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Philosophy of Religion in an Islamic Context

Hamidreza Ayatollahy

Philosophy of religion is a discipline originated and matured in a Western Context on this term. The similar discipline in Islamic context has been *Kalam* or modern *Kalam*. The modern world has encountered many new philosophical and religious problems that must be evaluated by scholars from a philosophical view. Therefore philosophy of religion originated. But these problem oriented studies have been influenced by the situations. One of these situations is philosophical approach of one period but the religious presuppositions are more important. Christian presuppositions of Western philosophy of religion make some problems more important than others and bring about a kind of solution that may differ from others. In my paper I am going to point out some differences of Christian approach to philosophy of religion from an Islamic approach. The differences are derived from both problems and solutions.

I hope there can be cooperation between Western philosophers of religion in a Christian context and Muslim philosophers of religion as an Islamic point of view. I wish this cooperation bring about a wider context for philosophy of religion utilize from both philosophical priorities of those two contexts.

Invitation theory: explaining the argumentation for or against the religious beliefs

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The justification or warrant of religious belief is the central topic in religious epistemology. The main question is whether a believer has sufficient justifications for the truth of, or warranted in, her religious belief. Justification approach to religious belief has been derived from a sharp distinction between the theoretical and practical aspects of human beings. We should be aware that although this distinction is a good epistemic instrument for teaching some ideas to others, but it is not a real distinction. Man is an integrated entity and his components, if he has any, are not distinct. In any circumstances man manifests himself as a whole and not his theoretical or practical aspect alone. So as connected to his religious belief, his whole existence interacts with others in a society. In fact anyone who acts as a theist or atheist and tries to develop good arguments for or against the existence of religious beliefs, manifests his whole existence and invites others to himself. Since everyone regards himself as the criterion for the true beliefs and good behaviors, we all have a kind of existential ego and we want others to be like ourselves; so invite them to acquire existential similarity, including their beliefs and behaviors, to ourselves. Invitation theory in the realm of religious epistemology teaches us not to divide the human existence into parts but take him as a integrated entity that manifests his unified existence. Making use of Mulla Sadra's philosophical principles, like the simplicity of existence, give us an explanatory power for explaining the invitation theory.

Keywords: invitation theory, religious epistemology, existence, religious beliefs, egoism

Examining an *Epoché Pluralism* in the Qur'anic Context: an Attempt at Pluralistic Peace Procreation

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Abstract

Various sorts of pluralism have already been defined, perhaps with a common purpose of devising some ways of balancing the insiders' truth claims with those of the outsiders. Such definitions may more or less become involved in the processes of judgment and evaluation concerning matters of truth or salvation. However, it should be acknowledged that hardly any judgment or evaluation is ever comprehensive enough to maintain a peaceful equilibrium. Hence, in many cases the inevitably unfortunate consequence would be the recurrence of chaos. In a sense, this might be identified as the postmodern riddle.

One practical question is what can be done? The present paper aims at introducing an *Epoché Pluralism* which has 'bracketing' at its core as a phenomenological method with particular emphasis on the process of suspending judgment. The main argument is that since it is very much unlikely that adherents of diverse religious traditions would abandon their own truth claims, the practice of an *Epoché Pluralism* potentially improves the possibilities of creating peaceful interactions between insiders and outsiders. As an important part of the study, the thesis is also examined in the Qur'anic context where the Prophet needed to interact with a diverse plurality of pre-existing traditions in his locality.

Keywords: *Epoché Pluralism*, the Qur'an, peace, empathy.

Divine Love and the Argument from Divine Hiddenness

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Abstract:

In this paper one of the premises of Schellenberg's atheistic argument from divine hiddenness will be criticized. The basic premise that can be considered as the foundation of the proposed argument is based on a specific interpretation of divine love as Eros. In this paper first following Nygren, I will distinguish two notions of divine love as Eros and Agape. Then I will try to answer two main objections to the ascription of Eros to God, namely the Aristotelian and Platonic objections. Then in the third part I will show that reading Schellenberg's argument neither by substituting his usage of divine love for Agape nor for Eros yields a sound argument.

Key Words: Divine love, Agape, Eros, Divine hiddenness, Schellenberg

Naturalism, Skepticism and Semantic Externalism

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Abstract

Naturalism is highly accepted among most of the contemporary analytic philosophers, even though they are not fully in agreement on its meaning. According to the general idea of ontological naturalism, there is no supernatural being in the world. This ontological claim is implicitly accompanied by an epistemological one: the naturalist claim is that there is no supernatural being in the world. But according to the skepticism about external world, as an illuminative account on our epistemic situation, the naturalist's claim is pretentious regarding our epistemic wealth. It is shown that Descartes' Evil Genius hypothesis, showing the constraint of our knowledge of external world, is a serious threat to the ontological naturalism, and, its naturalized version, brain in a vat hypothesis, cannot be a genuine skeptical hypothesis. This problem exactly arises from the naturalization. To clarify the problem, I use semantic externalism proposed by Hilary Putnam. Indeed, I try to show that based on semantic externalism, we cannot form a skeptical argument with brain in a vat hypothesis, and again, this is the result of the naturalization. Therefore, skepticism cannot be consistent with naturalism.

Key words: Naturalism, skepticism, external world, semantic externalism, Putnam

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The Spiritual Experience as Scientific Experiment?: How Science can meet Religion

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My presentation aims to discuss the approach between the mystic's experience and the experiment of the scientist. The mystic experience is closer to what is proper to the scientific experiment: both are, finally, ways of tryout. This also means that both are ways to come closer to a deeper understanding of Reality.

Raising the problem of the relation between religion and science requires a series of precautions, especially related to the underlying meanings of what we call religion or science. What is meant by religion and religious? The terms are too vague and, on the other hand, the differences among religions are so important that it is almost impossible to use the term religion without an abstract meaning. Even the overall invocation of Christianity is improper, as the report of Eastern Christianity to the Western one reveals different perspectives on some issues that determine the relationship with science. There must be also taken into account the history of the religious doctrines after Enlightenment, as they underwent secular influences that sometimes left tracks in their discourse, the most aggressive factor being the ideological one. And when speaking about the possibility of religion getting open to science it is necessary to specify what type of religious discourse is concerned. Since a generic report of religion to science is slippery, we should rather count on the identification of those types of religious experience and of those religious horizons that can offer a real openness to science. These statements are also true for science: for such a dialogue there is need of identifying those aspects of science that are not contaminated by ideology or by assumptions alien to its experimental nature.

Turning conflictions to consensus

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The matter of dialogue among religions, no doubt, is one of the most essential issues of our time. Unsuccessful and pointless communications among different religions which are full of misunderstandings and sometimes cause conflicts, is not an issue to be ignored by today's world if trying for improvements and aiming to build a better planet to live. But if we consider creating the opportunity of dialogue among religions is an effective way to avoid complications, we are faced with the question of "what specifications and what conditions should this dialogue contain at all?"

To answer this question in this essay we draw upon theories of two great contemporary philosophers: first, the central principle of Hans-Georg Gadamer and his Philosophical Hermeneutics, in which he explains "the central principle of hermeneutics consists in the possibility that the other might be right.", which may defend the idea of specific kind of pluralism and second, we employ Jürgen Habermas's "Communicative Action Theory", in which he seeks to achieve "ideal speech situation". Gadamer and Habermas's points of view on dialogue in general and its conditions, which were declared by the two philosophers in a reputed debate initiating 1967 and lasting for many years, is well described.

The objective of this paper is to compare the efficiency of Gadamer and Habermas's viewpoints in providing the possibility of dialogue among different religions, especially between those religions which differ vastly in backgrounds and traditions.

Keywords: dialogue between religions, philosophical hermeneutics, communicative action

Toward the Notion of a Religious Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

The term “Philosophy of Religion” can be explained in two different senses, one of which has been used historically prior to the other. The first possible meaning of the term, derived from the Hegelian notion of philosophy of religion, is the study of absolute religion, i.e. the study of religion as a genus for specific religions. The second meaning, which has been prevailed in contemporary philosophy of religion, is to explore problems of specific religions philosophically. Although the former meaning of the term is independent of any knowledge of specific religions, “philosophy of religion” in its latter meaning is relying on religious problems. In this sense, philosophy of religion could be religious, that is the philosopher can probe into problems of a specific religion. Hence, philosophy of religion can simultaneously explore the general problems, which religions have in common, and the problems that belong to a specific religion in particular. In the latter, when the problems are raised from a specific religion, the investigation of those problems would be a religious philosophy of religion. It should be noted that in this view of the notion, the term “religious” has not any apologetic implication, but it merely describes the sphere of the problems.

Key words: Religious Philosophy of Religion, the Concept of Philosophy of Religion, Religious Philosophy, History of Philosophy of Religion, Study of Religion.

Faith and Reason in Contemporary Shi'ite Thought

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Typically the issue of the relation of reason to faith has been discussed in two different ways. First, what is the status of basic claims of faith that are cognitive—like the existence of God—in relation to the beliefs of reason? Are they among the first principles of reason or must they be known derivatively with the help of basic beliefs? Or is there another source of knowledge aside from reason in which claims of faith are rooted?

Second, some of the claims of faith about the world, nature and human happiness and wretchedness that are rooted in revelation go beyond the boundaries of reason and may even conflict with reason. The question is: What can we, as believers, do in cases of non-rational or irrational claims of faith?

Here we will survey both issues in the thought of Shi'ite scholars.

**Pain, Suffering, and Death to the Glory of God:
An Explanation of Evangelical Theologian John Piper's
Understanding of the Problem of Evil**

Prof. Philip O Hopkins

John Piper is one of the most popular, influential, and revered evangelical Christians in America. Piper's first love is focusing all things on the glory of God, including suffering. This is developed in his understanding of God's will seen in the "Two Wills of God Thesis." Simply stated, Piper believes that God has more than one way of willing. He distinguishes what God would like to see happen and what he actually does will to happen. The ultimate reason that suffering exists in the universe, Piper states is so that "Christ might display the greatness of the glory of the grace of God by suffering in himself to overcome our suffering and bring about the praise of the glory of the grace of God."

This paper examines Piper's understanding of the problem of evil, particularly suffering. It investigates how Piper reconciles opposing emphases of particularity and universality in the "Two Wills of God Thesis" and its practical implications. It does not defend Piper's interpretation. Instead, it centers especially on whether Piper is internally consistent and whether Piper's understanding of God's glory motivates and dictates his understanding of suffering and the problem of evil.

Religious Pluralism: The Kenyan and African Experience

Henry Herman Neondo

The Kenyan society is a microcosm of Africa. The 40 million people who make up the Kenyan society consist of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and followers of other faiths including atheists.

While pursuing the religious pluralism, the society has chosen either by design or otherwise to pursue an attitude or policy that allows the diversity of religious belief systems to co-exist, run and function side by side without antagonizing each other.

From the outside and to those who may not know the society well, it may seem that the Kenyan society has chosen a form of religious path construed by some scholars as a social norm and not merely a synonym for religious diversity

As acceptance of the concept, none of the faiths lay claim to exclusivity of truth. They have allowed room for each to reach out to people they wish to convert without coercion or antagonism.

The beauty of their toleration becomes obvious at a time when a calamity strikes. In such cases, members of all religions come out to cooperate and offer solutions to the victims without minding the religious background.

The brand of religious toleration exhibited in Kenya has drawn some scholars and researchers interests in bid to understand how it is operating and this is what this work is all about.

Religious Pluralism in Vedic Religion

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The existence of religious pluralism depends on the existence of freedom of religions. Freedom of religion exists when different religions of particular regions possess the same right of worship and public expression. Pluralism is basically the belief that all religions of world are true and equally valid in the communication of the truth about the God, the world and salvation. Cultural and religious pluralism has a long history and development that reaches from antiquity to contemporary trends in post modernity.

Hinduism is the world's oldest living religion. The soft attitude towards all living things grows out of the Hindu view of the unity or oneness of all life. Hinduism respects the right of all living beings to live. This right is brought into practice through the principle of non violence in thought and action. The Hindu view of oneness of all life flows from every Hindu scripture. It must be classified that the word Hinduism does not reflect a religion. In fact Hinduism is a Vedic religion and commonly known as Hinduism. The Vedic scriptures are the collection of the wisdom of many great thinkers and evolved over thousands of years. The important among these are: the Vedas and the Upanishads. The oldest of the Vedas is the Rigveda, begins with a prayer that let noble thoughts come to us from all sides. Upanishads which form part of the spirit resides in all being, whatever may be their form (Ishavasyam Eedam Sarvam) The realization of ultimate truth or knowledge is the focal point of Hinduism. The Ramayana and Mahabharata two great epics of India also extol the virtues of universal brotherhood and compassion not only towards all human being but towards all living beings. The Mahabharata contains Bhagawad Gita which is the gospel of Hindu philosophy aiming at righteous deeds to dispel ignorance and realize the ultimate truth oneness of soul with supreme soul. Hinduism believes in fellowship, equality, togetherness or

acceptance. Through out the ages Hinduism has abjured exclusiveness and has assimilated the elements of several extraneous cultures.

Co-existence has been a part of faith in India. It believes that peaceful co-existence is the natural law of the universe. All the stars and the galaxies of the cosmos and all elements are governed peacefully and harmoniously by the invisible laws, which modern science calls the guiding principle of nature. In the Rigveda, it has been called Rita, the unseen, invisible paramount law of the universe, which also governs the human life. Non-adherence of this eternal law leads to chaos and confusion. Over their vast history, Hindus have never invaded another land in the name of religion. For centuries in the Southeast Asia, it has been the Hindu pluralism, which has provided the ideal environment for peaceful coexistence and prosperity for the eight major religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism among others. By accepting the divinity in all being Hinduism views the universe as a family or in Sanskrit “Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam”.

**Exploring Religious and Cultural Pluralism as Assets toward
Effective Bridge
Building in Muslim-Christian Relationship in Northern Nigeria
– The Global Import of this Exploration**

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Abstract

Social-political order in many cities of Northern Nigerian has been consistently tense and heinously violent for over a decade now. Living condition has become so volatile and unpredictable that security of life and property in many northern cities is at its lowest since pre and during the Nigerian civil war (circa 1965-1970). The wave of violence has become so troubling that many social and political analysts are predicting a possibility of either another civil war or another rancorous attempt to secede or even both. The conflicts have often been described as religiously motivated or at least painted as such by many. This paper will advocate critical and constructive interreligious dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria that is underpinned on religious and cultural pluralism. This worldview will advocate the following: embracing contemporary global appreciation and application of civil and human rights; review of the federal indigenization policy, which dovetails with the application of *ius sanguinis* principle; positive use of the growing impact of Western and progressive Islamic education; and constructive and critical appreciation of existing intercultural and interreligious parallels. This paper strongly enunciates the need to use dialogue toward effectively building harmonious and lasting relationship between Muslims and Christians not just in Northern Nigeria or the entire country but also globally. The global significance of peacefully arresting the deteriorating social and political condition between Nigerians of the two dominant religions is hinged on the significant roles played by both Western and Arab influences in the country.

Contemporary Human Rights and The Philosophy of Jihad in Islam of the Modern Times

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Abstract

As one of the branches of Islam, initiatory jihad is of such significance that it makes a separate entry in Islamic jurisprudence. Initiatory jihad (jihad al-ibtida'i, i.e. offensive jihad) has a two-sided principle and raises questions from two perspectives. On the one hand the question is whether initiatory jihad by the Islamic government is permissible in the contemporary era, a question which can be investigated within the realm of public law. On the other hand, from a human rights perspective the goal and ideal of initiatory jihad, which is to call for Islam, seems doubtful. This has its roots in the opinion of many intellectuals who believe that such a concept of war is against freedom of thought and belief and serves more like an imposition of belief.

Keywords: Jihad, Human Rights, Freedom of Thought, the Right to Access Information

Rationality and Religious Beliefs
Vedic Rituals and Worshipping Practices
Sri Satyanarayana Vrata and Katha
Balancing of Social Order- A Study

Professor Vijaya Kumar Babu*

Abstract

Vratas and Kathas, different practices of worship are meant to systematize the wavering mind of mankind and put them into an order, by which self and society become responsible to each other. Albeit spelled and performed differently, such phenomenon being Universal, it transgresses the boundaries of Space and Time. Indian contextually, of the many such practices of worship, *Sri Satyanarayana Vrata and Katha* stands unique. Worshipping of Lord Vishnu in the aspect of God *Satyanarayana*, as the Incarnation of Truth, on every auspicious occasion, is a typical South Indian religious practice. *Sri Satyanarayana Vrata and Katha* is a combination of both Vedic and secular elements. Entire process of Vrata and Katha is divided into Five Chapters. Chapter-I deals with invocation of Celestial Gods, the in-charges of Eight Directions of Globe, Nine Planets and process of Worship. Chapter-II deals with a wood-cutter visiting the house of a Brahmin, observing Sri Satyanarayana Pooja being performed by Brahmin and enquires about same. Chapters-III and IV deal with attitude of Traders, who mostly try to evade or postpone the prayers to be offered to God and how finally they face wrath of God. Chapter-V deals with pride of a King in refusing the Holy Prasad offered by cow-herd people and loosing his Kingdom. Characters in Vratas and Kathas represent social and psychological imbalances of people belonging to certain sections of society, but not sectarian divisions. For example, Wood-cutter represents the socio-economically weaker section; the Brahmin-the religious; the Vaisyas-the Business community; the King-the ruler's ego and pride; and the Cowherds-the agro-toilers. And God Sri Satyanarayana, the Cosmic Man, as the Physical manifestation of the Society.

Thus, present article fairly attempts to study how in the form of Vratas and Kathas, Indian Literature, both religious and secular, inculcates concept oneness among people, cutting the barricades of distinctions of birth, caste or creed.

Discourse Over Mystic Consciousness, God Particle and Pragmatics of Spiritual Healings in Islamic Traditions

Samin Khan

As People of the 21st century are driven by mass media and the invention of social media, popular literature in the subject area of positive psychology has taken over the role of traditional religions. Advices on our daily challenges of office stress, interpersonal relations, family, addiction and home improvement come from secular experts more than from religious leaders in the present world. Islamic traditions and its lessons are thus underrepresented in the ongoing discourse by academics and scholars.

The question is what can be interesting to learn in Islamic mystical traditions which may be of universal human value? While some sectarian and theological ideas in Islam are associated with needless strife and violence in the west, there is a well established mystical dimension with a long history and scholarly epistemic basis in the same traditions which can help in achieving the elusive goal of better life from a strictly pragmatic point of view.

One way of doing this is the cultivation of mystic consciousness as part of regular educational effort among the youth in order to explore a new productive meaning of higher life without chemical intervention and addiction to drugs and other psychedelics. Mystical ideas in Islamic traditions can be equated with Abraham Maslow "peak-experiences" concept and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's 1990, a well established research into the nature of happiness. These concepts and the Philosophies of Allama Mohammad Iqbal, Henri Bergson and William James are educative for cultivating a sense of mystical experience and can be very useful from a purely pragmatic view point.

As the search for the God particle is conducted by leading scientists, finding a better life is also the same search as a universal human value. The interest of this author is to explore how the rich Islamic traditions are helpful in our positive common universal quest. The exploration of the Sufi path is an exciting existential literature of the world in this quest and will be presented as a positive step in this never ending journey.
Courtesy,

Proof for the Existence of God in Indian Philosophy

Dr. Satish Kumar Singh
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The idea of God has been discussed in Indian philosophy and religion prominently in every school and sect, but here I shall confine myself to the concept, meaning and proof for the existence of God given in the Nyaya Philosophy. Nyaya advocates realism, pluralism, atomism, spiritualism and theism. Here God has been referred as creator, maintainer and destroyer of the world but in reality God is always limited by co-eternal atoms, souls and guided by the law of action. Creation means combinations of atoms and destruction means dissolution of these combinations through the motion supplied or withdrawn from the atoms by the “Unseen Power” working under the guidance of God. Atoms are eternal; God can neither create them nor destroy them. In this sense God is not the real creator as he is not the material cause of the universe. God’s grace is essential for obtaining true knowledge of the realities, which leads to liberation. God possesses six perfections; freedom, power, knowledge, majesty, glory and beauty. Nyaya have to their credit an array of proofs which include all the arguments given in western philosophy, there are as many as ten proofs.

Principle of Alternate Possibilities and the Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will

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Abstract

According to theological fatalism, divine infallible foreknowledge of a human act makes it necessary and, therefore, unfree. One of the premises of the theological fatalist argument is the “Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP)”. This principle states that a person is free for what he does if *he could do otherwise*. Harry Frankfurt, in his 1969 famous article, argues that PAP is false; i.e., a person may be morally responsible, and hence free, for what he does even though he could not do otherwise. I show that Frankfurt is right in his view, that is, the human act can be free although it could not be done otherwise; hence, the theological fatalism argument is not sound. Meanwhile, I show PAP, although not an ontological condition for free will is an epistemic one for it.

International Conference In Contemporary Philosophy Of Religion

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Title: Paradoxes that inhere in comparative notions of the concept of evil as held by Eastern, Western and African religions/philosophies

Main body of Abstract: The problem of evil is not only central but long standing in philosophy of religion. The core of the problem had always been how an omnipotent and benevolent / all loving and all kind God could allow evil, particularly natural evil, to visit his own children. Understandably, there are certain evils which human beings visit on themselves e.g. when they engage in self-induced conflicts and wars, when they degrade the environment and are in consequence visited by epidemics, inclement climate conditions and so on.

But what about natural evils such as earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts etc which from time to time erupt and claim thousands of innocent lives under very revulsive conditions? Let us take just a few examples:

One of the foremost Christian philosophers, Saint Augustine, held that evil was a negation or privation and that evil was necessary if man was to attain the greatest good. The philosopher Hume, on the other hand, was of the view that if evil occurred in accordance to the intentions of the Deity or contrary to it, then either the Deity was not benevolent or he was not omnipotent.

Among the numbers of Hare Krishna movement (and Eastern Religious Group):

What we call evil-suffering, mishap, etc – actually comes upon us due to misuse of our independence. ... In the absolute sense, nothing is bad because everything is emanating from God (Bhakatipada, 1985).

From the African perspective, evil is generally construed as punishment accruing from the gods (e.g. when they withdraw their protection) to an individual, groups of individual or to a community for breaking taboos and committing abominations.

This study attempts to provide a synoptic view of the concept of evil as held by as many world religions as possible: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, African Traditional Religion, Jewish Religion etc.

Firstly to be undertaken is an indepth metaphysical and ethical analysis of the positions taken about evil by each such religion. This will be followed by an attempt to uncover the similarities and dissimilarities inherent among the various positions. The third aspect will be to explore whether a unified synthetic view of evil can be forged or weaved from the bits and pieces of conceptions of evil from the various religious and philosophies and whether such a synthesis could be satisfactory to all stakeholders.

Reference

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Role of Kantian practical reason as transcendental philosophy in explanation of doctrines of god and religion

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Abstract

Perhaps it can be said with certainty that god, and consequently religion, are the most important and most principal subjects of metaphysics, which have been subject of attention and philosophizing attempts of philosophers and thinkers in the course of the history. In Greek and middle ages philosophy, philosophical thinking starts with god and leads to discussion of nature and human. This trend continued through renaissance period and modern period up until Kant, so that Cartesian philosophy was also somehow confined within such framework because it started with god and then discussed human. This trend changed in enlightenment era and especially in Kantian philosophy, Kant start from human and then thinks about god as one of concepts developed by human reason. In fact, from 18th century onwards, with introduction of critique of theoretical reason as well as practical reason in Kantian philosophy, concept of god and consequently that of religion and religiousness changed fundamentally, which shapes modern approach to god and its surroundings, so that such thinkers as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, etc. are clearly under influence of Kantian thought in this regard. Kant tried to found religion on the basis of ethics and shift the foundation of religion from theology to ethics and from beliefs to conducts. With introduction of Kantian theories, religious ceased to a matter of reasoning and become an ethical matter. Thus, the required ground was provided for separation of religion and science and also separation of religion and different aspects of social life. In this text, the following objectives are pursued: study of the origin of god in Kantian philosophy, because concept of god is among concepts that can be proved

by theoretical reason, and therefore, it is in practical reason that Kant proposes and proves the concept of god as the guarantor of morality, because here practical reason is basis, first such key concepts as axioms of practical reason, autonomy, etc. are mentioned, and then, through them, we reach the concepts of god and religion which are precede ethics.

Keywords: god, religion, ethics, metaphysics, human.

The Global Future of Religion
A Jafarian Reading of the Russellian Eurocentric Project

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Abstract

This is an article on Allama Jafari's take on Sir Bertrand Russell. In other words, the author has approached how Allama Jafari conceptualized the Russellian project in relation to certain questions within philosophy and religion. To put it otherwise, this essay could have been written differently by comparing Russell and Jafari in a systematic fashion which is current within comparative philosophical discourses in academia. But the author is more interested in the Jafarian reading of the Russellian project. It is argued that this mode of analysis has been significantly undertheorized for various intellectual, institutional and structural reasons and that's why it is important to transform the "Eurocentric Tide" within mainstream philosophical discourses.

Keywords: *Eurocentrism, Russell, Allama Jafari, Religion, Comparative Philosophy of Religion*

Theological Presuppositions of Reformed Philosophers' Christian Scholarship

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Over the last nearly forty years, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, leading philosophers of religion and two out of three prominent reformed epistemologists, take Christian Scholarship as one of their serious concerns. They, like their earlier reformed thinkers, reflect on the way that Christian scholars are expected to deal with academic disciplines. Their idea is that the religious belief of the Christian scholar ought to function as *control* belief within his devising and weighing theories. (Wolterstorff) In addition, he can use hermeneutical findings along with empirical evidence in the practice of science. (Plantinga)

This idea covers different academic disciplines, from philosophy to social and natural sciences, and results in the establishment of Plantinga's Augustinian Science and helps to justify the concept of Christian Philosophy. Reformed philosophers address the topic from within the Christian religion, but they believe their answer to the questions as to how a Christian university and Christian intellectual community should think about scholarship and claim that science could be applied to other, especially theistic, religions. In this paper I will show Plantinga's idea as well as Wolterstorff's have some theological presuppositions which not only some other religions (especially, Islam) could not acknowledge, but also other Christian denomination (like Catholicism) can barely endorse.

**Surprising Information
A Bayesian Approach to the Epistemology
of Testimonial Religious Beliefs**

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Recent years witness an increasing tendency of philosophers for formal and computational approaches to issues in various fields of philosophy. Among them are some significant issues in philosophy of religion such as testimony, miracles, design argument, the problem of evil, wager argument, and religious disagreement. Using a Bayesian approach I will focus in my paper on the epistemology of testimonial religious beliefs. I will first distinguish different forms of testimony in terms of the reliability of the sources of testimony as well as the credibility of testimonial beliefs. Meanwhile, I depict the Bayesian networks for these different forms of testimony. I then go on to examine if and to what extent these different forms of testimony are truth-maintenance. I will conclude that the view of some epistemologists regarding the special credibility of surprising information — which could be put amongst the rest for testimonies witnessing miracles — is not the case in most forms of testimony.

Keywords: Testimony · Bayesian Epistemology · Surprising Information · Reliability · Credibility.

Islam, Christianity and Science

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Abstract

Does Islam say the same thing as science? Does Islam accord with Christianity where science disagrees with Christianity? Islam says the same thing as science says and does not accord with Christianity in terms of the movement of the sun around the earth. Galileo said that earth is round and moves around the sun and it is what Islam says. According to Islam everything in the known universe rotates on an axis and orbits something else in space. The Sun is no exception. In Islam the earth is not fixed and has its own movement. In chapter 27 verse 88 God says “Thou seest the mountain fixed while they are moving and have their own movement”. How can the mountains move when you are watching them? The answer is that when the mountains are moving and you don’t see them it is because you yourself are also moving. The mountain is a synecdoche of part for the whole in the above verse. It stands for the whole earth. So according to Quran the earth is rotating. But in Christianity the sun is considered fixed. The conclusion is therefore the reliability of Quran with science.

Keywords: Islam, Quran, Science, Christianity, coherence

**Hindu View Of Human Rights And Human Dignity
For Presentation at
The International Conference on Contemporary
Philosophy of Religion
Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies**

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Abstract

'Amritasya Putrah Vayam' - "We are all begotten of the immortal." This is how Hinduism introduces human beings.

It is necessary to delve into the fundamentals of Hinduism in order to comprehend its position on human dignity, human rights etc. The fundamentals of Hinduism are in those great dialogues that took place in the Himalayas some 4-5 Millennia back very much like the Socratic dialogues.

Hinduism doesn't recognize human beings as mere material. Its understanding of human identity is more ethical-spiritual than materialistic. That is why a sense of immortality and divinity is attributed to all human beings in Hindu classical thought. An invisible *Atman* - the soul - dwelling in each body as the quintessential identity of all creatures forms the basis for all discussion on the status of human beings in Hindu classical thought starting from the times of the *Vedas*, indisputably the ancient-most literature of the world.

Human dignity cannot be ensured merely through constitutional means. It has to be embedded in the basic *Sanskaras* – the value system of the society. The ancient sages of Bharat have thus visualized the grand idea of the oneness of *Atman* and *Paramaatman* – and universal oneness of human beings based on ‘*Chetna*’ – the collective consciousness. That the same Consciousness pervades all creation is the greatest contribution of the Hindu classical thought to the wisdom of the world.

While emphasizing on the fundamental unity of the *Atman* – consciousness, Hinduism does recognize that there exists diversity in God’s creation. This diversity is not seen by a Hindu as a misnomer. Neither does he set out to destroy this diversity in his quest for uniformity when he talks about the innate oneness. Diversity in form and unity in spirit is what Hinduism stands for.

The secular ideals of Europe are nascent in front of the Hindu ideal of ‘*Sarva Dharma Samabhav*’ – ‘Equal Respect for all Religions’. Whereas the secular ideology stops at calling for ‘tolerance’ to the diversity, Hinduism goes much further. It doesn’t just tolerate; it accepts every religion. It transcends all barriers of religious bigotry and even celebrates diversity.

Some wrongly portray it as polytheism or pluralism. Pluralism means existence of parts that are not inter-connected. However the Hindu ideal of respect for and celebration of the diversity in the Creation stems from its core belief that whatever we see in the universe is nothing but the manifestation of the Supreme Reality only.

We shall term it Omnitheism. The purpose of life for a Hindu is to realize this, feel One, and through this feeling, liberate spiritually. Omnitheism guides the Hindu way of life. A Hindu sees God everywhere, in trees, in rivers, in serpents and even in the vacuum. For him all creation – animate and inanimate – is sacred. He worships a river and calls it *Ganga Mata* – Mother Ganges. He worships a cow and calls it *Go Mata* – Mother Cow. Every Hindu might have a personal deity like patron saints culled from

historical figures enshrined in folk memory. This is not polytheism as these deities are as divine as any in the creation and merely a part of the One Whole.

Hinduism is the religion of bliss. It considers the Right of Happiness to be the highest fundamental right of all humans. The ultimate goal for Hinduism is material and spiritual well-being of the mankind. It is pertinent to mention here that this all-important Right of Happiness doesn't find a place in the acclaimed Universal Charter of Human Rights.

No way of life or philosophy can be free of contemporary aberrations. Hinduism is no exception. Myriad jostles of history and further deliberate misinterpretations have left it scarred albeit cautious. In its present continuous, it connects simultaneously with the highest philosophic deliberations and variegated folk systems of worship while embracing with happy understanding all other systems of belief. The only reservation is about exclusivist medieval codes that refuse to allow other faiths to survive. The supreme salvation of Hinduism, which is no different than Realization of Self as an essential component of the Divine Whole, is achieved thus by peaceful coexistence rather than aggressive ambition, by cooperation rather than competition.

**Religions Where Law Matters:
Divine Law and Ethics in Judaism and Islam**

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It has long been understood that both Judaism and Islam are religions of law: both faiths boast a vast corpus of legal rulings and debates concerning religious law (*halakha* and *shari'a*) are ongoing to this day. Traditionally, Christian commentators have condemned what they describe as the 'legalistic' aspect of these faiths, arguing that in the emphasis on law the humanity of the faith is lost. In this paper, using Jewish and Islamic texts from the Middle Ages as well as works of contemporary continental philosophy, I argue that the importance of religious law in Judaism and Islam does not stifle the humanity of believers, but on the contrary provides the solid, strong, and pragmatic basis from which it is possible to attempt to live ethically with other people. Reversing the direction of the Christian accusations against Judaism and Islam, I suggest that Christian emphasis on spirit over law ignores the essential role that law plays in making us human beings who are capable of living well together. *Halakha* and *shari'a* are designed, and as religious law understood to be perfectly designed, for organizing social relationships in a way that prohibits the unethical or inhumane treatment of our fellow human beings.

Tabrizi's Commentary on the Propositions of Ibn Maimon

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Ibn Maimon (Maimonides) is one of, if not the, most important thinkers in the history of Jewish thought. However, while he is generally considered to have been an Arab thinker, little serious work has gone into the analysis of Arabic studies of his work. This paper will focus on Tabrizi's commentary on the twenty-five propositions that open Book II of Ibn Maimon's *Guide of the Perplexed*. It will consider the extent to which Tabrizi's analysis of Ibn Maimon's view of the soul is incorrect, and the possibility that Tabrizi is using the format of the commentary not simply to present the views of Ibn Maimon but to offer modifications and alterations. Drawing on the works of contemporary continental thinkers, we will consider how Ibn Maimon's notion of law dovetails and differs from that of Tabrizi. This paper will focus specifically on Tabrizi's great respect for Ibn Maimon's work, and ways in which that respect appears to stem from Tabrizi's recognition that the work of the "Israelite Prince" is compatible with Islam and can help lead to a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of Islam.

The Influence of Zoroastrianism on Eschatological Concepts in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament Greek

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In this paper we will explore the philosophical similarities and differences between Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity on the following major themes and concepts within the theological sub-field known as eschatology: namely the battle between good and evil, the nature of revealed scripture, transformation of heaven and earth, the messianic principle and the general resurrection of the dead at the end of days. To what extent are there similarities and differences in the very notion of monotheism when comparing the three religions? How does the hermeneutic structure of the ancient languages inform the theological concepts and their philosophical content? Can we discern different cultural roots for various ways to interpret eschatology differently given today's landscape of major Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Islam and Christianity? Utilizing certain philosophical insights from major continental European philosophers, such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, we will examine various eschatological conceptual structures at work in Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. Ultimately this will help us understand what the philosophy of religion means today as a global abstraction from specific doctrinal belief structures at work in the religions of antiquity and the contemporary age.

Misinterpretations Of Religion Causing War; With Special Reference To India

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Abstract

World has faced extremely diabolic forms of human minds in the most terrible wars fought in the name of religion from time immemorial. On some occasion to safeguard a religion or others to spread it. Human race has frequented war fields more often than not. This paper examines the major wars fought in the name of religion on the soils of India.

At present we live in a world where each nation is striving for supremacy in the fields of arms, new inventions and innovations. As a consequence we find the main religions of the world busy in strengthening themselves in order to accomplish their respective missions. They want to spread their religion to make it supreme by all means and increase the number of their followers at the quickest. Even terrorist groups now have a say in religious matters. Although, religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that establish symbols which relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life. The word religion is sometimes used interchangeably with faith or belief system, but religion differs from private belief in that it has a public aspect. The world's largest religious groups by population, estimated to account for between 5 and 7 billion people, are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. India is the birth place of four of the world's major religious traditions; namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Throughout its history, religion has been an important part of the country's culture. Religious diversity and religious tolerance are both

established in the country by law and custom. A vast majority of Indians associate themselves with a religion.

As India is a historical country, it has many religions since ancient times. When we go through the ancient history of the country we find that whenever outsiders have attacked and ruled here they have also spread new religions. The then natives of India were forced to adopt the ruler's religion. After several generations we have many well established religions here. Though the practices are different but the teachings of all religions are equally good and almost the same, their misinterpretation has caused serious wars. After independence India declared itself as a secular country and allowed its citizens to follow their own religion while respecting all other religions. The researchers in this paper have tried to analyze the causes which were responsible for the religion based wars in India.

Common Ground/Philosophical Real Estate
An Affirmative Exercise in Religious Pluralism /
Religious Dialogue Between East & West

(Cultural Astronomy/Astrology)

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If we want to focus on what divides us, there is plenty to choose from. If we want to focus on common ground, chances are what we are already standing on. However, whether we see that ground as 'common,' or merely as grounds for further contention, may well be due to individual personality differences as much as philosophical ones.

While culture, family, and personal history all influence our religious development, that elusive, and yet, highly measurable enigma we call 'personality' seemingly predestines us, in pure unconscious subjectivity, to espouse certain philosophical positions over others. Perhaps we are not nearly as rational as we'd like to believe?

- 1) Basic Religious Personality Types: Intrinsic, Extrinsic, or Questing, and their philosophical inclinations, plus the implications of the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicators: N (Intuitive) vs. S (Sensing) and T (Thinking) vs. F (Feeling).
- 2) Gender Differences = Philosophical differences. An overview of relevant research, especially recent findings contrasting the philosophical leanings of Western, Judeo-Christian women in advanced/post-industrial societies with their Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist sisters.
- 3) The Authoritarian Personality/RWA, Altemeyer, Stenner, *et al*: Philosophically, these types value uniformity and societal conventions, and are often hostile and punitive towards those who differ. Altemeyer estimates that as much as 20-25% of the American

adult population qualifies, but we can only imagine the percentages elsewhere.

While hardly comprehensive, this presentation is a guide to current research on a range of religious personality types, and their respective openness to religious pluralism, ecumenism, and dialogue between different traditions, that could help participants reflect upon their own personal inclinations in a different light.

Looking Behind the Mirror
An analysis if the influence of the
reporting agent on media reports about Islam

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The media coverage of Islam and Muslims differ widely in nature. Developing a greater understanding of their production will aid in the reflection on the position of Islam in the Western media. Religious concepts present in the reporting agent influence the report produced. As subjects in contemporary society we are under the influence of a variety of stimulants at any given time. The media acts as a stimulant to the receiving subject, however it is coloured by the subject producing the media report.

Accepting the theses of contemporary critical theory and hermeneutics as well as the developments in philosophy, anthropology and psychology in analysing the effect of and on the media, it does little to explain our contemporary approach and interaction with the Muslims in the media. Particularly as one can distinguish religious, socio-economic and ethno-cultural motives, that invariably intertwine.

Therefore by analysing the effect of the subject on producing media, I aim to offer an analysis of contemporary media reports on Muslims (using British media reports as the main examples). Arguing that the religious concepts in the producing subject will affect the way the story is reported, but more importantly where the (religious) concept is absent, different or perceived this way by the producing subject. The resulting media report will be coloured in this way. The resulting work will be an interdisciplinary study with the significance of the proposal being that it offers an initial analysis of how the producing subject of media affects their reporting of Muslims.

The Parallel Analysis of Science and Religion: Essentialism and Cultural Diversity

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Abstract

Science and religion (Christianity) have close relationship in the long run which still exists and looks being a great difference. By a parallel analysis, their sharing symmetrical characters can be recognized. There is strictly logic deduction in religious doctrine, and trust/belief, which generally regarded as character of religion, also is an inseparable part of science activity. Science and religion appear to share so much common characters, because both of them have the idea of essentialism. Both scientism believer and essentialism Christian, believe in the existence of objective world in the sense of ontology, and both believe their own respectively the true and only explanation for the outer world in the sense of epistemology. Therefore, both of them manifest strong character of exclusion and dogmatism. Therefore, both of them are fundamentally conflicting with culture diversity.

Key words: parallel analysis, scientism, essentialism, culture diversity, science and religious.

Is Fengshui Science or Superstition? A New Criterion for Judging the Value of Knowledge Systems

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Abstract

Fengshui, which can be translated as *Wind-Water* literally in English, is an ancient Chinese system of laws considered to govern spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of *Qi*, and whose favorable or unfavorable effects are taken into account when sitting and designing buildings². Similar systems exist in many other cultures such as *Vastu Shastra* in India, which consists of precepts born out of a traditional and archaic view on how the laws of nature affect human dwellings. Although prospered in ancient society, modern reactions to *Fengshui* are mixed. The *Skeptic Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience* states that principles of *Fengshui* are quite rational, but folk remedies and superstitions have been incorporated into its eclectic mix. In this paper, I will not distinguish *Fengshui* and other similar systems between science and superstition, but try to propose a criterion for judging whether a *knowledge system*³ is valuable, and if so, to whom it is valuable. I will end up arguing that, a knowledge system satisfying the criterion of relatively true property is

2. See *Zangshu* (Books of Burial) by Guo Pu of the Jin Dynasty and Wikipedia entry *Fengshui*.

3. A knowledge system here is referred to such a system that has one or more axioms or hypotheses (namely those propositions made as a basis for reasoning, without any proof of its truth), as well as a set of reasoning rules, together with all the conclusions based on these hypotheses and rules. Pay attention that a knowledge system is not necessarily a deterministic system, which requires no randomness is involved in the development of future states of the system. A knowledge system only requires two basic elements: hypotheses and rules. For example, Markov chain is not a deterministic system, but it is a knowledge system.

valuable *at least* to its *community of believers*⁴, and the problem of whether a knowledge system has *greater* value, is essentially a problem of whether it is *relatable*⁵ to other knowledge systems, so as to expand its community of believers.

4. Community of believers of a knowledge system is such a group of people or objects that believe in the axioms or hypotheses of the knowledge system, and follow the reasoning rules of this knowledge system. Mind that community of believers not necessarily consists of only persons. For example, if physics is a real description of nature, we view nature as a member of community of believers to the knowledge system physics.

5. A knowledge system is relatable to another knowledge system, if there exist one or more methods to transform conclusions in the first system to conclusions in the second one, and it is partially relatable to the second one, if part of its conclusions can be transformed to the second one. Two knowledge systems are relatable to each other, if this property holds in two directions. For example, geometry and algebra are relatable to each other, because the conclusions can be transformed from geometric forms to algebraic forms as well as reversely, through Cartesian coordinate system.