Petro Darmoris

IS THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE POSSIBLE? REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE ON THE BASIS OF DAVID HOLLENBACH'S WRITINGS

Este dialogul inter-religios posibil? Reflecţii asupra religiei în sfera publică în scrierile lui David Hollenbach

Petro Darmoris

Abstract: *This article focuses mainly on the role of religion(s) in the public sphere. Some concrete examples of its/their impact on public life will be discussed, especially in the political, economic and cultural spheres. Contemporary American Ethicist, David Hollenbach, argues that the only way that enables the peaceful coexistence of many religions is tolerance of different religious convictions. Therefore, in this article religious tolerance would be analysed as a promising model for interreligious dialogue. There is another notion in Hollenbach's argumentation which is important. At the centre of his teaching is the principle of solidarity. However, Hollenbach's solidarity is an intellectual one, which requires more personal efforts towards building the community. This concept will be discussed in detail. Focussing on tolerance and intellectual solidarity will lead to the conclusion that it is possible to speak of a common morality in the context of religious pluralism.*

Keywords: Secularisation, religious pluralism, tolerance, intellectual solidarity.

The problem of dialogue in a pluralistic context becomes particularly complex when the religious aspect is an object of attention. Religious convictions cannot be characterised by mere external features. Religious behaviour is not only to be understood at the level of action, but on the level of intention as well. Therefore, at first sight, it may seem problematic to speak of interreligious dialogue.

Notwithstanding universal human rights, the impact of religion on today's world still remains strong albeit sometimes unpredictable. Their influence can be quite diverse though. We can emphasise both the positive and negative effects of religion in the public square. If one looks at John Paul II, Desmond Tutu, or the Dalai Lama, one could definitely affirm the essential role of religion in keeping peace. However, the tragedy that happened in September 2001 in the USA evokes precisely the opposite impression.[1] Therefore, interreligious dialogue is no simple issue, because of the necessity to find a common background among fundamentalists who are open to dialogue with, of course, secularist theorists. The reality of religious pluralism and primacy of individualism in religious convictions seems to be a serious obstacle to achieving dialogue at the international level. In this context, one way of dealing with this task is via the politics of respect, which is not always straightforward.

In order to look at the problems of religious pluralism more comprehensively and seriously, the real impact of religion on public policy and culture must be described. After this analysis, some core suggestions concerning the peaceful and dialogical coexistence of different religions will be evaluated. What will be done here is a closer look at reconsideration of tolerance. Therefore, the aim of this article is to investigate the following: the degree of religious influence when it comes to decision

---

[1] David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics,* Washington, D. C., Georgetown University Press, 2003, p. XI.

making; the possibility for interreligious dialogue and the existence of a common moral basis in the various doctrines without any oppression of each one.

Religion in the Public Square:

Samuel Huntington was right to speak of religion as a significant aspect in the modern world. In public debates, religions still hold great importance among modern philosophers, theologians, sociologists, political theorists and scholars of other fields. One of the common notions that unites these fields of studies is the phenomenon of secularisation. Different interpretations and definitions of this term have emerged with the aim of describing the role of religion in public institutions and reasoning in general. However, as a result, there are a variety of opinions over what secularisation exactly means.

Among those contemporary theorists whose field of research touches the problems of the secular is Jose Casanova, a prominent contemporary scholar in the field of sociology and religion. American Theologian David Hollenbach more than once refers to his view on the theory of secularisation.[2] In his reasoning, Hollenbach does not go deeply unto the meaning of this term, unlike Casanova. The latter, in his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, emphasises the difference between the very notions of secular/secularisation on the one hand and the theory of secularisation with a more sociological connotation on the other.[3] In this context, Casanova describes it as follows: „The core and the central thesis of the theory of secularisation is the conceptualisation of the process of societal modernisation as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres – primarily the state, the economy, and science – from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialisation of religion within its own newly found religious sphere".[4]

On this general definition, Casanova presents three possible ways of considering the place of religion in public reasoning. The first one amounts to the same differentiation of religion from other influential spheres of society mentioned above. The second perspective stresses the decline of religion as a result of secularisation. This thesis argues that the role of religion tends towards continuous declination from public life until its disappearance. And finally, the third of Casanova's perspectives puts the accent on reducing religion's effective role in private reasoning, or the so-called privatisation of religion.[5] These three perspectives summarise the modern trends concerning the issue of secularisation.

David Hollenbach follows Casanova when speaking of secularisation. The former accepts these three statements above and defends the first one on the differentiation of religion. Hollenbach agrees with Casanova in his critique of the

---

[2] *Ibidem.* Cf., David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 117.

[3] Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World,* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 12-19.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 19.

[5] Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, p. 20.

thesis of declination of religion, because it is groundless generalisation of a particular west European context being applied to a rather worldwide framework. [6] The consequence of the thesis on privatisation of religion is also not well argued by Casanova, due to the reality of religious fundamentalists' strong position on the one hand and the existence of many religious movements on the other.[7] In that way, the most appropriate way to consider the effect of secularisation is to view it as a process of differentiation that takes place in history.[8]

Hollenbach considers an understanding of secularisation in terms of differentiation as the most promising. This way of thinking is also compatible with his claim for freedom and human rights, which must be protected. In such a way, it forces one to conclude that differentiation of religions does not automatically exclude their public presence. The main point here is that this approach "presupposes that any public role for religious communities must avoid a quest for hegemonic control of social, intellectual, and political life by religion."[9] In this context, Hollenbach poses the question of whether religion can proclaim the truth of salvation in a political or economic context without being hegemonic. To seek an answer to this, a more detailed analysis of religion's impact on political, economic and cultural reasoning should be conducted.

Religion and Politics:

What should be clarified at first is the sphere characterised by the term 'political.' Hollenbach argues that considering the political sphere in terms of the realms of government, legislation, juridical institution and other public administrations imposes strong limitations on the notion, because "the *res publica* is much larger than the sphere of government"[10]. According to Hollenbach, anyone who speaks of the political sphere must speak about all forms of social life, which finally constitute a particular social culture.[11] The separate treatment of politics and culture in this part of the research is not meant to contradict Hollenbach's clarification of the political sphere, which is similar to Aristotle's treatment of *polis*. This division is made so as to draw attention first to the governmental sector of the democratic state, and then after an analysis of religion's impact on economics, to provide a general overview of religion's role in society, especially culture.

Almost each niche in public policy can be evaluated by means of one or another religious point of view. The very fact that public authorities comprise individuals who might be strong believers affirms that religion does play a significant role in the decision making process of certain persons or groups. Therefore, the question of

---

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 35-39.

[8] *Ibidem*, pp. 24-25.

[9] David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, p. 6.

[10] David Hollenbach, "Contexts of the Political Role of Religion: Civil Society and Culture,"in *San Diego Law Review,* 1993, Vol.30(4), p. 878.

[11] *Ibidem.*

whether religious convictions should be a constitutive element of public policy is consonant with the question of whether political leaders should be governed by their religious persuasions while acting for the sake and on behalf of a multi-religious society, especially in democratic states. In this context, David Hollenbach defines three possible models of religion-politics intersections. The first is 'liberal democratic', compatible with strong secular logic. The second foresees a wider space for religion in public life, but without breaking down the liberal stance. The third and last is opposite to the liberal model in terms of giving greater space for religion in public life.[12] In order to recognise the most appropriate model or religion-politics relations, each of these models will be further evaluated.

A prominent representative of the liberal view is John Rawls, who claimed freedom and independence for each citizen. Therefore, freedom of religion and moral convictions should be protected. It is also necessary to clarify that Rawls is not against religious life or religion in general. In this regard, Daniel Dombrowski rightly emphasises that Rawls would rather avoid the religious-secular distinction when speaking of public-non-public reasoning.[13] Contemporary American political theorist, Patrick Neal, also emphasises that Rawls treats religious individuals not because they are religious as such, but because they, just as society's other members, constitute a plurality.[14] In other words, his arguments were in line with the concept of privatisation of religion. In this context, the Rawlsian concept of 'public reason' should be analysed.

Rawls uses the concept of public reason when speaking of a well-ordered society within the frames of democracy, the feature of which is obvious pluralism of moral, religious, philosophical and other conceptions.[15] He envisages this concept to be widely suitable to all citizens who are interested in promoting fundamental political justice. The main criterion for him is reciprocity among members of a democratic society, which must be concretised in different political forums such as the courts, legislative bodies, and election campaigns. The main focus of public reason is promoting ideas and arguments which can be accepted not by particular individuals or groups but by the whole pluralistic society. In this way, when a judge decides on a case or a politician seeks legislation, they must be guided by widely accepted norms, and not by the fear of violating certain citizens' religious beliefs.[16] Rawls describes the ideal of public reason in this way: „This ideal is realized, or satisfied, whenever judges, legislators, chief executives, and other government officials, as well as candidates for public office, act from and follow the idea of public reason and explain to other

---

[12] David Hollenbach, "Religion in Political Life,"in *Theological Studies*, 52 (March, 1991), p. 87. See also David Hollenbach, *Global Face of Public Faith*, pp. 10-106.

[13] Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Rawls and Religion: the Case for Political Liberalism,* New York, State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 116.

[14] Patrick Neal, "Is Political Liberalism Hostile to Religion?" in Shaun P Young (ed.), *Reflections on Rawls: An Assessment of His Legacy*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, p. 165.

[15] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited",* Cambridge - Harvard University Press, second edition, 2000, pp. 131-132. Rawls had already described his idea of public reason in *Political Liberalism*. With the aim to be more recent, this research will refer to his later book *The Law of Peoples*.

[16] *Ibidem,* pp. 133-134.

citizens their reasons for supporting fundamental political positions in terms of the political conception of justice they regard as the most reasonable".[17] Consequently, citizens realise this ideal by voting for their candidates, who by their acts and speech promote public reason. Generally speaking, Rawls considers public reason as the basis of "public political culture."[18]

In order to achieve a well-ordered society, Rawls emphasises the necessity of defending the religious freedom of different believers. His requirements of equality of all citizens can be satisfied by applying the principles of toleration and liberty of conscience.[19] In that way, as Patrick Neal explains, reflection on state policy for the poor in light of the parable of the Good Samaritan would not be acceptable within the frameworks of public reason.[20] Roland A. Lindsay, in his article *Religion Has No Place in Government*, takes up Rawlsian reasoning while arguing that religious individuals cannot be excluded from the government sector because in this way a policy of exclusion would take place.[21] Such exclusion would contradict the Rawlsian stress on equality, discussed in the previous chapter. Compatible with Rawlsian reasoning, Lindsay's main thesis is that religious arguments must not become the "justification of public policy." In other words, one's religious convictions cannot be used as argument in public reasoning. And as such, religion has no place in government.[22]

Hollenbach does not reject this approach entirely. On the contrary, following John Courtney Murray's assessments, he finds the achievement of state peace as something positive. Moreover, only by considering religious freedom can the human dignity of others be realised.[23] Hollenbach even finds in Rawls' argumentation a certain neglect for the radical vision of privatisation of religion, because of the possibility that policy and a particular religion might have some common points. However, Hollenbach does not agree with Rawls in terms of introducing religious conceptions in public life. The latter is clear in his claim that religious identity is a personal but not public identity,[24] which is the crucial point in Hollenbach's disagreement with the liberal view on religion in politics.

The second perspective regarding religion in public policy, as defined by Hollenbach, is 'a liberal theory supportive religion.'[25] In light of this perspective, the question over tension between policy and religious convictions is not as sharp as in the previous one. This theory has its liberal roots however, and does not radically reject religion-based argumentation in public decision making. Columbia University professor of Constitutional law and jurisprudence, Kent Greenawalt, argues that if a

---

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 135.
[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 133-135.
[19] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples,* pp. 151-152.
[20] Patrick Neal, "Is Political Liberalism Hostile to Religion?", p. 165.
[21] Ronald A. Lindsay, "Religion Has No Place in Government," *Secular Humanist Bulletin*, [journal online], vol. 24, 4 (Winter 2008/2009); https://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/articles/3465 [accessed March 15, 2014].
[22] *Ibidem.*
[23] David Hollenbach, "Religion in Political Life" p. 90.
[24] *Ibidem*, p. 94.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 95.

particular state in its secular purpose defends citizens' freedom and personal convictions, it should not be deaf to religious purposes, especially in questions of serious gravity like abortion. In this case, according to Greenawalt, public reason must include the metaphysical dimension and religious values of society's members.[26] In the case of abortion, he refers to Catholic teaching, according to which it is a mortal sin. Following his reasoning, it would be wrong on the side of government to neglect this substantially important Christian conviction. Therefore, he claims: "Legislatures could definitely be engaged in establishing religious ideas even if the laws themselves impose no adverse consequences on dissenters."[27] Thus, Greenawalt's position in comparison with the Rawlsian one seems to be more contradictory than similar.

A similar way of thinking can also be found in Ronald A. Lindsay. Being univocal to Rawlsian arguments, he appears not to be too conservative. He argues for the necessity of government maintaining secular reasoning or the public reason of liberal democracy. However, even he is not as supportive of such openness to religion as Greenawalt, for he accepts the possibility of making religion-based decisions in public policy. For him, what seems necessary is the following: "If a person [with religious beliefs] wants to engage fellow citizens in a discussion about the correct course of action to take, she must restructure her arguments in secular terms. […] In fact, it operates as a much-needed check on the soundness of one's reasoning."[28] Greenawalt emphasises this reformulation as well and goes further while stressing the non-necessity of such reformulation in discussions between the same religious oriented individuals.[29] This way should open up a wider space for religion in political life.

Hollenbach, however, is closer to the third perspective in the critique of the liberal view on religion. This approach foresees a wide space for religious convictions in solving political issues. Hollenbach is much inspired by the Cary Maguire University Professor of Ethics, Robin Lovin, who argues that religious convictions play an important role in political life. Lovin, in turn, agrees with the American scholar in constitutional law, human rights and religion, Michael Perry, while claiming that government cannot be neutral with regard to religious believers. Perry is convinced that such openness will characterise public policy as space for conversation, but not realisation of personal interests.[30] Rejecting the public role of religion, according to Lovin, leads to the "culture of disbelief", which expels religion from the media, culture and other spheres of social life.[31] For Lovin, this phenomenon is not a positive one, since ignoring religion can be considered an oppression of religious voices. In this context, he refers to the American lawyer and socio-political theorist, Stephen

---

[26] *Ibidem*, pp. 95-97.
[27] Kent Greenawalt, *Religion and the Constitution: Volume II: Establishment and Fairness,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 60.
[28] Ronald A. Lindsay, "Religion Has No Place in Government."
[29] David Hollenbach, "Religion in Political Life", p. 98.
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 100.
[31] Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Realism and the New Realities,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 124-125.

Carter. Drawing on Carter's arguments, Lovin comes to the following suggestion: „What is needed is […] that liberalism develops a politics that accepts whatever form of dialogue a member of the public offers. Epistemic diversity, like diversity of other kinds, should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished. What is needed, then, is a willingness to *listen*, not because the speaker has the *right voice*, but because the speaker has the *right to speak*. Moreover, the willingness to listen must hold out the possibility that the speaker is saying something worth listening to".[32] In this way, Lovin highlights discussions without fear and presuppositions of possible conflicts caused by religious arguments.[33]

Hollenbach accepts Lovin's arguments and comes to the conclusion that isolating religion from the public discourse is nothing other than a manifestation of intolerance, which in turn can lead to serious conflicts between the state and religious community/ies. Moreover, he suggests one more argument in favour of religious voice in public policy: "Because religion is about the ultimate good of the whole of human life, it will be untrue to itself if it accepts the private niche to which liberal theory would assign it."[34] Therefore, the active presence of religion in political life is one of the main contributions of Hollenbach to contemporary philosophy, theology, sociology and other disciplines that deal with religion-politics issues.

Thus, Hollenbach's statement is fully compatible with Casanova's explanation of deprivatisation of religion, which is contrary to the form of privatisation mentioned earlier. Accordingly, this deprivatisation means "the process whereby religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society."[35] This statement encourages a role for religion in such important spheres of social life as politics, economics and culture.

Religion and Economics:

The previously discussed arguments by Hollenbach concerning the role of religion in the public sphere may lead one to assume that religion would have quite an impact on the economic aspect of any society. The significance of this topic for David Hollenbach can be seen in his collaboration with the American bishops over the pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, issued in 1986.[36] In its final version, this document became the subject of a number of subsequent investigations concerning a

---

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 125.

[33] David Hollenbach, "Religion in Political Life", p. 103.

[34] *Ibidem*, p. 104.

[35] Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, p. 65.

[36] David Hollenbach took an active part in preparing the text of this document being the leader of theological group while making the first draft of the letter. See Gregory J. Fairbanks, *The History of the Development of the 1986 United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy : Economic Justice for All* [dissertation], Roma, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2005. In this dissertation, the author presents detailed analysis of the drafting process and editing of the document. See also Camilla J. Kari, *Public Witness: The Pastoral Letters of the American Catholic Bishops,* Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2004. This book presents general information on pastoral letters of the American Bishops' Conference and the *Economic Justice for All* is one of them.

new Christian view on the economic life of a democratic state. As to Hollenbach's vision of economics, he did not edit a separate book on the topic, but his opinions concerning this dimension of social life almost fully correspond to what has been presented in the pastoral letter. Therefore, the main points of this document, together with other religious views on economic life, will be analysed further.

The aim of *Economic Justice for All* is to rediscover the meaning of the Gospel, moral values and principles in a world dominated by economics. The authors of the letter affirm that "economic decisions have human consequences and moral content." [37] In this way, economics is considered not merely as a production-consuming process but as a key factor in the moral and spiritual life. Therefore, Catholic response to modern economic trends has to do with their impact on such moral issues as human dignity, life in community, protecting human rights, social justice, personal and corporate responsibility, and many others.[38] Thus, religion and economic policies are always at the crossroads. When economists elaborate new tendencies in production and management, religious doctrines seek to promote the moral values and principles among the faithful who are thus engaged in the economic life of their city or country. In this context, the American bishops found it necessary to evaluate all economics policies "in light of their impact on the life and stability" of citizens.[39] That is the reason why not only Catholicism or Christianity but any other religion for that matter ought to become attentive to economic matters affecting life.

In this context, there is the question of whether religion can have an impact on economics. Nowadays, religion and economic policy might be regarded as different, even opposite, domains that respectively lie in the different planes of the religious and secular. From the perspective of liberal democracy, this question is a rhetorical one due to the dominion of the secular. However, belonging to a particular religious community can affect the lifestyle of its members. Harvard Kennedy School of Government professors, Filipe Campante and David Yanagizawa-Drott, stress three important influential characteristics that affect the economic behaviour of religious people. Firstly, religious practitioners have an awareness that not everything can be produced or qualified by economic advantage. Secondly, religious practices can directly affect productivity through the prescription of rules of behaviour. And thirdly, such practices can determine the values behind certain economic decisions. [40] Following these statements, it can be emphasised that each religious doctrine tends to care more about a higher non-material good. Therefore, the personal life of a particular religious person can be directly dependent on his/her religious practice and convictions. In this context, a new question presents itself concerning the ideal model of relations which ought to exist between religion and economics.

---

[37] United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic SocialTeaching and the U. S. Economy* , Washington D.C.,United States Catholic Conference, 1986, p. VI.
[38] *Ibidem*, pp. VIII-IX.
[39] *Ibidem*, p. IX.
[40] Filipe Campante and David Yanagizawa-Drott, *Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness? Evidence from Ramadan*, (December 2013) http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/fcampan/Papers/Ramadan.pdf [accessed March 16, 2014].

Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry professor, Mark S. Markuly, defines four possible relational models for religion and economics. These models are: "economics separate from religion; economics in service to religion; religion in service to economics; and religion in union with economics."[41] In his analysis of the contemporary literature on the religion-economics debate, Markuly considered the trend that economists and business individuals prefer the perspective of religion being in service to economics. Theologians and religious leaders would prefer the model of economics in service to religion. What is most problematic at the present time, according to Markuly, is building up the relations between the two sides. On this issue, Markuly refers to the Vanderbilt university professor of theology, Douglas Meeks. The latter argues that economics as science and as system neglects the religious convictions in "God's universal household." In the same manner, religious leaders do not pay much attention to current economic issues. Generally, Meeks' message stresses the gap between religious and economic values, purposes, and lifestyle directions.[42]

The main claim of Meeks is the need for contemporary economics to recognise the life and worship of religious communities. Similar efforts should be made on behalf of religious denominations which, living in economically determined societies, have not merely offered criticisms but contribute as well to the economic development of a particular state or region. Only in this way will a bridge between religion and economy become possible. Such relations will be ideal when economic conditions do not jeopardise worship and religious communities do not treat economics as contributive to the dehumanisation of life.[43] Meeks' arguments lead to the conclusion that the relational model is the best way to promote the development of any particular society.

David Hollenbach would agree with Douglas Meeks in his relational approach. For Hollenbach, the economic aspect is an important criterion when thinking of a good life for the individual. Many social problems, such as unemployment, class-divisions, social inequality, poverty and many others, which are matters related to economic activity, are considered great evils in light of the Church's social teaching.[44] Therefore, as can be concluded, the official Church teaching on economic problems must correspond to the modern conditions. This consideration is the starting point for the authors of *Economic Justice for All*. For this reason, the document includes quite a profound analysis of the US economic context in particular, with the aim of offering specific, useful and realistic suggestions concerning society's well-being.[45]

---

[41] Mark S. Markuly, "Ships Passing in the Night: The Conceptual Disconnects Between American Christianity and Capitalism," in Nicholas Capaldi (ed.), *Business and Religion: A Clash of Civilizations?*, Salem, MA: M & M Scrivener Press, 2005, p. 34.

[42] Douglas M. Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy,* Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989, p. 19.

[43] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

[44] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, pp. 34-40.

[45] *Economic Justice for All*, pp. 2-5.

This discussion thus concludes that religious life cannot be totally separated from the economic one, since all people live in particular economic contexts and are engaged in all kinds of economic transactions. The main question here would be the same as that formulated by the American bishops: "How will my economic decisions to buy, sell, invest, divest, hire, or fire serve human dignity and the common good?"[46] In this context, striving for the common good unites different spheres of social life, including the religious one which cannot remain indifferent to social problems. Therefore, religion and economics have a common task – striving for the common good, which means promoting justice, human dignity and other principles, each in their particular area.

Religion and Culture:

Before analysing the interconnections between religion and culture, the very notion of culture should be clarified. The American sociologist and anthropologist, James Spickard, in trying to define the meaning of culture, argues that it is not merely Internet development or the birth of a new music style. His approach to culture is more anthropological and foresees, first of all, the communal dimension of the human person. According to him, culture "involves a group's core outlook on the world as it manifests itself in daily living", or in other words, "it consists of that group's root assumptions about the world."[47] However, it does not mean that technological or economic development or newness in music, arts and literature are to be neglected. On the contrary, all these aspects are integrated in Spickard's understanding of culture, because they in different ways affect the worldviews and lifestyles of individuals. Therefore, culture is a more general concept that cannot be reduced to a sum total of its many aspects. As a consequence, Spickard came to the notion of 'global culture', which is sharing ideas in a worldwide context.[48] According to Duke university professor of religious studies, David Morgan, culture is not a result of humanity's activity, but is "the constructive activity that makes social reality."[49] He also has a similar approach to Spickard when defining culture: "Culture is what people do to negotiate their relationship to natural, social and economic realities."[50] This understanding of culture seems to be compatible with Hollenbach's concept of the common good, especially in its communal and universal dimension. Therefore, the following discussion will focus on religion's impact on such communal perception of the world.

---

[46] *Ibidem*, p. X.

[47] James V. Spickard, "Religion' in Global Culture: New Directions in an Increasingly Self-Conscious World," in Lori Gail Beaman, Peter Beyer (eds.), *Religion, Globalization, and Culture*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2007, p. 233.

[48] *Ibidem.*

[49] David Morgan, "Religion, Media, Culture: the Shape of the Field,"in David Morgan (ed.), *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, New York, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 4.

[50] *Ibidem.*

The German sociologists, Bernhard Giesen and Daniel Suber, in *Religion and Politics: Cultural Perspectives*, argue that the process of secularisation has caused a 'cultural evolution' that "separates tradition and modernity."[51] On this statement, one may conclude that religion has no place in the public cultural life. However, it would be wrong to make such preliminary conclusions. The university of Tennessee professor of Religious Studies, Mark Hulsether, emphasises that often many scholars while speaking on religion and culture describe their studies in terms of the inherent tension between the sacred and profane. Some use religion in their judgment of modern culture and some blame a particular religion for integrating culture. At the same time, there are scholars whose starting point is a consideration of culture as a space for religion. Along this vein, Hulsether suggests considering culture as an umbrella term in whose context religion would become its subset.[52] Such suggestion clearly indicates that religion cannot be regarded as something isolated from human culture.

The director of research at the Worldwatch Institute, Gary Gardner, speaks of religion as a strong power in modern social life. Speaking of the influential role of religions, he emphasises thus: "They shape people's worldviews, wield moral authority, have the ear of multitudes of adherents, often possess strong financial and institutional assets, and are strong generators of social capital, an asset in community building. All of these assets can be used to help build a socially just and environmentally sustainable world."[53] These religious powers are very significant to Gardner, because they together create a space for formation in values, encouragement to public activity, source of personal and global changes.[54] Generally speaking, religions can thus be considered as engines of human activity.

Thanks to religions, faithful believers can find answers to important questions of an ontological and cosmological character, such as: Who am I? Why do I exist? What is my mission in this world? What or who is the ruler of the universe? Gardner contends that knowing the answers to these questions will render human activity meaningful for believers and will provide a good basis for communication among society's members.[55] One may conclude that each religion provides a certain formation in life. Through inoculating virtues and moral principles, religious communities become places of acculturation. In this context, a particular religion can be considered not merely as a system of symbols but as a "form of mediation that does not isolate belief but examines its articulation within [different] social processes."[56] Following Morgan, religious symbolism is adapted to particular cultures in order to provide believers with "a coherent understanding or a valuation of life, a meaningful, ordered

---

[51] Bernhard Giesen and Daniel Suber, "Politics and Religion: an Introduction" in Bernhard Giesen and Daniel Suber(eds.) *Religion and Politics: Cultural Perspectives*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2005, p. 1.

[52] Mark Hulsether, "Religion and Culture," in John R. Hinnels (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, London, New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 500.

[53] Gary Gardner*, Invoking the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World,* Washington D.C., Worldwatch Institute, 2002, p. 5.

[54] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

[55] *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13.

[56] David Morgan, "Religion, Media, Culture", p. 8.

world in which interaction and interdependence are enabled." [57] In light of this argument, the role of religion in human culture is a crucial one.

David Hollenbach follows the same line of thinking while stressing the significant impact of religion on the public life of a particular society. He calls this impact the 'formation of culture': „Religious communities make perhaps their most important contribution to public life through this contribution to the formation of culture. If they seek to make this contribution through a dialogue of mutual listening and speaking with others, it will be fully congruent with the life of a free society".[58]

Contrary to Rawls, Hollenbach considers the religious understanding of 'good' as of great importance to society's culture. Moreover, the right to achieve this good can be treated as protection of human rights and freedom. In that regard, dialogue in plurality is realistic. On this dialogue among religious comprehensive doctrines (Rawlsian terminology), Hollenbach only finds it beneficial because cultural conditions have a direct impact on legislation, court and other institutions of public policy.[59] In defending the need for religious communities to have a voice in the public sphere, David Hollenbach once more accentuates the gravity of striving for the common good, which is dialogic: „Cultural differences are so significant that a shared vision of the common good can only be attained in a historically incremental way through deep encounter and intellectual exchange across traditions. It is also dialogic because it sees engagement with others across the boundaries of traditions as itself part of the human good". [60] What also needs to be mentioned here is that in stressing dialogue, Hollenbach does not propagate any theocracy or hegemony but defends democracy, where the rights and freedoms of citizens are protected.

This theoretical analysis of religion's presence in the political, economic and cultural life of society can be supported by some fairly clear examples. One may find these in the history of American elections' campaigns. The elections of 1800 demonstrated the power and importance of expressing a personal belief in God by the candidates to the presidency. Finally, in spite of a number of antireligious accusations, Thomas Jefferson won these elections. The election of William Howard Taft was no less tense. He was attacked by evangelicals for being Unitarian and was even called an apostate. Despite this pressure, he, nevertheless, won the elections and became the 27th US president. Theodore Roosevelt publicly affirmed that the president should be an example to others in regularly attending church. Later successors, such as Kennedy, Bush (sr and jr), and Obama, announced publicly the importance of their faith to them.[61] These examples demonstrate religious convictions as of great importance to political activity.

---

[57] *Ibidem.*

[58] David Hollenbach, "Contexts of the Political Role of Religion" p. 896.

[59] *Ibidem*, p. 900.

[60] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 153.

[61] Karen Judson, *Religion and Government: Should They Mix?,* New York, Marshall Cavendish, 2010, pp. 27-29.

This discussion on the public role of religion started by considering the phenomenon of secularisation and its three possible characteristics, as presented by Jose Casanova: decline, privatisation, and differentiation of religion. For liberal thinkers, the most acceptable part is the great escape of religion from the public square into becoming a private matter for everyone. Casanova's arguments on this issue seem contrary to liberal interpretation. What he claims is that "we are witnessing the 'deprivatisation' of religion in the modern world," meaning the rejection of a marginalised position for religion and allowing it to become an important player in the political and public square.[62] When Rawls claimed *public reason* as the top priority in political decision making, Casanova points to the notion of *public religion*, the main feature of which is an active presence in the public sphere.[63]

In the context of this terminological quest, it would be logical to conclude that Hollenbach has made an essential contribution to the development of modern theological ethics concerning the public role of religion. Together with the American Lutheran religious scholar Martin Marty and Roman Catholic theologian David Tracy, Hollenbach contributed to developing the notion of *public theology*. By means of this term, Marty aimed to focus narrowly on the Christian religious tradition. Still, Hollenbach has defined the normative claim of public theology, which is "to illuminate the urgent moral questions of our time through explicit use of the great symbols and doctrines of the Christian faith."[64] Later, Tracy described the methods according to which theology should be done. His main claim was that each theology should be public and participate in public discourse in at least three groups within society: the church, the academy, and the wider society.[65] Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the concept of *public theology* is one more critical response to the liberal views on democracy and religious freedom.

Here, one may consider that Hollenbach, being a Catholic theologian and priest, makes his argumentation from the perspective of Christian tradition and does not therefore pay much attention to non-Christian doctrines in public debates. Kathryne Tanner, in her analysis of public theology in the public square and especially Hollenbach's contribution to this notion, touches upon this question. She argues that in many cases Christian arguments are compatible with non-Christian ones. Moreover, she emphasises that non-religious individuals can agree

---

[62] Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, 5.

[63] Idem, "What Is a Public Religion?" in Hugh Heclo, Wilfred M. McClay(eds.), *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America,* Washington, D.C., Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003, p. 111. In this article Jose Casanova gives detailed explanation of the distinction of three areas where the public religion is realized. Accordingly, public religion can be established by state churches in the area of polity; in a political society it can be established by political parties or social movements, which often can be in competition to each other. And finally, public religion can be established generally in public sphere by participation in debates on different issues, affair, common good and others. Following this article, the more detailed explanation of these three levels can be discovered.

[64] David Hollenbach, "Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism after John Courtney Murray,"in *Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (June 1976), p. 299.

[65] E. Harold Breitenberg, "What is Public Theology?" in Deirdre King Hainsworth, Scott R. Paeth (eds.), *Public Theology for a Global Society*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing, 2010, pp. 3-16.

with the conclusions provided by public theology. There is also a perspective whereby Christian public theology is able to base its argumentation on generally acceptable moral principles without contradicting other religions.[66] However, the question of different religions participating in the public square still remains problematic. Some religious convictions, especially fundamentalist ones, contain substantially contradictory doctrines. The main problem here is ensuring free and equal participation in public debates for different religions, many of which may seem to pursue significantly different ideas of what is 'good'

Different Religions and Common Morality:

The previous paragraphs showed that the role of religion in the public sphere cannot be underestimated. Even the liberal perspective does not contradict religion's impact in decision-making. It only restricts the sphere of such influence to private reasoning. However, many of the authors discussed, and David Hollenbach is one of them, provide counter-liberal arguments in favour of legitimised religion's participation in the public forum. It becomes problematic when two or more religious denominations come across in one and the same context. In this context there is a danger of possible conflict. The tension in such situations grows proportionally to the number of doctrinal differences or the basic principles of all religious parties. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate some theoretical and practical models of behaviour to ensure general agreement.

David Hollenbach is one of those who have looked into this problem deeply and carefully. What is interesting is that he does not make preliminary negative conclusions that modern pluralism sets many challenges rather than opportunities in interpersonal communication. As has already been mentioned in this research, he considers globalisation to be a striving of modern society for common goals. This is the reason for him to look at pluralism, whether it is cultural or religious, as a perspective from which to speak of the common good in different ways and from various perspectives. It forces him to conclude that religious pluralism is not an obstacle in making the community. He rather comes to the conclusion that it is one of the essential characteristics of the community of freedom – a unity of differences. With regard to defending his thesis, David Hollenbach based his argumentation on the idea of tolerance, or, to be more concrete, religious tolerance. The aim of this part of the article is to follow his reasoning, which starts from the proper understanding of this principle. As will be seen later, only through the right interpretation of tolerance may one come to consider the existence of a possible multi-religious community.

Considering Tolerance as a Virtue:

---

[66] Kathryn Tanner, "Public Theology and the Character of Public debate,"in *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 1996, 98-99.

Among different ways to regulate the interpersonal relationships in society is the policy of tolerance of different aspects: racial, linguistic, religious and others. David Hollenbach, referring to tolerance, defines it as valuable for striving to protect the equal dignity for all human beings.[67] Indeed, this is one of the best policies, widely practised in modern democratic states, which enables peaceful coexistence of different cultures, ethnic groups or religions in a particular place. Tolerance is one of the main instruments of liberal thinkers in their claims to protect personal freedom. On the pages that follow, Hollenbach's interpretation of tolerance and his appeals to its liberal interpretation will be discussed. In order to find the significant difference of Hollenbach's approach to tolerance, its interpretation in light of liberal thinking would be helpful. In this context, coming back to the Rawlsian perspective will make this difference more coherent.

John Rawls recognised tolerance (or, as he called it, 'toleration') as one of the political virtues. The other ones are mutual respect, sense of fairness and civility.[68] In the *Law of Peoples* he provides an argument for why the concept of tolerance is necessary. According to him, in the context of multiple religious, philosophical and moral comprehensive doctrines, unity is hardly possible. Therefore, some conception, which would assure some consensus, is needed. Following Rawls' reasoning, this political conception is 'toleration.'[69] In *Political Liberalism* he conducted deep research focusing on the possible causes of applying the idea of toleration. Speaking generally, all of them derive from one source – plurality of personal comprehensive doctrines, which cannot be accepted as reasonable for everyone.[70] In this context, the concept of toleration suits as the best option for public reason, as it was characterized by Rawls. This concept is supported by the claims for the equality of all members of society. Only through the practicing of tolerance, according to Rawls, can all persons keep their own religious, philosophical and moral doctrines.[71] This Rawlsian interpretation of tolerance forces us to conclude that a liberal tradition considers tolerance as a *modus vivendi* instrument. In other words, John Rawls elaborates his theory in order to protect the rights and freedoms of humans.

Evaluating this liberal position, David Hollenbach refers to Harvard University professor Judith Shklar's assessments of liberal democracy. Concerning the concept of tolerance, she recognises the liberal interpretation of this concept as the "liberalism of fear."[72] This characteristic becomes clearer when looking at liberalism as striving to protect the position of each individual. Consequently, liberal tolerance seeks to protect the private religious, philosophical or moral convictions from any other influence.[73] It forces us to conclude that religious tolerance in a liberal context means creating the

[67] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 32.

[68] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* New York, Columbia University Press, second edition, 1996, p. 122.

[69] Idem, *The Law of Peoples: With, The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, fourth edition, 2002, p. 16.

[70] Idem, *Political liberalism*, pp. 59-65.

[71] Idem, *The Law of Peoples*, pp. 18-19.

[72] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 32.

[73] Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in Nancy Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 21-38.

maximum conditions in social life for the non-influential impact of other religious doctrines on one's own.

Hollenbach shares the views of Shklar, but prefers to call this interpretation the liberalism of wariness. He explains his position as follows: "[People] are wary of people who hold conceptions of the good life that differ from their own."[74] Thus, liberal tolerance aims to secure individuals from any pressing on one from outside of the private sphere. In this context it is possible to affirm that such understanding of tolerance as fear or wariness about encountering the comprehensive doctrine of another leads to "individualistic isolation" of a particular individual from the society s/he lives in. Hollenbach says that such "individualistic isolation is finally a prison, not a liberation."[75] This argument challenges not only the Rawlsian concept of tolerance, but liberal theory in general.

Another serious critique of the Rawlsian interpretation of tolerance is provided by the Professor of Religious Education at the Norwegian School of Theology, Geir Afdal. Scrutinising Rawls' *Theory of Justice* Afdal comes to the conclusion that the former considered tolerance as a necessary condition in and principle of social life. From this perspective, the Norwegian scholar defined few domains of this principle. Firstly, it is limited by justice, which sets the limitation of tolerating each religion or morality which intersects the borders of justice. In this way the concept of tolerance is limited by another concept. The second domain is social neutrality. If tolerance should be adapted with the aim not to deal with and not to promote the other's vision of the good, then it creates the neutrality in interpersonal relationships and reduces them to mere cooperation. The next domain is the distorted individual's autonomy. Afdal recognises in the Rawlsian approach human autonomy, not a striving for self-realisation in society, but acting according to subjective convictions.[76] Afdal's critical assessments of Rawls' liberal ideas expose the latter to serious critique, especially from the viewpoint of the communitarian perspective. In this context, the Norwegian scholar is very close to Hollenbach's evaluation of liberal tolerance.

In one of his articles, David Hollenbach mentions that the liberal concept of tolerance discussed above is rooted quite deeply in the political culture of the West and is often treated as a virtue. In light of liberalism, this virtual character of tolerance is justifiable for promoting equality and personal freedom.[77] Hollenbach does not reject the role of tolerance in making for the peaceful coexistence of different religious, philosophical or moral views in a particular society. However, the attitude to and treatment of this principle is directly opposed to Rawls. The latter understood tolerance as "the method of avoidance" of any religious or philosophical view in political life. With regard to this statement, Hollenbach would agree with Afdal in his criticism of the state's neutrality promoted by liberals. The American theologian argues that such policy does not promote freedom but violation and the alienation of particular citizens. As a result, each individual is alone with his/her idea of the good.

---

[74] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 33.
[75] Idem, *"Is Tolerance enough?,"* p. 6.
[76] Geir Afdal, *Tolerance and Curriculum*, Munster, Zeitdruck GmbH, 2006, pp. 17-22.
[77] David Hollenbach*, "Is Tolerance Enough*?," p. 4. See also The Common Good and Christian Ethics, 32.

In this context Hollenbach claims: "A principled commitment to avoiding sustained discourse about the common good can produce a downward spiral in which shared meaning, understanding, and community become even harder to achieve in practice."[78]

Hollenbach and Afdal would also agree in their view of the liberal interpretation of individual autonomy. David Hollenbach considers autonomy not to be the possibility of avoiding the other's ideas of the good life. What is the real freedom for him is self-realisation in communal relationships and having the voice and power to influence the environment according to personal religious and moral convictions.[79] Therefore, democracy as it was understood by liberal representatives is not a democracy for Hollenbach. He makes a clear statement concerning his approach: "It [democracy] requires the virtues of mutual cooperation, mutual responsibility, and what Aristotle called civic friendship and control."[80] According to this thesis, tolerance as 'a method of avoiding' cannot be recognised as a virtue.

Contrary to Rawls, Hollenbach considers true tolerance to consist of the recognition and respect of differences. It does not isolate an individual, but seeks to achieve "positive engagement with one another through listening and speaking."[81] Such engagement in relationships provides a solid ground for the existence of the community of freedom, where none of its member interfere with their beliefs, but can participate in public discourse as religious individuals and express their personal vision of the good without any coercion.[82] Such an approach considers tolerance not as a procedural method in building the relationships of cooperation, but as an ideal in multi-cultural or multi-religious communication.

Hollenbach's critique of liberal tolerance might be compatible with the ideas of Lyn Lofland, Professor Emeritus and former lecturer on Sociology at the University of California. She pointed out the difference between positive and negative tolerance. According to her, negative tolerance takes place in social relationships where individuals and communities do not share their interests. In other words, the differences of others are not taken into consideration. On the contrary, positive tolerance flourishes in circumstances of interaction between particular individuals or local groups and requires engagement in public life.[83] Lofland's distinction finds parallels with Berlin's differentiation of positive and negative freedom, i.e. *freedom from* and *freedom for*, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter. On the basis of this comparison it is possible to affirm that negative tolerance, as well as *freedom from*, is a feature of liberal thinking, while positive tolerance and *freedom for* represent the communitarian approach.

---

[78] David Hollenbach*, "Is Tolerance Enough*?,"p. 4.

[79] *Ibidem.*

[80] *Ibidem.*

[81] *Ibidem*, 12-13.

[82]*Ibidem.*

[83] Daniel O'Connell, *Educating Religiously toward a Public Spirituality [dissertation, footnote]* (Boston College, May 2008), p. 14.

Hollenbach would appreciate this distinction, because for him tolerance is not only dealing with such problems as racism, poverty and social isolation. It is fulfilled when mutual interdependence in a community is recognised. „A good community is a place where people are genuinely interdependent on each other through their participation in, discussion concerning, and decision-making about their common purposes. It is a place where people make decisions together about the kind of society they want to live in together".[84] Moreover, tolerance cannot be limited to only a particular state or society. The reality of globalisation is a proof that different parts of the world aim to create a network, which presupposes interdependence on the one hand and autonomy on the other. This striving is being realised nowadays through international trade, protection of the environment and other ecological, cultural, economic or political initiatives.[85] In this context Lofland speaks of interactional pleasures – people-watching, public sociability, clustering of playfulness and fantasy – which are the consequences of positive tolerance.[86]

One more distinction, which it is necessary to mention here, is the difference between passive and active tolerance. American political theorist Michael Walzer in *On Toleration* described five forms of tolerance: 1) unacceptability of difference for the sake of peace; 2) passive and indifferent disposition toward possible differences; 3) moral stoicism, i.e. awareness of the rights of others in spite of whether they are practised in an appropriate way or not; 4) openness to differences and willingness to learn; 5) understanding of the positive role of differences in the realising of the individual's autonomy.[87] These five dimensions of tolerance could be divided into two groups – passive, which comprises the first three forms, and active, which consists of the fourth and fifth forms respectively.[88] Hollenbach does not mention such a distinction, but his attention to activity in the public sphere cannot be overestimated. In his publications he argues that active interaction is necessary for achieving the common good[89] and the realisation of human rights and freedom.[90] This position of Hollenbach's encourages other authors to speak of the superiority of active tolerance over passive tolerance. Among them, contemporary British theologian Philip Sheldrake, who in reference to Hollenbach's active participation in the common good comes to the conclusion that "we can go beyond passive tolerance" of "irreconcilable differences" towards the universal common good.[91]

---

[84] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 42.

[85] *Ibidem.*

[86] Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory,* New York, Aldine de Gruyter, third edition, 2009, p. 88.

[87] Michael Walzer, *On Toleration,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 10-11.

[88] Olga Schihalejev, *From Indifference to Dialogue*?, Munster, Waxman Verlag, 2010, p. 29.

[89] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 100. Here he argues: "Active citizen participation in public life is itself a constitutive part of the pursuit of the common good."

[90] Idem, *"Is Tolerance enough?,"* 7. Here Hollenbach emphasises: "Freedom's most important meaning is positive, the ability to shape one's life and environment in an active and creative way, rather than the negative state of privacy or being left alone by others."

[91] Philip Sheldrake, *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban,* West Sussex, John Wiley and Sons, 2014, p. 197.

This analysis of different approaches to the meaning of tolerance shows the relevance of this issue at the present time, because the publications of contemporary authors are taken into consideration. David Hollenbach, as one of the prominent contemporary theologians, clearly presents his position as a defender of positive or active tolerance, which presumes the active engagement of individuals with different religious or moral convictions in public debate. He rejects any attempts to define tolerance as merely protection of personal doctrines. On the contrary, he promotes the communal model of relationship in which human freedom can be fully realised.

This clarification of the non-liberal understanding of tolerance is crucial in the context of the role of religions in the public domain. Hollenbach is convinced that "religious communities have the capacity to strengthen public life in a time when other social pressures encourage a retreat to privacy."[92] This is the reason for him arguing that religions' presence in public life plays a significant role in the life of society and each individual for promoting the ideas of good. That is why David Hollenbach stays closer to a communitarian understanding of tolerance, which is not a *procedural* notion, but a *substantial* one[93] that presupposes not a private sphere, but a community of freedom, based on intellectual solidarity.

Intellectual Solidarity:

All previously made analyses and conclusions now lead the reader to the main and, probably, more difficult task this article aims to deal with. This is the question of how Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, representatives of Hinduism and members of other religious communities, whether they are fundamentalist or not, can stand shoulder to shoulder in one and the same context searching for the best way of achieving the good and not provoking a religious war. Moreover, Hollenbach claims that it is not only possible to keep the non-war conditions, but to strive for the flourishing of a particular state or society. What can make this possible, not only theoretically but practically, is the matter discussed in this part of the research.

As has been noted earlier, the main feature of pluralism is no agreement on the meaning of good. Hollenbach is aware of a big challenge for citizens to elaborate some perspectives in issues which are common for different cultures and religions. With regard to this problem, Hollenbach tries to find the value which could cross the different kinds of borders in order to perform a dialogue among all the members of the state community. He is convinced that solidarity is the best way to solve this problem. He, thus, claims: "Dialogue that seeks to understand those with different visions of the good life is already a form of solidarity even when disagreement continues to exist."[94] This statement appears as a consequence of his understanding of the common good, which is being a community as such.

Stressing the importance of solidarity, Hollenbach does not put the notion of tolerance in a central place. However, he does not separate these concepts.

---

[92] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 100.
[93] Geir Afdal, *Tolerance and Curriculum*, pp. 122-123.
[94] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 138.

Hollenbach's solidarity is *intellectual solidarity*. This concept indicates in its title the way of realising the virtue of solidarity. Hollenbach provides its basic definition: "'Intellectual solidarity' […] used here to describe an orientation of mind that regards differences among traditions as stimuli to intellectual engagement across religious and cultural boundaries."[95] In this context, solidarity is presented not as passive, but as an active practice for it requires personal intellectual efforts. Intellectual solidarity, as it is presented by Hollenbach, aims to overstep the limits of the personal comfort zone and experience the other. An intellectual orientation to the other is a practical realisation of *freedom for*, which is the stimulus for changing self and environment, and also readiness and openness to be learnt by someone. Hollenbach calls this process the "give-and-take of mutual learning among people who see the world differently."[96] Such openness to the world is the crucial point of difference of liberal and communitarian thinkers.

Hollenbach's interpretation of intellectual solidarity is compatible with MacIntyre's practical rationality. In *After Virtue* he speaks of secular rationality, which can "no longer provide a shared background and foundation of moral discourse and action."[97] For this reason he does not claim for a neutral position, defended by Rawls, but intellectual engagement, which foresees encountering different traditions and requires creativity.[98] Similarly to MacIntyre, Hollenbach accentuates that the intellectual basis enables dialogue in pluralism, which is the realisation of tolerance as a "strategy of non-interference with the beliefs, lifestyles of those who are different."[99] Applying this idea of intellectual solidarity to the context of religious pluralism would mean that religious differences are viewed not as distinctive features of different cultures, but as new perspectives of global interactions, which are possible because of tolerance (positive tolerance).[100] Such engagement will not cause harm to a particular individual, but enables the realisation of his/her freedom.

In practice, intellectual solidarity is realised in conversation, where participants share their historical, cultural and other experience and, on this basis, rethink the idea of good. From another perspective, intellectual solidarity is a process of education, which requires "mutual listening and speaking" that creates "an atmosphere of genuine freedom."[101] Speaking on solidarity in interreligious dialogue would mean, according to Hollenbach, the most important contribution to the common good, because of religions' contribution to the formation of cultures and worldviews.[102] It leads to striving for reciprocity among societies or citizens of a particular state. Hollenbach describes the way it should be performed: "When one makes a proposal about important matters of common social life, one respects the freedom and equality

---

[95] *Ibidem.*

[96] *Ibidem.*

[97] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory,* Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, third edition, 2007, p. 50.

[98] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*?, London, Duckworth, 1988, pp. 363-365.

[99] David Hollenbach, "Contexts of the Political Role of Religion," p. 892.

[100] Idem, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 140.

[101] Idem, "Contexts of the Political Role of Religion," p. 892.

[102] *Ibidem*, p. 896.

of all those the proposal will affect."[103] In this context, when Hollenbach claims that intellectual solidarity is a precondition for individuals to realise their right of religious freedom, he presumes that each religious community has a right to be engaged in making the public policy and influencing the laws "by which a free people will be governed and the public culture they share."[104] It forces us to conclude that intellectual solidarity foresees personal and collective responsibility for the well-being of all members of the community. This is what Hollenbach calls treating each person seriously.

In light of Hollenbach's reasoning, social isolation, as a consequence of Rawlsian 'avoidance', emerges as the weak point in liberal thinking. Rawls built his arguments with the aim to avoid any possible dependence on one's political, philosophical or moral doctrine. Hollenbach, in his turn, stressed the inevitable interdependence, because each human being is a social being. What is the most interesting is that, in a comparison between Rawls' and Hollenbach's reasoning, both of them had the same aims and used the same terms, but came to different conclusions. Both thinkers referred to the importance of tolerance with the aim of protecting human dignity. However, Rawls and Hollenbach chose different directions. The former was convinced that such dialogue would violate the individual's convictions and freedom. Therefore, Rawls used the concept of justice for the limitation and border between generally accepted and private domains. Hollenbach, on the other hand, chose the way to support the necessity of communication which would not hide religious principles. Perhaps John Rawls aimed to create the conditions in which particular persons would be maximally saved from external influence on their private life. Therefore, Rawlsian liberalism contains much limitation, because such substantial dimensions of human life as religion and culture are reduced to private domain. One more negative consequence of such an approach is double-standard life. Indeed, it is not an easy task for a particular person always to be conscious that in occupying some position in public institutions he/she in many cases has to follow rules and principles unacceptable to the religious community he/she belongs to. On the one hand, it can be justified by the striving for human dignity. However, it is a source of moral distress on the other hand. These arguments in sum challenge the liberal reasoning concerning the presence of religions in the public domain.

Contrary to Rawlsian theory, David Hollenbach does not look for a passive form towards well-ordered society. He does not provide arguments against the public voice of religion, because if human dignity has to be protected, human identity has to be protected as well. Religion for faithful people is a constitutive element of their identity. Therefore, prohibition of acting and speaking out of religious principles very often means the prohibition of self-realisation. The crucial impact of David Hollenbach is to stress personal responsibility and this makes him more successful in his arguments than Rawls. Hollenbach is aware that the conduct of the good life

---

[103] Idem, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 145.
[104] Idem, *Global Face of Public Faith*, p. 14.

among representatives of different cultures and religions is not an easy issue. What he argues for in this context is the personal freedom to choose or not to choose such a well-ordered life. If society's members, with open hearts, strive to build the community of freedom, they can do so in a dialogical and non-offensive way. If not, religious conflicts will not be avoided. One may criticise him for being light-minded. However, on the other hand, the possibility of choosing is a direct realisation of human freedom, which is absent in Rawlsian theory. If citizens choose to strive for the common good, they will strive for making all the necessary conditions to satisfy the different, but generally accepted, ideas of the good without any oppression of one's religion, nationality, culture, morality and other convictions.

Hollenbach's reasoning excludes any coercive actions directed towards particular members of the state community. He claims: „The spirit of intellectual solidarity is similar to tolerance in that it recognizes and respects these differences. It does not seek to eliminate pluralism through coercion. But it differs radically from pure tolerance by seeking positive engagement with the other through both listening and speaking. It is rooted in a hope that understanding might replace incomprehension and that perhaps even agreement could result. Where such engaged conversation about the good life begins and develops, a community of freedom begins to exist".[105] Such an approach enables a dialogue between Christians, Muslims, Jews and other faithful who strive for the common good. One general conclusion can be reached in this context. Religious pluralism is not an obstacle for a community of freedom existence. There is only one decisive criterion – whether each individual wants this existence.

In general, Hollenbach's approach to establishing the dialogue in light of intellectual solidarity looks very promising. University of Melbourne professor of Social and Political Sciences, Adrian Little, clarifies that this approach is realistic only if it presumes a full harmony among differences. However, political realities very often demonstrate the impossibility of achieving a consensus.[106] From this perspective, Hollenbach's concept of intellectual solidarity could be interpreted as too idealistic and not feasible. In fact, he offers any caution in such an interpretation. He does not aim to build an idealistic society, but even if the state or social community is imperfect, it should strive for an ideal – the recognition of the mutual freedoms of all citizens. In this context, religious freedom and encouraging different religions to play an active part in the public sphere are the minimal requirement for intellectual solidarity to be realised. This is the content of Hollenbach's 'dialogic ethics,' which aims to define human freedom positively and avoid any tyrannical "manipulation of public opinion," which would be a result of prohibiting the public presence of religions. With regard to this positive perspective on religious freedom Hollenbach says: „Religious freedom enables religious believers and non-believers alike to enter into a community of discourse that seeks to discover the truth about how they should

---

[105] Idem, *"Is Tolerance enough?,"* pp. 12-13.
[106] Adrian Little, *The Politics of Community: Theory and Practice,* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2002, p. 94.

live together. […] Religious freedom is the freedom to speak religiously in public. It is freedom to suggest ways that religious understandings of the good have a bearing on the realities of public life. The free exercise of religion is a social freedom and the right to freedom of religion includes the right to seek to influence other people's understandings of the good life through public persuasion and argument".[107] This statement could be as a reply to defenders of religion's privatisation. Following this reasoning, the very phenomenon of privatisation is the manifestation of coercion, but not vice versa. It could also be a reply to Rawlsian claims for the impossibility of a common morality. This analysis of Hollenbach's approach to tolerance as solidarity clearly demonstrates that modern pluralism can be a perspective in striving for the common good. While Rawls used the argument of different ideas of the good as the precondition to affirming the impossibility of the common good, Hollenbach claims that this is the starting point for searching for the good which is common.

---

[107] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, p. 161.