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# **Religious Opposition to Freedom of Speech**

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# Religious Opposition to Freedom of Speech

## Preface

When the time came for me to decide what topic I should choose for my graduate thesis, it didn't take long before the answer was religion. Having a religious background, but today identifying myself as an atheist, I have a deep fascination for religious influence in people's lives. This coupled with the need to make the thesis relevant for society today, I ended up writing about religious opposition to freedom of speech. Though it has been a difficult challenge to write about this topic, I am now very happy I chose the road less traveled, and wrote about a topic I have a passion for and that might not be the most explored topic in psychology. Even though there is still much to learn about the psychology of religion, I do today hold a much richer understanding of the topic than I did when I started my work on the thesis.

There are two people I would like to thank, and that has been of great importance for me throughout the process of writing the thesis. Maria, my partner and soon to be my baby mama. Thank you for all the hours you have spent listening to me talking about religion, and supporting me in my transition from believer to atheist. I do not know how many times you have sat down, and patiently listened to me talk about the same topic for the trillionth time. Thank you.

Leif Kennair, my supervisor for this thesis. When I first entered your office to ask if you wanted to be my supervisor, you were enthusiastic and said you wanted to support me in my quest to better understand religion. You helped me when I was stuck by discussing the topic to great extent, and motivated me to continue working when I was slowly started to understand, that I had committed to a topic that was a bit harder to explore than I had originally thought. Thank you for motivating me, enthusiastically discussing religion with me, and helping me believe that I could manage the task I had set out to do.

Last out I want to give a special thanks to three great men. Even though they have not directly helped me in the work on my thesis, they have been extremely important to me in my

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adult life. Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens, thank you for the work you do, it matters.

Trond Reidar Carlsen

Jessheim

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## **Abstract**

Religious opposition to freedom of speech is present in many areas of human life, also in areas like the government in Norway where one should think it was not. This thesis gives an explanation to how religious opposition to freedom of speech, can be explained from a psychological perspective. The thesis further argues why this perspective have to be the fundamental premise to understand this phenomenon. The psychological aspects of religion that has been presented and discussed, are costly and hard to fake signals, religious rituals, neural correlates of religious faith, mind perception, attachment, irrationality and the role of analytical thinking. The thesis concludes into the following hypothesis: Religious belief will most likely both consciously and unconsciously promote an intent of opposing freedom of speech. To what degree the intent are converted into behavior and what kind of behavior this intent results in, is a matter of context and opportunity.

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### Introduction

In today's society where we have a huge information flow facilitated amongst other by the internet, we are more now than ever confronted with different world views, religions and religious practices. We have people like those in the Westboro Baptist Church (2015) picketing funerals of deceased people they find immoral, pastors offering blessings for payment (Odde & Wilthil, 2015), religious organizations like the Salvation Army (2015) helping people in need, young Norwegian Muslims making a protective ring around the synagogue in Oslo to promote peace and unity (Kalajdzic & Frymer, 2015), and terrorists like ISIS that burn people alive in the name of Allah (Hall, Robinson, Wyke, Cockroft & William, 2015). All over the world we can see organizations and people acting in a way that is related to their religious faith.

Despite the people doing the acts professing that it is in the name of their god, or it's being facilitated by a religious organization, it is common to see in the aftermath of religious actions that people vindicate religion for any responsibility. A good example of this is the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris January 7th 2015 (Levs, Payne & Pearson, 2015). According to a survivor, the killers who were radical French Muslims, were shouting "Allahu akbar" during the shooting (Allen & Akbar, 2015), something that also was caught on video while the shooters were out on the street ("Raw footage captures", 2015). Even though it's caught on camera that the shooters killed in the name of Allah, people are saying that the killings can't be explained by religion (Klein, 2015), and that it's the French government's failure to embrace multiculturalism that is to blame (Schwartz, 2015).

Another example is Hege Storhaug's (2015) rational and fact oriented criticism of Islam. Instead of discussing the facts that form the basis for the criticism, she gets discredited personally and accused of being a hater (Steen, 2015). As Einar Gelius (2015) points out, it seems like the public society is so busy being politically correct, that it's no longer able to recognize healthy criticism which goal is to fight abuse in whatever form it takes. So it can

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seem that when religion is being criticized for having correlations with undesirable acts and attitudes, there is an opposition to acknowledge that there might be a correlation between religion and acts, acts that in today's society are unacceptable or viewed as morally deviant.

What makes this even more of a conundrum is that the links or correlations between acts and religiosity, are brought forward as important and essential when focusing on positive acts or attitudes. A report conducted by the Pew Research Center (2014) showed that according to surveys in 39 countries, a clear majority of people think it's necessary to believe in God to be a moral person. In 22 of the 39 countries surveyed, the majority of the people thought you needed to believe in God to be moral and have good values.

A concrete example of this belief that it's necessary to believe in God to be moral, can be found in the doctrines of Jehova's Witnesses. According to them we need God to make good choices, live a good life and be happy (Jehovas vitner, 2013). As so many other religions and religious groups, they view human beings as inherently sinful and in the need of believing in God, to learn correct attitudes and to act in a moral superior way. This doctrine is also present in churches in Norway, a country with no state religion, and that around the world is viewed as one of the most secular states there is. Churches like Oslokirken (2012) and Romerikskirken (2015) preach how letting God into your life will give you blessing, freedom, health, and a good life.

So there is a discrepancy between how positive and negative actions, attitudes, and outcomes are credited in regards to religion. On positive outcomes it's politically correct, possible, and does not meet much opposition when attributing them to the religion in question. As soon as the outcome is negative or morally undesirable, the link between religion and action is blurred. This bias to conclude that religions have good effects on people's lives, is even present in the scientific literature on the psychology of religion and behavior (George, Ellison & Larson, 2002; Seybold & Hill, 2001), this despite closer examination shows that the positive

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outcomes might not be as clear cut as earlier thought (Galen, 2012; Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschueren & Dernelle, 2005).

It is naive to think that any correlation in regard to religion, is a simple one only consisting of a few easily understood variables. But though the correlation may be intricate and that political correctness can seem to stifle criticism of religion (Steen, 2015), there are areas where this correlation should be allowed to be freely discussed, without the voice of concern being branded as a hater, immoral, anti-Christian, or Islamophobe. This area is freedom of speech and how religion influence it.

Freedom of speech is one of the fundamental building blocks of modern day democratic societies, and article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information. On why free speech is fundamental, Steven Pinker (2015) points out that when we are using free speech, we are talking and not fighting. Further he explains how freedom of speech is essential for a scientific exploration of our reality, a crucial part of a function democracy, and a bulwark against tyranny. Even though the European Convention on Human Rights states that all individuals shall have the right to freedom of speech, and that arguments like Steven Pinker puts forth clearly show why it's of such great importance to uphold this right, there are still strong voices against freedom of speech within religious communities.

One of these voices is Pope Francis, the head of the Vatican City State and the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church. In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, Pope Francis spoke about freedom of speech on a plane from Sri Lanka to the Philippines, a destination that is the Asian country with the largest Catholic majority (Topping, 2015). In his speech he starts by making a case for violent actions as a response to insults. First he says he is against violence, but if someone insults his mother, they must expect a punch. According to the pope this is a normal reaction, and he thereby implies that this is an acceptable way to react to criticism. Then



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he continues to say that you cannot provoke, insult, or make fun of other people's faith. Since religion has dignity, there is a limit to what you can say about it. Numbers from 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2013) shows there was nearly 1.1 billion catholic people worldwide at that time. For the Pope who is the religious leader of such a large number of the human population, to say that it's not acceptable to freely criticize religion, is potentially a big threat to freedom of speech since Catholics view him as an authority.

These kind of attitude are also present in Islam and Buddhism. In November 2014 Karim al-Banna, a 22 year old Egyptian student, was arrested and later sentenced to three years in jail for contempt of Islam (Burrows, 2015). Karim was found guilty of defamation of Islam, something that is illegal in Egypt.

In Myanmar where there is a majority of Buddhists, a bar manager from New Zealand and two Burmese men, were in March 2015 sentenced to prison for denigrating Buddhism and violating Myanmar's religion act (Moe & Ramzy, 2015). They were sentenced to two years in prison for posting an image online of the Buddha wearing headphones.

Similar but more brutal actions are found in Saudi Arabia. Raif Badawi was in May 2014 found guilty of amongst other things, insulting Islamic religious figures and ridiculing Saudi Arabia's religious police (Amnesty International UK, 2015). He got his sentence for creating an online forum for political and social debate, and his punishment will be 10 years in prison, a fine of 1 million Saudi Riyal and 1000 lashes. Raif will publicly receive the 1000 lashes 50 at a time, once a week, after Friday prayer.

The story of Raif Badawi is heart breaking, but not all opposition towards freedom of speech amongst Islamic people are as brutal as this. The organization Islamic Human Rights Commission give out the Islamophobia Awards for what they consider the worst Islamophobes of the year (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2009). This award is given to people they deem to promote prejudice and hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in

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general. At first glance this seem to be a just cause for a human rights organization, but then seeing who gets the awards puts this in another perspective.

Though the award given to FOX News for presenter Jeanine Pirro's statement "need to kill them", here referring to radical Muslim terrorist, can seem reasonable, the awards given to Maajid Nawaz and Charlie Hebdo make this seem more like an anti free speech award than an Islamophobia award (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015). Maajid Nawaz is co-founder and chairman of Quilliam, a counter extremism think tank working for religious freedom, equality, human rights, and democracy (Quilliam Foundation, 2015). Being him selves a Muslim, Nawaz is a strong critic of Islamic dogma, and through Quilliam encourage Muslims to be more self critical towards their own religious challenges.

The magazine Charlie Hebdo got the Islamophobic award in the international category. Charlie Hebdo is a satirical magazine with a left wing political view (Mounir, 2010), that through cartoons, articles and polemic, shed light on religious, political and cultural issues that's in violation with liberal values.

Even though one might not agree with the critique of Islam and in some cases feel hurt by the criticism, branding critics as Islamophobes with awards like the ones Islamic Human Rights Commission give out, is an attack on freedom of speech. People and organizations behind awards or statements like this may by all means have the best of intentions, but the reality is that it stifles free expression and the room for critical thought. This is a room that's needed to always question the status quo, so the promotion of growth and evolution of morals and fundamental human rights never cease to exist.

The last example that will be given on religious opposition to freedom of speech is from Norway. As many countries around the world, Norway still had a blasphemy law until 2015 (Bangstad & Strand, 2015). It was decided in 2009 that it should be removed from the constitution, but because of an outdated data system the implementation of the law was

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postponed indefinitely (Helljesen, 2010). In the early 2015 the law was still an official part of the Norwegian constitution, even though members of the parliament drafted a request to get it immediately removed (Prop. 8:59 L (2014-2015)). Not until the 29th of May 2015 was §142, the law against blasphemy, removed from the constitution (Myklebust, 2015).

The blasphemy law §142 in Norway was considered a sleeping law since no one has been convicted for blasphemy in Norway since the 1930s (Bangstad & Strand, 2015), but as the parliament members that asked for its immediate removal points out (Prop. 8:59 L (2014-2015)), having it strengthens the notion that religion should have a special kind of protection against free expressions. This protection is something that political parties in Norway has been promoting.

The only religious political party in Norway, Kristelig Folkeparti, has until the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015, wanted to keep the blasphemy law as a part of Norwegian law (“KrF gir opp”, 2015). Though they withdrew the proposal a short time after the Charlie Hebdo attack, they have been proponents of the law to signal that religion is holy, and therefore should be respected. Furthermore the leader of KrF stated that though one should be critical of what kind of actions that is punishable by law, they would still promote the blasphemy law if the majority of the Norwegian parliament wasn't against it.

In 2009 when the blasphemy law was up for revision, this majority was not as clear. As a compromise between the government parties at the time, they agreed to include insults to religion as a part of punishable actions which would be covered by the law against racism (Solvang & Nordahl, 2015). This proposition met hard opposition and was withdrawn, but it showed a political willingness to compromise freedom of speech, an attitude that was present in the people which of many still hold office in 2015.

One of these people that in 2009 accepted the blasphemy law is Jonas Gahr Støre (Solvang & Nordahl, 2015), a man who has been the leader of the Labour Party in Norway

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since 2014 (The Labour Party, 2015), and was a central person in the revision of the blasphemy law in 2009 (Sovang & Nordahl). What makes this man interesting in the context of this thesis, is that in the secular state of Norway, Støre is a religious believer in a position of power (Jahr, 2015). One must be careful to draw conclusions on this knowledge alone, but it is interesting to note that when religion and politics, or religion and core democratic values collide, religious people in power at least to some extent chose the side of religion.

It would be naive to think that opposition to freedom of speech only stems from religion, but denying the correlation would also be naive and dishonest. Religion do correlate with behavior (Lehrer, 2004; Medoff & Skov, 1992; Saroglou et al., 2005), and seeing the abundance of events in the society that is linked to religion, the religion and freedom of speech correlation is an important and interesting link to explore.

The link between religion and freedom of speech is not just interesting from a social and political perspective, but also from a psychological perspective. Pyysiäinen and Hauser (2010) argues that religion and religious faith is a by-product of evolved and non-religious cognitive functions, and they are not alone in this approach to the understanding of religiosity (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Plevic, 2006). So though a social and political perspective may shed important light on religious opposition to freedom of speech, the psychological perspective comes of great interest and importance to understand why and how the phenomenon can take place. If one was to say that an individual behaves in a specific way because the Bible says so, or that a person's culture dictates that sort of behavior, we are still left with the question; what is it that makes the Bible or the culture to have the specific influence it has on the individual's behavior? This question leads us to the inter- and intra-psychology of the individual.

A framework that supports this view and has substantial support in empirical research is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2005). To understand behavior one must identify the

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individual's attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms the person adhere to, and perceived behavioral control. These three components shape the individuals intentions, and that together with perceived behavioral control influence behavior. So to understand why people do what they do, and in this thesis in relation to religion, one must approach the question from a psychological perspective.

The religious opposition to freedom of speech presented so far, coupled with the need for a psychological approach to understand the phenomenon, leads to the research question of this thesis: *From a psychological perspective, can religious faith cause opposition to freedom of speech?*

### **Religious Faith and Freedom of Speech, Presentation and Discussion**

Trying to give a comprehensive explanation of what religious faith is would in itself demand a whole thesis, but to meaningfully address the question at hand, one must outline a fundamental framework for the understanding of religious faith. The definition of religion that will be used in this thesis, is one similar to the one used by Sosis and Alcorta (2003). Religion is a set of beliefs and actions that are held and performed in relation to sacred agents and things, and that unite those who adhere to it into a single community. When referring to the other central term in this thesis, opposition to freedom of speech, all acts verbal or otherwise that limit freedom of speech more than what is outlined by article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, are included.

Seeing that the science of the psychology of religion, understands religious behavior as a by-product of brain function (Boyer, 2003) and normal psychological mechanisms (Pyysiäinen and Hauser, 2010), will the research question of this thesis be addressed through the exploration of group processes and cognitive mechanisms. These are processes and mechanisms that lay out the foundation for the creation and sustenance of religious belief. The reasoning for taking this approach to the comprehension of how religious faith can influence behavior, is the assumption that to understand this link one must understand the psychological mechanisms underlying religious faith and practices.

### **Short Background on the Science of Religion**

Looking back on the history of the scientific study of the psychology of religion, the goal of the field has been to show how religion is different from the natural world (Barrett, 2000). Topics of interest have been uncommon emotional commitments, special ecstatic experiences, peculiar brain states, near death experiences, and beliefs in supernatural agents. In addition to a lack of empirical results showing that religion is distinctly different from natural world phenomenon, the problem with this approach is that no matter what our personal beliefs are, what we humans experience as religion is mediated through the natural human psychology.

A new approach to the psychology of religion that the last decades have accumulated a growing body of scientific support, is the notion that religion is a by-product of other already evolved psychological mechanisms (Bloom, 2007; Boyer, 2003; Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010). By this is meant that the human species up through its evolutionary history, have evolved cognitive functions that were adaptive in relation to other humans, the environment in general, and the individual it selves, that so created the framework for the religiosity. All though religion is viewed as a by-product, it does not mean that it does not have adaptive qualities by it selves. By by-product the science of religion points to its origin in psychological mechanisms, and that it sustains it selves on these mechanisms that have normal cognitive and social functions. It does not mean that religion is a social psychological meme without its own adaptive properties.

In regard to religion as having or not having inherent adaptive properties, there are two main approaches to this. Bulbulia (2004) discusses these two theoretical evolutionary propositions for the evolution of religion. The first one suggests that religion fosters religiously related behavior that in its social context supports identity, cohesion and cooperation within groups. The religious related behavior is viewed as a representation of human biological adaptations that makes it possible to identify reliable cooperators, and promote cooperation between the cooperators. The second approach argue that the mechanisms religion is a by-

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product of, are or was the adaptive components, and that religion in it selves does not have any adaptive value that promotes its survival. No matter what approach one must profess, they both address the psychological mechanisms that make religious faith a part of the human existence.



### **Religion, Groups and Cooperation**

The human species has evolved to become a social species that in many ways depend on other humans for their survival and well being. According to Sosis and Ruffle (2003), it has long been noted that creating group solidarity has been one of the primary functions of religion, and that religious rituals is acknowledged as a mean for achievement of this solidarity. When living in groups dependent on collective actions it is important to recognize free-riders, and secure the trust and commitment of the group (Sosis, 2000). An individual that is perceived as trustworthy and committed is more likely to facilitate intragroup cooperation than others, but for the group cooperation to function it is important to limit the risk of free-riders. When the gain of free-riding while coercing others to cooperate is higher than taking part in the cooperation, an individual has a high incentive to falsely claim participation in the cooperation. In scenarios like this only costly to fake commitment signals are credible signals, and religious rituals are viewed as this kind of signal.

In addition to being a costly and hard to fake signal, rituals also strengthen shared beliefs, norms, and values that further promotes stability and harmony in the group (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003). The importance of this affirmation is illustrated by Oved's (1988) conclusion in a comparative study of the dissolution of communes. He concluded that though there are many reasons for a community to break down, every breakdown was preceded by a loss of faith in the ideology the community was founded on, this whether the ideology was religious or secular. That rituals arguably are an inherent part of religion and religious belief (Rappaport, 1999), can explain the strength and survivability of religious communes (Sosis, 2000).

Religious communes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had greater longevity than secular communes, something argued to be a result of the increased commitment amongst the fellow religious believers, and that the common belief was fostered by performing costly rituals (Sosis, 2000). In the same study Sosis found support for this conclusion when researching religious and

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secular Israeli kibbutzim, a collective group of people that base their social and cultural lives on the collective ownership of property and wealth. The religious kibbutzim performed more costly and hard to fake rituals than the secular kibbutzim, rituals that directly limited the potential for income, but still they paradoxically had greater economic success. For the religious kibbutzim Sunday was a day when labor was prohibited, but the cows that supplied them with the milk they sold, had to be milked even on Sundays. As a countermeasure they chose to not sell the milk they milked on Sundays, and managed to make a breach of their religious doctrine into a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment.

Taking a look at opposition to freedom of speech present in society today, can we say that the opposition is a hard to fake signal, or even a religious ritual to show commitment to the group or God him selves? According to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2005), this is at least a possibility. Using the three examples from the introduction, political opposition to freedom of speech spearheaded by a religious, political party in Norway, the Pope condemning criticism of religion, and fanatical Islamists killing 12 people in the Charlie Hebdo attack, it is possible to explore this link.

**Theory of planned behavior.** Though the three examples differ in nature, they all have elements that fit into the theory of planned behavior's predictive model of behavior (Ajzen, 2005). They all expose an attitude towards the behavior showing a willingness to restrict freedom of speech, either through promoting blasphemy laws, encouraging its religious followers to condemn criticism of religion, or violence toward critics. This indicates a belief that restricting freedom of speech must have beneficial consequences for their group or the deity they adhere to.

Perceived behavioral control and a belief that they can perform the behavior, are also present in the examples. By promoting blasphemy laws, stifling of criticism, and killing, Kristelig Folkeparti , the Pope, and the Islamists respectively show that they think they can

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influence and restrict freedom of speech. Regarding the subjective norms they adhere to, it is reasonable to believe they follow the norms of their group, but how and why they do so is difficult to say much about without a closer examination of the examples given.

All of the examples have factors that through intention leads to the behavior of stifling freedom of speech in one way or another, but how insightful is this by itself? It is in hindsight easy and somewhat insightful to show how intention is created, but what's harder and truly interesting is to explore the beliefs that lay the foundation for how intentions get created. What is it with the members of Kristelig Folkparti, the Pope, and the Islamists that make them have the beliefs they have about attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control?

**Costly and hard to fake signals.** It can seem like a paradox that a highly educated person like Hareide (KRF, 2015), the leader of Kristelig Folkeparti, can promote a law against blasphemy. Being a highly educated person that him selves reap the benefits of living in a democratic country, he should know why freedom of speech is an important and fundamental building block of a democratic society, as well as knowing what the negative consequences of limiting this right will have. If we see this as a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment to his group and religion, it might not be a paradox anyway.

Kurzban, Tooby, and Cosmides (2001) found that coalition is a volatile and dynamically updated cognitive variable, that we easily categorize groups and alliances after. It is reasonable to assume that faced with the secularization prominent in Norway, Hareide and Kristelig Folkeparti categorize critics of religion as outgroup and them self and other religious actors as ingroup. So faced with a secular outgroup that is promoting criticism of religion, a group that voice values that is a threat to the beliefs of the ingroup, the paradoxical opposition to freedom of speech bear strong similarities to a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment. By promoting the blasphemy law, Hareide and Kristelig Folkeparti signals that they are committed

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to the party and their members, showing that religion is and will be an important common value and belief system. The costly and hard to fake signal part of this, is the obvious discrimination of the outgroup in the form of limiting their human rights, this to protect the ingroup from the perceived threat of criticism.

One could ask why the obviousness of the discrimination in it selves isn't enough to prevent the promotion of limiting the rights of the outgroup? On the contrary, research has shown that discrimination is a behavior remarkably easy to elicit (Kurzban et al., 2001). Just by being assigned to a group temporarily and anonymously, is enough to promote discrimination of an outgroup. So in a case like the blasphemy law in Norway where there is an ingroup that view the outgroup as a threat, the discrimination can be viewed as advantageous and even necessary to protect one's own group. This interpretation is supported by Kurzban & Neuberg (2005) that states that the more an individual is invested in, depends on, and identifies with their group, the more he or she is prone to prejudice and discrimination against outgroups.

Though maybe not as paradoxical, the same reflections can be done about the Pope's urgings to not criticize religion (Topping, 2015). On the one hand Pope Francis says that freedom of speech has limitations and shall not be used to denigrate religion, while on the other hand urge people to respect human rights ("Pope urges respect", 2015). Having a degree in philosophy and theology the Pope is also a highly educated person (Bunderson, 2013), so being an advocate for stifling freedom of speech can seem like a paradox. But if we view this as a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment to God and the catholic people, the behavior is perfectly rational.

In both the examples given, Hareide and the Pope show a behavioral belief that leads to the attitude toward the behavior they have. It is a reasonable assumption that they think the consequences of stifling criticism of religion is positive for their group, as well as showing their own commitment to the group. By stifling criticism they protect the shared beliefs, norms, and

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values of the group, all variables that is important to protect and strengthen to promote stability and harmony in the group (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003). It is also important to protect the foundation the groups are founded on, their religion in this case, since dissolution of this foundation can lead to a breakdown of the groups (Oved, 1988).

An assumption that is made in the argument given here is that education is linked with democratic values, but is this so? Finkel and Smith (2011) showed that this is in fact so, reporting that education resulted in significant growth in democratic knowledge and values. This makes it reasonable to assume that the educational background of the Pope and Hareide, should make them promote freedom of speech as well as other core democratic values.

**Religious rituals.** Religious rituals can function as costly and hard to fake signals (Sosis, 2000), and the attack on Charlie Hebdo can be viewed as such. The Islamist terrorists that killed 12 people in the Charlie Hebdo attack did according to themselves, the attack to avenge the Prophet Mohammed for the wrongdoing they meant the Charlie Hebdo magazine, had inflicted on their God by cartooning and criticizing Mohammed and Islam (Levs et al., 2015). This is an act that according to Islamic doctrines can be viewed as Jihad, a religious and ritualized warfare against those who oppose Islam (Handwerk, 2003). Jihad does also mean to strive for self improvement and by many Muslims this is what it means, but this thesis refers to the other meaning of Jihad, namely ritualized warfare against oppressors of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed.

In the Charlie Hebdo attack we have an ingroup of Islamic believers, that according to their religious doctrine are encouraged to wage religious war against an outgroup they perceive as a threat to Islam. Couple the encouragement of this religious ritual with the human tendency to discriminate outgroups (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005; Kurzban et al., 2001) and the importance of strengthening the beliefs, norms and values of the group (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003), the foundation for intention and behavior is laid. A follower of Islam that believe in militant Jihad,

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is likely to believe that physical opposition against an outgroup is a moral and good thing. This can again lead to a positive attitude toward that kind of behavior that fosters the intention to perform the behavior.

This example is maybe the easiest one to show the role of subjective norms and its influence on intention and behavior. Having a religious doctrine which encourage ritualized warfare, a doctrine deeply entwined in the religion of Islam, can amongst those of similar interpretation of Jihad create a norm that this is something to strive for. In other words, a believer will be prone to believe that this norm, militant Jihad, is worth adhering to.

**Summary.** By exploring group processes and their role in religion, it is possible to hypothesize about the link between religious faith and opposition to freedom of speech. It is likely that opposition to freedom of speech can be a costly and hard to fake signal, as well as taking the role as a religious ritual. Though the link seems probable, a few questions crystallize.

Both the holy books of Islam and Christianity profess that the followers of the faith shall turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29 New International Version; Quran 41:34), so why is this not the reaction when religious people and organizations like those in the scenarios given, are faced with criticism? In other words, why doesn't this doctrine override the reaction to stifle criticism?

And the last question. When someone in the framework of one religion is faces with different doctrines, doctrines like the two versions of Jihad (Handwerk, 2003), how does an individual chose what doctrine to follow? These are all questions that will be explored in the following segments of the thesis, and that will give greater insight into how religious faith can cause opposition to freedom of speech.

### **To Turn or Not to Turn the Other Cheek**

A good place to start the exploration of the question, why is criticism answered with stifling instead of turning the other cheek, is in the neuropsychology of religion. As addressed

earlier religion and religious faith, is in this field being understood as a by-product of normal psychological mechanisms (Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010). With this in mind, is it possible to say that the social psychological group mechanisms that triggers when faced with a perceived threat, are more dominant than the psychological mechanisms that lay the foundation for the actual beliefs a believer has?

In the coming section empirical research on the neurology of religion will be presented, and then followed by a discussion regarding the implications this research has for the question presented above.

**Neural correlates of religious faith.** In the field of the neuroscience of religion, they search for and explore the neural correlates of religious faith, and link these correlates to normal psychological mechanisms. The link between religiosity and conditions we today know has its roots in neurology, dates back millenniums (Trimble & Freeman, 2006). The Greeks called epilepsy the Sacred Disease, and the disorder has been associated with religious figures up through the ages. Today we know of several disorders that have links to religiosity and hyperreligiosity, has shown to be a major feature of mania, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, and temporal-lobe epilepsy (Previc, 2006).

The association between religious experiences and epileptic seizures, both during, after, and between seizures, are supported by clinical observations the last 150 years (Devinsky & Lai, 2008). Especially temporal lobe epilepsy has been shown to be strongly related to hyperreligiosity (Devinsky & Lai, 2008; Trimble & Freeman, 2006; Previc, 2006). Trimble and Freeman (2006) showed that individuals with temporal lobe epilepsy and religious inclinations extending over a period of at least 1 year, compared with religious members of the Church of England, endorsed significantly more experiences of awareness of an evil presence, a miraculous event, a sense or quasi-sensory experience of a great spiritual figure, a near death or life after death experience, a feeling of being very close to a powerful spiritual force that

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seemed to lift you outside, an experience of a great spiritual figure, and an overwhelming experience of fear. Using the Bear Fedio Inventory, the religious group with temporal lobe epilepsy showed the profile of Gestalt Geschwind syndrome, and their religious experiences differed from the Church of England group in both content and intensity.

In the review done by Devinsky and Lai (2008) they found that among patients with ictal religious experiences, there is a predominance of patients with right temporal lobe epilepsy. Religious experiences occurring postictally and interictally, are most prominent in temporal lobe epilepsy patients with bilateral seizure foci. According to Previc (2006) the hyperreligiosity related to patients with temporal lobe epilepsy, can amongst other be explained by them having a highly activated ventromedial dopaminergic system, which leads to exaggerated attention and goal directed behavior toward extrapersonal agents. Borg, Andrée, Soderstrom, and Farde (2003) found indications that the serotonin system may serve as a biological basis for spiritual experiences, and that variability in 5-HT<sub>1a</sub> receptor density may explain the great variety observed in people's spirituality.

Devinsky and Lai (2008) suggest a critical site for religious experiences must be the limbic system, this due to the emotional nature of the experiences and the association to temporal lobe epilepsy. The presence of visual and auditory hallucinations during religious experiences, suggest that neocortical areas also may be involved. Devinsky and Lai conclude their review stating that the belief and value system of the average person, and ecstatic religious experiences, may be predominantly localized in the right frontal and temporal regions of the hemisphere.

A study on Danish Christians (Schjoedt, Stødkilde-Jørgensen, Geertz & Roepstorff, 2009) where the participants belonged to a fraction within the Danish Lutheran Church called the Inner Mission, a fraction known for its orthodox views on Christian conduct, found some interesting results in regard to personal prayer and social cognition. Improvised praying, in



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contrast to formalized praying and secular controls (well known Nursery Rhymes of participants' own choice and wishes to Santa Claus), activated a strong response in the temporopolar region, the medial prefrontal cortex, the temporoparietal junction, and precuneus. These findings show that religious people that believe that their God is real and is an agent capable of reciprocal interaction, activates areas of social cognition when they pray. These are findings supporting that praying to God is an intersubjective experience on the same line as normal interaction between people.

Another study (Kapogiannis et al., 2009) supports the hypothesis that intersubjective experiences with God, are comparable to and activates the same regions of the brain that activates in normal intersubjective interaction. In response to statements reflecting God's lack of involvement, the pattern of brain activation in the religious participants, indicates that Theory of Mind processes gets activated. When faces with God's lack of involvement, activation of Theory of Mind processes helps one interpret God's intentions, and regulate the negative emotionality following the experience of rejection.

The same study (Kapogiannis et al., 2009) also tested people's brain pattern activation response to statements reflecting God's perceived emotions, and showed that areas associated with emotional Theory of Mind and higher order emotional regulation was activated. In response to God's anger, a key area in emotional Theory of Mind involved with detection of emotions in facial expression and linguistic content was activated. This area also activates in response to language induced fear and conscious evaluation of negative emotions. When exposed to statements expressing God's love, the participants showed activation of an area involved in positive emotional states and suppression of sadness.

In addition to testing brain activation as a response to God's involvement and emotions, Kapogiannis et al. (2009) exposed the participants to religious statements on a continuum from doctrinal religious knowledge to experiential religious knowledge. Brain pattern activation to

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doctrinal statements activated regions for interpretation of metaphors and abstraction, while experiential statements activated regions for visual and motor imagery of self in action. When the religious participants expressed statements that disagreed with their religious faith, key areas for emotional-cognitive integration was activated, and the areas activated implied a greater role of emotions in the process. These findings suggest that the religious group experienced cognitive conflict during this task.

Harris et al. (2009) got similar results in their study on the neural correlates of religious and nonreligious belief. They found that religious thought is more associated with activation of brain regions involved with emotional control, self representation, and cognitive conflict, where as ordinary thoughts about facts are more dependent on memory retrieval. Epley, Converse, Delbosc, Monteleone, and Cacioppo (2009) also got results supporting the importance of self-referential thinking when religious people estimated God's beliefs. They found that in believers, areas associated with self-referential thinking was activated more so when thinking about God's beliefs, than when thinking about other peoples' beliefs.

**Neurology and opposition.** The science of the neural correlates of religious thought and belief are still in its infancy, but the growing body of research are slowly showing that religiosity are rooted in brain activation associated with normal psychological mechanisms. So as a start one can say that both social psychological mechanisms and the psychological mechanisms of beliefs, are normal psychological mechanisms. Whether one is more dominant than the other is a more difficult question to answer. What we can say though is that based on the present research on the neural correlates of religion, it is reasonable to assume that the psychological mechanisms that are identified as important for religious faith, function in the same manner as it does in normal human interaction.

We do know that humans are easily prone to discriminate outgroups (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005), very little is needed to categorize someone as an outgroup (Kurzban et al.,

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2001), and these mechanisms are present and important in religious behavior (Rappaport, 1999; Sosis, 2000; Sosis & Alcorta, 2003; Sosis & Ruffle, 2003). This can tell us that though social psychological mechanisms in religion might be rivaled by other mechanisms, it is a strong factor when it comes to why people behave as they do. Summed up we have mechanisms that in our evolutionary past has secured the human survival, and that now are neurological founded mechanisms that religion uses to sustain it selves on. Is the religious encouragement to turn the other cheek based on anything similar?

The research presented above show that the religious beliefs a person has, are rooted in and mediated through psychological mechanisms used for normal human functioning. This means that a person that believe that God is real, actually experiences God as a real, and adhere to a doctrine where turning the other cheek is the righteous way of life, should be inclined to turn the other cheek when faced with perceived injustice. As long as the believer values the word of God and want to be seen favorably by their deity, research support that the failure to adhere to the will of God would elicit negative emotions (Kapogiannis et al., 2009). In this scenario eliciting of negative emotions could promote attachment behavior in the form of following the scripture. Attachment has shown to be a force in religion (Kirkpatrick, 2005), but attachment in religion and its role in regard to opposition to freedom of speech, will be explored later in the thesis.

Turning the other cheek could also make use of group mechanisms as long as turning the other cheek is the norm. If this was the case it would further strengthen the ability to follow this part of the faith, but reality is that both turning the other cheek and opposing criticism is supported by Islamic and Christian doctrines. The Quran (2:191-193) encourages people to Jihad and the Bible encourages unfriendliness towards the unbeliever (2 John 1:11), and even killing them (Deuteronomy 13:6-10). So a clear issue here is that all the reasons a person has

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to follow the doctrine to turn the other cheek, unless a strong norm are present, are also present in regard to not turning the other cheek.

In a way it can seem like the doctrine that best take advantage of social psychological group mechanisms will be the one a person or group adhere to, but if a person actually believe that God is real, shouldn't that challenge the group norm? Schjoedt et al. (2009) showed that praying to God activated the same areas of the brain that activate when a person talks to another person, this indicate that a belief in God can be as real as knowing if u have put on your pants or not. So if a person is sure that the almighty God, an omnipotent being that has created everything is real, it is reasonable to assume that this would be such a strong variable that it at least should give group norms great opposition.

On the one hand opposing freedom of speech when faced with criticism of religion can seem like the natural solution, seeing the strong link between this reaction and the underlying mechanisms of social psychological group mechanisms that trigger in reaction to a perceived threat. On the other hand turning the other check and embracing criticism, could also be the natural reaction based on the same psychological mechanisms, but are more likely to happen when this is the group norm. It is also important to take into consideration what an individual believe that their God believe, and what reactions this could elicit. So to conclude, opposition can seem like the most likely response, but it is not a given.

As above, this section also crystallizes the question on how a person chose the specific doctrine they adhere to, this since the reaction to criticism in part seem to be influenced by how one valued a given doctrine. Harris et al. (2009) and Epley et al. (2009) both found that when trying to estimate God's beliefs, psychological mechanisms like serf-referential thinking and mind perception triggered. Following is an elaboration on mind perception and its role in religion. Exploring this will better help the understanding of how a person ends up believing

what they believe, and that further can help in the understanding of the religious founded opposition to freedom of speech.

**Mind perception and why we believe what we believe.** The development of mind perception, also called theory of mind or mentalizing, is an important milestone in a child's development and happens during the first years of a child's life (Gervais, 2013). The ability to perceive other's mind is fundamental to be able to function in human social life. It allows us to predict other's behavior, something that is of great importance for cooperation and coordination in social groups.

The developmental path of theory of mind can roughly be divided into three stages (Lane, Wellman & Evans, 2010). Children start of their theory of mind with a reality bias where they think that everyone know what they do, they don't understand that other minds can lack or possess knowledge they them self have or don't have. At the age of four they start to understand that people have limitations to their knowledge. They start to apply this constrain to all agents, even though they get told the agent in question has counter-intuitive abilities that make it know things it normally shouldn't know. Later at the age of five and onwards, children develop the ability to hold counter-intuitive ideas about humans and agents abilities. At this stage they can differentiate between humans' limitations and extraordinary agents' lack of limitations, as for example humans' need to read, see or hear something to know about it, while God just know everything.

By taking a quick look at religion it is easy to see how mind perception is a fundamental component of religion. Religions have a focus on extraordinary agents with desires and intentions that are represented as having minds. A big part of religion is to interact with a supernatural agent through prayer and rituals, or just having to deal with the notion that your deity always sees you and knows what you think. In other words, as a religious person one must relate to the intentional mind of one's deity.

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With the growing consensus that religiosity is a by-product of normal psychological mechanisms evolved for other adaptive reasons than religion (Bloom, 2007; Boyer, 2003; Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010), the notion that mind perception is a part of religiosity leads to a couple of predictions (Gervais, 2013). If the same cognitive processes apply to both human-human and agent-human relations, then religious faith should both be facilitated and constrained by mind perception abilities. The second prediction is that if thinking about supernatural agents like God triggers the same mind perception processes that triggers by awareness of other humans, consequences that are known to trigger in relation to awareness of other humans minds, should also trigger in relation to supernatural agents.

Research supports the aforementioned predictions and that mind perception is both cause and consequence in regard to religious beliefs (Gervais, 2013). As mentioned earlier in the thesis, praying to God activates brain areas that are identified with mind perception (Schjoedt et al., 2009). The same is the case when religious people are asked to think about the mental state of God (Kapogiannis et al., 2009).

Not only the neural activation is similar in the two scenarios of mind perception, the same situations that trigger people to seek out other minds in the real world, can cause people to seek out God as well (Gervais, 2013). When people experience social exclusion, the motivation to forge social bonds with new potential relationship partners increases (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister & Schaller, 2007). Similar results are found in relation to religiosity where people are significantly more likely to express religious belief when feeling lonely (Burris, Batson, Altstaedten & Stephens, 1994).

The tendency to seek out other minds is also present when faced with the unexplainable, as people turn to others when in need of explanations (Gervais, 2013). As between humans, this also happens in relation to supernatural agents. When faced with an anomalous amount of help or harm, people can turn to God for praise or blame (Gray & Wegner, 2010). Even though God

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by many is seen as an ultimate moral agent and the bringer of salvation, the attribution to the divine is more strongly evoked in the presence of suffering.

A third area where mind perception of supernatural agents and other humans are similar is in regard to estimates of other people's and agents' beliefs. As the social beings humans are, it's important to be able to communicate effectively. To do this, humans have an egocentric approach to what other people think, where one's own knowledge is assumed to be held by the other part (Nickerson, 1999). It is not infallible and often done uncritically, but it's an approach that in general is efficient. The same egocentric approach of estimating people's beliefs is shown to be at work when estimating God's beliefs (Epley et al., 2009).

Epley et al. (2009) found that in addition to using religious texts like the Bible, Quran, and Torah, religious people use their own attitudes and beliefs when reasoning about what their respective deity believe, compared to when estimating what other people believe. They also found that manipulation of people's own beliefs, had a similar effect on their estimation of what their God believes. This shows that a person's estimates of what their deity believe, in part are causally influenced by their own beliefs.

Based on their data, a few interesting implications for religious beliefs' impact on everyday judgment, decision making, and behavior is pointed out by Epley et al. (2009). Together with the growing body of literature on religious belief, their data show how religious faith are governed by the same psychological mechanisms that govern social cognition, and that one doesn't need any unique psychological mechanism to explain religion. The second implication is that in addition to adopt one's religious belief from external sources, the self is an important source for religious belief as well. People's religious beliefs are guided by their own personal beliefs, and may thereafter influence what religious community they choose to take part of. The last implication is in regard to judgment and decision making. Religious people often view God as the ultimate moral authority, and faced with having to make a decision, will

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try to do what they presume God wants them to do. Seeing that people have an egocentric approach to judging what God wants, their moral compass will point in the direction it already were pointing. In other words, God will have a tendency to confirm their already held attitudes, beliefs, and desires.

**Summary.** Several questions were asked in this section of the thesis, questions that help enlighten in what way religious belief can cause opposition to freedom of speech. It can seem that turning the other cheek is harder since criticism trigger opposition as a function of underlying group mechanisms. A counterweight can be the religious doctrine, but for this to happen the person which religious beliefs are criticized, need to hold these attitudes in the first place, or have such a great faith in God that the doctrines override his or hers already held believes.

Another aspect of religious belief that is of interest when exploring opposition to freedom of speech is attachment. Attachment has shown to be of explanatory value in regard to religion (Kirkpatrick, 2005), so the next section of the thesis will explore this psychological mechanisms and how it can cause opposition to freedom of speech.



### **Attachment**

In the monotheistic religions, God is often addressed as the Father that the believers can lean on and that will take care of them. This phenomenon is strikingly similar to attachment behavior and the expression of a need to belong. Attachment theory, a fundamental framework for the understanding of attachment, was proposed by Bowlby (1982). This theory explains the importance of attachment to a close attachment figure, as a mean for personality development and a buffer against psychopathology. It's an evolutionary adaptive system evolved to secure closeness to caregivers, this to make sure that the child is protected from harm and has its survival secured. The attachment to a close caregiver, will lay the foundation for the child's attachment system toward both caregiver and other relationship partners throughout life.

The need to belong has shown to be a powerful and fundamental force in humans, driving people to form social attachment bonds under most conditions, as well as resist the dissolution of existing bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). To experience attachment has a profound effect on emotional patterns and cognitive processes, and are positively correlated with health, adjustment, and well being. Research on attachment and belongingness in relation to religion show that these psychological mechanisms are a part of religiosity, and that they can even be viewed as central concepts in the understanding of religion (Gebauer & Maio, 2012; Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz & Shaver, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990).

Comparison of attachment to God with attachment to a close caregiver, show that the God attachment is more similar to a child - caregiver relation, than to a romantic relation between adults (Granqvist, 2002). Relationship with God is like the child - caregiver relation, comprised of a strong and a weak part where the weak part is in need of help and comfort. In religious practices it is common to see that the believers lift their hands in worship of their wise and all knowing God, praying that he will help them in time of need, in the same manner as small children reach up to their caregivers (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Sim & Loe, 2003).

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Though attachment to God is more similar to a child - caregiver relation than to a romantic one, religiosity has also shown to be influenced by romantic relationship status (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000). In their study Granqvist and Hagekull found that lovers compared with singles, were less religious. Laurin, Schumann, and Holmes (2014) found that threats to the participants' romantic relationship made them draw closer to God, and threats to the relationship with God resulted in them drawing closer to their romantic partner. So even if the God attachment is more similar to a child - caregiver relationship, attachment to God can also compensate and be compensated for by an adult - adult relationship.

Gebauer and Maio (2012) found that belief in God can be motivated by the desire to satisfy the need to belong, thus seeking a relationship with God. In four studies they found the following: 1) After being primed with bogus scientific evidence of God's existence, individuals with an accepting and loving view of God, reported higher belief in God. 2) The change in belief was shown to be driven by a desire to increase or protect the belongingness to God. 3) After reading about God as a rejecting figure, religious people reported lower intentions of engaging in worship, talking to, and being alone with God, all behaviors indicating the level of desire for a close relationship with God. 4) People with a loving image of God reported that their belief in God, was partly motivated by a desire for a close relationship with God. This was not found in believers with a rejecting image of God, something that indicate that other needs than belongingness to God, might be important for this group's belief in God.

The study conducted by Gebauer and Maio (2012) have important implications for the understanding of attachment's role in religious belief. First, it is possible to persuade a believer to alter their belief in God by manipulating attachment variables. Second, attachment to God and humans seem to satisfy the same target unspecific need to belong. Third, religious fervor as well as religious belief, was affected by change in the need to belong. Finally, though many

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religions damn self centered motives, believers seem to be willing to admit that their need to belong motivates their religious belief.

The last research that will be presented on this topic is on the socialized correspondence and emotional compensation hypothesis of attachment in religion. According to Granqvist (2002) the socialized correspondence hypothesis, states that an individual's religiosity in the context of a secure attachment to a caregiver is the result of socializing into the religious belief of the child's caregiver. So the socializing into the religious belief is the important and corresponding variable, but it must happen in the context of secure attachment to a caregiver. The emotional compensation hypothesis states that for an individual with insecure attachment, it is the affect regulation mechanism that is the underlying and explanatory variable for the person's attachment to God.

The socialized correspondence and emotional compensation hypothesis, views how attachment in conjunction with context variables create and influence the religious expression (Granqvist, 2002). This approach to attachment and religiosity has after it first got introduced (Granqvist, 1998), received substantial support in empirical research as a framework of attachment's role in religious belief and behavior (Brown, Nesse, House & Utz, 2004; Granqvist, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2003; Granqvist, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2010).

The socialized correspondence hypothesis has gathered support in that the individual's attachment style correlated positively with the close caregiver's religiosity (Granqvist, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999, 2001). In addition to this, secure attachment has been found to be related to non-converting and a gradual increase in religiosity (Granqvist, 2002). The gradual increase in religiosity amongst those with secure attachment style was dominated by early onset, and started during life situations where it was of importance for the child, to be socialized into important other's religion. This gradual increase in religiosity was not associated with emotional

turmoil like relational conflicts with close caregivers or peers, personal crisis or mental illness. Emotional compensation hypothesis has gathered support in the findings of the direct link between attachment to God, and emotional regulation strategies in individuals with insecure attachment style. Insecure attachment style is also related to sudden religious conversion, and the nature of increased religiosity was often sudden and intense, had a late debut, and was compensatory.

**Attachment and opposition to freedom of speech.** As shown earlier in this thesis, religious belief is hardwired into our brain through the use of normal psychological mechanisms (Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010). This in turn leads to the conclusion that when a person are religious and profess a belief in a supernatural agent, he or she most likely believe that this supernatural agent is actually real, and will then show psychological and emotional reactions toward this agent in the same manner as one would a real person. The research on attachment's role in religion that was presented in the above section, strengthens this conclusion. But in what way is this relevant for religious opposition to freedom of speech?

One way attachment may lead to opposition to freedom of speech, is if the criticism of the believer's faith make the individual feel and or fear separation from God. In this state the individual will be prone to engage in attachment behavior that increase closeness to, and decrease the threat of separation from God. This behavior does not need to take the form of stifling freedom of speech, it can lead a person to increased prayer and other rituals since these are actions shown to increase closeness to God as well (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Sim & Loe, 2003; Sosis, 2000). But if the individual follow a doctrine professing that one for example shall not take the Lord's name in vain, or that blasphemy is a sin, the attachment behavior may take the form of stifling freedom of speech.

Harris et al. (2009) and Epley et al. (2009) found that humans engage in self-referential thinking when trying to estimate the mental state of God, something that suggest that when a

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person gets offended, they may assume that God is offended as well. So criticizing the doctrine may be one way of activating the attachment system, but a person's own feeling may also lead to this activation, even though the criticism was not directly directed at the doctrine. It might just be enough that the person is offended by something related to his or her religion.

The research done by Gebauer and Maio (2012) suggest that even though a person gets offended, they don't necessary activate their attachment system. Gebauer and Maio found that if a person had a rejecting image of God, their intentions of seeking a closer relation to God was lower than if they had a loving image of God. This may indicate that a person needs a loving image of God to engage in this behavior, but it can also mean that a person with a loving image will show more of this behavior than a person with a rejecting image of God. No matter what is the case, this show the complexity of attachment behavior in relation to religious belief. This is supported by Granqvist (1998) that showed how a person's attachment style affected how they viewed God and related to him.

### **Analytical thinking, or the lack thereof**

In the Abrahamic religions the believers are encouraged to have a childlike and naive faith in God. In Matthew 18:2-4 (New International Version) the bible tells the story of how Jesus says that only those that become like a child will enter the kingdom of heaven, and that the lowliest and most childlike will be the greatest one of them there. It is also not uncommon to hear from religious people and leaders that the ways of God are inscrutable, often as a response to questions about the faith that are critical in nature, or when trying to understand something that seems to be contradictory. Without maybe knowing it, the religious agents promoting this naive approach to religious belief, may have tapped into an important cognitive mechanisms for the promotion of religious belief.

Applying the dual-process model of cognitive processing, Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) found that analytical thinking promotes religious disbelief. This model of human thinking explains that there are two distinct, but interacting systems that are engage in information processing (Evans, 2003). System 1 is a rapid and autonomous system of information processing that relies a lot on heuristics, and assumed to yield default responses unless intervened on. System 2 is a higher order, conscious, and deliberate analytic system for information processing that's highly reliant on working memory, and is the system that must be engaged for system 1 to be overridden. Though the dual-process model of cognitive processing has received its fair share of criticism, it has for now stood its test of time, received empirical support, and is considered a strong model for the understanding of reasoning, judgment, and decision-making (Evans & Stanovich, 2013).

Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) found that individual differences in activating system 2, to analytically override an initially flawed system 1 intuition, was associated with religious disbelief. They also found evidence for a causal link between analytical thinking and religious disbelief, in that subtle manipulations triggering analytical thinking also promoted disbelief.

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Studies like this give insight into why naïve faith is promoted as something to aspire towards. Encouraging believers to rely on system 1 when processing information about their religious faith, can seem to be a supporting factor in both holding and acquiring a religious belief.

An interesting study on judgments about fiction and fact shows the impact exposure to religious ideas, have on children's ability to differentiate between reality and fiction (Corriveau, Chen & Harris, 2014). In their study, Corriveau and colleagues told religious and secular children fictional and religious stories about a protagonist with supernatural abilities. In both scenarios the religious children had a much higher tendency to report the story as real, while the secular children reported them as fictional. Though they didn't directly test the effects of system 1 and system 2 on religious belief as Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) did, it is reasonable to believe that exposure to religious ideas doesn't foster critical thinking, and therefore make it harder for religious children to engage system 2 that can override their system 1 driven heuristics of supernatural agents, as part of reality.

**Lack of analytical thinking and freedom of speech.** Analytical thinking or more accurately the lack thereof, and the neglect of fostering and activating system 2 thinking, is another of the psychological mechanisms that can shed light on religious opposition to freedom of speech. As shown, analytical thinking promotes religious disbelief (Gervais and Norenzayan, 2012), and freedom of speech is in its nature analytical. As Pinker (2015) points out, freedom of speech is essential to question the status quo, to take us out of the dogmas of today, and to guide us into a more fruitful understandings of reality.

With this insight we can explain the opposition showed by Hareide ("KrF gir opp", 2015), the Pope (Topping, 2015), the Saudi Arabia with their flogging of Raif Badawi (Amnesty International UK, 2015), and the Charlie Hebdo killers (Levs, Payne & Pearson, 2015) to freedom of speech, as a way of strengthening the autonomous system 1 information processing and weakening of the analytical system 2 information processing. In their different ways they

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all promote the status quo and the protection of their religious dogmas. This explanation is supported by Corriveau, Chen, and Harris (2014) in that their study shows that fostering children with religious stories, that in many ways contradict an evidence based and analytical approach to reality, makes it harder for them than non-religious children to activate the system 2 information processing.

Summed up, religious people with both a conscious or an unconscious intent of hindering critical thinking as a mean to protects their faith, is one of the ways normal psychological mechanisms can lead to opposition to freedom of speech.



### General Discussion

In this thesis various psychological mechanisms of religion has been presented to explain how religious belief can cause opposition to freedom of speech. The reason for these presentations is that a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, relies heavily on this perspective. One can compare this to when Richard Dawkins (2006) presented the idea that to correctly explain evolution, it must be explained at the level of the genes. This since it is at the level of the genes the actual evolutionary change is taking place, and that the phenotype of living things are a result of changes at this level. When approaching the question how a behavior can take place as a result of religious belief, every external and internal stimuli that cause the behavior in question, is filtered through conscious and unconscious psychological mechanisms in the brain. So no matter how one twist and turn the scenarios, or from what perspective one might prefer to explore the question of how, human psychological mechanisms will always be the foundation for this how. This is not to say that other perspectives can't shed light on the question, or even be important for a good explanatory model, but without the psyche there is no interaction and no how in regard to the topic of the thesis.

In the following section of the thesis the psychological mechanisms and processes of religious belief that has been presented until this point, will be stringed together to give a comprehensive understanding of their role in religious opposition to freedom of speech. Furthermore it is the hope of the author to give the reader an intuitive understanding of why the research question of this thesis, need to be explored from a psychological perspective.

The psychological aspects of religion that has been presented and discussed, are costly and hard to fake signals, religious rituals, neural correlates of religious faith, mind perception, attachment, and the role of analytical thinking. These aspects of human psychology has been explored since they all have explanatory value when trying to understand how a cultural meme as religion, can affect and interact with those who adhere to its doctrines.

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A good place to start to sew together the topics presented in this thesis, is with the neural correlates of religious faith. Religion in addition to being a cultural meme, is today fundamentally understood as being a by-product of normal psychological mechanisms (Boyer, 2003; Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010). We also know that central aspects of religion both today and up through the millennia, has its roots in neurology (Timble & Freeman, 2006), are major features of several mental disorders (Previc, 2006), and are relatively often present in patients with temporal lobe epilepsy (Devinsky & Lai, 2008; Trimble & Freeman, 2006; Previc, 2006). Furthermore the serotonin system has shown indications of maybe being a biological basis for spiritual experiences (Borg et al., 2003), and the presence of visual and auditory hallucinations during religious experiences, and the emotional nature of these experiences, suggests that the limbic system and neocortical areas are involved (Devinsky & Lai, 2008).

These findings are important for the validity of viewing religion as a by-product of normal psychological mechanisms, and as a foundation for the exploration of how religious belief can cause opposition to freedom of speech. Though religion has been important to create group solidarity (Sosis & Ruffle, 2003), and that a sociological perspective on religion is important to broaden our understanding of the phenomenon, the question of how will as with evolution, always demand that we explore the most fundamental aspects of the phenomenon in question. This leads us to the brain and the processes taking place in it.

Studies has shown that some forms of prayer activates areas of social cognition (Schjoedt et al., 2009), and thinking of God are associated with activation of Theory of Mind processes (Kapogiannis et al., 2009) and areas involved in emotional control, self representation, and cognitive conflict (Epley et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2009; Kapogiannis et al., 2009). This tells us that religious people as the Pope, the Charlie Hebdo Killers, and Hareide first of all and with high probability, relate to God as he is a real person, and second is prone to

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react to criticism of religion or God, as one would expect them to react to criticism towards themselves or their group.

Free speech give humans the possibility to freely criticize the status quo, and always challenge the way reality is perceived (Pinker, 2015). This can crack the foundation of groups that are held together by doctrines, and perceptions of reality that contradict evidence based perceptions of reality. Faced with this, a probable reaction to criticism is discrimination of the source of the criticism.

Knowing that humans easily discriminate (Kurzban et al., 2001), promoting blasphemy laws or other actions to stifle freedom of speech, is something that might be desirable when discriminatory actions seem just. This argument is supported by the knowledge that both the categorization of someone as outgroup, and outgroup discrimination, are mechanisms that are present and important in religious behavior (Rappaport, 1999; Sosis, 2000; Sosis & Alcorta, 2003; Sosis & Ruffle, 2003). Furthermore criticism of one's group can be viewed as a strong outgroup marker. This can be said based on the knowledge that a precursor to a groups breakdown, is the loss of faith in the ideology the group is founded on (Oved, 1988).

Sosis (2000) showed that religious rituals can function as a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment to the group, and discrimination can arguably be viewed as such. Both the Pope (Bunderson, 2013) and Hareide (KRF, 2015) are highly educated leaders, something that should make them democratically oriented (Finkel & Smith, 2011), but they still promote discriminatory actions against critics of religion ("Krf gir opp", 2015; Topping, 2015). If one views this as a costly and hard to fake signal of commitment to the group, as well as a strengthening of the ideology the group was founded on, it is perfectly reasonable for highly educated individuals to deviate from democratic values, no matter how core these values are to democracy.

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Another costly and hard to fake discriminatory action that better is categorized as an act of terror, is the Charlie Hebdo attack (Levs et al., 2015). This act can furthermore be viewed as a religious ritual, something that is an inherent part of religion and religious belief (Rappaport, 1999). Islam promotes the religious ritual Jihad against those who oppose Islam (Handwek, 2003), and this is exactly what the Charlie Hebdo killers engaged in (Allen & Akbar, 2015).

From a social psychological perspective this is an act that in its nature protect the doctrine of the group, and therefore strengthen its survivability. It is also a way for the assailants to show their commitment to the group and God.

The notion that religious individuals can experience God as a real person, highlights the limitations in addressing the topic of the thesis solely from a group psychological perspective. Protecting the ideology of the group, and participating in various religious acts that strengthen shared beliefs, norms, and values, this to further promote stability and harmony in the group, has shown to be important (Oved, 1988; Sosis & Alcorta, 2003). Though this is the case, believing that God is real should in and by it selves affect the individual in a way that can't be explained solely by discrimination, or the need to belong to and protect the group. This leads us to mind perception and attachment.

Mind perception is a way we humans can keep abstract images of others in our mind (Lane et al., 2010), and has proven to be both cause and consequence in regard to religious beliefs (Gervais, 2013). This mechanisms makes it possible for humans to believe in an abstract God, where the only perceived evidence of its existence, are events that are interpreted and attributed as caused by God. But how is this relevant for religious opposition to freedom of speech?

As concluded above, religious believers actually can believe that God is real, and thinking that something is real means that you most likely behave as though it is real. In a scenario where a religious person believe that God, an omnipotent being, the creator of all, and

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the ultimate author of life is real, it is reasonable to believe that this lends validity and strength to the will of the perceived mind of God. Epley et al. (2009) found that in addition to using the religious texts of their religion, religious people are also guided by their own personal beliefs when making everyday judgment and decisions, and engaging in behavior. This coupled with humans' general tendency to assume that others in some extent or another know what you know (Nickerson, 1999), makes it possible through mind perception to estimate what an abstract God thinks. So unless an individual is directly talking to God, something some may claim they can but none have proven, the psychological mechanism of mind perception is a must to be able to guess the will of God.

When faced with criticism or any other display of opinion, that religious people themselves judge as blasphemous or believe that God judges as blasphemous, a reaction as stifling freedom of speech both directly and indirectly in the name of God, is possible through mind perception and is most likely strengthened through the perception of God as real. Mind perception both make it possible to believe in God in the first place, entwines a believer's attitudes into God's attitudes, and makes the individual believe that his or her attitudes are God's attitudes. With this in mind it is not that strange that religious individuals can choose to engage in actions, meant to stifle man's freedom of speech on the behalf of the almighty God.

A related psychological mechanism that further sheds light on religious opposition to freedom of speech, is attachment (Bowlby, 1982). Being a fundamental and powerful force in humans (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), attachment and belongingness has shown to be central concepts in the understanding of religion (Gebauer & Maio, 2012; Granqvist et al., 2012; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Attachment to God is similar to a child-caregiver relationship (Granqvist, 2002), but the status of an individual's romantic relationship, has shown to influence attachment behavior towards God (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000; Laurin et al., 2014). Also the attachment style in conjunction with context variables, create and influence the religious

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expression, and has become an important framework for attachment's role in religious belief and behavior (Brown et al., 2004; Granqvist, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000; Granqvist & Hagekull, 2003; Granqvist et al., 2010).

Gebauer and Maio (2012) showed that by manipulation of attachment variables, a person's belief in God can be altered. If a person get exposed to criticism of God or religion, it is likely to presume that their attachment to God can be affected. This assumption is based on the research of Kapogiannis et al. (2009) where religious people experienced cognitive and emotional conflict, in response to religious statements that contradicted their own religious views. This is supported by Harris et al. (2009) that found that religious thought is associated with activation of brain regions involved with emotional control. So in a scenario where a religious person are exposed to criticism of God or religion, they will most likely experience cognitive and emotional conflict since the criticism contradict their own perception of reality, and thereby threaten their attachment to God.

As humans will resist the dissolution of existing relationship bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), it is a high probability that an individual that experiences the scenario portrayed here, will engage in attachment behavior to resist a weakening or dissolution of the relationship bond with God. This is one way the religious opposition to freedom of speech can be explained. Attachment can also give a probable explanation to the different ways religious opposition to freedom of speech are manifested.

Gebauer and Maio (2012) found that when the attachment to God was threatened, people with a rejecting image of God showed less intention to seek a closer relation to God, than those with a loving image of God. This is one way of explaining how some in the face of criticism only encourage people to not criticize religion, while others engage in killing to prevent criticism. This alone can't explain this difference, but it is a plausible way attachment is

involved in religious opposition to freedom of speech, and how attachment may shape what form the opposition takes.

Another psychological mechanism that is of interest for the explanation of religious opposition to freedom of speech is analytical thinking. Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) showed that analytical thinking promoted religious disbelief, a result that can explain why religious doctrines promote naive and childlike faith (Matthew 18:2-4). By hindering the activation of system 2 and promoting system 1 (Evans, 2003) through religious doctrines, religion makes it less likely that religious people challenge the faith and thereby protect and strengthen the religion.

This fictional approach to reality has even shown that children fostered up with this perception of reality, have a much higher tendency to report fictional characters as real than non-religious children do (Corriveau et al., 2014). Freedom of speech is in itself critical in nature in the way that it promotes the questioning of everything, and utterances that can challenge the way humans view reality. With the knowledge of how detrimental critical or analytical thinking can be to religious belief (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012), it is not strange that religious opposition to freedom of speech is to be found. Based on the research on religion and critical thinking (Corriveau et al., 2014; Evans, 2003; Evans & Stanovich, 2013; Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012), it can seem that it is more likely to see opposition to freedom of speech than to not see it amongst religious people.

A topic that until now has not been mentioned is irrationality. To an agnostic or an atheist the belief in a supernatural agent can be seen as irrational, and in many ways that is correct. Religious belief is a belief in an entity that is not falsifiable, and where the believers' evidence for the validity of the religious claims are not scientific evidence, but events that are interpreted as evidence. The religious reader may oppose this statement, but if this statement had not been true, we would not speak of a belief in God, but a scientific fact that God was real.

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This tendency to interpret the environment in a way that leads to the acquisition of irrational beliefs, is something that is known in the scientific literature (Caplan, 2000; Rabin, 1998). But seeing that religion and religious beliefs can be viewed as byproducts of normal psychological mechanisms (Boyer, 2003; Pyysiäinen & Hauser, 2010), and that the body of literature that has been presented so far in this thesis indicate that a believer actually can and most likely do perceive God as real, is it really irrational to believe in God? The goal of this thesis is not to answer if a belief in God is irrational or not, but taking a short detour through that question will better help enlighten the phenomenon of religious opposition to freedom of speech.

Caplan (2001) addresses the topic of irrationality in his model of rational irrationality, a model that has been applied to the topics of climate change (Humphrey, 2009), prohibition reforms (Thomas, Thomas & Snow, 2013), contributions toward the common good (Kyriacou, 2011), and religion (Caplan, 2001), to explain irrational behavior. In short the model explains how the private cost of a belief influence how much or little information the individual will gather on the topic the belief is held. So if the irrational belief that God is real has zero cost, but believing that God is not real has a high personal cost, it is rational to hold an irrational belief, and then restrict the consumption of information that can challenge the ability to hold the irrational belief. Examples of personal costs can be the stress of separation from God that a religious individual will experience if he or she challenge their religious beliefs, or an individual's loss of status, power, or wealth if those are held on the basis of religious belief.

From an outside perspective believing in God can seem irrational, but from the believers perspective if we apply Caplan's (2001) model of rational irrationality, the belief in God is a rational irrational belief. As stated earlier in the thesis the belief is objectively irrational just because of the lack of evidence, but the personal cost the individual must pay to challenge the belief, and the fact that the believer may perceive God as real, may make it rational for the



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believer to hold on to the belief. This can lead an individual to engage in stifling of freedom of speech, as a mean to prevent consumption of challenging information.

It can be tempting to explain religious behavior as a result of society and culture, as religion has been important for society and group cohesion up through the ages (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003; Sosis & Ruffle, 2003), but leaning solely on this perspective would make up a poor explanatory model for religious behavior like opposition to freedom of speech. According to Ajzen (2005) behavior is guided by intentions and perceived behavioral control, which again are guided and influenced by attitudes, norms, and beliefs. One can argue that an individual's society and culture can directly influence behavioral control, and be the vessel of which attitudes, norms, and beliefs are transmitted. An argument like this has its merits, but this approach do not explain what it is that makes it possible for a cultural meme to interact with an individual in the first place, or why individuals that belong to the same society and culture chose different behavioral paths. Therefore one must explore normal psychological mechanisms that are fundamental in humans, find out how they create and sustain religious belief and behavior, and then look at the interaction with culture and society. The last step is outside the scope of this thesis, but the first two are essential to be able to give an answer to the research question that has been put forth. It is the hope of the author that the reader at this stage are starting to get an understanding of why a psychological perspective is needed, and that the question of the thesis are getting more comprehensible.

As a finishing section of the general discussion the psychological mechanisms presented in this thesis, will be discussed in the light of how they do and do not give insight into religious opposition to freedom of speech.

The neurology of religion is important in the way that it is a gateway to be able to discuss religion and religious behavior as a normal psychological phenomenon. Seeing that hyperreligiosity is a common symptom in people with temporal lobe epilepsy (Devinsky & Lai,

2008; Trimble & Freeman, 2006; Previc, 2006), neurotransmitters can help explain spiritual experiences (Andrée et al., 2003), and social cognition are activated when one pray to and think of God (Harris et al., 2009; Kapogiannis et al., 2009; Schjoedt et al., 2009), the neuroscience of religion is the foundation for the exploration of religious opposition to freedom of speech. Together with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) and the knowledge of attachment's role as a psychological mechanism in religion (Gebauer & Maio, 2012; Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz & Shaver, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), the neuroscience of religion also show us that a believer can perceive God as real. This further lends strength to the validity to view religion and religious behavior as just another phenomenon of normal human behavior. The limitations of the neurology of religion when it comes to explain religious opposition to freedom of speech, is that it does not seem to in it selves to give any direct explanation to the phenomenon. When the neural foundation of the exploration of religious opposition to freedom of speech is set, the continued search for an answer must go through known psychological mechanisms that shape human behavior.

The psychological mechanisms that has shown to be part of religious behavior and therefore explored to shed light on the question of the thesis, are hard to fake signals and rituals (Rappaport, 1999; Sosis, 2000), mind perception (Epley et al., 2009; Gervais, 2013), attachment (Gebauer & Maio, 2012; Granqvist et al., 2012; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), analytical thinking (Evans, 2003; Gervais and Norenzayan, 2012) and irrationality (Caplan, 2001). Together and in different ways they all help build the framework for understanding the phenomenon of religious opposition to freedom of speech.

Religious rituals and hard to fake signals are behaviors that we understand as social psychological mechanisms (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003), that amongst other through the help of outgroup discrimination (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005; Kurzban et al., 2001), can cause stifling of freedom of speech. These are mechanisms that helps the individual to keep its place in the

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group, either through acceptance from peers or the perceived acceptance from God. This as a result of hard to fake signals or rituals that the individual has engaged in. One can argue that rituals and signals of commitment could be reduced to amongst other the need to belong (Beumeister & Leary, 1995) and attachment behavior (Bowlby, 1982), but seeing that religious opposition to freedom of speech is a behavior, exploring known religious behaviors and examining potential similarities, is a good place to start gaining knowledge of the topic of the thesis. The social psychological mechanisms of rituals and hard to fake signals does have explanatory value within the scope of the thesis, but there is still a need to try to build the framework of understanding on psychological mechanisms as fundamental as possible.

To fulfill this demand mind perception, attachment, analytical thinking, and irrationality has been explored, as they are by the author perceived as psychological mechanisms that is hard to reduce down to more fundamental mechanisms. Furthermore they do as already presented and discussed, have explanatory value in regard to religious opposition to freedom of speech. In many ways these psychological mechanisms share the same strengths and weaknesses in regard to in what way they do and do not shed light on the topic of the thesis.

They do show how fundamental and normal psychological mechanisms in humans are what religion is built on (Thomson & Aukofer, 2011), and second they give highly probable explanations to how religious belief can cause religiously motivated opposition to freedom of speech. Mind perception is the mechanism that makes it possible to hold a mental, abstract image (Gervais, 2013) of a non falsifiable God, and is activated when praying to and thinking of the mental state of God (Kapogiannis et al., 2009; Schojedt et al., 2009). Attachment (Bowlby, 1982) makes it possible to create a relational bond between the believer and God (Kirkpatrick, 2005), a bond that triggers many of the same attachment behaviors that would trigger in a human to human relation (Gebauer and Maio, 2012; Granqvist, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Sim & Loe, 2003). Analytical thinking explored in this thesis through system 1 and

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system 2 (Evans, 2003), has shown to promote religious disbelief (Gervais and Norenzayan, 2012). This again can explain why religious doctrines so often promotes a childlike and naive belief in God, an approach to reality that is severely threatened by freedom of speech. The last psychological mechanisms presented is irrationality, or more specifically rational irrationality (Caplan, 2001). Rational irrationality explain how a seemingly irrational belief can be held, and even be a rational choice in some situations. This makes it possible to understand how for example well educated politicians in Norway, can make political decisions that contradict democratic values, and support stifling of freedom of speech on the behalf of religion.

What these psychological mechanisms do not do, is by them self being able to explain the complexity of religious behavior. They all depend on being built on the neuroscience of religion, and then being put into a framework of different psychological mechanisms that explains their own part of the whole. Alone they give an inadequate explanation, but as a whole they create a comprehensive framework for the understanding of religious opposition to freedom of speech.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

An important limitation with this thesis is the lack of research done directly on the relationship between religion and opposition to freedom of speech. This has resulted in a need to build arguments and the conclusion on probable and rational assumptions, these based off of and in addition to the presentation of empirical research on religion and relevant other topics.

Another limitation is the amount and number of psychological mechanisms that has been presented to explain religious opposition to freedom of speech. There is always a question of where to draw the line to limit the scope of the thesis, this means that mechanisms that could have added insightful knowledge to the thesis, may not have been included. The author has tried to include what based on present research seem to be of necessity to include, but there is always the risk of not having included mechanisms that should have been discussed in this thesis.

A third thing worth mentioning is even though this thesis primarily has presented cases related to Christianity, Islam, and Catholicism, the conclusion and arguments put forth most likely applies to more religions than these three. When a supernatural agent the believers can relate to is a central part of the religion's dogma, it is reasonable to assume that the same psychological mechanisms involved in the aforementioned religions will activate. This might not directly be a limitation to this thesis, but it is an interesting assumption that with more exploration will shed greater light on the topic of the thesis.

Future research on religious opposition to freedom of speech should try to falsify the hypothesis presented in this thesis. The following hypothesis is presented as a result of the research and arguments put forth in this thesis, and the implications of it is not small. Therefore it would be of great interest to see if the hypothesis would show any merit in the face of scientific research.

### **Conclusion**

From a psychological perspective, can religious faith cause opposition to freedom of speech? The answer to this question is a highly probable yes. Even though there are limitations to this thesis, what has been presented so far about the psychological mechanisms of religious faith, strongly indicate that religious faith can cause religiously motivated opposition to freedom of speech.

Furthermore one can argue that religious opposition to freedom of speech, is something to be expected. Religion and religious faith are founded on and sustained by an array of fundamental psychological mechanisms, mechanisms that in the face of criticism of religion, are prone to trigger and promote behavior with the intent of stifling this criticism. The research presented in this thesis therefore concludes into the following hypothesis: Religious belief will most likely both consciously and unconsciously promote an intent of opposing freedom of speech. To what degree the intent are converted into behavior and what kind of behavior this intent results in, is a matter of context and opportunity.

This conclusion leads to one important and highly controversial implication, namely that the notion that a person's religious beliefs are a private matter that do not influence their decision making, with high probability is false. In other words, the separation of religious beliefs and politics is not so easily done as often claimed. Religious belief is an integrated part of the individual, and when a religious believer gets his or her religious belief challenged, their religious network consisting of normal psychological mechanisms, will trigger.

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