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P O L I G R A F I

RELIGIONS AND DIALOGUE

HUMILITY, RELIGIONS, AND DIALOGUE

Vojko Strahovnik

Introduction

Humility may initially be understood as one of the principal moral and epistemic virtues and is often appealed to within discourse about intercultural and interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, a full or proper understanding of humility proves to be demanding and elusive. In this introduction I will begin with a brief discussion about so-called general humility and will later differentiate its moral and epistemic aspects. It will then focus on epistemic or intellectual humility in the subsequent section.

Humility in a general sense is a multi-faceted concept and cannot easily be captured within a simple or one-dimensional theoretical model. James Kellenberger identifies seven elementary dimensions that we generally associate humility with. These are: (i) having a low opinion of oneself, (ii) having a low estimate of one's merit, (iii) having a modest opinion of one's importance or rank, (iv) lack of self-assertion e.g. in cases where one has made a contribution or has merit, (v) claiming little as one's (merited) desert, (vi) having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or proneness to mistakes, and (vii) not being proud, haughty, condescending, or arrogant.[1] Similarly, the conception of relational humility emphasizes that humility is closely associated with behaviour within a particular relationship, demonstrating that as a humble person we have an accurate perception of the evaluation of ourselves, and that in being humble we are other-oriented in the sense that we consider the wellbeing of others at least as much as one's own and that

[1] James Kellenberger, "Humility," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2010), 321–322.

this engenders trust in others.[2] Relational humility can also be defined in relation to "a relationship-specific judgment in which an observer attributes a target person with four qualities: (1) other-orientedness in one's relationships with others rather than selfishness; (2) the tendency to express positive other-oriented emotions in one's relationships (e.g., empathy, compassion, sympathy, and love); (3) the ability to regulate self-oriented emotions, such as pride or excitement about one's accomplishments, in socially acceptable ways; and (4) having an accurate view of self".[3]

Humility includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and motivational dimensions or aspects.[4] Many definitions of humility explicitly include both moral and cognitive aspects. Cole Wright and colleagues define humility as the inherent psychological position of oneself or towards oneself, which includes cognitive and moral alignment, calibration, or situatedness.[5] From a cognitive point of view this means that it is the understanding and actual experience of ourselves as limited and fallible beings that are part of a larger creation and thus have a limited and incomplete viewpoint, and it is the perception of the whole that surpasses this being. This experience can be mediated or also formed within a spiritual connection with God or the experience of an existential connection with nature or the cosmos. Humility in this sense also restricts our tendency to experience exceptionality, special distinction, or superiority, and also restricts the priority given to our beliefs (it also restricts the claims of special recognition or commendation and the establishment of a supremacy over others). Intellectual humility is both a virtue and a stance that involves having an appropriate, modest, and non-haughty view of our mental abilities, advantages, and disadvantages, that we have the ability to properly evaluate and evaluate vari-

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[2] Everett L. Worthington, Everett L., "What are the different dimensions of humility?" 2016. www.bigquestionsonline.com/2014/11/04/what-are-different-dimensions-humility.

[3] Don E. Davis, Everett L. Worthington and Joshua N. Hook, "Humility: Review of Measurement Strategies and Conceptualization as Personality Judgment," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, no. 4 (2010), 248.

[4] Don E. Davis et al., "Humility and the Development and Repair of Social Bonds: Two longitudinal studies," *Self and Identity* 12, no. 1 (2013), 61.

[5] Jennifer Cole Wright et al., "The Psychological Significance of Humility," *Journal of Positive Psychology*. Online first (April 2016), 2.

ous ideas and positions in a way that includes respect for others who disagree with us, etc.[6] Intellectual humility can, on such a basis, also be understood as an element of the afore-mentioned general humility, which interrelates intellectual and moral, cognitive, and non-cognitive aspects.[7] In the moral sense, this means that humility includes the understanding and genuine experience of oneself as merely one of the morally important beings whose interests and well-being are as worthy of equal consideration and care as the interests of others. In this sense humility limits our aspirations to attribute the advantages to our own interests and well-being.

Humility as an Epistemic Virtue and Agency

Intellectual humility can be initially understood as a part of general humility, i.e. the part oriented at intellectual and epistemic aspects.[8] Intellectual humility is thus a virtue or attitude, which implies that we maintain an adequate or realistic and a non-haughty look at our intellectual capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses, that we exhibit the ability to properly assess and evaluate different ideas and views in a way that includes respect for others that do not agree with us, etc.[9] It therefore includes both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. It enables us to establish a proper relationship with ourselves as epistemic agents, which inter alia includes us being open to new facts and insights, the ability to integrate new knowledge into our existing knowledge, the ability to assess the relevance of this knowledge, etc. At the same time it puts us into a cognitive space with others in a way that allows non-haughty, non-condescending, and solidary participation in the common pursuit of truth and in public discourse. Understood in this way we can distinguish intellectual humility as an epistemic virtue.

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6 Joshua N. Hook, "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10, no. 6 (2015): 499–506; Vojko Strahovnik, "Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava [Dimensions of Intellectual Humility, Dialogue and Reconciliation]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 76, no. 3/4 (2016), 471–482.

7 Don E. Davis et al., "Distinguishing Intellectual Humility and General Humility," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 11, no. 3 (2016), 215–224.

8 *Ibid*.

9 Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders".

One might object that in the epistemic domain, where the primary focus is on belief-fixation (belief formation and belief maintenance), we cannot speak about exercising one's agency or, for that matter, virtuous agency, since belief-fixation is not voluntary. In my previous work I have already argued for a view that includes a viable notion of epistemic agency, thus I will just reiterate some of the main points here before proceeding to address specificities of epistemic humility.[10] Virtuousness can be understood as a feature of agents, as a matter of exercising agency in certain ways. In order to include in this epistemic virtuousness one must leave behind the idea that virtue is entirely a matter of what is under one's voluntary control. I hold that belief fixation is virtually always non-voluntary, but still broadly agentive. This is supported by considerations based on epistemic phenomenology. Epistemic inquiry is experienced not passively, but rather as a product of epistemic competence, which includes the capacity to appreciate epistemic reasons and to form and maintain beliefs because of their evidential import. Rational belief-fixation is a virtuous exercise of one's epistemic agency and can thus facilitate understanding of rational belief-fixation as the core epistemic virtuousness, while other habits of mind pertinent to belief--fixation, including intellectual or epistemic humility, are understood as supplementary epistemic virtues. In addition to epistemic humility these include things such as epistemic conscientiousness, intellectual sobriety, impartiality, intellectual courage[11], synoptic grasp, a sense for alternative points of view both perceptual and theoretical, salience recognition and focus, and practical wisdom.[12] Supplementary epistemic virtues can be defined as abilities, dispositions, learned habits, or personality traits that assist people in achieving their epistemic goals, e.g. the formation of true beliefs about the world, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, etc. There are two aspects of epistemic virtues, one of them being oriented more towards virtues as reliable epistemic mechanisms while the other towards virtues as character traits (e.g. imaginative abi-

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[10] Terry Horgan, Matjaž Potrč and Vojko Strahovnik, "Core and Ancillary Epistemic Virtues."

[11] James Montmarquet, "Epistemic Virtue," *Mind*, 96 (1987): 482–497.

[12] Juli Eflin, "Epistemic presuppositions and their Consequences," *Metaphilosophy* 34, no. 1/2, (2003).

lity, epistemic courage, epistemic responsibility, intellectual sobriety, objectivity, creativity, etc.).[13] Intellectual humility falls mainly on the side of the latter of those aspects.

One aspect that highlights several facets of intellectual humility and interconnects it with moral humility is the interrelationship between humility and shame. A close connection between both humility and shame has already been recognized to a certain degree. Kellenberger puts forward a suggestion that humility can be understood in terms of two distinct core contrasts, the first being the contrast between humility and pride and the second the contrast between humility and what he calls the pride – shame axis.[14] According to the first understanding, humility is seen as the opposite of pride, arrogance, egotism, smugness, vanity, and this is reflected in the fact that we often simply equate humility with the absence of pride. According to the second contrast, humility is the opposite of the pride – shame axis. Both pride and shame are closely connected with our self-image, self-concern, and our centeredness on ourselves. On the other hand humility in a sense is not marked by focus on the self; quite the contrary, it rejects such a focus and thus cannot be placed on the mentioned axis. "If humility and the pride – shame axis of self-concern are operative as core contrasts, so that humility in this expression excludes both pride and shame, then shame would not be the response to a failure in humility or to other failures. Failure in exterior or interior behaviour would instead result in dismay, sadness, downheartedness, guilt, or an awareness of having sinned, of having violated one's relationship to another or to God, none of which must by its nature be tied to self-concern and a pride ideal."[15] Humility in this sense is thus associated with a kind of eradication of the self and such a view was most sharply stated by Simone Weil, and is exemplified in the following characteristic quote: "True humility is the knowledge

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[13] Vojko Strahovnik, "Uvod v vrlinsko epistemologijo [Introduction to Virtue Epistemology]," *Analiza* 8, no. 3 (2004).

[14] Kellenberger, "Humility," 324–331.

[15] *Ibid.*, 330.

that we are nothing in so far as we are human beings as such, and, more generally, in so far as we are creatures".[16]

My own proposal is that we can gain important insights by focusing our attention on the relationship between humility and (moral) shame.[17] I specifically underscore two aspects of shame, namely the reflective situatedness aspect and status aspect. The reflective situatedness aspect makes it possible to relate a given action or a given part of one's character to the self as a whole. This is what Bernard Williams pointed out when arguing that shame (as opposed to guilt) affects our whole personality, e.g. by implying a certain feeling in which our whole personality is revealed to us as diminished, weakened, lessened, or damaged. Furthermore, shame helps us understand our relationship to our (wrong) actions or lapses; a proper, reflective cultivation of shame can disclose this relationship and establish or re-build our personality and identity, both at the individual level and at the level of community.[18] Shame focuses on ourselves. It calls for confrontation with ourselves, for improvement and for progress that must be achieved, and also establishes a relationship between us and the other(s). If this aspect of reflective situatedness is transposed to intellectual humility, the focus must thus land firstly on the relationship between a belief, a set of beliefs or a part of our epistemic system, and the epistemic self a whole. This enables an overall framework for the epistemic appraisal that relates both mentioned parts. The second aspect of rank also closely associates shame and humility. For example, after a given wrongdoing (either by an individual or by a group) what the proper cultivation of moral shame and humility must establish is recognition, in the form of truthful moral responsiveness and humble attentiveness, of the other (in this case victim(s) of the wrongdoing) as fully equal to us, as having full human status.[19] Shame and humility impose such levelling

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16 Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 1952), 40; cf. Tony Milligan, "Murdochian Humility," *Religious Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007): 217–228.

17 Strahovnik, "Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava," 475–480.

18 Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 94.

19 Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity. Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 102; *cf.* Robert Petkovšek "Demonično nasilje, laž in resnica [Demonic violence, lie and truth]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2. (2015): 233–251.

of statuses and ranks, recognizing others as being our equals. Given an understanding of epistemic or intellectual norms, standards, and ideals as social norms[20], which function to direct, adjust, and control our intellectual endeavours including open and responsive public discourse as a complex form of coordination and cooperation activities with a set of expectations, standards, and demands, then humility and shame can function as part of such a system of regulation.

Promoting intellectual humility fosters overall recognition of our epistemic limitations, stimulates overcoming of our intellectual flaws, and motivates us to achieve epistemic ideals and to flourish intellectually. Just as moral virtues, emotions, and reactive attitudes can play the role of promoting pro-social, moral behaviour, the idea is that one can draw parallels for intellectual virtues and epistemic reactive attitudes, including intellectual humility and shame. The intellectual correlates of shame and humility also play an important role in levelling out the current of public discourse by emphasizing participants' equal status (besides the question of their being or not being our epistemic peers defined in terms of available evidence, capacities for reflection, etc.) in the sense that impedes pre-existing biases, stereotypes, etc.

A Deepened Understanding of Humility

In this section I will elaborate a deepened understanding or conception of humility, which will be based on the work of Raimond Gaita, in particular on his understanding the language and space of saintly love, compassion, moral vision, and common humanity. Gaita begins his paper on the relationship between morality, metaphysics, and religion with two autobiographical reflections.[21] The first related to his father and the second to the meeting with a nun, whom he himself met while working at a mental-health institution and who was confronted with

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[20] Peter J. Graham, "Epistemic Normativity and Social Norms," In *Epistemic Evaluation: Purposeful Epistemology*, ed. David Henderson and John Greco (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[21] Raimond Gaita, "Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion," in *Moral Powers, Fragile Beliefs: Essays in Moral and Religious Philosophy,* ed. Joseph Carlisle, James Carter and Daniel Whistler (New York: Continuum, 2011).

patients with the very worst illnesses. Gaita reflects on his father's life story – which he also described in the novel *Romulus, My Father* – and highlights some particular aspects of it. What is in the centre of attention are his actions and his attitude towards the madcap homeless man named Vacek, who lived in the wild on the edge of the estate, where Gaita lived with his father. Gaita's father treated Vacek of fully human and thus fully equal to any other. Gaita himself also describes how his original attitude toward the homeless Vacek was marked by the complete absence of all superiority or condescension and showed the full and humble recognition of his humanity. In doing so, he points out that this was not a sign of his special virtue, but he saw him in such a "normal light" in the context of the space of meaning that his father had already established.

A similar experience was predominant in the case of the nun. Until meeting the nun at the mental institution, Gaita admired certain doctors who spoke of their heavily affected patients as people with full human dignity (unlike most of the remaining staff, who saw them at best as "sub-human"). But after the arrival of this nun, who turned to all the patients with saintly love, treated them as precious beings, with the purity of love for them as children of God, a new moral level opened up, which goes beyond the recognition of human dignity. "The works of saintly love […] have, historically, created a language of love that yields to us a sense of what those works reveal in any individual instance, in, for example, the demeanour of the nun towards the patients in the hospital."[22] Her actions were not overwhelming or awe-inspiring (merely) because of the virtue they reflected, neither because of the good that they had achieved, but because of their power to reveal the full humanity of these patients. I cannot offer more detailed and richer descriptions of all the facets of these two stories that Gaita puts forward, but this short exposition allows us to analyse the central issue further.

The key question is how to understand these actions and attitudes. Gaita bases this understanding on the notion of saintly love (in relation to the sanctity of life or the dignity of a human being in the case of a nun) and the mode of moral vision (in the case of his father) that,

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[22] *Ibid.*, 24.

however, are not to be understood at the level of (supplementary) moral and epistemic virtues, but they reach beyond that. The absence of condescension in the described relationships is humility, and the key towards such humility is compassion, which makes such a mode of (moral) vision possible, including the actions of saintly love and the language of love. "The nature of charity or compassion depends on the concepts under which one sees those towards whom one responds charitably or compassionately. The concepts under which my father and Hora saw Vacek were historically constituted, I believe, by the works of saintly love, by the language of love that formed and nourished those works and which was, in its turn, enriched by them. That was their cultural inheritance, although neither would have thought about it as I have just put it."[23] There are two levels mentioned here, namely the attitude of the individual, and the background or tradition that fosters such an attitude. Later on we will return to this question by focusing on how religious traditions can be a source of such a mode of moral vision that enables humility. Gaita also appeals to Simone Weil and her idea that sympathy for those who suffer in misery is more miraculous than the healing of the sick or the resurrection of the dead, but this must be understood on the conceptual or metaphysical level and not (only) at the level of moral psychology (including virtues and moral emotions). What is at play here is compassion without condescension and with humility, with humble attention to the other. Gaita thus speaks about two types of ethics or two fundamental views on morality. The first is being framed in a network of concepts such as autonomy, integrity, courage, honour, flourishing and heroism, including heroic virtues, while the other is focused on the good as a central concept and emphasizes the importance of awareness about our sensitivity to vulnerability and adversity, and the meaning of renouncement, sacrifice, and godlikeness. This latter understanding also implies the concept of an ethically necessary response (in terms of moral necessity), for example, in the form of compassion that goes beyond the emotions you can choose, form, try to stop, redirect, etc., insofar as you judge that the other is not worth or deserving your compassion or moral attention. Compassion

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[23] *Ibid.*, 6.

in this sense is a form of recognizing suffering; it is an indispensable response to this perception and this is closely related to the Christian view of love as being our duty.[24] This now opens up space for a deeper understanding of humility. In the first sense it can be understood as our response to understanding our limitations or mistakes as the *cause(s)* of our moral wrongdoing or false beliefs. Another, deeper understanding sees humility as one of the forms of moral and cognitive thought, which establishes a special space of meaning. Not being humble is not seen as the cause of an error, but as a form of error.

Humility and Interreligious Dialogue

"Honest and respectful dialogue nurtures humility and offers a corrective to the excesses of our own traditions. Dialogue can create trust and imbue a sense of security to help overcome the suspicion and fear our traditions have often instilled about the other. By forging bonds of support and solidarity across religious boundaries, people of religious good will can help overcome ethnic and national xenophobia. I believe that this is the challenge confronting people of faith today."[25] I have demonstrated that humility stands in relation – of opposition – to pride, arrogance, self-glorification, and haughtiness. Iris Murdoch understands it along similar lines. Furthermore, Murdoch highlights it as one of the most central, but also as one of the most difficult or demanding virtues, which allows us to perceive the other justly. She argues that the greatest enemy of excellence in morality is personal fantasy a mixture of self-conceit, haughtiness, and wishful thinking, which prevents us from seeing what is outside of us.[26] For Murdoch moral experience is best characterized in perceptual terms, and she characterizes moral differences as differences in vision, namely that "moral differences look less like

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[24] Bojan Žalec, "Kierkegaard, ljubezen kot dolžnost in žrtvovanje [Kierkegaard, Love as Duty and Sacrifice]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 76, no. 2 (2016): 277–292.

[25] Shira L. Lander, "Supernatural Israel: Obstacles to Theological Humility in Jewish Tradition," in *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L, Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150.

[26] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

differences of choice, given the same facts, and more like differences of vision. In other words, a moral concept seems less like a movable and extensible ring laid down to cover a certain area of fact, and more like a total difference of Gestalt. We differ not only because we select different objects out of the same world but because we see different worlds".[27] Humility facilitates such a moral perception. Murdoch also claims that, for a religious person, purity of the heart and humility are the backbone of moral behaviour. Similarly, Charles Bellinger understands humility as the basic emotional posture or attitude of the type of personality that is also marked by maturity, the fullness of time, and basic acceptance of the continuous creation process with a dynamic form of life.[28] Humble situatedness within a given epistemic and moral space is, therefore, an important factor of morality and dialogue. But we can also see that such an understanding of humility goes beyond the framework of virtue or character traits and it already, inter alia, lies in the domain of attitudes, gestures, practices, and traditions, and thus concerns the deeper ethical dimension that we have already indicated above. Humility, compassion, or other similar responses in the light of that which is good are not emotional responses in the sense of something that accompanies our beliefs about the suffering of the other, but a form of recognition of this suffering.[29]

At the same time, religion and religious thought are what help us cultivate such a humble moral perception; religious depth and authenticity allow for such moral vision and understanding. They enable us to overcome shallowness and superficiality, and by following the role models (in Christianity, for example, Jesus and the saints) the depth of religion is a space of meaning that facilitates such a moral vision. Here we can invoke talk about sanctity, us being made as the image of God, and our relationship with God. Moral exemplars, e.g. Jesus, are some-

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[27] Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 30 (1956): 40–41; *cf.* Vojko Strahovnik, "Moral Perception, Cognition, and Dialogue," *Santalka* 24, no. 1 (2016): 14–23.

[28] Bojan Žalec, "Človekovo nesprejemanje temeljne resnice o sebi kot izvor njegovih psihopatologij, nasilja in nesočutnost [Human Refusal to Accept Basic Truth About Self as Origin of Psychopathologies, Violence and Non-Compassion]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2 (2015): 221–231.

[29] Gaita, "Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion," 11.

thing that goes beyond the virtues or set of rules that we must obey (Mk 10,17-31). We can agree with Gaita, who argues in the light of such a view that religion actually constitutes such a framework of meaning. "Think of how much of our sense of religious depth and authenticity is a function of our appeal to things in which we believe that form and content cannot be separated – art of course, but also prayers, hymns, religious rituals and so on. Appeals such as these and reflection upon them occur in what I have called 'the realm of meaning'."[30] And: "The language of love, reflection on it and on the God who informs it is, inescapably, in the realm of meaning."[31] That realm is a domain that makes theological and philosophical reflection possible. These aspects are also related to the meanings of concepts such as human dignity, inalienable dignity, the inner value of people, and unconditional respect, which Gaita denotes as so-called mid-level concepts, because their ultimate and full meaning can only be understood on the basis of a deeper background created by the aspect of common humanity and revealed by the aforementioned saintly love and the related acts of love. "Perhaps it is the biblical injunction, stories and parables that enable us to make sense of the idea of a person as an end in herself. Indeed, I think it is so. Or at least that it is so in contexts where the word neighbour carries resonances that derive from the belief that all human beings are sacred, insofar as that belief has been nourished by the works of saintly love."[32] If we apply this and follow Gaita, it shows the moral relevance of humility in a different context, e.g. in the context of reconciliation and the reconciliation processes. Here humility and the importance of humbled attentiveness for the victims are key. "When people's souls have been lacerated by the wrongs done to them, individually or collectively, openness to their voices requires humbled attentiveness. When one's nation has committed those wrongs, shame is the form that humbled attentiveness takes. Without it, there can be no justice."[33] Now we can

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30 *Ibid.*, 12.
31 *Ibid.*, 15.
32 *Ibid.*, 23.
33 Gaita, *A Common Humanity. Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice*, 102; *cf.* Vojko Strahovnik, "Resnica, zgodovina, integriteta in sprava [Truth, History, Integrity, and Reconciliation]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2 (2015), 253–263.

establish the role and importance of moral and intellectual humility in dialogue and in the reconciliation processes. Because dialogue and reconciliation often take place within the context of a heavily divided past and heavily burdened present, it is very important that – on the basis of humility – we situate ourselves in this space and develop a proper understanding of our position and of the relations that we are part of. At the same time humility balances the status of those involved in these processes and fosters moral renewal of relationships and forgiveness. All this as a result leads to the formation of responsibilities and the establishment of justice.[34]

A humble attentiveness toward the truth also helps us to overcome violence. "The answer to demonic violence as the ultimate form of violence must, therefore, be sought in the contradiction of truth – a lie. If a lie creates conditions and opportunities for increasingly aggravated violence, then the truth will abolish these conditions and possibilities. The truth does not abolish violence directly, routinely, or immediately: we have seen that violence can spread beyond the truth, given Pascal. In any case the truth does not create the conditions for the spread of violence. Truth creates an environment that fosters the formation of humanity, humanity, and genuine freedom."[35] Humility is the key to solving this contradiction. In-depth understanding of the above-exposed dimensions of intellectual humility and shame further facilitates the planning of strategies for overcoming conflicts and cultivating an open, humble, tolerant, and responsive dialogue, which will still be committed and profound.[36]

Let me, for now, focus more specifically on the importance of humility for interreligious dialogue from an empirical perspective. Such a role and importance of (intellectual) humility has been confirmed by several threads of empirical research. Research on the relationship between intellectual humility and religious tolerance confirmed that

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[34] *Ibid*.; Strahovnik, "Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava [Dimensions of Intellectual Humility, Dialogue and Reconciliation]".

[35] Petkovšek, "Demonično nasilje, laž in resnica [Demonic violence, lie and truth]", 249

[36] Vojko Strahovnik, "Religija kot dejavnik ponižnosti in dialoga [Religion as a Factor of Humility and Dialogue]," in *Religija kot dejavnik etičnosti in medkulturnega dialoga*, ed. Vojko Strahovnik and Bojan Žalec (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani, 2017).

individuals who have a high degree of intellectual humility (especially in relation to religious beliefs) also exhibit a high degree of religious tolerance towards different religious beliefs.[37] Intellectual humility is also a good predictor of people's religious tolerance in the sense that is relatively independent of the strength of their religious commitment and the conservatism of their religious beliefs or worldviews. Intellectual humility also weakens an excessively defensive posture towards others who do not share our religious beliefs. Intellectual humility has an important role in the formation of religious tolerance in a way that the simple exposure of different religious beliefs and religions (religious diversity) does not. The lessons learned can be summarized in the following way: "if religious tolerance is a goal, it may be important to promote religious intellectual humility in religious individuals,"[38] which is especially important in the broader picture of the contemporary world, where religious differences often lead to tension, conflicts, and even violence.

The perceived or attributed intellectual humility is furthermore a positive factor of forgiveness.[39] Perceived humility also concerns interpersonal dimensions and contributes to the regulation of social bonds, allows us to predict what will be the reaction of those around us and promotes non-selfish and solidary social bonds. Humility encourages forgiveness, in the sense that if the "victim" perceives the "perpetrator" as humble, it is easier to forgive wrongful behaviour.[40] Intellectual humility is important for establishing, maintaining, and restoring interpersonal and social bonds. "A high level of intellectual humility is an important virtue, especially for those individuals who are within their communities perceived as someone who has significant intellectual influence".[41] In conjunction with honesty, humility leads to increased levels of integrity, sincerity, and loyalty, to collaborative and responsive behaviour, and reduces the level of vindictiveness and manipulation.

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37 Joshua N Hook et al. "Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2017).

38 *Ibid.*, 6.

39 Hansong Zhang et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 43, no. 4 (2015); Joshua N. Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10, no. 6 (2015).

40 Zhang et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict".

41 Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," 504.

Humility is also related to (social and civic) responsibility, gratitude, compassion, benevolence and mindfulness, openness to the other, and hope.[42] That is why it is important to cultivate intellectual humility, especially in the context of interreligious dialogue.[43] There are also findings that demonstrate how secure attachment in the context of our relations to God in positively correlated with dispositional humility.[44]

Conclusion

All these are only a few of the mosaic stones that, together with others, lay the foundation for highlighting the importance of humility, both moral and intellectual, for interreligious dialogue and intercultural dialogue. The key is to direct our attention to the potential of religions, religious traditions, and religious communities to foster and exhibit humility (instead of e.g. absolutism, exclusivism, or fundamentalism), both in terms of understanding as well as practice. We can return to Gaita and his thought that "[i]t is part of the very idea of religion, at least within the Judeo-Christian tradition I think, that someone who professes a religion, who bears witness to it, must believe that it deepens rather than cheapens what human beings care for, whether they are religious or not or whether they care a fig for religion".[45] And there are attempts to base such dialogue processes on humility and aptitudes for religions in this regard.[46] The lesson learned is the following: "There can truly be no peace among humanity until and unless there is peace among the religions of humanity. That peace cannot emerge without profound dialogue, exchange, humility, and learning from one another".[47] This responsibility is then allocated also to the level of indi-

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42 Cole Wright et al., "The Psychological Significance of Humility," 5–6.

43 Zhang et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict," 260.

44 Peter J. Jankowski and Steven J. Sandage, "Attachment to God and Humility. Indirect Effect and Conditional Effects Model," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 42, no. 1 (2014), 80.

45 Gaita, "Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion," 14.

46 James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone, and Omid Safi, *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

47 Omid Safi, "Epilogue: The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue," In *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L, Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 305.

viduals. "Being a believer and yet truly and honestly open to the possibility of another's truth claims is the essence of humility and, to my mind, theological maturity. History has proven how religion has been an effective means for motivating large numbers of people to engage in extraordinary behaviors, sometimes good, sometimes evil. We must assume responsibility today to move the equation of religious history to the balance of the good".[48]

Religious communities and religions, in general, are important agents of global justice. Religions thus have a vital role in establishing justice and in the process of overcoming new religious intolerance by creating a context of sympathetic imagination, humility, and respect. This also represents our willingness to step out of our ego and enter into the world of the other. This allows us to avoid the phenomenon of "invisible other" or "invisible others".[49] A special challenge for such a sympathetic imagination is that the other is often different or distant, which means we must first make the other real for us. Inclusive imagination and sympathy represent only one aspect of compassion and care, but they are crucial because they move us in the opposite direction as fear, that is in the direction of the other. Narcissism misleads us when it persuades us that we can go through our life with other people but without making any efforts in the domain of imagination, sympathy, and care. This is one of the main forms of moral error (Nussbaum 2012, p. 169).[50] Compassionate empathy and imagination can overcome such tunnel vision or blind spots, and do so in a way that mere arguments cannot, because they include experiential participation (solidarity) on/with the other, but also go beyond it in that they evaluate, criticize, and explore the values that are embedded in the situation, and dismantle hierarchies, stigmatization, and undeserved suffering. Humility, both intellectual and moral, plays an important part as a virtue here. It ori-

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[48] Reuven Firestone, "Epilogue: The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue," in *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 310.

[49] Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2012), 139–140.

[50] *Ibid.*, 169.

ents us towards the other, fosters positive other-oriented emotions, and helps us overcome egoism, arrogance, and feelings of superiority.

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ON SOME FOUNDATIONS OF PLURALISTIC RELIGIOUS SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY OF MULTIPLICITY

Lenart Škof

Introduction

The theology of comparative religion, accordingly, must be the product of thinkers who see, who feel, and indeed who know men and women of all religious groups and all centuries, as members of one community, one in which they themselves participate.[1]

This paper aims to discuss some foundations of a pluralistic religious science as based on a revolutionary contribution to the *theology of religions* by Canadian theologian and religious scientist Wilfred Cantwell Smith. According to John Hick, more than any other single individual W.C. Smith has been responsible for a radical change towards a more positive and inclusive mode of thinking among the world's great religious traditions.[2] Contemporary religious pluralism therefore owes a great deal to Smith's important methodological and historical innovations. This paper will first focus on Smith's thoughts regarding religious pluralism. The question of "monotheism" and its ontological as well as historical understanding within the religious science will move to the forefront in the second part – by looking into less known but important contribution to religious science by Wilhelm Schmidt. Then we will follow Smith's methodological *credo* and explore the relation between the idea of religious pluralism and contemporary theology of multiplicity, as proposed by Lauren Schneider in her insightful study *Beyond*

1 Kenneth Cracknell, ed., *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 216.
2 Frank Whaling, ed., *The World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 147.

monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity.[3] The foundational principle of the theology of multiplicity is creativity: we should bear in mind that the Divine/God is present everywhere, in the birth of a child, in any gesture of affection and benevolence, in happiness on the one hand and crisis and suffering on the other, as well as in death. This is something that all world religions have in common, and we can put with these basic existential or ethical "markers" of different religions into a dialogue. The conclusion will argue that what is needed in our times is *ontological creativity* in the very core of the revelation of God that occurs within and around ourselves, but, even more importantly, in a truly hermeneutic way, it should occur in a dialogic manner *among us human beings*, as representatives of different religions and participants in the continuous religious dialogue of humankind.

Throughout this paper two fundamental questions related to the principles of the theology of multiplicity will be defended, namely the following:

- are we humble enough to be able to admit that we are fallible and open to amendments, corrections, revisions; which practical consequences could be inferred from this shift in our thought?
- we should be open to the presence of the Divine/God in the world, even where we perhaps did not expect it; the doctrines and their respective faiths as well as members of various religious communities should be in a dialogical partnership in achieving this goal.

1 On Humility and Tolerance in Interreligious Dialogue

Let us first look at the words of Smith, who presents us in the following passage with perhaps his most essential theological view on theological pluralism – which we can also take as a most sincere expression of his personal as well as theological (professional) *credo*:

If Christians take seriously the revelation of God in Christ – if we really mean what we say when we affirm that his life, and his death on the cross, and

[3] See Lauren C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2008).

his final triumph out of the very midst of self-sacrifice, embody the ultimate truth and power and glory of the universe – then two kinds of consequences follow, two orders of inference. On the moral level, there follows an imperative towards reconciliation, unity, harmony, and fellowship. At this level, all humanity is included: we strive to break down barriers, to bridge gulfs; we recognize all people everywhere as neighbors, as friends, as loved of God as we are. (...) [T]here is another level, the intellectual, the order of ideas. (...) At this level the doctrines that most Christians have traditionally derived have tended to affirm a Christian exclusivism, a separation between those who believe and those who do not, a division of humanity into a "we" and a "they", a gulf between Christendom and the rest of the world; a gulf profound, ultimate, cosmic.[4]

Two possible trends of theological and religious thinking could be implied from this simple, yet profound truth: theological exclusivism and theological inclusivism. Apart from both theological standpoints, however, the above paragraph articulates perhaps the most basic principle of all religious life: the principle of (epistemic) humility. This principle is what is common to all religious traditions if taken seriously. I elaborated upon this in one of my previous essays on humility as presented by Smith, namely with the following thoughts:

This testimony is what I think is the most important feature of interreligious dialogue today. Traditionally, theologians and believers (men and women of faith) have tended to distinguish both levels: we are ethical beings, we know that there are other individuals who possess and live their own faiths and live their ethical lives, but it is our faith that always makes us stronger and better, or more exclusivist in the search for truth. For Smith this is arrogant and it is in a direct contradiction with the Christian ethos: it is thus "*ipso facto* un-Christian". It is in this sense that Smith polemicizes with the phrase, which was under discussion some years ago in the United Church of Canada: "Without the particular knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, men do not really know God at all."[5]

But how is it possible to achieve such an epistemological standpoint, one that helps us become humble, more inclusive, and thus more

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[4] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Patterns of Faith Around the World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 134.

[5] Regarding this question *cf.* my essay "Faith and humility: on the future of theology of religions," in V. Strahovnik and B. Žalec, eds., *Religion, violence, and ideology: reflections on the Challenges of postmodern world* (Wien / Zürich: Lit, 2016), 35–46 (for citation see p. 38).

tolerant in our religious lives? I want to answer to this question with a reflection on the tragic Charlie Hebdo Paris events from January 2015. Following a second attack by Islamic extremists on a Jewish store, the staff were rescued by a young Muslim worker who – upon asking about his courage and motives – said (paraphrased): "I helped my brothers. We are all brothers." This expression of a young Muslim worker was at the same moment profound and simple. In these words two basic principles of religious life were encapsulated: the principle of compassion (or *agapistic* love), and the principle of religious tolerance (or multiplicity). If compassion was present in its most direct way and was literally incarnated in the form of the immediate help offered to his fellow-beings being under threat, religious tolerance, of course, represents what we, as observers of these horrific events, were able to understand from this courageous act. If the first principle is what is equally shared by all world religions, and directly relates to humility (and self-sacrifice in one of its forms), then the second principle is one of the key results of the process of Enlightenment. This expression from a young Muslim carries all truth, as presented in Smith's works.

The intellectual level, as presented by Smith in his thought – that all humanity is included this endeavor, that we need to strive to break down barriers and recognize all people everywhere as neighbors or friends, as one humanity, loved by God – is what could be found in the most famous presentation of the principle of religious tolerance, namely Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*.[6] This dramatic poem was written in the years 1778–79. Its central motif, as is well-known, is the parable of the three rings, which Lessing adopted from Boccaccio's Decameron. The story probably originated in Spain, where it most likely emerged among the local Jews, appearing afterwards in the Dominican texts of the 13th century. The parable of the three rings is written in the spirit of the Enlightenment, but contains much more than the traditional Enlightenment criticism of religion and revelation, but contradicting it (positively) in many ways with its inherent eschatological and agapistic message. It is closer to contemporary (postmo-

[6] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise: A Dramatic Poem in Five Acts*, tr. W. Taylor (London, Paris and Melbourne: Cassel & Company, 1893); see for citation Act Three, Scene 7.

dern) theological theses, for instance those by process theology, or, even closer, by the American theologian Jack Caputo, who in his *On Religion* proposes the form *What do I love when I love my God?* as the fundamental question of religion and theology.[7] In an analysis of this text by Peter Sloterdijk the dramatic poem by Lessing is called *The Sermon on the Mount* of the Enlightenment.[8] Sloterdijk sees this poem as a vehicle towards a future atmosphere of peace, based not on any kind of new polytheism or syncretism, but on one single truth: one of the principle of tolerance.[9] The play most definitely advocates new Enlightenment principles, which should extend beyond dogmatism and fanaticism and be based not only on epistemic principles, as related to reason and tolerance, but also on more agapistic principles of our common ethos and humanity. The narrative of *Nathan the Wise* goes as follows:

SALADIN
The rings—don't trifle with me; I must think
That the religions which I named can be
Distinguished, e'en to raiment, drink and food,

NATHAN
And only not as to their grounds of proof.
Are not all built alike on history,
Traditional, or written. History
Must be received on trust—is it not so?
(…)

Let each feel honoured by this free affection.
Unwarped of prejudice; let each endeavour
To vie with both his brothers in displaying
The virtue of his ring; assist its might
With gentleness, benevolence, forbearance,
With inward resignation to the godhead,
And if the virtues of the ring continue
To show themselves among your children's children,

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7 John D. Caputo, *On Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001), 26.
8 Peter Sloterdijk, *God's Zeal: the battle of the three monotheisms,* tr. W. Hoban (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2009), 123.
9 *Ibid.*, 154.

After a thousand thousand years, appear
Before this judgment-seat—a greater one
Than I shall sit upon it, and decide.
So spake the modest judge.

We see from Nathan's words that there is an intrinsic layer in us, common to all three monotheisms (and, broadly, to all world religions): it is the layer of humility, which is a sign of our willingness to admit that we do not possess full knowledge, that we are ontologically contingent, and that we do not possess any full knowledge of our judgement. All these are values now considered to be the foundations of a modern world that would seek to resist any violence and any thought of the One as the exclusive and monarchic ruler of the world. In *God's Zeal*, Sloterdijk follows Derrida when he states that the three messianic eschatological realities at the level of world order (which includes politics and economy) are now fighting one another. Of course, neither Sloterdijk nor perhaps shall we accept the thesis about the war of the three monotheisms or their eschatologies, yet it may nonetheless serve us as a starting point for reflection on the role of religion in today's world. In order to offer some answers to this question, let us, by means of transition, look at a reading from a lesser known, but equally important figure in the theory of monotheisms within religious science, namely, Father Wilhelm Schmidt. This theory lets us approach an initial layer of the thinking on monotheisms within religious science and thus be able, as will be show, in the third part of this essay, rethink the question of multiplicity within contemporary theology.

2 Wilhelm Schmidt on "Urmonotheismus"

One of the most interesting personalities at the intersection of religious studies *and* theories of the monotheisms was without any doubt German theologian and one of the earliest religious scholars, Father Wilhelm Schmidt. He was born on 16 February 1868 in the town of Hörde near Dortmund (he died in 1954). Upon completing his studies, he joined the *Societas Verbi Divini* (SVD) congregation, also known as the Steyler Missionaries. As we shall see, Schmidt's affiliation to this

order was closely related to his doctrine on primeval monotheism or "Urmonotheismus". Later Schmidt proceeded with his studies of Oriental languages and Islamic theology in Berlin. Soon followed Schmidt's close encounter with the early social anthropologists and ethnologists, who were then just beginning to develop the new science, based on E. B. Tylor's pioneering work. He became interested in the languages of African and Polynesian cultures as well as in undertaking studies that subsequently led to his principal and most extensive work, *The Origin of the Idea of God* (*Der Ursprung der Gottesidee;* published in volumes from 1926 to 1955). Throughout his career Schmidt remained in the ministry and his academic work was closely connected to the Church. That is also how he understood his theory of monotheism. He was mostly occupied by the problem of the origin of the idea of God, which was in different historical periods and in different cultures expressed in the most varying of ways. Schmidt wanted to unify that into a theory, and he approached the task by adopting a religious study and empirical method.[10]

One of the central topics in his work is related to the idea of God (*Gottesidee*): Schmidt wanted to study various cultures and religions (so-called 'natural peoples' or *Naturvolken,* as they appear in his theory) in order to discover how far back in history belief in the Supreme or Highest Being dates.[11] He examined peoples of all continents, presenting for each the idea of a supreme being as it was expressed in the culture in question: name, function, place, qualities. He thus attempted to illustrate the similarities between cultures and peoples in imagining and experiencing the idea of God. Without a doubt this methodological path was among the first serious attempts in religious science to discover the deeper religious truths of any of non-Semitic religions, and it could only be compared to Max Müller and his earlier project *The*

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[10] On Wilhelm Schmidt's life and work see excellent survey by Hans Waldenfels, in: Axel Michaels, ed., *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade* (München: C.H. Beck, 1997), ch. "Wilhelm Schmidt".

[11] See Wilhelm Schmidt, *Ursprung und Werden der Religion: Theorien und Tatsachen* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930).

Sacred Books of the East.[12] The deficiency of such studies, as critics find, is in the very thing that Schmidt wanted to prove: he did not succeed in reaching as far back as the prehistoric era to show the continuity or origin of the idea of God before concrete historical beginnings. That was why he was not really able to touch on the fundamental issue of the origin of the idea of God. Schmidt therefore resorted to reduction: based on comparisons among the ancient cultures of Africa (the Pygmies) and Asia (e.g., the so called "pygmies" of the Andaman Islands), on the one hand, and the cultures of the Arctic-American belt of the Inuit and American Indians, on the other, he extrapolated the existence of an older or original culture (*Urkultur*), and eventually, through a number of reductions, arrived at Australian aborigines, who were at the time of early anthropology and religious studies presumably considered as the earliest culture of the world (with racist overtones included, as in Tylor). Through this reduction, he tried to reach *the* original, most ancient culture of the mankind. At that point, he crossed to the field of theology and made an assumption about the existence of proto-revelation (*Uroffenbarung*), as people in ancient times could understand it. Schmidt most extensively studied the religion of the Pygmies. As we have seen, he thought that the key to the solution of the puzzle was hidden in ancient or "primitive peoples" (or "savages"), as they were called at the time.

Now, despite many deficiencies, which could be attributed to the early stage of new and emerging religious and theological methodologies (also accompanied by a lack of empirical data and existing translations of religious books) we can still affirm that Schmidt paved the way for many more contemporary explorations into the very structure (epistemology and ontology, and ethics, of course) of religious pluralism. Another deficiency of his early work is that he still united his work with

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[12] This book series comprises fifty volumes, and was first published by the Oxford University Press between 1879 and 1910. Since 2008 the complete series has been available online at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/sbe/index.htm. This book series itself, and the new and emerging discipline of religious studies evolving in that time, are the testimony that there is only *one religious history* – that of humankind, which cannot be possessed or exclusively claimed by any person, culture, religion, or theology. Schmidt's project therefore begins right after the completion of Müller's series.

the thought that the world could be derived from *one* principle. This is no longer possible in the era of religious pluralism. To him, as a Catholic priest and theologian, (Christian) God was one, or the only one, and everything that ever emerged belonged to this One as a principle. We will see in the third part of this essay that this metaphysical or monarchic credo has largely been negated by the contemporary theology of multiplicity. Still, in his idiosyncratic and original thought Schmidt displayed something that could not yet be found in his contemporaries: he considered ancient and primitive peoples as "partners" in the process of the emergence of the god idea in the world, and consequently he would not treat them with haughtiness, as was the rule in the practice of early anthropologists, ethnologists, or missionaries – and, of course, colonialists all around the world. In this regard, Schmidt accomplished a great task in his use of the empirical method (data, languages), relying on the empirical data of many existing anthropologists and ethnologists and, perhaps most importantly, he showed in this endeavour a good deal of epistemic humility in his methodology.

In his monumental work and *The Origin and Existence of Religion* (*Ursprung und Werden der Religion;* 1912–1955), Schmidt thus focused on all previously mentioned fields to prove the existence of the so-called primitive or original monotheism in them (his *Urmonotheismus*). He held that the idea of a supreme being could be found in Pygmies, Bushmen, and in primeval Arctic cultures. All these and numerous other cultures are jointly mentioned under the label of "monotheism."[13] Where the latter (monotheism) was not that marked, Schmidt assumed it to be the result of subsequent degradations. He argued that no one before him had studied the ancient cultures in that light and that was why it had not been possible to confirm until then that (essentially) they were all (with a few exceptions) monotheistic. He therefore refuted the theory, still very important at the time, of animism (of Tylor and Marrett and others in anthropology, also Freud) and the evolutional development of religion (such as in Comte, Spencer, and finally Frazer

[13] Schmidt, *Ursprung und Werden der Religion,* see Chapter XVI (p. 254ff.). Schmidt discusses in this chapter "the monotheistic character" of the Highest Being (*Höchste Wesen*) of Pigmies.

and their followers).[14] Relying on Andrew Lang, Schmidt claimed that "primitive peoples" would *not* at first believe in a being they associated with the Spirit, and only afterwards developed monotheism.

Finally, Schmidt built his theory of primitive monotheism on three elements: collective human needs, unity of time, and unity of space through that original idea of God. If these conditions are met, then it is possible to speak of primitive or original monotheism (*Urmonotheismus*). The element of collective human needs means that such a god gives meaning to the origin of family, parents, progeny, ethical need, love, etc. Unity of time is an attribute indicating that such a god fills up *all times*. The third element is the unity of space, which refers to God, the creator, controlling all space. These three elements as parts of Schmidt's early theory of *Urmonotheismus* are precisely what in a modern theory of multiplicity could be translated into the idea of God, as being present in Her multiple revelations in various world religions.

3 Towards A Theology of Multiplicity

Let us now finally move on to questions referring to the role of monotheisms in the concrete lives of individuals and societies. This issue involves some of the fundamental dilemmas of modern societies: for example, the role of religion within, the current understanding of the term "belief", and the way to consider modern society using the logic of monotheisms. This was contemplated in-depth by Laurel C. Schneider in her work *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity*. But why at all must we make mention of multiplicity? We must

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[14] See on this early and essentialist stage in the anthopology of religion an excellent study written by Brian Morris (*Anthropological Studies in Religion: An Introductory Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)). Especially see Chapter 3 on the intellectualists (Müller, Spencer, Tylor, and Frazer) and the early anthropological tradition within religious studies. Morris mentions Father Wilhelm Schmidt's theory of degradation on p. 102 of this book as a complete reversal of Spencer's and related evolutionary schemes of the development of religions from polytheism into monotheism. With this gesture Wilhelm Schmidt showed rare theoretical courage in an era of evolutionary science. One had to wait until E.E. Evans-Pritchard's (1902–1973) seminal *Nuer Religion* from 1956 to witness an equivalent scientific *ethos* as well as *spirit of humility* in analyzing any (!) of the African religions within the tradition of the anthropology of religion as well as within religious studies as such.

realise that in the 19th century (already with Hegel's historicism, and especially with Nietzsche) it was philosophy that stopped looking for one truth that could explain the world. Science in the early 20th century saw Gödel's theorem posed, and Werner Heisenberg published the Uncertainty Principle, which itself could be a paradigm for a new era of epistemic humility. In the humanities, including theology, various thinkers discovered that one can only see the world through the perspective of empirical, hermeneutical, or historicistic methods (Dilthey, but especially Heidegger, Gadamer, and, of course, later Wittgenstein; in the United States philosophers of the tradition of American pragmatism – Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey). As we have seen, Caputo said in his *On Religion* that, as a theologian, he was not interested any more in drawing the lines between the orthodox and the heterodox, etc. but rather that the only thing that he was interested in is how passionately a person was willing *to love God*. This is not a matter of a singular truth, but rather of living and experiencing, as well as of creating peace and justice. This challenged the viewpoint advocated by those who preferred to speak of closeness, totality, the only One, instead of this inherent and pluralistic openness of the idea of God. It is here that the theology of multiplicity begins.

Schneider's basic question in her *Beyond Monotheism* is when, in the story about God, did we begin talking about something that is no longer dynamic, that has no connection to the body (or, flesh), that is dissociated from our hearts and unrelated to nurturing sexual differences and the elements of nature. The thesis offered by her book about monotheism(s) is that today we no longer want to talk anymore about the One that should rule the world (causing disputes and arguments: religious wars have always been waged under the flag of the One), but that we would like to return to theology as thinking (and feeling) about multiplicity, about a d/Deity (or God) that is no longer metaphysically *One*, but that possesses in itself/herself/himself the principle of humility, and reveals to us within the principle of multiplicity. But the theology of multiplicity is a not a theology of polytheism or syncretism. Leonardo Boff (in his *Jesus Christ Liberator*) and especially Jürgen Moltmann (in his *Trinity and the Kingdom*) already criticised the so-called monarchical or political monotheism and suggested that we should think in-

stead about our inherent social and ethical aspects, also as related to the Trinitarian (or triadic) doctrine and principle, which in itself comprises the principle of multiplicity.[15] Of course, another question associated with this is the one we posed ourselves when reading W. Schmidt, who talked about primitive monotheism as a paradigm of all the religions of the world. Here we necessarily raise the question of how to conceive of three monotheisms and, more broadly, of how to conceive a dialogue of faiths, both narrowly monotheistic (such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, theistic traditions within Hinduism, and Buddhist Adi--Buddha theology) as well as those that do not fall under the label of monotheism in its strict sense. We should not forget that the very same logic of the One also led the colonialist expansion of the Europeans, who did immeasurable evil in centuries past to peoples of other faiths and cultures. It also leads all those religions of the world, which in the present era aggressively or monarchically aspire to rule over other faiths, as was the case at any time or any place in the world's religious history.

Now we must bear in mind that the issue of Christian monotheism is, of course, extremely complex. Christianity emerged and developed in the context of the broader Semitic-Mediterranean cultural and religious framework, in an environment strongly influenced by Semitism/Judaism as well as ancient Greek philosophy, African traditions, and influences originating from Persia.[16] In this environment something that we today know as Christian monotheism took several centuries to form. We know that the term "monotheism" was not used or defined until 1680 (polytheism in 1630).[17] The first to use it was Henry More – not as a defence against New World religions and Judaism, but rather for inter-Christian purposes – to distinguish its position as opposed to that of the Unitarians, who supported the unity/oneness of God and world. The 19th-century theologians, early social anthropologists, and

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15 *Cf.* Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinität und Reich Gottes: Zur Gotteslehre* (Güttersloh: Kaiser, 1994). See chapter VI ("Das Reich der Freiheit") and his criticism of "political" and "clerical" monotheism. See more on the trinity and the triadic principle in my essay "Thinking towards peace: on triades and new cosmology of the mesocosm", *Religious inquiries*, 9:5 (2016), 81–93.

16 *Cf.* about the early African influences on Tertullian's trinitarian thinking an excellent study by A. O. Ogbonnaya, *An African Interpretation of the Trinity* (New York: Paragon House, 1994).

17 Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 19.

religious scientists used the term monotheism together with the term polytheism (its evolution to, or degradation from Monotheism, as in W. Schmidt) to distinguish religions as more or less developed, more or less original, etc.

Now, how would a theology of multiplicity look at various monotheisms and their historic as well as contemporary encounters? First, I would like to propose that we talk about experience rather than theory. This is the view we encountered at the beginnings of hermeneutics (Hegel, Dilthey, Gadamer), as well as in the theology religions as posited by W.C. Smith. This experience can consist of something that someone personally met with or underwent, or it can also refer to literary, mythological, and, of course, religious characters and encounters, as proposed by Lessing in his *Nathan the Wise*. What is needed, thus, is ontological creativity in the very core of the revelation of God that occurs within and around ourselves, and *among ourselves*, all the time (in it thus horizontal transcendence), and replaces the earlier monarchic or vertical wish to rule over the other. In this wish all three methodological aspirations – those of W. Schmidt, W.C. Smith, and finally L. Schneider meet.

According to Schneider, "multiplicity is a dialect of porous openness, implicating a divinity that is streaming, reforming, responding, flowing, and receding, beginning … again."[18] Thus, again with Moltmann, God "*begins* in the flesh and the pathos of incarnate connection."[19] In the introductory chapter to his *Towards a World Theology,* Smith elaborates on a variety of phenomena related to our religious lives – such as various religious practices, religious feasts, stories and prayers, all the way to the different greeting cards we send to each other. Smith beautifully observes with these illustrative examples in his thought how we, as members of various religious communities or Churches, but also as part of one world religious community, interact in them, how we take part in them, or how we communicate with others.[20] We do not say that all

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18 *Ibid*., p. 162.
19 *Ibid*, p. 163.
20 W.C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), ch. 1.

religions are the same, but we can claim that in various practices, rituals, and religious acts one truth is revealed in multiple ways.

This acknowledgement is now a first sign that we are willing to accept the principle of epistemic humility. Our religious life is, as Smith would claim, participation in a broader process that transgresses boundaries, narrow doctrines, and exclusivist views. We are now able to see members of other religious communities as members of one, yet a pluriform community of believers. Spiritual life is not a privilege or possession of anyone: it is a sign of our common *humbleness* (before God, and before other human beings) to admit that there are many epistemologically valid and especially ethically worthy varieties of religious experience, and, finally, that it is *the spirit of love* that enables and guides such belief. It is only on this basis that a future culture of peace among the religions can be imagined and achieved.

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ACCOMMODATION AND UNIVERSALISM: AN EARLY MODERN EXPERIMENT IN RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Helena Motoh

It is undeniable that the 16th century and the two centuries that followed were marked by religious struggles in various senses of this term. Within Europe, of course, the main demarcation line was drawn between the reformed churches and the Catholic orthodoxy, at first mostly a doctrinal division and/or critical debate that nonetheless had horrible political and social consequences. Another version of the same debate was taking place outside of Europe, under the umbrella of colonial and semi-colonial world exploration. Travelers, merchants, and especially missionaries who ventured beyond Europe witnessed in person that each of the countless new localities had different traditions of worship that could – by analogy – be called religions. Using the label of paganism, the old term for any non-Christian non-monotheistic worship (or simply one that pre-dated Christianity), soon became too vague and the proponents of this dialogue had to seek ways to talk and think about religious phenomena outside the framework of Christianity. This paper will focus on the approach of accommodation with its universalist implications, which developed in European contacts with China, but which after that has become an influential paradigm for interreligious dialogue.

Tolerance and search for a common ground

The first step in the religious dialogue between China and Europe was already made centuries before the founding of the Jesuit mission in Beijing, at the time of the Mongol rulers of Yuan dynasty. Europe

found out about them through the writings of Marco Polo[1]. This was not a time of religious tolerance in Europe, so Polo must had been genuinely surprised when he saw how the matters of rituals and religion were treated among the Mongol rulers. As we can read in the Ramusio version of the *Travels*, Polo's party witnessed the Great Khan Kublai celebrating Easter in a ritual that included both The Book of Gospels and incense burning and he is said to have similarly celebrated all of the religious holidays of the people in his great empire:

> ... he always acts in this fashion at the chief Christian festivals, such as Easter and Christmas. And he does the like at the chief feasts of the Saracens, Jews, and Idolaters. On being asked why, he said: 'There are Four Prophets worshipped and revered by all the world. The Christians say their God is Jesus Christ; the Saracens, Mahommet; the Jews, Moses; the Idolaters, Sogomon Borcan [*Sakya-Muni Burkhan* or Buddha], who was the first god among the idols; and I worship and pay respect to all four, and pray that he among them who is greatest in heaven in very truth may aid me.'[2]

The attitude that the Great Khan displays towards the four religions is obviously a pragmatic one and it was, if we can trust the accounts of Polo and other writers, obviously the custom of the Mongol imperial court. Nevertheless, practice was separate from the creed. "He all the while believes in none of them," said William of Rubruck[3] for Kublai's predecessor, Möngke. If we are to believe the writers' accounts, this tolerance obviously had more of a symbolic political significance for the Khans. Allowing, tolerating, or even practicing a religion also meant that the respective communities were brought under the Khan's patronage, or, sometimes, that he even hoped to have some practical benefits by having the makers of miracles and helpful tricks on his side. Following a version of Pascal's Wager, Khan's religion seemed like a rational pragmatic and/or political choice. What is surprising about these 13th century accounts, however, is not what they noticed about the multi-religious practice of this or the other Mongolian ruler, but that

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1 The actual authorship of this semi-fictional travelogue is of course a much debated issue, but for practical purposes we here follow the traditional attribution.

2 Marco Polo, Sir Henry Yule and Henri Cordier, *The Travels of Marco Polo: The Complete Yule-Cordier Edition* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 348.

3 *Ibid.*, 349.

they chose to reveal it to the audience of the time. It is fairly unusual to read those lines on the background of the simultaneous developments in Europe and the Middle East. The year when William of Rubruck was visiting Möngke[4] and commenting on his Easter celebrations saw the end of the Seventh Crusade, and a few years after Marco Polo admired the religious tolerance of Möngke's younger brother Kublai, now already the Great Khan, the Eighth Crusade began. Europe was going through a very close encounter with another religion, but religious tolerance was not considered an option. The framework of any inter-religious relationship was far from mutual understanding and dialogue – although perhaps at times it was just as pragmatic as the practice of the Khans. There is not enough credible information about the reception of these travel accounts at the time to make judgement about their intents or the readers' interpretations, but, when the travel connection with Asia was re-established, their alleged religious tolerance again became a topic in writing about Chinese monarchs.[5]

However, for most of the Christians arriving to Asia after Polo and Rubruck the most important part of the information about the religiously tolerant Mongol Khans was the part about them allowing or even welcoming Christian practices. This story partly confirmed another myth that invited travelers to undertake such an arduous journey in the first place, a belief that was very strong at the time of the Crusades and that offered an exciting promise. This was the legend of a Christian ruler in the East, the so-called "Prester John". A mysterious letter – most probably a collage of various elements, such as accounts on Nestorian Christian communities in Asia and earlier texts on Eastern Syriac Christianity, such as the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* – started circulating in Europe in the second half of the 12th century. Attributed to somebody called *Presbyter Johannes*, or, in translation, Prester John, it was allegedly a letter written to Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus.[6] The letter

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4 Michael Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, tr. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 298.

5 Helena Motoh, "Accounts of (in)tolerant rulers: Kang Xi's 1692 decree in the context of the shaping of the concept of religious tolerance in Europe," *Azijske in afriške študije*, 2008, vol. 12, iss. 2: 23-38.

6 Robert Silverberg, *The Realm of Prester John* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1972), 1.

was full of exotic descriptions and vivid imaginary, but the most important message was straightforward and timely: on the other side of the continent, behind the countries of the Muslim rulers, there is again a Christian world, waiting to be reunited with the Christian Europe. A century after the forged letter started circulating, people like Polo and Rubruck came back with a realistic version of the same account, namely, that there is a powerful king in the East who supports Christian beliefs. Equating Kublai Khan with Prester John was not feasible even in the semi-fantastic genre of a travelogue, but his tolerance to the Christian practices and the fact that his mother was a Nestorian Christian[7] did help promote the idea that there was a common ground upon which missionary enterprise could be possible.

Familiarity in difference

The land route from Europe to Asia turned into a bigger challenge after the fall of the unified Mongol empire, and especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The search for alternative routes to Asia also opened up a new path for the Christian missionaries. Formally established in 1540, in the midst of Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits decided to focus on spreading their faith as one of their main goals. After failing in their initial vow to go to Jerusalem[8] Asia became one of their destinations, the other most important being South America. The Jesuit Asian experience in many ways differed greatly from the one in South and North America. Not only did they encounter an urbanized civilization, complicated systems of government, and sophisticated literary traditions, but they also believed to have found the lost realm of Asian Christianity. Following the old fables about Prester John it was easy to make an intellectual bridge to the claim that Asia, especially China and partly the Indian subcontinent, was an old lost ally. The missionary work was therefore seen not as the challenge of meeting a foreign and incomprehensible spiritual territory, but the revival of an

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7 Michael Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, 298.

8 Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), xiii.

old friendship and familiarity, and hostility was replaced by the intent to find the common "language" in which the message of faith could be transmitted.

The most important official ramification of this attitude was the so--called "accommodation method", promoted by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the founder of the Beijing Jesuit mission. Ricci arrived to China in 1583 and began his missionary work as the assistant to a fascinating Jesuit scholar, namely Michele Ruggieri. Ruggieri was the first Jesuit missionary who managed to master the Chinese language to the point of fluency and complete literacy; some accounts even claim that he mastered 12000 characters in the two years of study[9]. The Jesuit Visitor of Missions in the Indies, Alessandro Valignano, sent Ruggieri back in 1588 and Ricci took over the establishment of the Chinese mission. Ricci's approach became exemplary. His excellent command of the Chinese language and manners enabled him to socialize with the high class of scholarly officials. Valignano entrusted the young Jesuit Ricci to start expanding the mission further north and in 1600, in his second attempt, he finally managed to get himself accepted for an audience before the Chinese emperor,[10] which marked the beginning of the Jesuit mission in Beijing.

The imperial capital became for Ricci the testing ground for his new method. But the accommodation method was not entirely Ricci's invention. The origin of this approach can be traced back to the first, original generation of Jesuits. The founder, or better spiritual father, of the first Jesuit community, Ignatius of Loyola, had already set several guidelines that determined the accommodationist approach. In his interesting analysis of the Jesuit take on accommodation, Stephen Schloesser[11] identifies five areas in Jesuit teaching and practice, which made possible the development of accommodations approach. (1) Loyola's *Spiritual exercises* already show a turn, typical for many of the 16th century theological reflections (including reformed factions), namely the

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9 Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2001), 862.

10 Paul A. Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius, The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism* (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 24.

11 Stephen Schloesser, "Accommodation as a rhetorical principle", *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 354-361.

shift towards individual religious experience. Loyola is therefore especially careful not to prescribe one path for all and his *Spiritual Exercises* instruct the spiritual teacher to adjust the way exercises are performed for the particular living reality of each individual, their age, intelligence, profession, and other conditions and limitations. The goal is not to regulate the learner's conditions, but to "accommodate" the teaching itself in order to be successful. (2) Personal experience was considered a prerequisite even to the academic training of a Jesuit novice. Six testing *experiencias* were required: undertaking a month of spiritual exercises in total seclusion, serving in a hospital, making a pilgrimage while begging for food and shelter, performing the most basic and lowest tasks in the Jesuit house, teaching the Christian faith in public to simple audiences, preaching, and hearing confessions.[12] All these testify to the importance of a lived experience and all its challenges in the life of a future Jesuit. Accommodation in this case was a personal one, an adjustment that also included an ascetic transcending of the harsh living conditions and trained the novice to be able to get along with and to accommodate to very different people and environments. (3) The self-representation of the Jesuits was very much related to their original, pre-Tridentine mission. They emphasized flexibility, friendliness, and an approachable style as the main characteristics of a good Jesuit. In Polanco's words the Jesuit lifestyle was not for the "duros de cabeça", the hard headed ones.[13] In his analysis, Schloesser sees (4) the emphasis on preaching as one of the most determining characteristics of the Jesuit order. The preacher's intent was to move listeners, to provoke and invite a change in conduct, and to do so through by appealing to emotions, not mere rationality. This approach, for Schloesser, brings the Jesuits closer to the *rhetorical* attitude towards the religious truth, especially when connected with the previous points and applied in the last important Jesuit characteristic, (5) the attention given to education. The rhetorical approach to the truth formed a bridge between accommodation in practice and accom-

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12 *Ibid.*, 357.
13 *Ibid.,* 358.

modation in teaching and spreading of faith, making the Jesuit project a unique experiment.[14]

Accommodation in China

This experiment was successful in Asia. the accommodation approach was advocated by the forbearer of the China mission and one of the initial group of Jesuits, Francis Xavier (1506–1552). As a missionary in Japan he insisted on the translation of all the Christian texts that were used into the Japanese language. He also demanded that his fellow missionaries pay special attention to adjust their habits and manners to the local customs in Japan and to abide by the local rules and regulations. Xavier himself never reached China, dying on an island just off the Chinese coast. His approach was continued by the Visitor Valignano who used this argument to oppose the competing Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in China. Compared to the harsh and rigid approaches that Jesuits accused those two groups of having, Valignano insisted that the Jesuit missionaries had to first learn the language and writing and then try to accustom themselves as well as possible to the Chinese community.

Accommodation became the leading approach in the Chinese Jesuit mission at the turn of the 17th century. This significant shift can be noticed in the difference between two texts used for religious teaching. Two catechisms were published by Jesuit missionaries at the time. Ruggieri published the first one with the title *The Veritable Record of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shengjiao shilu*, 天主圣教实录) in 1582, and Ricci supplemented it with his version of catechism in 1603 with the title *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shiyi*, 天主实义). There are many differences between the two texts. A formal distinction, which undoubtedly also influences the content, is that they are written in a different catechism style. Ruggieri's work, according to Paul Rule, is of a doctrinal type, a positive systematic explanation of the

[14] See also: Robert A. Maryks, "Rhetorical Veri-Similitudo- Cicero, Probabilism, and Jesuit Casuistry," in *Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits and Modern Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Cinthia Gannett and John C. Brereton (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 65.

Christian teaching, while Ricci writes a dispute, a justification of the Christian doctrine against the opinions of its critics.[15] Ruggieri's text is straightforward in what it presents: he explains for example that Jesus Christ died on the cross and that a Christian can only have one wife or husband.[16] On the other hand Ricci's approach is accommodationist. As was indicated by Standaert[17] and further explored by Meynard[18], the initial idea for Ricci's change of approach came from Allesandro Valignano's similar text, the *Catechismus Japonensis*. What Valignano came to understand after the initial period of missionary work was that the historical revelation was difficult to explain to the audience in Japan and it posed an obstacle for reaching more potential converts. The method Valignano decided to use was an accommodationist one. He organized his *Catechismus* in two parts, first presenting the Christian religion through natural revelation – using the philosophical arguments and the logic of universal natural reason – and only then, in the second part, presenting the content of historical revelation.[19]

Following the example and the instruction of Visitor, Ricci conceived *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* along similar lines. The co-author and editor *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*, Nicolas Trigault, comments on Ricci's work in a similar fashion:

> This new edition was written as a more ample explanation of Christian Doctrine, but before being published, it was so arranged as to be chiefly adapted for use by the pagans. (...) this new work consisted entirely of arguments drawn from the natural light of reason, rather than such as are based upon the authority of Holy Scripture. In this way, the road was leveled and made clear for the acceptance of the mysteries dependent upon faith and upon the knowledge of divine revelation.[20]

A decision to base the missionary work primarily on the use of the arguments of natural reason, and not on the truth of the historical re-

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15 Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius,* 7.

16 *Ibid*., 8.

17 *Cf.* Nicolas Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China: 635–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

18 Thierry Meynard s.j., "The Overlooked Connection between Ricci's Tianzhu shiyi and Valignano's Catechismus Japonensis," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/2: 303–322.

19 *Ibid.*, 305.

20 Matthew Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610*, tr. Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953), 448.

velation, also allowed Ricci to make perhaps the most surprising omission. Focused on the elements that he could explain with rational arguments, the *Tianzhu shiyi* leaves out several key elements of historical revelation, those that were most difficult to grasp for the Chinese converts: the crucifixion and passion of Jesus Christ, but also the obligation of monogamy.

In order to come even closer to his potential Chinese readers, Ricci – well versed in classical learning – decided to use the passages, arguments, and motives from Chinese classical texts. References from the *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing*) and *Book of Documents* (*Shujing*) were used to illustrate the Christian teaching.[21] Trigault comments on that, too:

> The book also contained citations serving its purpose and taken from the ancient Chinese writers; passages which were not merely ornamental, but served to promote the acceptance of this work by the inquiring readers of other Chinese books. It also provided a refutation of all the Chinese religious sects, excepting the one founded on the natural law, as developed by their Prince of Philosophers, Confucius, and adopted by the sect of the literati.[22]

This decision was crucial for the success of the accommodationist strategy of the Jesuits in China. From the very beginning Ricci saw Confucianism as a possible bridge towards establishing the dialogue on a common ground, while he fully rejected both Buddhism and Daoism. The other two religions had the elements of idolatry, while for Ricci Confucianism seemed to be a religion based on natural reason alone. With later authors, most notably Leibniz, this alleged trait of Confucianism came to be known as the natural theology of the Chinese. Trigault quotes Ricci in a debate with a disagreeing Buddhist scholar:

> Our arguments must be drawn from reason, not from authority. Since we disagree in doctrine and neither of us admits the validity of the books of the other, and since I could quote any number of examples from my books, our argument now is to be settled by reason, which is common to us both.[23]

According to Ricci's interpretation the light of reason brought Chinese ancient scholars close to Christianity, but was later tainted by the

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21 Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius,* 35.
22 Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 448.
23 *Ibid.*, 342.

idolatrous teachings of Buddhists and Daoists. Christianity, however, is said not to have remained at the level of the light of natural reason, but to have made one key step further into the realm of the supernatural. This addition can only be understood and approached through the truth of historical revelation. The Biblical reference often used for such an understanding is the apologetic account of the Apostle Paul in Athens in (Acts, 17, 23), where he finds the altar in Athens, dedicated to the "Unknown God" and explains to the Athenians that they have unknowingly been worshipping the Christian God, and he only provides them with the explanation in the form of historical revelation.

Characteristically for Ricci's method, however, this surplus is persistently kept for a later time and becomes more and more subordinate to the natural-theological core of the missionary teaching. This shift in the "Christianity for Non-Europeans" also marks another more European shift, a turn from the theology of revelation to natural theology, which starts to take shape in the debate between the Jesuits and Jansenists in 17th-century France.

Universalization of religion

In their affirmation of the primacy of natural religion the Jesuits established a common ground for their own missionary project, the language in which they could explain the truth of the Christian religion and their way of converting a growing number of Chinese Christians. Or so they hoped. Although (or perhaps also because) their method of conversion was much more successful compared to the Dominicans and Franciscans, they were confronted with a strong opposition that started to come from Europe. The debate picked up after the publication of an openly apologetic Jesuit book, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687). Dedicated to French king Louis XIV, the book was a compendium of translations of Classical texts and general information on China. It included the translations of three of *Four Books* – Confucius' *Analects*, *Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning* – accompanied by a chronological table and various texts on geography, demography, etc. The ideas on the natural religion of the Chinese developed by Ricci still formed a basis for the Jesuit standpoint, but were developed even

further. The climate in which the book was written, however, differed greatly from Ricci's time. The protagonists were French Jesuits, whose loyalty or at least reference was France and its king much more than Rome. Dynastc rule had also changed in China. If Ricci was working with several Han Chinese scholars of the late Ming dynasty, now the Manchu Qing dynasty came to power, while such a profile of scholars was labeled "Ming Loyalists" and fell in disgrace. For the French Jesuits of the late 17th century the dialogue was to be held with Qing emperors and not with scholars.[24] The textual emphasis also shifted. If the previous generation focused primarily on the key texts of classical Confucianism (*Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* was in a way the result of that), the new generation of Jesuits saw that they could better prove the ancient Chinese monotheism Ricci was talking about through the means of another textual reference, the *Book of Changes* (*Yi jing*). The decision was also pragmatic, because the choice of a cosmological classic was better suited to what the Jesuits were supposed to contribute when they served at the court, i.e. astronomy, calendars, etc.

Several issues became a problem for the critics of the Jesuit China mission. The debated topic is usually summed up as the "rites controversy", but accusations were actually broader than that. "Rites" alluded to the decision by the Jesuits to still allow their new converts to practice the veneration of Confucius and – even more essential for them – ancestral rites for their deceased relatives. The Jesuit choice of Chinese terminology for the Christian God was also questioned. The Jesuits decided on a cultural translation instead of mere phonetic transliteration, so for the Christian God they were using the term Lord of Heaven (*Tian zhu*). Such concessions were in line with the Jesuit principle of accommodation and were not difficult to justify with regard to their otherwise high opinion on the natural disposition of Chinese people to become Christians. The Jesuits, still interpreting the Chinese as a naturally religious people along with the Ricci presumption, believed that China was an excellent example that God-given nature is enough for salvation, even without grace. It is in this aspect that the quarrel bet-

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[24] D. E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 248–249.

ween the Jesuits and their critics over the salvation of potential Chinese converts was only a case in a larger theological dispute going on at the time between two contesting views on the prerequisites for salvation. The discussion itself was much older and began with contesting views on salvation by two church authorities from two sides of the known world, North Africa and Britain. Augustine defended the view that, after the Fall, humans are unable *not to* sin and can only be saved by God's grace. Pelagius, on the other hand, criticized Augustine's view and believed that God gives man his inherent nature as the basic predisposition, which enables him to choose good, while grace only facilitates this process.[25] Although Pelagius' views were condemned heretic, a compromise between the Augustine doctrine of grace and Pelagian view on free will was found in the late 16th century by Louis Molina, Jesuit from Evora in Portugal. His book *De liberi arbitrii cure Gratiae donis concordia* (1588) claimed that grace-given salvation can only happen if free will cooperates. This view soon got a lot of support, especially among the Jesuits, but the critics from the Dominican side were also very unforgiving.[26] As Escobar and Grazier point out, the two sides of the theological dispute were coming from very different circumstances. The Jesuits were a missionary order outside of Europe and engaged in the restoration of Catholicism in Europe, so the practical solution they could apply had to be a broader and more open view on grace and potential salvation. The situation for Dominicans was different:

> The Spanish Dominicans, on the other hand, favoured a narrower, less generous theory, tinged with the fatalism of a race, which had achieved its national consciousness in the age - long struggle with the Moors, and having something of that aristocratic exclusiveness peculiar to the Order, which administered the Spanish Inquisition. The Dominicans could fearlessly destroy, knowing how few there are among the Elect; the Jesuits preferred to cast wide their nets, believing that salvation is for all men and that it was their peculiar mission to spread this truth.[27]

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25 *Ibid.*, 339.

26 Escobar and Gazier, "Chapter VIII- Jesuit and Jansenist," in *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, by David Ogg, 6th Rev. ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954), 326.

27 *Ibid.*, 327.

Another new religious movement, the Jansenists, joined the Augustinian side of the debate and emphasized that grace was the sole prerequisite of salvation, reserved for the few. For Jesuits the fact that China had not received revelation in its history did not mean that the Chinese could not be saved. A book was published along these lines in Paris in 1696, strongly supporting the Jesuit view. The author, Louis--Daniel Le Comte, himself a missionary in China for two years, strongly advocated the validity of missionary work among the Chinese:

> Sometimes we are surprised, that China and the Indies were buried in the darkness of idolatry for almost all the time since the birth of our Lord, while Greece, a part of Africa and almost all of Europe enjoyed the light of faith; but we don't pay attention to the fact that China has for more than two thousand years preserved the knowledge of the true God and practiced the purest moral principles, while almost all of the rest of the world was mistaken and corrupted.[28]

God's grace was granted to the Chinese millennia before it was given to Europe, claims Le Comte, and that was evident from the classical texts and the high level of public morality alike. This claim understandably caused a great upheaval in the opposing group of scholars, wondering if now Le Comte wants to say that the Chinese were the original chosen people. He does really make a surprising and very influential claim. The Chinese, he says, were the first to know a monotheist God.

> The traces of real religion, which we find for consecutive centuries in the Chinese, lead us to confirm the Divine Providence.[29]

The proof for the "real religion" according to Le Comte, is the veneration of the Supreme Emperor (Shang Di), which was attested since the earliest royal dynasties:

> The knowledge of the true God was kept for centuries after the emperor Cam-Vam and most probably a long time after Confucius.[30]
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> …

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[28] Louis Le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (Paris: J. Anisson, 1696), 146–7. Accessed at: https://archive.org/details/nouveauxmemoires02leco.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, 148.

… idolatry did not contaminate the spirit even three centuries later, until the emperor Yéou-Vam, who ruled 800 years before the birth of our Lord.[31]

But however provocative this might seem at the turn of the 17th century, it was still a paraphrase of the similar ideas in works from Ricci onward. What is more interesting in Le Comte is the next step he takes towards explicit universalism. God's grace claims Le Comte – again in the fashion of Molina – is not a privilege given to a few. The comparison he gives is very telling, using the metaphor of the sun:

When distributing his gifts, God makes no unfair preference; instead he chooses moments to let shine the light of his grace, which rises and sets successively in different parts of the World, the humans can then make a good or bad use of it.

Le Comte claim was straightforward and the critics could not stay quiet. The controversy was now raging and, between Beijing, Paris, and Rome, the fate of the Jesuit project became more and more uncertain. Four years later a letter was addressed to the Pope from Missions étrangères.[32] The title was explicit: *Les idolâtries et la superstitions chinoises*; its content was a thorough refusal of the ideas in Le Comte's book and two other pro-Chinese Jesuit texts. The Jesuit defense then came from another angle – claiming that ancestor worship and other rituals were civic rites and not religious in nature, a distinction that supported an influential paradigm shift in Europe[33], but was not successful in the particular case. The inquisition finally forbade both the Chinese rites and the accommodation method, and that was confirmed in 1704 by Pope Clement XI with the bull *Cum Deus Optimus*. The final condemnation was made eleven years later with the bull *Ex illa die*, and after a long struggle of the papal seat to actually apply the condemnation

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31 *Ibid.*, 141. The names of the rulers are quite difficult to identify, the –Vam part probably comes from »wang«, the king. *Yéou-Vam* could be king You of Zhou, who ruled at approximately that time.

32 Mungello, *Curious Land*, 331. This was an organization of missionaries, established in the late 17th century and subject directly to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Vatican. The missionaries in this organization were mostly opponents of accommodation.

33 *Cf.* Nicolas Standaert, "The Jesuits did NOT manufacture Confucianism," EASTM 16 (1999): 115-132.

in China it was again sealed by Benedict XIV, who censored both Jesuit adjustments – of rites and of terminology – with *Ex quo singulari.* The Jesuit order itself was suppressed in 1773 by Clement XIV.

In two centuries of the Asian mission the Jesuits' missionary work was barely successful, the number of converts considerably small, and the influence on the respective countries limited both in scope and time. The two intellectual shifts, however, that occurred in the framework of the Jesuit China mission were of much greater significance. Coming from a lived experience of people spending all their lives in faraway parts of the known world and practicing first-hand what we today might call intercultural dialogue, these shifts were not mere experiments of thought, but pragmatic models of intellectual, religious, and practical mediation. We could perhaps say that the missions were in many ways themselves an experiment, a laboratory, where their ideas and paradigms were formed, tested, and then brought back to Europe. Two phenomena addressed in the present paper, the accommodation method and the universalism of grace, are good examples of such, already foretelling the mental shifts of the Enlightenment era ahead.

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FEMINIST THEOLOGY AS A SPECIAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIONS AND THEOLOGY (?) OF RELIGIONS

Nadja Furlan Štante

Introduction

Every cultural and historical period is marked by burning questions that are a challenge for the people of that time and, looking from a theological point of view, we understand such questions as a sign of the time itself. In this postmodern, global world, which is striving more and more for parity and equality in terms of gender, race, religion, or political affiliation, it seems that the question of women's equality in secular and religious life is becoming ever more ubiquitous and unavoidable. The belief that men are superior to women, which is characteristic of all great world religions, including Christianity, is slowly being upended in the search for equality. Global feminism, in the sense of emancipation that humanizes the world is, for a post-modern person, no longer a question but the path on which we tread. The question of a woman, of her role and the role of the Church in society, is still inexhaustible and is increasingly the subject of various psychological, sociological, social, and other scientific studies and debates. All of society is faced with a new view of women, and also of men. The world is in the middle of an important place of transformation, or a new valuation and formation of gender identity.

At this point institutionalised religion plays an important role, serving as a meaning-producing system that is (jointly) responsible for society's (non)ethical behaviour and vice-versa. Culture and religion are not just realms of passive influence but also meaningful systems for producing meaning. They give the notions, the beliefs that become unnoticed, and the non-rectified patterns by which people live. Negative

gender stereotypes and prejudices are accordingly formed in addition to positive ones in terms of culture, and we absorb them uncritically. An important role here is played by those religions that, according to M. Franzmann, are the main key in individual socio-political structures to opening the door to harmful gender stereotypes and prejudices, and consecutively to a patriarchal mentality.[1] Feminist theologian E. Sorge, for instance, wonders if there has ever been a religion favourable to women.[2] Religion has in fact played and continues to play a key role in the oppression of women as well as in their struggle for freedom. In this context the question of "her story" and women's voices within different religions are of utmost importance.

Female voices within various religions

Feminist theology has become a worldwide and pan-religious movement, emerging as a response to women's experience of discrimination and patriarchal dominance, which regulated and defined their religious and secular lives. Just as individual women's experiences are different, and consequently women's efforts within Christianity, the religious experiences within other world religions are also different. But we can still say that what they all have in common is discrimination and the feeling of patriarchal violence that they have had to – perhaps still have to – endure. Although the notion of discrimination and patriarchy can be understood differently in individual cultural-religious spheres, the desire and need to "talk about the female experience" and awakening of women's voices are universal. In this sense it could be said that feminist theology and religious feminism have together become intercultural and interreligious phenomena. They connect all women, appealing to them to strive for their liberation from the oppression of religious patriarchal domination and violence. This can be compared to struggles against slavery, racial discrimination, or any other kind of genocide. Women's liberation movements are formed differently in different

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1 Majella Franzmann, *Women and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press 2000), 60.

2 Elga Sorge, *Religion und Frau. Weibliche Spiritualität im Christentum* (Stuttgart: Kohehammer 1988), 22.

religions. In any event feminist theology is a pluralist and diversified phenomenon, rooted in women's religious experience, which is full of hopes and unfulfilled dreams and which strives for the liberation and equal evaluation of the female principle of action, as well as for ethic feminisation and harmonisation of the world.

The possibility of *feminist theology as a philosophy of religion* was noted by Pamela Sue Anderson, who saw feminist theology as a new form of philosophy of religions.[3] *Feminist theology as a theology of religions* is a relatively new expression, which in the opinion of Rita Gross denotes the awareness that, in the background of religious plurality and diversity, there exists a key common to all religions. In the case of feminist theology it is thus about the common key of how women have experienced patriarchal subordination and discrimination of women by all religions. Gross appeals to all feminist theologians to try to develop the right approach for women's participation in interreligious dialogue to truly come alive.[4] In this context the term "theology of religions" is acceptable because it indicates the question of the positioning and the negative stereotyping of women within individual religious systems by the dominant patriarchal agenda that is encompassed in the term "theology". In a different context the universalization of the concept of *theology of religions* would be misleading and discriminatory. Religions, precisely in terms of conceptualizing the transcendental, show great internal heterogeneity and diversity: for example, Buddhism and Samkja, the traditional Hindu philosophical schools, are considered to be atheistic rather than theistic, wherefore it is impossible to speak of theology in the narrow sense of the word, which refers to some theos that puts it in the framework of transcendence. This plurality and diversity of individual religious contents, which are the building blocks of individual religious systems, is a great wealth and at the same time a great challenge for postmodern, religiously plural culture.

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[3] Pamela Sue Anderson, "Feminist Theology as Philosophy of Religions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40.

[4] Rita Gross, "Feminist Theology as Theology of Religions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, 61.

Feminist theology therefore critically opposes all forms of oppression, inequality and, discrimination (sexual, racial, class, ethnic, religious, etc.). Just like rejecting the distribution of power along androcentrism, it also rejects the superiority of a particular religion at the expense of another/others. It advocates the recognition of women's humanity and the recognition of the equality of all religions. Rita Gross in this respect rejects the exclusivist and inclusive approach of the theology of religions, on the basis of a critical argument that they both repeat and promote the superiority of Christianity over other religions, and urges feminist theologians to rise beyond discriminatory models and practices of exclusivism and inclusiveness, and to take on a pluralistic model. In her view the pluralistic model makes it possible to gain a more effective visibility of the common denominators of different traditions.[5]

Faced with a cultural and religious plurality, feminist theology is trying to develop a suitable key, a methodology for understanding the (O)other, and to strive for solidarity and interreligious tolerance and respect in light of interreligious dialogue. In the process it tries to find a critical category of estimation and treatment of diversity within feminist theory and theology: gender, racial, cultural, and religious, etc. Ursula King also points out the importance and necessity of developing a critical approach and methodology that would enable feminist theology to truly face religious pluralism.[6]

The specifics of a post-socialist religious sphere: religious or feminist?

In this section we would like to raise the question of the appropriateness or inadequacy of the established term *feminist theology*, which, especially in post-socialist countries, has a negative rather than a positive connotation. Similarly, Zilka Spahić-Šiljak concludes: "Even today, the majority of women and men in the Balkans, including theologi-

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5 Gross, "Feminist Theology", 87–89.

6 Ursula King, "Feminism: the Missing Dimension in the Dialogue of Religions," in *Pluralism and the Religions: the Theological and Political Dimensions*, ed. John D'Arcy May (London, Cassell 1998), 40.

ans, do not know what feminist theology is and if it is indeed possible to combine feminism with theology".[7] Expressions such as feminism, chauvinism, etc. are a priori marked negatively. In the case of feminism we first think of the most radical form, which rejects all that is masculine. The word *feminism* is obviously charged with opposing meanings, weighted with feelings that encourage comments, definitions, and explanations; it has many sub-tones and it is strongly negatively stereotyped. During the long years of various, contradictory, even completely mutually exclusive types of feminism, the word feminism has acquired a lot of weight. Some meanings have prevailed and pushed others away. In relation to feminist theology the reaction is similar both for women and men. When hearing the expression, some people think of certain feminist "commandos" in the field of theology, who are destroying a "sacred area". Others understand the phenomenon of feminist theology as a form of heresy: "This lack of understanding is, in large part, a hangover from the days of socialism when ideology and political order marginalized and supressed religion and considered feminism as alien. Consequently, women, particularly women believers, would not dare reveal these two identities in public. Being a feminist was not acceptable, but being a religious feminist was inconceivable, and is still today".[8] The negative dimension of the term feminism spills over everything that is related to this term. Feminist theology is therefore predominantly negatively understood and labelled. Many accordingly try to use the milder and friendlier expression of *female spirituality*, which is not the most adequate term. What is female is not feminist *de natura*. Feminism namely sees everything that is female through the prism of a woman's captivity in the patriarchal clutches of society and puts the whole context under question.

The prejudice towards feminism has led to its general acceptance as a way to crush the society and destroy "family values". If I quote the Christian fundamentalist, Pat Roberts: "For the sake of feminism,

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[7] Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, "Do It and Name It: Feminist Theology and Peace Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, 2, (2013), 176.

[8] Spahić-Šiljak, "Do It and Name It: Feminist Theology and Peace Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 176.

women abandon their husbands, kill their children, deal with magic, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."[9]

We will hope to overcome this dualistic feminist alternative of "either being religious or a feminist" with a conceptualization that would both include and exceed the understanding of religion either as a home or as eviction. It is therefore crucial for feminists to critically examine religion as one of the oppressive discourses, but also as a potential source of power and vitality in women's lives.

Feminist theology and religious feminism

Since (Abrahamic) religion has a major impact on the lives of women and, inter alia, it strongly co-shapes European culture and society, it is of utmost importance to re-examine the emerging forms of religion and the interpretation of the Bible, or the Koran, since it was the latter that co-created the traditional cultural role of women. Interpreting certain sacred texts in the light of patriarchal frameworks that corresponded to the ethics of the time served to create and promote the negative images of women and femininity. For example, the traditional Abrahamic worldview attributed women distinct, specific, and immutable social roles both in the private sphere of the home and in the public and cultural spheres. At home women are required to be submissive and/or subordinate to their husbands, and in broader society they must to be submissive and/or subordinate to men. Such susceptibility is based on the view that a woman is the property of a man. Male ownership is justified by the story from Genesis 3 as a consequence and punishment for women having brought sin to the world. These fundamental patriarchal assumptions or, even better, kyriarchal (i.e. a master, a father, a husband, the power of the male elite) assumptions about the subordinate status of women as second-class citizens are recorded in the Bible and recreated in legal and political culture. Women are forced to be submissive and lenient towards male violence.

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[9] Pat Roberts, "The Top 10: Facebook 'vomit' button for gays and other Pat Robertson quotes," accessed October 22, 2017, http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/09/us/pat-robertson-facebook-remark/index.html.

Out of all world religions Christianity has developed one of the most rigorous views blaming women for the origin of evil. In accordance with the Augustinian tradition that shaped Western Christianity both men and women were created with the same soul, except that woman was created as a being that was subordinated to a man in the original order of creation. The woman then rebelled against this subjugation in the Garden of Eden, which resulted in the expulsion of mankind from paradise and the arrival of evil in the world. If she wants to be redeemed, a woman must submit herself to male authority to the point of coercion and abuse. Although women of spiritual virtue can be equivalent to men in paradise, this salvation transformation requires them to be subjected to strict subordination on earth.

Christianity also assumed the Greek dualist ontological hierarchy of the spiritual over the material, of the spirit over the body, and connected the body with physical passions and sin. By their nature women are viewed as being more closely connected with the body and more inclined towards bodily passions. According to Augustine belief female "natural" subordination is associated with this hierarchy of spirit over the body, where all male represents the spirit, and the female is the body.

Judaism also knows the story of the creation of a woman from Adam's rib, her primacy of disobedience to God, and the expulsion from paradise. Since Judaism does not have a doctrine of ruin, this story does not have the same theological consequences as in Christianity. The Koran contains only the story of the simultaneous creation of a man and a woman, but not the story of Adam's rebellion and the accusation of a woman for sin; but this story appears in Islam later, through subsequent comments under the influence of Christianity. Islam does not know the idea of ruin. Both Judaism and Islam see men and women as created for different roles, men for public services and family management, and women for household tasks; but this is not related to the ontological hierarchy of the spirit above the body as in traditional Christianity.[10] Such religious ideas and discourses are embedded in socio-political situations and defend or destroy certain societal trends and efforts. As Gregory

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[10] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 71–77.

Baum nicely put it, opinion is inevitably determined and shaped by its historical position.[11]

As pointed out by the feminist philosopher Caroline Ramazanoglu, millions of women see the meaning of their life in religion. Religion therefore remains a predominant factor in the personal identity and the cultural position of millions of women around the world. Religion is one of the most important and most direct factors that enable a woman to know who she is and gives her life meaning. By renouncing a reform of the established "traditionally" legitimate negative stereotypical images of the female element in religious matters, we would renounce the reform of a very important part of society.[12]

The whole of society is confronted with a new view of woman and, hence, man. The world stands at an important point of transformation or a new evaluation and development of gender identities. Identity is not something stable; it changes with time and space. What can religion offer us during this time of rapid change and transformation? How can it help us improve the quality and ethics of mutual relations and gender understanding and, consequently, raise the quality of life?

This question and the issue will be presented in light of efforts how not to establish a relationship from the two integrities of a man and a woman, i.e. two diverse but equal totalities, from a constructive difference into the more valuable, i.e. the male and the inferior, which at least in the past used to be female.

A Christian feminist theology emerged in response to the patriarchal androcentrism of Christianity, a critical theology of liberation where a new subject, the woman, "gets to have the word". Feminist theologians try primarily to question and review historical memory critically and to recognize and raise women's value in it. This need is so much stronger because deep in our collective memory there is still a rooted prejudice about women's powerlessness and inferiority. The reconstruction of the past within the scope of the movement for women's liberation thus tries to recapture "her-story", which, in the opinion of feminist theologians,

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[11] Gregory. M. Baum, "Remarks of a Theologian in Dialogue with Sociology," in *Theology and the Social Sciences*, ed. Michael Horace Barnes (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 11.

[12] Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Opression* (London: Routledge, 1989), 151–152.

is never told in the particularly male "his-story".[13] Such a reconstruction is of paramount importance in relation to the issue of gender equality within individual religions. Until the emergence of Christian feminist theology there was no serious questioning of the negative explanations of the texts of Genesis and other biblical passages relating to women. This is why negative interpretations have dominated Christian tradition for almost two thousand years. With the development of feminist theology more and more women saw that the message of the Bible was quite patriarchically coloured. There is not much trace of the female element in the Bible and, if there is, it is only a fleeting reflection of women as an object that is understood and represented through the eyes of men. Feminist theology and feminist studies of religion developed on the basis of participation in the feminist movement, which seeks to change the relationship of superiority and susceptibility. Within them the explicit link between feminist criticism and social change has been present from the outset. Feminist theology and feminist studies of religion have become a vibrant area of research that has transformed from analysing and criticising male texts to the reconstruction of women's legacy in the prevalent religious traditions and beyond them, and has, at the same time, focused on the constructive transformation of patriarchal traditions and the creation of new values. Women's theological voice and religious authority developed as a result of a critical reflection on the experience, the arousal of awareness, and the wording of feminist theology as a critical theology of liberation, committed to feminist struggles toward changing and transforming Abrahamic religions. Since emancipatory fights in religion are an essential part of social and cultural discourses, feminists from religious circles of radical democratic rights are founded on spiritual foundations. They thus contribute to common radical democratic feminist struggles for equal membership and the full power of decision-making in society and religion.

Because of the marginal position that women have in individual religions and their hierarchical systems women's voices have been rather muted. Women have become accustomed to being passive members

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[13] Catharina Halkes, "*Primo bilancio della teologia femminista,"* in *La sfida del femminismo alla teologia,* eds. Mary Hunt and Rosino Gibellini (Brescia, 1980), 163–164.

of the communion they belonged to. The stories in which women participated were told by men and women's fate was tailored by men. Women's life testimony became the confession of men, not of themselves. As a result, in all major religions around the world, various feminist movements have called upon women to put themselves in the role of an active subject and speak about their own religious experiences themselves. We talk about various forms of religious feminisms (Islamic feminism, Jewish feminism, Christian feminism, pagan religious feminism, the Goddess movement, etc.).

A discussion of Islamic religious feminism must make mention of Amina Wadud, a world-renowned professor of Islamic studies who is the mother of five children and has long stood in the front battle lines of the so-called "*sexual jihad*", the fight for women's rights in the global Islamic community. Her life experiences as a religious Muslim woman are deeply associated with Islamic reforms: she seeks to link intellectual discourse with strategic activism and holistic spirituality. Amina Wadud became internationally known as a woman who led Muslim Friday prayer in New York, provoking media debates, as conservative Muslims around the world condemned her of blasphemy.

Media all over the world discussed the admissibility of a woman leading men in prayer, and for many Wahhabists defaming this author has become even more popular: the influential Islamic activist Shaykh Jusuf al-Qaradawi devoted a part of his program on Al Jazeera to attacking the author and denounced her act as non-Islamic and therefore heretical. On the other hand Gamal al-Banna, Hasan al-Banne's younger brother and the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, wrote a shorter book in which he argues that the author's deeds are supported by Islamic sources and are thus completely orthodox.

Amina Wadud devoted her life to the fight against sexual prejudices and in this segment she critically calls into question various patriarchal institutions within Islam. Although Amina Wadud leads the so-called "*sexual jihad*" against the persistent patriarchy, she does not question whether or not something is wrong with Islam, why Islam is a problem, or why Islam is a kind of deficient religion. She considers Islam to be the very religion that strengthens her struggle for justice. Islam forces her to be uncompromising in its honesty and morals. Amina Wadud

does so in the context of a critical analysis of Islamic theology and the reconceptualization of the relationship between a Muslim and her god. She is building the so-called *tawhid paradigm*, which does not consist only of pure monotheism, but also of sincere and complete submission to God. According to her paradigm a person who submits to God accepts the vow of morality and autonomous action. The divine vow that God offers to people results in a steadfast commitment to justice, integrity, truthfulness, and resistance to all forms of supremacy and oppression that deprive people of their autonomy in order to be accountable before God for their own moral judgment and actions.

Similar to Amina Wadud, also Azizah Z. Al-Hibri notes that in Islam your biological sex is not decisive; however, your religion is.[14] Most Muslims would agree with the statement that only on the basis of open obedience to God can the individual achieve real freedom. Often the difficulty of this transfer is ignored. Wadud's insights and painful fighting discourses in order to submit herself to God are inspiring. She warns of many forms and "disguises" of hypocrisy, wickedness, despotism, and oppression that a man meets on his path toward submitting to God. From a theological point of view the worst traps are when people take on the roles of God and use the name of God in the process of suppressing autonomy and the will of other human beings. Wadud, as well as her colleagues dealing with Christian feminist theology, describes the ways in which divine authority, text, or law is transformed into instruments used by those who have the power and desire to suppress others. Wadud's intention was, inter alia, to illustrate how Islam can be transformed on the basis of its own egalitarian tendencies, principles, articulations, and implications. The concepts of Islam and the concepts of justice were always relative to actual historical and cultural situations. You have to live Islam, says Wadud: "Neither their "Islam" nor my "Islam" has the ultimate privilege. We are all part of the complex whole, in constant movement and manifestation through the history of the multiple, human-constructed "Islam".[15] Her opinion is that patriarchal control over what it means to be human is depriving women of their

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[14] Marjana Harcet, *Alahove neveste* (Ljubljana: Monitor ISH, 2007), 21.

[15] Amina Wadud, *Inside the gender Jihad: Women's reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 50.

God-given power. Therefore, in her attempt to transform historical practices of sexual asymmetry, the author relied on the Koran, which remains her main source of inspiration. She confirmed the idea that sexual justice is essential for the divine order of the universe. "Being a woman means being human. I cannot be more or less than a woman," says Amina Wadud, "this is my humanity".[16]

In order to be able to surrender meaningfully to God, says Wadud, Muslims must critically examine their texts, laws, habits, and thoughts. A critical attitude towards divine texts or laws is an essential component of the Muslim vow to God, and it is also a decisive part of the effort to surrender meaningfully. It is necessary to achieve autonomy over oneself, since an individual cannot completely surrender what they do not possess.[17]

Wadud notes that the understanding of the primary sources of Islam depends on the interpretation of an individual, since it is neither fixed nor static, and adds that the interpretation of religious texts has so far been the privilege of men. She adds that the prevalent male structure (deliberately) misinterprets sacred texts with the aim of excluding women in Muslim countries.[18]

The most important feature of the modern struggle of Muslim women for rights is their rejection of the claim that they cannot be as free and equal to men as good Muslim women. They deny this. On the contrary they insist that a woman becomes a true Muslim only when she has achieved freedom and equality as an individual citizen.[19]

Similarly, the Pakistani feminist Farida Shaheed has argued that Muslim feminists, if they want to be effective, must act within the Islamic religious system of beliefs. If feminist teachers, lawyers, or activists want to effectively advocate a legal, economic, or any other type of reform,

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16 Wadud, "Inside the gender Jihad," 30.

17 Anja Zalta, "*Amina Wadud in borba za enakopravnost spolov,*" in *Ženske in religija*, eds. Nadja Furlan and Anja Zalta (Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 2007), 289–290.

18 Wadud, "Inside the gender Jihad," 22.

19 See also: Mahnaz Afkhami, G. H. Nemiroff, and H. Vazir, *Safe and Secure. Eliminating Violence against Wo/men and Girls in Muslim Societies* (Baltimore: SIGI 1998), 7. See also M. Cooke, "Multiple Critique. Islamic Feminist Rhetorical Strategies," in *Postcolonialism, Feminism & Religious Discourse*, ed. Laura E. Donaldson & Kwok Pui-Lan (New York: Routledge 2001), 142–160.

they cannot and should not persuade female believers to choose between feminism and their own religious convictions.[20]

All religious belief systems and all institutional practices increasingly subject to intensified feminist reviews.

Conclusion

Despite all that is written above, many men would oppose the claim that women in the world's major religions are perceived as second-class creatures in contemporary times. The commonly used terms "equal but different", and "equivalent but complementary" are thinly disguised real-life inequalities. All religions, which are a reflection of diversity, underline in their fundamental teaching the equivalence and equality of both sexes. The findings of feminist theology or various religious feminisms remind us of this. Christian feminist theology and Islamic feminism thus also draw attention to the fundamental purpose of Christian and Muslim law, which is to defend the social justice and equality of every individual, thereby expressing the equivalence of all before God. The personal relationship of an individual with God is the most important thing for the Muslim, and therefore every man or woman should have the same right to practice Muslim religious rituals, for all of Allah's worshipers are equal before Him. The same applies in Christianity.

At this point I agree with Rosemary Radford Ruether, who says that religious or theological feminism is a key alternative to the false duality between anti-feminist religious fundamentalism and liberal secularization.[21] All of the world's religions, especially in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have seen important movements of religious feminism developed, seeking to confirm the full equality of women as equal partners to men, not by general refusal of tradition, but rather by embracing deeper ethical and spiritual values. According to Jewish

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[20] F. Shaheed, "The Cultural Articulation of Patriarchy: Legal Systems, Islam and Wo/men," *South Asia Bulletin* 6, 1 (1986): 12–13. - preveriti strani, na speltu so navedene 38-44.

[21] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "*Ženske v svetovnih religijah: diskriminacija, osvoboditev in reakcija,*" in *Ženske in religija*, eds. Nadja Furlan and Anja Zalta (Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 2007), 21.

feminist Ellen Umansky Jewish feminism confirms the deeper values of Judaism, namely male and female equality, dignity, and value.[22] Christian feminists try to find the confirmation of Jesus' essentially liberating message in the New Testament[23]. Islamic feminists such as Amina Wadud and Riffat Hassan are trying to consolidate Mohammed's egalitarian message in their social environment. They try to show that messages such as the fact that a woman was created secondly, and only from Adam's rib, do not have a place within the teachings of the Koran.

Religious feminists in various world religions therefore tend to restore ethical and spiritual traditions and do not reject religion on account of secular materialism. This very renewal, on the basis of the same sacred value of all people, women as much as men, is the only answer to the false duality of anti-female religious fundamentalism on the one hand and secular materialism, which is not interested in the values of the common good, on the other.

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22 Ellen Umansky,"Feminism in Judaism," in *Feminism and World Religions*, eds. Arvind Sharma and Katharine K. Young (New York: Suny Press, 1998), 180.

23 For example Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (NY: Crossroads, 1983).

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CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: THE SAME GOD AND SEMANTICAL EXTERNALISM

Bojan Žalec

This paper may be classified as belonging to the area of philosophical theology and to the analytical philosophy of religion too. Its central aim is to provide a semantical underpinning for the identity thesis (hereafter IT). IT claims that the term 'God' as used by Muslims and Christians has the same reference, and that there is a sufficient similarity in the understanding of God between Christianity and Islam that we may say that Christians and Muslims believe in the same God. Put in the terms of Fregean philosophical semantics, IT claims that the term 'God' as used in Islam and Christianity has the same reference (Ger. *Bedeutung*) and sufficiently similar sense (Ger. *Sinn*) that we can say that the God of Islam and Christianity is the same. My central thesis in this paper is that a basic semantical underpinning for IT is provided by semantical externalism (SE). Let's call this thesis SEIT. Beside those already mentioned, there are many other implications of the findings of this paper. One of them is reinforcing of dialogic universalism. Dialogic universalists believe that dialogue, ethical consensus, and cooperation between people belonging to different cultural and religious horizons are possible. An important foundation of this belief is the belief that most important religious and cultural horizons have a common ultimate origin. Therefore, arguments in favour of IT are the arguments for the one of most important pillars of dialogic universalism. A very elegant and attention-grabbing defence of IT was presented by a Christian Protestant theologian, Yale Professor Miroslav Volf in his book *Allah: A Christian Response*.[1] I develop my argument for SEIT mostly by reference to Volf's defence of IT in the mentioned book. Such approach will make the points of my argument clearer and more understandable

[1] Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (Edition Kindle, 2011).

because it places them in a relatively well-known context. Furthermore, it makes clear that the "target" of the paper's arguments is not a sort of strawman or some fictional opponent but that these problems concern a quite lively current debate. That our essay is not just shadowboxing becomes more understandable if we are aware of practical ethical implications and relevance of IT.[2]

The structure of the paper is the following. First, I present an outline of SE. Then I briefly sketch Volf's argument for IT. In the third, concluding part, I show that SE is very relevant for the crucial components of Volf's argument. These components concern the reference of Christian and Muslim believes in God, the understanding of love and its relationship to God, the Trinity, God as the Creator and as an omniscient being. My argument is twofold. On one hand, I argue that SE provides a very good semantical basis for Volf's argument and IT in general. On the other hand, I argue that SE is compatible with the components of Volf's argument. Among them is Nicholas of Cusa's twofold argument for the Trinitarian nature of God. This argument Nicholas presented in his works *De pace fidei* and *Cribratio Alkorani*.[3] It is partly based on the premise that Logos is an internal Image of God. Further, SE is compatible with the conception of God as the Creator, and God as an omniscient being. These last two claims are central integral parts of Christianity and Islam.

This paper philosophically reinforces Volf's important theological contribution to the realization of peaceful and dialogical coexistence among Muslims and Christians. The importance of such coexistence is obvious in the face of violence in the contemporary world. The perpetrators of this violence present themselves as true followers of a particular God. Besides, Muslims and Christians represent a half of world's population.

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2 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, part IV.

3 Nicholas of Cusa, *On the peace of faith* (*De pace fidei*), trans. H. Lawrence Bond, accessed December 7, 2017, http://www.appstate.edu/~bondhl/bondpeac.htm; Nikola Kuzanski / Nikolaus Cusanus, *O miru među religijama / De pace fidei* (Sarajevo: Connectum 2005) [Bilingual (Croatian–Latin) translation/edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia*, *vol. VII*, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed. Raymond Kilbansky and Hildebrand Bascour (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1959)]; Nicholas Cusa, *A Scrutiny of the Koran or Cribratio Alkorani*, The Great Library Collection by R.P. Pryne (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Kindle edition, 2015).

1 Semantical externalism

Hilary Putnam argued for the thesis that reference cannot be explained by intrinsic characteristics of representations (he opposed the so called magical theories of reference).[4] In this framework, he presented - in his now classical essay "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" – the famous Twin-Earth thought experiment, and presented and explained theses and concepts of his semantic externalism: *intension* (*stereotype*), *extension* (*meaning*, *reference*), *division of the linguistic labour*, indexicality of the most terms, causal relations needed for reference … According to Putnam, the error of the traditional philosophy of language is that it did not take into consideration neither the contribution of others (division of the linguistic labour) nor the contribution of the world (indexicality of most terms). A better philosophy and a better science about language must take into account both[5]. Putnam`s work was importantly supplemented by Tyler Burge[6] and some other philosophers. The main claims of semantic externalism are: 1. All meanings are not in the head; 2. We cannot individuate all meanings without taking into consideration some aspects of the environment of the person (organism); 3. Intension does not necessarily determine the reference.[7]

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[4] Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," in *Mind, Language and Reality, Philosophical Papers*, *Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1975), 215–271; Hilary Putnam, "A problem about reference," in *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 22–48; Hilary Putnam, "Two philosophical perspectives," in *Reason, Truth and History*, 49–74; Hilary Putnam, "A theory of reference," in *Renewing philosophy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1992), 35–59.

[5] "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," 271.

[6] Tyler Burge, *Foundations of Mind: Philosophical Essays*, *Volume 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 4: 73–122, reprinted in Tyler Burge, *Foundations of Mind: Philosophical Essays*, *Volume 2*, chap. 5; Tyler Burge, "Cartesian Error and the Objectivity of Perception" in *Subject, Thought and Context*, ed. Phillipe Pettit in John McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 117–136; Tyler Burge, "Individualism and Psychology," *The Philosophical Review* 95 (1986): 3–45, reprinted in Tyler Burge, *Foundations of Mind: Philosophical Essays*, *Volume 2*, chap. 9; the same, "Individuation and Causation in Psychology," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 70 (1991): 303–322, reprinted in Tyler Burge, *Foundations of Mind: Philosophical Essays*, *Volume 2*, chap. 14.

[7] Among critics of semantic and methodological externalism it is worth to mention Fodor (Jerry A. Fodor, "A Modal Argument for Narrow Content," *Journal of Philosophy* 88 (1991): 5–26; Jerry A. Fodor, *A Theory of Content and Other Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); Jerry A. Fodor, *The Elm and the Expert: Mentalese and Its Semantics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts

It seems that naturalism (ontological or methodological) doesn't imply semantical internalism or externalism. So for example, Jerry Fodor is a naturalist and at the same time internalist; Fred Dretske[8] is a naturalist as well, yet he is an externalist. Philosophers involved in the discussion about externalism (antiindividualism) *versus* internalism (individualism) are (mostly), at least in some respects, all naturalists or at least they naturalistically limit the area of their discussion. That is the reason why it took (more than) twenty years that somebody[9] realized the importance of semantic externalism for philosophical theology; since many philosophical theologians are anti-naturalistically oriented and for that reason they (alas) do not know important works and discussions of naturalistic philosophers at all (they are simply not interested in them) or they do not understand them very well.

Claims of SE have important philosophical implications or effects. Let me mention only two of them: 1. SE is the basis of one of the most important anti-sceptic arguments in modern philosophy, which is based on the brain-in-a-vat thought experiment, which was presented by Putnam in the article with the same title. On the basis of SE, Putnam inferred a justified conclusion that brain in a vat is not possible. 2. American philosopher Robert Howell has presented arguments for the thesis that SE is incompatible with the creationist theism. [10]

The essence of Putnam`s argument from his article "Brains in a vat"[11] is maybe most easily to explain by comparing the following two statements: 'I am a brain in a vat' and 'I do not exist'. Putnam argues: If I do not exist then the statement 'I do not exist' is false. So, 'I do not exist' is necessarily wrong if it is true that I do not exist. Similarly, it holds true for the statement 'I am a brain in a vat'. If I am a brain in a vat then the statement 'I am a brain in a vat' is false. Consequently, the

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and London, England: MIT Press, 1994). (Putnam-Burge version of) SE was rejected also by Davidson (Donald Davidson, "The Structure and Content of Truth," *The Journal of Philosophy* 87 (1990): 310–311).

8 Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: A Bradford Book, The MIT Press, 1995).

9 Robert Howell, "The skeptic, the content externalist, and the theist," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69 (2011): 173–180.

10 *Ibid*.

11 Hilary Putnam, "Brains in a vat," in Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, 1–21.

statement 'I am a brain in a vat' is necessarily false, if I am a brain in a vat. The statement 'I am a brain in a vat' is in the case of a counterfactual situation, if I were a brain in a vat, false, if SE is true, because it claims that we are only a brain in a vat on the brain`s "picture", and not a real brain in a vat. In short, it says that we are something else as a real brain in a vat (and consequently it is false). This is Putnam`s argument for the thesis that the hypothesis that we are a brain in a vat is self-defeating. Formally speaking we can say that for the statement 'I am a brain in a vat' the following holds true (the same as for the statement 'I do not exist'): If p, then 'p' is necessarily false. Putnam pointed out, that nevertheless a brain in a vat is physically possible, it is not really possible. This possibility is eliminated by philosophy, not physics.[12]

Putnam thinks that hypothesis that I do not exist is self-defeating. Here he agrees with Descartes. Self therefore exists. Afterwards he proves that the hypothesis that we are a brain in a vat is self-defeating, that outer world exists (we are in causal relations with it). But the world which is the object of my thought and of my speech may be pretty different from what I think. I grasp the world and parts of the world with which I am in a causal and reference relation only through my concepts (intensions or stereotypes); but the real world or its structure may be different from my grasping of it and it has layers and structures which are unknown to me. I cannot grasp the world in any other way but only through my intensions or stereotypes. That is Putnam's inner realism. It is inner because I cannot grasp the world differently but only through my stereotypes and intensions, and realism because the object of my thinking is nevertheless the real world with which I am in a causal relation. This is really a variant of Kant`s philosophy. Kant: There must exist a world on its own, a thing in itself. What would otherwise affect my senses? Yet only the world of phenomena is accessible to me. Putnam: There exists a real and objective world (world on its own) which has causal effects on me, but I can grasp it only through my stereotypes. Further, we can say that by Putnam's distinction between reference and stereotypes in a way Frege's distinction between sense and reference is preserved: references are referents of my thought (things with which we

[12] Putnam, "Brains in a vat," 15.

are in a causal relation), and senses are stereotypes through which we experience or grasp those referents.

Tyler Burge has in a series of articles presented several thought experiments in favour of the externalist (or as he called it anti-individualistic) position. He ingeniously and convincingly argued for the thesis that the representational natures of mental states of persons/organisms can be different despite the identity of individualistic descriptions of persons/organisms. To put the same claim in other terms: person's'/ organism's broader states can be different despite the identity of their narrow states. Burge's thought experiments are of two kinds. The first are supposed to show that the representational features of some mental states depend on the mental or social environment of their subject. Experiments of the second kind suggest that the representational properties of some mental states depend on the non-mental environment of their bearer. Burge enriched Putnam's achievement with different examples (thought experiments) which help us understand better the implications and scope of Putnam`s discovery and of SE in general.

Before we go on, let me make another very important remark. The opponent of Putnam and Burge is semantic internalism, sometimes called also (semantic) individualism. Internalists claim that all mental states can be properly individuated - regarding their representational properties and for the needs of explanation of behaviour -, independently of the aspects of the environment of the subject of mental states. So strictly taken it is enough one counterexample for externalists to falsify the account of internalists (individualists). And, that is what Burge and Putnam has done. They don't claim that semantical properties of all linguistic terms/mental states depend on environment, that there is no meaning without environment, and that it is not possible that there is a thought about something that doesn't exist. This is not an adequate definition of SE that Putnam and Burge defend, and of the position that I call SE in this essay. SE is a more moderate position. It claims only that there are *some* linguistic terms and mental states whose semantical properties can't be explained without taking into account the environment of their bearer. If we define SE as a position that the semantic features of *all* linguistic terms and mental states depend on the environment, then we get a caricature of SE, a strawman that is easy to refuse

justifiably. Robert Howell[13] did this mistake and that is the reason why his argument about the incompatibility of SE and creationist theism is flawed. But on the other hand, I should add, for the sake of clarity, that the reference of the terms 'God' as used by normative Christianity and Islam are a kind of terms that are semantically dependant on particular aspects of the environment – including historical causal social chains - of their users.

Important part of the IT and SE compatibility is the compatibility of SE and the omniscience of God because the last is part of both, normative Islam and normative Christianity. I think that SE is compatible with the traditional Christian idea of God who created the world with His intention. God is omniscient, so God's descriptions or intensions always correspond to the thing to which God refers. God knows all (secret) structures. Because there are no secret structures for God, all His intensions completely correspond to the thing to which He refers. Let's take as an example God's idea of light. God had an image of light. This image covers all the knowledge about light that He created. There can be nothing in God`s environment that it is not already in God's mind. And God is the only such being. There can be nothing in God`s environment that it is not already in God`s mind, and at the same time God is aware of everything what is in His mind and also of that that He is aware of that. And for God only holds true that He is such a being that there can be nothing outside His mind what is not already in His mind. So God is the only being for whom it is impossible that He is in identical narrower states, and in different broader (semantic) states. An identical narrow states/different broader states situation is possible only with beings who have not got absolute knowledge about things they refer to. So it is possible that a human being does not know that the chemical structure of the liquid they refer to as water is H_2O.

2 Volf's argument for identity thesis

Why is IT important? Volf answers that God is a condensation of the fundamental values of a believer. Therefore, if the God of Muslims

[13] Howell, "The skeptic, the content externalist, and the theist."

and Christians is the same then they (can) agree about the fundamental values. This fundamental convergence is very important for peace and coexistence among Muslims and Christians. Volf does not deny that Muslims and Christians have some different views regarding God. This is an obvious fact. His thesis is that we may claim that despite those differences the God of both is the same. What are his arguments for IT? The main argument is that both, Christians and Muslims, accept two commandments as central: "Love your God" and "Love your neighbour". Let's call this the love commandments thesis (hereafter LCT). He argues that the genuine sense of understanding of these two commandments is not so different that we could say that they are two different commandments in Islam and Christianity. His argumentation for IT and LCT is based on the views of reputable and representative scholars and leaders of Islam and Christianity. From the side of modern Christian he mentions Pope John Paul II who said that the God of Muslims and Christians is the same.14 The second is Pope Benedict XVI (hereafter Benedict). However, in his case the matter is a bit more complicated.

Volf starts with the commentary of Benedict's famous speech at the University of Regensburg.[15] In it, Benedict makes a distinction between a God who is Reason, and a God who is so transcendent that we can say nothing adequate about Him in our categories and therefore we may describe Him as totally transcendent Will. One may interpret Regensburg lecture as claiming that the first God is a Christian God and the second is Muslim.[16] This suggests that the God of Muslims and the God of Christians is not the same. In addition, Benedict quotes the statement of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus that the new thing that Islam has brought is only violence[17], and many got the impression that Benedict actually agrees with the Emperor.[18] But accord-

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14 Volf, *Alah: A Christian Response*, 27.

15 Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," September 12, 2006, accessed December 7, 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.

16 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 19, 23–25.

17 Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections."

18 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 22.

ing to Benedict, the fundamental illness is not violence but rather "a profoundly mistaken idea about the nature of God, namely, that God is an unreasonable and capricious deity." Violence is only a symptom of it.[19]

This lecture caused a stormy response of Muslims.[20] Benedict gave it only seven months after he commented events connected with the Danish cartoons affair. In the comment of the cartoons affair, Benedict opposed the desecration of religious symbols, but at the same time he refused as improper any violent reactions to such desecration. The last was his criticism of Muslims who reacted violently. However, it seemed that, in sum, he basically agrees with the Muslims and he is an alley of them in this case.[21] Thus the surprise and (correspondingly) indignation among Muslims were so much bigger after his Regensburg lecture. Their response was so indignant that the Catholic Church was forced to respond. So two weeks after the lecture, on September 25, 2006, Benedict gave additional statements in the Castel Gandolfo where he invited the Muslim leaders.[22] He quoted *Nostra Aetate*. His words about the relationship between Christian and the Muslim faith may be interpreted as an expression of his account that nevertheless the God of Muslims and Christians is the same. Benedict confirmed his standpoint from the Castel Gandolfo in his speech on May 9, 2009, in al-Hussein bin Talal mosque in Amman, Jordan.23 So at the end we may conclude that Benedict too shares Pope John Paul II's standpoint about IT.

However important it may be the Christian opinion about what is the genuine Muslim faith, Volf thinks that regarding this issue the Muslims' own interpretation is the most relevant. Also in this respect, he can allege very convincing evidence. The first is the already mentioned open letter to Benedict. The second is a representative document writ-

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[19] *Ibid*., 23.

[20] *Ibid*, 20ff. There was a lot of fury but the main response was rational and measured. This was an open letter signed by reputable Muslim scholars and leaders: "Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI," https://archive.secondspring.co.uk/media/openletter.pdf, December 7, 2017. The letter confronted pope's claims about Islam from the lecture. For the Volf's comment on the letter see his *Allah: A Christian Response*, 25ff.

[21] Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 19–20.

[22] *Ibid*., 37.

[23] *Ibid*., 37–38.

ten by highly reputable Muslim leaders from all over the world – who belong to different branches of Islam - titled "A Common Word Between Us and You".[24] It was published on October 13, 2007, exactly one year after the "Open letter".[25] This longer document also refuted the negation of IT. "A Common Word Between Us and You" was followed by the so called "Yale Response" to "A Common Word Between Us and You". It was published originally in the *New York Times* in November 2007 under the title "Loving God and Neighbour Together: A Christian Response to 'A Common Word Between Us and You'".[26] Volf says that it "did not address directly the question of whether God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an are the same God. But the drafters – I was among them – worked with that assumption."[27]

This is an outline of Volf's starting point in his book *Allah: A Christian Response*. In the rest of it, he argues in more detail in favour of his central thesis, IT, and explains its significance and implications. As a truly paradigmatic, representative and influential Muslim thinker whose views are in favour of IT, he takes the Islamic scholar and theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1056-1111). Among our contemporaries, we should as first mention the Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr as Volf's "alley". Volf's Christian historical "heroes" from the past are Nicholas of Cusa and partly Martin Luther. Let us first briefly present Nicholas' view about one God for all.[28]

Volf distinguishes two approaches. One is dialogical, the other is exclusivist. Volf's example for the second is Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-64), later Pope Pius II, who urged the sultan Mehmed II to become a Christian.[29] But this same person also worked for the Crusade.[30]

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24 "A Common Word Between Us and You," accessed December 7, 2017, http://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/; Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 21.

25 *Ibid.*, 28.

26 Harold W. Attridge et al., "Loving God and Neighbour Together: A Christian Response to 'A Common Word Between Us and You'." http://www.acommonword.com/loving-god-and-neighbor-together-a-christian-response-to-a-common-word-between-us-and-you/, December 7, 2017.

27 *Ibid.*, 34.

28 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 40ff.

29 *Ibid.*, 44.

30 *Ibid.*, 40.

Nicolas was different and instead of the Crusade, he picked up what he called conversation. With it, he meant the discussion in which we seek the truth in a way that we are explaining positions and arguing for or against them. But the aim is not to overcome the opponent but rather to find the truth. Nicholas' argumentation is complicated and sophisticated, but there are some central components of it that can serve us for its outline. Volf reconstructs it from Nicholas' works *De pace fidei* and *Cribratio Alkorani*.[31] Nicolas' starting point is a "Platonic" position. Like Plato, he believed that what all people desire is the good.[32] Their representations about the good might be - and in fact are - different, they might be false or wrong, but the intended object of all human desires is nevertheless the good. The main line of his argumentation is that the God of Muslims and Christians is the same. Truth, they have different beliefs about him, but despite that their God is the same.[33] The central Muslim's reason for their refusal of Christian faith is the Christian belief that God is a Trinity. When one interprets this claim as saying that God is not one, then of course IT is not acceptable, neither for Muslims nor for Christians. But according to Nicholas, this is not true. The starting point of his argumentation is that God is transcendent and that our categories for Him are not appropriate. But still, there is something we can know about God. This knowledge is accessible to us through revelation. And according to revelation, and also according to great Christian tradition (Augustin, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Aquinas …), God is one. God is prior and beyond any numbering, because numbers and numbering are categories pertaining to the immanent world and God is radically transcendent. But why is then revealed that God is a Trinity, why God must be a Trinity? There are two reasons for that. The first (1) is that God is the Creator; and the second (2) that God is Love. Ad (1): God is the Creator of the world. If He is the Creator of the world then He must have had – according to Nicholas - an internal image of the world before its creation.[34] But this is possible only if God is a Trinity. There is no doubt according to

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31 *Ibid.*, 55–56.
32 Nicholas of Cusa, *On the peace of faith*, paragraph 5.
33 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 4 and 5; Nikola Kuzanski, *O miru među religijama*, editors' notes 6, 7 and 8.
34 Nicholas of Cusa, *On the peace of faith*, paragraph 23.

revelation – both Muslim and Christian - that God is the creator of everything. So, He must be a Trinity. One more thing must be stressed here in order to make this argumentation understandable. This is a distinction between *having* and *being*. God is the only being about whom we may say that there is nothing that He has. If we speak correctly, we must say for every God's attribute that He *is* this attribute and not that He *has* it. For God every *having* is *being*.[35] So it isn't true that God has an internal image, He is an internal image. This internal image is internal logos, internal word, which is Word or Logos. This Logos is Jesus Christ, the Son. But it is not true that God has the Son, He is the Son. Similar argument Nicholas applies in case of love. God *is* Love. God doesn't just have love and the object of his love. He *is* Love and He *is* the object of his love. This entails that God is a Trinity.[36] For both Muslims and Christians there is no doubt that God is only one, that there is no other God beside God, that God is a perfect being, and that He loves. Likewise there is no doubt that both believe that God is the Creator of everything. But what the Muslims according to Nicholas don't "know" is that this implies that God is a Trinity.

In a nutshell, Nicholas' twofold argument for the thesis that God is a Trinity is the following: 1. God is perfection; 2. If God is perfection then He is the Creator and He is the supreme love, i.e. Love; 3. If He is the Creator and Love then His creating and Love must be independent of everything that is not Himself, i.e. God; therefore 4. God is a Trinity. Both Muslims and Christians accept (1) that God is the Creator and that His love is supreme. Hence, it follows that also Muslims should

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35 *Ibid*., paragraph 26.

36 Nicholas Cusa, *A Scrutiny of the Koran or Cribratio Alkorani*, loc. 1175–1184. There Nicholas argues that if God is the supreme happiness then He shouldn't lack neither fatherly nor filial love. And if God is the Fecundity then He himself has to be fecund as a parent. Therefore God has to be a Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Love to the Son who is the Holy Spirit (Nicholas of Cusa, *On the peace of faith*, paragraph, 24). In this same paragraph Nicholas explains the terms 'Father,' Son,' 'Spirit,' the relationship between them etc. The Word says the following: "Some call the unity 'Father,' the equality 'Son,' and the nexus 'Holy Spirit,' since these terms, although not proper terms, nevertheless, appropriately signify the Trinity. For from the Father is the Son and from the unity and equality of the Son is the love or Spirit". About the Spirit as the connection between the Father and the Son see also editors' note 32 in Nikola Kuzanski, *O miru među religijama*.

accept that God is a Trinity. But they don't accept it because they misunderstand or misinterpret the claim that God is a Trinity.

Luther's account was on one hand in accordance with Jesus' answer to the Samaritan woman who asked Jesus whether the God of Samaritans or the God of Jews is the true God. "You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know," Jesus responded, and added: "We [Jews] worship what we know, for salvation is from Jews".[37] For Luther, Christians are like Jews and all others – heathens, Jews, Muslims, even "false" Christians are like Samaritans. They worship the same and the one true God, "creator of heaven and earth and moral lawgiver". But this is only one side of his paradoxical position. On the other side, Luther said that although it is true that the object of worship of Christians and Muslims is the same, Muslims distort this object almost beyond recognition because they do not believe that God is a Trinity, and that His Son died on the cross. So on the other hand Luther claimed that – despite the same object of reference of the Christian and Muslim worship – "Muslims heats and mouths this true God morphs into no God at all".[38] Another "paradoxical" feature of Luther's attitude was the following. He claimed that what non-Christians - including "false" Christians - don't know about God is that God's love is gratis and that it doesn't depend on good deeds. However, Luther's own actual attitude and actions were not in accordance at all with such gratis love. Nevertheless, he firmly believed in IT.

After Volf pointed to the two great Christian theologians who argued for IT, he has turned to his own argumentation. The reason is that despite the brilliancy of Nicholas and Luther, he doesn't find their argumentation entirely satisfactory and he in general thinks that today we must reflect upon this issue afresh. He starts with the remark that according to the Muslim's view, Muslims and Christians share the same revelation and therefore they refer to the same God.[39] But on the other hand, Muslims and Christians don't share the same scripture. Therefore, we need to demonstrate that their understandings are similar enough so

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37 Jn 4: 22.
38 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 70.
39 *Ibid*. 88.

that we may say that IT is true. Thus, the key term of Volf's approach is "similar enough". The premises upon which he builds his further argumentation are: [40] 1. The descriptions of an object/God don't have to be identical in order to refer to the same object/God; 2. In order to refer to the same object/God the descriptions of an object/God may not be radically different. There are two positons possible. One is that we claim that for God being the same a total identity is necessary. The other is that we stress common characteristics although we at the same time pay attention to differences. But not every difference is decisive in the sense that it makes IT false. From the book of Halbertal and Margalit, Volf draws the moral that it depends on the particular religion which of the mentioned two accounts we choose. [41] So which is appropriate from the Christian point of view? According to Volf, it is the second because it stresses the commonalities. He justifies his choice by referring to St. Paul's conception of love. Love rejoices in truth and it doesn't see only the wrong.[42] Afterwards, he deals with the following questions: Are the beliefs of Muslims and Christians similar enough - and in relevant ways - for IT to be true?

Volf points out that the truth of the claim that the descriptions of Muslims and Christians are similar enough depends on which Muslims and Christians one refers to. He himself has in mind Muslims and Christians who accept and take into account what Volf calls "normative versions of their religions".[43] These versions are connected with the Bible and Qur'an with robust ties. They appreciate the tradition of interpretation and discussion about these holy texts. These believers are majority mainstream in both religious traditions. They take their faith seriously and are at the same time aware that many great teachers have diverged about many important questions and have discussed about them. Among these questions are also those concerning the nature of God.

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40 *Ibid*, 90.

41 Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, trans. Naomi Goldblum, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 93.

42 Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 94.

43 *Ibid*., 96.

Volf argues for IT in two steps. First, he demonstrates that there is a sufficient similarity between descriptions of God. Then he argues that there is a sufficient similarity in God's commandments. At the same time, he points out that he argues from a distinctively Christian point of view. Muslims might agree with him, or they might not and rather have their own approaches to this issue. Let us look now at the first step, a sufficient similarity of descriptions.[44] Volf starts with the discussion about three claims/beliefs that are central to both, Muslims and Christians and are components of a sufficient similarity between the Muslim and Christian views: 1. There is only one God, one and only divine being; [45] 2. God created everything what is not God; [46] 3. God is different from everything what is not God. [47] (Volf 2011, 97-98) Latter on Volf points to the fourth claim: 4. God is good. [48] Thus we have four important beliefs about God about which Muslims and Christians agree. They are - according to Volf - sufficient for IT. All who accept these four claims about God refer to the same "object" when they speak about God.[49]

The second part of Volf's argument for IT concerns God's commandments. Firstly, he points out the following: If we agree that Muslims and Christians accept the same commandments as the commandments of God, this fact alone doesn't entail that they have the same God. But if we prove independently that their God is the same then the fact that they accept the same commandments additionally reinforces the claim that they have the same God. Then he carries out a comparison of the commandments. He starts with two great commandments.[50] Jews, Christians and Muslims agree about the first and greatest commandment – "Love your God with all your being".[51] The same is true about the second great commandment – "Love your ne-

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44 *Ibid.*, 97ff.
45 Mk 12: 29; Qur'an, Muhammad, 47: 19.
46 Gen 1: 1; Qur'an, Al Shura, 42: 11.
47 1 Tim 6: 16; Qur'an, Al An'am, 6: 103.
48 1 John 4: 16; Qur'an, Al Buruj, 85: 14.
49 Volf 2011, 101.
50 *Ibid.*, 104ff. Cf. Vojko Strahovnik, "Divine command ethics, cosmopolitanism, fundamentalism and dialogue," *Annales* 27, 2 (2017): 379–386.
51 Matt. 22: 37, citing Deut. 6:5; Qur'an, Al Zimar, 39: 45.

ighbour as yourself" - which is as important as the first.[52] He further points out that for every commandment of the Decalogue, there is a corresponding commandment in Qur'an. The only exception is the one about Sunday. Afterwards Volf makes a comparison, commandment after commandment, and alleges six claims about God about which Muslims and Christians agree:[53] 1. There is only one God, who is one and the only divine being. 2. God created everything that is not God. 3. God is radically different from everything that is not God. 4. God is God. 5. God commands that we should love Him with all our being. 6. God commands that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. Christians believe that this agreement entails that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. The first four theses imply IT. The other two, which summarize the basic God's commandments, reinforce IT. This is true about normative Christianity and Islam, i.e. two religions, expressed in their holy books and interpreted by great teachers of their traditions.[54] Regarding God and love, Muslims and Christians have in common the following three believes: 1. God loves; 2. God is just; 3. God's love encompasses God's righteousness. God's love is primary and basic in relation to the justice/righteousness. Love is the foundation of justice. Later on he adds – to the three claims above – the fourth claim of agreement between Muslims and Christians: 4. People should love their neighbours as they love themselves.[55] Then Volf turns to more detailed scrutiny of what is meant with 'love' and 'neighbour', who is neighbour etc. and he provides additional evidence for the similarity between Christian and Muslim understanding of love. At the end, this way leads him (back) to God and God's love. To summarize his analysis and conclusions, we may say the following: The bottom line of Volf's argument is that Christians and Muslims worship the same God and that their understandings of God and God's commandments partly but sufficiently overlap for IT being true. In the first line, the overlapping consists of the claims that God is one, benevolent, and that He commands us to love Him with our entire being and our neighbours as

52 Matt. 22: 39; Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 105.
53 *Ibid.*, 109–110.
54 *Ibid.*, 110.
55 *Ibid.*, 159.

ourselves. At this point, I will stop with the presentation of Volf's argument for IT because what I have said thus far suffices as a basis for the justification of SEIT and some other relevant conclusions.

3 Conclusion

SE is very relevant for the discussion about the question whether Muslims and Christians have the same God. SE was introduced by Hilary Putnam. Putnam convincingly argued that not all meanings are in the head, and that the reference of the majority of terms is determined by their causal relations to the aspects of the person's or organism's environment. In the case of the term God the reference of 'God' depends on the causal relations of the speaker, no matter how they understand or represent "in their head" the nature or characteristics of the referred object. To put the same point in different terms: the extension, i.e. reference of the term is not determined by the intension (in Putnam's terminology stereotypes in the speaker's head) but rather by the causal relations between the speaker and the referred object. So Muslims and Christians can have the same God even if their understanding, i.e. representations or descriptions of God, differs. What matters is only that they are connected with the causal chain to the same object, i.e. God. This causal chain is by majority of speakers of a social nature. It is determined by the original act of naming or referring. The speech acts of Abraham/Ibrahim, who is recognized by both Muslims and Christians, can be accepted as such original acts of reference to God. Muslims and Christians, and their linguistic communities, are connected - through historical and social linguistic causal chains - to Abraham's/Ibrahim's utterances about God, and via them with their referent, i.e. God. So they refer to the same God as Abraham/Ibrahim. The reference of their uses of the word "God" is determined by the reference of Abraham's/Ibrahim's use of it.

On the basis of SE, we may defend another thesis, which is even more general: If all genuine revelations are revelations of the same transcendence, although in different intensions and from different aspects, and if speakers about this transcendence, to whom it was revealed, bear causal relations to the same transcendence, then they speak about the

same "object" or about the same God. Their understanding[56] of this transcendence might be different but the referent or extension of their speech and thoughts about transcendence/God is the same.

If having the same God is of high ethical importance, because it is a positive factor of agreement about basic values, then SE is of high ethical relevance. Another example of ethical and theological relevance of SE is the argument of Nicholas of Cusa - that if God is the Creator then He must be a Trinity because Creation demands an internal Image or Word (Logos) in God. Here we should point out that Nicholas' position doesn't contradict SE. SE claims only that solely in case of speech acts/thoughts which do not crate things to which they are directed the meaning is determined by the aspects of the speaker's/thinker's environment. In other cases - we can call the thinkers/speakers involved in such cases 'creators' - the meaning is given already by their intensions, by what is "in" the original and creative speaker/thinker. God is, according to Nicholas, Christianity, and Islam, the Creator. In God's case, there can be no mismatch between intensions and extensions of God's thought/speech. So there is no contradiction between SE on one hand, and Nicholas' standpoint, Christianity and Islam on the other. Maybe someone would say that this is a reduction of SE and that it simply means that SE is not valid for creators, therefore for God. I don't find this formulation appropriate. Nothing what we have said above limits SE. SE claims that the meaning depends on the relevant aspects of the thinker's/speaker's environment. Meaning depends on the environment if there is relevant environment. But in the case of creators, there is no relevant environment. Yet the utterances or thoughts of creators, before their creations exist outside "their heads" are not meaningless, they are meaningful. But what does give them their meaning? The only rational answer that I see is: their representations of the object that doesn't exist (yet), their intensions/stereotypes about it. In order to avoid thinking that SE and creationism are incompatible we must bear in mind that SE doesn't claim that thoughts/utterances about non-existing objects are as such meaningless. Nor it claims that a creator as such can't have false

[56] In other words, their representations – or in Putnam's terms their stereotypes, their intensions – of it.

ideas about their creation. According to Christianity and Islam, God is omniscient and this option is excluded. But SE doesn't say anything about (non)omniscience of creators. What SE excludes is only that if there already is a relevant aspect of environment then it, and not intensions in the head of the speaker/thinker, determines the meaning.

To conclude: It is clear that SE provides semantical foundation and reinforcement of IT. It is mostly relevant for the first constituent of IT, i.e. the thesis that Islam and Christianity refer to the same God. But the truth of this thesis is relevant also for the second part of IT, i.e. that genuine Muslim and Christian understanding of God is sufficiently similar to say that their God is the same. If the revelation to Muslims and Christians has the same origin, i.e. the same God, than the thesis that IT is not true - if we interpret Islam and Christianity truthfully – seems unconvincing. Thus the crucial question is whether we recognize or not that the same God was revealed not only to Jews and Christians, but also to Muhammad; or, to put the same question in the terms of SE, whether Abraham, Moses, the prophets, apostles etc. on one hand and Muhammad on the other were "causally connected" to the same God, or not. If we believe that there is only one God, the question may be put even shorter: Has God revealed Himself to all, not only to Jews and Christians, but also to Muhammad, or not? If our answer is positive, we are faced with many difficult questions as for instance: Should Muhammad be recognized by Christians as a prophet?[57] But regardless the answer to this last, and other similar questions the positive answer on the former question about revelation makes denial of IT unconvincing. And if we accept IT, then also the formulation that there is only a "strange kinship"[58] between Christianity and Islam maybe doesn't sound as exactly an appropriate one.

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[57] Wolfgang Pfüller, "Sollte Mohamed aus christlicher Sicht als Prophet anerkannt werden? Eine veraltete Fragestellung," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 65 (2014): 131–144.

[58] "Ich schlage vor, im Blick auf den Islam mit Carsten Colpe von einer fremden Verwandtschaft zu reden." This is a quotation from Michael Weinrich, "Glauben Juden, Christen und Muslime an denselben Gott? Systematisch-theologischen Annäherungen an eine unzugängliche Frage," *Evangelische Theologie* 67 (2007): 259.

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THE TURKISH ALEVIS: IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY

Maja Bjelica

Introduction

The Turkish Alevis are members of specific religious communities that comprise the largest faith minority in Turkey, though they are not acknowledged as such. These communities are nowadays reclaiming their identities: after hundreds of years of persecution they emerged from seclusion in the early years of the 20th century as the bearers of Turkish culture. During their revival in the last decade of the same century they presented themselves mainly through their music and whirling (the *semah*), which form the main parts of their rituals. Demanding the freedom to practice their faith, their presentations became gradually more and more political and therefore subjected to the dangers of reductionism, essentialism, universalism, and the urge to identify themselves in specific, finite ways. However, this manner of identification adopted under the influence of Western scientific thought was not appropriate and was hardly adaptable to the nature of the Alevi religion and tradition, which are much more fluent and changeable than a firm definition would allow. This kind of identification in the fixed terms of Western scientific thought therefore poses a threat to the vividness and aliveness of the traditionally adopted way of life and worldview of the Alevis.

Thus the question of Alevi identity is a microcosm of the ways in which the Western sciences spread their methods and doctrines of rationalization and universalization to various fields of knowledge and an example of how biased orientalism is still very much present even in the postcolonial world. Even if defining their customs and religion in traditional scientific ways brought the Alevis some recognition, it denied their identity its own perpetually fluid repositioning in culture and society. This paper shows some aspects of this problem by presen-

ting some of the most widespread accounts on Alevi identity, of specific sources about these communities, and especially by following the lead of two researchers that were among the first to single out this problematic point of view, namely David Shankland and Marcus Dressler. Before addressing the main problem of Alevi identification, first a quick insight into the criticisms of Western sciences is offered, followed by a short introduction to the beliefs and ways of life of Alevi communities in Turkey.

Researching the Religion of the Other

A specific critique of the Western sciences emerged in the second part of the 20th century, namely the fact that they are elitist and Eurocentric. One of the milestones in recognizing this bias in scientific development was Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*,[1] which gives a thorough presentation of the problem of the West when turning towards the East in order to objectify it and make it understandable for the West itself. Said's discussion about the stereotypes surrounding the Orient and Islam, "otherizing", the reckless acceptance of the authority of tradition, the politicization of scientific discourse, etc., is still relevant nowadays, regardless of how differently postcolonial studies treat the subject. Said was not the only one who warned about the fallacies of Western scientific discourse. A year later Alain Grosrichard published his *Sultan's Court*,[2] which also acknowledged the attitude of superiority in Western sources as regards Oriental lands. Grosrichard's presentation of the Sultan's Court as the core of the despotic social order is a typical example of the ethnocentric perspective towards the Ottoman sultanate of the 17th and 18th centuries that was present in the European world as a phantasma, a fascination with the concept in both science as well as literature. Also, the author claims, the West projected onto the East

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1 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, reprint with new preface (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

2 See Alain Grosrichard, *Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans. Liz Heron, introd. Mladen Dolar (London and New York: Verso, 1998).

its biggest fears and restrictions with the aim of self-confirmation and self-reconciliation.

Awareness about the Eurocentricity of science spread from Oriental studies among other disciplines to anthropology and religiology. Among the authors that connected these fields of thought there is Talal Asad, whose work *Genealogies of Religion* practically shook the foundations of the concept and definition of religion. Namely, he claimed that understanding religion as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomena, which is the default approach of the prominent modernistic norms of separating religion and politics, is unsuitable for a thorough understanding of religion. "[T]here cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes."[3]

Richard King was another author who tried to bridge orientalism and religion, focusing on the study of construction of the meaning of "mystical" from the perspective of the Western understanding of religion, a study that this author has mainly applied to Indian religions. In his work he calls for a reconceptualization of the notion of religion in a way that would not be directly connected to speculation cunducted by Christian theology. He identifies the basis of the erroneous understanding of religion in the project of Enlightenment: rationalism, essentialism, and universalism.

However, the Enlightenment preoccupation with defining the 'essence' of phenomena such as 'religion' or 'mysticism' serves precisely to exclude such phenomena from the realms of politics, law and science, etc. – that is, from the spheres of power and authority in modern Western societies. Privatized religion becomes both clearly defined and securely contained by excluding it from the public realm of politics. In other words attempts to preserve the autonomy of religion can also lead to the marginalization of religion since it becomes separated from these other realms. In fact, if we look more closely at the concept of 'religion' itself, we see that like the 'mystical' the term is an explanatory construct, which, while useful for focusing upon certain aspects of cultural activity, tends to marginalize that which it purports to explain if

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[3] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

the term is reified and segregated from the wider cultural dynamic in which it occurs.[4]

Some of the dangers and fallacies here described are also very much applicable to the question of Alevi identity, subjected as it is primarily to the traditional manners and methodologies of social sciences and humanities from the West, which in describing phenomena outside their domains of knowledge might do more harm than good. Before furthering this argument, what follows is a short and general, far from exhaustive, description of the Alevis' tradition and the lives of their community members.

Who are the Alevis?

It is crucial to understand that any generalized description of the Alevis is and will be quite problematic, because information about them differs from source to source. This is due to the fact that their religious and cultural tradition is non-scriptural, and also because of actual differences among the beliefs and religious practices of Alevi communities, which allows for a plurality of interpretations. Alevi wisdom, faith, and culture have been transmitted orally, as well as through ritual, mainly musical practices. A variety of sources present the Alevis as a Muslim heterodox Shi'a religious community in Turkey, which is the biggest, though unofficial, religious minority in the country, mainly inhabiting the central and eastern part of Anatolia. As a result of urbanization, however, they are also nowadays very much present in Turkish cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Their communities are often called different names, for example *Kızılbaş*, *Bektaşi*, *Tahtacı*, *Çepni*, which are attributed to them depending on their specific historical and geographical origins. Ethnically they identify as Turkish or Kurdish, the latter differing among themselves due to the language they use, namely *Kurmanji* and *Zaza* speaking Kurds. They worship Ali (Ali Ibn Abi Talib); Mohammed's family, which is called *Ehlibeyt* and whose members are Mohammed, Ali, Fatıma (the Prophet Mohammed's daughter and

[4] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and "the mystic East",* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 11.

Ali's wife), and Hasan and Husain (Ali and Fatıma's sons); they also worship the trinity of Allah, Mohammed, and Ali, as well as the Twelve Imams. They are accordingly categorized as a Shi'a branch of Islam, but due to their diverse religious practice, which is not based on the Koran, there are many sources that connect them with shamanism, religious cults of central Asia, and other pre-Islamic beliefs, resulting in attributions of syncretism. Not following the Sunni tradition was the main reason they were regularly persecuted and purged by the orthodox mainstream, and therefore they were forced to keep their belief secret and perform their rituals in seclusion. They emerged as a specific religious community only after the formation of the Republic in the first half of the 20th century. Nowadays, the Alevis are still stigmatized – but they constitute a powerful alternative to the supremacy of Sunnism and one of the strongest political oppositions in secular Turkey.

Extant literature mainly provides contemporary accounts on Aleviness and its religion and tradition in relation to the political and social situation in Turkey – namely regarding the fact that even in present times the Alevi are not acknowledged as a distinct religious group in their homeland, but mainly as a specific part of "Turkish national heritage". The Turkish government claims that the great majority (more than 90%) of the 70 million Turkish population are Sunni Muslims, and this does not coincide with the belief of some Alevis, who themselves claim that their number might amount even up to 25 million people.[5] This would be around a third of Turkish population, but the generally accepted view is that there are around 15 million Alevis.[6] The Alevi "maintain that belief in the Sunni God is based on fear, but that the Alevi base their faith in love, a love which is within all people and that can be found within them."[7] Despite the process of the so called "Alevi revival" (the massive appearance of the Alevi in the public and

[5] This opinion was the most widespread among the Alevi people the author talked to during her fieldwork in Istanbul, March 2015; this number also takes into account those living in diasporas, as well as the assimilated Alevi population.

[6] Bedriye Poyraz, "The Turkish State and Alevis: Changing Parameters of an Uneasy Relationship," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 4 (2005): 503.

[7] David Shankland, "Anthropology and Ethnicity: The Place of Ethnography in the New Alevi Movement," in *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives, Papers Read at a Conference Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, November 25–27, 1996*, ed. Tord

the media, especially from the 1990s forward) and the acknowledgement of their existence and way of life, the Turkish government does not regard them as a distinct religious community, but merely as an integrated part of the "Turkish nationality", namely, a part of Turkish cultural heritage.[8]

Alevi Identity: A Western Account

The Alevis and their tradition and religion were a topic of widespread, interdisciplinary interest throughout the entire 20th century. The long tradition of research is evident from the informative bibliography list on the website of the *Alevi-Bektaşi* Research Centre. The first foreign, that is non-Turkish, written source about these communities with the word "Alevi" in its title is listed as an article from the publication *Harvard Theological Review*, published in the year 1909 and written by Stephen von Rensselaer Trowbridge under the title "The Alevis of Defiers of Ali".[9] The reason for such an early and strong interest in the religious community might be very different: researchers could be intrigued by several Alevi characteristics, be it their religious practice, rituals, and musical performance, or maybe their religious and political alternative to the orthodox hegemony of Sunni Islam. Surely it could be acknowledged that the interest is derived from Alevi idiosyncrasy, their otherness. Their fresh discovery and their peculiarity attracted Western researchers of the Middle East with their Sufi doctrines, affection towards the other as one of their main life philosophies, and esoteric rituals based on musical performance. Due to the Western hegemony in the tradition of ethnographic, religious, historical, and cultural rese-

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Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2003), 20.

8 Cf. Fahriye Dinçer, "Alevi Semahs in Historical Perspective," in *Dans Müzik Kültür – Folklora Doğru*, *ICTM 20th Ethnochoreology Symposium Proceedings 1998*, ed. Frank Hall and Irene Loutsaki (Istanbul: Boğazıcı University Folklore Club, 2000), 32–42; Poyraz, "The Turkish State and Alevis"; Kabir Tambar, "The Aesthetics of Public Visibility: Alevi Semah and Paradoxes of Pluralism in Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 3 (2010): 663–673.

9 Ali Yaman, Aykan Erdemir and Müslüm Güler, eds., "AleviBektaşi araştırma merkezi," accessed 15 July 2015, http://www.alevibektasi.org/.

arch they were often presented with connotations of Eurocentrism; for example some researchers connected them with Christianity just because of their custom of food distribution (with the analogy to sacramental bread) and wine drinking during their rituals. The similarity might be recognized, but it is not enough to connect their religious traditions, since the Alevis use food distribution to express their care for the less fortunate and provide them a warm community meal. From another point of view the Alevi are an excellent example of the possibility of many interpretations and experiences of Islam; they confirm this with their saying "*Yol bir, sürek binbir!*", which means "The Way is one, the roads one thousand and one!"[10]

Another indicator of the interests described is found in the edited volumes of articles and chapters about the Alevis that have begun to emerge since the end of the 20th century. One of them was published in 1998, entitled *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, presenting articles that were introduced at a conference on this topic in Istanbul.[11] The contributions are very diverse and specific, while Turkish authors are in the minority (only 6 out of 17). Another notable volume is *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*,[12] which collects contributions on Alevis from the points of view of sociological research, history, and the country, and talks about the so called "Alevi revival", the "Kurdish question", and political opposition. The volume was published with the intent to uncover biases in Alevi research. "Altogether, the collected papers try to shed light on the ambiguous and contradictory images of the Alevi communities, as well as elaborating on the development of social identities in Turkey."[13] One of the contributing authors, Isabella Rigoni, states that the "Alevi renaissance" was made possible because of Europe's recognition of the Alevis that emi-

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[10] Marcus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18.

[11] Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere, eds., *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives, Papers Read at a Conference Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, November 25–27, 1996*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2003).

[12] Paul J. White and Joost Jongerde, eds., *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview* (Boston: Brill, 2003).

[13] Alice Assadoorian, "Review: Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview," *Iran & the Caucasus* 9, no. 1 (2005): 190.

grated into Western countries. This is a heavily ambiguous statement: it acknowledges the importance of work on the Alevis, but from another perspective this fact is accompanied by a hint of elitism and orientalism. However, the peculiarity of the volume lies in the fact that it gathers various ethnical, cultural, and political perspectives of the Alevi question, which was previously considered only in separate ways. Another important contribution is the new volume *Alevis in Europe: voices of migration, culture and identity*,[14] which collects writings from Turkish authors, including some Alevis, which is a step forward for scientific research into their own tradition. However, the structure and topics of this book resemble the ambitions of Western science with its effort to present Alevi identity through political, sociological, and psychological perspectives, mainly neglecting their religious and philosophical points of view. It seems that the Turkish authors followed the principle of Western science such as rationalism, logocentrism, and deductionism in order for their knowledge on Alevi identity to be acknowledged by the international academic community. In doing so, however, it seems that the researchers have on many occasions omitted a specific and very important part of their tradition, namely their instability, variability, and fluidity.

Combining Identification: Ethnographic Studies and Religiology

Among the first to explicitly acknowledge and specifically warn about the difficulties of defining Alevi identity and the dangers of the unsuitable nature of the definite knowledge and rationalistic identification of Western science were the two researchers David Shankland and Marcus Dressler, who, each from his own view, i.e. ethnography and religiology, respectively, researched Alevi communities for decades. David Shankland wrote his book *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*[15] based on his intensive fieldwork conducted

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[14] Tözün Issa, *Alevis in Europe: voices of migration, culture and identity*, Routledge Advances in Sociology (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

[15] David Shankland, *Alevis in Turkey: the emergence of a secular Islamic tradition*, (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

in the villages of rural Anatolia in the years 1980–1990. This book definitively places him among the most relevant ethnographic scholars researching the lives and traditions of the Alevis. Marcus Dressler, on the other hand, investigated the question of Alevi identity from a sociological and historical point of view, shedding some light onto the politics of their identification.

In his fieldwork-based research Shankland compared the lives of various rural communities in Turkey and concluded that the most substantial differences are present between Sunni and Alevi communities. The most crucial difference was about the conflict management situation: the Sunnis use the state institutions and juridical system to resolve their issues, while the Alevis have a self-sustaining social system that allows them to resolve conflict within their communities, with the help of mediators, or better the *dedes*.[16] Thus not only are conflicts resolved within the community, making it stronger as a result, but also this method allows these communities to stay independent from the state; this autonomy, however, only persisted until they inhabited the rural parts of Anatolia. After the mass migrations due to their desire for modernization towards and into urban areas, the communities scattered and lost their connectedness and autonomy, especially because their communities had to change in order to integrate into the state's system:

> (...) the Alevis cannot integrate into the modern Turkish state without conflict between this integration and belief in their myths, rituals and ideals because, taken literally, these undermine the legitimacy of the central government. Their mechanisms of social control must change far more radically than those of the Sunni villages (...)[17]

Thus the Alevis, in order to follow the process of modernization, had to reformulate their cosmology, by which they had to adjust their religious and life practices. His fieldwork in specific rural villages led Shankland to some findings, not all of which he says are necessarily valid for all Alevi or Sunni communities. They are nonetheless worth taking

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[16] The turkish word *dede* in general means grandfather, old father, but among the Alevis it signifies an elderly man of the Alevi community, who gained his authority and responsibilities due to his origin and kin.

[17] Shankland, *Alevis in Turkey*, 5.

into account, as further research could confirm or reject them. Besides a radical difference between the Alevi and Sunni communities regarding their social order and traditional arrangement, the author established that the Sunni's traditional hamlets are usually bigger than the Alevi villages, that migration into urban areas is much more prevalent among the Alevis than among the Sunnis, that the Alevis are politically oriented mainly towards the left, that, in contrast to the Sunnis, who usually believe in religious prescriptions literally, the Alevis are more inclined toward religious skepticism, and that the securing of goods and assets is much more difficult for the Alevis than for the Sunnis.[18]

The author compared these observations and deductions from his ethnographic work to the controversial model of Muslim societies established by Ernest Gellner, which was subjected to criticisms of generalization, ambiguity, and simplification.[19] However, Shankland does not look for (in)congruency, but rather offers some parallels to the infamous model that might lead to new questions and points of view that would additionally clarify the complex position of the Alevis in Turkey.[20] The Alevi communities could fit well the "tribal pole" of Gellner's model of Muslim societies, since they have a tendency to keep themselves out of the state system as much as they can. Further, their religious practices are much less codified, and at the same time they are extroverted and centered on the person. Moreover, the process of modernization has a negative impact upon these communities, since the orthodox mainstream tries to marginalize them. However, there are some deviations from the model, since these communities are not nomadic, nor excessively rebellious, because traditionally they embraced a peaceful and reserved way of life in order to maintain their own autonomy. Also, their religion was not "purified" while going through the process of modernization, as Gellner predicted, quite the opposite – with modernization came the Alevis' demand for the freedom to practice their own religious customs and the possibility to abandon the orthodox Sunni ones. On the other hand the process of modernization can be observed from the point of

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18 *Ibid.*, 9–12.

19 Cf. Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

20 Shankland, *Alevis in Turkey*, 174–181.

view of the bureaucratization and universalization of Alevi practices, which are being simplified, adapted and fixed, with the wish of public recognition in mind. This is happening also with the appearance of the defining literature that codifies their religion, which is in opposition to the Alevi esoteric tradition that was mainly preserved orally.

Shankland writes explicitly about the scripturalization and codification of Alevi identity in his account on the role of ethnography for the Alevi movement.[21] He states that this process takes places mainly based on the mass emergence of new literature about the Alevis that cannot be called scientific; but this does not diminish the importance of such literature for the Alevis that are continuing to strive for the public recognition of their religion. Publications and media appearances contribute to the more and more evident polarization among the Alevis and Sunnis, which lead to bigger conflicts – this danger must also be acknowledged regarding the scientific publications. "What we publish will also be taken up by the people for whom the revitalization and recreation of their culture is a vital issue."[22] However, this cannot impede scientific work and research, but it should open questions about the role of science in this process.

At the same time as different perspectives to describe Aleviness are established, different interpretations of their tradition might appear, along with various speculation about which of them is the correct one. "In practice, however, any claim to be a true form of Aleviness will be empirically incorrect, simply because Aleviness has over the centuries arrived at such complex forms of accommodation."[23] Living in the shadow of the hegemony of orthodox Sunnism, the Alevis developed mystic philosophy, a doctrine of peace and gender equality. "If, as researchers, we permit this flexibility, inherent within Alevi communities, to be written out of the process of cultural revival, we are failing in the one area where we may be of use."[24]

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21 Shankland, "Anthropology and Ethnicity," 15–22.
22 *Ibid.*, 16.
23 *Ibid.*, 22.
24 *Ibid.*

Shankland, in one of his recent critical accounts about the ethnography of heterodox Muslim groups,[25] shows the fallacies inherent in the perception of cultures as coherent wholes. This view on cultures should be substituted by seeing cultures as ever-changing contradictory processes. In his opinion Western experts on Islam were not able to follow the challenge of understanding the perpetual shifts in determining cultures. The author shows that ethnographic studies are far too often based on previously conducted research, instead of being grounded on actual fieldwork and developing sensitivity for the variety of organizations in Muslim societies.

The question of defining communities as heterodox is a regular feature in Islam, claims Shankland, while differentiating among orthodox and heterodox communities is widespread also in theology. The author is aware that this dichotomy is usually based on prejudices and that using the term "heterodox" can a priori negatively label minorities. However, Shankland does not defend the abandonment of the term, since the unorthodox communities are omnipresent as opposition to the core ideas of specific societies, and therefore as very important alternatives to the mainstream system.

The tendency of the West towards defining Islam through the division of religious groups into Sunni and Shi'a branches can lead to the danger that heterodox communities might disappear from scientific literature, since they are not part of either of the two dominant orthodox parts of Islamic religion. These heterodox religious groups are not important as a form of resistance to and differentiation from the "right" beliefs, moreover, they are not to be perceived as "extremist". Rather, they have an important role as alternatives, which are shown by contrasting some aspects of a specific religion. For these heterodox groups the author recognizes a certain specific pattern, though roughly:[26] inhabiting rural areas, affirming leaders on the basis of their patrilineal descent, performing collective rituals to (re)affirm the *status quo*, calling

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[25] David Shankland, "Maps and the Alevis: On the Ethnography of Heterodox Islamic Groups," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2010): 227–239, doi: 10.1080/13530194.2010.543307.

[26] Shankland, *Alevis in Turkey*, 530.

for gender equality or at least for less gender discrimination, and also an emphasis on the esoteric aspect of their approach to religion.

Shankland claims that the Turkish heterodox communities are often called "extremist Shi'a", which is a social framework that was established by the scientific works of social anthropologists in the 1940s, typically describing the communities that were/are outside the lines of or in contrast to the country's government. This kind of ideological stigmatization, formed with changes in the social order, makes the actual communities unrecognizable – therefore, there is a crucial need for intensive fieldwork and long-term observation in order to present these communities in their own reality, especially due to the fact that their tradition was mainly preserved orally.

Shankland claims that Western scholars had a great and direct impact on the history of Alevi communities and the definition of their identity, especially in the period when Turkish Alevis migrated into European countries, mainly to Germany. With simplification and codification in the new emerging texts about their faith and cultural tradition from the middle of the 20th century onwards, a sense of uniformity took shape that had never existed beforehand. This uniformness must be labeled as inappropriate for Alevi communities, which differ among themselves greatly. Shankland claims that the authors of these texts are "both actors and play wrights"[27] of the process of transforming the cultural tradition, and therefore the accuracy of their information and interpretation is extremely important.

Markus Dressler researches the Alevis and the Alevi religion from the perspective of the sociology of religion and from the question of their identity. In his works[28] he explicitly warns about the unsuitability of the traditional Western dichotomies upon which various religions are explained and understood. All religions in this process are subjected to determination by patterns, defined by the so-called "world religions". The paradigm that understands religion in connection to dichotomous

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[27] Shankland, "Maps and the Alevis," 239.

[28] See for example Markus Dressler, "Turkish Alevi Poetry in the Twentieth Century: The Fusion of Political and Religious Identities," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23 (2003): 109–154; Markus Dressler, "Religio-Secular Metamorphoses: The Re-Making of Turkish Alevism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 280–311.

concepts, such as religious/secular, religious/political, or sacral/profane, is neither known to nor suitable for Aleviness. In this faith religious and political themes are often fused, but that does not necessarily put them in the realm of the paradoxical.[29] Furthermore, Dressler claims that the borders between the political and the religious are dynamic and variable: "[W]e need a discursive, non-essentialist conception of the dimensions of the religious and the political in order to understand what happens when these dimensions fuse."[30] The overlapping of both themes in the Alevi discourse is presented by the author with an analysis of some works from Alevi poetry, which has been the main carrier and transmitter of the Alevi heritage through the centuries.

Dressler presents some specific poems that include political events or symbols in Alevi beliefs or their religious realm. To depict his deduction one of many representative examples of secularization of the religious can be used, or better of the sacralization of the profane: namely the Alevis tend to connect the events from the battle at Kerbela in 680, which comprise an important part of Alevi mythology, with the socio-political incident in the Turkish town Sivas in the year 1993, which resulted in the death of 35 people, all members of the Alevi community.[31] In connecting these two events a continuity of martyrdom and suffering of the Alevis is established; moreover these events adopt transhistorical significance: the martyrs from Kerbela become political victims. Furthermore "the secular ideologies are in turn sanctified by their

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29 Dressler, "Turkish Alevi Poetry," 110.

30 *Ibid.*, 119–120.

31 The so called "massacre at Kerbela" in the year 680 is understood by the Alevis as the martyrdom of Huseyin (Ali's second son and the third Shi'a imam) and his family. Before slaughtering them, the followers of the Ummayad (Sunni) calif Yezid left them without food and water for twelve days. To honour their pain the Alevis even nowadays hold a twelve-day fast at the beginning of the month Muharrem, when the massacre originally occured. (Dressler, "Turkish Alevi Poetry," 121; see also Shankland, "Anthropology and Ethnicity," 19–21.) Dressler in his account on Alevi poetry recognized that this event is often paralleled to the attack on the Alevi members gathering at a festival dedicated to an important figure if their legacy, that is the poet Pir Sultan Abdal. The attack happened on 2 June 1993, when militant Sunni fanatics started a fire at a hotel, where the participants in the festival were lodging, the consequences of which included the loss of 35 lives. The local authorities observed the event without intervening.

inclusion into the religious narrative."[32] This contributes substantially to their "political legitimacy and a political identity."[33]

Despite the tendencies of connecting and integrating the political and the religious shown above, it is fairly important to state that the Alevis strongly support laicism, which is supposed to keep apart religion and politics in the public realm, and to presuppose the control of the state on religion and not the other way around, faith being moved from the public into the private domain. Laicism is crucial to the Alevis, especially because it is a precondition for their religious freedom, which they were not able to obtain before the emergence of kemalism and the secularization of the state in the 1920s.[34] According to Dressler this is another sign that affirms the compatibility of Islam with secularity – a possibility that is rather rejected than affirmed.[35]

In the Alevi worldview the division between religious and political is possible only in the institutional structure of society, otherwise both are inherently connected. This is recognizable in some of the crucial concepts of Aleviness that significantly affect their belief system, such as the immanence of God and the differentiation between batın in zahir, which could be understood as differing between "the inner" or "the hidden" and "the outer" or "visible". From these the Alevis stress the importance of the inner side of faith; however, these two sides are not mutually exclusive, but they are rather mutually complementary.[36] Dressler therefore describes Aleviness in the following way:

> This worldview, with its batinism and its conception of the divine as immanent, has no equivalent with the common western perspective on religion that structures religion along the lines of a clear-cut distinction between a transcendent God and man, between *sacred* and *profane*, between *religion* and *politics*.[37]

Furthermore, the author warns about the dangers of oversimplification in postorientalistic debates, which, in oversimplifying, reaffirm the

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32 Dressler, "Turkish Alevi Poetry," 126.
33 *Ibid.*, 136.
34 *Ibid.*, 132.
35 *Ibid.*, 135.
36 *Ibid.*, 112.
37 *Ibid.*, 137.

hegemony of traditional dichotomies.[38] Besides, he emphasizes: "The case of the Alevis serves as an example for the limits of a dichotomous concept of religion and asks for a pluralist re-definition of the concept *religion*."[39] Similarly, he continues this debate in one of his later works,[40] where he offers an account of the self-identification of the members of the Alevi communities in two different environments, namely in Turkey and in Germany. This time he shows the fallacies of postcolonial studies in understanding the politico-religious dynamic as one-sided:

> While postcolonial studies has discussed the role of religion as a tool to legitimize and administer the hegemony of the nation-state, less attention has been directed to cases in which marginalized sociocultural communities have adopted the language of religion as a means of empowerment vis-à-vis assimilationist politics directed against them.[41]

Again, Dressler recognizes in defining the Alevi identity a proper example of neglecting "the other side" of the relation between politics and religion, especially because Alevis clearly adopt the tendency to religionize Aleviness without leaving the frame of the state. The author goes even further in claiming, that the secular and the religious are not mutually excluding, but he rather sees the processes of religionization and secularization as mutually constitutive.

Simultaneously, Dressler highlights another problematic aspect of perceiving the Alevi identity that emerged as a response to the ideological project of "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis", namely, a "re-Sunnization" of the state, from the end of the 20th century onwards. Contrary to this project, the Alevis adopted, in determining their religion, a universalistic discourse framed by human rights, secularistic rhetoric, and self-determination. This attitude was also an answer to the need to redetermine Aleviness in urban environments that emerged after the rural exodus in the 1970s. The Alevis thus always had to seek balance between the tensions of their local environment and the ever more universalistic

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38 *Cf.* previously cited authors for the criticism of orientalism and conceptualization of religion: Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; Grosrichard, *Sultan's Court*; King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Said, *Orientalism*.

39 Dressler, "Turkish Alevi Poetry," 139.

40 Markus Dressler, "Religio-Secular Metamorphoses."

41 *Ibid.*, 281.

conceptions of Aleviness. Put another way – in order to fulfill their wish to be publicly recognized as a legitimate religious group the members of Alevi communities used the universalistic religious discourse offered by the West, and therefore Aleviness went through its own reformulation and is now understood as a worldview, a way of life, a cultural praxis, and religion.[42]

The fact of not being publicly recognized as a religion by the state leaves the Alevis with two options, "either to oppose the hegemonic discourse, or to play by its rules and appropriate them as well as possible for their own purposes."[43] Following the latter, a number of various Alevi organizations emerged, each of them defending their own proper view on Alevi identity, whether that be integrated into Islam, even Sunnism, or as an independent religion. Another element of their universalization is the development of curricula for religious education in elementary schools, which appeared as a response to the introduction of classes of Sunnism as compulsory to elementary education. Urbanization led to the emergence of a specific setting of the Alevi elite, formed by educated representatives who were strongly skilled in rhetoric and socialization, making up the "brain and motor" of the Alevi revival and public recognition movement. Moreover, during this process, a number of publications sprung up, among them manuals and textbooks about various aspects of Aleviness, which on one hand strongly contributed to the need for knowledge and education, and on the other hand reinforced even further the standardization of Aleviness as a religion.

To assure their own independence, Dressler claims, the Alevis are obliged to objectify their religious practice especially with its fixation on scripturalization. This brings about the metamorphosis of an otherwise very esoteric doctrine into a public religion, to which the Alevi elite contribute as much as the scientific researchers.[44]

But now Alevis are for the very first time engaging in a systemic reconstruction of their tradition along the lines of an implicit *world religion* model, and define belief, practice, philosophy, ethics, and culture of Alevism within

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42 *Ibid.*, 283–288.
43 *Ibid.*, 297.
44 *Ibid.*, 301–302.

the grammar of the secular-religious – an approach alien to traditional Alevi practice and worldview and in line with the politics of the modern nation-state. Such new formations of Alevism are in line with a religion discourse that gives preference to objectified universality as opposed to a plurality of valid local interpretations as characteristic of traditional Alevism. Most significantly, the objectification process has consequences for the character of Alevism as a communal culture.[45]

In establishing a "theology of Aleviness" the very core of Aleviness is being transformed. The Alevi religionization is an illustrative example of the further blooming of modernistic semantics in the public discourse about religion, even if said discourse has gone through the necessary process of emancipation from the modernistic paradigm.

In his book *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevism*, Dressler argues for another example of the modernistic character of the project of establishing a theology of Aleviness and its rootedness in orientalism – that is, the name Alevi itself. The author states that this denomination appeared only in the late 19th century in order to substitute the pejorative term kızılbaş, which was used for naming specific Anatolian religious communities that were known to be connected with the Shi'a Safavidic empire. Over time, mainly thanks to authors with nationalistic tendencies since the 1920s, the name Alevi has become an umbrella term for Anatolian communities sharing various features, such as unorthodoxy, syncretism, and specific forms of ritual practice. In the second half of the 20th century the term substituted all the previous denominations, and thus despite their heterodoxy the Alevis were integrated into the nationality and faith of the young Turkish state.[46] This kind of reconceptualization of the notion of Aleviness was a political gesture, Dressler explicitly affirms. The hypothesis of the homogeneity of Aleviness met the standards of the nationalistic project that was founded on the belief on the continuity of Turkish culture and its integration. The reduction of "otherness", namely the plural aspect of Aleviness, allowed for a more substantial assimilation.[47] The Alevis were accordingly seen as a much more homogeneous community than they really were. The new

45 *Ibid.*, 303.
46 Marcus Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 1–4.
47 *Ibid.*, 5.

terminology brought about stabilization, and with it also a generalized view on their tradition. Alevi religiography is mainly modernist and secular and this has strongly affected research on Aleviness, especially the type conducted by Turkish authors, which, supported by nationalistic characteristic, was found to be essentialistic and functionalistic. Functionalism was a specific characteristic of the French structuralism and sociology, hence it is a clear evidence of the strong influence of Western scientific theories on Turkish (self)determination.[48]

> The diverse connotations that have been attributed to Alevi/Alevism during the last century (e.g., Alevis as preservers of pre-Islamic Turkish traditions and culture, Alevism as pre-Marxist class-fight ideology, as Turkish philosophy, as secular Turkish Islam, or as post-Zoroastrian Kurdish religion) are part and parcel of the complicated dynamics of Turkish identity politics in which religious, ethnic, nationalist, and class-based concerns relate and clash.[49]

In this way the author specifically exposes the methodological problem of the historical account on "the Alevis," since their name and the concept of Aleviness did not exist until the end of the 19th century, which explicitly shows that these accounts are mainly a projection of modernistic concepts onto the past.[50] It is surprising that this kind of writing still goes unquestioned by scientists and that experts have not yet made warnings about the conceptual transition from different names to a unified umbrella term. This fact shows a lack of criticism towards the modernistic obsession with origin and essence.[51] Dressler emphasizes that the modern conceptualization of Aleviness is ambiguous: it allows for the Alevis to have a legitimate place in the Turkish society, but only by limiting their identification to the confines of Turkishness and being Muslim. In this ambiguity Dressler recognizes the fact that integration and assimilation are two sides of the same coin. The Alevis still remain "heterodox," since the norm for the Turkish state is Sunni Islam.[52]

On the role of heterodoxy especially as an opposition to orthodoxy Dressler writes in one of his newer works, which is meaningful eno-

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48 *Ibid.*, 8–10.
49 *Ibid.*, 11.
50 *Ibid.*, 12, 14.
51 *Ibid.*, 15.
52 *Ibid.*, 277.

ugh already by its subtitle, "Otherizing the Alevis as heterodox".[53] In Dressler's opinion because of the label of heterodoxy the Alevis keep being and integral part of Islam, but at the same time they are being positioned on its margins, especially by those who hold the position of the "centrality" of Islam, "*orta*".[54] These believers, being nationalistically inclined, as orthodox, always have their others. Dressler points out how to solve, or better how to expose this "otherizing", in a critical deconstruction of the symbiosis among the hegemonic political and academic discourse, especially "by analysis of the dynamics through which orthodoxies are formulated, and heterodoxies ascribed to, in the context of specific theologico-political power relations."[55]

Aleviness: A Fluid Identity

The aspects of writing and explaining Alevi identity presented in this paper show that the identity of these communities is not easily unambiguously determined. Especially the studies of David Shankland and Markus Dressler lead towards the uncovering of some fallible ways of identifying the Alevis. Their points of view and interest are based on separate areas of study, that is anthropology and religiology, but they appear mutually compatible and supporting, even complementary. This points towards the realization of Richard King's[56] suggestion about the possibility of religious studies imitating or even unifying with cultural studies, which could prevent the foundation of the concept of religion in the Christian and Enlightenment terms that are typical of theology.

Dressler's belief about the impropriety of grounding religion in the model of dichotomy, which opposes it to secularity, and his call towards a pluralistic understanding of religion fit well with Shankland's comprehension of culture as a perpetually transformable entity of which religion is a part. When he states the danger of losing the variety and difference because of the regular separation of Muslim communities be-

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53 Markus Dressler, "Turkish politics of doxa: otherizing the Alevis as heterodox," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 41, no. 4–5 (2015): 445–451.

54 Interestingly enough, the Turkish word "*orta*" means center, middle, in between.

55 Dressler, "Turkish politics of doxa," 450.

56 King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 2.

tween the two branches, that is Sunnism and Shi'ism, he warns, just as Dressler, that the reasoning behind this differentiation "otherizes" some groups of Turkish society. In Shankland's terms heterodoxy should not designate separation, but rather an alternative to the hegemonic ways of life and religious practices. Both authors warn about the codification of the Alevi practices as being unsuitable or poorly adapted to Alevi knowledge, which was transmitted mainly orally. They thus express concern about the possibility of losing fluidity, which is elementary to the Alevis, and they call for awareness about the role and impact of scientific researchers in defining and reconstructing Alevi identity. Shankland claims that the hypothesis about Alevi uniformity is wrong and similarly Dressler defends the view that the illusion of their homogeneity is politically grounded, since it always put the Alevis in ambiguous positions, identifying them as "the others" of Turkish society.

Different approaches towards defining, even constructing, the Alevi identity, such as universalization, homogeneization, codification with scripturality, otherizing, objectification, etc., all show the clear influence of Western scientific and political discourse. This discourse was uncritically applied to the situation of the Turkish Alevis, preserving the modernistic tendencies of rationalization and essentialism, as well as, surely, also Eurocentrism. The fact that this modernistic scientific style is also used by the Alevis themselves is quite concerning. Even if this approach is the only way in which the Alevis gained some degree of public recognition in terms of Turkish cultural heritage and legitimacy in the political sphere, the adopted rationalistic determination leads to the loss of their proper variability and the local characteristics of Alevi communities. Objectivity and rationality originate from the project of enlightenment, the modernistically grounded sciences, and the egocentrism of the Western view of "others".[57] The westernization of the Alevi studies affects greatly the changes in the Alevi religious and other traditional practices that are adapting to the need of identification with fixed determinations, whether that is as a Muslim heterodox group or as a

[57] This drawbacks of spreading the Western scientific models can be followed from different points of view in theoretical works listed before from authors such as Asad, King Grosrichard, and Said.

political opposition to the Sunni hegemony. Moreover, with the objectification and scripturalization of their tradition there comes the danger that the sacred rituals might become thoroughly fixed and consequently lose the vividness, aliveness, and fluidity that are crucial to said tradition. This reminds us of Grosrichard's discovery of the Sultan's Court and the realization that the accuracy of reports about it did not make a difference, since what was most important was the belief in them: significance is gained only with the translation to discourse and concepts of analytic theory, its articulation and synthesis into a system.[58] Similarly it could be stated for the objectification and codification of Alevi praxis that, subjected to simplification, it is reducible to a few ground rules and concepts that make it accessible for Western discourse and the modernized Turkish public. This kind of "Alevi system" is far from suitable for representing in its full extent the complexity of the esoteric experience and mystical philosophy that were primarily preserved in Alevi poetry and music.

The issue of Alevi identity proves that the West has not yet released its master grasp over all of its others. Maybe this hegemony is often not self-evident, but it seems important for scientists to continue researching it and thus contribute to the credibility, truthfulness, and relevance of science. It is encouraging to meet in the extant literature some authors that are constantly aware of the dangers of simplification and application of their own beliefs on other individuals, cultures, faiths. Among them there is the Slovenian author Marijan Molè, who in researching Islamic mysticism realized its uncanniness, as well as researchers' responsibility towards their subjects of research, which could be a model for every discipline.

Islamic mysticism puts the European researcher in front of various difficulties. The first one being that the grounding of religion is problematic by itself. To what extent is it even possible to comprehend a religious experience – individual by definition – that besides not being ours, it unfolds inside a system that is unknown to us? This task demands a substantial effort: researchers have

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[58] See Alain Grosrichard, *Struktura seraja*, trans. Eva Bahovec and Mladen Dolar (Ljubljana: Škuc, Filozofska fakulteta, 1985), 200.

to get accustomed to those that they research and follow their experience from inside, without ceasing being themselves.[59]

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[59] Marjan Molè, *Muslimanski mistiki*, trans. Vesna Velkovrh Bukilica (Ljubljana: KUD Logos, 2003), 9.

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THEOLOGY OF SACRIFICE

Mari Jože Osredkar

Introduction

A scientist is an observer who places an object on the table and tries to study and describe it as thoroughly as possible. Scientists will ultimately be successful in this endeavor when they "see" and represent for themselves and others the observed object. Throughout history Christian theologians also have strived to represent in detail their observations about God. These theologians have written about the essence of God and its composite attributes. But, because God is not an object that can be set down before them and observed thoroughly, we can practically know nothing about Him. Common denominators found throughout the writings of these Christian theologians with regard to a description of God are focused on three of His attributes. These are ultimately reflected as negations of our human qualities: God is omnipotent, eternal, and, with respect to human reason, is unattainable. Therefore the logical conclusion of all the effort is the "realization", that we know nothing of God. And since we cannot say anything concrete about God, we accept the idea that God is completely different from any aspects of our human lives.

The word "theology" derives from the Latin word *theología*, which itself is derived from the Greek. Theología is a word comprised of two Greek words, namely *Θεός*, meaning God, and *λόγος*, meaning speech, thought. The etymological interpretation of the term tells us that theology is systematic thinking, discussion, or knowledge of God, but in fact it is systematic thinking of faith. Speaking about the Theology of Sacrifice means speaking about Christian faith based on the Gospels. In other words the research object of theology is belief.

The Bible reads: "It is truly wonderful when relatives live together in peace" (Ps 133, 1). It is mutually beneficial when partners and brothers dwell together in understanding, collaboration, and peace. Many have

experienced and are experiencing the success of such in their families. Sociologists conversely find in modern society extensive breakdown of formerly staid units. Family and traditional values are in crisis too. The statistics are horrifying, reflecting the growing number of divorces, broken families, and dysfunctional families. In fact the essence of relationship itself is in crisis. That which should bind us together as individuals has plunged into desuetude. Why? Because modern humans no longer comprehend the essence of common life. In this paper we will show that "sacrifice", as it is introduced in the Gospels, is of utmost importance for maintaining a high-quality life for those who elect to live in community with others. Even more, evangelical sacrifice is of utmost importance for maintaining a human life and a human civilization. In fact we would like to show the importance of Christian faith in general for humanity's survival.

The place of religion in the modern world

Many ideologists in the 20th century wanted to eradicate religion, or they were convinced that faith would disappear by itself as soon as people had "scientifically" changed their outlook. Marx viewed religion as an illusion that alleviated the suffering caused by exploitation and oppression. Communism proclaimed that religion was opium for the suffering, which distorted reality and offered many deceptions, which thus form the basis of the ideology of the ruling class and a false class consciousness. Religion does not do anything to solve problems but is just an "irrational" attempt at making life more bearable. Marx maintained that most religious movements appear first among oppressed classes, which embrace such movements in the hope that they will alleviate the pains of their oppression. Marxists thus proclaimed religious beliefs as opium, i.e. a noxious narcotic that brings no benefit, something similar to smoking. There are many who like smoking and cannot give it up. Yet everybody knows that smoking is harmful to smokers as well as to non-smokers, who have to breathe in cigarette smoke. And this is how they saw religious beliefs – as harmful. Sigmund Freud defined religion as a mental disturbance. According to a Pew Research Center demographic analysis, today about 85 percent of the world's

population is religious, i.e. adheres to institutionalized religions. Does that mean that a great majority of people are mentally disturbed? Yet also among those 15 percent that count themselves as non-believers, some show certain signs of religiosity. The situation has not been any different throughout history.[1]

Religion is not disappearing. Quite the opposite, in the first years of the new millennium the world strongly felt, in a rather painful way, that religion is still – or increasingly so – an important factor in today's world. Also among scientists many can be found who oppose Marx's and Freud's assertions. It is true that for some time it seemed that science would supersede religion because the Church stubbornly insisted on assertions that were not in accordance with scientific findings. The best-known example of a meaningless insistence of religion contrary to scientific facts is the assertion of the Church that the Sun rotates around the Earth and not vice versa. Yet some very prominent scientists have had a rather positive attitude towards religion, e.g. Newton. Albert Einstein shared the opinion of numerous other scientists that the world was ruled by a certain higher order, whose absence would make existence itself impossible. Stephen Hawking considers God as the incarnation of physical laws.[2]

"Science has discovered several new facts about faith. The most important finding about faith is that people (also atheists) have a part of brain pre-specialized for believing/faith and that processes of faith have their own chemistry, their chemical-biological processes. Some interesting conclusions and analyses follow therefrom. Thus, it is generally accepted today that certain parts of the brain are pre-prepared for their function, e.g. for sight or for speech. Man is not a "blank slate" completely determined by the world around him. Of course, the final embodiment of man/brain comprises inborn as well as acquired features, yet during the last decades the importance of genetics and of predispo-

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1 Conrad Hackett and David Mcclendon, "Christians remain world's largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe," accessed December 18, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/.

2 *Cf.* Stephen Hawking, Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (London: Bantam books, 2010).

sitions of the human brain has been emphasized. Among the first to put up this thesis for linguistics on the basis of experiments and at an abstract level was Noam Chomsky (who was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Ljubljana in 2005). Since the abilities of the brain are of key importance for the success of humanity and since a part of the brain is specialized for faith – and not, e.g. for better mathematics, faith is evidently one of the key features for the evolutionary success of man. If, in an abstract manner, one imagines two peoples in the past, one religious and one unbelieving, evolution chose the religious people as the winner. It should also be considered that the brain uses up about 20 percent of the energy, which makes the religiosity part of the brain an additional burden. Yet it has definitely been worth it! It can be said that the claim about the usefulness of religion is an historical and evolutionary fact"[3].

Humans are religious because they are connected with others

It is a fact that a vast majority of Earth's population has always been religious and has expressed its faith. Wherever archaeologists find remains of civilizations that had disappeared, they also find proof of religious activity. We dare claim that we will be religious as long as the human species exists. What is the foundation of this claim?

People have various reasons for believing, one of them being the promise of life after death, of meeting their beloved ones who have already died, and of their happy eternal life together in Heaven. Others are healed by their faith, which gives sense to their lives. Some believe because they are afraid of death and of suffering in hell and others because of the consolation and peace faith brings. Again others believe because they have been educated in this sense and do not look for other reasons. Some believe because of moral norms and values founded in faith, and others because they have had an experience with the supernatural, or simply because humans have a need for spirituality. All these reasons are justified.

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[3] Matjaž Gams, "Znanost o verovanju *(Science about Faith)*" *Information society IS 2005, Proceeding of the 8thMulticonference. Institut »Jožef Stefan«, Ljubljana,* 43–47.

Our thesis is, however, that humans believe because they are relational beings, i.e. because they are connected with others. This is the deepest and the first reason for humankind's faith. Humans first experience transcendence within a relationship, and just in a relationship do humans meet what they have called God. Only a being in a relationship can be a religious being. And since we are all "beings in a relationship", we all believe in a certain way. How should this be understood? Faith is often imagined by people as "conviction about God's existence", but it is more rightly a relationship. Many have an idea about God, many philosophers and wise men speak about God, yet this is not yet faith. Everyone is a believer, but not everyone immediately gets to know God. Actually the verb "know" is not suitable here because faith is not just knowledge. It is much more. It is a relationship. The field of faith is not the world of objects, but the world of relationships, where one does not speak "about God" but "meets" God when one finds oneself in the world of relationships. Since the objective of believing is not knowledge, believing is outside the context of scientific research. What brings one closer to God is not knowledge, but faith. To believe does not mean to understand. Therefore God "escapes" science, which is bent on getting to know things. Namely we get to know what is equal or similar to us. God, however, is different, so much so that we cannot get to know Him. Yet thanks to the fact that He is "the Other", we can communicate with Him.

Interpersonal relationships are for faith what humus is for a plant. A plant cannot help but sprout, bloom, and bear fruit when it is planted in fertile soil. In the same way also humans cannot help but believe since they live together with the other, in a relationship. To be in a relationship does not mean just to talk "about somebody", but especially to talk "with somebody". To put it simpler, it means to pronounce the word "you". As long as I do not pronounce this word, I cannot pronounce the word "I" either! Thus the first act of faith is to pronounce the word "you". The pronounced word "you" is the guarantee of my existence. Yet I can only pronounce it when I find myself in a relationship with you. It should not be said "until I form a relationship with you", but "when I find myself in a relationship with you", or even better, when I become aware that I am in a relationship with you. Namely, I

cannot enter a relationship, I can only become aware that I am already in it because the relationship was there before me. Similarly, I cannot enter life, I can only become aware that I live.

The relationship is a condition, a guarantee, and a basis of the existence of the two of us because it was there before me and before you. If the relationship exists before the subjects, a subject cannot create it. On the contrary, it follows from what has been said that the relationship generates and enables subjects. When "you" and "I" exist, the second act of faith can occur when I recognize God's face in you. Then I recognize something more than just you in "you"; I find myself in faith and I call God that which I recognize. Faith was there before me. Faith is the condition that I can call "God". Faith has generated a believer out of me. And faith is a gift. The credit is not mine. Saint Augustine wrote in his Confessions: "I would not have sought you if you had not found me before." What does that mean? Humans would not seek God if they already believed in Him. Only when one feels that they believe does one start seeking God. And as long as one seeks God, one believes. Once you stop seeking or once you believe that you have found Him, you do not believe any more. You find yourself in faith and, when you become aware of it, you start seeking God and start to call Him "you, my God". Actually faith is a relationship with a partner whom you do not know but whom you nevertheless call "you". And when you call Him "you", god becomes "your God". And then you start to believe. You find yourself in faith when your relationship with God becomes a covenant, whereby you are committed to permanent religious activity and religious practice.

Thus, humans believe because we are beings of "relationships" and we are aware of it. And maybe believing is just the ability that distinguishes humans from other living beings. As long as humans have existed and will exist, faith will exist too, not as one of our shortcomings, but as a quality, a value that will help us develop and make our existence meaningful, thus also contributing to the development of society.

Faith encourages seeking the other

Faith means seeking the (O)other and, since we are all in a relationship, we all need and long for seeking the (O)other and desire to realize this relationship with the (O)other. Since the relationship is transcendent, the longing for the other is essentially a longing for the transcendent, a longing for God. As has been said before, faith is a relationship with a partner we do not know. Neither is there a need for it. The objective of believing is to maintain the relationship with the Unknowable, wherefore we can now ask ourselves: does to believe mean to maintain a relationship only with Him? And the answer is: not just with Him; to believe means to maintain a relationship with "any other".

It was said above that humans believe because we are connected with others. Now these words can be reversed: since humans believe, we can be connected with others, or the more we believe, the more we are connected with others. The more humans realize that we were generated in a relationship and that such relationship keeps us alive, the more we long for the transcendent and the more we realize our relationships with others.

For humans believing is like breathing. One dies without air. The development and the expression of faith, however, also depend on other factors. It can be said that a relationship is human's first experience of transcendence. The transcendent is that which humans experience, but do not understand. So we people also live in relationships that connect us, but we do not understand them. Objects from the material world can be described and explained. The relationships in which we find ourselves, however, cannot be defined because they transcend knowledge.

We all simultaneously live in the material world and the spiritual one. We are aware that life is not just food and drink, but that life is made possible by the relationships that connect us with one another. These relationships leave a much stronger mark on our existence than the property we possess. Interpersonal relationships do not extend into the realm of knowledge, but into the realm of faith where all people find themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously. Since our knowledge of the other is very limited, life without faith is impossible. To believe means to trust.

One receives life in its fullness when one is not worried about objects of knowledge any more, but communicates with "the other" without knowing the other. Therefore the knowledge and profession of God is not decisive either: when a person finds themselves in a relationship with Him, when they no longer speak "about Him", but "with Him", they become a believer. When you are prepared to extend your hand to the other without knowing the other at all, but you want to be with that other and to live for them, when the other does not interest you any more as an object, but you communicate with them as with a subject, then you find yourself in faith. To find ourselves in a relationship with other means to sacrifice ourselves for the other.

Sacrifice in the Bible

The English word "sacrifice", derived from Latin *sacrificare*, that is, *sacrum facere*, means performing a holy act. The etymological meaning of sacrifice therefore is to perform an act that makes the performer closer to God and assures that they will be loved by God. In all religions throughout the history of humankind we find sacrifice as an expression of human penance, a sign of human humility before God. The goal of sacrifice is regaining God's favor or avoiding His punishment. The generic word for sacrifice in the Old Testament is *qorban*, which means "approach". The etymological meaning of the Hebrew root (*qrb*) "is to be close to someone/something"; other meanings from the root include "close" and "relatives." These meanings underscore our affirmation that believers in the Old Testament made sacrifices in order to be closer to God and to express their faith in God.

The fourth chapter of Genesis has a narrative on the sacrifice made by Adam's sons (cf. Gen 4, 3-5). Each offered God the fruits of his labor: Cain, the farmer, the harvest of the earth; Abel, the shepherd, a first-born lamb. They lived each in his own culture, from whence comes a typical offering for sacrifice. Another culture conditioned Abraham's sacrifice of his son. Herein we readers of the Old Testament are awestruck at Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac to God (cf. Gen 22, 9-10). Exegetes of the biblical texts often emphasize God's intervention (cf. Gen 22, 11-13). Because God prevented the execution of the

sacrifice of Abraham, the exegetes conclude that God prohibited this sacrifice of human life. However, in biblical history, we can find after Abraham another case of human sacrifice. The Book of Judges, for example, tells us how Jephthah sacrificed his beloved daughter to God in gratitude for a victory (cf. Judg 11, 29-40).

Mosaic Law prohibited human sacrifice in Leviticus: "Don't sacrifice your children on the altar fires to the god Molech" (Lev 18, 21). However, Mosaic Law allowed making a payment to the priests in lieu of the human sacrifice promised: "If you have promised to give someone to me and can't afford to pay the full amount for that person's release, you will be taken to a priest, and he will decide how much you can afford" (Lev 27, 1-8). Let us proceed to New Testament references of sacrifice and finally define the importance of sacrifice in human relationships.

The Old Testament doctrine "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" matured in the New Testament into the unconditional commandment of love for one's neighbor. Christ reveals God's will, which leads us to survive by forgiving the wicked and doing the wicked well (cf. Mt 5, 39). As Christians we thus recognize God's will in the Gospel text. Moreover we can see that even Jesus requires of his disciples a sacrifice; He does not demand the sacrifice of a son or daughter, but the sacrifice of one's self. He said to his disciples: "If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find it" (Mt 16, 24). If we compare God's orders from the Old and New Testaments, we quickly realize that in both cases our gift to God must be impeccable. Believers must sacrifice the best of what they have, denying themselves the best of what they have. The word "sacrifice" in the Gospel text expresses this directly. Evangelical doctrine emphasizes the crux of sacrifice as renunciation. When we say that a believer in the Old Testament had to give up that which they considered the most precious, we then learn that renunciation will be taken a step further in the New Testament. Here Jesus does not require renunciation of a believer's property or loved ones, but renunciation of oneself.

We have seen the importance of the sacrifice in the Bible. Now let us pass to a deeper understanding of why God requires such renunciation

from humankind. Our reflection will be based on the Theology of Relationship, formulated by French theologian Guy Lafon.

A relationship is an ongoing reaching out to others
in the human community.

A person enters the material world following the union of two cells. They then start to live as a person when someone, the mother, addresses them as "you", in a verbal way or non-verbal ways. Called by "you", a human being is born as "I", as a person. This personal identity, their existence, can only be maintained when "I", the person, continues to look for "you", that is, "I" interact with the "you". To call another by "you" is an ongoing searching for "you". "You" become my responsibility, and "I" begin, in turn, to give up myself. Responsibility and sacrifice are key to understanding a relationship. This interpersonal relationship is the first human experience of transcendence[4]; so it is possible that the person in this relationship with another person at the same time seeks God and enters simultaneously into this relationship. We might say that, in relationship to other humans, we can and do experience a yearning for a relationship that goes beyond us.

The nature of a dynamic relationship is change. "Partners" in a relationship thus always experience each other in a new light, always different. A husband may recognize his wife every day in a new light. His wife could be today pleasant to him; tomorrow she will change completely and they will be at odds with each other. Then family life could require real sacrifice. However, we read in the Gospel that Jesus invites his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. What does this invitation imply for those disciples and today's members in family who may be contemplating options to restart their conjugal and familial life?

Sacrifice is an integral element of every human relationship.

We shall answer the question of "why God requires us to give up father, mother, son or daughter, even to renounce ourselves". First, we

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4 Guy Lafon, Le *Dieu commun* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 43.

must define life itself. Materialist philosophy defines life as the growth and death of body cells, while the Theology of Relationship argues that to live means to be in a relationship. This theology asserts that there is no life outside of relationships. Given this theory of what constitutes living, we will arrive at an understanding of renunciation in the theological theory of relationships, which argues that renunciation is the voluntary acceptance of absence. What is absence? This question will be answered by exploring the fundamental workings of relationships.

A relationship consists of two dimensions: presence and absence. These two dimensions work at the same time in a relationship between two individuals. Their rapport is changing all the time. Let's use geometry to imagine a meter-long line. We can split this line into two parts infinitely. We find an infinite number of possible ratios between the two segments of the line: 50:50, 40:60, 80:20, 99:1, etc. The simultaneous operation of presence and absence between two subjects forms a relationship and the subjects find themselves within this relationship. Anyone who wants to stay in a relationship must accept this variance. If the presence eliminates the absence, two subjects would be but one and the same to each other; but if the absence overcomes the presence, the subjects would not know each other and would not be able to communicate. The essence of the relationship is the diversity of the subjects, who find themselves linked through a dynamic rapport. At one point presence dominates; later absence may prevail over presence. Constant change is the overarching constitutional element of relationship. Because of the constant changing of the rapport between presence and absence, the relationship is always new. We can say that the relationship produces at every moment new subjects within itself. In a family members always recognize others as changed or new persons. To remain together they must accept their absence in the sense that they acknowledge the new differences of others as necessary and renounce their own desires for presence. The Gospel narrative of the return of the Prodigal Son will underscore the meaning of acceptance of absence through the homecoming extended by the father.

Forgiveness allows a new creation.

The Gospel of Luke tells a story of a father who warmly welcomes home a son who had strayed: "This son of mine was dead and is alive again" (Lk 15.11 to 32). How then was the prodigal son "revived"? The father forgave him, accepted him, and embraced him, and the son lived once again in this paternal relationship. The father's pardon created a new son, who then again had the opportunity to justify his father's confidence in him. Here is a wonderful example that recognizes a new creation through forgiveness. Moreover, to help us understand the full importance of forgiveness, the parable introduces the older son, who does not share his father's enthusiasm at his brother's return. Why not? The condition for extending forgiveness to another is willingness to give up oneself. In forgiving his son the father renounced all that he had in order to be able to give over everything to his son once again. The sibling, conversely, did not forgive his brother upon his return to the household because he could not forgo any of his belongings, including himself. To forgive, and then to welcome someone, means to give up property, rights, will, and even sovereignty. Through the act of forgiveness we are reborn as another. In fact every relationship with others means the renunciation of one's own sovereignty. In contrast the older brother turned his back on his younger brother, and refused to be overjoyed, like his father, with his prodigal sibling's reinstatement into the family. He preferred that his brother remain "dead". The elder son could not concede to a new birth under his father's roof for he was not prepared to give up himself or he has the idea that he alone had earned his father's love being the good and ever-faithful child.

When we are strongly offended by someone, our attitude toward them may change abruptly. We can say that this party does not exist for us anymore. They have become different. In fact they move into absence; and yet we cannot accept their absence. We would like them to be the same relationship as before, pleasant, congenial. What does the shift in attitude mean? If we cannot accept the distancing of the second subject in this change of rapport, then we do not accept said subject's absence. How then might we accept their absence, that is, the personal differences of the brother, spouse, or child? Christ suggests to us that

forgiveness is the way of accepting the differences of others living together. Moreover, because one's brother in a relationship is changing constantly, Christ commands us to forgive him seven times seven, meaning forever. Forgiveness leads us closer again to those who had been living as a unit, because today they are different from who they were yesterday.

Forgiveness changes attitudes and thus allows the rebirth of individuals in a relationship. We have indicated that a human starts to live as a person when someone addresses them as "you", in a verbal way or non-verbal ways. Called "you", a human being is born as "I", as a person. To forgive someone, in fact, means to call them "you" again. To be willing to address that person who offended as "you" you is not so easy. It is quite hard to again call a husband by name, saying to him: "Dear, I accept you, let's stay together!" To be able to move in the direction of the other it is necessary to give up the totality of who we are as a person. It means to sacrifice my own individuality. Forgiveness will permit the continuation of the relationship (life) because of the renunciation of one's self-sufficiency. Because a relationship implies reaching out to another, someone who forgives knows the other in a new light. In fact it is possible only through forgiving the other to see that other in a new light. Forgiveness allows the partner to change or to be reborn. The Gospel teaches us through the parable of the prodigal son that a good father is waiting, is seeking the son, and welcomes him home with a warm embrace. The father's forgiveness allows his progeny to be "born again"! In this Gospel passage Jesus demonstrates for us that forgiveness is the means by which we can return to each other, reborn in our relationship.

In this context we can even speak of cases where there is no insult, no offense. To accept anyone who is different from us in a relationship is also a kind of forgiveness; in fact, this acknowledgment of the other is a new creation. Forgiveness and acceptance of diversity (absence) are very necessary in a family. When we accept a partner or a child, we give them a new life. Over time changes impact these relationships, we age, experience both good and bad moments, even perhaps a crisis. If we do not support a relative for the long term, we begin to disavow their new birth and eventually leave them for "dead". But in such cases we

essentially disavow what constitutes living our life. For our very existence we depend on our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness and acceptance of others allow the continuation of life for all, especially for those who forgive others and then fully welcome them back.

To forgive does not mean to forget. People have memories, and it is useful to remember the mistakes and bitter moments from their past. These thoughts will help us avoid repeating the pitfalls of before. To forgive means to accept another such as they are, even with their weaknesses, which may have negatively affected the relationship. Even harder is to forgive a person who has turned their back on us, and, in spite of their faults and handicaps, still seek them and "call them by name"! God always forgives humankind despite our wickedness; He inevitably reaches out to the sinner, calling them by name; His love engulfs His children. A good example is found in the first pages of the Bible, when Adam chooses not to follow the order of God. "Lord God called to the man and said to him: Where you are?" (Gen 3, 9). God is looking for Adam, who had turned from Him. The word of God found in scriptures encourages humans to become like God. Similarly the person who forgives their brother, spouse, or child must seek out the one who had offended them while they wait in anticipation for the other's return.

Conclusion

Life, like a relationship itself, is a gift. As humans themselves have no prospects to be born to life, so also a Christian will be accepted into the Church and experience a rebirth in the Christian community only through a calling from God. In this light we can understand the words of the Apostle Paul when he says: "Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others. What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And He has given us the work of sharing His message about peace. We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated

him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God" (2 Cor 5, 17-21). We could say that whoever is accepted and whoever accepts a Christian life is a new creation! Being a new person means realizing that one cannot live alone: it means accepting everyone as brother or sister. In this way we can also understand Jesus' answer to Nicodemus that a man must be born again; the first is the person's birth as an individual and the second their being born in communion with others, that is, in a relationship.

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ABSTRACTS

Vojko Strahovnik

Humility, Religions, and Dialogue

Humility might be understood as one of the fundamental moral and epistemic virtues and is often employed in discourse about intercultural and interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, a full or proper understanding of humility proves to be elusive. I argue that humility could be understood as a moral and epistemic virtue that has a vital role in dialogue, but that its deeper dimensions can also be related to a specific conception of morality. This conception is related to the form of moral vision within which humility is not merely a response to our (possible) moral or epistemic limitations, flaws, or mistakes as sources or causes of false beliefs or wrong actions, but is itself a form of moral and epistemic thought. A connection with the notion of epistemic agency is also made. In the conclusion I open a discussion about the potential of religion(s) to both understand the nature and the role of humility in dialogue as well as to embody it.

Keywords: humility, virtues, dialogue, religion, agency, intercultural dialogue, interreligious dialogue.

Lenart Škof

On Some Foundations of Pluralistic Religious Science and Theology of Multiplicity

In this paper I discuss the pluralistic religious science and theology of multiplicity as proposed by Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Lauren Schneider. The article first focuses on the question of monotheism and the ontological as well as historical understanding thereof within religious science as proposed by W.C. Smith. In the second part an idiosyncratic theory of monotheism (*Urmonotheismus*), proposed by Wilhelm Schmidt, is presented in order to be able to conceive of monotheisms in the way of pluralistic theology. In the third part, based on Smith's methodological *credo*, I explore the relation between the idea of religious pluralism and the contemporary theology of multiplicity, as proposed by Schneider in her insightful study *Beyond Monotheism*.

Keywords: W.C. Smith, theology of religions, G.E.W. Lessing, W. Schmidt, three monotheisms, Urmonotheismus, theology of multiplicity.

Helena Motoh

Accommodation and universalism: an early modern experiment in religious dialogue

China in the 17th and 18th centuries was the locus of an early systematic attempt at religious dialogue. The Beijing Jesuit mission faced a problem: how to explain the fact that the Chinese had an extremely long documented history, sophisticated literary tradition and high level of public morality while not having been given historical access to the truth of revelation. The idea of the Chinese as a model of "naturally religious" people helped advocate the accommodation approach that the Jesuits experimented with when trying to convert people from very distant cultural and religious backgrounds. This paper analyzes the development of the accommodation method, from its beginnings with Matteo Ricci to its end in the rites controversy and the suppression of the Jesuit order. It also interprets the accommodation model as one of the most radical attempts to find a framework for religious dialogue. Finally it explores the last period before the end of the Jesuit Beijing mission to show that the doctrine of accommodation at the time of Le Comte had already opened the door to a much more complex worldview of religious universalism.

Keywords: Jesuits, China mission, accommodation method, universalism, religious dialogue

Nadja Furlan Štante

Feminist Theology as a Special Philosophy of Religions and Theology (?) of Religions

This paper will address the question of how femininity and women's voices within theologies and interreligious dialogue are also important in shaping discourse about the role of religion in our times and our capacity for full mutual and spiritual understanding. The paper will consider the view that highlights the positive contribution of the various forms of religious feminisms, focusing on Islamic feminism (Amina Wadud) in the process of re-evaluating both sexes in light of respect for gender equality and social justice.

The centrepiece here is an analysis of the hypothesis that every religion in its original doctrine pronounces egaitarianism and in this context also highlights the fundamental purpose of Islamic law, which is certainly to defend social justice and equality of each individual and thus reflect the equality of all before God.

Keywords: feminine principle, feminist theology, religious feminism, gender stereotypes, interreligious dialogue.

Bojan Žalec

Christianity and Islam: the Same God and Semantical Externalism

The paper belongs to the area of philosophical theology and analytical philosophy of religion. Its aim is to provide a semantical underpinning for identity thesis (hereafter IT). IT claims that Christians and Muslims refer to the same God and that their understandings of Him are similar enough that we may say that they believe in the same God. Author's main thesis is that semantical externalism (hereafter SE) provides a basic semantical underpinning for IT. The structure of the paper is the following: first an outline of SE is presented. Then the author presents Miroslav Volf's argument for IT from his book *Allah. A Christian Response* (2011). In the third, concluding part, the author shows that SE is very relevant for the crucial components of Volf's argument and compatible with them, and that it provides a very good semantical basis for IT. Besides Volf's book, the main constituents of the frame of reference of the paper are works of Hilary Putnam, Nicholas of Cusa, and Pope Benedict XVI.

Keywords: Islam, Christianity, one and the same God, semantical externalism, Miroslav Volf, Hilary Putnam, Nicholas of Cusa.

Maja Bjelica

The Turkish Alevi: In Search of an Identity

This paper discusses the Turkish Alevi communities, which in recent years have been researched quite intensively by foreign and domestic scientists who have tried to define, categorize, and identify them with the help of the traditional approaches of Western social sciences. However, these approaches offer only a limited acco-

unt on Alevi lives, beliefs, practices, and worldview, since they are very difficult to unambiguously describe, wherefore plenty of inconsistent sources about them exist. In exposing this argument a few collections about the Alevi identity are presented, while the dangers and difficulties of Western science-based studies are explained using the texts of two researchers who each dedicated decades of their work to the Alevis and their way of being, namely David Dhankland and Markus Dressler. The Alevi question is thus presented as a paradigm for the misuses and incompleteness of the approaches of scientific tradition for a deep understanding of people's way of life.

Keywords: Alevi, Aleviness, Turkey, identity, Islam, traditional science

Mari Jože Osredkar

Theology of Sacrifice

Modern man does no longer comprehend the essence of community life. Even Christians often do not know how to improve quality communal life. In this paper we show that "sacrifice" is of utmost importance for maintaining a quality life for those who elect to live with others. Our reflection is based on the Theology of Relationship, formulated by French theologian Guy Lafon. Forgiveness and acceptance of diversity (absence) are very necessary in a modern world. When we accept another man, we give him a new life. Through time changes impact relationship, we age, experience both good and bad moments, perhaps a crisis. If we do not support our brother for the long term, we begin to disavow his new birth and eventually leave him for "dead." But in such cases, we essentially destroy ourselves. For our very existence we depend on others. Forgiveness and acceptance of others allow the continuation of life for all, especially for those who forgive others and then fully welcome them back.

Keywords: sacrifice, Bible, faith, relationship, Christian life.

P O V Z E T K I

Vojko Strahovnik
Ponižnost, religije in dialog

Ponižnost kot ena izmed temeljnih moralnih in spoznavnih kreposti oz. vrlin se pogosto pojavlja v okviru razprave o medkulturnem in medverskem dialogu. Po drugi strani se polno ali ustrezno razumevanje ponižnosti izkaže za težko dosegljivo. V prispevku pokažem, da lahko ponižnost razumemo kot pomembno moralno in spoznavno vrlino, ki ima ključno vlogo v dialogu, vendar pa so njene globlje razsežnosti povezane tudi s posebnim pojmovanjem moralnosti. To pojmovanje je povezano z vrsto moralnega vida, kjer ponižnost ni zgolj odgovor na naše moralne ali spoznavne omejitve, pomanjkljivosti ali napake kot vire ali vzroke neresničnih prepričanj ali napačnih dejanj, temveč je ponižnost sama oblika moralne in spoznavne misli. Prav tako je vzpostavljena povezava s pojmom spoznavne dejavnosti. V zaključku se vrnemo k razpravi o potencialu religij tako za razumevanje narave in vloge ponižnosti kot tudi za njeno udejanjenje v dialogu z drugimi.

Ključne besede: ponižnost, vrline, dialog, religija, delovanje, medkulturni dialog, medverski dialog.

Lenart Škof
O nekaterih temeljih pluralistične religijske znanosti in teologiji multiplicitete

V članku se ukvarjam s pluralistično religijsko znanostjo ter teologijo multiplicitete, kot ju zagovarjata že pokojni kanadski teolog in primerjalni religiolog Wilfred Cantwell Smith ter ameriška sodobna teologinja Laurel. C. Schneider. Moj prispevek se najprej posveča vprašanju monoteizma ter njegovega ontološkega in zgodovinskega razumevanja, zlasti v okviru razsvetljenstva. V drugem delu ponujam branje teologije in religiologije pra-monoteizma, kakor ga je zastopal v svoji posebni misli nemški teolog in religiolog pater Wilhelm Schnidt. V tretjem delu se, temelječ na Smithovem metodološkem *credu*, ukvarjam z odnosom med idejo religijskega pluralizma ter sodobno teologijo multiplicitete, kakor jo v svoji *Beyond Monotheism* predlaga Schneiderjeva.

Ključne besede: W.C. Smith, teologija religij, G.E.W. Lessing, W. Schmidt, trije monoteizmi, Urmonotheismus, teologija multiplicitete.

Helena Motoh

Prilagoditev in univerzalizem: novoveški eksperiment z religijskim dialogom

Kitajska je bila v 17. in 18. stoletju prizorišče enega prvih zgodnjih sistematičnih poskusov religijskega dialoga. Jezuiti pekinškega misijona so se soočili s težavo, kako razložiti dejstvo, da je imela Kitajska izjemno dolgo dokumentirano zgodovino, sofisticirano literarno tradicijo in visok nivo obče morale, pri tem pa ji ni bil dan zgodovinski dostop do resnice razodetja. Ideja, da so Kitajci model za "naravno religiozne" ljudi, je pripomogla k obrambi prilagoditvenega pristopa, s katerim so eksperimentirali jezuiti, ko so želeli pokristjaniti ljudstva iz zelo različnih kulturnih in religijskih kontekstov. Članek analizira razvoj prilagoditvene metode od njenih začetkov pri M. Ricciju do njenega konca v sporu o obredju in ukinitvi jezuitskega reda. Poleg tega interpretira prilagoditveni model kot enega najbolj radikalnih poskusov iskanja okvira za religijski dialog. Nazadnje razišče še sklepno obdobje pred koncem pekinškega jezuitskega misijona, s čimer pokaže, da je prilagoditvena doktrina v času Le Comta že odprla vrata precej kompleksnejšemu svetovnemu nazoru religijskega univerzalizma.

Ključne besede: jezuiti, kitajski misijon, prilagoditvena metoda, univerzalizem, religijski dialog

Nadja Furlan Štante

Feministična teologija kot posebna oblika filozofije religij in teologija (?) religij

Prispevek izpostavi vprašanje pomena femininosti in ženskih glasov v okviru različnih religijskih sistemov in medreligijskega dialoga, saj je le-ta izjemnega pomena tudi pri oblikovanju diskurza vloge religije v našem času in naše sposobnosti vzajemnega in duhovnega sprejemanja in razumevanja. Preučili bomo stališče, ki poudarja pozitiven prispevek različnih oblik religijskih feminizmov, s poudarkom na islamskem feminizmu (Amina Wadud), pri procesu ponovnega ovrednotenja obeh spolov v luči spoštovanja enakosti spolov in družbene pravičnosti. Osrednja točka prispevka je analiza hipoteze, da vsaka religija v svoji izvirni doktrini vsebuje idejo egalitarnosti in v tem kontekstu tudi analizira temeljni namen islamskega

prava, ki je zaščititi družbeno pravičnost in enakost vsakega posameznika in tako odražati enakost vseh pred Bogom.

Ključne besede: princip femininosti, feministična teologija, religijski feminizem, spolni stereotipi, medreligijski dialog.

Bojan Žalec
Krščanstvo in islam: isti Bog in semantični eksternalizem

Članek spada na področje filozofske teologije in analitične filozofije religije. Njegov namen je priskrbeti semantično podporo za tezo istovetnosti (v nadaljevanju TI). TI trdi, da se kristjani in muslimani nanašajo na istega Boga in da je njihovo razumevanje dovolj podobno, da lahko rečemo, da verujejo v istega Boga. Avtorjeva glavna teza je, da semantični eksternalizem (v nadaljevanju SE) zagotavlja temeljno semantično podporo za TI. Zgradba članka je naslednja: najprej avtor predstavi oris SE. Nato oriše argument Miroslava Volfa za TI, ki ga je podal v svoji knjigi *Allah: A Christian Response* (Alah: krščanski odziv) (2011). V tretjem, zaključnem delu, avtor pokaže, da je SE zelo relevanten za odločilne elemente Volfovega argumenta, da je z njimi združljiv in da zagotavlja zelo dobro semantično osnovo za TI. Poleg Volfove knjige so glavni sestavni deli referenčnega okvirja članka dela Hilaryja Putnama, Nikolaja Kuzanskega in papeža Benedikta XVI.

Ključne besede: islam, krščanstvo, en in isti Bog, semantični eksternalizem, Miroslav Volf, Hilary Putnam, Nikolaj Kuzanski.

Maja Bjelica
Turški aleviji: v iskanju identitete

Članek obravnava skupnosti turških alevijev, ki so v zadnjih letih snov obsežnih preučevanj tujih in domačih raziskovalcev, ki so jih skušali definirati, kategorizirati in identificirati s pomočjo tradicionalnih pristopov zahodnih družboslovnih znanosti. Ti pristopi pa ponujajo zgolj omejeno dojemanje alevijskih življenj, prepričanj, praks in svetovnega nazora, saj slednjih ni mogoče enoznačno in dokončno določiti, k čemur stremijo razširjeni znanstveni prijemi, zato je med viri o alevijih mogoče zaslediti mnogo neskladnosti. Navedeni pogled je v članku predstavljen s pomočjo nekaterih zbornikov o identiteti alevijev, prav tako pa se posveča nevar-

nostim in težavam raziskav, utemeljenih izključno na pristopih zahodnih znanosti. Te so razložene s pomočjo del dveh akademikov, ki sta desetletja raziskovanja posvetila ravno alevijem in njihovemu načinu bivanja, to sta David Shankland in Markus Dressler. Na ta način je vprašanje alevijske identitete predstavljeno kot paradigma zlorabe in necelovitosti pristopov znanstvene tradicije zahoda, ki onemogoča globlje razumevanje načinov življenja različnih ljudi.

Ključne besede: aleviji, alevijstvo, Turčija, identiteta, islam, tradicionalna znanost

Mari Jože Osredkar
Teologija žrtvovanja

Človek vse manj upošteva pomembnost skupnega življenja. Celo kristjani, ki imajo v evangeliju zapisano zapoved ljubezni in Kristusovo naročilo, naj bodo »eno«, pogosto ne vedo, kako uresničevati »prvo zapoved«. V članku želimo pokazati, da je »darovanje« nujno potrebno za življenje v skupnosti. Naše razmišljanje temelji na Teologiji odnosa, ki jo je osmisli francoski teolog Guy Lafon. Odpuščanje in sprejemanje drugačnosti (odsotnosti drugega) je temeljni pogoj skupnega življenja v modernem svetu. Ko drugega sprejmemo, mu damo možnost novega življenja. V primeru, da drugega ne sprejmemo takšnega, kakršen je, predvsem v primeru nesporazuma, mu ne omogočamo novega življenja in ga puščamo »mrtvega«. Toda v tem primeru tudi sebi onemogočamo bivanje. Naše življenje je namreč pogojeno z življenjem »drugega«. Kvaliteta našega življenja torej temelji na sposobnosti odpuščanja in sprejemanja drugih.

Ključne besede: darovanje, Sveto pismo, odnos, vera, krščansko življenje.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS / O AVTORICAH IN AVTORJIH

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BOJAN ŽALEC

Research Professor *Bojan Žalec* (b. 1966 in Ljubljana) is a philosopher interested in issues connected to religion: conceptual grammar of religion, ethical aspects of religion (including topics like forgiveness, reconciliation, religious origins of ethics), ethics of call, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and coexistence, religious epistemology, semantical and communicational aspects of religion, phenomenology and hermeneutics of (religious) violence, religion in public life, existential aspects of faith and religion, etc. He pays special attention to the study of Kierkegaard and is developing the position of solidary personalism. He is the head of the Institute of Philosophy and Social Ethics at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana. At the moment he is the leader of the Jean Monnet module "Challenges for EU: Identity, Dialogue and Values". Professor Žalec has published his scientific texts in several languages. He has published more than 50 original papers in scientific journals, 5 monographs, and more than 50 parts of other

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Znanstveni svetnik dr. *Bojan Žalec* (r. 1966 v Ljubljani) je filozof, ki ga zanimajo vprašanja povezana z religijo: pojmovna slovnica religije, etični vidiki religije (vključno s temami kot so odpuščanje, sprava, religijski izviri etike), etika klica, medreligijski in medkulturni dialog in sožitje, religijska teorija spoznanja, semantični in komunikacijski vidiki religije, fenomenologija in hermenevtika (religijskega) nasilja, religija v javnem življenju, eksistencialni vidiki vere in religije, itd. Posebno pozornost posveča preučevanju Kierkegaarda. Razvija stališče solidarnega personalizma. Je predstojnik Inštituta za filozofijo in družbeno etiko na Teološki fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani. Trenutno je vodja Jean Monnet modula »Izzivi za EU: identiteta, dialog in vrednote«. Dr. Žalec je objavil znanstvena besedila v raznih jezikih. Objavil je več kot 50 izvirnih znanstvenih člankov v znanstvenih revijah, 5 znanstvenih monografij, več kot 50 samostojnih znanstvenih sestavkov v monografskih publikacijah, vse kot edini avtor. Uredil je več kot 50 znanstvenih monografij (pri založbi Lit in drugih uglednih založbah). Svoje članke je objavil v revijah z visokim faktorjem vpliva: *Acta Analytica, Anthropological Notebooks, Synthesis Philosophica, Filozofska istraživanja, Bogoslovni vestnik, Filozofia, European Journal of Science and Theology, Annales: Series Historia et Sociologia*.

MAJA BJELICA

Maja Bjelica is a PhD candidate at University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies, where she is concluding her dissertation with the title "A Philosophical-anthropological Study of the Possibilities of the Ethics of Hospitality: Breath, Silence and Listening in Spaces of Intersubjectivity". During her studies she worked as an assistant at the Science and Research Centre Koper (Slovenia), and for some short-term periods also at the Istanbul Technical University (Turkey), Linköping University (Sweden), and University of Limerick (Ireland), where she presented her research on the Alevi communities in Istanbul.

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jega študija je bila mlada raziskovalka na Znanstveno-raziskovalnem središču Koper, hkrati pa se je kot asistentka občasno udeleževala praktičnih izobraževanj v tujini, in sicer na Istanbulski tehnični univerzi v Turčiji, na Linköpingški univerzi na Švedskem ter na Univerzi v Limercki na Irskem, kjer je tudi predstavljala svoje raziskovalno delo o alevijskih skupnostih v Istanbulu.

MARI JOŽE OSREDKAR

Dr. Mari Jože Osredkar, a Catholic priest of the Franciscan order, is Assistant Professor and a head of Department of Fundamental Theology and Dialogue at the Faculty of Theology (University of Ljubljana). He was born in Ljubljana, 11 March 1963, where he started Theology Studies and where he also obtained the title Master of Theology in 1993. He continued Doctoral Studies in Theology at The Institut Catholique de Paris, defending his doctoral thesis in 2002. In Ljubljana he worked also as Personal Secretary to the Vatican Ambassador to Slovenia, and, since November 2006, has held the title of Court Expert for Religion at the Ministry of Justice. His point of interest is the importance of relationships in faith studies.

Dr. Mari Jože Osredkar, katoliški duhovnik frančiškanskega reda, je docent in predstojnik katedre za osnovno bogoslovje in dialog na Teološki fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani. Rojen je bil v Ljubljani, 11. marca 1963, kjer je tudi začel študij teologije, diplomiral in leta 1993 magistriral. Doktorski študij je nadaljeval v na Katoliškem inštitutu v Parizu, 1993–2002, kjer je pripravil doktorsko tezo. V Ljubljani je kot osebni tajnik apostolskega nuncija deloval na Veleposlaništvu Svetega sedeža in od novembra 2006 je tudi izvedenec za religijo na Ministrstvu za pravosodje. Njegovo osrednje področje raziskovanja je pomen odnosov za verovanje.


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