement, or without intelligent reflection. And, as I have argued here, it is precisely by being positioned to ‘think with feeling’ about religious reasons for oneself that one can better grapple with religious reasons as live possibilities, worth taking seriously, instead of dead options, easy to ignore and, therefore, misunderstand. And given that public reason liberals start with the idea that reliance on public reasons ensures that the public is *not* coerced by laws and policies that they do not understand, it is compatible with the general aim of political liberalism that rhetoric make reasons accessible.

2.9 Conclusion

Let’s return to the core question I asked at the beginning of this paper: what makes a religious reason accessible? To come full circle, we can return to the secret box worry. I explained that the secret box worry characterizes the intuition behind excluding religious reasons from public and political dialogue. The worry is that non-religious or different religious citizens cannot see into the metaphorical box because the box contains a supernatural authority that non-believers do not have direct access to. Thus, reasons that are generated by reference to the secret-box are inaccessible, and so shouldn’t be included in public and political dialogue.

In this paper, I have shown that the secret box worry doesn’t hold. However, I have taken a different route than current answers as to why. I have shown that the epistemic sources of Christian mystical perception, natural theology, and testimony are insufficient to explain what makes religious reasons accessible in a richer and more intuitive sense, beyond mere in principle accessibility, and in way that is consistent with how emotions play a role in our judgements. For religious reasons to really be accessible, we also need to account for their emotional components. Although I haven’t taken a stance on the existence of an accessibility requirement, the route of accessibility I have

proposed suggests something that could be compatible with the political liberal's accessibility requirement. This is distinguished from an idea I entertained early on about distinctly Christian emotions, a view that I argued the political liberal might not accept. That is, they might not accept that God causes our emotions, or that such emotions reveal tell us something about the world, and *as such* ground our reasons for political action. However, the political liberal should accept that emotions do some work in structuring our judgements, if they are to follow the consensus found in the philosophy of emotion. Rhetoric is one instance in which this occurs. Rhetoric positions us to think with feeling. More interestingly, even religious forms of rhetoric can, I have shown here, render religious reasons accessible for the religious and non-religious citizen alike. This runs contrary, I have suggested, to our thinking about epistemic assessments in the limited way that such assessments have been framed in the public reason literature on accessibility thus far. Such assessments, as I outlined at the beginning, suggest that reasons are either accessible or inaccessible. But rhetoric positions us to *better* understand religious reasons (it cannot guarantee accessibility, after all), *more than we otherwise would*, and this is essential if the notion of accessing our fellow citizens' religious reasons is to be appreciated for what it is, in practice, in our actual political communities. And when we think about religious reasons and their accessibility in practice at the political level, we can think of the demand of accessibility then not being too high, by our needing to access the intricacies of others' arguments, and not too low, where we don't reflect at all on what we are hearing, and act reactionarily. Accessing one another's claims, and the religious reasons that undergird them, can lie somewhere in between.

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3 Religious Identity and Epistemic Injustice: An Intersectional Account

Abstract

In this paper, I argue in favor of an intersectional account of religious identity to better make sense of how religious subjects can be treated with epistemic injustice. To do this, I posit two perspectives through which to view religious identity: as a social identity, and as a worldview. I argue that these perspectives shed light on the unique ways in which religious subjects can be epistemically harmed. From the first perspective, religious subjects can be harmed when their religion is racialized or when their gender and dress are mistakenly thought to be predictive of their beliefs and practices. As an instance of this, I focus on the epistemic harms facing Muslim women who practice veiling. From the worldview perspective, religious subjects can be harmed when we, by contrast, underestimate the force of the connections between religion, race, and gender. Such connections can give rise to intersectionally rich theologies that can in turn be marginalized and denied credibility. To illuminate the worldview perspective, I focus on Christian abolitionist and feminist Sojourner Truth.

Key words: Epistemic Injustice; Religious Identity; Worldview; Intersectionality; Sojourner Truth

3.1 Introduction

Religious people often rely on the testimony of others to inform their religious beliefs. They also use testimony to, in turn, convey these beliefs to others. It is therefore striking that, while interest in testimony, particularly as a site of injustice, has grown steadily over the last few decades, the idea that religious people can be treated unjustly with respect to their testimony and testimonial exchanges remains undertheorized. Indeed, where we would expect to find a discussion of this nature—for instance, in the literature on epistemic injustice—we instead find that religious subjects are rarely mentioned. Moreover, the few who have discussed religion and epistemic injustice have tended to focus on the epistemic injustice that occurs to marginalized people *within* particular religious communities. That is, they have tended to focus on women and people of colour, among others, who have their credibility diminished on account of their marginalization within their churches, theological traditions, or even religious studies or philosophy departments.³⁰⁵

In this paper, I aim to remedy what I take to be an oversight in the literature by exploring a different set of relations. I want to home in on how religious subjects relate to a secular environment, broadly construed, and explore the possibility that religious subjects can be negatively impacted in their knowledge-producing efforts because of that environment. To be sure, some emerging accounts have recognized this possibility.³⁰⁶ They have recognized that religious citizens seem to be in a unique position whereby they may have their testimony harmed in some way owing to the impacts of secularism.

Nevertheless, while these accounts have made valuable strides, I argue that they are not sufficiently attuned to how identities intersect to produce different harms for different religious subjects who must constantly negotiate their lives in spaces that are at once secular and shaped by the norms of a dominant religious worldview. In light of this, I aim in this paper to develop an intersectional account of religious epistemic injustice.

³⁰⁵ For such views, see Anderson 2010, 2012; Kidd 2017; Griffeon 2018; Panchuk 2019, 2020; De Cruz 2019; Hübel 2020.

³⁰⁶ Kidd 2017; Lougheed 2019; Lee 2021

To develop my account, I begin by, in 3.2, providing a brief overview of epistemic injustice by way of Miranda Fricker³⁰⁷ and Jose Medina's³⁰⁸ respective work. In 3.3, I then turn to emerging literature on religion and epistemic injustice that deals explicitly with the role of secularism in shaping epistemic injustice. As stated, while I agree with the direction current accounts are headed, I ultimately criticize their approaches to epistemic injustice and religion for not accounting for the intersectional nature of religious identity.

In 3.4., I offer my own account. I demarcate two ways of viewing religious identity: as a social identity, and as a worldview. While these two aspects of religious identity inevitably co-exist and inform one another, distinguishing between them allows for greater precision when it comes to articulating the epistemic harms religious people can face. First, in 3.4.1, I focus on how religious social identities can be harmed by way of losses in our social knowledge of religious groups as internally complex and diverse. To illustrate the nature of the harm, I provide two examples: the testimonial harms of the racialization of religion and prejudgments surrounding Muslim women and religious dress. Turning to the second view in 3.4.2, which highlights the nature of religious identity as a worldview, I then focus on how certain theologies can be epistemically diminished for religious adherents, even those who belong to a religious majority, like Christianity. As an example of this, I consider in 3.5 the neglected religious testimony of Christian abolitionist and proto-intersectional feminist Sojourner Truth. I follow this by suggesting how religious worldviews can, more generally, be attributed credibility in 3.5.1. In the final section, 3.6, I briefly consider how one might further develop the conclusions reached in the paper.

3.2 Epistemic Injustice

The wave of literature in recent years concerning epistemic injustice has been profound. Philosophers and other academics have been quick to recognize and articulate the importance of injustice as it relates to the production and transmission of knowledge.

³⁰⁷ Fricker *Epistemic Injustice*

³⁰⁸ Medina *The Epistemology of Resistance*

Before turning to what has been said (and not said) about religion in this literature, I will briefly lay out the dominant theories that have shaped the discussion so far.

For Miranda Fricker, who coined the term “epistemic injustice”, individuals can be harmed in their capacity as knowers when their testimony is wrongly diminished according to inequalities in social power. Fricker demarcates two kinds of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. In cases of testimonial injustice, a speaker, testifying to some aspect of their social experience, receives a deflation of credibility when the hearer harbors a negative identity prejudice toward the speaker.³⁰⁹ This prejudice is the result of a widely held negative stereotype in the social imaginary, “distort[ing] the hearer's perception of the speaker” qua social type.³¹⁰ The upshot is that the speaker is harmed distinctly in their capacity *as a knower*, which is a hybrid epistemic-ethical harm. Fricker argues that the purely epistemic harm in a case of testimonial injustice is a loss of knowledge. Either the speaker *or the hearer* loses out on some piece of knowledge being exchanged, which reflects “a moment of dysfunction in the overall epistemic practice or system”.³¹¹ Prejudice therefore operates as an “obstacle to truth”.³¹² In turn, the ethical harm, which coincides with the epistemic harm, is to be wronged in one of the very capacities that makes one a human being—one's capacity for reason.³¹³ In failing to be being treated as a rational agent who is a giver of knowledge, on account of a false understanding of one's social type (i.e., as someone who is not credible with respect to what they know), one must bear the pain of being “degraded *qua* knower”, and so of being considered less than fully human.³¹⁴

Hermeneutical injustice, Fricker's second kind of epistemic injustice, occurs prior to the offering of testimony, and yet exposes itself in the attempt at articulating one's experience through testimony. The injustice is that of having one's experience rendered unintelligible, either to oneself or to others, on account of a structural prejudice in the

³⁰⁹ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 4

³¹⁰ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 36

³¹¹ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 43

³¹² Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 43

³¹³ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 44

³¹⁴ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 44

collective imagination that manifests in our collective hermeneutical resources.³¹⁵ Such exclusion from those resources has often been the result of belonging to a social group that does not have equal participation in the generation of social meanings, or collective hermeneutical resources, particularly those that are needed to make sense of an experience that one has a strong interest in knowing.³¹⁶ Fricker's core example is that of women, with increased social power, coming to understand and name the harm of workplace sexual harassment.³¹⁷

Since its introduction, there have been two widely accepted adjustments to Fricker's view that are worth noting for our purposes here. First, it has been argued that both kinds of epistemic injustice are more deeply intertwined than Fricker acknowledged. As Jose Medina rightly observes, when one is deemed unintelligible, one is often deemed *incredible*, and vice versa.³¹⁸ It is because of the hearer's insensitivity to the speaker's credible testimony that the speaker is persistently denied the opportunity to generate new meanings; at the same time, it is also because certain voices are rendered less intelligible that their credibility is then further undermined.³¹⁹ I will follow Medina's thinking here, taking for granted that testimonial and hermeneutical injustice are intimately related and often connected. That said, I do my best to articulate which is most apparent according to the different aspects of identity I consider, where testimonial injustices occur most often for cases where social identity is at stake, and hermeneutical injustice most often for cases where a person's worldview is at stake.

A second adjustment to Fricker's view is also warranted. Medina argues that while oppressed subjects can indeed have their experience rendered unintelligible to themselves, they may also often be able to access ways of knowing that only those who are marginalized will share in.³²⁰ As Medina states, "these subjects often find themselves in need of certain bodies of knowledge in order to escape punishment or stigmatization, sometimes even to survive [...] developing forms of expertise that no one else has".³²¹ As

³¹⁵ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 155

³¹⁶ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 6

³¹⁷ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 150-151

³¹⁸ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 96

³¹⁹ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 96

³²⁰ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 43

³²¹ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 44. Put similarly by Gaile Pohlhaus, "the situations resulting from one's social positioning create 'common challenges' that constitute part of the knower's

we will see, this addition is relevant to this paper because religious subjects might need certain bodies of knowledge, i.e., particular theologies and religious ways of knowing, precisely because of their social positioning as both religious and marginalized.³²²

3.3. Religion and Epistemic Injustice: Existing Accounts and Their Limitations

Let us now briefly turn to the work that has been done to articulate how the religious subject can be treated with epistemic injustice, of both the testimonial and hermeneutical kind. There are three such views worth noting for our purposes. First, as Kirk Lougheed describes it, religious subjects can be epistemically harmed when they pre-emptively suppress testifying to a religious experience out of fear that “already existing (negative) prejudices about religion implies that their report won’t be taken seriously by others”.³²³ Non-religious subjects are then also epistemically harmed, since they miss out on the “intuitive knowledge” that could have been transferred through such reports.³²⁴ Second, as Y. J. Lee describes it, epistemic injustice of a similar sort might occur even out anticipation and fear of negative prejudices, rather than existing or felt prejudices from a specific audience or an unwilling hearer.³²⁵

lived experience and so contribute to the context from which she approaches the world”, and the knowledge she has of it (2012, 717).

³²² It is also worth highlighting that Medina criticizes Fricker for paying insufficient attention to credibility *excess* as composing important cases of epistemic injustice (Medina 2013, 57-60). Medina argues that such excess can be epistemically harmful in a comparative sense for both speaker and hearer insofar as it can, among other things, detract credibility from others in certain contexts. I see the potential for credibility excess to be a part of the picture here when we think of some religious people being attributed *too much* credibility, and thus overshadowing or dismissing what others might know with respect to religious matters. This is a particularly useful way of looking at those who adhere to white Christian leaning views that remain unchallenged because of credibility excess attributed to them. Although clearly relevant and deeply important, I put the idea of the epistemic harms that can occur to those who have an excess of credibility aside to focus on the epistemic harms that occur to those who are intersectionally marginalized.

³²³ Lougheed, “Epistemic injustice and Religious Experience”, 88

³²⁴ Lougheed draws on the work of Phillip Wiebe, who describes intuitive knowledge as “[t]he power of the intellect to grasp concepts and truths intuitively that are neither derivable from sense perception, such as the concept of infinity, nor justifiable by empirical evidence, such as inviolable principles of ethics, has been widely considered a characteristic that sets humans apart from all other earthly creatures” (in Lougheed 83; Wiebe 2015, 1).

³²⁵ Ji-Young Lee, “Anticipatory epistemic injustice,” *Social Epistemology* 35, no. 6 (2021): 566. To be sure, the ideas of pre-emptive or anticipatory testimonial injustice are similar to Kristie Dotson’s

Third, as Ian James Kidd describes it, epistemic injustice against religious subjects reporting their religious experience might be particularly “deep” because some secular spaces, particularly in academia, effectively “[rule] out the *possibility* of a veridical interpretation of religious experiences, of their being what their experiencers report and interpret them to be”; so, credibility itself is not just deflated, but is removed from possibility.³²⁶ To explain this, Kidd follows Charles Taylor’s influential account of secularism in “A Secular Age”, defining secularism as “a change in the prevailing ‘conditions of belief’ of modern societies” where “[r]eligious belief, once ‘axiomatic’, is now ‘one . . . possibility’ among others, ‘eligible’ for some, but not for others, such that different groups within a culture ‘experience their world very differently’”.³²⁷ With this definition at hand, understanding religious testimony and practices becomes more difficult under secularism, where the conditions for belief, but also opportunities for religious literacy, are generally lacking. Kidd suggests that the epistemic obstacles for religious and non-religious subjects that follow from these lacking conditions and opportunities can result in degrees of complicated misunderstandings of religion: religious language can be falsely deemed as merely “symbolic” but also sometimes “senseless”, and non-religious people remain generally ignorant of religious testimonies of faith, practices, and traditions.³²⁸

To be sure, although Kidd offers the most direct discussion of secularism and its role in the connection between epistemic injustice and religion, in all the views just

work on testimonial smothering (As Lee recognizes and discusses in 2021, 568). Testimonial smothering, for Dotson, is characterized by truncating one’s own testimony when one perceives one’s audience as either unwilling or unable to understand that testimony (Dotson 2011, 244). But while Dotson understands smothering to be caused by a kind of pernicious ignorance, and the harm an “epistemic violence”, what Lee highlights is that religious subjects may be silenced because of a lack of *platforms* for such testimony to be delivered, rather than a pernicious ignorance in a specific audience (Lee 568). This may be right. However, I think we can also imagine that when would-be hearers are white or otherwise not marginalized, and indeed are unwilling or ill-equipped to understand the testimony of marginalized religious subjects, there indeed exists forms of pernicious ignorance towards religious speakers.

³²⁶ Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice and Religion”, 388; italics added. Kidd does also highlight the ways in which those who are minorities *within* a religious community are epistemically harmed. However, apart from one passing remark, Kidd does not give a serious treatment to the development of intersectional forms of religious epistemic in/justice, or those theologies that emerge from intersectional ways of knowing, like womanist theologies developed by Black Women (Kidd 388).

³²⁷Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice and Religion”, 392, quoting Taylor, 2007, 3, 14.

³²⁸Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice and Religion”, 392

discussed, epistemic injustice against religious subjects ultimately hangs, however strong, on the negative impacts of secularism. For all views, secularism is manifest in either a general, if insipid, shift towards an increase in non-religious environments as the norm, or as an overt aggression against religion. That is, as Lee notes, even the “mere perception that one’s religious experiences will be stigmatized owes to shifting norms related to a cultural trend towards secularity”.³²⁹ Or, as Lougheed notes, the rise of more explicit anti-religious sentiments inflamed by prominent atheists.³³⁰ In any case, secularism is at fault; it is thought to be the main contributor to the marginalization of religion. The upshot for *epistemic injustice*, then, is that secularism in some way contributes to real or anticipated negative prejudices against religious adherents in a way that causes them to suppress their testimony.

Further, both Lougheed and Kidd add teeth to the precise *epistemic* manifestation of secularism as a naturalistic worldview that dominates in secular environments, particularly in secular academic environments. A naturalistic worldview involves understanding the world in physical, reductive, or “purely natural terms”, thus excluding an experience that depends on the supernatural.³³¹ As Kidd remarks, “[s]ince [supernatural entities] are judged not to exist, belief in them must be evidence of epistemic fault, usually to be explained in the terms of psychological and evolutionary terms”.³³² Again, the upshot is the wrongful suppression of a religious testimony, but the hermeneutic harms are present too; both religious and non-religious subjects will receive less opportunity to make sense of religious experiences, be it others’ or their own, when a naturalistic worldview removes the language, concepts, and resources needed for religious experiences to be intelligible.

Overall, I take these descriptions of epistemic injustice and religion to, for the most part, rightly capture the epistemic impacts of secularism on religion and religious people generally. That such a threat is exacerbated at the academic level is also well documented,³³³ and so justifiably interrogated.

³²⁹Lee, “Anticipatory Epistemic Injustice”, 567-568.

³³⁰Lougheed, “Epistemic injustice and Religious Experience”, 86

³³¹Lougheed, “Epistemic injustice and Religious Experience”, 88

³³²Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice and Religion”, 392-393

³³³For instance, religious students and educators are a minority in the sciences (Ecklund and Scheitle 2007; Ecklund et al. 2016). As a recent study by Soneral et al. shows, “a majority (61 percent) of

However, two points are worth making, which suggest these views are incomplete. First, if we are to consider academic contexts as a particular secular site of epistemic injustice for religion and religious students, even if *most* students feel marginalized with respect to their religion in non-religious (i.e., secular) academic contexts, and even if those in a religious majority report feeling excluded or ostracized as some research suggests,³³⁴ this marginalization does not occur in the same way for all students who are religious.³³⁵ Those who adhere to a minority religion, such as Jews and Muslims, are reported to have “decreased sense of well-being and increased religious skepticism” in college contexts compared to those in a religious majority.³³⁶ So, even if secularism is indeed a threat in non-religious academic contexts, it is unlikely to have a uniform impact on all religious people. My intent here is to offer a theoretical account grounded in intersectional epistemic injustice as to why this may be and how it may look.

the scientific community hold no religious affiliation compared to the general public (34 percent)” (2021). We also know that among academic philosophers, the majority are atheists and agnostics; one survey shows that only 18.93% Accept or lean towards Theism, while 66.95 accept or lean towards atheism, and 7.18% are agnostic or undecided. (Bourget and Chalmers 2020), and the majority of those who reject theism also “lean toward” naturalism (Bourget and Chalmers 2020). For an interrogation of the decline of religious orientations in the university, see Wolterstorff 2019. For accounts of the impact of secularism in Western feminist theory, see Hawthorne 2014.

³³⁴ There is some evidence that in universities at large, where the religious majority is mirrored in the student population, e.g., Christian students in America, students still feel report feeling ostracized and marginalized compared to students who are not religious (Bryant 2005; Moran 2007, 430; Moran, Lang, & Oliver 2007; Gross & Magolda 2009). Such feelings of marginalization even flood into religious studies. As religious studies professor at James Madison Alan Levinovitz anecdotally argues, even though one third of his students “believe in the exclusive salvific truth of Christianity [...] rarely do these students defend their beliefs in class” (2016). Levinovitz reports that students worry that defending their beliefs would seem “hateful, hostile, intolerant, and disrespectful” (2016). This ostracization may be a matter of perception, perhaps owing to a sensed threat to such students’ privilege given the increased religious diversity of campus life and decline of Christianity in America. Although, matters are unlikely this simple. As Moran 2007 notes, it may be that for such Christians, their behaviour is perceived to be watched more closely. Or such students are indeed responding to the negative impacts of secularism. It is not clear. However, I think what this information suggests is that it is wise to at least keep open the possibility that both secularism and the dominance of certain religious worldviews can together have a unique shaping force on the space that college students have with respect to expressing their religious worldviews.

³³⁵ For a thorough account of the nuances of how the experience of minority students in college differs from that of majority religious students, especially Christians in America, see Bowman and Small in *Spirituality in College Students' Lives: Translating Research Into Practice*, edited by Alyssa Bryant Rockenbach and Matthew J. Mayhew. Bowman and Small write that “marginalized religious affiliations have been on the negative, receiving end of Christian privilege” which affords Christian student’s certain advantages (2013, 20).

³³⁶ Small and Bowman 2013; 2011

A second point is that if secularism, and the naturalistic worldview that accompanies it, does not operate uniformly for all religious subjects, this may also be because secularism is not the only threat to religious subjects and the expression of their testimony. The impacts of secularism can be overshadowed (but also perhaps compounded) in contexts where a dominant religious worldview is also favored. Put another way: secularism can simultaneously shape and be shaped by a dominant religious worldview that would make the expression of a religious testimony more or less challenging depending on whether one adheres to that dominant religious worldview, and not just whether one is non-religious. For instance, we can think of the dominance of a religiously informed political worldview in the political sphere. Such a view has the potential to give rise to both a distorted understanding of what religion itself is *and* how religion (supposedly) must be manifest in political life. One such version of Christianity as ‘mixed’ with politics is White Christian Nationalism, whose influence citizens, Christian and non-Christian, might mistake for Christianity proper.³³⁷

Thus, it would seem that secularism is not the only threat to religion, and more specific to our purposes, the expression of religious testimony, especially outside the university. While I do not get into the details of how such dominant religious views could be a shaping force of epistemic injustice, such a view is one telling example of how dominant religiously informed worldviews can be themselves a competing threat to *all* religious people *alongside* secularism. Another way of putting this is that while naturalism, which emerges from secularism, might make all religious experience seem outside the scope of credibility, a dominant religious worldview can shape which religious voices appear *more or less* credible, and can shape a nation’s collective understanding of what, for instance, Christianity itself *is* when certain voices are dominant.³³⁸

³³⁷ White Christian Nationalism is constituted by the idea that America is blessed by God, “But these blessings are threatened by cultural degradation from “un- American” influences both inside and outside [its] borders” (Gorsky and Perry, *The Flag and the Cross*, 4). The result of this is (among other things) a rising perception of White Christian Nationalism as an understanding of Christianity proper, but not just for Christians; non-Christians understanding of what Christianity is also compromised by this politically charged religious worldview. It distorts a greater, broader, more diverse understanding of Christianity and who is Christian in America and other liberal democracies.

³³⁸ One consequence of the dominance of these views is that they also contribute to the perception that Christianity is inherently tied to specific political views, like conservatism, and religious and political affiliation become inextricably linked. As Gorsky and Perry observe, “[t]o be a Christian was to be a

We should thus be motivated to develop, as I do below, an account of epistemic injustice and religion that can make sense of the experiences of various identities that must navigate the competing forces of secularism and the dominance of religious worldviews. So, an account of epistemic injustice and religion should be able to account for, for instance, Black Christians in America, who can have their religious testimony treated with epistemic injustice (pre-emptively or otherwise) according to both secular norms and religious norms, like white Christian norms. And we should too be able to explain how these co-existing threats may operate differently still for the testimony of those whose religion is racialized or made hyper visible, such as for veiled Muslim women.

Again, the point is that if secularism is indeed not the only threat to the epistemic lives of religious (and even non-religious) individuals, at least not to all equally, then we also need to reconceive of the *epistemic harms* that might arise from a more complicated understanding of the threats at issue. And as I will argue, parsing this out successfully will hang on a better understanding of religious identity. The upshot is that epistemic injustice will manifest uniquely for different religious identities, which ultimately demands an intersectional approach.

3.4. Intersectional and Religious Epistemic Injustice

Before describing how exactly an intersectional approach can be used to understand the epistemic harms facing religious subjects, let me first establish what it means to look at epistemic injustice intersectionally. This requires a few remarks about intersectionality itself. Kimberlé Crenshaw uses the term intersectionality to challenge the use of single axis frameworks to analyze race or gender-based inequality as isolated phenomena. On Crenshaw's view, single axis approaches do not capture how both forms of discrimination coalesce for Black women.³³⁹ The key idea here is that Black women

member of a church and/ or to affirm certain beliefs (e.g., in God or the Bible). But today, calling oneself a "Christian" or even an "evangelical" is sometimes just a way of claiming membership in an ideological or political tribe or defending a certain "way of life." (2022, 107).

³³⁹ Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the margins: Identity politics, intersectionality, and violence against women." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-1299.

face subordination on two fronts, racism and sexism, and thus are uniquely marginalized by the intersection, and multiple burdens, of both.

Since Crenshaw, intersectionality has been used, not without its critics, to describe many different intersections beyond race and gender. Put by Patricia Collins, “[t]he term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities”.³⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Collins neglects to mention religion as a membership category, perhaps because there exists a “deeply contested and contextual terrain of whether religion is actually an oppressed form of difference or is itself an oppressive force”.³⁴¹ We can simplify this contested terrain, however, by considering religion as a point of difference, rather than strictly a point of oppression, in an effort to better articulate the harms that fall on those who are not clearly oppressed *by their religion*, nor oppressed by secularity, whatever that might mean. Rather, religion may be a source of difference that is connected to other sources of difference and points of oppression.³⁴²

Putting the ideas of intersectionality and epistemic injustice together, then, we can suppose that understanding different forms of epistemic injustice will depend not on treating identity as (or just as) a single axis of oppression, but rather, as a point of difference that can shape other points of difference. Given this, we should wonder: how might the understanding and expression of religious knowledge depend on what other points of difference one occupies, and how those identities shape one’s actual or perceived credibility? Might intersecting identities amplify undue burden in cases where expression of religious testimony is already challenging, as it seems to be in non-religious spaces?

To answer these questions, I want to consider a few cases of how religious people with intersecting identities face epistemic injustice. I do so through the lens of two

³⁴⁰ Collins, Patricia Hill. "Intersectionality and epistemic injustice." In *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice*, pp. 115. Routledge, 2017

³⁴¹ Jakeet Singh, "Religious agency and the limits of intersectionality," *Hypatia* 30, no. 4 (2015): 657-674.

Religious agency and the limits of intersectionality, 658

³⁴² Singh, Religious agency and the limits of intersectionality, 658

perspectives on religious identity. The first, the social identity perspective, is meant to highlight the aspect of ourselves that takes on a distinctly social meaning, usually outside of our control, and sometimes to our detriment. It is concerned with how religious identity appears to others beyond one's religious community, and has the potential to communicate distinctly demographic knowledge, such as the diverse identities, beliefs and practices that makes up one's religious group.

The second view, the worldview perspective, involves conceiving of religious identity as an internally robust outlook through which we make meaning of our experiences in the world, and has the potential to communicate a reflective stance on how we see that world. Of course, this often involves taking into consideration and integrating the meaning of our different social identities, such as our race or gender. So, to be sure, the social identity and worldview perspectives will not always neatly break down into distinct categories. However, distinguishing them can bring clarity to how epistemic injustice can occur differently depending on which aspect of identity we are attentive to.

How do these two perspectives—religious identity as social identity and as worldview—reflect the aims of intersectionality? As we will see in the following sections, it is precisely the intersectional nature of race, gender, and religion—their coalescing and shaping one another—that can prompt ways of knowing and corresponding epistemic harms. From the social identity perspective, religious subjects can be harmed when their religion is racialized or when their gender and dress are mistakenly thought to be predictive of their beliefs and practices. From the worldview perspective, religious subjects can be harmed when, by contrast, we underestimate the force of the connections between religion, race, and gender, which can give rise to distinct and intersectionally rich theologies, and that can in turn be marginalized and denied credibility.

3.3.1 Religious Epistemic Injustice from the Social Identity Perspective

Let's consider a few cases that illuminate the social identity perspective, and how it might inform our understanding of epistemic injustice in relation to religious individuals. The first concerns those who have their religious identity racialized, where a negative identity prejudice concerning race is intertwined with that of religion. The

racialization of religion is a well-documented phenomena.³⁴³ As Joshi puts it, “[a] religious group is racialized when a group of people belonging to a specific religion (therefore having shared beliefs and traditions, etc.) becomes in the social imagination constructed as a ‘race.’”³⁴⁴ In turn, “an individual’s race creates a presumption as to her or his religious identity”.³⁴⁵ Currently in the West, the racialization of religion is most likely to occur for Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims, who are considered a visible racial *and* religious minority. But of course, we can imagine different religions being racialized in different contexts, and across different periods of time, as Jewish people have for instance been in the West.

What is wrong with racializing a religion? The most obvious wrong (which is perhaps also the wrong of simply racializing any group) is that it essentializes and stereotypes the adherents of the religion, equating the religion with a racialized group, and vice versa; “[i]t reduces people to one aspect of their identity, presents a homogeneous and undifferentiated view of communities, and overlooks the dynamic nature of ethnoreligious communities”.³⁴⁶ When considering the *epistemic injustice* that may result, however, we need to be more specific. For according to Fricker at least, stereotypes can sometimes be useful heuristics, “oiling the wheels of testimonial exchange” such that we make reliable assumptions about our interlocutor.³⁴⁷ In her view, stereotyping leads to epistemic injustice when it is *prejudicial*—that is, based on a harmful prejudgment about someone qua social type in a way that is not only unreliable, and so often false, but widespread enough to distort the image of a group in the collective imagination. So, the assumption that someone is Hindu because they are Indian, for instance, need not be prejudicial, but the assumption that someone is Hindu *and being Hindu is also seen as a negative feature of that person*, can indeed be based on a prejudicial stereotype.

³⁴³ See Joshi 2009; Al-Saji 2010; Meer 2013; Selod 2013, 2015; Galonnier, J. 2015.

³⁴⁴ Joshi, Khyati Y., W. J. Blumenfeld, and E. K. Fairchild. "The racialization of religion in the United States." *Investigating Christian privilege and religious oppression in the United States* (2009): 37

³⁴⁵ Joshi et al., “racialization”, 37

³⁴⁶ Joshi et al., “racialization”, 38

³⁴⁷ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 32; For an opposing view, see Lawrence Blum 2004.

When it comes to religion and epistemic injustice, racialized religious identity may be the target of the pre-emptive epistemic injustice described by Loughheed.³⁴⁸ That is, testimonial injustice can occur when the religious person suppresses their own testimony, precisely because they are aware of a negative judgement not just about their religion, but about their race; they fear that the negative judgement about their race has transferred over to their religion, and the two have become intertwined. What is more, even if a subject suppresses their own testimony only out of an *anticipatory* fear owing to their *not knowing* whether their interlocutor will understand their religious beliefs or practices, this fear is still contingent on the very concrete fear of having one's testimony distorted qua being a racialized subject.³⁴⁹ And the religious speaker may then hold back speaking about their religion particularly in non-religious contexts when they fear having it fall on ears that are not equipped to hear the nuances of their religious experience or beliefs. Of course, this may be because such environments are secular, and so there is already an obstacle to voicing one's testimony, but the racialized religious subject faces another obstacle, which is the way in which their religion is itself racialized. This is amplified when the dominant religion is unreflectively detached from race, where one's whiteness is "invisible" with respect to one's religion, as it may be the case for white Christians in the West.

Consider the university, which I have already suggested leans towards secularism. We can see how someone whose religion is racialized in society at large will not want to offer a distinctly religious testimony in an academic environment insofar as this could feed existing racialized stereotypes about them. For instance, stereotypes that one is less than fully rational because of one's race may influence how one's interlocutor perceives one's religious testimony too, leading this testimony also to seem less than fully rational, less credible, and thus taken less seriously than it otherwise would have been. And certainly, the lack of expression of the testimony, held back from fear of prejudice against one's religion, may reaffirm the false idea that such beliefs held by the racialized religious subject are non-rational, and so not suited for academic discussion.

³⁴⁸ Loughheed, "Epistemic injustice and Religious Experience", 88

³⁴⁹ Lee, "Anticipatory".

Even though actively testifying to religious beliefs or experiences in public environments such as the university has the potential to diversify a secular audience's understanding of the race-religion connection, the religious speaker may still risk strengthening the ties of existing interconnected stereotypes. This is especially the case if the audience is already not well-equipped with concepts that allow for an easy grasp of religious ideas in general, as the prevalence of naturalism suggests. Ultimately, in offering a religious testimony, the religious subject risks giving their audience even more content by which to misunderstand them, more content by which to degrade them qua knower, instead of doing the work of clarifying misconceptions. By bringing up their religious views in the university, for instance, the racialized religious speaker may risk being perceived as fundamentalist, as making others uncomfortable, irrespective of the content of the beliefs being communicated.

By holding back one's testimony for fear of this perception, there is a clear ethical harm to the religious speaker, who loses out on an opportunity to participate in knowledge-building projects and offering a religious contribution as a knower. But there is also an epistemic harm. There is a risk of further distorting or impoverishing *social knowledge*, whereby the complexity of one's religion is distorted from view in the social imaginary. By this I mean that the racialization of religion and religious identities may not only cause religious subjects to suppress their own testimony, but it prevents would-be hearers from inquiring into the nature of the religion that they presume racialized subjects hold. They may be ill-equipped to ask or may assume they already understand. Particularly under the dominance of a white Christian worldview, such perspectives might be dismissed as "other" in a way that would not occur to those views that are not racialized. In turn, the racialization of religion may only further isolate already marginalized religious communities such that opportunities for non-religious people to appropriately challenge and grapple with religious knowledge in public are lessened or lost, as religious communities become the only safe space within which to discuss one's beliefs and live them out.

The racialization of religion comes into view even more clearly when we add another layer of social difference: gender. As one instance of this, consider the negative

identity prejudice that has accompanied Muslim women in the contemporary West. Rashida Bibi notes that Muslim women have “become subsumed in narratives on forced marriage, gender violence and of course veiling and are thus understood through neat cultural icons [...] that present them as essentialized, homogeneous subjects”.³⁵⁰

To see how prejudicial stereotypes against Muslim women can result in a distinctly social form of *testimonial injustice*, we must recognize the systematic loss of knowledge and systematic harm to religious women qua knowers of their religious beliefs. This harm has indeed been recognized by those writing on the exclusion of Muslim women’s voices, showing how they are persistently excluded from secular and political spheres in which their religious lives and practices are at issue, such as the practice of veiling.³⁵¹ This exclusion is an unfair denial of Muslim women’s testimony insofar as it is a denial of the proper *credibility* that veiled women in particular should be attributed about the political issues that affect them most. This exclusion, in turn, may reinforce the stereotype that Muslim women lack autonomy or are thought to adhere to religious beliefs out of false consciousness. Put by Thomas Lynch writing on epistemic injustice and veiling, when Muslim women are viewed as “victims of a backward culture”, then their rationality is denied, and if rationality is necessary for agency, then the “purported irrationality of Muslim beliefs render Muslims necessarily incapable of the agency necessary to *be credible*”.³⁵²

The particularly social nature of religious identity further comes to light when we focus on the role of dress as a social identity marker for religious people, particularly women, and the role that it plays in expressing religious testimony. We could explore any number of religious forms of dress, such as the religious habits worn by Roman Catholic nuns, and veiling as it takes on different forms for geographic regions and religions. But at least for some Muslim women, as Lynch remarks, “the veil not only marks religious

³⁵⁰ Rashida Bibi, "Gendered Islamophobia: Intersectionality, religion and space for British South Asian Muslim women," In *Intersectionality in Social Work*, pp. 63-76. Routledge, 2018.

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³⁵¹ See Mahmood 2001; Scott 2007, 10; Parvez 2011, 289; Inge 2017, 4; Lynch 2022.

³⁵² Lynch, Thomas. "Epistemic injustice and the veil: Islam, vulnerability, and the task of historical revisionism." *Culture and Religion* 21, no. 3 (2020): 283, italics added)

identity, but plays a role in the racialization of religious minorities”.³⁵³ Here, veiled Muslim women may face multiple axes of difference. Not only is their religion *racialized*, but they face the complexity of being a religious woman who is viewed as lacking agency, and also face the burden of being hyper visible as veiled in secular spaces. As Alia Al-Saji observes, it is the simultaneous denial of veiled Muslim women’s voices and persistent view of equating the veil with *oppression itself* that makes it so “the veiled woman is at once hypervisible as oppressed and invisible as subject”.³⁵⁴ This paradoxical burden put on veiled Muslim women’s capacity to express their testimony is also notably unique for women in a way that doesn’t occur to Muslim men who wear religious dress or religious women who do not wear religious dress.

We might wonder, still, how exactly dress can be the subject of testimonial injustice. Such a question demands that we ask not only how dress is connected to one’s identity, but how it is itself a form of testimony; only then can we see how it can be subject to epistemic and ethical harm. To see this, consider Jose Medina’s idea that testimony and testimonial exchange can range “from silences and inchoate expressions to sophisticated propositional and discursive structures”.³⁵⁵ Religious testimony will also take on a variety of forms, including, for instance, direct argumentation for belief in God, explanation of one’s conversion into a religion, or in the case of dress, the use of symbolic representation to point towards the divine. As Lynne Hume remarks in *The Religious Life of Dress*, “[d]ress is more than a visual demonstration of allegiance to a particular set of beliefs. It is a sensory testimony of those beliefs”.³⁵⁶ That is, it pulls on the senses to testify to the sacred and one’s devotion to it. In this sense, religious dress may be a visual representation, both a sensory and symbolic kind of testimony, expressing one’s religious commitment, even where no verbal testimony or testimonial exchange takes place. Religious dress, such as the veil, therefore, can do precisely what testimony does: that is, pass on knowledge from speaker (or “wearer”) to hearer (or

³⁵³ Lynch, “Epistemic injustice and the veil”, 280

³⁵⁴ Al-Saji, Alia. “The racialization of Muslim veils: A philosophical analysis”. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 2010 36 (8): 891.

³⁵⁵ Medina, *Epistemologies of Resistance*, 28

³⁵⁶ Lynne Hume, *The Religious Life of Dress: Global fashion and faith*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 9

“seer”), particularly knowledge of one’s religious commitment, but also, in virtue of this, the religious group to which one belongs.

But this process of communicating social knowledge is risky. Such communication can become distorted when the racialization of religion transforms a potentially informative testimony, via dress, into an object of prejudice. What exactly are the epistemic and ethical harms that result from such prejudice? First, concerning the epistemic, the racialization of religion may block agents from acquiring social knowledge that they otherwise would acquire if they did not judge veiling, or religious dress in general, in a negative way. What is at stake is knowledge of the diversity of the agents who engage in religious dress, and the diversity of the beliefs and practices these agents hold (i.e., in the very least, that Muslim women are autonomous in these beliefs and practices).³⁵⁷

Prejudice arising from dress is perhaps unsurprising in its pernicious nature. This is because it can form with no engagement with the wearer beyond a mere visual “exchange”, and again can be reinforced by already existing prejudices that are rooted in the racialization of religion. What knowledge is decreased or distorted is, overall, a lack of nuance in understanding internally diverse sets of beliefs, theologies, practices, personalities, genders, nationalities, classes, and races. (A fuller intersectional analysis could explore every axis here!). This isn’t quite *religious knowledge*, but it certainly constitutes knowledge that is directly related to religious identity, since it is knowledge of *who religious people are* that is at stake.

Finally, what are the ethical harms of prejudicial judgement of those who wear religious dress? What is at stake is not always the silencing of people in religious dress, although, in some countries and regions, this certainly is the case. Religious dress can “speak” whether one wants it to or not. Unlike race, dress *can and often is* a much more

³⁵⁷ Certainly, one hindrance to this diversified knowledge is the assumption that it is only Muslims, or even Muslim women, who engage in religious dress, which, of course, is false. Most religions contain religious dress of some kind. What explains the existence of such an assumption is not just secularism alone, but a backdrop of Christianity in the West, wherein a lack of religious dress is more common, or more common forms of religious dress (e.g., cross necklaces) are more discrete and perceived as non-threatening.

reliable indicator of someone's religion. Yet, as the case of the veiled Muslim women reveals, some religious dress "attract[s] more attention than others" depending on how discreet it is in the secular space it is in.³⁵⁸ Given the hypervisibility of the veil in public, then, we can see that the ethical harm is likely the increasing denial of the voices of those we ignore or assume to understand based on the visible testimony of the veil. The ethical harm here is the assumption that Muslim women lack agency and rationality, and so credibility, which is difficult to defend against when the testimonial "exchange" is based simply on the appearance of religious identity markers.³⁵⁹

To summarize, racialization, gender, and dress represent a few salient intersections by which the social aspects of religious identity can be subject to epistemic injustice. Concerning the racialization of religion, individuals may pre-emptively suppress their testimony in order not to inflame those racial prejudices that are already operating against them. Concerning gender and religious dress, we see how racialization plays a similar role, but may especially burden and distort the testimonial expression for women who are rendered hyper visible via religious dress.

3.3.2 Religious Epistemic Injustice from the Worldview Perspective

The social identity perspective shows us that epistemic injustice can result from *overestimating* our understanding of the connection between race, gender, and religion. When we conflate two or more of these social identities, we wrongly assume we understand how they intersect. However, *underestimating* the connection between race, gender and religion can also give rise to epistemic injustices. Underestimating these connections has the potential to deny individuals the credibility to speak on specific *theologies* that are intimately shaped by their experience as racialized or gendered subjects, and so puts individuals at a conceptual disadvantage for developing and expressing these views.

³⁵⁸ Al-Saji, "Racialization of Muslim veils", 881

³⁵⁹ Lynch, "Epistemic Injustice and the Veil", 283

Undoubtedly, this applies to those groups we focused on above, such as Muslim women in the contemporary West. However, one limitation to that analysis, via the social identity perspective, is that it doesn't fully capture the experience of those religious people who are marginalized in society generally *and* who adhere to the dominant religion of a given society. I'm thinking here of Black Christian Americans. It's not as clear how race and religion can intersect for such people to give rise to epistemic injustices, given that the religion in question seems to not itself be marginalized nor clearly met with pervasive prejudice, as in the case of Muslim women and their perceived lack of agency. So, we can ask: how might epistemic injustice affect those who are indeed marginalized by race or gender, but whose religion is not obviously racialized nor marked out by social identity markers such as religious dress? Part of the answer, I think, is found when we focus on how worldviews can be epistemically marginalized.

Let's begin with a better picture of what a religious worldview is.³⁶⁰ To say that religious identity is or is composed of a worldview tracks a few existing ideas in the literature. For instance, Kidd notes that a religious worldview is a "conception of reality";³⁶¹ Alvin Plantinga's defines a religious worldview as "a sort of total way of looking at ourselves and our world"³⁶², and John Cottingham likewise describes philosophy of religion as a "comprehensive 'synoptic' vision of things—one that endeavours to discern how (or how far) the different areas of our human understanding fit together".³⁶³ These descriptions capture the rough idea that while religion is a social identity for many people, it is also constituted by a lens-like quality through which one *sees* the world, and one's place in it, in part in order to arrive at satisfactory answers to deep and difficult questions about the nature of reality.

Of course, defining religious identity as a worldview is not to say that it does not connect to, or even stem from, the social aspect of one's identity, or one's behaviours and

³⁶⁰ For an argument for why we should call religions themselves "worldviews", and differentiate them from secular worldviews, see Mikael Stenmark, "Worldview studies." *Religious studies* 58, no. 3 (2022): 564-582.

³⁶¹ Kidd, "Epistemic Injustice and Religion", 392

³⁶² Alvin Plantinga, *Where the conflict really lies: Science, religion, and naturalism*. Oxford University Press, 2011) ix

³⁶³ Stenmark, "Worldview studies". John Cottingham, *The spiritual dimension: Religion, philosophy and human value*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, 2

practices. Indeed, these will mutually inform one another. The worldview perspective nevertheless helps us see more clearly how religious identity can be importantly related to the development and expression of one's theological beliefs, and how these beliefs can oppose not just naturalism, but other dominant religious worldviews, even those associated with one's own religion. This is particularly apparent at the political level. To see how this is so, let us consider three advantages to the worldview perspective of religious identity and the expression of religious testimony.

First, by understanding a religious worldview to be integral to someone's identity, we can more easily see why raising political issues from a religious perspective might be of the utmost importance for religious citizens. Religious citizens may think it a matter of faith and integrity to not sever their public and private selves on political issues, and viewing religion as a worldview may help us, particularly the non-religious among us, to see why.³⁶⁴

Second, and relatedly, viewing religious identity as a worldview captures why some religious people use their religion as an overarching perspective to orient and make sense of other aspects of their identities, such as their race or gender. This can be especially apt when these identities have been oppressed, and where a religious worldview is a large motivating force to fight against oppression. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is an excellent example of this. It was not just because King was a Black man that he testified to the wrong of segregation. It was because he was a Black Christian man.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ As Nicolas Wolterstorff has pointed out in a debate concerning the role of religious reasoning in debates on public reason, religious citizens may strive to keep their public and private selves integrated and whole, reflecting the idea that there is in fact no obvious distinction between them (Wolterstorff, 1997). This no doubt applies to those who wear religious dress and thus testify to their faith in public through their dress. However, religious folks may also testify to their beliefs more directly, through argument and bearing witness to their faith in processes like conscientious objection. But they might be compromised in their ability to testify to their religiously informed political view when either they or their audience are deprived of the conceptual resources, like basic religious literacy, required to successfully do this. When the collective resources for religious views are diminished, and citizens increasingly lack a more nuanced understanding of religious citizens' beliefs and practices, religious citizens risk appearing fanatical, stubborn, or unintelligent in their being "unable" to separate their religious and political beliefs and selves. For more on epistemic injustice and public reason, see Morgan-Olsen 2009. For a view that includes religion, see Epstein 2015.

³⁶⁵ King's fight against racial injustice was seen by King himself as a call from God motivating and leading him in the Civil Rights Movement. In his biography, King is quoted stating: "I could hear an

Third, the worldview perspective has the advantage of making sense of how different theologies that arise from *within* or in response to the hegemonic perspective in a dominant religion, such as Christianity, can nevertheless be wrongly epistemically excluded. Leaving out the perspectives of diverse members of a Christianity can perpetuate existing and monolithic understandings of Christianity as a primarily white religion, at least in America, or as inherently linked with conservative, hierarchical, or nationalistic values.

In summary, the worldview perspective allows us to make sense of how religious identities may importantly shape political perspectives, make sense of race and gender as relevant to political issues, and, for the sake of epistemic *justice* for marginalized religious people, challenge hegemonic religious views and monolithic understandings of those views. With these elements of the worldview perspective in mind then, let us turn now to one concrete example. The goal here will be to explain how the worldview perspective can help to illuminate the epistemic and ethical harms at play.

3.4. Sojourner Truth

To explore *all* of the liberation, feminist, queer, and womanist theologies that have challenged, for instance, a hegemonic and monolithic Christian worldview would be beyond the scope of this paper. However, let us consider one example that reflects the beginnings of womanist theology in the West, a grouping of worldviews that stays faithful to the intersectional nature of religious identity we are exploring here. I have in

inner voice saying to me, ‘Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo I will be with you, even until the end of the world.’ . . . I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on” (King, quoted in Garrow 241-242). Certainly, it was because of King’s overarching religious worldview that he was able to situate his experiences as an oppressed Black man in America within a particular theology, a “personalist” theology, and vice versa, wherein the Christian God is portrayed as personal God who stands with King and God’s Beloved Community (Carson, chpt. 4). King defines his personalist philosophy as such: “the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality. This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality-finite and infinite-is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality” Carson, 2001.

mind here the testimony of 19th century abolitionist, feminist, and Christian, Sojourner Truth.

My focus on Truth is motivated in part by the fact that, while she has recently been viewed as a proto-intersectional feminist, her testimony is rarely seen as a distinctly *religious* testimony.³⁶⁶ Indeed, as Katrine Smiet argues, “Sojourner Truth illustrates both how a particular *secular* version of feminist history becomes dominant, and also reveals the religious counter-discourses that exist alongside the mainstream feminist story”.³⁶⁷ When we ignore the religious nature of Truth’s identity and testimony, however, we lose out on what it means to be Black, a woman, and *Christian*. Such understanding isn’t just important for the development of knowledge within a church; a secular society’s collective understanding of Christianity and *who Christians are* is also at stake. Moreover, when we describe testimonies as narratives that focus only on race, or gender, particularly testimonies that also comment on issues of social justice, we miss what diverse perspectives can tell us about the religion that gives meaning to these social identities.

Truth’s very identity is constitutive of her relationship to God. Truth changed her name from Isabella Baumfree to Sojourner Truth, meaning “itinerant preacher”, under a purported call from God to fight for racial and gender equality. As Truth’s biographer Nell Painter notes, “Isabella underwent a cataclysmic religious experience and the Holy Spirit, the power within Pentecost, remained a crucial force throughout her life—a source of inspiration and a *means of knowing*”.³⁶⁸ Truth was able to use her faith not only to testify to her own unjust experience of racial and gender inequality, but to speak to the wrongness of racial and gender equality more broadly. As Smiet suggests, “Truth’s faith not only *inspired* her to fight against injustices that she lived through in her own life and that she witnessed around her, it also provided her with *tools* to do so”.³⁶⁹

Notable instances of Truth’s feminist Christian theology are found in her famous “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech from 1851. Truth claims that Eve committing the first sin

³⁶⁶ I borrow the term “proto-intersectional” from Kathryn T Gines, “Race women, race men and early expressions of proto-intersectionality, 1830s–1930s”, In *Why race and gender still matter*, pp. 13-25. Routledge, 2015.; Katrine Smiet, *Sojourner truth and intersectionality: Traveling truths in feminist scholarship*. Routledge, 2021.

³⁶⁷ Smiet, *Sojourner truth and intersectionality*, 9; italics added

³⁶⁸ Painter, “Representing Truth”, 462; italics added

³⁶⁹ Smiet, *Sojourner truth and intersectionality*, 88; italics added

was a sign of women's strength. She states that "[i]f the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!".³⁷⁰ Truth also elsewhere emphasized the distinctly experiential component of faith for Black women, that moved beyond relying on the authority of the Bible and depended on a personal experience with Jesus. Scholar Jacquelyn Grant claims that, "[f]or Black women, the role of Jesus unraveled as they encountered him in their experience as one who empowers the weak. In this vein, Jesus was such a central part of Sojourner Truth's life that all of her sermons made him the starting point".³⁷¹ It was a "tough, active love [of Jesus] that empowered her to fight more fiercely for the freedom of her people".³⁷²

Crucially, the religious nature of Truth's testimony was not just a testimony conveying the unjust treatment of Black Women, but a testimony conveying the gravity of that wrong. The gravity of the wrong, of course, was established with a particular (if unarticulated as such) theology which encouraged the idea that God stands for equality between people and "empowers the weak".³⁷³

One might think that we can simply remove the Christian elements of Truth's testimony and still understand its importance. However, it's not clear that removing the very spirit and force behind it does epistemic justice to what Truth claimed as a Black Christian woman. (Indeed, doing so may constitute an *injustice*). To be sure, Truth certainly depended on some shared values her fellow (Christian) citizens held in common at the time of her activism. And she simultaneously challenged these values to the extent that she demanded that the anti-slavery movement, and women's participation in it, be front and center to the Christian faith. However, in doing so, the point here is that Truth played a key role in expanding the values and saliency of these political issues, and thereby gave them political life by way of freedoms and rights for everyone, Christian or not.

³⁷⁰ Smiet, "Post/Secular Truths", 11-12

³⁷¹ Jacquelyn Grant. *White women's Christ and Black women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and womanist response*, (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1989): 214

³⁷² Grant "White women's Christ", 214. For more on the theology underlying Truth's testimony, see Schüssler Fiorenza 1994 and 2001

³⁷³ Grant, "White women's Christ", 214

Although Truth's religious testimony was in many ways successful in the abolitionist movement of the 1800s, I think that we can (and should) also recognize that Truth nevertheless faced and still faces epistemic injustice. Biographer Nell Painter notes that even in Truth's own time, she was aware of and worried about not being taken seriously.³⁷⁴ Truth had "a preoccupation with credibility" because "as a girl, she had been beaten and sexually abused, and as an enslaved worker, she had found her word doubted"; moreover, as a litigant "she was liable to be doubted in situations of the utmost seriousness", such as when she went to court against a white man over the loss of her son to slavery.³⁷⁵ We can surmise that doubt in her word hinged on the double burden of racism and sexism that Truth faced, but we would be remiss to think it entirely unrelated to her religious testimony as a spiritual leader. Indeed, as Painter points out, Truth was preoccupied with her credibility *as a spiritual leader*.³⁷⁶

While it is unclear what impact secularism had on Truth's testimony during her time, a more recent analysis of Truth reveals the distinct impact of secularism today. As Painter herself notes, "[i]n the work of secular-minded feminists resenting orthodox religion's power to oppress women[,] Truth's religion, always a puzzle for biographers, disappeared entirely"³⁷⁷. Having disappeared from view, we might think that Truth's religious testimony has not been treated as equally *credible* nor *deeply related* to her testimony of racial and gendered injustice.³⁷⁸ Of course, isolating Truth's religious testimony from the rest of her story does not mean that all aspects of her testimony are thereby distorted; however, in the very least, "the story of Sojourner Truth shows that there is a tendency to treat race and religion as two different axes of difference that are to be discussed separately".³⁷⁹ Authors like Katrine Smiet are now showing that they need not be.

³⁷⁴ Painter, "Representing Truth", 483

³⁷⁵ Painter, "Representing Truth", 463

³⁷⁶ Painter, "Representing Truth", 463

³⁷⁷ Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A life, a symbol*, 270

³⁷⁸ To be sure, "[m]ore than a century and a half after Isabella Baumfree changed her name to Sojourner Truth, a small cadre of Black female scholars of religion claimed a similar power of naming and called themselves womanists" (Floyd-Thomas 2006, 3). Particular to womanism is an epistemology that challenges "certain ideological formulations, certain cultural complexities, and certain languages of existence that have kept white supremacist heteropatriarchy intact and omnipresent"; womanist theologies in turn emphasize Black Women's ways of knowing (2006, 3).

³⁷⁹ Smiet, *Sojourner Truth and Intersectionality*, 19

By discussing Sojourner Truth's religious testimony, I hope to have better illuminated why it is important to consider religious identity as a worldview, and why we should consider religious testimony as intersectionally related to the testimony of racialized and gendered individuals. Such considerations seem especially important for recognizing those Womanist theologies that Black women may draw upon and develop in their making sense of and pursuit against oppression and injustice. More broadly, it is important to recognize that when we deny the relation between religious ways of knowing, and the forms of knowing that arise from experiences of oppression, this constitutes an epistemic injustice. Why? It lessens our collective understanding of the connection between race, religion, and gender, especially when subjects are already marginalized according to race and gender. In what remains of this section, I would like to make this idea clearer by asking more directly what it might mean to attribute credibility to a worldview like Truth's as an act of epistemic *justice*.

3.4.1 Epistemic Justice and Credibility

It doesn't quite work to say that Truth's religion—Protestant and Methodist Christianity—was racialized (although this may be a future point of research worth considering), nor was or is her testimony distorted according to any obvious religious social identity markers that she held. Truth's race and gender of course still played a role in shaping her theology, but this is better captured by showing how her Christian worldview coalesced with and subsumed an understanding of race and gender as oppressed. This worldview can, then, be denied *credibility* precisely when we deny the ways in which gender, race, and religion inform one another for the religious person.

But what does it mean to say that Truth was offering a *credible* testimony? We might grant that Truth was credible about her experience of *injustice*, but even if one's religious worldview helps one describe or cope with injustice, how exactly can it be credible, particularly if it competes with different religious views? Here, the story isn't so different from the one Fricker and Medina tell. It is indeed the epistemic access Truth had to her experiences of oppression that in turn shaped her religious testimony, and vice versa. So, we should wonder why we cannot extend the credibility that someone has over

their experiences of injustice to their religious experience if they are indeed deeply related for the testifier, and trusted by others in one's community.

Note that we can accept that Truth's religious testimony was credible without further supposing that Truth was *correct in her belief in God*. Truth may be testifying to the claim that God exists, as evidenced through her life lived in devotion to God, and this belief may or may not be successfully taken up by others. However, she, like many other religious people, is also testifying to the more modest idea that *if* God exists, then God is a God for the worst off, the weak, the oppressed. *If* God exists, it is evidence of God's existence that God gives strength to the oppressed who indeed report this to be the case. And it is Truth's very experience of injustice that *allows her* to testify to *who God is*, and by testifying to how individuals like her, in all their suffering, can be aware of God's presence through injustice.

A related theological point is worth making here. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me".³⁸⁰ If those who are subject to intersecting injustices are among the worst-off, socially, economically, and even epistemically, and in them people find God, surely such people occupy a special stance from which they can *know* about this God. But before we can help the least among us, we must hear them properly; we need to know their needs if we are to serve them, and by serving them, we can, if we are believing, serve God in turn.

Recall Medina's claim that oppressed "subjects often find themselves in need of certain bodies of knowledge in order to escape punishment or stigmatization, sometimes even to survive".³⁸¹ Why not extend this to bodies of theological knowledge? If white Christians in particular were to take Truth's religious testimony about who God is as inseparable from her oppression, they would take seriously the idea that Truth was in a position to know something they could not, something only knowable through experiences of survival. That is, they would recognize that Truth's experiences of racism and sexism, together with her religious experiences, suggest she was in a position to *know* something of theological importance that they could perhaps not know, at least not through direct experience, and so is something they must know through testimony.

³⁸⁰ Matthew 25:40 NIV

³⁸¹ Medina, *Epistemologies of Resistance*, 44

Of course, it is one thing to say that Sojourner Truth's testimony can challenge the theological assumptions of other Christians, particularly white and male Christians (or those who, as stated at the outset, hold white Christian nationalist views that degrade other races or gendered identities), but it is another thing to say that she can do so for different religious or non-religious folks. How does granting credibility to the religious person work in these cases? Again, granting credibility to the religious person need not amount to agreeing with their entire set of beliefs. This is too great an expectation to put onto the hearer and goes beyond merely recognizing or neutralizing the impact of prejudice on one's judgments of the speaker as a knower. Rather, to grant credibility means to see that the speaker *is in a position* to have—is perhaps justified in having or has good reasons to have—the worldview that they do. It recognizes how their social roles and experiences give rise to a perspective that *rightly* has a bearing on what their religious beliefs are. What is more, recognizing the intersectional nature of their testimony amounts to recognizing the oddity of granting credibility to only certain parts of another's experience. Knowers can, of course, get things wrong. We are not always right about all aspects of our experiences. At the same time, it's unclear why we shouldn't extend credibility when social experiences that intimately inform one another, such as oppression and related theologies that make sense of that oppression, collide.

In turn, when one attributes credibility to a religious speaker, one can help the religious speaker live with integrity. Recall that this is one important way in which religious identity as a worldview can be lived out. For instance, by accepting how religious testimony is relevant to the speaker's sense of injustice, we give the speaker room to more easily testify to their faith, and in the process understand and even revise their worldview. Allowing this, in turn, has the likely effect that the hearer will also gain an enriched understanding of the seriousness of that faith in the lives of those around them, perhaps even seeing this as evidence in its favor.³⁸²

³⁸² Again, granting credibility in no way implies that one needs to adopt a specific doctrine themselves to *see* the religious speaker's testimony as credible here. One need not *believe* the doctrine in full to see that the speaker has an epistemic position that justifiably informs and is informed by a doctrine which guides their actions—one can simply see the doctrine and actions as interwoven based on the subjects' experience, as a reflection of who the speakers *is*, and still disagree with or challenge that doctrine.

It is also important to the understanding of credibility in the context of a religious testimony to recognize the hermeneutical resources that make that testimony intelligible, at least to the internal workings of a group, but also outside of it. Recall that Medina adjusts Fricker's view of hermeneutical injustice to claim that members of some oppressed groups indeed have an intelligible, sometimes privileged, understanding of their own experience.³⁸³ Concepts that capture these experiences may not be widespread or common knowledge, especially in an increasingly secular society or one dominated by white Christianity, but may still be internally coherent to a group.³⁸⁴

In light of this, epistemic justice for religious speakers may consist in non-religious people simply being willing to *recognize* the rich and deep theological resources and concepts that are already available for religious people to make sense of their experience internal to their communities, for instance, recognizing the importance of womanist or liberation theologies. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that these resources will not always generate or correspond with the secular-liberal ideas of some feminists. That is, they may not aid directly in resistance to patriarchal norms in the way that secular-liberal feminism has come to define these norms; to be epistemically just, I take it that non-religious people must be open to seeing, as Saba Mahmood writes, that “what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may actually be a form of agency—but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment”.³⁸⁵ So, epistemic justice for religious subjects may mean acknowledging perspectives that in fact challenge secular-liberal feminist ideas of oppression and agency.

³⁸³ Pohlhaus, “Relational knowing and epistemic injustice”, 177; Medina, *Epistemologies of Resistance*, 43-44

³⁸⁴ For various accounts of womanist theology, and other African American theologies, see Pinn and Cannon 2014. For other accounts, see Coleman 2009 and Hayes 2010.

³⁸⁵ Mahmood 2005, 15. For a perspective that criticizes Western feminist assumptions that some religions are not only regressive or are outright oppressive, but are “unchanging”, see Narayan 1997. As Uma Narayan explains, “‘Religion’ appears in such analysis as a relatively unchanging body of beliefs and practices shared by all its adherents, rather than as a cluster of beliefs, practices, and institutions, historically constituted, traversed by change, and affected by interpretative and political conflicts about its values and commitments. [...] What results is not merely an intellectually inadequate picture of religion as an evolving social institution, but a picture of religion that plays an important role in a ‘colonialist stance’ toward Third-World contexts” (52).

Finally, I think that it is worth stating that while individual virtue has been the assumed route to epistemic justice explored in this paper, it is equally important to point out, if for further research, that structural remedies are essential. As noted, secular bias may exist structurally, with no obvious individual culprit(s).³⁸⁶ So, it may not be obvious that individual virtue is always the best approach to epistemic justice for religious people. In light of this, we would be remiss not to acknowledge that our public institutions, especially our academic ones, can increase the opportunities that religious testimonies need to gain credibility and intelligibility. Part of being treated as serious contributions to our collective knowledge-building projects is to be given institutional space, but what this space looks like will inevitably be determined by context. For instance, as I noted at the outset, if secularism is not the only threat to religious subjects' ways of knowing, but dominant political worldviews are too, then political contexts may differ from academic ones; political contexts may need institutional structures to ensure credibility and intelligibility for religiously informed political worldviews that challenge others, like White Christian Nationalism.

3.5. Concluding Thoughts and Future Research

In this paper, I have shown that better understanding religion and epistemic injustice requires, in part, a better understanding of religious identity. I have argued that a focus on the social identity and worldview perspectives of religious identity illuminates specifically epistemic harms negatively affecting religious knowers. I have demarcated two specific ways in which this harm occurs. The social identity perspective primarily makes sense of religious minorities and testimonial harms that occur to them by way of racialization and the bearing this has on the meaning of religious dress as itself a kind of testimony. The worldview perspective, on the other hand, has the benefit of making sense of a variety of religious adherents, especially those who are not strictly speaking oppressed according to their religion, but who can nevertheless have theologies that are marginalized and epistemically obscured.

³⁸⁶ Lee, "Anticipatory Epistemic Injustice", 2021

It is worth highlighting that the epistemic harms I've been discussing are not fully distinct; they are likely to occur in tandem, since both the social and internally reflective aspects of identity are often inseparable. For instance, insofar as knowledge of the diverse demographics that compose a religion are obscured in the homogenizing of social identity markers, knowledge of the hermeneutical resources that develop a diversified understanding of religious beliefs and practices will also tend to be obscured.

Ultimately, epistemic *justice* for religious people hinges on neutralizing prejudice and affording credibility where it is due. From the social identity perspective, this primarily involves *breaking down* our negative and false judgements about how religious identities relate to other identities. In the worldview perspective, this involves neutralizing prejudice by better recognizing how religious identities and other identities *are related* and can produce testimonies that are credible while utilizing unique hermeneutical resources that a secular society is not broadly familiar with. However, as I noted briefly, our institutions will inevitably play an important role in facilitating these individual opportunities for decreasing prejudice towards religious people. What this should look like exactly warrants more research.

Finally, because religion and epistemic injustice is a relatively young area of inquiry, and deserves more space than I have here, many questions remain unanswered in my account. We could (and should) consider in more detail how epistemic excess and privileged religious identities might intersect to harm religious knowers. This worry was implied in my remarks on the impact of White Christian Nationalism, but a fuller treatment of how different identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, and class can intersect with whiteness need to be fleshed out. We could also consider how other points of oppression, low socioeconomic status in particular, may ground some religious testimonies and challenge the beliefs of economically privileged others, or challenge associations between capitalism and Protestantism. Finally, we could ask how religious disagreement, something I have not taken up here, plays out in secular environments, or consider how secular environments may increase disagreement amongst different religious individuals. Future answers to these questions will, I hope, only reinforce the

importance of thinking more about religious identity intersectionally within an account of epistemic injustice and religion.

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Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have laid out and assessed three ways in which religious reasons for political action are excluded in the public sphere: in a political sense, an epistemic sense, and a testimonial sense. Of course, much more could be said about these forms of exclusion. Here are a few questions that I left unaddressed in my thesis, which I think future research ought to explore:

- i. First, what exactly is the nature of a religious testimony? If it is not like moral testimony, as I suggest in my second article, “The Accessibility of Religious Reasons”, what is unique to it?
- ii. While I discuss civic friendship in my first chapter, “Rawls and Religious Reasons”, something more might be said for the affective dimension of civic friendship. Can civic friendship have the kind of affect we typically describe of our relationships with our close friends? Is having or striving for this affect between citizens always good? How can it go wrong or be exploitative?
- iii. If overcoming our differences might demand that we come to know and be known by citizens who are radically different from ourselves, can citizens be reasonably entitled to opportunities for interpersonal (or two-way) knowledge of other citizens? What might these opportunities look like?
- iv. In light of question three, can citizens be overburdened by a supposed ‘duty to know’, or be informed of, the viewpoints of their fellow citizens? Does empathy burn out, or something like ‘opinion overload’, exempt certain citizens from knowing certain things, or even caring about them? If so, can certain citizens thus waive a ‘duty to know’?
- v. What is the epistemic significance of ‘understanding’ to deliberative democracy?