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Fighting Rage with Fear: The “Faces of Muhammad” and the Limits of Secular Rationality

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Abstract: In recent years, a number of incidents have pitted Islam against secularism and liberal democracy. This essay examines the Danish publication of the Prophet Muhammad cartoons in order to examine the deployment of rationality as a litmus test for political membership. It argues that Western media and political analysis of the protests surrounding the cartoons constructed Muslims as anti-rational and thus unfit for democratic citizenship. Such a deployment of rationality inhibits the possibility of and demands for political pluralism. The essay then looks to two disparate theorists of affective reason, Abdulkarim Soroush and William Connolly, to offer an alternative model of reason that encourages pluralist political engagement.

Keywords: Muhammad cartoons; secularism; liberal rationality; political pluralism

In late September 2005, a series of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad and his followers appeared in the conservative Danish newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* (hereinafter *Jyllands-Posten*).¹ Causing massive protests, these provocative and, for many Muslims, intensely offensive cartoons, portrayed the Prophet as a terrorist, devil, advocate of suicide bombing, and an oppressive patriarch.² In most of the cartoons, Muhammad is depicted as bearded, turbaned, and dressed in nomadic clothing harkening an ancient, traditional, and barbaric time and culture. The publication of these cartoons in Denmark and then around the world³ set off a critical debate about the relationship between Islam, free speech, and democratic freedom, as well as the role of religious tolerance in secular democratic polities. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims protested their publication and boycotted Danish companies, and a small few even resorted to threats of violence (Shadid and Sullivan 2006). It was this latter move to violence that became the depiction of Muslim protestors in almost every discussion surrounding the controversy in the West. While many argued that the cartoons were insensitive and perhaps offensive, the running narrative was that this standoff between the press (a quintessential democratic institution) and Muslim protestors was emblematic of a larger clash of cultural and political beliefs; that between secular rationality/democratic freedom and conservative irrational Islamic religiosity. This discourse was particularly couched in terms of the liberal protection of freedom of speech.⁴

This essay examines the way in which the Danish cartoon incident portrays an anxiety about whether Muslims living in Western secular polities can choose the secular over the religious, the democratic over the theological, reason over emotion. It reflects one significant nodal point in analyzing the complex tensions that have developed over contemporary questions of Muslim immigration and the meaning of Europeaness. While the cartoons themselves were not particularly

¹ For an excellent history of the incidents, see Klausen (2009).

² For a replication of the published images, see Spiegelman (2006).

³ The cartoons were published in over 50 newspapers across the world with the majority being printed in Europe and a few in the Middle East.

⁴ For an example of this liberal defense of free speech, see Hansen (2006).

significant and we have continued to see deep disagreement about the role of cartoons and satire of Muslim minorities in Europe, what continues to be meaningful about these incidents is how they reveal a key tension in the contemporary deployment of secularism in democratic polities. On one hand, secularists insist on an unencumbered neutral rational stance towards all religious faiths, and on the other, secularism encourages political judgment regarding the proper space for religion, particularly Islam. At the heart of this tension is the claim that the expression of religion in the public sphere is destructive to the capacities of the state and its people to produce a coherent, though albeit limited, community identity. In place of religious thinking, rationality—a shared faculty ostensibly held by all—stands as the medium through which all can communicate and be equally understood. For secularists, rationality thus operates as both a capacity and a value necessary to the function of a pluralist society. As Talal Asad has noted, “To be fully part of a democratic community, citizens holding different religious beliefs (or none) must share values that enable them to have a common political life” (Asad 2006, p. 494). These shared values in either their liberal or deliberative instantiation are predicated on the cognitive capacity for reasonable engagement and rational thought. However, it is becoming progressively more difficult to develop the idea of a political community with shared values in religiously diverse democratic societies, particularly when minority religious identities come to the fore. The result of this instability has been the development of a dogmatic form of secularism that has the effect of subsuming some forms of religion into the private sphere, ignoring the affective motivations of the majority, and allowing the majority to then normatively assess certain minority religious groups as fundamentally irrational and consequently lacking the essential characteristics needed for democratic participation⁵. The problem, then, is that the deployment of the secular mandate of rationality over religious affect has made it nearly impossible for Muslims to be fully accepted citizens in the secular polity. In turn, such a deployment ignores the affective conditions that make such a political move possible. Thus, while the discourse of this dogmatic secularism attempts to configure a binary between Western rationality and religious emotion, an essential catalyst for this dogmatic secularism has been fear (surely one of the most visceral of emotions) of a minority religion.

This essay analyzes the Danish cartoon incident as one nodal point through which to critique the juxtaposition of rationality/irrationality as a political litmus test for inclusion in secular democratic polities. It turns specifically to this incident to empirically think through how theoretical concepts like secularity and rationalism function and because, despite it being 15 years later, the cartoon incident reflects our current historical moment, in which anti-immigrant sentiment, nationalism, and the perversion of claims to free speech have contributed to further anti-Muslim bias. This paper thus aims to do two things. First, it examines how claims to rationality and irrationality limited Danish-Muslim dissent and curtailed a more robust discussion of issues of pluralism. It argues that the deployment of reason/rationality in response to the outrage over religious mockery obfuscates the way in which calls to reason are often born out of affective consideration. Second, it then argues for a conception of reason that is essentially affective as an antidote to these limits on democracy. A reevaluation of reason as affective, this essay argues, allows for conditional moments of engagement that do not falsely subsume emotion to the private. Instead, this view of affective reason embraces emotion in its various forms as the catalyst for pluralist political engagement.

1. The Incident and Its Aftermath

The publication of the cartoons was not simply a joke—a moment of satire for all to laugh about across the breakfast table. The editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Flemming Rose, meant the cartoons to be a political document that challenged what he saw to be the increased coddling of Muslim feelings out of

⁵ This is clearly nothing new. As Joseph Massad has argued, the emergence and development of European liberalism has been articulated and solidified through the disavowal of Islam (Massad 2015).

fear of retribution. In the introduction to the cartoons, Rose offered an explanation and impetus for the cartoons as the following,

The modern secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with contemporary democracy and freedom of speech, where you must be ready to put up with insults, mockery and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context . . . [W]e are on our way to a slippery slope where no-one can tell how the self-censorship will end. That is why *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* has invited members of the Danish editorial cartoonists union to draw Muhammad as they see him. (Rose 2005)

Rejecting the multiculturalist claims to cultural tolerance, the publication of these cartoons, it was argued, was not meant to insight hostility or animosity towards Muslims, but rather was an attempt to incorporate Muslims into Danish secular society. Presumably, then, the cartoons were intended to “secularize” immigrant Muslims so that they could be full members of the Danish polity. By ridiculing Muslims the same way you would make fun of the majority, Rose insisted, they were treating Muslims as equals and integrating them into the Danish way of life.⁶ This would serve as both a rejection of minority privilege, but also as a refutation of Muslim strong-arming that had led some Danes to self-censorship for fear of retribution. Perhaps unwittingly, *Jyllands-Posten* articulated a litmus test for Danish incorporation into the polity: the ability to be a true Dane required that one set aside their deeply held religious convictions in the name of citizenship, where citizenship was articulated as both rational participation and critique of religion (Islam)⁷ within the public sphere. This vision of citizenship required that Muslims not only accept the caricatures of their Prophet as just another silly expression of speech, but also that their response be one of acceptance of the generic value of free speech regardless of their visceral experiences of suffering and pain (Tønder 2011). The cartoons called on Danish-Muslim citizens to prove that they are able to relinquish their attachments to their religion in the name of Danish citizenship and belonging. But the assumption, from the onset, was that Muslims could not or would not relinquish this religious attachment in the name of citizenship. Thus, their response of pain and anger only reified the preconceived notion held by *Jyllands-Posten*, and ostensibly a large part of the Danish polity, that Muslims could never fully be integrated into the secular polity because their religiosity dominated their identities. In other words, Muslims would not choose rationality, exemplified in the general acceptance of free speech and in the specific acceptance of religious mockery, over their faith.

This juxtaposition between rational citizenship and Islamic anti-rationalist religiosity was not limited to the publication of the cartoons themselves. It is best seen in political and media discourses regarding the Islamic backlash to the cartoons. While some have been quick to criticize the actions of *Jyllands-Posten*, Western media and academic coverage has overwhelmingly tended to focus on the irrational and rage-filled response of Muslims across the globe. The use of the word “rage” has permeated almost every account of the cartoon fiasco.⁸ This invocation is not limited to conservative ideological commitments. Both those on the Right and the Left have deemed the Muslim reaction as an invocation of rage. The question has simply been whether that rage is justified.⁹ Yet as we

⁶ In fact, many journalists and editorialists in Denmark have made the claim that satire, parody, and humor are an essential part of Danish political culture. This incident was thus simply an ill-advised occurrence in which Islamic participation in Danish life was being criticized. See Bjørner (2008).

⁷ The editors of *Jyllands-Posten* also had an opportunity to publish a series of cartoons depicting Jesus Christ in 2003 but refused to do so in fear of an outcry by their readers.

⁸ In early 2006 alone there were over six hundred articles in which Muslims and rage were put together.

⁹ It is telling that less than one week after the initial uproar over the YouTube clip surrounding *The Innocence of Muslims*, *Newsweek Magazine* published a controversial cover page with the headline “Muslim Rage” depicting angry Muslim men in

know from various accounts, not all of the Muslim responses were reflections of rage nor did they all express violence or anger.¹⁰ Using such language to describe the actions of Muslims reifies the pervasive Orientalist discourse that has produced them as outside the confines of modernity. One, of course, cannot forget Bernard Lewis's now famous tract, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (Lewis 1990). And while many were angry about the cartoons, a number of Muslims were quoted as being hurt. Thus the protests did not simply evoke rage, but also pain; an affective condition that had no place in secular public discourse. As Saba Mahmood has argued, the effect of the cartoons was one of moral injury. She writes, "The notion of moral injury I am describing no doubt entails a sense of violation, but this violation emanates not from the judgment that the law (blasphemy) has been transgressed but that one's being, grounded as it is in a relationship of dependency with the Prophet, has been shaken" (Mahmood 2009, pp. 848–49). This moral injury is not simply one of breaking the laws against aniconism or blasphemy, but of injuring the very being of Muslims who see themselves as deeply connected to the Prophet. The inability to recognize the pain of these Muslims or to simply think that this pain is not justified operates to strip them of recognition as real citizens and to dehumanize them in a crucial way. To use Judith Butler's words, it is as if they are made "unreal"—not real humans with real pain, but a mob of angry Others that threatens the status quo (Butler 2004). To read this pain as reflective of an essentially violent and irrational disposition functions to justify both verbal and physical acts of aggression by the secular liberal order as defensive. Such fearful actions are couched as reactive to the innate violence of Muslims rather than as the proactive actions of the West struggling with both a will to dominate and an anxious sense of vulnerability. These Western secular reactions, as one can see, are affective motivations in their own right.

While there is no doubt that incidents of violence happened and were an essential part of the global response to the cartoons, the vast majority of Muslim responses were peaceful. Within Denmark, a number of Islamic organizations attempted to engage in non-violent and democratic forms of public/political protest. As Jytte Klausen points out in her reconstruction of the incident and its aftermath, "The Muslim activists in Denmark who started the action committee against the cartoons faithfully copied tactics familiar to Danish action committees: writing letters to the press, using community groups to build a network for recruitment to demonstrations, staging sleep-ins and raising consciousness about the injustice done to Muslims by sending speakers to Friday prayers at the mosque" (Klausen 2009, p. 43). In addition, eleven ambassadors from Muslim majority countries attempted to approach then Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen¹¹ to discuss what they believed was rampant Islamophobia in the media. Their request for a meeting was summarily refused and in response Rasmussen suggested that any meeting would compromise Danish democracy. He was quoted as saying, "This is a matter of principle. I won't meet with them because it is so crystal clear what principles Danish democracy is built upon that there is no reason to do so" (Ammitzbøll and Vidino 2007). Rasmussen's belief that any discussion regarding the religious toleration and concerns of Muslims was tantamount to the curtailment of liberal freedoms reflected a dominant narrative that rendered Islam as incompatible with democracy. By articulating it as a free speech issue then, Rasmussen assumed a dichotomy between freedom, as articulated by the Danish cartoons and illiberal desires to curtail such freedom, as reflected in the Muslim protesters. What Rasmussen did not seem to understand is that the conditions of free speech and what was worthy of saying had been predetermined by the very culture itself. As Stanley Fish has argued, the practices

the street. The cover and the article written by the polarizing figure, Aayan Hirsi Ali, stirred much controversy but in many ways reiterated a dominant language regarding Muslims. See Ali (2012).

¹⁰ Klausen shows that the vast majority of Muslims who expressed their unhappiness did so by tried and true democratic practices (Klausen 2009).

¹¹ Rasmussen became Prime Minister in 2001 when his center-right party Venstre formed a minority government with the Conservative People's Party. While in power his government took tough measures to reduce the number of immigrants from primarily Muslim countries.

and conditions of speech already constrain what speech is possible and what counts as freedom of speech (Fish 1994).

Perhaps, the issue that developed most emphatically in the media and in the academy was whether, “Muslims really understood freedom of speech;” the cornerstone right of liberal democratic citizenship. A resounding number of people argued that if Muslims protested the cartoons then they simply did not comprehend the commitment to free speech and thus could never fully embrace or embody the liberal secular society of which they were said to be a part.¹² Their way of life was simply incommensurable with Danish identity and principles. It was through this mandate of free speech that the distinction between rationality and irrationality was constituted. Framing the issue in this way cast Muslim responses as outside the purview of reasonable discussion. This mindset was especially obvious in remarks made by various journalistic agencies claiming the necessity of free speech in democratizing Islamic political culture and, more importantly, showing Muslims that their irrational religious beliefs have no place in western democratic society. For example, a reprint in the newspaper *France Soir* was originally said to have “published the images in full to show ‘religious dogma’ had no place in a secular society” (BBC 2006). Interestingly, little was said about how these actions expressed an essential paradox and perhaps limitation of secular principles. On one hand, they claimed that religious sentiment and affective expression (at least by Muslims) had no place in public discourse and conversely the caricatures of Muhammad both brought questions of religion into the eye of the public sphere and expressed the affective anxieties of the dominant population. Thus, this expression of secularism, despite their affective origins, allowed for a public and, ostensibly, rational critique of a minority religious belief to be held up as an ideal of democratic participation, while religious responses to those public claims were produced as reflections of primitive anti-rationalism. Consequently, despite secularist claims to leave religion in the private sphere of life, the actions of Rose and the cartoonists were held up by many as the essence of secularism, because they challenged the beliefs of a religious minority they feared had threatened their secular public sphere. Expressions of Muslim pain and the hope for religious engagement were deemed incommensurable with the capacity to speak and uphold the secular order.

What do these claims about incommensurability tell us about the state of secularism’s practice?¹³ First, as I have already suggested, secularism requires the subjugation of religious discourse outside of the public sphere (especially if one is from the minority religion) and thus, Muslims (at least those who avowedly express their religion or pain) are seen as not having the ability or desire to uphold secular democratic virtues. Muslims’ subservience to God, some claim, trumps individual freedoms and renders the individualist rationality of secular democracy as uninhabitable. Much of secularist thought argues that one cannot believe in or participate in democratic institutions if one is publicly beholden to an irrational religious orthodoxy because this will limit the capacity to develop a community-oriented ethos.¹⁴ Of course, this imagining of secularism relies on a certain obfuscation of both the origins of secularism, as predicated on Christianity, and the more insidious ways in which the dominant religion of Christianity intrinsically shapes the very terms of the secular. The second uncontested premise is closely related to the first, namely that individual preferences and expressions articulated within a secular liberal regime of power, have more political and social weight than the desires, expressions, and standing of religious and ethnic minority groups whose “non-rational” arguments cast them outside of the political norm. Reason is so fully connected to secularity such that, tweaking Chantal Mouffe’s argument, “reasonable persons are those who accept the fundamentals of,” liberal

¹² For an analysis of the press coverage regarding the cartoon affair and free speech, see (Eide et al. 2007).

¹³ While there are no doubt varying forms of secularist understanding, from the American republicanism of the separation of church and state to the French conception of laïcité, a dominant focal point of secularist thought is a pre-political conception of human rationality.

¹⁴ Clearly, the compatibility or incompatibility of Islam and democracy has garnered quite a bit of intellectual debate. See, for example, (Abootalebi 1999; El-Solh 1993; Esposito and Voll 1996). Yet, the predominant claim about Islamic democracy continues to be that they are incompatible unless Muslims become more secularized and liberalized.

secularism. “In other words, the distinction between ‘reasonable’ and ‘unreasonable’ helps to draw a frontier between those who accept the liberal [secular] principles and those who oppose them” (Mouffe 1996, p. 249). This premise is essential for understanding why, within the debate surrounding the cartoons, the liberal issue of freedom of speech became the resounding defense of the newspaper and its cartoonists and no such defense was given to the Muslim protestors. Their very questioning of the mandates of liberal secularism cast them as irrational. This invocation of irrationality does not only limit Muslim participation in the public sphere, but also marks Muslims as the antithesis of white secular citizens (Modood 2006) and thus as justifiably violable within and outside of the territory.

This casting of Muslims as irrational and in the grip of rage should be juxtaposed against the pre-constituted Christian identity and affective universe in which the cartoons were published. While one (and many have) may argue that the requirements of rationality and secularism cast a neutral demand on all, it is clear that in the context of the publication of the cartoons and in terms of the practices of Western secularism, in general, a Christian language and sensibility dominates as it is depoliticized.¹⁵ This depoliticization relies on two unacknowledged yet critical assumptions. First, that Christianity is the de facto religion of most of the Western secular world and second, that the Islamic and Christian civilizations are antithetical rather than mutually constitutive (Bulliet 2004). Yet, alongside the political erasure of Christianity within the deployment of secular discourse is a particular anxiety over the loss of the secular-Christian ethos that animates the liberal democratic polity. This anxiety, often translated into the fear of Islam, is no doubt based on emotion but is never cast as irrational. Fear—an emotion linked to both the forbidden and the unknown—marked the origins of the cartoons from the start. *Jyllands-Posten*’s editor, Rose, determined that it was fear that motivated many of the artists to reject his proposal, but it was also that a culture of fear had developed in Denmark and the rest of the Europe. This fear was of Muslims being violent towards the true citizens of Europe. It was fear of retaliation for speaking about Islam. But it was also fear of the changing fabric of national, religious, and ethnic identity. Throughout Rose’s description for why the cartoons were commissioned, he framed the cartoons as a rejection of such emotions, all while the cartoons bred those emotions in the public (Rose 2006).

Unlike the unbridled “rage” of the Muslim world, European fears of Islam were projected as not only rational, but as part and parcel of dealing with Muslims. It was this intense emotion that would be the catalyst to fight Islamism and its violent manifestation. In fact, fear of Islam could be seen as the measure of true secularization. Paradoxically, the responses by many Muslims within Denmark, who challenged this view of Islam as essentially violent, were characterized as resentfully anti-democratic, anti-secular, and irrational.¹⁶ To even speak in the vernacular of religious offense marked them as incapable of both committing to liberal-secular principles and, more explicitly, to rationalist public debate, thus positing an unattainable standard of citizenship. Further, it marks the democratic secular order as demanding a univocal and impenetrable mode of being, casting Muslim political interventions and Muslim expressions of speech, especially if that speech is agonistic towards the dominant Christian-secular narrative, as somehow outside the confines of democratic practice. Put simply, to be an offended Muslim reflected one’s irrationality and a specific kind of (ir)rationality, one that embraced the fear of Islam, was the prerequisite to be a secular public citizen. This foundational juxtaposition is not endemic to the Danish cartoon controversy or to Islamophobia, in general. Nor is it reflective of the incommensurability between rational secular citizens and emotionally stunted Muslim immigrants. It is indicative of a framework that always already sees the Muslim minority as

¹⁵ In the specific context of Denmark, despite claims to secularism, the nation-state is essentially Lutheran. This includes a constitutionally mandated national religion, as well as religious education in public schools. For an analysis of the paradoxes inherent in such a political construction, see (Dencik 2007). More broadly, a number of historians and political theorists have shown the essentially Christian origins of secularism in the modern West. See, for example, (Strong 1999; Grasso 2006).

¹⁶ Roughly only 3% of Danes identify themselves as Muslim, yet it seemed imperative that this particular minority be secularized and democratized into the Danish political sphere.

outside the parameters of democratic political competency and that marks the affective motivations of the dominant (white, Christian, and original) citizen as reasonable. It is through the normative development of a rationality that privileges some forms of affect over others that the concerns of religious pluralism are (or are not) negotiated. The next section of this essay looks to the literature on rationality, religious affect, and secularism in order to move out from the specific context of the cartoon affair and illuminate the limits of contemporary views of rationality for the politics of pluralism.

2. Rethinking Rationality Today

The capacity for rationality has been an essential foundation for liberal secular theory. Reason has been at the cornerstone of political engagement as a condition for keeping the pluralist political community together. Yet, as Steven D. Smith has argued, the meaning and practices of reason have fundamentally shifted in secular thought and practice (Smith 2010). When Reason was held up in the Enlightenment, it was posited as a counter to religious dogma. It was through the faculty of the mind and engagement with others that humans could attempt to answer those perennial questions of our existence. What is the nature of the world? What is the good life? Kant's rational religion was an attempt to proffer a way of knowing, predicated on a faculty all humans were endowed with in order to develop answers to these big questions (Kant 1999). In turn, Karl Popper offered a conception of critical rationality that focused on moving toward essential goods and truths through the practices of public critique (Popper 2013). But over time with the development of contemporary liberal secularism, much indebted to John Rawls, this conception of rationality has changed, and in its place, we have a reason devoid of metaphysical curiosity and superficially situated as a minimalist tool for adjudicating political issues (Rawls 2005). As has been pointed out by a number of political theorists, this view of reason both sets the standards of communication in a pre-political fashion and, more importantly, avoids essential questions out of fear of incommensurability (Mouffe 2006).

The transformation of rationality to this minimalist standard is an attempt to deal with the fact of pluralism—"people profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines" must find a way to live together and find moral consensus (Rawls 1993, p. xviii). Rather than grapple with these doctrinal differences, the solution prescribed by advocates of liberal secularism has been to subsume religion and other doctrines to the private sphere, leaving reason to be the determining act of public discourse and a minimalist moral consensus. Yet, reason has had clear limits in enacting the political community so desired by liberal secularists. In claiming reason as the foundational and only mode of engagement, it has been held up as a higher order faculty ostensibly removed from everyday experience and belief. The result has been an articulation of reason that, while historically and culturally situated, is assumed to be normatively neutral. Rationality is seen as an abstract capacity achievable by all rather than an embodied practice contingent upon a particular ethical, religious, and affective landscape. This leads to a set of clear problems. First, reason is not cognitively separate from other forms of thinking and being. As William Connolly has convincingly shown, affect and reason are part and parcel of the same cognitive capacities and essential motivators for human action. This reflects a key dilemma for secularists in that they see emotion as something to be overcome by rationality when, in fact, all forms of thinking are fully implicated in the processes of emotion (Connolly 2000).

Secondly, as I have argued in the context of the cartoon affair, this privileging of rational cognition and reasonableness in the public sphere not only ignores the essential practices of human thinking but also proffers an unacknowledged normative bias for liberal secularism. In attempts to refute "sectarian religious struggles in the public realm", secularism instantiates "authoritative conceptions of thinking, reason, and morality" (Connolly 2000, p. 32). It does so through a mythology that grants human reason as profoundly natural, all while its meaning is being politically stated and reinstated in the collective psyche. Thus, it imposes on the public sphere a way of being (political) which privileges specific modes of rationality. This effectually casts the religiously oriented, especially those who do not fit the dominant model of reasonableness (in our case Muslims), as outside of the political realm, but also as underdeveloped in attaining the natural endowment of rationality. What I am arguing here is

that the commitment to rationality is a political decision within secularism that is cast as pre-political. Reason is deemed to be a “natural” faculty that is fashioned to privilege certain subjects over others. As such, determining certain practices and ways of thinking as non-rational, visceral, or emotional is not a neutral claim regarding rationality. It is an enactment of power that works to differentiate and discipline religious minorities. Consequently, the secularist attempt to replace faith, emotion, or religion in the public realm with a specific pre-political vision of rationality only posits one culturally determined form of thinking over others. And even more conspicuously, this rationally enforced secularism is unable to see the way in which its *political* dictates and institutions impose and extract insurmountable amounts of suffering (Tønder 2006).

The emphasis on reason thus constitutes a tautology in which liberal secularism can never be questioned from the outside. Any questioning of the conditions of liberal secularism casts those objectors as irrational, unproductive, and detrimental to the secular order. As I have suggested in my recounting of the cartoon incident above, this advocacy of reason has amounted to the simultaneous inability for Muslims to engage in dialogue about their belief systems and the practice of deriding those of minority religions as being insufficiently reasonable. But it also works to obfuscate the way in which, at the deepest levels, visceral emotions like fear of religious and cultural difference, have been essential to the very figuring of the secular order.

Thirdly, as Connolly points out, the political translation of the dichotomy between rationality and religion in secular politics has resulted in a less than firm articulation of the reason/emotion divide so valued by secularist thinkers. The demands of rationality in the contemporary liberal public sphere do not simply articulate all religious thought and action as outside of the public sphere, nor do they mandate all emotions as outside rational deliberation. As we can see from prevalent discourses among the Religious Right in the United States or the existence of a national religion in Denmark, religion is alive and well in the secular public sphere. Even further, some emotions, including fear and a sense of vulnerability by the religious majority, are rationalized in the name of territorial and ideological purity. Why is some affective and religious speech acceptable and other speech rejected? Wendy Brown convincingly argues that articulations of religiosity within the rational public sphere are rarely derided because of the accepted conceptions of ideological culturalization and a discourse of organicism (Brown 2006).

Organicism is a discourse in which one is so fully made by culture or religion that one cannot work outside of it, criticize it, or reject it. The positing of Muslim irrationality is clearly associated with this notion of organicism. Linking rationality to liberty, a move made by liberal theorists as early as John Locke, liberal secularists posit Muslims who invoke their religious edicts (prohibitions against blasphemy and aniconism) or their sense of insult or anguish as so culturally submissive that they are unable to exercise and respect the freedoms necessary to be citizens. To exercise freedom in the context of the liberal secular order requires that one must overcome, take hold of, or cast off one's culture, if that culture is religious. As Brown argues, in contrast to the organicists, “In liberalism, the individual is understood to have, or have access to, culture or religious belief; culture or religious belief does not have him or her” (Brown 2006, p. 170). While it is clear that religion and culture are not and should not be seen as synonymous, what is striking about this organicist view is that the Muslim individuals' belief in Islam is often cast as all encompassing. Thus, when Muslim citizens within the liberal polity are reified as irrational, this is not simply a critique of their emotions or even their religious commitments, but rather is a charge that Muslims are unsuitable citizens.

If we look back to the justifications made by *Jyllands-Posten's* editor, that the cartoons were an attempt to incorporate Muslim citizens into the Danish polity, we can see that this type of thinking reflects a paradigm in which Muslims qua Muslims can never be accepted as true Danes. This is because their acceptance into the Danish polity is reliant on, not simply their subjugation of religion into the private sphere, but also their acceptance of the public as the site of their ridicule. Their incorporation is only possible if they simply laugh along, do not respond at all or endorse the practice of free speech, while quietly lamenting the content of that speech in their homes. To be accepted into

the polity they must be, to use Mahmood Mamdani's words, "good Muslims" who preach moderation and liberal values (Mamdani 2004). They must overcome their affective commitments to their religion, set aside their pain, and accept that as religious people they will be criticized. In effect, they must be liberalized and secularized. But even then this transformation may not be enough, for their very identities as Muslims, and thus organicists, preclude their ability to cast off their culture. Even when they call on liberal justifications and tactics for protesting criticism of their religion, they are cast out of the liberal secular fold. Yet, there is no requirement that Rose and those who agree with him must set aside their visceral fears of Islam and their Muslim neighbors.

It is important to note that Muslims are not simply being criticized for being religious; it is specifically their Muslim-ness that is at issue. Their religious identity signals both an inability to be incorporated into the Danish polity and the slow deterioration of Danish and European identity in the wake of the mass migration of Muslims. The specifically racial components of such an anxiety cannot be addressed here, but it is clear that the changing dynamics of European identity are linked both to a certain "cultural" way of life and a certain racialized understanding of Europe in the context of colonial and post-colonial migrations. The very existence of a Muslim minority challenges the meaning of the territory. This anxiety about Muslim immersion is clear in Flemming Rose's depiction of the incidents that motivated the publication of the cartoons. Rose writes,

At the end of September, a Danish standup comedian said in an interview with *Jyllands-Posten* that he had no problem urinating on the Bible in front of a camera, but he dared not do the same thing with the Koran. This was the culmination of a series of disturbing instances of self-censorship. Last September, a Danish children's writer had trouble finding an illustrator for a book about the life of Muhammad. Three people turned down the job for fear of consequences. The person who finally accepted insisted on anonymity, which in my book is a form of self-censorship. European translators of a critical book about Islam also did not want their names to appear on the book cover beside the name of the author, a Somalia-born Dutch politician who has herself been in hiding . . . So, over two weeks we witnessed a half-dozen cases of self-censorship, pitting freedom of speech against the fear of confronting issues about Islam. (Rose 2006)

Rose contends that these incidents, the majority of which reflect self-censorship, were reflective of a fear about how Muslims would react, particularly the fear of violent retribution. But his concern regarding self-censorship also reflects another concern Rose is not willing to express, which is that, perhaps, members of the Danish polity, for whatever reasons, have been willing to sacrifice their ability to say whatever they like in order to preserve relations with their Muslim neighbors and co-workers. Could it be possible that some might choose not to attack or criticize or ridicule Muslims out of deference and not simply out of fear? How would that reflect a change in the essential meaning of Denmark and Europe in the wake of pluralism? The real struggle here might not only be about fear, but rather about attempts at accommodation and recognition as a necessary aspect of pluralism. To cast this "censorship" as a reflection of fear maintains a binary divide between those who belong (good liberal secularists) and those who do not (immigrant organicist Muslims). The printing of the cartoons and the concomitant focus on violence and threat reaffirms what was attested to all along: Muslims cannot have a rational conversation about religion because, unlike liberal secularists, they are in the grip of their culture and cannot overcome it. And if they can overcome their religion, which is what *Jyllands-Posten* claimed it wanted in the first place, then they have to stifle their pain as a condition of their membership in the liberal secular polity. But there is no requirement that secularists stifle their fear. Even their fear is a condition reflected in the actions of the Muslim minority and not in and of themselves.

This vision of rationality disproportionately punishes minority religions that are deemed a threat to the cohesiveness of the public sphere. As I have shown in the case of the cartoons, such commitments to secular rationality produce significant rifts in the political community in the name of solidarity. They also demand that religious Muslims accept their offense quietly as the price to pay for being

incorporated into the liberal polity. Thus rationality and secularism are marked by (1) an understanding and respect for free speech as essential for the non-religious or the majority religion whose religion nor citizenship is ever called into question; and (2) a set of acceptable emotional claims (in this case fear) against religious minorities with no legitimacy for the expression of emotion (suffering or even perhaps rage) by the minority religion. For the rest of this essay, I argue that ever-pluralizing polities like Denmark might look to a different view of the relationship between rationality and religion. Specifically, secular rationalists could learn from a more complex understanding of political engagement that sees religious affect and reason as interconstitutive and tempering rather than antagonistic.

3. Mediating Between Affect and Reason

In “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide,” Saba Mahmood argues that to fully understand the Muslim reaction to the cartoon affair, we must move from a notion of blasphemy to a focus on the destabilization of identity such affronts encode. Mahmood argues that the cartoons did not simply transgress the religious code of aniconism or the juridical code of blasphemy, but assaulted the very moral core of how Muslims understood themselves in their mirroring of the Prophet. She writes, “For many Muslims, the offense the cartoons committed was not against a moral interdiction (“Thou shalt not make images of Muhammad”), but against a structure of affect, a habitus, that feels wounded” (Mahmood 2009, p. 78). Mahmood illuminates an issue that has had little engagement in popular discourses about religious offense: Muslim offense is not solely predicated on a transgression of a religious law that is counter to constitutional or liberal-democratic rights (such as the right to free speech and press). Rather, it is an offense that is predicated on a complex framing of ontological presuppositions about the nature of the self.¹⁷ While Mahmood has provided an important intervention in understanding why so many Muslims were deeply hurt by the actions of *Jyllands-Posten*, it is also essential to recognize that these feelings of emotion and *habitus* are not limited to those of Muslims. Like the Muslim that feels deep grief over the cartoon depictions, so too does the liberal secular citizen grieve for and feel anxiety over the transformation of the liberal culture/public that has both encoded and erased its theological origins. Thus the debate about the place of Muslims in the liberal-secular polity is not and should not be seen as structured by a divide between reason and affect. For it is clear that for both those who claim the secular liberal mandate and for those Muslims who express their pain via public modes of mourning, the question of the place of Muslims in liberal societies is one clearly rallied on feelings of emotion. The question then becomes: how does one adjudicate between these varied conceptions of identity and the good in the context of pluralist societies? The answer, I argue, is to rethink the secular divide between reason and emotion and embrace the reality that reason is essentially affective. In other words, if we are to truly understand the nature and complexity of the divide engendered by such cultural schisms as the cartoon affair (and incidents like it), then we must understand how, in these contexts, affect and reason function interconstitutively so that one does not simply call on reason to banish emotion or vice versa. Instead, we must understand both the expressions of the Muslims who were distraught by the cartoons and the responses of Danish secularists as rooted in the complex affective universes in which they reside, thus fostering a more complicated and agonistic model of political practice.

The remainder of this essay turns briefly to two disparate theorists of, what I am calling, affective reason, William Connolly and Abdulkarim Soroush, in order to grapple with the possibility of reasonable emotion (or, perhaps, religiously imbued reason) as a way to mediate the complexities of the religious/secular divide embodied in the cartoon affair.

It might seem odd to juxtapose the theoretical works of Connolly and Soroush. They clearly have different political projects and theoretical orientations. While Connolly stakes his interests in the world

¹⁷ Andrew March intervenes in Mahmood’s claim by arguing that moral injury does not always function as a binary against juridical or doctrinal commitment. See (March 2011).

of pluralism and the possibilities of “critical responsiveness” in a diverse society, Soroush is most well-known for his hermeneutical approach towards religious understanding and his advocacy of Islamic democracy. Yet, I read these two theorists of religion and secularism together in order to proffer an understanding of the complexities of emotion and religiosity that is essential for adjudicating the tensions seen between diasporic Muslims and their liberal secular counterparts. Specifically, through a critical juxtaposition of their works, we can see that emotion and affect are not the cornerstones of incompatibility, but rather are the possible mediating impulses necessary for democratic practice. It is the recognition of the dynamics of emotion and reason that permeate the democratic pluralism necessary for members of varying faiths and non-faiths to live together. Three essential characteristics of the reason-emotion dynamic ignored by the dominant advocates of secular liberalism are enumerated here: (1) reason is a culturally-constitutive and malleable activity rather than a constrained faculty; (2) reason is both cognitively and spiritually connected to the emotions; and (3) religion and religious emotion is always already mediated by the reflective faculties of individuals and groups. Through a reimagining of the political commitment to reason, I show how incidents like the cartoon affair might insight different kinds of discussions about the nature of political participation and pluralism.

3.1. Reason as Activity

One of the key arguments against a secularist vision of politics is that secularism relies on an understanding of reason as a pre-political characteristic engrained in all individuals. Reason as John Locke, and many liberals after him, argued is a natural and God-given faculty predicated on reflection and deduction (Locke 1996). In this vein, reason is interpreted to be something all humans have and the secular order is predicated on the notion that such reason can be wiped of the emotions brought on by that which we cannot fully know or understand. As Connolly rightly notes, “Secularism . . . is predicated upon a two-fold strategy of containment: to secure the public realm as it construes it, it is almost as important to quarantine certain non-theistic patterns of thinking and technique as it is to monitor ecclesiastical intrusions into public life” (Connolly 2000, p. 26). In the context of this strategy, secularists treat reason as prior to the political realm, but also reinforce a model of reasoning at its point of *political* erasure. Contestations of truth claims are only possible via the already established norms of the given political and social order. Consequently, all forms of contestation, including those that might challenge the ramification of these given norms, are evaluated upon non-negotiable methodological and epistemological frameworks. Take for example, liberal secular critiques of the Muslim protests against the cartoons. The practice of contestation, especially by the minority, is so limited in such scenarios that it challenges the capacity for what Abdolkarim Soroush has called, “external freedom” or what we might simply call a political freedom of full participation (Soroush 2000a).

The crux of this challenge to external freedom is the inability to see reason as what Soroush has called a process of “truth-seeking”, rather than as a “destination towards truth.” Too often we see “reason as the source and repository of truth,” rather than a “critical, dynamic, yet forbearing force that meticulously *seeks* the truth by negotiating torturous paths of trial and error” (Soroush 2000a, p. 90). While Soroush’s view of truth-seeking works as a chastisement of religious dogmatism, his process view of thinking is essential for troubling the rational dogmatism posited by secularists. Put slightly differently, Soroush pushes us to move away from the liberal secular view of reason as an already pre-conceived faculty, a repository of truth-claims and ways of thinking, and instead conceptualizes it as an activity that is shaped by a multiplicity of sources and meanings. As Soroush argues,

The vision of reason as a treasure trove of truths is not conducive to thinking about the origin and the manner of arriving at the truth. But viewing reason as a truth-seeking, sifting, and appraising agent entails as much respect to the method of achieving the truth as it does to the truth itself. Here it is not enough to attain the truth; the manner of its attainment is equally important. While the former is indifferent to freedom, the latter depends on it. (Soroush 2000a, p. 90)

For both Soroush and Connolly, it is the multiple practices of critical engagement that shape and give meaning to truth claims. It is important to note here that Soroush does not posit Truth, in its metaphysical incarnation, as accessible to human cognition, but rather he focuses on truth as defined by the capacities of human beings to get closer, but never reach, a universalistic or deistic understanding. Truth, then, functions as a horizon of meaning unattainable by any one person, but essential to the shaping of human cognition, political engagement, and religious devotion.¹⁸

While such a view, which relies on the existence of metaphysical truth as a catalyst for political engagement, contrasts significantly with Connolly's anti-foundationalist commitments, it does not preclude us from thinking about the processes of critical interlocution as essential for a pluralist politics. The implication of understanding reason, as a critical process of truth-seeking, is that one's human capacity for truth is mindfully flawed. It is in these flaws, these incapacities for grasping full knowledge, that our own sense of contestability arises. We can only come closer and further from a Truth or truths that are never fully attainable and it is through this process that we can hear other's claims. But this cannot be a one-way route. As Connolly has so persuasively argued in his advocacy for the politics of becoming and ethos of pluralization, all engagements must rely on the possibility that one's truth or identity is not fully stable. In the context of engagements between the Muslim diaspora and the West, he writes, "If and as you call upon Muslims in Europe and America to be receptive to coexistence with other faiths in the same territory and across territorial divisions, it is indispensable to work upon your own faith—theistic or nontheistic—to come to terms affirmatively with its deep contestability in the hearts and minds of others" (Connolly 2006, p. 288). For Soroush, this contestability comes from the flawed but progressive nature of human understanding. For Connolly, it comes from an ethical commitment to respond to the complexities of pluralism. But either way, it requires citizens to critically assess their own positionalities and affective responses rather than hiding behind ostensibly normatively neutral characteristics like secular rationality. Thus, like religious devotion, reason and rationality, in this context, are seen as contingent, derived from the critical engagement and practices of the community including those outside of the dominant mode of thinking.

3.2. Reason's Emotion/ Emotion's Reason

A view of reason as both process and culturally contingent, then, rejects the duality of rationality and emotion inherent in much of secular discourse and so obviously seen in assessments of Muslim reactions to the cartoons. Instead it ponders the relationship of rationality and emotion as one of mediation between two, and sometimes multiple, competing and overlapping impulses and modes of thinking. One can surely imagine a form of rational determination that loses all moral sensibility and emotional content in the name of human capability. But the cognitive and performative aspects of reasoning are rarely discrete from the affective and emotional frames that influence our thinking. Thinking has a layered character, "with each layer contributing something to an ensemble of dissonant relays and feedback loops between numerous centers" (Connolly 2002, p. 10). In this context, neither deliberationist nor intellectualist¹⁹ models of thinking, which focus on rational consciousness (which one could argue secularism embodies), fully appreciate the ways in which experiences (including mystical experiences), protothoughts,²⁰ visceral responses, and all other forms of affect and emotion both ground and give meaning to our cognitive capacities and conscious thinking. Put simply, we should not see rationality as an overcoming of affect. Rather, as Connolly shows in his juxtaposition between neurobiology and political theory, rational cognition and affect are indelibly linked, sometimes

¹⁸ One can see the clear influence of Mahatma Gandhi in Soroush's understanding here. Like Gandhi's *satyagraha* (truth-force), Soroush warns his readers to both avoid religious and rational dogmatism lest they wish to miss the possibility of further refining the truth. See (Gandhi 1961).

¹⁹ Following the pragmatist William James' critique of "vicious intellectualism," Connolly deems intellectualism as an inability to understand the world outside of the bounds of rational consciousness. (Connolly 2005).

²⁰ Protothoughts as the "lightening quick process of filtering" of perceptions worked upon by consciousness. (Connolly 2002, p. 65).

producing the creative and progressive nature of human thinking. This is not say that all emotions work toward progress or creativity, for surely they do not. Some forms of emotion are clearly normatively better than others. Nonetheless, affect (including religious affect) does give meaning to our rational cognition and an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of affective and cognitive registers sets the stage for better and more plural ethico-political engagements. “Here pluralism would not be grounded in one austere moral source adopted by everyone (say, a universal conception of rational religion, or discourse, or persons, or justice). It would be grounded in an ethos of engagement between multiple constituencies honoring a variety of moral sources and metaphysical orientations” (Connolly 2000, p. 39).

In the hands of Soroush, Connolly’s analysis of affective interventions in reason is turned on its head. While Connolly, in order to challenge the conceits of secularism, tends to focus on the ways in which affects influence consciousness and rational cognition, Soroush illuminates the ways in which emotions, particularly those of religious devotion, are mediated by our critical reasoning capacities. According to Soroush, emotion, particularly in the scheme of extreme religious or perhaps even secular devotion, is and must be tempered by reflective capacities that enjoin us to think outside of our own visceral registers and ideological commitments. As Soroush argues,

The lightening of emotion dazzles the eye of reason. In emotional upheavals, when reason is paralyzed, rational analysis is replaced with the urge to act out of blind devotion, which often leads to remorse. Of course, we cannot advance without leaning on the staff of emotions, but without seeing through the eyes of reason we might stumble into the gutter of fanaticism. (Soroush 2000a, pp. 92–93)

Here, we are warned against a rabid emotionalism that rejects reason. But what is the content of such emotional overload and how might the practice of reason challenge such emotionalism? At first glance, one might read Soroush as reifying the secular commitment to rationality and consciousness advocated by secular liberals and intellectualists. He uses the language of many such liberal thinkers. But unlike those who reject emotion and particularly religiosity as outside the bounds of rational cognition, I believe that Soroush attempts to develop a distinction between what we might call mediated and unmediated forms of emotion. For Soroush, depending on their qualities, emotions can be either debilitating or essential for the practice of reason as communal truth-seeking.

Clearly, excess emotions, including those of rage or fear, can lead to blind devotion and even sometimes to violence against those that disagree with you. This can be seen in the extreme calls of violence after the publication of the cartoons, but also in post-9/11 attacks on Muslims in the United States. In these scenarios, emotion is reflective of a commitment to “pragmatic religiosity” that pushes its believer to develop Manichean distinctions between us and them in order to establish a sense of identity. “Dogmatic distinctions drawn between us and them and believers and infidels, the firm and unyielding categorization of people, the simplification of the world and the refusal to see the complexities, subtleties and variations of human existence,” and, “creating strict ideological divisions, seeing people as either heavenly or hellish . . . ignoring the common attributes of human beings and emphasizing every small difference in belief, and compartmentalizing humanity into so many different sects are some of the characteristics and defining,” features of this kind of thinking (Soroush 2000b). This type of emotion, whether an effect of blind devotion or ideological purity, seizes our critical and reflective spirit and promotes dogmatism instead of a culturally open and pluralized form of truth-seeking. It cannot imagine a way of being in which one’s position might be unpalatable or simply wrong to others. This excess of emotion leads to dogmatism and an uncompromising belief that one is always right. Yet, despite Soroush’s condemnation of such emotional dogmatism, he does not reject all emotion (particularly those of experience and faith). These emotions are essential parts of the practices of reason. That is, a critique of emotionalism does not come in the form of a rejection of feeling, spirit, and belief altogether. In fact, Soroush posits emotion as a receptive and tempering device against the dogmatism of rationalism, where rationalism is the commitment to rational cognition over all other forms of thought and belief. It is only through embracing all of the categories of the human mind,

including those that do not fall clearly into the scientific and rationalist models, that we are truly able to posit our freedom as human beings.

Through a critical juxtaposition of Connolly and Soroush, then, we can derive an alternative understanding of the relationship between reason and emotion where these modes of thinking are mutually contingent and tempering of extreme religiosity and rationalism. Thus, reason allows us to moderate our emotions when necessary, but it does not erase our emotions out of existence. And in turn, emotions and affective experiences offer the mediating ground upon which thought and consciousness are laid; they are an essential part of the reasoning process. My reading of Soroush and Connolly together offers us a way out of the reason/affect divide that has perilously shaped the experiences of secularists and Muslims in polities like Denmark. Instead of such a stark division in which religious minorities are deemed outside of the bounds of the rational by virtue of their religious commitments, habits, and pains, we can instead imagine a diversity of reasoning humans marked by a variety of cognitive processes and affective experiences attempting to negotiate the meaning of the ever plural political community. Reason, here, takes on a fundamentally different characteristic as it moves from an individualized capacity to negate or overthrow one's feeling and culture to one that embraces a plurality of thoughts, experiences, and affects. Affective reason is multi-vocal, contingent, and politically democratic in its establishment. Consequently, in this incantation, it implores members of the political community to engage with each other's ideas, political and religious commitments, and experiences as an essential part of the practice of establishing the meaning of and good for the political community. But it must do so without preconceived views of what affective conditions are allowed or not. Instead, these emotions are brought to the fore and produce discreet and sometimes complex political engagements.

4. By Way of Conclusion: Politicizing Affective Reason

In "Drawing Blood," the Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist and social critic Art Spiegelman argues that the Danish cartoons were not the cause of animosity between Muslims and secularists. Rather, their publication should be seen as a symptom or "excuse to add more very real injury to an already badly injured world" (Spiegelman 2006, p. 43). For Spiegelman, the cartoons were an act that further etched in the already constituted bifurcation between the West and its Islamic Other. In turn, the violent responses to the cartoons deepened that chasm by reifying the claims of incommensurability within the polity, rather than critically engaging with the ideas and processes that made the publication of the cartoons possible. It has been the argument of this essay that the reification of such a bifurcation and the concomitant rendering of Muslims as irrational, rage-filled, and unable to grasp the mandates of democracy is indicative of an anxiety over the meaning and constitution of the polity. The result of this anxiety has been an attempt at the problematic homogenization of the activity of citizenship in the guise of dogmatic rationality. Further, and perhaps more significantly, I have argued in this essay that the vast majority of readings of the Danish cartoon fiasco have misapprehended the incident as one between secular rationality and religious emotion or rage. In fact, the diversity of responses to the cartoons, including those from Muslims, secularists, Christians, etc., have been grounded in a variety of affective dispositions including anger, pain, fear, and loss of a cohesive identity. Thus, rather than calling on the secular mandate of rationality to erase these feelings in the name of a common political life, the deployment of secular rationality has deepened these divides. It is time now to imagine a different model of engagement—one that might be embraced by those with or without religious affiliations in the name of an affective pluralism and rationality.

How might the affective view of reason, developed through a reading together of Connolly and Soroush, destabilize the deployment of secular rationality as a litmus test for political participation? What would an embracing of a multitude of different perspectives, affective orientations, and ethico-political commitments change for the political experiences of minorities and the majority in ever-pluralizing societies? If we turn back to the Danish cartoon incident, some things become clear. First, cartoons, and any expressions of emotion, in and of themselves, are not the real problem. They

are symptoms of a far more complex issue and set of discursive tropes that posit Islam against the West.²¹ The Prophet Muhammad cartoons (the illustrations themselves) sparked dialogue and anger, agonism, and antagonism. In fact, one could even argue that at least two of the cartoons attempted to engage in a debate about the complexities of religious pluralism and immigration.²² But these debates could not be had in an affective political order that privileges some emotions over others in the name of rationality. This suggests that, secondly, for religiously plural polities to engage in politics requires a different kind of attentiveness to the complexities of emotion and reasoning necessary for participation among equals. I have argued that, with attention to the practice of affective reason as truth-seeking (or good-seeking), we are able to engage with those in our polity whose commitments and beliefs might increasingly diverge from the historico-ideological origins of the polity and/or our own beliefs. Engaging with the complexity of thought that helps to elaborate their positions and our own requires that we leave behind the secular mandate for an already established rational deliberation, that we do not see their pain as rage and our fear as the reasonable norm, and that we see truth as something we can all work toward and never quite reach.

For political theorists and political activists, a shift away from the conceits of a dogmatic secularism is not only necessary, but urgent. Many have attempted to rethink secularism to a project that is more open, capacious, and tolerant (Taylor 2007; Asad 2003; Calhoun et al. 2011).

As we assess the continuous emotional and physical violence done to others in the name of secularity, liberalism, and democracy, we can see that the invocation of rationality has become destructive for the commitment to pluralism. In this essay, I have tried to offer both an analytic account of the ways in which rationality has been deployed to curtail Muslim resistance in Denmark and a normative account of what we might do differently. The rethinking of rationality as a litmus test for participation is only the first step.

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²¹ This bifurcation is not one sided. Just as many Western voices have articulated a view of the Islamic world as backward and violent so too have powerful voices in the Muslim world traded on these distinctions. In the case of the Danish cartoon incident, a number of Middle Eastern politicians stoked the flames of anger in order to displace citizens' frustrations with the state of politics and economy at home. Thanks to Roxanne Euben for emphasizing this point.

²² See Arne Sørensen's self-referential take where he illustrates himself, sweat on his brow, drawing the Prophet Muhammad and Lars Refn's cartoon of a young Muslim immigrant also named Muhammad, with the sentence "Jylland-Posten journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs" written in Farsi on a chalkboard behind him.

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