

Book of Abstracts

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and



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The 2nd International Conference on International Conference on Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

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Alexandrian Philo's view of divine providence

Farshad Aliyari¹

Abstract:

Philo believed that God is pure spirit beings and nature, there is a distinction, he believes that God is pure goodness. The grace of God has been manifested in the world, the Lord is the absolute whole, the soul of the world, the Global need to apply an external God but he is not exported from inner necessity arises and divine providence of God he is the kind of inner necessity. Providence innocent of evil will do His will is absolutely free? In addition, the author also discusses the following issues: God's wisdom, God's will, the intellect and the will of God, the influence of Greek philosophy and thoughts Of Philo vote, and influence of Philo on the teachings of Christianity, especially the impact that has had on people like Paul and John. Logos of Philo's view of its influence on the Christian view of the difference between the Logos of Philo and the Christian church and fatherland. Whether or not human actions with God's will be done? If the will of God, the will of the people and how they are determined? Philo philosopher, theologian and theistic which is influenced by the ideas of great interest taken hellenize owned by Plato's ideas and opinions, he believes much of the Godhead, the Lord transcendence under state emphasize and design he knows .whoever believes in him shall prosper, And every man stand in front of him to be killed. He writes in his works of providence that God has for his creatures. Philo believed that God acts through natural forces do Logos, Logos is a single substance, which is then interpreted by the intellect and the spirit of religious texts .He adopted the existence to come live in his creation, is always at work, but does not deprive man of freedom. Philo Providence characters .God knows everything God has even toys and constraints due to the good will of God as he knows his and , divine

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providence that evil, evil because God is not a matter of metaphysics
.Near Cosmos and creation hold its holder infinite power he has is and
creation the world.

Keywords: Philo of Alexandria, divine providence, creation, logos,
divine power, wisdom, goodness, evil

The Epistemology of Religious Diversity in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

Amir Dastmalchian¹

Abstract:

Religious diversity is a key topic in contemporary philosophy of religion. One way religious diversity has been of interest to philosophers is in the epistemological questions it gives rise to. In other words, religious diversity has been seen to pose a challenge for religious belief. In this study four approaches to dealing with this challenge are discussed. These approaches correspond to four well-known philosophers of religion, namely, Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, and John Hick. The study is concluded by suggesting four factors which shape one's response to the challenge religious diversity poses to religious belief.

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Constructivist Views on the Nature of Religious & Mystical Experience: A Review Based on thoughts of Steven Katz

**Mohammadreza Bayat¹
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Abstract:

Many of fundamental questions of epistemology have been undoubtedly risen in late twentieth century. Hence, religious experience as one of the most highlighted subjects in philosophy of religion faced certain challenges. Constructivism is a significant approach toward epistemological value of religious experience. Steven T. Katz, constructivist, emphasizes on this fundamental epistemological assumption that it is impossible for human being to have any unmediated perceptive experience, to show that mystical experiences are influenced by prior situations and alike any other perceptive experience, cannot be figured without considering the social and cultural contexts.

Constructivism is in fact a reaction to the essentialism as a rival approach, which emphasizes on common essence shared between all mystical experiences.

In this paper we seek to criticize Katz's ideas about epistemological validity of religious experience and will defend the notion that mystical experiences are of common essence.

Keywords: religious experiences, mystical experiences, Steven T. Katz, constructivism, essentialism, perceptive experience

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The Stenmark-Golshani Exchange: A Critical Assessment

Stefano Bigliardi¹

Among the contemporary philosophical debates, the one that surrounds with the relationship between science and religion stands out as particularly vibrant. Some scholars attempt to map the areas of conflict or harmony between them. Others criticise the method and guiding principles of science from the standpoint of a specific religion. Among the exponents of the first group is the Swedish philosopher M. Stenmark, who has elaborated a “dynamic model” focussing on the interaction of religion and science on four levels: problem-stating, development, justification, and application. A remarkable contribution to the criticism of contemporary science from the standpoint of Islam is advanced by the Iranian physicist and philosopher M. Golshani, who defends a metaphysical, Qur’anic-based foundation for science. An exchange between Stenmark and Golshani on *Theology and Science* (2005) has proved to be a notable example of interaction between the two approaches mentioned above, as well as the philosophical dialogue between East/Christianity and West/Islam. Stenmark attempted to demonstrate the weakness of Golshani’s defence, reducing it to a simple demonstration of the fact that individual scientists can be influenced by different ideologies. Golshani emphasized in his turn the twofold distinction, apparently neglected by Stenmark, between “fundamental theories” and “intermediate theories” while arguing that the former necessarily require meta-scientific assumptions. In my paper I will offer a synthetic account of the Stenmark-Golshani exchange, emphasizing its ground breaking character and demonstrating how one might harmonize the two scholars’ views by adopting a bottom-up interpretation of Stenmark’s model.

1 . Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, Sweden

Influence of natural and creative elements in the intellectual development of the children and the youths and its impact in human society

Abu Musa Mohammad Arif Billah¹

Abstract:

Nature is a composite phenomenon of all the physically identifiable and visible objects. However, there is an invisible nature which exists in human mind. The reflection of bodily existed things or matters or images appear in the mind which finally work as a principle sources of basic knowledge in human thought processes. The mental state here is to be considered as the sky in natural atmosphere. Thus, human mind act not only as a reservoir of memory function rather it also works as like a camera which makes the picture of a seen or perceived object and stimulate the person to think, to contemplate or to enjoy or feel sorrow – confounding the criteria of the natural object or images. This is why the types of elements or the shape of nature is important to form a child mind. In some cases creative elements, such as play-games, TV serials, reading books and study materials etcetera, have more impact than the natural one, which might divert a child from natural mental growth to a synthetic or superficial manifestation or to a cynical mental development. Since religious values are the most common and valuable elements in human life and society, its appropriate reflection in the creative elements enable the society to emerge with very productive outcomes to diminish those negative consequences.

The paper, providing with the definition of natural and phenomenal objects, attempts to analyse the relations between the acquisition of perception and the effect of creative and natural elements. Finally it

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will suggest a way forward for the responsible authorities to make them understand how to help the children and the youths to get appropriate atmosphere of achieving perfect knowledge in general and enable them to reach a sustainable and reliable way of peace, prosperity and happiness in particular.

Key words: Natural and creative elements, religion, perception, society, TV serials.

The Relationship between Culture and Religion from a Comparative Point of View

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein¹

Abstract:

The relationship between culture and religion has often been discussed in the past but appears in a different light today in a globalized and mediatised world. The relationships between culture and religion are complex, which has mainly to do with the perception (a) that an entire religion can be seen *as* culture or that a culture can be seen *as* a religion (b) that cultural elements can be found *in* religion or that religious element can be found *in* culture. Cultural values are not absolute but can be negotiated because they are determined by arbitrary temporal and spatial conditions. Often we think that when differences are “merely cultural,” they can be stored in the warehouse of relativism, similar to what we do with questions of taste. Why does this “merely” most often not apply when it comes to religious differences? There are two reasons. First, religion is a system of beliefs that requires faith. Also culture can embrace – next to values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts – some systems of shared beliefs, but those beliefs do not require faith. I discuss those questions in an East-West intercultural context by drawing on arguments from philosophers and theologians from different traditions and cultural spheres.

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Critique of Hick's theodicy: "Soul making as a solution for the problem of evil"

Mandana Chegeni Farahani¹
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Theodicy of Soul making, which finds its last version in Hick's thought, has historical foundations. John Hick developed his theory in contrast to Augustine's traditional theory (evil as *privatio boni*) and under the influence of Irenaean theodicy. In his theodicy, Hick argues that the evil in this world is the main ingredient that human agents need in order to expand upon their moral virtues. According to Hick, the creation of an "imperfect" universe is intended to provide a realm in which imperfect ("mortal") human beings can be formed, molded, and shaped along their way toward God. Hick refers to this kind of a world, the one which actually exists, as a "vale of soul making", without which most of the virtues could not be reasonably formed. Free will is the essential moment of Hick's Theory. We try to criticize different aspects of this theodicy to evaluate Hick's solution for the problem of evil.

A number of difficulties attend Hick's theodicy: 1. Inadequate response to the question of multiplicity of human pain, like slaughter and carnage. 2. Inadequate response to the evils in the nature, which are not related to human beings. 3. A logical critique stems from Hick's own argument which would yield to the responsibility of God for moral and natural evils.

Keywords: John Hick, Irenaeus, Augustine, The problem of evil, Soul-making, vale of soul making

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Sacred text and dialogue between religions

Veronica Cibotaru¹

Abstract:

Most religions as we know them today are organized around one or a group of texts which are considered sacred from one point of view or another. It is this unique character that gives them a special force to define one specific religion and the religious faith of the believers. Moreover, the sacred text founds a religious community and it constitutes a fundamental distinction point between religions. If we cannot be Christians and Muslims at the same time, it is not in the least because we cannot accord the same place to the Bible and to the Quran in our lives.

However, if the sacred texts are exclusive in the commitment they imply, what kind of dialogue can there exist between different religions? It is my aim to explore the meaning of such a dialogue, beyond the mere theoretical observation of similarities between religions, by thinking about what a sacred text actually is. For this purpose, I will examine Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics which opens an approach to the Gospel beyond its literal meaning and considers it a metaphor that speaks about our existence, here and today. It is perhaps this here and today of our existence that can make us look beyond the textual differences and make a bridge between different religions.

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Homoousios or Homoiosis: The Influence of Islam in Redefining the Christian Image in the Wake of the Iconoclastic Controversy

Arianne Conty¹

Abstract:

This paper will set out to elucidate the philosophy of the image that developed in the wake of the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Eastern Christian Empire in the 9th Century in order to differentiate icon veneration from idolatry. Ever encroaching on the borders of the Empire, the influence of Islam will be shown to be decisive, both in influencing the wave of iconoclasm that swept across the Empire, and in establishing the terms of the debate regarding how to define the image philosophically. Iconophilia was finally reinstated in the Empire, but image veneration was transformed and differentiated from relic worship thanks to its encounter with Islamic iconoclasm. After reviewing the Islamic influence on the Iconoclastic Controversy, this paper will elucidate the philosophy of the image of Patriarch Nicephorus in order to show how he managed to differentiate veneration from idolatry by redefining the image as “similar to” (*homoiosis*) rather than consubstantial with (*homoousios*) its model. By differentiating image veneration from the theory of consubstantiality that was normative within Islam, Christian philosophy of the image developed the theory of anagogy introduced by the sixth century Syrian monk known under the pseudonym of the Pseudo-Dionysius. This theory gives to the image the indexical function of pointing beyond itself to an archetype that is itself invisible and uncircumscribable.

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TEMPORALITY, CREATION, AND DIVINE PERSONHOOD

Joseph Diekemper¹

Abstract:

Suppose God always has been, and always will be, temporal: time runs to infinity in either direction and God exists at every time. On this conception of divine eternity, God's temporality is independent of creation, and therefore God's existence and nature alone must account for the existence and flow of time. Since Augustine, however, philosophers have found such a conception problematic. Intuitively, for time to exist, events must occur, but it seems that God can only be the subject of an event in virtue of his interaction *with creation*, since it would be inappropriate and overly anthropomorphic to characterize God's mental life as involving discrete, ordered events. Furthermore, if God's temporality is independent of creation, then we must say that God waited an infinite amount of time before creating, and this seems absurdly arbitrary. I consider three different responses to this set of concerns: the possibility of coeternal creation; the possibility of changeless time prior to creation; and the possibility that God's nature *as a person* entails both that he is, necessarily, the subject of events, and that his decision to create when he did was in no way arbitrary. I develop and defend this last possibility.

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Avicenna's Seddigin Argument: An Evaluation by the Contemporary philosophers of religion

Ali EBRAHIMZADEH¹

Abstract:

Avicenna analyses seddigin argument in the fourth chapter of his book titled “Al_Esharat val_Tenbîhât”. This argument which moves from the absolute existence attempts to deduce necessary existent, without dependence on any external being. The purpose of this article is to probe into this argument from philosophy of religion point of view.

In Kant’s classification, three kinds of argument have been stated. Ontological and cosmological arguments are the closest arguments to seddigin argument. Ontological arguments using mental existence analysis of complete being, proves its external existence. Mean while cosmological argument by moving from the world or one of the world’s features tries to prove that being.

Although some scholars consider Seddigin argument as ontological argument and some others count it as cosmological argument, we cannot declare it as ontological or cosmological argument due to lacking the features of those arguments. Because the Seddigin argument instead of moving from specific being, it moves from the absolute existence and demonstrate God. Naturally, such a motion, hasn’t existed in The Western philosophical tradition, so that, even Kant hasn’t spoken about such a movement and its possibility or availability. Therefore, to know the position of seddigin argument, a new classification must be made and only in that case its position among other arguments will be known.

Keywords: philosophy of religion, Seddigin argument, Kant's classification, ontological argument, cosmological argument.

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Kuhnian Incommensurability of Paradigms and the Relation between Religion and Social Sciences

Mohsen Feyzbakhsh¹

Abstract

Inspired from natural sciences (especially Physics), Thomas Kuhn established the theory of scientific revolutions. Hence, following Kuhn, philosophers of science have applied this theory widely in natural sciences; but it does not mean that it is impossible to apply the theory to other scientific fields e.g. social sciences. So, I would try to apply one of the most important notions in Kuhnian philosophy of science i.e. “Incommensurability” to social sciences. (It is obvious that along with this application, I assume social sciences to be actually a science—or, strictly speaking, an empirical science. This assumption has been derived from the reality of social scientists’ society, rather than a philosophical debate.)

Thomas Kuhn has distinguished between three aspects of incommensurability of paradigms, i.e. semantic incommensurability (meaning change), methodological incommensurability, and the incommensurability of observations. Based upon this distinction and the assumption that “Theism” and “Humanism” can be considered as two major paradigms in social sciences, I shall make a distinction between these paradigms and, by presenting a couple of examples, will show how different aspects of incommensurability could be recognized in them.

Taking incommensurability of these paradigms to be granted, I will probe into some results of this notion for the relation between religion and social sciences.

Key Words: Incommensurability of Paradigms, Thomas Kuhn, Religion and Science, Social Sciences, Religion and Social Sciences.

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The “Death of God” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Kristin Gissberg¹

Abstract:

Reading Hegel’s discussion of the relation between humans and the divine in terms of the temporal, this paper sheds light upon the ways in which an experience of time itself is woven into the fabric of religion for Hegel, and thus one’s understanding of the divine. Traditionally, one can only know the divine as something that is either within the self, or outside of the self—a view that mandates that God can only be known as an inner power, or as something beyond human reach. Finding a new, third way for thinking of God, Hegel will claim that God is neither within us, nor beyond us; instead, God is Dead. Hegel claims this on the grounds that, if existence entails death—as the transition from nature to spirit in the *Encyclopaedia* renders explicit—then for God to exist requires that God too, like all other living beings, must die. Setting up God and death as absolute necessities, Hegel opens a new terrain of logic—the speculative—which paves the path for re-conceptualizing the relation between humans and the divine, and the temporal tag that this relation entails.

Picking up from the *Phenomenology* and the parallel, albeit condensed exposition that one finds in the *Encyclopedia* of “Revealed Religion,” the paper argues that the utterance of the death of God foregrounds a need for the new, and prompts a heretofore un-thought understanding of religion and philosophy. Offering an account of this famous phrase, we argue that it gives expression to a death/birth, to a fundamental shift in the self, and the self’s relation to the divine, to a disruption of the dichotomy of time—the finite and the infinite—which historically maps onto the division between humans and the divine. The proclamation of the death of God, as will be argued, thus serves as the springboard for a radically novel conception of time—

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that of the absolute present—which allows for the complete and reciprocal recognition between human beings and the Divine.

How to Encounter the Religions of the World? The Project of Comparative Theology

Norbert Hintersteiner¹

Abstract:

During the last two decades, comparative theology as the theologically conscious study of religions other than one's own has become an exciting and quickly developing field, both in Iran and in the European as well as American academia. Since this conference has one focus on it, it shall be beneficial to lay out the questions and theses put forward in this discipline as it is evolving in the Anglo-American theological context. First, I will locate comparative theology at the crossroads of crosscultural and interreligious translation processes, accompanied by a claim that theology always was and is an inherently comparative discipline. Second, I will give an understanding of the practice of comparative theology through some of its contemporary definitions. Third, this is followed by an analysis ad exemplum of the comparative work of one of the pioneers of contemporary comparative theology, Francis Clooney (Harvard Divinity School), including some systematic points which become visible as essential in the contemporary fabric of a new comparative theology. Finally, I will conclude with a heuristic lense as epistemologically instructive entry point to the discourse and practice of comparative theology; namely, the matter of translatability or untranslatability of concepts and traditions.

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Nagel and Wittgenstein on Detachment

Reza Hosseini¹

The concept of detachment is of key significance among sceptics about meaning in life. In this paper I criticize Thomas Nagel's account of 'the absurd' by showing the limits of detachment. Nagel claims that we arrive at both epistemological scepticism and a sense of the absurd as a result of our failure to find justifying reasons for our actions. However, by discussing Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, I argue that Nagel's account of life's meaning fails to address the fundamentality of our 'world-pictures' in the constitution of meaning in our lives. A world-picture is, roughly, the totality of 'hinge propositions' and hinge propositions are propositions that are not usually the subject of doubt. I argue that a significant aspect of our lives is built upon a 'groundless' trust in our world-pictures. In this view, as opposed to Nagel's, some meaning is granted with the act of living, one that does not stand in need of justification.

1 . Rhodes University- South Africa

Identifying the Conflict between Religion and Science

David Kyle Johnson¹

Abstract:

It is commonly maintained among academic theists that religion and science are not in conflict. I will argue, by analogy, that they undeniably are in conflict. I will begin by quickly defining religion and science. Then I will present multiple examples that are unquestionable instances of unscientific reasoning and beliefs and show how they precisely parallel common mainstream orthodox religious reasoning and doctrines. I will close by considering objections to my argument.

Although some, like Richard Dawkins and John Worall disagree, it is commonly maintained among academic theists (e.g., Alvin Plantinga and Del Ratzsch) that religion and science are **not** in conflict. I will argue however, by analogy, that science and religion undeniably **are** in conflict. I will begin by quickly defining religion and science. Then I will present multiple examples that are unquestionable instances of unscientific reasoning and unscientific belief and show how they precisely parallel common mainstream orthodox religious reasoning and doctrines. Specifically I will argue that common and orthodox beliefs about petitionary prayer, the occurrence of miracles, divine intervention, the existence of the soul, belief in God (despite the problem of evil), and the existence of divine/miracle men (such as Jesus and Muhammad)—along with methods of reasoning that theists use to defend such belief—are demonstrably and undeniably unscientific. I will close by considering objections to my argument.

1 . Associate Professor of Philosophy King's College, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Philosophy and religion at the thought of Ibn Sina

Souad Joinini

Abstract:

The power of religion emerges from the power of his presence, that is a postulate we can hardly disagree around. Human's need to own a religion is not a requirement dims in the era of science and globalization but it even has increased. This is what has justified the ongoing phenomenon in search of a religious nature, and in order to reveal the terms of its access. Philosophy ensure such constituent reading, and we have in the mediator thoughts a model for the theoretical interpretation of the religion .

We will not interpret the whole issue of religion in the mediator period due to the tight intervention on the one hand and the importance of the request on the other hand, therefore to the perception of Ibn Sina to the issue will be sufficient. Our choice of this philosopher is due to his specialized reading which we will reveal during our treatment of these matters:

- How is the status of religion determined in the philosophy of Ibn Sina?
- What are the elements of philosophical study of religion that belongs to him?
- Had Ibn Sina distinguished between the philosopher and prophet? Is it related to the curriculum or the results?
- If the religion possesses some truth, what is the legality of this chapter? Is the religious truth the same as the philosophical truth?

Through this section, we seek to reveal some aspects of theology in the philosophy of Ibn Sina. So our focus will be limited to the truth in both sides: argumentative and prophetic. We hope to reach some of the results and contribute even with a little at enriching the scientific research.

Analyzing Mystical Experience

Prof. Steven T. Katz
Boston University, USA

No-one attending this conference needs to be reminded that mystical experiences in different forms have been known in all the major religious traditions of the world. These experiences have been the subject of intensive study by theologians and philosophers. In the main, these learned students have concentrated on the mystical experiences as reported by those who have undergone the experience, and thus their philosophical interrogations center on issues concerning what mystics report.

In reflecting on this, and having read mystical texts from many religious traditions over many decades, I have been impressed by the fact that this content of mystical experience almost always turns out to be what the mystic wants to experience. That is, Christian mystics experience God or Jesus but not Nirvana and not the Toa. Alternatively, Buddhists never experience Jesus or encounter the Virgin Mary, or even God the Father. And Sufis never experience the Heavenly Temple entered by early rabbinic mystics. Now, I am certainly not the first student of mystical texts to note this central, indivisible, and unavoidable fact. Since at least the time of William James, scholars have recognized the congruity between the tradition out of which a mystic comes – which sets his or her goals – and the mystical experience had. For more than a century they have explained this phenomenon by arguing that mystics, having actually experienced that which is inherently and necessarily ineffable and beyond limited religious traditions, are forced, when they return from their ecstatic moments, to use only language they know in which to describe the indescribable. Walter T. de La Haye articulated this crucial claim with paradigmatic clarity: “It is important as well as possible to make a distinction between a mystical experience itself and the conceptual interpretations that may be put upon it.” (*Mysticism and Philosophy*,

p. 7) And this is because though “it is probably impossible to isolate “pure” experience, yet, although we may never be able to find senses experience completely free of interpretation, it can hardly be doubted that a sensation is the thing and its conceptual interpretation is another.” (Ibid., p. 31)

Now I would argue that it needs to be recognized, contra James and Stace, et al, that this concentration on the content of mystical experience – and the post-experiential description of such experience – bypasses a fundamental issue, the analysis of which will effect all questions regarding the *what*, the content, of mystical experience. And this is the issue of *how* we experience, how we know, what we know in and through the mystical experience. Which is to say, vis-à-vis mystical experience and the reports of mystical experience, the first and major question (or set of questions) is epistemological. How do mystics come to experience what they experience? Do mystics experience X – letting X stand for the objects of ultimate concern with which they claim a relationship or encounter – in a direct and unmediated way? Or, as I would argue, is the mystical experience, despite claims to the contrary by mystical adepts, the product of complex epistemological forms that, at least in part, shape the mystical experience?

It is this essential issue that I will explore in my paper.

Eastern and Western Modes of Thought: Nagarjuna and Quantum Physics

Christian Thomas Kohl

1. Key term: 'Emptiness'. The Indian philosopher Nagarjuna (2nd century BC) is known in the history of Buddhism mainly by his keyword 'sunyata'. This word is translated into English by the word 'emptiness'. The translation and the traditional interpretations create the impression that Nagarjuna declares the objects as empty or illusionary or not real or not existing. What is the assertion and concrete statement made by this interpretation? That nothing can be found, that there is nothing, that nothing exists? Was Nagarjuna denying the external world? Did he wish to refute that which evidently is? Did he want to call into question the world in which we live? Did he wish to deny the presence of things that somehow arise? My first point is the refutation of this traditional translation and interpretation.
2. Key terms: 'Dependence' or 'relational view'. My second point consists in a transcription of the keyword of 'sunyata' by the word 'dependence'. This is something that Nagarjuna himself has done. Now Nagarjuna's central view can be named 'dependence of things'. Nagarjuna is not looking for a material or immaterial object which can be declared as a fundamental reality of this world. His fundamental reality is not an object. It is a relation between objects. This is a relational view of reality. Reality is without foundation. Or: Reality has the wide open space as foundation.
3. Key terms: 'Arm in arm'. But Nagarjuna did not stop there. He was not content to repeat this discovery of relational reality. He went on one step further indicating that what is happening between two things. He gave indications to the space between two things. He realised that not the behaviour of bodies, but the behaviour of something between them may be essential for understanding the reality. This open space is not at all empty. It is full of energy. The open space is the middle between things. Things are going arm in arm. The middle might be

considered as a force that bounds men to the world and it might be seen as well as a force of liberation. It might be seen as a bondage to the infinite space.

4. Key term: Philosophy. Nagarjuna, we are told, was a Buddhist philosopher. This statement is not wrong when we take the notion 'philosophy' in a deep sense as a love to wisdom, not as wisdom itself. Philosophy is a way to wisdom. Where this way has an end wisdom begins and philosophy is no more necessary. A.N. Whitehead gives philosophy the commission of descriptive generalisation. We do not need necessarily a philosophical building of universal dimensions. Some steps of descriptive generalisation might be enough in order to see and understand reality. There is another criterion of Nagarjuna's philosophy. Not his keywords 'sunyata' and 'pratityasamutpada' but his 25 philosophical examples are the heart of his philosophy. His examples are images. They do not speak to rational and conceptual understanding. They speak to our eyes. Images, metaphors, allegories or symbolic examples have a freshness which rational ideas do not possess. Buddhist dharma and philosophy is a philosophy of allegories. This kind of philosophy is not completely new and unknown to European philosophy. Since Plato's allegory of the cave it is already a little known. (Plato 424 – 348 BC) The German philosopher Hans Blumenberg has underlined the importance of metaphors in European philosophy.

5. Key terms: Quantum Physics. Why quantum physics? European modes of thought had no idea of the space between two things. They were bound to the ideas of substance or subject, two main metaphysical traditions of European philosophical history, two main principles. These substances and these subjects are two immaterial bodies which were considered by traditional European metaphysics as lying, as a sort of core, inside the objects or underlying the empirical reality of our world. The first European scientist who saw with his inner eye the forces between two things had been Michael Faraday (1791-1867). Faraday was an English scientist who contributed to the fields of electromagnetism. Later physicists like Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg and others followed his view in modern physics. This is a fifth point of my work. I compare Nagarjuna with European scientific modes of thought for a better understanding of Asia. I do not compare Nagarjuna with European

philosophers like Hegel, Heidegger, Wittgenstein. The principles and metaphysical foundations of physical sciences are more representative for European modes of thought than the ideas of Hegel, Heidegger and Wittgenstein and they are more precise. And slowly we are beginning to understand these principles.

Let me take as an example the interpretation of quantum entanglement by the British mathematician Roger Penrose. Penrose discusses in the year of 2000 the experiences of quantum entanglement where light is separated over a distance of 100 kilometers and still remains connected in an unknown way. These are well known experiments in the last 30 years. Very strange for European modes of thought. The light should be either separated or connected. That is the expectation most European modes of thought tell us. Aristotle had been the first. Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) was a Greek philosopher, a student of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great. He told us: Either a situation exists or not. There is not a third possibility. Now listen to Roger Penrose:

“Quantum entanglement is a very strange type of thing. It is somewhere between objects being separate and being in communication with each other” (Roger Penrose, *The Large, the Small and the Human Mind*, Cambridge University Press. 2000 page 66). This sentence of Roger Penrose is a first step of a philosophical generalisation in a Whiteheadian sense.

6. Key terms: ‘The metaphysical foundations of modern science’ had been examined particularly by three European and American philosophers: E. A. Burt, A.N. Whitehead and Hans-Georg Gadamer, by Gadamer eminently in his late writings on Heraclitus and Parmenides. I try to follow the approaches of these philosophers of anti-substantialism. By ‘metaphysical foundations’ I do not understand transcendental ideas but simply the principles that are underlying sciences.

7. Key terms : ‘Complementarity’, ‘interactions’, ‘entanglements’. Since 1927 quantum physics has three key terms which give an indication to the fundamental physical reality: Complementarity, interactions and entanglement. These three notions are akin to Nagarjuna’s relational view of reality. They are akin and they are very precise, so that Buddhism might learn something from these descriptions and quantum physicists might learn from Nagarjuna’s

examples and views of reality. They might learn to do a first step in a philosophical generalisation of quantum physical experiments. All of us we might learn how objects are entangled or going arm in arm. [The end of the summary.]

Who is Really Being Unreasonable? Atheism vs Religious Belief

Stephen Law¹

Abstract:

In discussions and debates between atheists and adherents of different religions, participants are often struck by the failure of their intellectual opponents to recognize the reasonableness of their own position. If atheism is reasonable, why do religious people fail to recognize this? If a religion is reasonably held, why do atheists fail to recognize this? This paper investigates the kind of explanations each side offers to account for the failure of the other to be reasonable. It argues that the explanations offered by atheists are far more plausible than those offered by the religious. It looks, in particular, at explanations offered by the latter based on (i) atheistic ignorance of the religious claims and arguments (ii) atheistic wishful thinking (iii) the suggestion that atheists have a faulty *sensus divinitatis* or God sense (iv) the suggestion that atheists are led astray by Satan/devils. Atheists, by contrast, can point to the fact that religious beliefs are of a kind to which human beings are peculiarly attracted and about which they are remarkably unreliable judges of reasonableness (judging reasonable what, in reality, is not).

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The Correlation between the Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Deconstruction of Religion

Hossein Mesbahian¹

Abstract:

In his influential book, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (1965), Paul Ricoeur gives prominence to three leading philosophers of the 20th century: Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Each, in their distinctive approaches, searches to uncover or remove mysterious elements, and reveal the true from the ostensible. Ricoeur deemed these three the ‘masters of the school of suspicion.’

This paper explores how the distinctive suspicion revealed by each of these three great masters of suspicion served as models for Ricoeur's own hermeneutics. To shed light on this significant process, I first provide a brief account of how each of these three thinkers comprehends the real nature of religion. Here, I focus on Marx's conception of religion as consolation or, as he put it, “the opium of the people,” (*Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 1843). Nietzsche's notion of religion as weakness was clearly expressed in his famous quote: “That which does not kill me makes me stronger,” (*Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, 1889). Freud's conception of religion as illusion, clarified in his book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), contends that illusion is not an error: “We call a belief an illusion when wish fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation.”

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Next, I address Ricoeur's account of a hermeneutics of suspicion by which the genuine explanation of religion appears solely in consequence of bracketing and deconstructing appearances to allow the fundamental truth of religion to show itself. In other words, the only way to grasp the true function of religion is to clear away the false function. Hence, suspicion uncovers the text of a religion to reveal a new understanding, one which is even more effective than our first understanding and which in a parallel manner can arouse in us an even stronger response. I conclude my paper by interpreting Ricoeur's question 'under what circumstances can I say that I have understood this text?' and his own response (in *The Symbolism of Evil*, 1969) that "beyond the desert of criticism... we wish to be called again."

KeyWords: Paul Ricoeur, Masters of suspicion, Hermeneutics, Deconstruction

Alvin Plantinga’s Christian Philosophy: ‘Advice to Christian Philosophers’ after Thirty Years

S. Muḥammad-Taqīy Mudarrisī

Abstract:

Thirty years after Alvin Plantinga’s “Advice to Christian Philosophers,” it seems still a thought-provoking idea which attracts many philosophers attention. Though, he is neither the first nor the foremost philosopher who has constructed an idea around relating philosophy to religion, but, due to Plantinga's influence in the contemporary philosophy of religion and religious epistemology, his proposal might affect his fellow Christian philosophers more than all of its predecessors. In this paper, I will try to explore the history of the debate over the notion of the “Christian Philosophy,” especially in the last century. Then, I will examine Plantinga’s “advice” and show the connection between Plantinga’s Christian philosophy and his epistemology, namely reformed epistemology; it shows that to what extent someone who does not advocate Plantinga’s reformed epistemology can embrace his Christian philosophy.

Title: Muslims in Britain: From Islamophobia to Conversion to Islam

Dr Leon Moosavi¹

Abstract:

In this paper I discuss the experiences of Muslim communities who live in Britain. Based on 5 years of ethnographic research, I assess the practical dimensions of the religious diversity that is a prominent feature of British society. Muslims now make up 5% of British society, and in some cities, more than 20%. What does religious diversity in this contemporary setting look like? Is it as hospitable and welcoming as British politicians often claim? Or are there shortcomings between the idealistic imaginary and the reality? I will argue that Islamophobia is pervasive in British society, which means that religious diversity is not as harmonious as some like to claim. However, I will also provide some insight into the way Muslims resist Islamophobia which has led to some non-Muslim Britons converting to Islam and choosing to alter their lifestyles to become Muslim. Finally, I will complicate the picture further by considering the religious diversity that exists amongst Muslim communities themselves. Can Muslims themselves cope with religious diversity within their own community? I will argue that there are many Muslims in Britain who do strive for Muslim unity but that there is a growing problem of sectarianism where some Muslim schools of thought persecute other schools of thought.

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Faith requires belief, but rationality does not require truth-aiming

Joshua Mugg¹

Abstract:

A common objection to religious faith claims that faith is unreasonable because it requires believing without sufficient evidence. This objection assumes that if faith in God is rational then the belief that God exists must be rational. In an effort to undercut this assumption, Daniel McKaughan (2013) suggests that faith need not involve belief. I agree that the assumption is false, but disagree with McKaughan's reasons for rejecting it. McKaughan offers two accounts of faith which, he claims, do not involve belief: 'trusting acceptance' (faith is acting as though there is person (God) upon whom one can rely) and 'hopeful affirmation' (faith that p is belief that p is possible and desire that p). These accounts of faith undercut the above assumption because faith in God does not entail belief that God exists. I argue that both accounts of faith do involve belief. I argue that acceptance should be understood as a kind of belief. If we accept an account of belief that is stringent enough to exclude acceptance from being a kind of belief, then we violate parsimony in multiplying psychological kinds. I draw on recent criticism of Tamar Gendler (2008, 2012) by Eric Mandelbaum (2013) and Graham Hubbs (2013) to argue that belief, with its many modes (e.g. implicit, explicit, and dispositional) can do the theoretic work that new psychological kinds (such as belief or acceptance) are supposed to do. I then argue that the hopeful affirmation account of faith tacitly relies upon acceptance, and thus suffers the same problem as the trusting acceptance account. I then argue that the above assumption is false because there is an equivocation between an epistemic and an all-things-considered ought. I argue, drawing on work from Mugg (2013),

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that if a rational agent always aims to form true beliefs, then rationality and morality come apart.

The Theistic Stance and the Tu Quoque

Nathan D. Oseroff¹

When choosing between conflicting theories of rationality a second-order problem arises: what standards should be adopted when choosing between conflicting theories of rationality? There are many different standards that, if accepted, permit one to adopt almost any theory of rationality one chooses. This may indicate that, as apologists such as Tillich and Barth argue, no theory of rationality is itself rationally defensible. Thus, one retort to the question of whether the theistic stance can be rationally adopted is, ‘According to which theory of rationality?’ Depending on the standard, it may be equally rational, more rational, or less rational than non-theistic stances to adopt the theistic stance, and the theist is free to choose whichever standard they desire. In this paper I focus on one standard, *comprehensively critical rationalism*, that may permit rationally adopting the theistic stance, explain why comprehensively critical rationalism differs significantly from the standard known as *comprehensive rationalism*, give a brief historical overview illustrating how comprehensively critical rationalism is compatible with the theistic stance, and elaborate on whether the theist ought to prefer comprehensively critical rationalism or comprehensive rationalism.

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Ontological Hierarchy & Gradual Rationality of Religious Beliefs System

Qodratullah Qorbani¹

Abstract:

The nature of religious beliefs is one of the most important questions which philosophers of religion are concerned to them. In this case, there are some theories like fundamentalism, Coherentism, Holism and Reliabilism which try to justify maintaining to religious beliefs and show their rationality. In this paper, it is tries to explain rationality of religious beliefs by new approach. In this approach, religious propositions are considered as system of beliefs that are consisted of three fundamental, intermediate and marginal beliefs, and between them there are some ontological and epistemological relations. In this system, Fundamental Beliefs are ontologically in the highest stage, and have the highest level of rationality, universality and constancy, and there is the least possibility of their changeability and effectiveness. Intermediate Beliefs, which are depended on fundamental ones and the result of how they are interpreted, are in the farther down level and have relative rationality, constancy and universality, and subjected to altering and be effected by epistemic and non-epistemic factors. Marginal Beliefs are placed in the lowest ontological and epistemological level, and have the lease rationality, constancy and universality, and are greatly subjected to altering and accepting more effects. In this ontological system, there are some beliefs in the same level that have unique ontological and epistemological stage, but with different functions. Ontological and epistemological differences of three beliefs are caused to their different rationality which can be named as ontological hierarchy and gradual rationality of religious beliefs system.

Keywords: Rationality, Religious Beliefs, Gradual and Hierarchical Levels, Universality, Constancy, Changeability.

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Relation between Religions and Sciences: Status of Ideal Concepts in Great Religions and Modern Sciences

Mazdak Rajabi¹

Abstract:

There are some ideal notions such as freedom of human beings, being finite of the universe and status of human beings in such a universe by which there has been changed the relation between religion and science in the era we live. In this paper I would try to draw out a basic approach to the ideas mentioned above, and explain how religion in a “new perspective” might be consistent with modern science, albeit these two realms has always seemed to be against each other.

Key words: ideal concepts, freedom of human beings, being finite of the universe, relation between human and the universe.

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The Epistemological Value of God's Existence: Epistemological Pro-theism Revisited

Roohola Ramzani

Abstract:

If and how God's existence matters has been recently put forward by some philosophers of religion as a philosophically significant question. The question is developed basically through what I call a value-based approach. The core argumentation in this approach is to show whether God's existence is (in)compatible with certain values all or some of human beings would prefer to have. In this paper, an epistemological sort of pro-theism can be distinguished which conditions the possibility of knowledge to the existence of God. In my research I intend to examine if and to what extent this kind of pro-theism is viable. Besides, identifying axiological reasoning as based on reason-to-wish as opposed to reason-to-believe, I intend to study the nature of axiological reasoning in general and with regards to God's existence.

Keywords: axiological reasoning · pro-theism · anti-theism · reason to wish · reason to believe

‘What is interfaith discourse? Meaningful deconstruction and eclectic reconstruction within an Averroism alethiometer’

Thng Yi Ren¹

Abstract:

Interfaith discourse represents a vanguard project operating on the site of the modern. Firstly, singular visions of religious truth altercates against secular preferences for pluralistic accommodation. Moreover, where different religions jostle mutually against competing, and seemingly incommensurate claims, cumulatively this transforms interfaith discourse as an endeavour of academic and policy desire. Yet, a mark of ambivalence and even ostensible failure nullifies this platform. Where some question the feasibility of this endeavour, others lament a possible squalid descent where different religions overcompensate for the sake of *agreement*, rather than resolution.

Perhaps this modern expectation of ‘interfaith discourse’, where it bridges the West to East or resolve the separation to the unification is potentially a misnomer and utile fiction. The processes of engagement, deconstruction and reconstruction do not occur within an intellectual or cultural vacuum; rather they intermesh against a backdrop of divergent cultural milieus, prevalent moral fashions and intellectual preferences. Using the intellectual trajectory of Averroism, intercultural and inter-religious discourse occurred as a historical fact. However, further meaning can be elucidated through positioning Averroism’s legacy as a *instructive phenomenon* of interfaith discourse across time and space, and across civilisational and cultural lines. The divergent outcomes of interfaith discourse over different centuries reveal *particularised brands*, rather than a uniform brand, possible within interfaith discourse.

Within Averroism’s legacy, the dominant intellectual concerns are:

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1) the intra based exchanges of Ibn Rushd against both his predecessors (Al-Farabi, Al Ghazali) and his immediate contemporaries.

2) the percolation of Ibn Rushd's canonical thought, specifically *falsafa*, as intellectual predicates for European medieval and Renaissance religious thought

3) the re-emergence of Ibn Rushd in modern Islamic thought, notably shaped by (Western) spectres of Renan and Strauss

By shifting the frame away from intellectual history onto a frame of interfaith discourse, the meta question of *why* this particular configuration of Averroism's legacy provides answers as to key tenets that characterise interfaith discourse: interpretive protocols, the influences, prejudices and agendas of participants, and a priori expectations hitched upon the outcomes of the interfaith discourse exercise. This framework diagnose past and present successes and failures of interfaith discourse, while clarifying existing contours of interfaith discourse for future application.

God is still a person; a reply to Plantinga's objection

Mohammad Saeedimehr¹

Abstract:

In *The Nature of Necessity*, Plantinga raises some objections to Aquinas' view that God has an essence which is identical with Him. One of Plantinga's objections to this view is that it implies God's being an *abstract* object and thus not a *person*. The summary of his argument is that since the essence of a thing is nothing but the sum of its essential properties, to be identical with one's essence is to be identical to a kind of property and since properties are abstract entities, the assumption that God is identical with His essence leads to the unreasonable and odd result that God is not a concrete but an abstract object. In this paper I shall argue that Plantinga's objection against Aquinas' view is irrelevant: The main flaw in Plantinga's argument seems to be that it criticizes Aquinas' view -as one presented in the framework of medieval metaphysics- on the basis of contemporary analytic metaphysics. As far as it concerns to the present issue, however, the relevant difference between the jargons of these two metaphysical systems must not be neglected. What Aquinas and other medieval philosophers including Muslim philosophers mean by terms such as 'essence' and 'property' is essentially different from its meaning in the terminology of current analytic philosophers. Moreover, a medieval thinker is not bound to endorse the contemporary theory of abstract objects. Considering the own characteristics of the medieval metaphysics we may conclude that the idea of identity between God and His essence is a consistent and reasonable one which does not imply the rejection of God's being a person.

Keywords: God's essence, property, abstract object, medieval metaphysics, Plantinga, Aquinas.

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Title: Religion the New Face of Colonialism

John Sodiq Sanni¹

Abstract

The existential reality in the world is one which can be described as a battle between God and society. This has taken different nature in the past, especially when one looks at colonialism and how most parts of Africa had to be subdued and ‘instrumentalised’ for the self aggrandizement of the colonialists. In recent times, one sees an increasing resurgence of religious terrorism as a radical form of domination, operation and control of political, social and economic structures.

Focusing on Africa, I will explore how Ayatollah Khomeini’s “Iranian Revolution” and its mandates continue to have a ripple effect on most parts of Africa and the world at large. It will also show how religion has become a new tool for state control and the advancement of political docket. And how the attempt on making the world a *dar islam*, “the house of Islam” present a danger of either a conscious or an unconscious colonisation of the world, especially Africa.

An attempt will be made to proffer a possible solution (s) to the situation by exploring how Islamic epistemological and hermeneutical enquires can resonate with society’s epistemology as a means of bringing about coexistence in difference or respect regardless of the ‘separation of unification’.

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Considering Islam from the Perspective of Neurotheology

Alireza Sayadmansour¹

Abstract:

“Neurotheology” refers to the multidisciplinary field of scholarship that seeks to understand the relationship between the human brain and religion. However, neurotheology can benefit from the rich doctrines, tenets and traditions of Islam and Muslim scholarship as a useful and more specific perspective. Thus, it will be important to determine how neurotheology might be applicable to basic core values and traditions practiced within the four dimensions of Islam [Islam, Īmān, Īhsān, and the End of time]. Islamic ritualistic practices not only involve exoteric objective traditions of Islam, but also include subjective inner training of self, which is the result of neurological processes of the various components of brain structures relevant to neurotheological scholarship. Furthermore, neurotheology might be useful for understanding the rationale of specific elements of Islam as they relate to the human experience on personal level, such as the effects of prayer, fasting and other rituals, as well as on social aspects which include community based rituals, some of which are unique to Islam. The benefits of these practices on human mind would expand our horizon in the empiric field of neuroscience and enhance our enlightenment. The goal of this article is to introduce neurotheology in general, and to consider its possible applications in the context of Islam.

Key words: Brain, Causality, Functional Brain Imaging, Islam, Morality, Neurotheology, Prayer, Ritual, Spirituality

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Muslim women and religious empowerment

Fatin Shabbar ¹

Recent western feminist perspective about Islam is best described as cautious and confused because although feminism increasingly acknowledges religion as an important institution in many women's lives, it still considers Islam as an oppressive institution that is particularly discriminative against women. Therefore, the trend of 'tolerating religion' in recent feminist literature does not promise an understanding of women's empowerment through religion particularly Islam. In fact, a large body of literature reflected in western media and western politics (including the banning of Hijab in few countries) is very much committed to liberate Muslim women from Islam.

In this paper I argue that western feminist analysis of Islam fails to acknowledge the different ways in which Muslim women practice religion as a site of strength and empowerment. I focus in this argument on two themes that emerged from my recent research with Iraqi women. The first theme focuses on Islamic role modelling particularly for Shi'a Muslim women. In this theme I analyse women's political and cultural mobilization of certain Islamic female figures (such as 'Al SaydahZaynab') to advance the cause of women's liberation/development in their society. The second theme of the paper focuses on women's spiritual mobilization of Islam to claim moral power and develop their resilience. In both themes I use Islamic feminism as the theoretical basis for my analysis and as a guiding perspective that informs the process of arguments and the reinterpretation of Islamic principles.

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Pervasiveness of metaphor: study of different types of language usage in religious language

Javad Taheri¹

Abstract:

This study is a contribution to achieve a more accurate understanding of how metaphor becomes ubiquitous in religion through the different ways of language usage. It first introduces different approaches toward the nature of metaphor by which it distinguishes the cognitive definitions of metaphor from the non-cognitive ones. This section concludes that the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) provided by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live by* (1980), compared with other theories is more efficient and more successful in describing the nature and the function of metaphor in language and thought. Also, because of the high explanatory power of the theory, it can be a better help to meet the purpose of the present work. In the next part of the paper in hand, there is an explanation of the ways language is used in religion. These ways are some types of usage in religious language named by Luther J. Binkley (1962) as Empirical, Tautological, Emotive, Performatory or Ceremonial, Prescriptive, Mythical and Paradoxical usages. After all, the study explains how, in terms of CMT and with regard to the mentioned different types of language usages, we can say that the metaphor is pervasive in religious language.

Keywords: religious language, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), ubiquity and Pervasiveness of metaphor

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Between Secular Pluralism and Religious Exclusivism Some Observations in the context of Peace, Sustainability and the Religious Other

Muhammad Suheyl Umar¹

Abstract:

That our public life needs whatever wisdom we can find, whether religious or secular; That the Scriptures and the Wisdom Traditions of man are a rich source of such wisdom; That our religious and secular world needs frameworks, patterns, settlements and institutions within which this and other wisdoms (both religious and secular) can be put forward, learned, taught, explained, discussed, disputed, deliberated about and have practical effects in public life; That in the contemporary world and in our present environment the ways of doing this that have been worked out have considerable potential, but that they need to be both critiqued and developed much further; That there is a special need to do fuller justice in the public sphere to religious intensities, those deep and powerful convictions, understandings, desires, community attachments, habits and practices that are at the heart of each tradition, and that one vital way of doing so is by thorough engagement with the scriptural texts that are at the core of their identities; And, finally, that because religious intensities in the public sphere rightly give rise to deep fears of fanaticism, divisive confrontation and bloody conflict, one of the greatest needs is for the healthy intensity of passionately wise faith.

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RULING THE FAITH: FATWA AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN INDONESIA

Pradana Boy Zulian¹

This paper discusses *fatwa* and its relations to religious diversity within Islam in Indonesia. It will analyse the role and position of *fatwa* in shaping the discourse and practice of religious diversity in the country and ideological affinities underline the *fatwa*. The problem related to religious diversity in Indonesia can be clearly seen by presenting the condition of minority religious groups which are susceptible of being subjects of violence and discriminations. In recent years, a number of religiously motivated violence sparked in several parts of the country such continuous violence addressed to Ahmadiyah community as in many parts of West Java. The same situation also happened to Shi'ite community in East Java, which recently being labeled as deviant by a *fatwa* issued by East Java Province MUI. All those cannot be separated from the fatwa on religious diversity. In other words, fatwa has turned as threat to diversity of religion in Indonesia.

This paper will be organized into several sections. In the first part, it will present MUI's *fatwa* pertaining religious diversity and arguments the fatwa bodies proposed in issuing the *fatwa* that against religious diversity. Next, in order to be able to analyse the *fatwa* against the backdrop of Indonesian pluralistic nature, it will also discuss the realities of the plurality of Islam and religious pluralism in Indonesia, how it develops in the courses of Indonesian history, and how different groups of Muslims in Indonesia perceive the fact. In the next section, it will direct the discussion to the discourse of Islam and pluralism in contemporary settings. The last part of this chapter will

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be the analysis of *fatwa* on religious diversity in Indonesia and its influence on the discourse and practice of religious diversity among Muslim circles as well social impacts it brings. It will further analyse the ideological outlook underlining all *fatwa* related to pluralism and or pluralistic society in Indonesia.