



International conference

**NEW PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL  
FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM  
DIALOGUE**

Portorož, May 27–29, 2019

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS



International conference  
**NEW PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS  
FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE**

Portorož, May 27–29, 2019

Mednarodna konferenca  
**NOVI FILOZOFSKI IN TEOLOŠKI TEMELJI  
ZA KRŠČANSKO-ISLAMSKI DIALOG**

Portorož, 27.–29. maj, 2019

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS  
PROGRAM IN POVZETKI



KOPER 2019

**International conference NEW PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE**

**Programme and Abstracts**

**Mednarodna konferenca NOVI FILOZOFSKI IN TEOLOŠKI TEMELJI ZA KRŠČANSKO-ISLAMSKI DIALOG**

**Program in povzetki**

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# CONTENTS

- 7 INTRODUCTION
- 9 UVOD
- 13 PROGRAMME/PROGRAM
- 25 ABSTRACTS
- 27 **Reza Akbari**  
The Role of Conceptual Metaphors in the Fruitfulness of Interreligious Dialogues: Interreligious Dialogue as Friendly Co-Travelling
- 28 **Gorazd Andrejč**  
Religious Freedom and the Epistemic Limitations of Religious Belief
- 30 **Andrew Ashdown**  
An exploration of Christian-Muslim relations in Syria, 2000–2018: Contextualising the religious landscape, historical and contemporary dynamics, and eastern Christian frameworks of engagement
- 31 **Hamidreza Ayatollahy**  
The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue: Coexistence or Cooperation?
- 32 **Maurits Berger**  
What Do We Mean by ‘Radical Islam’? – A Dutch Case Study
- 33 **Maja Bjelica**  
The Turkish Alevis and their Interreligious Dialogical Inclination
- 34 **Nadja Furlan Štante**  
Women’s Voices in Christian-Muslim Interreligious Dialogue – a Venue for Religious Peace-building

- 35 **Mohsen Javadi**  
The Primacy of Justice in Islamic Social Ethics: a Solution for Religious and Cultural Conflicts
- 36 **Janez Juhant**  
Religion, Society and Mystics: The Spiritual Ground(s) of Societal Life
- 38 **Carool Kersten**  
Of Double Genealogies and West-East Investigations: Resetting The Christian-Muslim Encounter
- 39 **Elmar Kuhn**  
Is the Clash of Religions the Future of Our World?
- 40 **Saida Mirsadri**  
Process Islam: Towards a Metaphysical Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue
- 41 **Jafar Morvarid**  
Language-Games Philosophy as a Philosophical Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue
- 43 **Joshua Ralston**  
Comparative Political Theology: a Framework for Christian-Muslim Dialogue
- 44 **Rasoul Rasoulipour**  
Philosophy of Religion: An Existential Approach
- 45 **Mohammad Saeedimehr**  
Islamic Mysticism and Muslim-Christian Dialogue

- 46 **Klaus von Stosch**  
Comparative Theology and Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Relationship  
of Mutual Foundation
- 47 **Lenart Škof**  
A New Temporality of Religion: On Political Theology and its Ethical  
Core
- 48 **Javad Taheri**  
Possibility of a Comparative Theology According to Allamah Sayyed  
Muhammad Hossein Tabataba'i's Philosophy
- 49 **Bojan Žalec**  
Religious Exclusivism, Dialogue and Coexistence





## INTRODUCTION

Today, few would disagree that interreligious dialogue is an indispensable tool (or medium) for mutual coexistence, acceptance and peace. In recent times, the importance of such dialogue has been highlighted by the revival and the resurgence of religion (de-secularisation), relevant in variety of contexts – e.g. in the context of democratic politics, the context of political extremism and terrorism, or that of integration or non-integration of immigrants who are often of different faith and/or culture than that of the host communities.

At the same time, we should also ask critically whether interreligious dialogue has indeed been as beneficial and useful as the dialogue activists claim it has and as they want it to be. While dialogue between the religions can be understood as a pressing step in the modern development of intercultural relations, it can only work when it is founded on careful investigation of their foundations.

At this conference, we want to reconceptualize the question of the importance of an active and well informed interreligious dialogue. The focus will be on in-depth, philosophical-theological conversation between Christians and Muslims. We will explore new ways in which philosophical theories can foster Christian-Muslim understanding.

Examples of the questions to be addressed are:

- Can Christian and Muslim theologies as equal partners in conversation, and as comparative theologies, help us foster better intercultural understanding?
- What are best philosophical models and theories of dialogue for framing the theological conversation between European Christians on one hand and Iranian and other Middle Eastern Muslims on the other?
- Is it the Aristotelian, Platonist, one of the modern philosophical foundations (Continental, Analytical, Wittgensteinian, Phenomenological, Deconstructivist, Pragmatist, or other), or a combination of these?

- How can the experiences and perspectives of the relevant “in-house” minorities (Muslim minorities in Europe, Christian minorities in the Middle East), as well as those of Christians and Muslims in special social and political circumstances (refugees, migrants, displaced persons), inform contemporary philosophical-theological dialogue between Christianity and Islam?
- And, how should philosophical and comparative theologies address the contemporary criticisms of interreligious dialogue, which brand it as a failed tool for better understanding between cultures, or as a Western invention and tool for cultural domination, or as a cover-up for power-relations between groups in power, as opposed to empowering those who are often voiceless and excluded from interreligious dialogue (“heretical” sects, secularists, women, sexual and other minorities, migrants)?

At the conference, we will address these and related questions in carefully prepared lectures, delivered in pairs during thematically ordered 1,5 hour sessions of two speakers, with ample time for responses and discussions.

**The conference is held under the Honorary Patronage of the President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor.**

## UVOD

Danes bi malokdo zanikal, da je medreligijski dialog nepogrešljivo orodje (ali medij) za vzajemno sobivanje, sprejemanje in mir. V zadnjem času je pomembnost takšnega dialoga izpostavljena z oživljanjem in ponovnim vznikanjem religije (desekularizacijo), ki je relevantna v različnih kontekstih – na primer v kontekstu demokratične politike, kontekstu političnega ekstremizma in terorizma ali kontekstu integracije oziroma neintegracije priseljencev, katerih verska in / ali kulturna pripadnost je največkrat drugačna od tiste, ki določa gostiteljsko skupnost.

Obenem bi se morali kritično vprašati, ali je bil medreligijski dialog resnično dobrodejen in koristen, kot to trdijo in želijo aktivisti dialoga. Dialog med religijami je sicer v sodobnem razvoju medkulturnih odnosov mogoče razumeti kot nujni korak, vendar je lahko učinkovit zgolj pod pogojem, da je osnovan na pozornem raziskovanju religijskih temeljev.

Na konferenci želimo rekonceptualizirati vprašanje o pomembnosti aktivnega in dobro poučenega medreligijskega dialoga. Poudarek konference bo usmerjen na poglobljen filozofsko-teološki razgovor med kristjani in muslimani. Raziskali bomo nove načine s katerimi lahko filozofske teorije spodbujajo krščansko-muslimansko razumevanje.

Nekatera vprašanja, ki jih bomo obravnavali, so:

- Ali lahko krščanske in muslimanske teologije kot enakovredne partnerice v pogovoru in kot primerjalne teologije pomagajo pri spodbujanju boljšega medkulturnega razumevanja?
- Kateri so najboljši filozofski modeli in katere teorije dialoga za oblikovanje teološkega pogovora med evropskimi kristjani na eni strani ter iranskimi in drugimi bližnjevzhodnimi muslimani na drugi?
- Ali je ta model aristotelski, platonistični, katere izmed sodobnejših filozofskih temeljnih teorij (kontinentalna, analitična, Wittgenstainska, fenomenološka, dekonstruktivistična, pragmatistična ali druga) ali kombinacija teh?

- Kako lahko izkušnje in perspektive relevantnih »domačih« manjšin (muslimanskih manjšin v Evropi, krščanskih manjšin na Bližnjem vzhodu), pa tudi kristjanov in muslimanov v posebnih družbenih in političnih okoliščinah (begunci, migranti, razseljene osebe), osveščajo sodobni filozofsko-teološki dialog med krščanstvom in islamom?
- In kako naj filozofske in primerjalne teologije naslavljajo sodobne kritike medreligijskega dialoga, ki slednjega označujejo za neustrezno sredstvo za boljše razumevanje med kulturami, ali kot izum Zahoda in sredstvo kulturne dominacije, ali kot prikrivanje odnosov moči med skupinami na oblasti, kot nasprotje opolnomočenju tistih, ki so pogosto neslišni in izključeni iz medreligijskega dialoga (»heretične« sekte, sekularisti, ženske, spolne in druge manjšine, migranti)?

Na konferenci bomo ta in z njimi povezana vprašanja obravnavali v okviru temeljito pripravljenih predavanj, ki jih bomo izvedli v dvojicah, v obliki tematsko urejenih, uro in pol trajajočih zasedanj, ki bodo dovoljevala obilo časa za odzive in razprave.

**Konferenca poteka pod častnim pokroviteljstvom predsednika Republike Slovenije Boruta Pahorja.**

**CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY / ORGANIZATOR KONFERENCE:**

Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper  
(Slovenia) / Inštitut za filozofske študije Znanstveno-raziskovalnega  
središča Koper (Slovenija)

**In collaboration with / V sodelovanju z:**

Iranian Association for Philosophy of Religion (Iran)

Centre for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies, University of  
Paderborn (Germany)

European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA) – World Religions Class  
(Austria)

Society for Comparative Religion (Slovenia) / Društvo za primerjalno  
religiologijo (Slovenija)

**ORGANIZING AND PROGRAMME COMMITTEE /  
ORGANIZACIJSKI IN PROGRAMSKI ODBOR:**

Dr. Lenart ŠKOF, Chair of Programme Committee / predsednik  
Programskega odbora

Dr. Gorazd ANDREJČ, Chair of Organizing Committee / predsednik  
Organizacijskega odbora

Dr. Klaus VON STOSCH

Dr. Nadja FURLAN ŠTANTE

Dr. Maja BJELICA

Mr. Javad TAHERI



## PROGRAMME / PROGRAM

**International Conference / Mednarodna konferenca**  
**NEW PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR**  
**CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE /**  
**NOVI FILOZOFSKI IN TEOLOŠKI TEMELJI**  
**ZA KRŠČANSKO-ISLAMSKI DIALOG**

Hotels Bernardin, Portorož, May 27–29, 2019 /  
Hoteli Bernardin, Portorož, 27.–29. maj 2019

**MONDAY, May 27, 2019 / PONEDELJEK, 27. maj 2019**

**14.00–16.00**

Registration / Registacija

**14.00–15.00**

Welcome coffee break / Dobrodošlica  
(Hotel Bernardin, Hall / dvorana Emerald II)

**15:00–15:50**

Protocolar Speeches and Conference Opening /  
Protokolarni govori in otvoritev konference

**Protocolar speeches / Protokolarni govori:**

**Prof Dr Rado Pišot**, Director of the Science and Research Centre Koper /  
direktor Znanstveno-raziskovalnega središča Koper

**Prof Dr Nadja Furlan Štante**, Science and Research Centre Koper /  
Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Leader of Research Project on  
Interreligious Dialogue (Slovenian Research Agency) / vodja raziskovalnega  
projekta o medreligijskem dialogu (ARRS)

**H.E. the Ambassador** of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Slovenia **Kazem  
Shafei / Nj. eksc. veleposlanik** Islamske republike Iran v Sloveniji

**Msgr Dr Jurij Bizjak**, Bishop of Koper / koprski škof

**Mag. Nevzet Porić**, Secretary General of Islamic Community in the  
Republic of Slovenia / generalni tajnik Islamske skupnosti v Republiki  
Sloveniji

**Dr Gregor Lesjak**, Director of the Office for Religious Communities,  
Ministry of Culture of Republic of Slovenia / direktor Urada za verske  
skupnosti, Ministrstvo za kulturo Republike Slovenije

**Conference Opening / Otvoritev konference:**

**Prof Dr Lenart Škof**, Head of the Institute for Philosophical Studies/  
predstojnik Inštituta za filozofske študije, ZRS Koper and the Chair  
of the Conference Organizing Committee / ZRS Koper in predsednik  
organizacijskega odbora konference

**Assoc Prof Dr Gorazd Andrejč**, ZRS Koper, Faculty of Arts, University of  
Maribor and Woolf Institute, Cambridge / Inštitut za filozofske študije,  
ZRS Koper, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Mariboru in Woolf Institute,  
Cambridge, Chair of the Conference Programme Committee / predsednik  
programskega odbora konference

**Prof Dr Elmar Kuhn**, European Academy of Sciences and Arts / Evropska  
akademija znanosti in umetnosti, – Dean of Class World Religions / dekan  
Razreda svetovne religije



**Prof Dr Mohsen Javadi**, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance for Cultural Affairs / namestnik ministra za kulturo in islamskega vodenja za kulturne zadeve, Islamic Republic of Iran / Islamska republika Iran

**Prof Dr Klaus von Stosch**, Head of the Centre for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies of the University of Paderborn / vodja Centra za primerjalno teologijo in kulturne študije Univerze v Paderbornu

**16:00–17:30**

**Panel 1**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Lenart Škof**

**Klaus von Stosch:** *Comparative Theology and Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Relationship of Mutual Foundation / Primerjalna teologija in krščansko-muslimanski dialog: Odnos skupnih temeljev*

**Hamidreza Ayatollahy:** *The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue: Coexistence or Cooperation? / Namen medreligijskega dialoga: sobivanje ali sodelovanje?*

**17:45–19:15**

**Discussion Panel - Round table /  
Razprava - Okrogla miza**

On the Futures of Islam and Muslims in Europe's Democracies / O prihodnostih islama in muslimanov v evropskih demokracijah (moderators / moderatorja: Gorazd Andrejč and Carool Kersten)

**Participants: Elmar Kuhn** (EASA Dean of Class World Religions) / (EASA, dekan Razreda svetovne religije), **Rasoul Rasoulipour** (Kharazmi University / Univerza Kharazmi, Tehran, Iran), **Mari Jože Osredkar** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology) / (Univerza v Ljubljani, Teološka fakulteta), **Anja Zalta** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts) / (Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta), **Maurits Berger** (University of Leiden) / (Univerza v Leidnu)

**19:30 Dinner / Večerja**

**TUESDAY, May 28, 2019 / TOREK, 28. maj 2019**

All panels in Hotel Histrion / Vsi paneli v Hotelu Histrion,  
Asteria conference room / Hotel Histrion, konferenčna dvorana Asteria

**9:00-10:30**

**Panel 2**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Joshua Ralston**

**Saida Mirsadri:** *Process Islam: Towards a Metaphysical Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue / Procesni islam – k metafizičnim temeljem za medreligijski dialog*

**Nadja Furlan Štante:** *Women's Voices in Christian-Muslim Interreligious Dialogue – a Venue for Religious Peace-building / Ženski glasovi v krščansko-muslimanskem medreligijskem dialogu – A Venue for Religious Peacebuilding / prostor za izgradnjo religijskega miru*

**9:00-10:30**

**Parallel panel 2A / Vzporedni panel 2A:**

**Postdoc & PhD students**

Hotel Histrion, Larus conference room / konferenčna soba Larus

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Gorazd Andrejč**

**Maja Bjelica:** *The Turkish Alevis and their Interreligious Dialogical Inclination / Turški aleviji in njihova medreligijska dialoška naperjenost*

**Javad Taheri:** *Possibility of a Comparative Theology According to Allamah Sayyed Muhammad Hossein Tabataba'i's Philosophy / Možnost primerjalne teologije po filozofiji Mohameda Huseina Tabataba'ija*

**10:30-11:00** Coffee Break / Odmor za kavo

**11:00-12:30**

**Panel 3**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Klaus von Stosch**

**Janez Juhant:** *Religion, Society and Mystics: The Spiritual Ground(s) of Societal Life / Religija, družba in mistika: duhovni temelj(i) družbenega življenja*

**Rasoul Rasoulipour:** *Philosophy of Religion: An Existential Approach / Filozofija religije: eksistencialni pristop*

**12:30-14:30** Lunch Break / Odmor za kosilo

**14:30-16:00**

**Panel 4**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Rasoul Rasoulipour**

**Carool Kersten:** *Of Double Genealogies and West-East Investigations: Resetting The Christian-Muslim Encounter / O dvojnih genealogijah in preiskavah med Zhodom in Vzhodom: ponastavitev krščansko-muslimanskega srečanja*

**Lenart Škof:** *A New Temporality of Religion: On Political Theology and its Ethical Core / Nova temporalnost religije: o politični teologiji in njenem etičnem jedru*

**16:00-16:30** Coffee Break / Odmor za kavo

**16:30-18:00**

**Panel 5**

Chair/Predsedujoča: **Nadja Furlan Štante**

**Maurits Berger:** *What Do We Mean by 'Radical Islam'? – A Dutch Case Study*  
*/ Kaj mislimo z »radikalnim islamom«: nizozemska študija primera*

**Andrew Ashdown:** *An exploration of Christian-Muslim relations in Syria, 2000–2018: Contextualising the religious landscape, historical and contemporary dynamics, and eastern Christian frameworks of engagement*  
*/ Raziskava krščansko-muslimanskih odnosov v Siriji, 2000–2018: Kontekstualizacija religijske krajine, zgodovinskih in sodobnih dinamik ter vzhodnih krščanskih okvirjev spoprijemanja*

**19:30** Dinner / Večerja

**21:00**

**Christian-Muslim prayer / Krščansko-muslimanska molitev**  
(St. Bernardine Church) / (Cerkev sv. Bernardina)

Hosted by / Vodi Elmar Kuhn, with the cooperation of / sodelujeta Janez Juhant and / in Reza Akbari

**WEDNESDAY, May 29, 2019 / SREDA, 29. maj 2019**

**9:00-10:30**

**Panel 6**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Maurits Berger**

**Mohammad Saedimehr:** *Islamic Mysticism and Muslim-Christian Dialogue*  
*/ Islamski mysticizem in muslimansko-krščanski dialog*

**Joshua Ralston:** *Comparative Political Theology: a Framework for Christian-Muslim Dialogue* / *Primerjalna politična teologija: okvir za krščansko-muslimanski dialog*

**10:30-11:00** Coffee Break / Odmor za kavo

**11:00-12:30**

**Panel 7**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Carool Kersten**

**Gorazd Andrejč:** *Religious Freedom and the Epistemic Limitations of Religious Belief* / *Religijska svoboda in spoznavne omejitve religijskega prepričanja*

**Jafar Morvarid:** *Language-Games Philosophy as a Philosophical Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue* / *Jezikovne igre – filozofija kot filozofska osnova za medreligijski dialog*

**12:30-14:30** Lunch Break / Odmor za kosilo

**14:30-16:00**

**Panel 8**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Hamidreza Ayatollahy**

**Elmar Kuhn:** *Is the Clash of Religions the Future of Our World? / Ali je spopad religij prihodnost našega sveta?*

**Mohsen Javadi:** *The Primacy of Justice in Islamic Social Ethics: a Solution for Religious and Cultural Conflicts / Prednost pravičnosti pred velikodušnostjo v islamski družbeni etiki: rešitev za religijske in kulturne konflikte*

**16:00-16:30** Coffee Break / Odmor za kavo

**16:30-18:00**

**Panel 9**

Chair/Predsedujoči: **Jafar Morvarid**

**Bojan Žalec:** *Religious Exclusivism, Dialogue and Coexistence / Verski ekskluzivizem, dialog in sobivanje*

**Reza Akbari:** *The Role of Conceptual Metaphors in the Fruitfulness of Interreligious Dialogues: Interreligious Dialogue as Friendly Co-Travelling / Vloga konceptualnih metafor za plodnost medreligijskih dialogov: medreligijski dialog kot prijazno so-potovanje*

**18:15-19:00** Concluding Remarks / Sklepni razmisleki

**19:30** Dinner / Večerja

**21.00**

**Musicking Sound Dialogue with Zvenika /  
Muziciranje zvočnega razgovora s triom Zvenika**

A Muzofil collaboration / srečanje Združenja Muzofil  
(St. Bernardine Church) / (Cerkev sv. Bernardina)

The sound event will offer a musicking experience, exploring the dialogue between music and religion. The intent of this experience is to dissolve the borders that separate the performers and the audience through a sound dialogue, that will allow the participants to unveil the potential of mutual intertwinement of musical and religious bonds. /

Zvočni dogodek bo ponujal izkušnjo muziciranja, ki raziskuje dialog med glasbo in religijo. Smoter tega izkustva je s pomočjo zvočnega dialoga razblinjati meje med poslušalstvom in izvajalnimi telesi, ki bodo v skupnosti razgrinjali možnosti medsebojnega prepleta glasbenih in religijskih vezi.

## THE LIST OF SPEAKERS / SODELUJEJO

### Slovenian group / Slovenska skupina

**Prof Dr Lenart Škof**, Head of the Institute for Philosophical Studies ZRS Koper, Alma Mater Europaea ECM/ISH and EASA / predstojnik Inštituta za filozofske študije ZRS Koper, Alma Mater Europaea ECM / ISH in EASA

**Prof Dr Nadja Furlan Štante**, Institute for Philosophical Studies ZRS Koper / Inštitut za filozofske študije ZRS Koper

**Assoc Prof Dr Gorazd Andrejč**, Institute for Philosophical Studies ZRS Koper, University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts and Woolf Institute, Cambridge / Inštitut za filozofske študije ZRS Koper, Univerza v Mariboru, Filozofska fakulteta in Woolf Institute, Cambridge

**Dr Maja Bjelica**, Institute for Philosophical Studies ZRS Koper / Inštitut za filozofske študije ZRS Koper

**Prof Dr Bojan Žalec**, EASA and University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology / EASA in Univerza v Ljubljani, Teološka fakulteta

**Prof Dr Anja Zalta**, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts / Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta

**Prof Dr Mari Jože Osredkar**, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology / Teološka fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani

**Emer Prof Dr Janez Juhant**, EASA and University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology / EASA in Univerza v Ljubljani, Teološka fakulteta

### Iranian group / Irska skupina

**Prof Dr Hamidreza Ayatollahy**, Head of Iranian Association for Philosophy of Religion, Emeritus professor of Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran / vodja Irskega združenja za filozofijo religije, zaslužni profesor Univerze Allameh Tabataba'i v Teheranu, Iran

**Prof Dr Mohammad Saedimehr**, Professor at Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran / profesor na Univerzi Tarbiat Modares, Teheran, Iran



**Prof Dr Mohsen Javadi**, Professor at University of Qom / profesor na Univerzi v Qomu, Iran

**Prof Dr Reza Akbari**, Professor at Imam Sadiq University / profesor na Univerzi Imam Sadiq, Tehran, Iran

**Prof Dr Rasoul Rasoulipour**, Professor at Kharazmi University / profesor na Univerzi Kharazmi, Tehran, Iran

**Prof Dr Jafar Morvarid**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Faculty of Theology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad / docent za filozofijo, Teološka fakulteta, Univerza Ferdowsi v Mashhadu, Iran

**Ms. Saida Mirsadri**, Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy of Religion at Tehran University, Farabi College / doktorska kandidatka za filozofijo religije na Teheranski univerzi v Farabi College, Iran

**Mr. Javad Taheri**, Director of Iranian Association for Philosophy of Religion, Ph.D. Candidate in Philosophy of Religion at Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia / direktor Iranskega združenja za filozofijo religije, doktorski kandidat za filozofijo religije na Teološki fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani

### **Other speakers / Drugi govorniki**

**Prof Dr Klaus von Stosch**, Head of the Centre for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies of the University of Paderborn / vodja Centra za primerjalno teologijo in kulturne študije Univerze v Paderbornu

**Prof Dr Elmar Kuhn**, European Academy of Sciences and Arts – Dean of Class World Religions / Evropska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, dekan Razreda svetovne religije

**Prof Dr Maurits Berger**, University of Leiden / Univerza v Leidnu

**Prof Dr Carol Kersten**, Department of Theology and Religious Studies / Oddelek za teologijo in religijske študije, King's College London

**Prof Dr Joshua Ralston**, Faculty of Divinity, University of Edinburgh / Fakulteta za bogoslovje, Univerza v Edinburgu

**Rev Andrew Ashdown**, Winchester University / Univerza v Winchesteru



# ABSTRACTS



## **THE ROLE OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN THE FRUITFULNESS OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUES: INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS FRIENDLY CO-TRAVELLING**

**Reza AKBARI**

*Imam Sadiq University, Tehran, Iran*

Dialogue can be divided into numerous types following various criteria. For example, observing the people who engage in dialogues, there could be paternal, maternal, conjugal, and filial ones. Considering the goals of dialogue, there could be appreciative, critical, reflective, generative, and destructive dialogues. In a normative sense, we are faced with the following question: Which kinds of dialogue would be fruitful when there are two people from two different religions? To find the correct answer, we need to reconsider the goal of interreligious dialogue, and then to compare different kinds of dialogue according to their form and content. It seems that the aim of interreligious dialogue is mutual understanding in the realms of knowledge, emotion, and action, which paves the way for mutual cooperation. To reach this compound goal, one needs to have epistemic virtues such as open-mindedness and epistemic courage; and lack epistemic vices such as epistemic hauteur and epistemic animosity. By having the former and lacking the latter, and holding the goal of interreligious dialogue, the outcome would be humility, cooperation, and mutual respect, all of which are vital for developing a better life for all human beings. Because every religion considers itself a path to salvation, dialogue as friendly co-travelling is the best metaphor for the fruitfulness of every interreligious dialogue. Consider two strangers who are on the same trip. They talk, share their knowledge, understand their emotions and reasons for their actions, and help each other by confronting difficulties. By the end of their trip, they will have become good friends who will continue their relationship in the future.

## **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE EPISTEMIC LIMITATIONS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF**

**Gorazd ANDREJČ**

*ZRS Koper and University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts, Slovenia  
Woolf Institute, Cambridge, UK*

In this paper I argue that a principle of strong religious freedom is justified on the basis of the epistemic limitations of religious belief. These limitations are recognized by important strands of both Christian and Islamic philosophy and have been further clarified in modern philosophy.

The epistemic limitations of religious beliefs are most readily visible when analyzing religious disagreements. Most interreligious disagreements seem epistemically peculiar and different from many other important disagreements in society. While there is a broad consensus on the basic scientific methods for resolving disagreements between different scientific claims or theories, and while, in the realm of public morality, we at least have well-tested methods of reaching compromise and agreement on some central moral principles across most societies, there is no consensus at all across religious and non-religious life-stances as to how to resolve theological disagreements or, indeed, whether attempting to resolve them even makes sense. This holds for the most basic questions of religion, such as: Is there a god or any other kind of divinity? Is there one god or more? Is god a person or 'something' else? While very general criteria of internal consistency and the moral consequences of beliefs can be applied to religious beliefs across different traditions, these criteria cannot resolve most, or even many disagreements across religions.

While these epistemic limitations are recognized, to an extent, within both the Christian and the Islamic traditions, modern philosophy of religion has expressed these limitations more forcefully and has logically connected them to the ethical and political argument for religious freedom. After examining John Locke's argument for religious tolerance and Friedrich Schleiermacher's argument for religious freedom, I will introduce a Wittgensteinian perspective on interreligious disagreement which offers further support for

freedom of religion or belief. Despite the differences between their interpretations, the arguments of all three thinkers include the following conclusion: it is the very nature of religious beliefs which makes it senseless and unethical to pressure, force or expect individuals or communities to adopt, keep or abandon their religious beliefs on the basis of external authority, whether religious or political.

**AN EXPLORATION OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN SYRIA,  
2000–2018: CONTEXTUALIZING THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE,  
HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY DYNAMICS, AND EASTERN  
CHRISTIAN FRAMEWORKS OF ENGAGEMENT**

**Andrew ASHDOWN**  
*Winchester University, UK*

Researching Christian-Muslim relations in Syria between 2000 and 2018, this study provides historical and contemporary context, introduces the plural Christian and Muslim landscapes that coexist in Syria, and explores how this relationship has been impacted by the conflict. Examining the role of culture, religious leadership and sectarianism in the Middle Eastern context, it reflects on the recent influence of political Islam. Through qualitative fieldwork in Syria, the thesis explores efforts made by religious leaders to model inter-religious relations, seek reconciliation, and nurture humanitarian initiatives. Considering the contributions of Eastern Christian theologians, the study posits that, given eastern Christianity's historical encounter with plurality, the theology and spirituality of the eastern Church – the Antiochene paradigm – is uniquely placed to play a role in inter-religious dialogue in the face of contemporary political and religious challenges.

The thesis offers a unique contribution to understanding the religious landscape, particularly within government-held areas during the Syrian conflict, and to exploring how the 'Antiochene paradigm' can help inform contemporary Christian-Muslim dynamics in the face of the considerable challenges they face today.



## **THE PURPOSE OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: COEXISTENCE OR COOPERATION?**

**Hamidreza AYATOLLAHY**

*Iranian Association for Philosophy of Religion,  
Emeritus professor of Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran*

There have been many interreligious dialogues all over the world but the purposes of them have not been the same. In this paper, I will point out seven different purposes of interreligious dialogue and evaluate them and their attitudes.

In recent decades, the focus of formal interreligious dialogues has been directed to peace between religions. I will show that this approach is not sufficient and that its fruitfulness is very limited. If the purpose of interreligious dialogues is directed towards the coexistence of religions and among their followers, that is an intercultural dialogue that can result only in mutual understanding. I want to show that interreligious dialogues must go to a higher level than that, which is a level of cooperation. Religions try to propose a better life and guide their followers towards happiness in both spiritual and mundane life. Therefore, they attempt to remove obstacles to achieving the meaning of life and encourage people towards spirituality as well as the good life.

Believing in God as the origin of existence and in his omnipresence, and believing in life after death and resurrection as the consequence of our deeds, are the most important messages of religions. Although religions teach many different ideas, teaching these two main beliefs are their common tasks. I believe interreligious dialogues must be oriented towards a kind of cooperation which can enhance the lives of people who are facing the challenge of achieving a better goal for their lives. And yet, coexistence is not the totality of the responsibility of religions. At the end, I will suggest certain kinds of activities through which religions can cooperate for this purpose.

## **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'RADICAL ISLAM'? - A DUTCH CASE STUDY**

**Maurits BERGER**

*University of Leiden, Netherlands*

The notion of 'radical Islam' was first introduced in the Netherlands in 2003, and has been at the centre of attention of policymakers, intelligence services and academics ever since. In this presentation, we will see how these three actors have interacted in the past 15 years; they have all pursued the same truth, but their different aims and methods have led to different results.

We will see, for example, that the intelligence service has approached radicalism from an ideological (top-down) point of view, while most academics have used an anthropological (bottom-up) approach. We will also see how, in most studies, 'radical Islam' was quickly replaced by the term 'Salafism', which in turn acquired an uneasy balance between orthodoxy and radicalism in its meaning. The two questions that remained unanswered were 1) what exactly does "radicalism" mean, and 2) whether, and how, orthodoxy would lead to radicalism. Finally, we will see that security has played a key role in all the research on Islam in the Netherlands, to the extent that some scholars describe this phenomenon as the 'securitization of religion.'

For understandable reasons, policymakers were in need of concepts and notions concerning 'radical Islam' in order to develop policy measures. This presentation will argue that the interplay of policymakers, intelligence services and academics in their focus on 'radical Islam' has led to a development of terminology that is often not in touch with the reality of the everyday lives of Muslims.

## **THE TURKISH ALEVIS AND THEIR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGICAL INCLINATION**

**Maja BJELICA**

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The Alevis, the largest religious minority in Turkey, are officially recognized by Turkish society mainly as a cultural group that together with their heritage represents a specific part of “Turkishness” and therefore has contributed importantly to the Turkish national project since its inception. However, the publicly recognized cultural aspect of the Alevi heritage and way of life is only part of their identity. That identity, being rooted in oral tradition, is not fixed, as the political realm would like to show. The fluidity of the Alevi identity can be seen in their diverse religious practices, in the variety of adaptations of their rituals to the contemporary world, and in the differentiation of smaller communities in respect to the specific Anatolian region they belong to. Moreover, being ethnically diverse, they coexist as a community on the grounds of their philosophy and ethical stance that every person is important and equal, and that all human (and other) beings should coexist as brothers and sisters.

The proposed lecture presents the Alevis’ readiness for an interreligious dialogue as evident in their tolerance and openness towards the other(s) and through their understanding and practices of hospitality. The presentation is methodologically based on ethnographic fieldwork, extensive research by the presenter and personal experience. Focusing on a case study on hospitality, the lecture will strive to provide a possible understanding of the Alevi tendency towards peaceful and emphatic coexistence with other religions and cultures as a core part of their religious conduct. The experience of and perspective on the religious practices of the Turkish Alevi religious minority and their specific social circumstances through history can be more than relevant to contemporary philosophical and theological perspectives on interreligious dialogue.

## **WOMEN'S VOICES IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE – A VENUE FOR RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING**

**Nadja FURLAN ŠTANTE**

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This paper will address the question of how the power of feminine and women's voices within theologies (with an emphasis on Christianity and Islam) and interfaith dialogue are important in shaping the discourse of the role of religion in our time, and our capability of a full mutual and spiritual understanding. Although the voices of women and their engagement in interreligious dialogue and the religious establishment of peace, at least at a visible and formal level, is often left out and ignored, it is at informal levels, in the expression of concrete actions, that women's efforts to restore peace is very much alive and present. It should be noted, however, that the issue of equal recognition of the sexes or the recognition of women and their visible role at formal levels is, in fact, very closely connected to the question of understanding and positioning of the religious Other. Therefore, the key to the equal recognition of women's voices is one of the key components of a quality interreligious dialogue, or the key to the equal recognition of the religious Other. Both are crucial in transforming and raising human awareness at both the individual as well as the collective level. The issue of women's voices, as the missing dimensions of interreligious dialogue, will serve as a bridge between interreligious dialogue and the phenomenon of religious peace-building.

Consideration of a view that highlights the positive contribution of the various forms of women's voices in the process of re-evaluation of both sexes in the light of respect for gender equality and social justice will be investigated. The centrepiece here is an analysis of the hypothesis that every religion in its original doctrine pronounces egalitarianism and, in this context, also highlights the fundamental purpose of Islamic law, which is to defend social justice and the equality of each individual and thus reflect the equality of all before God.

## **THE PRIMACY OF JUSTICE IN ISLAMIC SOCIAL ETHICS: A SOLUTION FOR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS**

**Mohsen JAVADI**

*University of Qom, Iran*

Social ethics is used in two senses: (1) as a body of ethical principles and rules or personal virtues that contribute to the welfare and improvement of human social life, and (2) as a specific reading of the Gospel, which considers the main mission of religion to be the improvement of society. This article first explains the major principles of social ethics, then evaluates the importance of each principle, and finally discusses the main challenges of social ethics from an Islamic viewpoint.

Among the major principles of social ethics, the principles of respect for others—whether other individuals, institutions, or cultures—forgiveness and justice as the main element of regulating social life are analyzed. Afterwards, the reasons behind the primacy of justice over the other principles, such as forgiveness, are discussed. In the comparison between justice on the one hand and generosity or forgiveness on the other, priority has been given to justice. Although generosity and forgiveness are always recommended as personal decisions, they are not social requirements. One of the reasons for this priority is the role of justice as a general policy in keeping order in society. A society with a rule of justice is more enduring and inclusive than a society with a rule of generosity and forgiveness. Finally, the main challenges of social ethics are explored, and issues such as misusing others, self-centredness, practical materialism, the dominance of hedonism over wisdom, and bigotry are introduced as major obstacles to a perfect social life.

## **RELIGION, SOCIETY AND MYSTICS: THE SPIRITUAL GROUND(S) OF SOCIETAL LIFE**

**Janez JUHANT**

*EASA and University of Ljubljana, Slovenia*

Hans Küng stressed that without peace between religions there is no peace between nations or peoples. The reason for this is not only that religions are politically influential, but much more that religions are the most important anthropological source and therefore a condition for peace. Humans, as principally good and dialogical beings, are able to deepen, through interpersonal relationships, their mystical grounds, and so to promote peace in themselves and consequently among their cohabitants. This paper deals with solutions-finding methods of peace from this complex religious point of view. In general, the complicated societal life of the history of humanity has usually developed adequate tools to address this challenge and establish sustainable relationships between individuals and social units because religions played an important part in it. The task is much more difficult in postmodern societies, which stress the role of individual units. Consequently, they are no longer providing sufficient grounds for society to survive. According to Ortega y Gasset, the wo/man of today is luxuriating in destroying the grounds of her/his life. This is the most important political problem of contemporary societies.

In comparison to traditional societies, in which religion was an important anthropological presupposition and ground that provided the common material and spiritual grounds of life, in modern society this is no longer the case. Religions are losing their societal influence and the politics of today is unable to replace religion. This creates uncertainty in religious communities and consequently in all members of society. It may be that today individuals are living better, but the problem arises as to how to provide the material and spiritual grounds for the life of the whole community. Who can provide wider, deeper and long-term societal grounds? While the old societies could benefit from religions as grounds for politics and other societal life, today's societies are struggling to secure the grounds which would secure their future. To reach these grounds means that religious partisans should exercise

themselves in deepening the dialogue between them. The temptation of politicians is to disrupt the dialogical processes in society and to submit individuals and groups under their total regulation. But totalitarian regimes do not achieve peace; under their pressure society becomes doomed and is brought to death; instead of societal harmony, tyranny and destruction prevails. The real way to societal harmony is an open society trained in dialogue and reconciliation. For this reason, politicians should support the processes of deepening in mystical religious grounds, and it is in this sense that Dietmar Mieth speaks about mystics and politics.

## **OF DOUBLE GENEALOGIES AND WEST-EAST INVESTIGATIONS: RESETTING THE CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM ENCOUNTER**

**Carool KERSTEN**

*King's College London, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, UK*

Attempts to counter the replacement of the bipolarity characterizing the ideological East-West confrontation during the Cold War era by equally dichotomous identity-politics paradigm of the clash of civilizations thesis with a dialogue of civilizations initiative suffered a severe setback due to 9/11 and other atrocities elsewhere. This forms the background of the increasingly polarized culture wars that have erupted in the wake of these events and which is used here to frame a presentation of some tentative findings from a new research project on contemporary Muslim intellectuals, focusing on forms of cultural criticism and alternative ways of engaging with religion found in literary writings that emphasize sublimation rather than abstraction.

For this occasion, I have made selections from the oeuvres of three writers who resist essentialist identity politics but recognize and acknowledge the significance of difference/alterity for the formation of identity. It is argued that the writings of the Iranian Daryush Shayegan, the French-Tunisian Abdelwahab Meddeb, and German-Iranian Navid Kermani offer material for a critical appraisal that is required for a radical resetting of religiously-informed encounters between cultures, whether framed as interfaith dialogues or philosophical and theological exchanges.

At one and the same time, this trio can be considered similar enough in terms of shared concerns and different enough in regards to their chosen approaches and substantive engagement to warrant an instructive comparison and sufficiently representative conclusions to discern the contours of an alternative to both the confrontational culture war discourse and to counter the narratives formulated on the basis of equally unhelpful understandings of collective identities.



## **IS THE CLASH OF RELIGIONS THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD?**

**Elmar KUHN**

*European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg, Austria*

In 1996, Samuel Huntington published his book »Clash of Civilizations«, dating back to an article from 1993. Huntington was massively criticized for his thesis. One reason for this was that Huntington's cultural frontiers are overlapping between his concept of civilizations and the religious map of the world. If we follow his thesis, we can therefore also speak about a clash of religions.

In the last decade, various political and religious subjects tried to verify his thesis about the world living in controversy by religion and culture. Since 2003, Daesh (or the Islamic State) tries to justify its regime of terror by the necessity of a monolithic religious culture, state and economy. It has attempted to demonstrate the superiority of its own Sunni religious concept by murdering everybody else. Hindu nationalists are trying to get rid of the Christian and Muslim populations in India. Buddhist nationalists are trying to get rid of Muslims and Christians in Myanmar. PEGIDA and the AfD (i.e. Alternative for Germany, a political party influenced by PEGIDA) are trying to get rid of the non-Christian and non-German population of Germany. Some Pakistani Sunni leaders are trying to get rid of Christians in their villages. And so on. Is that the future of our world? Is the European – and particularly, French – concept of a pure secular state far away from any religious influence the future?

I want to add a third thesis: a thesis about the economic strength, political independence and religious influence for the welfare of our globalized world. We need to concentrate on the question to what is non-derogable of religious contents and what is necessary for a balance of power in a free and prosperous state.

## **PROCESS ISLAM: TOWARDS A METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATION FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**Saida MIRSADRI**

*Tehran University, Farabi College, Iran*

Religion – despite being marginalized in its institutionalized form – still plays a role in our societies, for it is an essential part of our traditions and cultures. As a result, the theological language can have a big impact on shaping our consciousness, and thus, our social constructions, ethics and conducts. Therefore, by reformulating and modifying our theologies we can contribute a great deal to the improvement of the human society and surroundings, especially in countries and communities where religion plays a very important role – in society, politics, culture, as well as human individual lives. Admitting the fact that the theological language is just a human product and a socio-historical construction to talk of the divine, and intending to put the Islamic thought in dialogue with the modern philosophico-theological currents and discussions, I would like to propose a new Islamic theology, that could work like a bridge in different respects – between tradition and modernity, between the Western and Islamic speculative tradition, between philosophy and theology, between two world religious traditions – hence, a good case in point for a comparative philosophy. This contribution is, thus, trying to illustrate the metaphysical foundations for an Islamic “theology of today”. Due to the common elements, it shares with the process worldview, I term this metaphysical theology the “process Islam”. It is my strong conviction that we can talk of “Islamic process theology” and of “Islamic process God”, and that we can find enough evidence in the Qur’an and in the rich Islamic literature in order to substantiate this claim. My choice of Iqbal lies in the fact that, despite being a Muslim thinker who stands in his own Islamic tradition and relies heavily on the Qur’an, he is familiar with the Western philosophical thought system, and this way provides a novel metaphysics that can well serve as the foundation for a new Islamic theological system, unprecedented in the Islamic world.

## LANGUAGE-GAMES PHILOSOPHY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

**Jafar MORVARID**

*Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Faculty of Theology, Iran*

Wittgenstein's view on Language-Games philosophy and the impossibility of »Private Language Argument« can present the semantic and epistemological assumptions for having a dialogue with the "other" in interreligious dialogue as opposed to a denial of the "other", and provide collective criteria versus the self-centred dogmatic criteria.

The method that Wittgenstein suggests in his *Philosophical Investigations* §202 and §258 is that in following the rules, instead of looking for criteria that are based on private mental states or rational interpretations, we must refer to a collective, social method (criteria), which constitutes objectivity. If the basis is mental certainty and private mental states, then there would be no standard for distinguishing between that mental state which is in accordance with reality and the one which is not. As a result, we cannot say when the right knowledge or the right adherence to rules has occurred. In a position when the reason means only the certainty of an individual (private mental states) due to a lack of criterion or a safe way for distinguishing between wrong and right, so the way would be paved for multiple individual interpretations of this certainty (private mental states) and we would collapse in the infinite regress of various interpretations of this private and individual certainty.

However, the way out, according to Wittgenstein, is to move from the inside of private mind to the collective and social behaviours (self with the "other"). And the solution is to move from mental subjective certainty (rational self) to social methods (social and wise agreements) which have come into agreement upon following these fallible mental states in a collective and rational manner. By proposing pluralistic ways of life as the basics (the bed-rock) of various language games, Wittgenstein later tends to emphasize the diverse and changing structure of reality, and as a result, his epistemology opens the way for a social and collective rationality. Indeed, for later Witt-

genstein, reality is a collective, *a posteriori* and a changeable process, and both “I” and the “other” bear influence on constituting contemporary rationality and relations in the world.

## COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEOLOGY: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

**Joshua RALSTON**

*University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Divinity, UK*

It has become a widespread practice to commend the common good and social justice as the proper starting point in Muslim-Christian relations. The perceived benefit of this methodology is to circumvent the “outstanding neurological issues” of God’s (tri)unity, the nature of Jesus, the prophethood of Muhammad, the Imamate, and the status of the Qur’ān. This activist approach to Muslim-Christian dialogue has become increasingly popular across theological, political, and denominational differences. For instance, Nostra Aetate’s remarks on Islam concludes by urging “all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.” (Nostra Aetate, §3.) The World Council of Churches has issued various documents advocating for social justice and shared common action as means for improving Christian-Muslim tensions. The Common Word Between Us and You, while rooted in Scriptural readings, ends with a similar call for a shared social and political action.

While there is much to commend in this approach, it runs the risk of obscuring the ways that understandings of ethics and the common good are deeply shaped by theological and scriptural commitments, such as those around divine sovereignty, political power, secular space, religious leadership, and more that may not be shared. Thus, a presumed area of common ground actually lands us firmly on some of the most controversial aspects in current Christian-Muslim relations: political power, law, secularism, religious freedom and social justice. To engage in dialogue about the common good is also to enter into theological discussion about revelation, law and morality, and the divine will. To overcome this lacuna, this paper leverages the methodological insights of both recent comparative theology and the political one to propose a model of comparative political theology aimed at tracing and exploring both shared and diverging concepts between Western Christian political theology and recent Islamic proposals.

## PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

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While the analytic tradition of philosophy of religion is defined and pre-occupied with “questions” concerning justification and rationality of theism, the continental/existential philosophers pay their attention to the “mysteries” of human life. In other words, while the analytic philosophers of religion are engaged with “religious belief”, and inquiring answers to the theological problems – such as the problem of Evil, the problem of God’s Hiddenness, the problem of cognitive status of religious language and so forth – the existential philosophers appreciate “religious life” and thematise our encounter with the tragic aspects of life, such as death, suffering, and loneliness. Existential philosophy of religion, offering an alternative to the analytic approaches, is conceived, as John Caputo asserts, in the spirit of Heidegger’s critique of “onto-theo-logic” and his meditations on “non-objectifying thinking.” God is not an object for a subject, not the referent of a propositional assertion, not the subject matter of a demonstration.

In this paper, I will argue that if one wants to philosophize about religion, one needs to comprehend religion in all its mixed cultural-historical diversity. To an extent one considers only a limited set of traditions or reasons, his or her philosophy of religion will be limited. I will show that the obsession with “beliefs” or “propositional attitudes” and the focus on supportive arguments takes our attention away from other aspects of religion— or, as Ninian Smart called them, the other “dimensions of the sacred” – such as the ritual, mythic, experiential, ethical, legal, social, material and political dimensions. So, broadening the definition of philosophy of religion helps us embrace the other measures of religion, and to avoid reducing truth to “true propositions”.

## ISLAMIC MYSTICISM AND MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

**Mohammad SAEEDIMEHR**

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My main task in this paper is to investigate Islamic Mysticism in order to find out how and to what extent the mystical views can build theoretical bases for a productive and fruitful interfaith dialogue. I will appeal to selected evidence in order to argue for the claim that Islamic mysticism possesses the principles which can promote and foster Muslim-Christian dialogue in a profound and comprehensive mode. According to the mystical principle of 'the unity of existence', God is unique and existent in reality, and other things are nothing but His mere manifestations. God manifests himself for adherents of different religions, as apparently, different gods. Thus, all believers, no matter whether they are Muslim or Christian, actually believe in and worship the same god. Muslim mystics also highly value the so-called 'spiritual experiences' which are more or less common among the followers of different religions. Though these experiences may emerge in different forms and, consequently, may be interpreted in dissimilar ways, their common subject is nothing but the one God and His manifestations. Furthermore, according to the theory of the primordial nature of the mankind, God creates all human beings with a common original disposition and natural or innate constitution (*Fitrah*). The Muslim mystics' emphasis on the human *Fitrah* as an inborn natural predisposition provides an anthropological principle which emphasizes on a profound existential feature common to all human beings despite their actual superficial religious differences. Moreover, the Mystical esoteric interpretation of the scriptures can pave the way for a plurality of authentic interpretations and consequently, avoids the literal exegesis of those expressions which, apparently, highlights religious differences.

## **COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE: A RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL FOUNDATION**

**Klaus VON STOSCH**

*Centre for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies of the University of  
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Comparative Theology seeks learning across religious borders. Hence, it offers different possibilities how we can learn from the religious other. With Catherine Cornille, I would like to categorize these forms of learning as intensification, rectification, recovery, reinterpretation, appropriation and reaffirmation. The most challenging forms of learning are rectification and appropriation because they help us to overcome the apologetic framework of the dialogue of religions. An attitude of vulnerability and empathy is necessary as well as the most typical for the enterprise of comparative theology. In my lecture, I will use case studies in order to show how those forms of learning can happen in Muslim-Christian dialogue in both directions. Thus, I will try to show how all six forms of learning happen in both religions and I will try to explain why they are fruitful for interreligious dialogue. This is a means of proving that comparative theology can serve as a foundation for interreligious dialogue.

On the other hand, comparative theology does not only prepare for a dialogue; it is also the result of a dialogue. It proceeds dialogically and the dialogue enables most of its insights. That is why an interreligious dialogue is also a foundation of comparative theology. In my lecture, I will try to reflect my last book on Jesus in the Qur'an which is very much a result of interreligious dialogue and I try to encourage an understanding of comparative theology which is based on interreligious dialogue. At the same time, I try to show why comparative theology and interreligious dialogue have to be distinguished. But in this case, distinction does not mean separation.



## **A NEW TEMPORALITY OF RELIGION: ON POLITICAL THEOLOGY AND ITS ETHICAL CORE**

**Lenart ŠKOF**

*Institute for Philosophical Studies ZRS Koper,  
Alma Mater Europaea ECM/ISH and EASA, Slovenia*

In his insightful essay »Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization«, Cornel West fervently addressed a question of our abilities to imagine a more empathetic, more compassionate, and also more hospitable world, in which we could foresee, or perhaps already lay grounds for a future community where the word religion would simply mean that we live our lives in the consciousness of our finitude and thus in an existential and cognitive humility. This kind of religion (not far from Dewey's or Rorty's ideals) would enable us to see beyond the margins of any narrow-minded religious ideology or any violent incarnation of religion.

Based on these initial thoughts, I first wish to discuss two basic concepts of contemporary political theology – community and vulnerability. I shall argue that we need to offer in contemporary political theology a basic ethico-democratic response, infused with our imaginative capacity for remembrance (Benjamin, Metz, Agamben) and future hope (West, Unger). I will argue with Unger (The Religion of the Future) that we need to live through accepting an enhanced vulnerability, being shared in our democratic (and) religious communities. From this view any loss of human life and its potentials is a sign of a grave injustice, and a catastrophe from an ethical point of view.

Finally, I will propose the so-called reverse thesis on religion – namely that today, perhaps, we should first look at religion in its radicalized ethico-political form which only later enables us to think about its variations and incarnations within different traditions and cultures. I will argue that it is within this newly acquired temporality of religion and its inherent ontologico-political paradox, that it is possible to imagine a future place where recurrent hope for a life is reborn and nurtured within future pluralist/inclusivist/democratic/post-Christian/post-Islamic communities, based on compassion and shared vulnerability, and not any more on power, or any other form of violence.

## **POSSIBILITY OF A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY ACCORDING TO ALLAMAH SAYYED MUHAMMAD HOSSEIN TABATABA'I'S PHILOSOPHY**

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Comparative theology compares one religious tradition to another in a way which is different from interreligious dialogue, comparative religion and theology of religions. Comparative theology can endure changes due to its in-depth engagement with other traditions. One of its tasks is a critical study of another religion, in which it should have a critical standpoint towards the doctrines, texts and interpretations of other religions as well as the interpretations of one's own religion. Tabataba'i agrees that human beings have important features in common, because they are born in the same nature. However, they are different in what their lifestyle and environmental characteristics necessitates. He claims that some of person's religious beliefs and even ethical judgments are a function of the individual's primary needs. These practical needs must be fulfilled to guarantee a human's survival. He argues that, being compelled by primary needs, our mental system creates conventions which urge us to fulfil our most necessary needs. For him, ordinary language is a product of human capacity in connecting meanings to words and hereby with verbal sounds and their tendency to make communications with others. Tabataba'i explains the mechanism of our mental system in creating natural language which is the source of religious language. Understanding religious teachings requires both a common knowledge of their ordinary language as well as their technical (interpretational and theological) knowledge of that religion. With this picture in mind, it is quite clear how theologians can approach to other traditions to study and learn certain insights from them. If comparative theologians with their critical approach can study other traditions and finally get an agreement on unchangeable truths of religious traditions, they will then easily negotiate about conventions and changeable parts which will lead to a constructive theology which is competent enough to be recognized as a comparative theology.

## RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM, DIALOGUE AND COEXISTENCE

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The author deals with the conditions and factors of dialogue and peaceful coexistence in the contemporary globalized world. He focuses on the role of world religions. First he asks whether the believer's openness to other religions and "world views", their respect and coexistence with them, are compatible with his cultivation of strong religious beliefs that are contrary to the beliefs of other religions or "world views", and what views and attitudes of the believer this compatibility implies. The deepening of the answer to these two questions is very important for understanding the possibilities of genuine interreligious dialogue and, consequently, its realization. The first factor of dialogue to be mentioned is respect. Interreligious tolerance is important, but it is not enough for a developed dialogue. This requires mutual respect, which implies the recognition of the rationality of a person with a different belief or a non-believer. Another key question is whether religious exclusivism is compatible with political pluralism. Some people think that you must be a religious pluralist if you want to be a political pluralist. This position is very impractical. Most believers are religious exclusivists. If we wait for them to become religious pluralists, we will wait a long time. The author, on the contrary, argues that religious exclusivism is compatible with political pluralism. Moreover, he defends the thesis that members of world religions can accept political pluralism exactly on the basis of their own religion. The next factor of coexistence is the reduction of motivation for conflict. This is why we need a vision of a good life that does not focus only on "bread" and which emphasizes contentment and solidarity. The idea that man does not live by bread alone is common to all world religions. However, all these conditions and factors are not yet sufficient for peaceful coexistence (in the modern globalized world). We need also reconciliation. It is true that on the one hand world religions, alas, are often themselves the "source" of conflicts, but on the other hand they are also the key drivers of reconciliation. This is a historical truth that should not surprise us, because world religions have the necessary resources for reconciliation. The author concludes that if we

succeed in establishing a prudent combination of peace-making components of globalization and peace-building constituents of world religions, then the prospects in terms of peace are not bad.

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