MORAL NEUTRALITY OF RELIGION IN THE LIGHT OF CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE IN MEDIATIZED WORLD

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Abstract

Although only seven percent of wars in human history were caused by explicit religious motives – as it is suggested by one estimate – religious beliefs affect human attitude to the world. Especially in the context of the rash of contemporary conflicts and terror attacks which have a stated connection to religious motives, it is important to try to understand the possible religious motivations of such antisocial and dangerous behaviors. There are several different research perspectives on this topic, but none of them by itself offers a sufficient explanation. The purpose of this essay is to show that religious components themselves can be interpreted as morally neutral, and that their supposed impact on behavioral patterns can, in fact, be attributed to non-religious factors. Religion is discussed as cultural phenomenon partially interacting with cognitive and adaptive patterns.

Keywords: religion; religious beliefs; violence; conflicts; evolution of religion; cognitive science of religion, new media, mediatization,

Introduction

The opening statement that only seven percent of wars in history were caused by religious motivation [Atran 2014] is promising and misleading. It is promising because it suggests that religion is peaceful or morally neutral, and it is used rarely to justify conflicts. It is important for religions to clarify this point because religion from time to time is accused of perpetrating moral evil. Recently published books by members of a group known as The New Atheists including *The God Delusion* of Richard Dawkins or *The End of Faith* of Sam Harris express this approach. Religious culpability is explained in these books through such examples as the crusades, with clear reference to religious texts and theological support.

The cited opening statement is also misleading. Religion never does cause war directly as it is sometimes assumed. Let us look at this issue through the lens of human biology. As Jay Feierman points out, wars are almost always executed between breeding populations of humans where there are barriers to gene flow between the populations. There are exemptions in this theory when wars have occurred without any barrier to gene flow. Religions are considered here as in-group markers for a breeding population [Feier-

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man 2009], but they are not the only in-group marker. Groups who have the same religion go to war as well as long as there are other barriers to gene flow. Language is another barrier, which also acts as an in-group marker. During the Cold War it was political ideology codified in political beliefs that acted as the barrier to gene flow. The East and West had essentially the same religion. This theory assumes that cultural traits – religious and nonreligious – are secondary and accidental, and they are used to mark groups but they do not affect behaviors in causal sense. This approach implies that religious beliefs are not important for evolution of morality and development of behavioral patterns. Morality is formed within and between groups that can include various religious and nonreligious cultural traits.

Explanation of the complex impact of religious beliefs on decision-making, especially in reference to conflicts and lethal violence, is one of the most important topics for the social sciences [Ginges and Atran 2011; Atran and Henrich 2010; Atran and Ginges 2012]. On the one hand, diplomatic optimism of religious – like pope John Paul II – and political – like Barack Obama – leaders emphasizes the concept of religion which encourages peace, not war. On the other hand, religious beliefs and their deontological rather than consequentialist nature could develop during the cultural evolution a tendency to "defy 'business-like' negotiation" enhanced especially via "sacred values" [Atran and Ginges 2012].

The purpose of this essay is the discussion on the idea of religion as morally neutral phenomenon, which does not cause conflicts and violence. As it is assumed here, religious components are only secondary factors. Cognitive and evolutionary contexts support this thesis.

Cognitive and evolutionary study of religion

Pascal Boyer was one of the first scholars who have implemented cognitive approach to the study of religion. His key idea is that cognitive mechanisms generate human ability to acquire theistic and religious beliefs [Boyer 2001; 2008]. His point of view today is a basic one for the standard model of Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR). CSR states that religious beliefs are natural. Naturalness means that religious beliefs are non-supernatural, intuitive and cognitively effortless. Humans have natural predispositions to supernatural beliefs.CSR assumes that cognitive capacities like agency detection or theory of mind are effective tools for implementation of religious beliefs. Human cognition is not specially designed to create supernatural beliefs but this sort of beliefs is a good candidate for successful dissemination.

Another approach to the study of religion associated with CSR is focused on origin of the ability to cooperate at the level of large groups. Religious beliefs, especially those of the great moralizing religions, are a basic tool for cooperation and prosocial behavioral patterns [Norenzayan 2013]. But the real impact of religion on cooperation and conflict is still unclear [Oviedo 2016]. Religiously motivated acts of violence show that relationship between decision making and religious beliefs affects not only pro-social, but also anti-social behaviors.

Religious beliefs associated with sacred values are nonnegotiable. They are perceived as more important than material issues [Atran and Henrich 2010, p. 25]. While the idea of sacred value includes not only religious values, the peculiar contents of religious beliefs make them especially resistant to negotiation or rational and empirical critique. Religious beliefs seem to be accompanying and supporting factors rather than causal ones. Cognitive and evolutionary approaches seem support the idea that religious beliefs and behaviors depend on cognition and they are morally neutral.

The positive impact of religious components

Scientific and philosophical study of religion historically looks like a sine wave. Until

recently the predominate point of view has been one that interpreted religion as an unhealthy and even deleterious phenomenon. It seems that today, New Atheists notwithstanding, the dominant approach evaluates positively an impact of religion for human health, psyche and behavior. Adam B. Cohen and Harold G. Koenig point out that the religious impact on health and behavior is generally positive, but context dependent. It depends on the kind of religious content and environmental conditions [Cohen and Koenig 2004, p. 255]. Religious components have usually positive impact, but sometimes they can coincide with mental problems or peculiar mental imaginations of supernatural entities. Consequently, they affect negative behaviors, but it does not mean that religion is responsible for them. However, specific content of religious and supernatural beliefs make them good candidates for beliefs that can support and increase mentally pathological or uncommon states.

Correlation between religious beliefs and conflicts can be explained by religious studies, sociology, criminology, phenomenology or neuroscience. The mentioned biological approach suggests that religious beliefs are in-group marker for a breeding population that inhibits gene flow. Religious components work as in-group signs that provide social cohesion. This biological approach is too reductive and religious components are much more complex. Purely biological explanation does not express the domain of sense and meaning that are linked to aesthetics or value. When religion is reduced to the level of evolutionary group dynamic regulatory mechanism, right and wrong patterns are by-products of religious components affected by ecological niches. There are possible different biological explanatory framework and they differ in the causal role that they assign religious components.

The dominant point of view underlines its positive effects, especially for physical and psychological health [Joshi and Kumari 2011]. Despite positive effects and peaceful nature of most religious traditions, violent acts are associated with evolution of religion or, more accurately, with human evolution which encompasses evolution of religion. Violence can be found both in religious practice and in religious texts [Juergensmeyer and Kitts 2011]. The problem here is what constitutes religious practice. If there is no scriptural basis for the practice, is it still to be considered religious? The issue of the content of religious texts and their possible justification for violent acts is a particularly complex challenge. The same religious passages can be interpreted in various ways, and for this reason it is difficult to unequivocally conclude what could be the intent of the writers. Hans Küng points out that monotheistic religious texts cannot be interpreted as documents that affect and motivate to wars and conflicts [Küng 2005]. The comparative analysis of seven world religions conducted by Walter Dorn shows that Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism and Sikhism prohibit killing as a basic moral rule. But only Jainism rejects categorically any opportunity of killing. All other religions accept exemptions such as the punishment for wrong-doers or protecting the religion [Dorn 2010]. It is worth keeping in mind that Hinduism is interpreted as a crucial factor for the development of military strategy and the culture of violence in India [Roy 2009].

Politics and religion overlaps

William T. Cavanaugh points out that it is impossible to separate religion and violence. He finds that religious activity is connected with politics and economics. Evolution of religion is embodied in human life. Religion is shaped by environment. Political and ethical behaviors of believers which are perceived as right or wrong – including violence and lethal conflicts – are integral parts of religion [Cavanaugh 2007]. This approach avoids a tendency to treat religion separately from environmental factors, and consequently, to look for only religious causes of conflicts and violence. Human conflicts are not motivated only by one factor, and perhaps religion is in fact one of the least important.

It is better to reject the concept of "religious violence", because religion does not cause violence and conflicts. Religion and politics overlap, and perhaps it is impossible

to clearly separate only religious items from non-religious cultural and social context in which they work. We argue, following Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson [2011, p. 383] that we should be circumspect about buying into the idea of a causal relationship between beliefs and behaviors. The phenomenon known as theological incorrectness shows how complex and unpredictable it is to follow causal links between officially shared beliefs and decisions [Slone 2004]. Although religious components do not affect violence and conflict, there are particular features that can attract such behaviors like an impact of charismatic leaders, literal interpretation of religious texts or nonnegotiable stances [Barkun 2003, p. 69].

Our idea is that talking about religion and violence is possible at least in two of the following cases: when religious components are intentionally used to justify originally non-religious violence, and when person affected by mental disorder is affected by religious contents. There is also the third scenario when someone interprets literally religious texts. But this last opportunity is a case of the second approach, when mental illness and mental peculiarities motivate someone to treat religious texts literally, while other believers and religious professionals read them in a metaphorical sense.

Apologetic strategy

There are different levels of analysis and ways of interpretation of correlation between religious beliefs and behaviors. One of them is the defense of the good moral nature of God despite the fact that some Bible texts favor morally wrong actions. Paul Copan and Matthew Flanagan favor the concept of two different authors of scripture: human authors and divine authors. The human authors of the Bible prescribe actions that violate divine morality as dictated by the divine author [Copan and Flannagan 2014, p. 20]. This approach defends God but does not defend religion as social construction. At the level of religious language, according to biblical representation of God, God can promote only morally good behaviors. Despite this alleged will of God, religion has a hidden lethal potential which can be activated by religious leaders or believers.

Non-religious evolutionary roots of aggression

Another approach is offered by Ara Norenzayan who enumerates two strategies of defense of religion against being accused of causing conflicts. First, it is possible to point to secular conflicts such as two World Wars or the lethal actions caused by Communism and Nazism [Norenzayan 2013, pp. 156-157]. This approach refers to a negative impact of the enlightenment as well as a rationalization and instrumentalization of reason [Horkheimer and Adorno 1969]. Second, religion does not cause morally wrong acts [Norenzayan 2013, pp. 156-157]. But if religion has a peaceful nature, pious people never should make very bad decisions on the basis of religious beliefs. Scott Atran explains this phenomenon by the concept of sacred values, something that is not only applicable to religious matters [Atran et al. 2014, p. 42]. Religion's nature is nothing more or less than the nature of the people who act in its name. There are also many incompletely structure/realized individuals who are susceptible to superstition.

It is significant to ask about the origin of the human ability to act aggressively and to make decisions that involve lethal conflicts in general. McDonald [2012, p. 671] states that aggression and lethal conflicts may be explained in terms of an inherent fight or flight mechanism, also known as "the Male Warrior Hypothesis" [McDonald et al. 2012, p. 671] or the concept of "archaic intolerance" [Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1971]. Aggression, fear and anger are, from an evolutionary standpoint, old feelings, older than prosocial and altruistic behaviors, including biological altruism. Biological altruism is egoistic and necessary for survival. This feature also is very old. Evidence for this is seen in the phenomenon of territoriality in animals and such mechanisms as property equilibrium, loss aversion and endowment effect [Gintis 2013]. These mechanisms are not directly responsible for aggression; but during the evolutionary history of humans these mechanisms could

become strongly activated by some element of their environment and extend to property and material resources. Later, they could cause a social hierarchy and institutions of co-ercion [Seabright 2013, pp. 113-114]. The emergence of inequality has caused wars and conflicts. Religions could be useful cultural tools not only to aid morally good behaviors but also lobby against other competitive groups to ameliorate aggressive behavior.

On the one hand, we are acquainted with these kinds of explanations of human aggression and tendencies toward conflict. On the other hand, it seems that the con-nection between religious beliefs and lethal conflicts may be something different than those aforementioned mechanisms evolved by natural selection. When we refer to the phenomenon of loss aversion and property equilibrium [Gintis 2013, pp. 117-118, 127], we find that there is no certainty about whether religious beliefs have a causal relation-ship to lethal aggression related to the provision/maintenance of individual and group benefits. They can be explained in terms of self-sacrifice for the survival of the group or its defense. In this context the most useful concept can be the concept of eusociality. Its explanatory advantage over the altruistic explanation is that eusociality means relation between individual and the group while altruism describes only one to one relationship. Individual lethal acts motivated by religious beliefs should be separated from the phe-nomenon of inter-group conflicts. Religious conflicts at the higher level of competition may benefit the group. Behaviors at the lower level of competition should favor behavior which is beneficial for the individual. One of theories that try to explain the evolutionary origin of human cognition proposes that the evolution of human higher cognitive abilities came about by humans competing with other humans at the individual and the group lev-el. This is one of possible explanation including others like pure cooperation or the some mixture of competition and cooperation, just to mention a few. One way in which groups compete is with warfare, although it is often the least effective way due to the high costs involved. Today when one – individual, group, and nation/country – competes, they com-pete to be more successful economically. Violent warfare is just a type of human compe-tition at the group level. We can easily find an adaptationist context of wars and conflicts, especially if they provide quick and effective access to mates, territories, and resources. As John Price points out in the foreword to the book of Joseph Polimeni: "When the group goes to war, they are likely to fight harder if they know that the gods are on their side, so whoever is able to reassure them on this point is in a position to raise group mo-rale [Price 2012, p. x]." Of course, mentioned explanation is troublesome to maintain in the current age but may be applied to human evolutionary past. Polimeni's point of view corresponds with Norenzayan's idea of being watched by God/gods and other specific religious contents that make them effective tools for supporting social cohesion.

The puzzle of suicidal terrorism

It is more difficult to find an adaptationist explanations for suicidal terrorist attacks. There are two kinds of fitness, *direct*, such as when an individual maximizes his own fit-ness by increasing his own reproduction rate, and *indirect*, as when someone maximizes his fitness by increasing the reproduction rate of other related individuals [West et al. 2007, p. 416]. Some scholars point out that groups in which suicide cases occur can develop better in the sense of reproduction and social cohesion than groups in which suicide does not occur [Szentes and Thomas 2013, p. 434]. Terrorist acts, especially suicidal acts, are not beneficial for the individual or for the group, especially not in these cases when one believer also kills his coreligionists. In this particular context of reli-giously supported or inspired acts of violence, evolutionary explanations seem to be un-satisfactory. Suicidal bombing is more ambiguous than non-suicidal terrorism. Suicidal terrorism may be explained in terms of eusociality and individual self-sacrifice for others but it is not clear if all suicidal terrorist acts cause benefits for a group. Suicidal acts of violence are typically used by an oppressed weaker party who has no better recourse – no known higher efficacy. It is almost inconceivable that a suicidal act of violence is per-

petrated without some thought to group benefit, even if the individual acts unilaterally. However, it is difficult to conceive of adaptive benefits accruing from terrorism – suicidal included – since they typically meet with incommensurate military responses and/or strict sanctions of various sorts. In some occasions terrorism may be able to provide adaptive effects but often terrorism, especially suicidal terrorism, is maladaptive. The cost to benefit ratio is flexible and comes in degrees. The costs are simply too high too often. Some try to explain evolution of self-sacrifice and altruistic behaviors in terms of sexual selection, but certainly suicide terrorism does not fit this case.

Nonetheless, Norenzayan [2013, p. 162] tries to interpret some suicide attacks as an extreme form of parochial altruism. Lethal conflicts influenced by religious beliefs can be explained as a natural phenomenon at the group level. Specifically, this is true for individual lethal conflicts, but not necessarily at the level of large inter-group conflicts such as the Arab-Muslim conquest or the Crusades [Phillips and Axelrod 2007]. Suicide attacks, in this case religiously motivated ones, are not beneficial for the group and they should not be interpreted in terms of parochial altruism. Indeed, this theory does not seem to work within the framework of the current large societies. According to Paul Seabright, individually motivated sacrifice is stronger within smaller egalitarian societies than in larger hierarchical communities. Current hierarchical societies should, theoretically, exclude such acts. These acts can happen independently of official calls for or against wars and conflicts in religious terms.

Norenzayan partially explains historical connection between religious beliefs and conflicts referring to the social function of religion. He underlines that the main factor which influences decisions about religiously motivated conflicts is regular attendance of religious practices. This regular attendance is more important than regular prayer [Norenzayan 2013, p. 164]. Social ties within a religious community play the most important role in enhancing conflict actions. But this way of thinking can easily be falsified. Plenty of people participate in religious events and ceremonies on an everyday basis, but only a very small part of these participants choose to use lethal violence. Even in the group of the more radicalized believers, there is only a small percentage of possible future terrorists or persons who decide to perform religiously motivated violent acts. This observation suggests that regular attendance is only a casual factor, not a necessary or a sufficient one, and that other and stronger factors are required. Neither the evolutionary nor the social or ritual explanation of lethal conflicts under religious beliefs seems adequate.

In the context of global war on terrorism and some connotation between terrorism and Islamic culture – because reference to this religion dominates in talking about cultural context of the current terrorism and is exploited by right-wing parties – religion is effectively used as a tool that provides social cohesion and unifies various populations under a common religious affiliation.

Specificity of religious contents

Sharon Erickson Nepstad enumerates factors of religiously motivated violence and aggression. Religiously inspired violence can be rooted in a non-religious dichotomy of parties deemed "right" and "wrong." Nonetheless, a religious background introduces a supernatural element that is missing in a secular dichotomous attitude [Nepstad 2004, p. 298]. This kind of dichotomy is not a domain of religion, but religion can strengthen it up the level of cosmic battle that is out of any negotiations. This seems to be true of certain strains of eschatological Judaism and Christianity.

Another possible religious component of motivation to violence lies in the concept of the one truth. This concept can be found in certain religious texts, and for this reason it is not clear if religion can be rightly excused from accusations of motivating violence and aggression. It can lead to aggression and conflict in combination with the meta-

physical dichotomy of good and evil. Nepstad concludes that the main difference between good and bad modes of application of religion lies in the ways of understanding of religion. For terrorist, religion works as an end; for peacemakers, religion is a means to end. The key point lies in the difference between "truth seekers" and "truth protector" [Nepstad 2004, pp. 299-300].

Delusion

Support for topics discussed thus far can be provided by reference to the nature of delusion. Andrew Sims points out that the most important part of delusion is its form. Content of delusion works as secondary component and can be fulfilled by various cultural ideas, including religious beliefs. He states that religious faith cannot be interpreted as delusion [Sims 2009]. However, it is likely that religious beliefs are good candidates for the contents of delusion. Their attractiveness does not make them directly responsible for any possible violent and lethal behaviors. In some cases of mental illness, a patient can treat some sentences of his own imaginations in a very literal way [Sims 2009]. Such illness, in combination with religiosity, can lead to personal conviction about the will of God to do something, or can affect particular behaviors in accordance with literally interpreted se lected parts of religious texts. Religious references can strengthen an impact of obsessive compulsive disorders. Religious contents can negatively affect behavioral patterns when they correspond with some kind of fear that is attractive for religious traditions like fear of sin or fear of God [Cohen and Koenig 2004, p. 257].

Domestic violence

Another example of violence that is not motivated by religion itself, but which shows how a religious reference can encourage it, is the case of domestic violence. Religious people, especially women, can be more prone than nonreligious ones to accept uncritically possible acts of domestic violence. One of the religiously motivated factors that can increase the risk of violence is the religious critique of divorce and possible convictions of at least some part of religious women that marriage is unbreakable [Nason-Clarck 2004]. Religions and religiosity can increase the feeling of guilt and dependency. Sometimes strongly believing individuals can resort to suicide when they are affected by charismatic leaders of cult groups.

Nevertheless, in the cases mentioned above which suggest a possible connection between religious violence and conflicts, religious contents are not key factors in antisocial behavior. Religious beliefs do not provide contents that affect inherently wrong acts. More likely factors connected to conflicts are ethno-nationalistic concepts [Gunning and Jackson 2011, p. 380].

Multi-functionality of religion

Religious content is influenced by the cognitive tendencies, because humans are guided by particular heuristics, especially by self-interest, and by other ones which evolved by natural selection [Rolls 2012, p. 279]. Behavioral patterns which lead to lethal conflicts under pressure of religious beliefs at the individual level are probably based on very specific heuristics, which connect two different kinds of reality: namely, mundane and religious reality. Religion in general is a rather high cost phenomenon in terms of evolution because it requires some kinds of limitations which are not justified by natural evidence. Despite this, popularization of the scientific explanation of the world undermines an explanatory power of religion. This is why the simple functionalist explanation of religious beliefs is not an easy approach. However, some believers use religious beliefs as an explanatory tool. They may refer to them in order to explain and to understand the causes of natural properties [Rolls 2012, p. 329]. The most important pragmatic function of religion is its psychological impact. Religious beliefs can be a source of consolation

and psychological comfort. Their possible explanatory and psychological functions do not explain the possible role of religious reference in motivating conflict and aggression.

This explanatory incompatibility may have methodological reasons. The study of religion and its possible impact for evolution of cooperation and prosociality as well as motivation to aggression and conflicts is common amongst the populace of Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic countries (WEIRD). Norenzayan notes that the correlation between religion and prosociality is much stronger in non-WEIRD societies [Norenzayan 2013, pp. 52-53]. Religion plays a much more important role in these societies, not only for developing prosocial tendencies but also for anti-social actions associated with terrorism, conflicts and wars. It is not clear how effective this impact can be for socially negative behaviors. There are some evolutionary mechanisms commonly shared among people which regulate, for instance, the nature of parochial altruism. The tendency to love and trust within the group and to hate those and be hostile against those outside the group is a natural bias. This is a default mechanism which usually must be overcome by extra-biological stimuli. Religion can be this extra-biological, cultural tool, but it can also develop out-group hate. It is not clear whether cultural differences could affect significant differences in the impact of religious components for decisions and actions. Independently of inter-group differences, within one religion we observe different behavioral strategies and different kinds of motivation caused by the same religious beliefs. This is why we can presume that this motivational power of religious beliefs should be explained by other factors. Especially in the current large societies, religious inspiration and motivation to lethal conflicts may be interpreted as a result of some pathological, psychological changes which causes someone to uses religion for the purpose of the lethal conflicts despite the peaceful nature of religion.

Edmund T. Rolls notes that attractiveness of religion consists of the two following functions. First, religion explains causal relations and provides answers to existential questions which are associated with the feeling of uncertainty. Rolls [2012, p. 331] suggests that especially this latter function can affect positively human psychology by supporting a positive attitude towards the world. It appears puzzling why religious beliefs may cause lethal conflicts and aggression. One of the attractive explanations for this kind of application of religion is reference to manipulation and ideologization. It is not clear if this factor would be sufficient for someone who is going to use violence and aggression while motivated by religious beliefs.

Second, religion may be understood as a phenomenon which has emerged during cultural group selection and was used as motivation for cooperation at the level of large groups. This cooperation may imply actions for immanent benefits of the group or actions of unifying for the purpose of inter-group competition, especially aggression. Religion may be connected to tribalism and parochial altruism. In conflict situations these connections may lead to great aggression towards other groups in accordance with the main idea of tribal instincts and the mechanisms of parochial altruism [Rolls 2012, p. 335]. This possible lethal potential of religion may be the by-product of human small kin groups evolutionary past. The mechanism of parochial altruism is the domain of the oldest level of morality, the level of moral feelings. Religion has enforced in-group trust and loyalty, and negative attitude towards the members of other groups as well [Rossano 2010, p. 180]. Religion enforces "tribal psychology" because it underlines boundaries between groups. Atran and Henrich [2010, pp. 25, 27] note that there is a correlation between frequency of religious attendance and readiness for acts of martyrdom. This correlation underlined by Atran, Henrich and Norenzayan confirms Boyer's suggestion that religion parasites on morality. Boyer probably referred to morally good behaviors. We can add that religion and religious beliefs can enhance good and bad actions as well. Both of them are different sides of the one human "nature" [Waal 1996; 2005].

This topic involves the question of the human behavioral default tendency in terms of prosocial and antisocial behavioral patterns. We cannot prove whether human beings

are biologically egoist or altruist. The basic biological power is described by kin selection and the inclusive fitness theory which states that individuals tend to maximize their inclusive fitness, not to maximize group fitness. Inclusive fitness is the total sum of the mentioned direct and indirect fitness. However, inclusive fitness could include group fitness if the group is small enough. This theory has two important consequences. First, it suggests that natural selection usually favors selfishness, not altruism or prosociality. This sentence is the result of anthropomorphic generalization because there is no evidence that natural selection favors anything except adaptability. Natural selection is a natural phenomenon not based on personality as expressed by either selfishness or altruism. Despite this, many biologists are talking about natural bias towards selfish behaviors that usually provide direct fitness. If we take it for granted, and if we assume that human culture extends human biology – this is not obvious – we can interpret religion as a phenomenon which is used for selfish interests of believers and religious leaders. However, at this point religion has devolved into an ideology and has lost its "religiousness." Second, it seems impossible to explain the phenomenon of suicide attacks in the terms of inclusive fitness theory. We could try to do it if we assume a specific concept of a benefit for the group – also genetically non related like in the case of extended fictive kinship – that could be provided by suicide act of terrorist.

Religious components can work as "signal of coalition affiliations" [Boyer 2003], however they should not to be reduced only to this function. They can be used to strengthen negative behaviors by, for instance, demonizing enemies and improving social cohesion; but it does not mean that religion is the first and main causal factor [Gunning and Jackson 2011, pp. 380-381].

Noreez Herzfeld described the religious context of the massacre in Srebrenica in 1995. He points out that religion itself has no motivational power, but religious ideas affected aggressive behaviors among Serbian people. In that conflict, religious symbols were often used to highlight in-group affiliation with strong opposition to other competitive groups. We can talk about some kind of symbolic violence when victorious parts of the conflict destroyed sacral objects of defeated parts [Herzfeld 2007, pp. 111-112]. This practice is evidence for the concept of religion as in-group marker for a breeding population [Feierman 2009]. Religion works effectively as a means that provides clear boundaries between ethnic groups. We can think it over if religious components introduce a new quality by their specific contents.

The role played by religious components in conflict situations is ambiguous. On the one side, we should not accuse religion of special motivation to conflicts and violence because religious components work as many other cultural means that are used for in-group marking. On the other side, it seems justified at least partially to consider religion as a specific cultural tool. Religious contents assume unique ideas and concepts like the concept of supernatural agent and an afterlife. Both of them can affect behavioral patterns. Perhaps they are neutral in behavioral terms, but they can easily be used to provoke morally right or wrong behaviors. For this reason we can ask, following Herzfeld [2007, p. 113], whether religion is used by nationalism or nationalism is used by religion. History of wars and conflicts provides more examples for the above-mentioned concept of religion as a signal of in-group affiliation. In Poland in 1946, military groups killed some orthodox civilians. The criterion of their selection was their religious affiliation. Orthodox people were identified with Belarusians.

Deontologism versus consequentialism

Religion has in some sense destroyed and continues to destroy the connection between facts and values. Religious beliefs make it in specific sense but such a disconnection is not only a domain of religious components. It has a long philosophical tradition that is rooted in Platonic – facts as a domain of phenomenal world, Kantian, and Humean thoughts and that assumes that the realm of facts is distinct from the realm of

values. The core idea is that facts do not express values. This potentially antisocial influence refers not only to the decrease of inter-group trust, but also to in-group trust. The level of in-group trust may sometimes be enhanced, but sometimes can be decreased by the concept of reconciliation with God. This reconciliation in terms of religion is more important than reconciliation with other people.

Another important element of religion is ritual. Rituals involve emotions which may serve to maintain religious beliefs [Lawson and McCauley 1990]. Emotions and somatic states shape the nature of decision-making processes [Slyke 2011, p. 138].

This kind of reasoning and moral deontologism appropriated for religion may minimize the importance of factual chances and consequences, and may change the attitude towards the real world. The moral tools which can be responsible for this process are sacred values and the dualistic concept of the world. The latter one divides one reality into two worlds: mundane and supernatural. Religious support for morality does not work sufficiently in everyday life. The idea of the supernatural judge should influence human behaviors in a positive manner. However, it seems that "watched people are nice people" [Norenzayan 2013]: not that the ontological question of a supernatural observer is of particular relevance but rather the real and natural "feeling of being watched" [Brosnan and Waal 2014] is what is important. Moral dichotomy between ideas and behaviors among believers is expressed by the concept of theological incorrectness which shows that the believer subjectively modifies religious contents or does not treat them seriously. Not every believer treats the concept of God's omnipresence and the concept of supernatural, eternal punishment and reward seriously. The biblical story about human creation portrays Adam and Eve as practically atheists in the sense that they were not able to believe in the words of God and consequently, to follow his orders. This story suggests that people do not always treat God seriously.

Some beliefs can strongly affect human decisions. Rational motivation of killing and aggression is a specifically human feature. Nonhuman primates like chimpanzees use lethal aggression usually to achieve particular existential aims. Their behaviors have adaptive nature [Silk 2014]. The history of human self-domestication is characterized by the great tension between aggression and selfishness, and strong efforts to prevent them [Gibbons 2014, p. 405]. Behaviors which benefit neither individual nor group are abnormal.

Religiously motivated violence makes perfect sense, i.e. is normal, when religion is considered as an ideology and adherence is strong and there is a strong grievance to be addressed by suicidal action. We can try to treat suicidal terrorist acts as a behavior in which the death to self is not the primary aim of the act, which is the case in suicide affected by depression. One of the emergent properties of eusociality is that one puts the welfare of one's in-group above that of one's self [Nowaket al. 2010]. Precisely, this is the rationale for Jesus' martyrdom, hence, for Christianity. As such, it is not difficult to see how someone could become a suicide bomber. The Japanese kamikaze suicide bombers did the same thing. And, in battles, soldiers die for their in-group all the time. Celibate religious do the same thing when they forego reproduction for the benefit of other members of a religious group. Certainly there is difference between celibacy and suicide but both of them withdraw their reproduction for the group benefits.

Religiosity and mental illness

Religiosity and spirituality can be treated as possible components of mental illness. For this reason, religious background should be taken into account during clinical treatment [Hansdak and Paulraj 2013, p. 40]. Religious and spiritual considerations can be components of mental disorders. Some scholars suggest that a destructive cult can be affected by the leader's narcissism. There is a correlation between religious texts and the rate of aggression. Believers exposed to texts that discuss religiously sanctioned

violence are more prone to aggressive behaviors [Pargament and Lomax 2013, p. 29]. Believers with religious delusions experience both kinds of experiences, positive and negative. Religious patients have more hallucinations and their delusions are deeper than among less religious ones [Mohr and Huguelet 2004, p. 371]. Specific content of religious and supernatural beliefs make them better candidates for inherent components of mental disorders than other kinds of beliefs. Religious content often includes the idea of supernatural punishment that can generate fear and even various kinds of neurosis. Such components of supernatural reward and punishment can be used to manipulate believers and to provide political purposes independently of the moral core ideas of a religious system.

Religion in new media

Nowadays, there can also be observed new ways of transmitting religious ideas to recipients and sometimes they are connected to aggression, however not necessarily in real life. The Internet as the most powerful and global new medium circulates religious ideas in many ways and methods. Starting with holy texts in multimedia form and websites of churches, throughout on-line religious channels, blogs and on-line religious service, word religious leaders eg. Pope's Francis Twitter page and multimedia, ending with using elements of religious content or history in computer games.

These all measures generally spread knowledge of religion, history of religions and their ideas and symbols in the largest range in history, however usually with popular content. Religious expressions on the Internet are not precisely the same as those 'in real life' and are always conveyed symbolically, the difference depends on the technical context and the social context [Johns 2013, p. 238]. There are secret or closed circles that celebrate their specific sacred symbols. However, mediation with technological media usually makes it public. Representation and reception of the sacred as well as of evil occurs in relation to the media [Lundby 2013, p. 231]. Especially in computer games the virtual reality could provide to merger of various religious elements and symbols transferred to entertainment industry and aggressive behaviors, eg. in such computers games as Diablo. However the recipient is obviously aware of the game character of such connection, that could interfere or modify religious experience and interactions. In the same time presence of religion in new media demonstrates the constant need and importance of contact with the concept of the superior being.

Conclusion

Some parts of religious beliefs and decision-making influenced by those beliefs seem to be the result of the human tendency to delusion, self-deception, and confabulation. The strong impact of religious beliefs for decision-making is guaranteed by the specific content of those beliefs. They suggest the presence of another kind of parallel reality which is a better one than the mundane world. Common sense states that acts of religiously motivated violence, especially in the context discussed here, seem to be not natural and not adaptive. It is time to stop obsessing over an evolutionary/adaptive explanation for human behavior despite the obvious usefulness of evolutionary framework in general. Religion seems to possesses much many other functions that are hard to explain in evolutionary terms. Consider such functions like meaning and sense of life, or looking for spiritual desire, just to mention a few. The same remark refers to other non-religious cultural phenomena as well. But this is the topic for a separate discussion, currently broadly studied under the agenda of cultural evolution studies.

If we assume that the concept of the superior parallel reality does not affect morally wrong acts, it is worth to consider alternative research perspective into the study of religion. Violent acts motivated by religious beliefs could be explained in the terms of mental disorders or some mental illness. Another explanation mentioned in this essay is the possibility of unhealthy imagination of supernatural entities which are subject

to manipulation and can be seen as a type of superstition. It seems that any research approach including CSR, psychology, or evolutionary sciences does not explain sufficiently the correlation between religious beliefs/religion, and aggression perpetrated in religion's name. In the framework of intuitive psychology, believers do not accept all religious contents, and they modify them within their specific environmental conditions and psychological states. Intuitive and naive knowledge which is commonly used in everyday life often is in contradiction with religious beliefs. Consequently, there is a gap between religious beliefs and aggressive behaviors.

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