

POST-RELIGIOUS CRITIQUE OF RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

Jürgen Habermas's Concept of 'Religion as Critique'

Pius V. Thomas[♦]

1. Introduction

Discussions on religion's place in democracy in the backdrop of dominant secularist ideals either register an inconclusive gist or they are transposed to what is often believed to be more open and transparent 'weak comparative schemes,' connected with liberal or communitarian perspectives. But, when the question of the possible interactive space between religion and democracy is integrated to the theoretical projects aimed at the critique of modernity, sometimes, it assumes a strong/deep hermeneutic claim that can situate a mutually constructive critique between religion and democracy. Critical philosopher and prominent second generation Frankfurt School¹ theorist Jürgen Habermas's concept

[♦]**Dr. Pius V. Thomas** is Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Assam (Central) University, Silchar. His current research interests are focused on themes dealing with Philosophical Concepts of Interculturality and Critique, Democracy and Religion and Ethics and Reason.

¹Frankfurt School, brought into being in the first years of Weimar Republic and historically understood as both critical and constructive response to Marxian philosophy, which later created its own genealogy of theoretical engagements, gained its recognition under the directorship of Max Horkheimer with its other prominent first generation members Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Otto Kirchheimer, Leo Löwenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, and Friedrich Pollock. Frankfurt School's main agenda was formulating a critical theory of society, culture and politics with its varied multi dimensional frameworks radically different from the traditional theory. It was complemented by related work in the aesthetics of experience (Benjamin and Adorno) and work in political theory and political economy (Neuman and Kirchheimer). But the guiding concern of the original Frankfurt School was with emancipation through reflective social science, focused on the experience of the working class in particular. "Frankfurt School" came to stand for a social-theoretic approach employing methods of qualitative social science to expose the ideology responsible for various societal pathologies. With it's the most discussed second generation critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, Frankfurt School's theoretical ambience attaches with itself yet another dimension of reconstructive, deep hermeneutical theory of rationality, communication and normativity. The third generation members of Frankfurt School are Seyla Benhabib, Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, to name the most notable few.

of ‘religion as critique’ is such a deep interpretative engagement which tries to attach and contrast the meaningful realm of religion/religious discourses with the conceptual imagination of ‘critical modernity.’

The intent of the following discussion is to attempt a close look at the problem of the critique of democracy and religion in alignment with the concepts of Jürgen Habermas, particularly his notion of deliberative democracy which puts forward a major insight that the religio-cultural critique as critical religiosity is one of the prime requirements of meaningful democracy. In my attempt to discuss Habermas’s concepts, especially the concept of ‘religion as critique,’ I use two supportive notions, such as, the multicultural post-secular critique of democracy and the post-religious critique of religion. ‘The post-secular’ is meant to imply here a stance beyond secular nationalism, which is informed by the cultural affirmation of religion over modernist secularism. ‘The post-religious’, in its primary sense, is the self-critique of religion necessitated by the post-traditional and social modernist lifeworld(s). Therefore, the concept of ‘religion as critique’ in Habermas is discussed to prompt a reading which takes up the query that whether such an idea of ‘critical religiosity’ strikes or not the possibility of a constructive interpretation in invoking a distinct conceptual space to the problem that seeks religions’ place in democracy.

2. The Critique of Democracy: A Brief Sketch of the Conceptual-Scape

The discourses on democracy which emerged along with the critique of modernity seem to be composed of two mutually determining poles, namely, a radical democratic critique of politics, governance and lifeworlds on the one side and a deeper self critique of their own formative theoretical frameworks on the other. More contemporary critical theories consider democracy as a framework for constant and ever renewing patterns of critique. Naturally, the self critical theory formations project a new definitional space of democracy, constituted by a series of self negotiating counterfactual ideals. We can see them as the result of the problematization of the conceptual grid of western (socio-political) modernity, which comprise of the nation state, liberal democracy, its ideal of identity/citizenship and secularism.

Deliberative and deconstructive approaches to democracy as self critical engagements are guided by the gist that democracy primarily is an anti-institutional force and challenge any idea of democracy with the remnants of uncritical (western) concept of metaphysical reason. When the

projects with a post-metaphysical import put forward the critique of the nation state to propose post-national constellation and constitutional patriotism as the concept that can trigger the de-centring of nationalism,² theories with radically ‘deconstructive élan’ as they ask us to imagine the ‘democracy to come’ as here and now sensitize us with the ideal of the ‘cities of refuge’ as retrieved from the medieval notion of the ‘free city’ to counter the violence and undemocratic sovereignty of the nation state.³

Liberal democracy has been criticized for its enlightenment centred superficial notions in understanding the relationship between social complexity and democracy. Broadly, it has been exposed that the inner dynamics of liberal democracy is activated by the enlightenment-type rationalism, essentialism, universalism and the cultural insensitivity to alterity/otherness and heterogeneity. Different positions of ‘deliberative democracy’ pronounce their diagnostic critique of democracy in the uncritical modernist kernel to highlight the crisis tendencies which propped up around the ideals that constitute constitutional liberal democracy and its westo-centric philosophy. A deconstructive approach to democracy questions the violence of ‘self sameness’ of sovereignty built into its Eurocentricity which leads to ‘all naivete and every political abuse’ to propose the reclaiming of a different sense of democracy with the free play of its inherent indetermination.⁴

It, then, consequently entails that the nature (question) of identity has to be portrayed as a ‘fractal,’ having multiple coordinates of certainty-uncertainty, and as Bonnie Honig says ‘... (Difference) is what identity perpetually seeks (and fails), to expunge, fix and hold in place.’⁵ Nevertheless, according to some of the deliberative democratic projects, identity-citizenship problem also has to postulate a constructive framework of democratic identity that is sensitive to a moment of ‘procedural singularity’ at some point of time. Singularity becomes associated with

²Jürgen Habermas’s idea of postnational constellation expressed in Jürgen Habermas, *Postnational Constellation*, trans. Max Pensky, London: Polity, 2001.

³Fred Dallmayr, “Jacques Derrida’s Legacy: Democracy to Come,” in Kailash C. Baral and C. Radhakrishnan, eds., *Theory after Derrida*, London: Routledge, 2010, 36.

⁴Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascal-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

⁵Bonnie Honig, “Difference, Dilemmas and the Politics of Home,” in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 258.

identity to capture the idea that identity is not dissolved unidentifiably but can be captured procedurally, if not metaphysically. Moreover, it tells us the need to highlight and recognize identity as an ideal manifestation, constructed communicatively for a deliberative democratic frame of reference. Such an idea, however, does not discard fully the contemporary insight that the question of identity should be seen as the question of difference and identity and difference are mutually exclusive, especially when identity is problematized in connection with citizenship. However, its distinctness is in democratically and communicatively accommodating the assumption that identity or self is the struggle for reciprocal recognition with others/other identities/groups etc.

When the critique of liberal democracy extends itself to the critique of the modernist-secular idea of the compatibility of religion in democracy, it has been guided also by the dynamism which ‘... reflect(s) upon the theory and practice of democracy after the experiences of identity politics in their “new social movements” form,’⁶ to naturally refurbishes the need to reclaim and re-raise the question of religion and its role in democracy. The post secular understanding of religion(s) and its movements to relocate its place in democracy becomes the key negotiating point in this context. The post secular discourses are recognized here as the culturally sensitive and multi-culturally inspired critique of religion and democracy. According to such stances, the main insight in remodelling democracy would be in taking religion’s participatory power of being and becoming radically new movements which recognizes the pluralistic sites of its self understanding and social understanding.

It is, at this point, I believe the idea of post-religious (self-) critique of religion that is inherent in Habermas’s concept of ‘religion as critique’ in the context of philosophy of deliberative democracy comes alive as the problematique of the discussion.

⁶Seyla Benhabib, “Introduction,” in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 5. See also Michael Dusche, (2010), *Identity Politics in India and Europe*, New Delhi: Sage, 2010, 93-94.

3. Habermas’s Concept of Deliberative Democracy⁷

Habermas intervenes in the Liberal-Communitarian debate (in Habermas’s language, the Liberal-Republican) on the nature of democracy to show how they are appropriated by an economy of the remnants of the uncritical modernity. He pronounces ‘deliberative democracy’ distinct from the definitional engagements of liberal and communitarian ideas of democracy as it accommodates the ideal of ‘social dialogue.’ Habermas views the deliberativeness essential for democracy as the logical extension of his assumption that communicative reason sets the ground for deriving the validity for social norms and interaction in modern pluralistic societies.

For Habermas the difference between liberalism and republicanism is that they are different in understanding the role of democratic process. The liberal view understands its mode of democratic process as the programming of the state in the interest of the society. State is mere apparatus for administration, where society is conceived as a system of market-structured interactions of private persons and their labour. Politics, as the citizen’s will formation, is considered as the dealing with the private social interests by the state apparatus and state as administration of political power to attain collective goals. The republican view expects to go beyond the mere mediating function of politics. Politics as the citizen’s will-formation constitutes the socialization process as a whole, according to the republican view. Citizens are conceived to have the capacity to self-recognize as members of ‘quasi-natural solidary communities’ to act with full deliberation to further shape, as Habermas observes, ‘...and develop existing relations of reciprocal recognition into an association of free and equal consociates under law.’⁸

The different consequences of the two views according to Habermas are as follows: a) Difference in the concept of citizenship. The liberal view takes citizenship determined by the individual rights, the individual who

⁷Deliberative model of democracy has been advocated by many important interlocutors of the democratic debate. Seyla Benhabib points out that deliberative democracy has been defended as providing the most adequate conceptual and institutional model for theorizing the democratic experience of complex societies. She names the following thinkers, who come from contrasting theoretical and philosophical backgrounds, as representing different versions of deliberative democracy: Jürgen Habermas, Joshua Cohen, Amy Gutmann, and Iris Marion Young. Seyla Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference*, 6.

⁸Jürgen Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other*, Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff, eds., London: Polity, 1998, 240.

enjoys the protection of the government as bearers of individual rights. The individual rights as well as the political rights are conceived as negative rights as they operate only as means to check the state apparatus against the individual liberty. The republican notion of citizenship is based, instead, on the positive liberties such as political participation and communication. b) The legal status. When the liberal view maintains a concept of individual rights and subjective view of the legal function, the republican view proposes an objective legal order that substantiates subjective rights. c) Political process. For the liberal view, politics is the struggle to grab positions of administrative power. Opinion formation and will formation in the public sphere and parliament are regarded as products of competitive strategies of the collectives to acquire administrative power. The same competitive logic of winning participants in the market determines the political process and will-formation. According to the republican view, the political process is determined by the ‘obstinate structures of a public communication oriented to mutual understanding’ and by the paradigm of dialogue. The communicative power (discursively generated majority decision) here is different from the administrative power of the state apparatuses. The third model of democracy, which is proposed by Habermas, is, therefore, having three components. 1. A discourse theory of democracy that works out a proceduralist position different from both the liberalism and republicanism. 2. Human rights discourse and theory of multiculturalism that entail from a single unified theory of popular sovereignty. 3. A conception of the post-national.

Deliberative democracy, according to Habermas, is built on the deliberative politics of taking into account ‘the multiplicity of forms of communication in which a common will is produced’, which relies on the conditions of communication to produce rational results by operating ‘deliberately at all levels.’⁹ In contrast to the liberal and republican models, Habermas’s deliberative model of democracy claims a ‘differentiating’ space by proposing the following major points:

Making proceduralist conception of deliberative politics the corner stone of theory of democracy results in differences both from the republican conception of state as an ethical community [*where the democratic process, in which will formation takes place as ethical self understanding and deliberation can rely for its on a culturally established background consensus of the citizens*] and from the

⁹Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other*, 245-246.

liberal conception of the state as the guardian of a market society [where the democratic process takes place in the form of compromises between competing interests]. ... Discourse theory takes elements from both sides and integrates them into the concept of an ideal procedure for deliberation and decision-making. Weaving together negotiations and discourses of self-understanding and of justice, this democratic procedure grounds the presumption that under such conditions reasonable or fair results are obtained. According to this proceduralist view, practical reason withdraws from universal human rights or from the concrete ethical life of a specific community into the rules of discourse and forms of argumentation that derive their normative content from the validity basis of action oriented to reaching understanding, and ultimately from the structure of linguistic communication.¹⁰

More importantly, Habermasian emphasis on critique and communication as trajectories to the deliberative process of politics and democracy becomes the key point here. For the critical theorists in general and Habermas in particular, maturing self-identity is determined by the capacity/power to critique, to criticize conventions. The self-identity and social identity are argued to be built upon a mutually determining individuation and sociation, and are based on linguistic and communicative intersubjectivity. The communicative necessity as the telos inherent in the language and in the ideal of communicative rationality (the unforced force of reason in discourse) gives shape to the notion of communicative identity. Habermas's theory, thus, puts forward the idea of a 'democratic identity' as something inherent and simultaneously occurring along with the communicative identity. Communicative identity as democratic identity offers the effective framework for social dialogue or discourse, since the necessity of democracy is a procedurally justified one. Hence, the ideals of consensus, discourse (ideal speech situation) and deliberative democracy are argumentatively posited as counterfactual ideals.

The major assumption that would distinguish the notion of democratic identity further is the decentralization of the concept of communicative action/rationality as embedded in the linguistic intersubjectivity and the provision for universalizable validity claims for dialogue, which is further elaborated into social dialogue and democracy,

¹⁰Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other*, 246.

into ideas like ‘postnational constitutional-patriotism,’ postnational constellation etc.¹¹ Habermas’s intervention to create a distinctive space of deliberative democracy and discourse theory through the notion of ‘institutionalization of deliberative politics,’ as he explains below, the notion of democratic identity is again situated as that which reflectively enlarged from critical self and social identities. Habermas writes:

Discourse theory does not make the success of deliberative politics depend on a collectively acting citizenry but on an institutionalization of corresponding procedures. It no longer operates with the concept of a social whole centered in the state and conceived as a goal oriented subject writ large. But, neither does it localize the whole in a system of constitutional norms mechanically regulating the interplay of powers and interests in accordance with the market model. Discourse theory altogether jettisons the assumptions of philosophy of consciousness...Discourse theory works instead with the *higher-level intersubjectivity* of communication process that unfolds in the institutionalized deliberations in parliamentary bodies, on the one hand, and in the informal networks of the public sphere, on the other.¹²

It seems to me here that the above notion of intersubjectivity and the dynamics of deliberative politics are suggestive of one more counterfactual ideal that is operative in the corpus of Habermasian concept of deliberative democracy, that is, the idea of a democratic identity. The conceptual pair that emerges along with the notion of democratic identity is constitutional citizenship which houses Habermas’s idea of deliberative democracy/politics and the concept of democratic identity. For Habermas, as guided by the notion of positive law the concept of citizenship defines how it necessitates and locates the concept of democratic identity.

¹¹While the concept of the post-national/post-national constellations carries with it the extension of the discourse theory of moral /dialogical universalism into a global precept for democratic deliberation, it also emerges as a tool to critique the west constructed as culturally and uncritically meshed with European identity. The post-national ultimately refers to the democratic overcoming of the nation state, a definitional deliberation of civic and political sense of nation and culture from the ethnic and majority sense of nation and culture in the multicultural context (from ethnos to demos), to realize international institutions that can be constituted on the basis of supranational, republican constitutional law making and universal principle of human rights.

¹²Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other*, 248.

Democratic identity is imagined to function as the ethics of citizenship which informs the duty of reciprocal accountability toward all citizens supported by the intersubjective communicative necessity that is built into the ideal of democratic constitution.

It is arguable that such a notion of democratic identity is secondary and overloaded as a theory construct. But, as we think along with Habermas, democratic identity can be seen as the deliberative ground of moral consciousness carved by the higher-level intersubjectivity of communication. For me, such a presupposition becomes more important as we connect it with the idea of religion as critique in Habermas’s thought. The reason is: The same social dialogical pattern makes the concept of critical religious identity take shape in Habermas, with the implication that the critical religious identity and democratic identity are mutually inclusive and determining.

4. Critical Religiosity or Religion as Critique

The early thesis of Habermas in the conceptualizing religion can be understood as explaining away religion by contrasting it with rationalization of society. It was done for the ultimate purpose of supporting the process of the communicative and normative undoing of the sacred which was supposed to reclaim the transparency of an undistorted communicative rationality. It implies that the need of the sacred as referring to a realm beyond the communicative negotiating power of linguistic intersubjectivity is not rational and uncritical. In ‘Legitimation Crisis’ Habermas observes:

The idea of God is transformed [*aufgehoben*] into a concept of *Logos* that determines the community of believers and the real life context of a self-emancipating society. “God’ becomes the name for a communicative structure that forces men [*sic*], on pain of a loss of their humanity, to go beyond their accidental, empirical nature to encounter one another indirectly, that is, across an objective something that they themselves are not.’¹³

The above understanding, argues Habermas, as expressed by Eduardo Mendeita, ‘Religion, as belief and ritual inaugurated a particular syntactical relation that in turn overtook it. Religion linguistifies the world,

¹³Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon, 1975, 121.

catalyzing the very dichotomies that in turn linguistify the sacred.’¹⁴ The sacred becomes the language that mystifies the sediments of the dichotomous relations of social and cultural life which religion fails to place under the scrutiny of reason. Hence, the Habermasian diagnostic answer to the question of religion is, ‘Only in and through communicative action can the energies of social solidarity attached to religious symbolism branch out and be imparted, in the form of moral authority both institutions and to persons.’¹⁵

The idea of ‘religion as critique’ in Habermas acquires its momentum when the early pronounced ‘methodologically atheistic’ approach which locates God and religiosity in the limited scope of societal rationalization allows itself to shift to the idea of a new dialogical moral authority that demands a deeper understanding of God and religion. Similarly, notions like ‘the linguistification of the sacred’ as the way to the optimisation of the unfinished project of modernity and its communicative rationality strike a constructive hermeneutic relation between the apparent distancing tone in the understanding of religion and in the acceptance of the critical participatory role of religion in the critique of modernity which keeps the locus of religiosity within the self-reflexivity of social modernity. In one of his later works Habermas writes:

... religion, which has largely been deprived of its world-view functions, is still indispensable in ordinary life for normalizing intercourse with the extraordinary. For this reason, even post-metaphysical thinking continues to coexist with religious practice – and not merely in the sense of contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous. This ongoing coexistence even throws light on a curious dependence of a philosophy that has forfeited its contact with the extraordinary. Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues resist translation into reasoning discourses.¹⁶

¹⁴Eduardo Mendieta, “Introduction,” in Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality*, ed., Eduardo Mendieta, London: Polity, 2002, 23.

¹⁵Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Cambridge: Polity, 1987, 61.

¹⁶Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten, London: Polity, 1994, 51.

Habermas agrees here that the dissolving of the religious validity claims and discourse in the communicative rationality largely fails to understand the full import of communicative reason which has to be inclusive of the post secular cultural reason and critique. More emphatically Habermas observes elsewhere: ‘Postmetaphysical thinking misunderstands itself if it fails to include the religious tradition alongside metaphysics in its own genealogy. On these, it would be irrational to reject those “strong” traditions as “archaic” residua instead of elucidating their internal connection with modern forms of thought. Even today, religious traditions perform the functions of articulation an awareness of what is lacking or absent... They rescue from oblivion the dimensions of our social and personal relations...’¹⁷ The postmetaphysical procedural reason¹⁸ as it has to give space to the multicultural critique of religion as the post secular critique of democracy comes into the picture affirmatively retrieving the peculiar interconnection between religious identity and social identity.

At this juncture of our discussion I move on to reason out how the above qualified view of religion as the post secular understanding of religion and democracy as it is understood more in the nature of a cultural critique of democracy inspired by religion (religious discourses) implies the concept of a post religious religiosity in Habermas’s thought which is unique in many ways.

5. The Concept of Post-Religious Religion

Habermas’s notion of secularization clarifies it further, it seems. He rejects the concept of secularization which assumes it to be

a kind of zero-sum game between, on one hand, the productive powers of science and technology harnessed by capitalism and, on the other, the tenacious powers of religion and the church. This image no longer fits a post-secular society that posits the continued existence of religious communities within a continually secularizing

¹⁷Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Ciaran Cronin, London: Polity, 2008, 6.

¹⁸The postmetaphysical stance makes a critique of the western metaphysical tradition and its over-rated conception of reason by de-mystifying the metaphysical traps that shape its concepts of reason. The ‘aspects of metaphysical thinking,’ according to Habermas, presents itself in identity thinking, ‘prima philosophia as philosophy of consciousness’ and a strong concept of theory. Post-metaphysical thinking takes a counter stance against the above by bringing to fore the ideal of procedural rationality initiated to problematize the totalizing thinking.

society. And most of all, this too-narrow view overlooks the civilizing role of democratically enlightened common sense, which proceeds along its own track as an equal third partner amid the murmurs of cultural conflict between science and religion.’¹⁹

The critique of modernity/western liberal democracy combines a self-critique as well, as Habermas expresses it, ‘the self understanding of modernity is characterized not just by a theoretical “self-consciousness”, by a self-critical attitude toward all tradition, but also by the moral and ethical ideals of “self-determination” and “self-realization.”’²⁰ Habermas’s critique of religion not only couples it here with the critique of modernity to enact a critical religiosity but also makes it part of a critical modernity. Religion’s potentiality as critical religiosity is the necessary and unavoidable counterpart of self-critique essential for democracy. As Habermas says:

Thus modern faith becomes reflexive. Only through self-criticism can it stabilize the inclusive attitude that it assumes within a universe of discourse delimited by secular knowledge and shared with other religions. This de-centered background consciousness of relativity of one’s own standpoint certainly does not necessarily lead to the relativization of articles of faith themselves, but it is nevertheless characteristic of the modern form of religious faith²¹.

Bringing in the rights discourse to counter the question/phenomenon of fundamentalism, Habermas emphasizes the above position more clearly. Reminding and reflecting his auto-critical stance in the multicultural debate that ‘ultimately it is personal autonomy the determinant of the rights discourse’ Habermas says that the secularization of politics is the flip side of the political autonomy of citizens. Therefore, for Habermas, even in comparatively homogenous societies ‘a reflexive reformulation of the prevailing dogmatic traditions’ is the core of critical modernity and religiosity. He writes:

The awareness is growing, first of all among the intellectuals, that one’s own religious truths must be brought into conformity with publicly recognized secular knowledge and defended before other

¹⁹From the Speech by Jürgen Habermas, accepting the Peace Prize of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association. Paulskirche, Frankfurt, 14 October 2001, Trans. Kermit Snelson, www.sueddeutsche.de/aktuell/sz/artikel86740.php

²⁰Jürgen Habermas, *Postnational Constellation*, 133.

²¹Jürgen Habermas, “A Conversation About the God and the World,” in *Religion and Rationality*, London: Polity, 2002, 150.

religious truth claims in the same universe of discourse. Like Christianity since the Reformation, traditional world-views are thus being transformed into “reasonable comprehensive doctrines” under the reflexive pressure generated by modern life circumstances²².

Hence, compared with a post secular understanding of religion, a post religious understanding of religion and democracy can be seen as an intercultural critique of both religion and democracy. More clearly, ‘the post secular’ as the multicultural critique of the secular–liberal democracy, is less contextualized in terms of a religious self-critique. ‘The post-religious,’ on the other hand, is religion’s self-critique from a deeper understanding of democracy. More interestingly, post religiosity as understood here makes a critique of religion from the point of view of the deeper understanding of social modernity as critical modernity. It becomes an inter-cultural engagement between religion and critical modernity, if we can presume the concept of interculturality as evoking interaction between cultures, where the agents of a particular culture recognise and accept the reciprocity of the other’s culture. While the concept of “multiculturalism” means mainly a request for cultural identity and respect for cultural difference, interculturality involves a communicative and ethical commitment to interact with and understand the other cultures to dialogically modify one’s own culture.

Habermas’s theoretical-self critical intervention in his own tradition, that is Judeo-Christian, to trace out ‘an enlightenment Christianity’ that can dialogically respond to the post-secular reality discerns and shows how the idea of critical religiosity constructively determine the philosophy of democracy. Habermas’s discussion in this context points out the emerging post religious models of self critique within the Christian tradition: Johannes Baptist Metz’s theology with notions of a polycentric World Church and Hans Kueng’s interculturally enlarging Christian Global Ethics posit a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary notion of critical religion that could be named a ‘post-religious’ response to the ‘post secular’ according to Habermas. Similarly Habermas shows the model of Glebe-Moeller and his political dogmatics as an example of a critical religious discourse. ‘Glebe –Moeller subjects the Christian dogma to a

²²Jürgen Habermas, *Postnational Constellation*, 128.

demythologizing interpretation in the sense of a theory of liberation based on a theory of communication.’²³

Habermas’s ideal of religion as critique firmly establishes the link with cultural critique of democracy and post-religiosity. It welds the notion of deliberative democracy with ‘social dialogue’ and ‘critical religiosity’, which is to be achieved through a ‘self critique of one’s own tradition’. More conclusively, the postmetaphysical understanding of critical religiosity with the two of its wings of post-secular and the post-religious notions establishes religion as critique which is an essential component of deliberative democracy.

6. Conclusion

I would like to conclude the discussion highlighting a contextual delimitation that shadows the concept of post-religious self-critique in Habermas’s project, even when I regard the effort made in our discussion to show the justificatory epistemic link between Habermas’s concept of ‘religion as critique’ and the idea of a post-religious self-critique that has been derived out of it as legitimate in situating religion’s role in democracy. In other words, it can be stated that the concept of post-religious self-critique of religion as a deeper response to the post-secular critique of democracy in Habermas’s theoretical world remains a unique achievement which can lead us to a new constructive hermeneutics in understanding religion and democracy. But, as I mentioned above, such a stance encounters an urgent question as we try to know the nature of the relationship between ‘religion and democracy’ from an Indian context. In other words, the idea of religion as critique and self-critique of religion that we tried to derive from Habermas as the necessary precondition for meaningful democracy is in fact drawn from the ideal of social modernity and its reflexivity according to Habermas’s critical theory. Its import is restricted to the conceptual-scape of a less multicultural and multi-religious western ‘secular-post-secular’ societies. Whereas, the post-religious self-critique in a more diversely multi-religious context like the one of Indian situation compared with the more homogeneous western one, becomes more of a ‘real-living-lifeworld’ engagement. The idea of post-religious self-critique of religion gains a ‘contextual enlargement’ of its theoretical implication in the Indian context. Here, I think, we should understand the post-religious self-critique of religion expresses itself

²³Jürgen Habermas, “Transcendence,” in *Religion and Rationality*, ed. Eduardo Mendeita, London: Polity, 2002, 77.

primarily as multiple interactive patterns guided by the reflexivity of religious truth claims oriented to a context sensitive social modernity that is to emerge as critical modernity out of a really happening social dialogue instead of the one dimensional plane of reflexivity that exists between religious self-critique informed by social modernity.

The concluding gist, thus, tends to register the conceptual viability of the ideas of the post religious religiosity and the concept of ‘religion as critique’ in the Indian lifeworlds/context with the following reading/realizing possibility: 1. There is/should be a transfiguration of the post-secular multicultural criticism of democracy to post-religious intercultural self-critique of religion and democracy (which can be called intercultural post-religiosity) in the fully alive multi religious contexts, and 2. It is in such contexts the reclaiming of the idea of post-religious critique of religion which enacts intercultural self-critique as the unavoidable background of genuine democracy becomes more authentic and assertive.