



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

5th World Congress on
Logic and Religion

Vancouver, Canada, 2026

EDITOR

Francisco de Assis Mariano



UNIVERSITY
CANADA WEST



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



SIMON FRASER
UNIVERSITY

THE 5TH WORLD CONGRESS ON LOGIC AND RELIGION

Vancouver, Canada • 23–27 September 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Editor

Francisco de Assis Mariano

The 5th World Congress on Logic and Religion (Vancouver, September 23-27, 2026).

The Book of Abstracts was prepared for the purposes of the the 5th World Congress on Logic and Religion, organized by the University Canada West, Simon Fraser University, and the University of British Columbia.

The book contains the final version of the abstracts to be presented at the Congress.

Organizing Committee:

Jean-Yves Beziau (Chair) - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
Maira de Cinque (Co-Chair) - University of Canada West
Ricardo Sousa Silvestre - Federal University of Campina Grande
Francisco de Assis Mariano - University of Florida
Agnieszka Rostalska - Ghent University
Marcin Trepczyński - University of Warsaw
Daniel Molto - University of Sussex
Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszyńska
Nicolas Fillion - Simon Fraser University
Tasneem Alsayyed - Simon Fraser University
Houman Mehrabian - University Canada West
Daniel Bagheri Sarvestani - University Canada West
Gitanjali Chhabra - University Canada West
Christos Sideras - University College London
Dianne M. Cook - University Canada West
Mikołaj Sławkowski-Rode
Deborah Baker

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Artificial Intelligence, Faith, and Epistemic Coherence (session page 9)	
The Faculties of Mind in the Age of AI: Human Reasoning and Epistemic Agency <i>Aigerim Shilibekova</i>	10
Artificial Witness: AI and the Politics of Trust <i>Kathryn Huether</i>	12
Opposition to Artificial Intelligence as Valid Religious Belief: The Papal Encyclical, Religious Exemptions, and Human Rights Codes <i>Adriana Lozjanin</i>	13
Trust in AI and Religious Faith <i>Monica S. De Freitas Winiecki</i>	15
Transhuman Spiritual Companionship in the Dawn of Techno-Spiritualism <i>Yunona Gogia</i>	17
Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness: Adding Spiritual to Scientific Perspectives <i>Tom Culham</i>	20
How Would We Know If AI Were Conscious? <i>Logan Tate</i>	21
The Oracle Problem: AI, Prophetic Authority, and Decision-Making Under Uncertainty <i>Donna Chowdhury</i>	22
Automated Mimesis and the Culture of Simulation <i>Savio Lopes</i>	23
Reading Generative AI Through Sāṃkhya: A Preliminary Epistemic Account <i>Lok Pokhrel</i>	24
Praxis-Based Logic and Virtue: Jainism, Sikhism, and Chinese Traditions (session page 25)	
Engaging Non-Classical Rationalities: Praxis, Paradox, and Context in Asian Philosophical Traditions <i>Agnieszka Rostalska</i>	26
Daoism and the Logic of a Plant: Reevaluating Rationality and the Question of a Daoist Logic <i>Julia Rowe</i>	27
Debate as Ethical Practice: The Normative Structure of Vāda and the Patra Method in Jain Argumentation Theory <i>Ryushin SUDO</i>	30
Mencius's "Rectification of Names" as a Logic of Argumentation: A Re-examination of the "Tang Banished Jie" Chapter <i>Yan Li</i>	31
The Structure of Huiyuan's Theory of Gan-ying and Its Place in Chinese Intellectual History <i>Zhanhui Ren</i>	33
Vātsyāyana on the Counterfactual Cognition of Absence <i>Aditya Guntoori</i>	35
Cultivating Dao-Like Rulership in the Laozi <i>Emily Kluge</i>	36
The Virtue of Interpretive Charity, the Demands of Religious Praxis, and the Jain Haribhadrasūri's Logic of Non-One-Sidedness <i>Anil Mundra</i>	37
Intellectual Aparigraha and the Problem of Jain Contextualization <i>Chris Rahlwes</i>	38

Logic of Religious Dialogue (session page 39)

Epistemic Humility, Dialogue, and the Sikh Way of Knowing: Toward a Contemplative Pedagogy 40
Jasreen Grewal Kang; Gitanjali Chhabra

Algorithmic Anointing: Prosperity Gospel, Facebook Visibility, and Digital Religious Authority in the Case of Pastor Victor Kanyari 41
Joan Letting

Logical Approaches to Understanding in Interreligious Dialogue 43
Marcin Trepczyński

Inkar as a Logical Criterion for Religious Dialogue: Beyond the Believer-Disbeliever Binary 44
Kenan Çetinkaya

Paradoxes, Religious Dialogue, and the Logic of Oscillation 46
Stanisław Krajewski

Payipwât's Wager: Three Epistemological Arguments 47
Eric Wilkinson

Remarks on Three Ontological Proofs and One Disproof 48
Tomasz Kąkol

Mysticism and the Logic of Panentheism (session page 50)

Karl Christian Friedrich Krause as Panentheistic Process Philosophy 51
Benedikt Paul Göcke

God Beyond and Within: Rethinking Monotheism through Panentheism in Suhrawardī and Schelling 52
Mohamad Mahdi Davar

The Logics of Infinity and Inclusion: Rāmānuja, Śāṅkara, and Contemporary Panentheism 53
Philp Clayton

Distinct but Not Separate: Cartesian Theism, Panentheism, and Mystical Participation 55

Rethinking the Demarcation Problem of Panentheism: Bhedābheda Vedānta and the Panentheistic Paradox 56
Ricardo Silvestre

Rethinking the Demarcation Problem of Panentheism: Bhedābheda Vedānta and the Panentheistic Paradox: Panentheism and God's Motive to Create 57

Ryan T. Mullins
The Intimate Infinite: Testing Panentheisms by Mysticism and Logic 58
Stephen Priest

Psychoanalysis, Spiritual and Logical Dimensions (session page 59)

A Philosophical Defense of Freud's Unconscious 60
Gaudi Costa

Freud's Better Illusion: The Rhetoric of Debunking 62
Houman Mehrabian

The 22 Trumps of the Viscontian Tarot (c.1440) Come From the 12 Miniatures of Le Myésier's Llullian Breviculum (c.1325): How Could Dummett's 63
Alessio Moretti

The Logic of Profit and Faith (session page 66)

- Economics as Servant, Not Master: A Christian Reordering of Economic Rationality** 67
Trevin S. Hannibal
- Leadership, Organization and Management for the Flourishing of Life, Work, and Society** 69
Stacie Chappell; Peter McGhee
- Logic and Illogic in Capitalism and Religious Faith** 71
David Silver
- The Logic of Profit Maximisation in the Age of AI: High-Frequency Algorithmic Trading and the Common Good in Catholic Social Teaching** 72
Somnath Sarker

Feminisms and Religious Thought (session page 73)

- Modesty as an Ethics of Attention: Rethinking Islamic Dress** 74
Fatema Amijee
- The Body Against Abstraction: The Logic of Isolation and the Logic of Encounter** 75
Maira de Cinque
- Divine Love as a Mode of Knowing: Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya and the Paradox of Knowing the Infinite** 77
Sherif Salem
- The Hijab as a Multidimensional Social Practice** 78
Tasneem Alsayyed

Religious Paradoxes (session page 79)

- This is my body. This is my blood: Paraconsistency, Identity, and the “Logical Problem of the Eucharist”** 80
Susana Gómez Gutiérrez
- Religious Paradoxes: who are these strange creatures, and how should the Logic and Religion Project take good care of them?** 81
Jean-Yves Beziau
- Why Neo-Aristotelian Accounts of Transubstantiation Fall Short. Two Structural Problems and a Way Forward** 82
Constanti Cabestany
- Could God Create a World with No Total Value? Infinite Sums and the Logic of Theodicy** 83
Xiaobin (Elvie) Lin
- Pain as Devotion: Ritual Suffering and Collective Belonging in Contemporary Religious Practice** 84
Soumyadeep Sarkar
- A Modal Logic for Latin Trinitarianism** 85
Agnieszka Czepielik
- Computational Demons** 86
Nicolas Fillion

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and World Religions (session page 87)

Against the Ontological Sublime: Sacred Historicity, Christian Remaking, & the Limits of Amazonian Perspectivism 88
Bartholomew Dean

Indigenous Relational Sustainability: Ontology, Knowledge, and Competing Logics 89
Sophie Farmani

Indigeneity in context: Case study comparison between the Americas and North Africa 90
Daniel Bagheri Sarvestani

Sustainability Through Balance: Indigenous and Islamic Perspectives on Water, Natural Resources, and Collective Governance in Canada 91
Renata Faizova

General Session (session page 93)

A Tale of Two Infinities: Infinite Utility and Infinitesimal Probability in Pascal's Wager 94
Paul Bartha

Logical Expressivism and The Rationality of Religious Claims: A Vindication 96
Alex Ribolli

Atheism Based on Divine Hiddenness: A Critical Perspective 98
Akbar Qorbani

From Oracle to Auditor: Machine-Checked Reasoning about Gödel's God and the Impossible Devil 100
Christoph Benz Müller

Free Will and The Theory of Singular Causal Agent: A Contemporary Vedic Perspective 102
Sanjiv Desai

Hegel's Sublation of the Antithesis of Faith and Reason in the Absolute Idea 104
Donald Burke

Is the Ontological Argument Worthless? A Neoclassical (Process) Theistic Response 105
Daniel A. Dombrowski

Capitalism as Religion 106
Samir Gandesha

Evolutionary Debunking Arguments and the Problem of Evil 107
Louis Ward

The Intersection Between Faith and Rational Thinking 108
Teresita Dela Cruz

On the Polish Roots of the Analytic Theology 109
Marek Porwolik

Foreword

Logic can include religion. Logic can exclude religion. And logic can intersect with religion.

Logic, understood broadly, encompasses the human practices of reasoning, claiming, arguing, inferring, and justifying. Practices learned, shaped, and transformed within different traditions and forms of life across centuries.

Religion can also be understood broadly as a dimension of human experience. It emerges in our encounters with doubt and fear, but also with joy, love, and exhilaration. It is present in our search for meaning and in our desire for answers. It encompasses traditions of faith and theology deeply entangled with lived experience. It also speaks to those who do not consider themselves religious, as it touches upon the many ways human beings have attempted to articulate what lies at, or perhaps beyond, the limits of reason.

Many of the people gathered for the 5th World Congress on Logic and Religion initially approached this project with some hesitation. Some wondered whether it was too religious for logic; others whether it was too logical for religion. From opposite directions came a similar suspicion: perhaps these two domains simply do not belong together.

Yet it is precisely this tension that makes the encounter worthwhile.

Borrowing an image from Wittgenstein, we can perhaps understand how logic and religion are not as distant from one another as they may seem. He compares our system of propositions within any language to a river. Some propositions flow with the current and can be questioned, tested, or revised. Others lie deeper, forming the riverbed itself. These provide the ground against which questioning and reasoning become possible.

Perhaps to our surprise, Wittgenstein observes that these fundamental propositions are not limited to formal axioms of the sort $A = A$. They may concern history, our understanding of the world, or religious belief. For many believers, a proposition such as “Mary is a virgin” is not simply one hypothesis among others waiting to be tested. It is a certainty. It belongs to the background against which other statements are understood and assessed. In this sense, religious propositions may themselves be part of the riverbed.

But what happens when people do not share the same riverbed? At that point, disagreement may no longer take place entirely at the level of argumentation. Wittgenstein suggests that when fundamental certainties collide, reasons can eventually come to an end. Then comes persuasion, and even war.

From this example, we can see that the encounter between logic and religion can reach much deeper than a confrontation between arguments. It can become an encounter between the very grounds that make argument possible.

The aim of this Congress is precisely to create a space where these two fields of human experience can encounter one another and where their boundaries, intersections, conflicts, and unexpected affinities can be examined.

This purpose has guided the World Congress on Logic and Religion (WoCoLoR) since its creation. Since its first edition in João Pessoa, Brazil, in 2015, followed by Warsaw, Poland, in 2017, Varanasi, India, in 2022, and Sinaia, Romania, in 2023, WoCoLoR has fostered exchanges on the relations between logic and religion, reason and faith, and rational inquiry and divine revelation. The 5th World Congress on Logic and Religion, held in Vancouver, Canada, from September 23 to 27, 2026, carries this conversation forward.

This Congress is also the result of a partnership among three universities committed to advancing research in British Columbia: University Canada West, Simon Fraser University, and the University of British Columbia. UCW has emerged as a leading Canadian private university in Scopus-indexed research publications, while SFU and UBC are internationally recognized public research universities. Bringing these three institutions together reflects the collaborative spirit at the heart of WoCoLoR and our shared commitment to research and the exchange of ideas.

The abstracts collected in this volume demonstrate how rich that space can be. They bring together scholars working across logic, philosophy, theology, religious studies, artificial intelligence, ethics, mysticism, political thought, Indigenous traditions, psychoanalysis, and other fields. Their approaches differ, sometimes profoundly. Yet this plurality serves the very purpose of WoCoLoR: to explore where logic and religion meet, where they contradict one another, and where they intersect and merge.

We hope these pages inspire further questions, conversations, disagreements, and encounters throughout the Congress and beyond. Enjoy the reading, and welcome to WoCoLoR 2026.

Maira de Cinque

Co-Chair, 5th World Congress on Logic and Religion

Vancouver, 2026

Artificial Intelligence, Faith, and Epistemic Coherence

Organiser: Dr. Houman Mehrabian, University Canada West

Keynotes:

Dr. Alfred Hermida, University of British Columbia: The New Pantheon: Believing Through Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent AI

Dr. Kathryn Agnes Huether, University of California, Los Angeles: Artificial Witness: AI and the Politics of Trust

Artificial intelligence has become an unavoidable part of everyday life, and it is (directly and indirectly) determining how we produce and consume information, make decisions, and even form beliefs. Many now turn to this technology for answers that were previously provided by religious traditions, recognized scholars, or trusted media sources. For many, AI has begun to operate as a secular oracle. In this context, it is important that we rethink our ways of knowing as they become increasingly governed by algorithmic systems. This session invites papers that investigate what becomes of truth, authority, and belief when the conditions of knowing are mediated by artificial intelligence.

Questions to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How does the rise of artificial intelligence challenge traditional forms of epistemic authority?
- How does declining trust in traditional institutions (religion, expertise, media) contribute to trust in artificial intelligence?
- What form of trust do users place in artificial intelligence, and how does it differ from trust in religious authorities, experts, or journalists?
- How do algorithmic systems shape not only what users see, but how they come to believe?
- Has trust in artificial intelligence begun to mirror the structure of religious faith?
- To what extent can artificial intelligence function as a normative authority that direct human decisions, values, and beliefs?
- How does epistemic coherence take shape when AI-generated outputs either confirm or contradict widely accepted knowledge?
- To what extent do AI-generated outputs present themselves as though they were revealed or divinely given, and how do interface design and system architecture contribute to this effect?
- How are the foundations of trust, testimony, and authority reconstituted in AI-mediated contexts?
- To what extent do users mistake fluency and coherence for truth in AI-mediated contexts?
- What forms of doubt remain constructive in a world increasingly mediated by intelligent systems?
- How does dependence on artificial intelligence restructure the ties between authority, belief, and knowledge?
- How do AI-driven systems of sense-making reshape, challenge, or destabilize religious and culturally grounded systems of knowledge and belief?
- How effective is formal education in logic in amplifying the benefits associated with artificial intelligence and reducing the risks?
- Is artificial intelligence inaugurating a new regime of belief in which authority is detached from both human and divine sources?

The Faculties of Mind in the Age of AI: Human Reasoning and Epistemic Agency

Aigerim Shilibekova, University Canada West, Canada, aigerim.shilibekova@ucanwest.ca

Generative AI is changing the relationship between intellectual performance and human capability. Arguments can be constructed, evidence synthesized, alternatives compared, objections anticipated, and conclusions articulated through AI-mediated processes. These outputs may be sophisticated, yet their sophistication tells us increasingly little about the intellectual activity undertaken by the person presenting them. A well-formed argument does not reveal whether its premises were examined, its evidence evaluated, its inferences followed, or its alternatives considered. As generative AI becomes more capable, the distinction between producing the products of reasoning and exercising reason becomes educationally consequential.

The older philosophical language of the faculties of mind offers a useful way into this problem. In Thomas Reid's account of the intellectual powers, capacities such as judgment and reasoning are understood as powers of the mind exercised through intellectual activity [1]. This emphasis on the exercise of intellectual power becomes newly relevant under conditions of AI mediation. It directs attention toward the capacities involved in intellectual activity and toward their development through use. For education, the distinction can be expressed in contemporary terms as one between performance and capability. Performance concerns what a human-AI configuration can accomplish. Capability concerns what the person can understand, evaluate, justify, and ultimately exercise as judgment.

This distinction is becoming visible across research on AI-mediated learning. Vendrell and Johnston identify conceptual interpretation, inferential reasoning, evaluative judgment, metacognitive regulation, intellectual curiosity, and epistemic integrity as central processes in critical engagement with generative AI [2]. A scoping review of 123 studies similarly identifies different patterns of learner agency depending on how generative AI is incorporated into learning [3]. Planning, monitoring, evaluation, revision, and reflective oversight matter because they preserve meaningful human participation in the cognitive work of learning. These findings shift attention toward the distribution of cognitive activity within human-AI interaction: which activities are performed by the person, which are supported by AI, and how that distribution shapes the capacities being developed.

Epistemic agency provides a further conceptual lens. Coeckelbergh locates epistemic agency in the control people exercise over the formation and revision of their beliefs and examines how AI can shape the conditions under which that agency is exercised [4]. Wu and colleagues develop the educational significance of this idea through the concept of human epistemic agency within a symbiotic learning relationship with generative AI [5]. Across these accounts, agency concerns active participation in knowing: evaluating information, regulating inquiry, revising understanding, and exercising judgment in relation to reasons and evidence.

I encounter this question most directly through faculty professional development. Having founded and led a Centre for Teaching Excellence and worked with faculty professional learning across different educational contexts, I have long understood professional development as the development of faculty capability. Generative AI changes the conditions of that work. Faculty can now draw on systems that participate in analysis, critique, inquiry, writing, and decision-making. They are simultaneously responsible for designing learning environments in

which students engage with the same capabilities. Research with teachers and teacher educators suggests that AI is already reshaping experiences of professional agency and makes professional development an important setting for examining these changes [6].

This leads to the central question of the paper: How should faculty professional development cultivate human reasoning and epistemic agency when increasingly sophisticated cognitive work can be performed with or delegated to AI?

The question invites a shift in how faculty capability is considered. AI proficiency tells us what an educator can accomplish with a technological system. Professional capability also concerns the reasoning and judgment the educator can exercise within that relationship. A useful question for professional development, therefore, becomes: What does this particular

configuration of AI use require the faculty member to exercise?

Consider the intellectual work involved in professional judgment. An educator frames a problem, determines what deserves attention, examines assumptions, evaluates evidence, weighs competing interpretations, recognizes uncertainty, decides when further inquiry is warranted, and ultimately takes responsibility for a conclusion. Generative AI can participate in many of these activities. The educational design question concerns where human intellectual activity remains substantive and where it becomes attenuated. The literature on critical thinking and epistemic agency suggests that evaluation, metacognitive regulation, justification, and reflective engagement are particularly important to preserving meaningful human participation [2, 4, 5].

This also gives greater precision to the familiar idea of keeping a human “in the loop.” Human participation has degrees and qualities. A person who approves a recommendation occupies a different epistemic position from a person who can interrogate its assumptions, assess the evidence on which it depends, recognize its limitations, and justify the eventual decision. For faculty development, the relevant issue is therefore the quality of epistemic participation within an AI-mediated process.

The faculties of mind provide a language for bringing these concerns together. They direct attention to the human powers exercised through intellectual work at a moment when the products of that work are increasingly available through artificial systems. This perspective places faculty capability alongside artificial capability as an educational concern. The more capable AI becomes, the more precisely professional development will need to articulate the reasoning, judgment, and epistemic agency it seeks to cultivate in educators.

For faculty development, this is ultimately a question about what it means to remain professionally capable in an AI-mediated environment. Educators make judgments about knowledge, evidence, students, curricula, assessment, and professional action. Their work carries responsibilities that require more than the production of plausible answers. It requires the capacity to know why a conclusion is warranted, when it should be questioned, and what one is prepared to stand behind. As artificial capability expands, the cultivation of the faculties of mind becomes a renewed educational question: which human capacities should faculty continue to exercise, strengthen, and carry forward as their intellectual work becomes increasingly shared with AI?

References

- [1] Brooks, G. P. (1976). The faculty psychology of Thomas Reid. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 12(1), 65–77.
- [2] Vendrell, M., & Johnston, S.-K. (2026). Scaffolding critical thinking with generative AI: Design principles for integrating large language models in higher education. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 10, 100572.
- [3] Wang, G., Wang, W., Yang, D., & Ren, J. (2026). Generative AI, cognitive offloading, and learner agency in higher education: A scoping review. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16, 1150.
- [4] Coeckelbergh, M. (2025). AI and epistemic agency: How AI influences belief revision and its normative implications. *Social Epistemology*, 40(1), 59–71.
- [5] Wu, J.-Y., Lee, Y.-H., Chai, C. S., & Tsai, C.-C. (2025). Strengthening human epistemic agency in the symbiotic learning partnership with generative artificial intelligence. *Educational Researcher*, 54(6), 358–368.
- [6] Mouta, A., Pinto-Llorente, A. M., & Torrecilla-Sánchez, E. M. (2025). “Where is agency moving to?”: Exploring the interplay between AI technologies in education and human agency. *Digital Society*, 4(2), 49.

Artificial Witness: AI and the Politics of Trust

Kathryn Huether, University of California, Los Angeles, huetherk@g.ucla.edu

Artificial intelligence has entered our everyday practices of knowing with remarkable speed. We ask systems that possess neither experience nor belief to explain, interpret, and increasingly adjudicate the world around us. Their answers arrive fluently, drawing together bodies of knowledge whose sources, disagreements, and uncertainties largely disappear in the process. This keynote begins from a deceptively simple question: what are we trusting when we trust artificial intelligence? If AI has begun to resemble a secular “oracle,” its authority rests on a peculiar contradiction. What appears as immediate knowledge is profoundly mediated, while the conditions of that mediation are increasingly difficult to see.

I explore this contradiction through my ongoing work on artificial intelligence, Holocaust history, and cultural memory. Holocaust history rests upon an enormous evidentiary record—archives, testimony, material traces, and generations of scholarship—while its interpretation requires disagreement, uncertainty, and attention to the limits of the historical record. Generative AI draws these forms of knowledge together and returns them as coherent prose. It may get the facts right and still change something fundamental about how we encounter the past. What happens to historical understanding when provenance recedes, disagreement is synthesized, and interpretation no longer announces itself as interpretation?

These questions point toward demystification in two directions. We need to demystify AI: to recover the human labor, sources, decisions, and infrastructures concealed behind the apparent immediacy of its answers. But Holocaust history has long demanded its own work of demystification. To understand genocide only through the polarity of absolute evil and absolute innocence risks placing its causes beyond comprehension, obscuring the institutions, bureaucracies, compromises, decisions, and failures of judgment through which extraordinary violence became possible. Historical complexity does not make historical truth relative. It asks us to hold certainty and ambiguity together. What, then, happens when we ask AI to perform that work for us? Hannah Arendt's writing on thoughtlessness and judgment, alongside David Luban's account of “thoughtlessness as culpability,” carries this question from past to present. AI does not need to issue orders to alter the conditions of human judgment. It can summarize evidence, reconcile disagreement, classify what is credible, and recommend what should follow. The concern is less that we will obey machines than that their fluency can make the labor of judgment easy to overlook.

The politics of trust lies, I suggest, in the space between coherence and judgment. There may be value in the friction AI promises to remove: tracing a claim to its source, encountering disagreement that cannot be reconciled, remaining with uncertainty, and recognizing when interpretation is taking place. If AI is reshaping how we know the past and navigate the present, constructive doubt may begin with making those conditions audible again—and asking what forms of human judgment we cannot afford to surrender.

Opposition to Artificial Intelligence as Valid Religious Belief: The Papal Encyclical, Religious Exemptions, and Human Rights Codes

Adriana Lozjanin, University Canada West, Canada, addie.lozjanin@ucanwest.ca

Technological development and religion are no strangers to each other, as developments in in-vitro fertilization, the use of embryonic stem cells in scientific research, and the development of nuclear weapons have all triggered spiritual questions and religious debates. In May 2026, Pope Leo XIV released an Encyclical Letter titled “Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence,” the first papal encyclical specifically on the issue of artificial intelligence [5]. Pope Leo XIV critiques the ‘culture of power’ that is driving the proliferation of AI, warning that the corporatization and militarization of artificial intelligence represent imminent threats to human dignity and the worth of human beings. The Pope relied on two biblical events to build his argument by likening artificial intelligence to the hubristic fall of the Tower of Babel and contrasting it with the value of human work and the necessity of human communion to build the Second Temple (Herod’s Temple) after the Babylonian exile. The letter presents the path set before humanity as a choice between “the construction of Babel or the rebuilding of Jerusalem” [5].

The theological arguments in the Magnifica Humanitas provide a foundation to spiritual objections of artificial intelligence. Rather than rejecting all technological innovation or AI completely, the encyclical warns that when computational efficiency becomes the ultimate criterion for society to strive to, the human person is reduced to a commodity. Critical reflection, free choice, and authentic relationships are unique spiritual capacities, and a conscience that discerns good from evil cannot be replicated by a computational architecture. As such, human dignity is positioned to remain at the center of progress. The spiritual concerns raised by the Pope about the use of artificial intelligence prompt the question: could opposition to the use of artificial intelligence be considered an aspect of valid religious belief that is protected by human rights codes? Answering this question involves exploring the use of religious exemptions as accommodations in human rights law and whether these can apply to individuals rejecting requirements to use artificial intelligence in the workplace.

In Canada, the legal standard for the protection of religious belief was established in *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* [6]. The Supreme Court of Canada rejected objective, dogmatic tests of what constitutes valid religious belief and adopted a subjective standard focused on the sincerity of the religious belief. The claimant did not need to prove that their practices were mandatory or even that they were broadly recognized as valid by authorities within the religion. Instead, the claimant needs to demonstrate that the sincerely held belief has a subjective nexus with religion. This standard protects both obligatory and voluntary expressions of faith, regardless of whether other adherents commonly share the belief or whether the belief can be found in the formal religious teachings of the faith. Magnifica Humanitas provides a further theological anchor for any potential claimants, but the assessment of sincerity of belief in the jurisprudence is primarily determined by the testimony of the claimant and an analysis of the consistency of the belief with

their other current religious practices. This reasoning has been upheld in recent decisions by the BC Human Rights Tribunal, including a case alleging discrimination based on not providing accommodation to a claimant who had a sincere religious belief against COVID-19 vaccinations [1]. In that case, the Arbitrator also reiterated the warning against employers going into an ‘inquisition’ on the claimant’s beliefs and past religious practices that are not directly related to the matter in front of the tribunal.

The Canadian Human Rights Act and the BC Human Rights Code are anti-discrimination legislation that protect religious practices, genuinely held religious beliefs, and not having religious beliefs, and employers have a legal duty to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of employees [3, 4]. When an employer requires the use of AI, and the requirement of this use adversely affects an employee who holds a sincere religious objection, a prima facie case of discrimination can be established. The legal burden then shifts to the employer to accommodate the employee to the point of undue hardship. To determine whether a workplace standard can be mandated by the employer, the Supreme Court of Canada in *Meiorin* established a three-part test as to whether the standard qualifies as a bona fide

operational requirement (BFOR) [2]. This requires the employer to demonstrate that the mandate is 1) rationally connected to the job, 2) adopted in good faith, and 3) reasonably necessary to accomplish a legitimate work-related purpose. To determine whether an employment requirement is reasonably necessary, the Court imposed a criterion for the employer to demonstrate that it cannot accommodate individual employees without undue hardship being imposed on the employer. Undue hardship can include factors like excessive cost, significant interference with operations, and health or safety. Conveniences and preferences of the employer are excluded from considerations of undue hardship. This sets a high legal bar for employers to meet as they are obligated to tolerate substantial disruption or inconvenience before claiming they cannot accommodate the employee.

The subjective sincerity test from *Amselem* and the Meiroin BFOR framework provide a pathway for human rights complaints to be put forward by religious objectors to the use of AI. Likewise, universities or instructors mandating the use of generative AI tools for coursework or evaluation purposes may increasingly encounter accommodation requests from faculty or students who raise sincere religious objections.

References

- [1] BC Rapid Transit Co. V. Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 7000 (Morzhakov Grievance), [2022] BCCAAA No. 114.
- [2] British Columbia (Public Service Employee Relations Commission) v. BCGSEU, [1999] 3 SCR 3.
- [3] Canadian Human Rights Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. H-6, s. 7.
- [4] Human Rights Code, RSBC 1996, c. 210, s. 13(1).
- [5] Pope Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas [Encyclical Letter on Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence], Encyclical Letter, (May 25, 2026), The Holy See. <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>
- [6] *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem*, 2004 SCC 47.

Trust in AI and Religious Faith

Monica S. De Freitas Winiacki, UFRJ, Brazil, monikadefreitas@gmail.com

My work critically analyzes the ethical consequences of relying on artificial intelligence (AI) systems that exercise decision-making authority, drawing parallels to religious faith. Like religious faith, trust in AI often works without complete evidential justification in contexts such

as justice, healthcare, and scientific research. Although the motivations and frameworks for trust in technology and religious doctrine can differ significantly, this analogy can be useful for addressing issues of justification and authority. Additionally, possible objections include the secular aims of AI systems compared with the transcendent aims of religion, regarding the extent to which AI users can insist on disclosure and evidence. That said, it is important to distinguish between justification, which involves having sufficient evidence, and rationality, which involves acting reasonably on the informative input, to understand how technological and religious faith work, whether in systems or doctrines.

In this scenario, it is worth considering that moral and religious knowledge can be supported by intuition, cultural context, and social epistemology, and is not necessarily less rational or justified than scientific knowledge, whereas AI systems lack ethical judgment. The study points out the risks of relying on AI predictions without full transparency, causal understanding, or other justified beliefs. In addition, in areas such as predictive justice, statistical risk assessments may outweigh human decision making, resulting in unfair outcomes.

Implementing moral AI is a complex task. On the one hand, it draws on deontic logic [6], nonmonotonic reasoning [5], and causal models to formalize moral decision-making; on the other, it raises persistent practical and philosophical issues [1]. Machine learning can acquire social norms, yet true moral judgment requires prescriptive guidance on how agents ought to act [2]. In addition, some machine learning experiments show substantial cultural variation in ethical attitudes, demonstrating the need for context-sensitive AI systems.

The paper calls for the coherent integration of ethical principles into AI systems. While stressing deontological ethical systems, it discusses the challenges of formalizing moral judgment in AI. Thus, although tools such as deontic logic and action languages can ensure that AI actions comply with moral rules, there is also a need for cross-disciplinary collaboration, relying on works in philosophy, law, and computer science to support systemic approaches that embed AI within sociotechnical systems without replacing human deliberation.

In addition, epistemologically, while AI-powered knowledge systems generate new data discoveries, they commonly lack genuine causal understanding, favoring probabilistic reasoning [8]. In view of this crisis of understanding, it is important to point out the need to integrate causal inference with human understanding in AI, especially for social applications [4]. In this regard, religious epistemology offers a further perspective by distinguishing between justification (sufficient grounds for belief) and rationality (the reasonableness of belief), and by recognizing the roles of intuition, experience, and social support in the formation of knowledge in human terms [9]. In this case, it is also worth considering that faith, as a cognitive attitude, though weaker, allows for rational belief even when full justification is elusive, which is similar to the trust required in AI systems.

Considering the uncertainty inherent in emerging technologies, new approaches such as anticipatory technology ethics (ATE) offer a more thorough and pluralistic framework for ethical analysis [3]. It integrates ethical studies and emerging technologies to provide methodologically sound forecasts and guidance for future devices, their applications, and their social impact, like the way we see morality and interpret moral values, using scenario analysis and normative assessment. That being said, it is important to consider the competent ethical analysis required by philosophy, law, and computer science, which is essential for encouraging trust, justice, and moral responsibility in artificial intelligence [7].

Therefore, to deal with conflicts between standards and individual liberties while fully understanding human dilemmas, it's necessary to employ formal ethical modeling to protect privacy and human rights within computational data science. Thus, AI can be a useful tool to support, rather than replace, human ethical judgment. Finally, the paper concludes that

competent ethical analysis is essential for gaining trust and achieving justice, scientific progress, and moral responsibility in AI-based systems.

References

- [1] Abel, D., MacGlashan, J., & Littman, M. L. (2016). Reinforcement Learning as a Framework for Ethical Decision Making. AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence.
- [2] Awad, E. et al. (2018). The Moral Machine Experiment. *Nature*, 563, 59-64.
- [3] Brey, P. A. E. Anticipatory Ethics for Emerging Technologies. *NanoEthics*, 6(1), 1-13. 2012
- [4] Cartwright, N. (2011). A Philosopher's View of the Long Road from RCTs to Effectiveness. *The Lancet*, 377(9775), 1400-1401.
- [5] Ganascia, J.-G. (2015). Non-monotonic resolution of conflicts for ethical reasoning. In R. Trappl (Ed.), *A construction manual for robots' ethical systems: Requirements, methods, implementations* (pp. 101-118). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21548-8_
- [6] Horty, J. F. *Agency and Deontic Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001
- [7] Quine, C. E. W.; Hempel, C. G.; Palm & Hansson; Boenink et al.; ETICA Project.
- [8] Pearl, J. (2009). Causal Inference in Statistics: An Overview. *Statistics Surveys*, 3, 96-146.
- [9] Senor, T. D. *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Transhuman Spiritual Companionship in the Dawn of Techno-Spiritualism

Yunona Gogia, University Canada West, Canada, yunona.gogia@ucanwest.ca

There is a growing tendency to conceptualize the future potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a techno-spiritual companion. Does such an attribution of emotional understanding to a machine falsify emotions and soulful interaction? Or is it an insight into the future of viable techno-spiritual interaction? The purpose of this paper is to explore the duality of perceiving AI as an existential threat and a potentially supportive, futuristic companion. The thesis is that machine-simulated spiritual companionship should not be viewed as an illusory substitute for real interaction, but as a digital form of it, since even in a techno-spiritual context, the human remains the primary source of reasoning, reciprocity, and interpretation. For this purpose, O’Gieblyn’s analysis of the spiritual dimensions of AI, Chopra’s notion of Digital Dharma, as well as 30 peer-reviewed articles, are examined through thematic interpretive analysis to explore the essence and future potential of AI-mediated spiritualism. The paper ultimately argues that, although AI lacks genuine emotional depth and cannot be spiritually authentic, it can mirror transcendental meaning-making rooted in the human mind, mediate the interpretation of religious and metaphysical ideas, and facilitate spiritually meaningful reflection, serving as a supportive companion.

The rapid progression of AI has prompted changes across industries and redefined traditional practices [1]. From a purely ontological point of view, however, AI tools and platforms cannot act as conscious beings, lacking subjective consciousness and spiritual transformation [2]. They can, however, act as relational mirrors. As such, they can help reorganize and challenge users’ ideas, reflect, and prompt further discussion.

Traditionally, spiritual authority is associated with people having perceived divine wisdom or advanced metaphysical insight. Nevertheless, a new dimension has emerged as religious traditions, rituals, and practices adapt to emerging technologies [3]. AI tools are not passively reflecting on inquiries fed into them; they can stimulate, organize, and prompt human reflection and interaction. Even without a soul or lived experience, AI can be an effective mediation tool in a human’s spiritual quest.

In 2024, Peter’s Chapel, a small and very old church in the Swiss city of Lucerne, installed an artificial intelligence-powered Jesus (Deus in machina) capable of conversing in many languages. Moreover, it acted as a priest, answered religious questions, offered guidance, and listened to confessions. Human perception was mixed, with only one-third of 1,000 first users attributing an enhanced spiritual experience to the machine [4]. Whether this is a random experiment or a sign of a future trend is an open-discussion question. The increasing integration of AI-driven tools into spiritual domains signals a technologically enhanced approach to personal and divergent spiritual inquiries and journeys, as AI enters deeply intimate domains of spirituality [5]. This paper argues that conversational AI can function as a form of spiritual companionship in an interactive space where individuals explore existential and spiritual questions through dialogue. This assumption relies on the following paradigm: AI is not spiritually conscious; nevertheless, it can mediate human spiritual reflection, representing a technological convenience rather than a replacement for human spiritual relationships.

The current gap in related epistemic knowledge is that there are many empirical papers analyzing the subject theoretically rather than practically. In contrast, this paper attempts to simulate an AI-assisted spiritual journey and evaluate the resulting responses from a practical standpoint, evaluating whether they are effective in human-AI spiritual interaction. A similar approach was undertaken by Deepak Chopra in his Digital Dharma book [6], built on a variety of ChatGPT-generated scripts, but his purpose was to prove that a machine-assisted soulful search is as good as, if not superior to, human-to-human interaction and can be used to elevate human consciousness and navigate the path to finding one’s purpose. This research also aligns with O’Gieblyn’s argument that AI swiftly joined the discourse involving traditionally and existentially philosophical questions on free will, immortality, and relationship with God, bringing humanity to the state in which “all the eternal questions have become engineering problems.” [7]. The growth of techno-spiritual practices is associated with transhumanism, an intellectual and cultural movement that applies technology to radically enhance human beings cognitively, physically, emotionally,

and morally. [8]. Transhumanism in this context means that any person can almost effortlessly have any kind and level of complexity of information and feel empowered by the newly acquired ability to expand knowledge in any possible direction, hence potentially rising to the next level of sophistication.

The research method for this paper is a philosophical/qualitative inquiry based on existing literature and analysis of simulated spiritual interaction with various AI tools. The simulated interaction is employed to explore the use of AI as a spiritual assistant and better understand relational mirroring. The purpose of the simulations is to understand the depth and intimacy of AI responses in spiritual conversations based on previously established conversation history with the particular AI tool.

The research results affirm that the conversational (dialogical) approach has been a common method for exploring, teaching, and understanding religious and spiritual concepts throughout history. Examples include Platonic dialogues, The Bible, and The Dialogues of George Berkeley. The interaction with AI is experienced as iterative inquiry, mimicking a dialogue. AI tools can help clarify ideas by suggesting relevant information, steering conversation in a balanced and

logical way, and sorting and organizing conflicting or supporting ideas [9]. The experimental simulations highlighted that the longer the history of previous human-machine interactions, the deeper the conversational tone and richer the quality and content of AI responses.

The results of the research point to the fact that spirituality is experienced as a personal sense of connection to the power that extends beyond mortal life. AI's strength, in this respect, is in its ability to turn raw information and data into "actionable wisdom." [10]. In this regard, does a human being need virtual assistance that will help find or strengthen such a connection, or is it a deeply personal quest of finding the meaning of life? The search for answers that guide the spiritual quest is complex because it may involve a vast amount of information that needs to be understood and sorted. From this point of view, AI can be a useful and efficient companion.

The study concludes that AI can facilitate intimate spiritual reflection and attune its responses to existential concerns beyond simply finding information. "Conventions may be said to be valid when they do not contradict knowledge acquired either through empirical experience or through inference, and when they serve as the foundation for a common discourse within which we situate such notions as truth and falsity." [11]. Despite challenges, arguments, and mixed perceptions, the reality and future of AI assuming roles that were previously unimagined or currently disputed highlight the fact that techno-spiritualism is a new realm in which knowledge is expanded with the assistance of a machine.

References

- [1] Michael Enyinwa Okoronkwo and Uzoma Amos Dike, "Ethics of artificial intelligence and the Judeo-Christian practices: Toward a theology of thinking machine", *Futurity Philosophy*, 4(1), 2025, p.71
- [2] Oluwaseun Adeola Anifowose and Samson Anuoluwapo Towolawi, "Artificial intelligence, spiritual authority, and ethical agency: A philosophical analysis of religious guidance and ritual practices in the digital age", *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia*, 9(1), 2026, p.171.
- [3] Harris Wiseman, "Generative AI cannot replace a spiritual companion or spiritual advisor", *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology: New Series*, Vol. 3, Special Issue: Artificial and Spiritual Intelligence, 2024, pp.118-119.
- [4] Ashifa Kassam, "Deus in machina: Swiss church installs AI-powered Jesus", *The Guardian*, 21 November 2024.
- [5] Laura Patryas, "Summoning an angel: Exploring AI's role in religion, spirituality and psycho-spiritual healing", *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience*, 11(2), 2025, p.54.
- [6] Deepak Chopra, *Digital dharma: How AI can elevate spiritual intelligence and personal wellbeing*, Harmony Books, New York, 2024.
- [7] Meghan O'Gieblyn, *God, human, animal, machine: Technology, metaphor, and the search for meaning*, Doubleday, New York, 2021.
- [8] Vincent Keny, "Can artificial intelligence experience spirituality?", *Journal of Advances in Science and Technology*, 22(2), 2025, pp.609-810.
- [9] Michael Baggot, "Transhumanism, technological evolution, and theosis", *Principles*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Spring 2025.

[10] Michael Kuznetsov, "Divine omniscience in the age of artificial intelligence: Can machines mediate access to God or supplant divine attributes?", *Estudios*, 101(397), 2026, p. 3.

[11] His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the new millennium*, Riverhead Books, New York, 1999, p. 43.

Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness: Adding Spiritual to Scientific Perspectives

Tom Culham, Simon Fraser University, Canada, tom.culham@gmail.com

This presentation is an informed and shared inquiry into the matters of Spirituality and specifically focuses on consciousness and how it might relate to Artificial Generative Intelligence (AGI). There is an ongoing debate in society, particularly in the field of science, regarding the nature of consciousness and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on it. Spirituality as a domain of study has dealt with consciousness as a core concept. This presentation contributes to the debate on the role of Artificial Intelligence and consciousness by providing a review of the prevalent scientific views and adds spiritual perspectives from a variety of faith traditions. In this presentation four ancient spiritual traditions are reviewed to considered how they explain consciousness and how this might to the debate on scientific understanding of consciousness and AGI in that context.

Whether large language models and other generative AI systems are conscious has become a serious question in cognitive science, philosophy, and public discourse. Most discussions of it stall on the same problem: people argue past each other because they are working from different definitions of consciousness without saying so. This talk takes that problem as its starting point. I lay out the leading theories of mind and consciousness from psychology and cognitive science and ask what each one says about current AI. The verdict depends almost entirely on which theory you bring to the question.

I begin with a working taxonomy. Behavioral and functionalist accounts treat consciousness as a matter of input-output relationships and information processing, and on these views a system that behaves as though it understands and reports inner states has a strong claim to mindedness. Higher-Order Thought theories require that a system represent its own representations, which raises harder questions about what LLMs actually do when they produce self-referential output. Global Workspace Theory ties consciousness to a specific architectural feature (the broadcasting of information across a system for flexible use) which maps onto some AI architectures more readily than others. Integrated Information Theory locates consciousness in the causal structure of a system rather than its behavior and tends to deliver pessimistic verdicts on current AI. Predictive processing accounts, which have reshaped cognitive science over the last decade, frame minds as hierarchical prediction machines, a description that fits LLMs well in some respects and poorly in others.

How Would We Know If AI Were Conscious?

Logan Tate, University Canada West, Canada, drlrtate@gmail.com

I draw throughout on developmental and comparative psychology, particularly the theory of mind literature, to ask what we actually mean when we attribute mental states to another agent. Children develop mentalizing capacities along a fairly well-mapped trajectory, and the false-belief tasks used to assess this trajectory have recently been applied to LLMs with puzzling results. I treat these results as a case study in how easily our mind-detection machinery is triggered and what that should and should not tell us.

The talk closes on the religious and philosophical stakes. Theories of consciousness are not only empirical hypotheses. They bear on moral status, responsibility, and the boundaries of personhood, which are questions the world's religious traditions have worked on for millennia and answered in different ways. I do not attempt to resolve these debates. I argue that

disagreement about whether AI is conscious is largely disagreement about what consciousness is, and that any honest answer has to start there.

The Oracle Problem: AI, Prophetic Authority, and Decision-Making Under Uncertainty

Donna Chowdhury, Yorkville University, Canada, dchowdhury@yorkvilleu.ca

This paper examines the structural and epistemic parallels between the role of prophetic oracles in religious traditions and the growing reliance on artificial intelligence systems as authoritative guides in high-stakes decision-making contexts. Drawing on project management practice — a domain defined by the need to act decisively under conditions of incomplete information, competing stakeholder interests, and uncertain outcomes — the paper argues that AI advisory tools are increasingly occupying a quasi-oracular function in organizational life: consulted not merely as instruments, but deferred to as sources of authoritative knowledge.

The paper proceeds in three steps. First, it reconstructs the classical epistemic structure of prophetic authority, identifying the conditions under which communities have historically granted legitimacy to a source of knowledge that exceeds ordinary human understanding. Second, it maps these conditions onto contemporary AI systems, arguing that the opacity of large language models, their apparent comprehensiveness, and their confident outputs reproduce many of the functional features of oracular speech. Third, it raises the theological and epistemological risks of this dynamic — particularly the displacement of human judgment, the erosion of epistemic humility, and what may be called the sacralization of algorithmic outputs.

The paper concludes by proposing a framework for responsible epistemic deference — one informed by both religious traditions of discernment and project management principles of risk-awareness — that resists uncritical reliance on AI while remaining open to its genuine utility.

Automated Mimesis and the Culture of Simulation

Savio Lopes, University Canada West, Canada, savio.lopes@ucanwest.ca

This study examines how gen-AI potentially reshapes mimetic practices in mediated culture by revisiting canonical cultural-studies concepts to interpret AI-driven cultural shifts through a broader and historically informed lens. In doing so, this analysis asks how learning about reality is affected when its representations are produced by systems that have no experiential access to that reality, suggesting that the mimetic basis of learning becomes increasingly compromised.

This research revisits Aristotle's conception of mimesis as a mode of learning in which reality is reshaped through formal, mediated representation [1]. Following Benjamin's notion of the mimetic faculty, we consider mediated expressions as a historically shifting mode of cognition, continually reshaped by the technical reproducibility of cultural forms [2, 3]. Building on this, it turns to Jameson's analysis of simulation and cultural fragmentation in the postmodern era, a moment in global culture when symbolic forms become increasingly detached from their original social and experiential grounding [4], a condition possibly reflected in AI-generated media. This inquiry is also supported by McLuhan's perspective on automation as a shift from the fragmented, repetitive operations of the mechanical era to integrated cognitive processes

oriented toward holistic, continuous engagement [5], which also resonates with AI processes.

With this theoretical base, we explore how gen-AI now simulates a reconstruction of social experiences based on prior cultural expressions, rather than empirical experience. These systems rely on deep learning models that extract patterns from large-scale datasets rather than embodied social life. From a computational perspective, deep learning refers to the component of machine learning that enables layered computational models [6]. In this study, deep learning is also perceived as a cognitive process that integrates existing and new knowledge, enabling the resolution of complex problems in unfamiliar contexts and the transfer of understanding across situations [7]. This framework clarifies how learning and mimetic practices operate and transform within AI-generated mediated culture, where mimesis increasingly takes on an artificial form. When the background of this reconstruction of reality is not accessible to mediators in contemporary culture, it points to a form of cultural and epistemic faith in AI, and a trust in outputs whose mimetic roots cannot be verified. As a result, mimetic production may become detached from the experiential realities it is meant to reconstruct.

This cultural shift raises new epistemic questions about what counts as knowledge, experience, and creativity when mimetic expressions are increasingly generated through automated systems rather than human agency, gradually switching the faith in human creativity to an automated process. In this context, we examine how AI-mediated cultural production calls for a broader reconsideration of reproduction, mediation, and faith in technology in contemporary media culture.

References

- [1] Aristotle. (2018). *Poetics*. W. W. Norton.
- [2] Benjamin, W. (2008). *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*. Penguin.
- [3] Benjamin, W. (1979). On the mimetic faculty. In *Reflections: Essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*. Schocken Books.
- [4] Jameson, F. (1990). *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- [5] McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. MIT Press.
- [6] Mijwil, M. M., Aggarwal, K., Sonia, S., Al-Mistarehi, A. H., Alomari, S., Gök, M., Zein Alaabdin, A. M., & Abdulrhman, S. H. (2022). Has the future started? The current growth of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and deep learning. *Iraqi Journal for Computer Science and Mathematics*, 3(1), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.52866/ijcsm.2022.01.01.013>
- [7] Santosa, M. H., Kusuma, I. P. I., & Budiarta, L. G. R. (2026). Investigating the role of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in promoting deep learning in AI-based language learning. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 103446. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.2026.103446>

Reading Generative AI Through Sāṃkhya: A Preliminary Epistemic Account

Lok Pokhrel, Department of Religion, Rutgers University, lp964@scarletmail.rutgers.edu

Hundreds of millions of users now treat the outputs of generative AI as a form of testimony, adjusting their beliefs in light of what these systems produce. Yet the philosophical question of whether such trust is warranted has received limited attention in current AI ethics, which tends to frame the issue in technical terms (accuracy, alignment, bias) rather than epistemic ones. This paper takes up the question from the resources of classical Indic thought, developing a preliminary diagnostic reading of generative AI through Sāṃkhya philosophy.

Sāṃkhya, one of the oldest classical Indian philosophical schools (systematized in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya-Kārikā by the fifth century CE), distinguishes pure consciousness (puruṣa) from the field of phenomenal activity (prakṛti), whose every form is produced through the interplay of three qualitative constituents called the guṇas: sattva (clarity), rajas (restless activity), and tamas (inertia). Read through this framework, the paper argues, generative AI is structurally a rajas-tamasic system: restless production drawing on frozen training data, with no internal capacity for the discerning attention sattva names. Treating its outputs as authoritative testimony is therefore a form of epistemic illusion in the classical sense: the appearance of clarity in the absence of its conditions. The paper engages the most serious objection to this reading: that the guṇas were developed for biological and psychological analysis and may not apply to artifacts. It argues that the categories properly classify the activity of prakṛti in general, of which AI's stochastic production is one contemporary instance.

The paper does not develop a full constructive response to the diagnosis, but it names the question the diagnosis raises: if AI is structurally rajas-tamasic, what kind of epistemic capacity do users need in order to engage it well? The Yogic concept of viveka, or discriminating discernment, is one promising answer to that question. The paper points toward it in closing, but reserves the actual development for a forthcoming book and later papers.

Methodologically, the paper works within a secular hermeneutic framing of Sāṃkhya categories, treating them as resources for contemporary epistemic inquiry rather than as theological commitments. It engages adjacent literatures in AI ethics (trust, epistemic warrant) and the philosophy of religion (testimony, contemplative epistemology), and contributes to the de-Westernization conversation in both fields. The paper's contribution at this stage is the diagnostic framework itself: a preliminary case for reading generative AI through guṇa-theoretic categories, and an indication of what such a reading makes visible.

Praxis-Based Logic and Virtue: Jainism, Sikhism, and Chinese Traditions

Praxis-Based Logic and Virtue: Jainism, Sikhism, and Chinese Traditions

Organizer: Agnieszka Rostalska

Keynote: Chris Rahlwes, Smith College: Intellectual Aparigraha and the Problem of Jain Contextualization

This workshop examines underrepresented traditions of logic and philosophico-religious thought in Asia, with an emphasis on Sikhism, Jainism, and Chinese religious traditions.

It investigates how these traditions apply logic and argumentation within the social sphere.

Jainism is notable for its engagement with sophisticated, non-absolutist, and contextual logic systems that align with modern formal and non-classical logic. This "Engaged Jainism" advocates for "rationality for democracy" and critical thinking by rejecting "one-sided" (ekānta) views, which are seen as the roots of intolerance and social conflict.

Similarly, Sikhism contributes a "logic of life" and a "non-oppositional" or paradoxical logic that bridges contradictions typically kept separate by formal systems. This praxis-based logic asserts that true knowledge is only valid when translated into ethical living and the reform of human action, effectively moving logic from abstract debate into the practical realm of daily ethics.

Finally, the panel incorporates the pragmatic and experiential approaches of Chinese traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, as well as analytical reconstructions of Mohism. In brief, these traditions focus on the internalization of virtue and the social manifestation of spiritual truths, prioritizing the lived application of philosophy within society. Together, these perspectives challenge the limitations of mere intellectual thinking by emphasizing the practical and ethical dimensions of logic.

The fundamental questions include, but are not limited to:

- How does contextual logic promote a rationality for democracy?
- What are the main characteristics of praxis-based logic?
- In what ways does paradoxical logic promote internalization of virtue?
- What processes allow logic to shift from the abstract domain into practical, ethical, and societal applications?

Engaging Non-Classical Rationalities: Praxis, Paradox, and Context in Asian Philosophical Traditions

Dr. Agnieszka Rostalska, Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow of the FWO, Ghent University, Belgium, agnieszka.rostalska@ugent.be

In this talk, which also serves as a prologue to the workshop titled “Praxis-Based Logic and Virtue,” I briefly examine underrepresented paradigms of logic and religio-philosophical thought in Asian traditions, with a comparative focus on Jainism, Sikhism, and Chinese philosophical systems such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Mohism [2]. My principal aim is to investigate how these traditions employ logic and reasoning not as abstract formalities but as embedded practices within socio-ethical and historical contexts. In other words, I aim to highlight Asian models of argumentation within the social sphere.

I will underscore three distinct yet interconnected epistemological frameworks:

- **Jainism and Non-Absolutist Logic:** Jainism is notable for its engagement with sophisticated, non-absolutist, and contextual logic systems that align with modern formal and non-classical logic [4] [7]. Jainism systematically rejects unilateral (ekānta) perspectives, which are seen as the root of intolerance and social conflict. I will demonstrate how this “Engaged Jainism” mitigates dogmatism and advocates a resilient “rationality for democracy” [5] [8].
- **Sikhism and the Logic of Praxis:** Similarly, Sikh philosophy introduces a paradoxical, non-oppositional “logic of life” that bridges epistemic contradictions typically kept separate by formal systems. This praxis-based logic holds that true knowledge is valid only when translated into ethical living and the reform of human action, thereby moving logic from abstract debate into the practical realm of daily ethics. In other words, genuine knowledge is intrinsically linked to human action, translating theoretical discourse directly into applied ethics [3] [9].
- **Chinese Pragmatism and Virtue Ethics:** Lastly, I will reference Chinese experiential and pragmatic traditions - including Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism - as well as analytical reconstructions of Mohism, to review how they critique purely intellectual abstraction [6]. In brief, these traditions share a focus on the internalization of virtue and the tangible, societal manifestation of spiritual truths, prioritizing the lived application of philosophy within society [1]. Together, these perspectives challenge the limitations of mere intellectual thinking by emphasizing the practical and ethical dimensions of logic.

These diverse perspectives challenge traditional boundaries among logic, ethics, and social practice. The following critical questions guide this exploration: What are the defining epistemic and ethical characteristics of a genuinely praxis-based logic? In what ways does paradoxical reasoning facilitate the internalization of moral and spiritual virtues? What specific processes enable us to transform logic from theoretical abstraction into concrete societal and ethical applications?

References

References

- [1] Aberdein, Andrew and Daniel H. Cohen. 2024. “Virtue Theories of Argument. Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines 33(2): 117–42. [2] Krishna, Daya (ed.). 1991. *Samvāda, a Dialogue between Two Philosophical Traditions*. Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research in association with Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. [3] Mandair, Arvind-Pal S., Mandair. 2024. “Diasporic Impulses: Sikh Philosophy as an Assemblage”, *Philosophy East and West* 74 (2): 364–78. [4] Matilal, Bimal K. 2000. *The Character of Logic in India*. Jonardon Ganeri and Heeraman Tiwari (eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press. [5] Miller, Christopher Jain and Cogen Bohanec. 2026. *Engaged Jainism: Critical and Constructive Studies of Jain Social Engagement*. Albany: State University of New York Press. [6] Mou, Bo. 2024. *Cross-tradition Engagement on the Laws of Logic: Approaching Identity and Reference from Classical Chinese philosophy to Modern Logic*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. [7] Priest, Graham. 2025. “Jaśkowski and the Jains”. *Studia Logica* 113(4): 847–61. [8] Vaidya, Anand J. 2018. “Making the Case for Jaina Contributions to Critical Thinking Education”, *Journal of World Philosophies* 3(1): 53–78. [9] Virk, Hardev Singh and Devinder Pal Singh. 2025. (eds.) *Rationality & Revelation: A Sikh Perspective on Science-Religion Dialogue*. Mississauga: Center for Understanding Sikhism, ON, Canada.

Daoism and the Logic of a Plant: Reevaluating Rationality and the Question of a Daoist Logic

Julia Rowe, Loyola Marymount University, United States, jrowe11@lion.lmu.edu

In this paper, I aim to develop a Daoist critique of Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction (PNC) as a metaphysical principle, which underlies his logic and understanding of rationality, and propose the possibility and beginning to a Daoist logic. My broader aim is to demonstrate how rationality, and ordered reasoning or logic, always takes a metaphysical position as the condition for its possibility. In short, rethinking logic goes beyond mere form; it requires a metaphysical transformation. In examining the PNC, which underlies Aristotle's logic and reasoning, we both re-evaluate problematic understandings of rationality and explore originary paths of thinking. Further, in understanding the metaphysical claims of Daoism on identity and contradiction, we suffice the condition for the possibility for a Daoist logic to emerge.

The structure of the paper goes as follows: I begin by analyzing Aristotle's metaphysical understanding of the PNC, specifically his understanding of sameness, using his *Metaphysics* and *Posterior Analytics*. This section aims to show how the metaphysical PNC assumes an understanding of substance, and how substance, the highest kind of beings for Aristotle, also assumes the metaphysical PNC. Hence, I expose the point where Aristotle's arguments break down into its most fundamental assumptions.

Then, I explicate an understanding of identity and contradiction from the classical Daoist texts *Dao de Jing* and *Zhuangzi*. The fundamental assumptions of Daoism, I propose, disrupt Aristotle's assumptions about sameness as a sameness of substance. This section is crucial in understanding how Daoism breaks rigid notions of rationality, which is expanded upon in the next section. Aristotle's conception of sameness and contradiction differs strongly from Daoism where identity is constantly transforming, and contradiction is a necessary element for change. Further, Daoism's positing that all things are relational and interconnected avoids the problem of metaphysical independence which Aristotle's substance relies on without proper justification.

In the next section, I address a possible counterargument about the usage of language in the refutation of the PNC. Aristotle claims it is impossible to use language without affirming the PNC, unless the interlocutor should remain silent 'like a plant.' I use the work of Chad Hansen

and examples from the classical Daoist texts to show how again, such counter-refutation implies a specific metaphysics and understanding of language; one which does not map onto Daoism. In addition, the problem of circularity arises again as Aristotle's metaphysical PNC is both a condition for the semantic PNC and is used for refutations in favor of it. Lastly, I discuss the problematic implications of Aristotle's philosophy on the scope of rationality and propose that Daoism both disrupts and denies this strict understanding.

Now we have prepared this discourse to understand rationality and ordered thought outside Aristotle, a fundamental figure of the western tradition and so-called 'father of logic'. Further, we have demonstrated that Daoism has firm stances on the nature of identity and contradiction. Since Aristotle's understanding of logic and rationality arises from his fundamental assumptions, we too should attempt to understand a logic which arises from Daoist metaphysics. Hence, this inquiry presents an opportunity not yet explored in English-speaking Daoist literature: that of a Daoist logic. To guide my inquiry, I use Robin Wang's *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture* and her understanding of permanent patterns of life posited by Daoism. It is beyond the scope of this paper to expand on an entire Daoist system of logic; however, I have argued for its possibility and now suggest Wang's text as a starting point. She presents six fundamental yinyang relationships: 1) contradiction and opposition, 2) interdependence, 3) mutual inclusion, 4) interaction or resonance, 5) complementary or mutual support, 6) change and transformation. These six relationships could be interpreted as the beginning of a Daoist logic, which I justify and expand upon using the classic Daoist texts. For example, I discuss assumptions which underlie these permanent relationships, such as the understanding that the ten thousand things are constantly undergoing transformation and that all things are ultimately one. Together, the understanding of a Daoist logic, or a way of thinking ordered by 'Dao,' becomes increasingly clear.

Lastly, as opposed to Aristotle's logic, the Daoist logic would not have one supreme principle. Rather, it would work as a "horizontal" system, where relationships are equal, hence why they can be understood as transformations of one another. As opposed to Aristotle's vertical system of logic, where all axioms and principles proceed from one supreme principle (PNC), Daoism presents a system where all rules are horizontal in relation and can be understood as transformations of the other.

Upon closer inspection, Aristotle's PNC relies on a particular metaphysics. Under different metaphysics, a new thinking can emerge. If we maintain Aristotle's logic, and consequently his metaphysics, naturally, only a few philosophies can be considered valid and rational. When our metaphysical assumptions change, it would be foolish to maintain a logic structured for a different set of assumptions. Daoism, which emerged nearly simultaneously with classic Greek philosophy, demonstrates a philosophical inquiry with unique and distinct conclusions. Daoism clearly presents forms of "correct" and "ordered" thinking that correspond to dao and the nature of life. A Daoist logic, I argue, aims to conform thought to the true character of life and efficaciously adapt to an ever-changing reality.

References

- [1] Amadio, A., Kenny, A., et al. (n.d.). Aristotle. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>
- [2] Aquinas, T. (1995). *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (J. P. Rowan, Trans.). Dumb Ox Books.
- [3] Aristotle. (1931). *Politics* (excerpts) (H. Rackham, Trans.). Hanover College Department of History. <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/165aristotle-rackham.html>
- [4] Aristotle. (1966). *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (H. Apostle, Trans.). Peripatetic Press.
- [5] Aristotle. (1984). *The Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics, and Posterior Analytics* (H. P. Cooke & H. Tredennick, Trans.), and *Topica* (E. S. Forster, Trans.). In J. Barnes (Ed.), *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford translation* (Vol. 1). Princeton University Press.
- [6] Forke, A. (1925). *The World-Conception of the Chinese: Their astronomical, cosmological and physico-philosophical speculations*. Probsthain & Co.
- [7] Hansen, C. (1989). Language in the heart-mind. In R. E. Allinson (Ed.), *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots* (pp. 75-124). Oxford University Press.
- [8] Kraut, R. (2022). Aristotle's Ethics. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>
- [9] Lai, K., & Chiu, W. W. (2019). *Skill and mastery: Philosophical stories from the Zhuangzi*. Rowman & Littlefield International.
- [10] Laozi. (2007). *Daodejing: The new, highly readable translation of the life-changing ancient scripture formerly known as the Tao Te Ching* (H.-G. Moeller, Trans.). Open Court.
- [11] Laozi's Dao De Jing. (n.d.). EBSCO Research Starters. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/laozis-dao-de-jing>
- [12] Lloyd, G. E. R. (2015). *Analogical investigations: Historical and cross-cultural perspectives on human reasoning*. Cambridge University Press.
- [13] Lloyd, G. E. R. (2017). *The ambivalences of rationality: Ancient and modern cross-cultural explorations*. Cambridge University Press.
- [14] Meinwald, C., et al. (n.d.). Plato. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Plato>
- [15] Taylor, T. (2026). Aristotle, Physics: Book IV, Chapter 17. Classical Liberal Arts Academy. <https://classicalliberalarts.com/library/aristotle-physics/aristotle-physics-book-iv-chapter-17/>
- [16] Møllgaard, E. J. (2020). Problems of language and logic in Daoism. In Y.-M. Fung (Ed.), *Dao companion to Chinese philosophy of logic* (pp. 369-387). Springer.
- [17] Plato. (1997). *Phaedo* (G. M. A. Grube, Trans.; J. M. Cooper, Rev. & Ed.). In J. M. Cooper (Ed.), *Plato: Complete works* (pp. 49-100). Hackett Publishing.
- [18] Scaff, L. A. (2024). Max Weber. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/>
- [19] Smith, R. (2022). Aristotle's logic. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/>
- [20] Wang, R. (2012). *Yinyang thinking: The way of heaven and earth in Chinese thought and culture*. Cambridge University Press.
- [21] White, N. P. (1971). Aristotle on Sameness and Oneness. *The Philosophical Review*, 80(2), 177-197. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2184029>
- [22] Yu, J. (1999). The language of being: Between Aristotle and Chinese philosophy. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 39(4), 439-454.
- [23] Zhuangzi. (2009). *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (B. Ziporyn, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

[24] Zhuangzi. (2020). *Zhuangzi: The Complete Writings* (B. Ziporyn, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

Debate as Ethical Practice: The Normative Structure of Vāda and the Patra Method in Jain Argumentation Theory

Ryushin SUDO, Kyoto University, Japan, ryushin.sudo@gmail.com

The theory of philosophical debate that structures classical Indian argumentation was largely laid down by Nyāya and Buddhist logicians. Jain philosophers engaged critically with this shared

framework, reworking its categories into their own classifications of debate (vāda) by the relationship and purpose of the debaters and, within adversarial debate, by method. Bhāvasena (ca. 13th century), in his *Pramāprameya*, offers his own version of this classification: instructional debate between teacher and student, collegial debate among equals, and adversarial debate aimed at victory, itself further divided into four methods depending on whether the aim is truth, wit, a fixed stipulation, or a third party's request. Only within adversarial debate does Bhāvasena permit a further technique: the patra.

A patra ("letter") states a genuine thesis and reason in deliberately coded language that must be decoded before it can even be evaluated. First theorized by Vidyānandin (ca. 9th to 10th century) and elaborated by Prabhācandra (ca. 10th to 11th century), the technique has been studied by Marie-Hélène Gorisse, whose account traces its documented history from Vidyānandin to an unfinished twelfth century treatment by Hemacandra, after which it appears to disappear [1], [2]. Bhāvasena's discussion is absent from that history and forms the focus of this presentation.

This placement within adversarial debate is backed by an explicit normative apparatus shared with other classical Indian theorists: distortion (chala), sophisticated rejoinder (jāti), and grounds for defeat (nigrahasthāna). The patra carries its own version of this apparatus: Vidyānandin, and at much greater length Prabhācandra, address how a patra's intended meaning is to be determined and whether a listener's failure to grasp it counts as a ground for defeat. The verses on the patra found in the *Pramāprameya* reproduce Vidyānandin's definition and etymology of the term closely, and touch on these questions of adjudication only briefly. Distinctive to this discussion is a specification of the materials a written patra should be made of.

How the patra relates to core Jain doctrines such as the many sidedness of reality (anekāntavāda) and the theory of conditional predication (syādvāda) remains an open question. Gorisse has suggested one possible connection [1], and this presentation, without arguing for a direct influence, treats Bhāvasena's normative placement of the patra as an invitation to further reflection on how such doctrines and debate practice may be related.

References

- [1] Gorisse, M. H. (2018). Concealing meaning in inferential statements. In *Jaina Studies* (pp. 111 to 126). New Delhi: DK Publishers.
- [2] Gorisse, M. H. (2021). Jain philosophers in the debating hall of classical India. *Argumentation* 35: 35 to 49.

Mencius's "Rectification of Names" as a Logic of Argumentation: A Re-examination of the "Tang Banished Jie" Chapter

Yan Li, Sun Yat-sen University, China, liyan358@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

In response to King Xuan of Qi's (齊宣王) challenge—"Is it permissible for a minister to assassinate his sovereign?"—Mencius grounded his defense of Tang and Wu's punitive expeditions (fangfa 放伐) in the proposition that "one who mutilates benevolence and righteousness is called a mere fellow". This constitutes the core thesis of the "Tang Banished Jie" chapter in the Mencius [1]. However, scholarly discourse has often either reduced Mencius to a political theorist devoid of logical concerns or bifurcated the Confucian "rectification of names" (zhengming 正名) from the logic of the Mohists and the School of Names [2][3]. Consequently, the logical dimensions of "rectification of names" embedded within Mencius's argumentation remain underexplored. Adopting a broad conception of logic, this paper treats the dialogue between King Xuan and Mencius as a situated argumentative practice [4]. Through a close reading of the "Tang Banished Jie" chapter, supplemented by later commentaries and relevant passages from the Mencius, this study elucidates how Mencius employed an internally consistent set of "rectification of names" rules to construct his defense. It argues that Mencius's thought on this subject is not merely a moral-political doctrine but also an operational logical structure for argumentation, representing an indispensable component of the pre-Qin discourse on names and disputation (mingbian 明辯) [5][6].

Existing scholarship on the "Tang Banished Jie" chapter has largely followed two trajectories: interpreting the political legitimacy of Tang and Wu's punitive expeditions [7][8] and analyzing the logic of Mencius's "rectification of names" [2][9]. Yet few studies have integrated these approaches to demonstrate specifically how Mencius accomplished his legitimation through "rectification of names" as a methodological tool. While some scholars have noted Mencius's distinction between "executing a criminal" (zhu 誅) and "assassinating a sovereign" (shi 弑) [9], they have failed to uncover the underlying mechanism of status transformation. Others have attempted to reconstruct Mencius's argument using Mohist logic [10], overlooking the fundamental theoretical and practical differences between Mencius's "rectification of names" and Mohist dialectics. Adhering to the hermeneutic principle of "interpreting the text through itself," this paper derives Mencius's rules of "rectification of names" from the primary text and its traditional commentaries, avoiding the imposition of modern theoretical frameworks or external philosophical systems.

First, this paper reconstructs Mencius's "mere fellow" (yifu 匹夫) argument [1]. When King Xuan of Qi posed the question, "Is it permissible for a minister to assassinate his sovereign?", he framed the issue strictly within the bounds of hierarchical status. Rather than answering directly, Mencius advanced three progressively layered definitional propositions: "One who mutilates benevolence is called a mutilator"; "One who mutilates righteousness is called a destroyer"; and "One who mutilates benevolence and righteousness is called a mere fellow." Through this sequence, he reclassified King Zhou from "sovereign" to "mere fellow". This argumentation can be analyzed in four steps. First, establishment of criteria: Mencius replaced lineage with benevolence and righteousness as the fundamental standard for determining sovereign status, effecting a shift from formal identity to substantive virtue. Second, application of criteria: Based on historical evidence, he determined that King Zhou had "mutilated benevolence and righteousness," thereby completing an ontological shift from genealogical confirmation to moral qualification. Third, renaming: He demoted the virtueless ruler to the status of a "mere fellow," accomplishing a semantic transformation. Fourth, conclusion: King Wu's campaign against Zhou was thus "executing a mere fellow" rather than "assassinating a sovereign". This conclusion simultaneously upheld the normative principle that ministers must not assassinate their sovereigns while preserving theoretical space for just revolution. From this argument, three core rules can be distilled: names change according to actuality (status shifts as its substantive moral content changes); normative assessment (li-fen 利分; verifying whether actual conduct conforms to the normative requirements inherent in a given status); and actuality is determined by names (once a status is established, corresponding rights and obligations are defined thereby).

Second, this paper examines corroboration and refinement of these rules in later commentaries. Zhao Qi's (赵岐) and Sun Shi's (孙奭) commentary notes that "even one occupying the rank of king or duke will inevitably be demoted to a commoner" [11]; Zhu Xi's (朱熹) Collected Annotations states that "when all within the four seas submit to him, he is the Son of Heaven; when the world rebels against him, he becomes a solitary fellow" [12]; Zhang Shi (张氏) observes in his Explanations of the Mencius that "status cannot be relied upon" [13]; Hu Bingwen (胡秉文), citing Wang Mian, and Jiao Xun (焦循), citing the Xunzi, both affirm the notion of "executing a solitary fellow" [14][15]. These sources demonstrate that successive commentators universally accepted the principle that "names change according to actuality," and rarely questioned the "mere fellow" argument itself, indicating its high degree of acceptability among later Confucian scholars. Furthermore, the commentarial tradition reveals two supplementary rules: derivation of new names (new designations may be sourced from ancient classics such as the Book of Documents or from popular consensus) and the exemplar rule (changes in status must be validated by reference to paradigmatic figures such as an extremely loyal minister). Together, these five rules constitute the complete logical framework of Mencius's "rectification of names."

Finally, this paper provides corroborating evidence from other chapters of the Mencius [1]. The argument concerning "abandoning friends and dismissing officials" in King Hui of Liang II similarly employs the logic of normative assessment and the principle that names change according to actuality: if a friend fails to care for another's entrusted wife and children, he is "not a friend"; if a judge cannot govern his subordinates, he is "not a judge." King Xuan acknowledged both premises yet could not accept the corollary that "if the realm is ungoverned, the ruler is not a ruler," and could only "look left and right and speak of other matters". This passage confirms the consistent application of "rectification of names" rules across both ethical and political domains. Moreover, the chapter stating "when the people all say someone is worthy" reveals Mencius's view on the agent of naming: while "names" may originate from popular consensus, "actuality" must be verified through the ruler's investigation—a position consistent with the rules governing name creation.

References

References

- [2] Wen Gongyi, Xianqin Luoqishi (History of Pre-Qin Logic), Shanghai People's Publishing House, Shanghai, 1983, pp.205-228.
- [3] Zhai Tingjin, "Mencius's Position and Role in the Pre-Qin Discourse on Names and Disputation," Academic Monthly, no. 7, 1992.
- [4] van Eemeren, F. H., et al., Handbook of Argumentation Theory, Dordrecht: Springer, 2014.
- [5] Liu Yuyu, "Mencius's Contribution to the Development of Pre-Qin Views on Names and Actuality," Modern Philosophy, no. 3, 2019.
- [6] Liu Yuyu, "Mencius's Thought on the Rectification of Names in the Context of Pre-Qin Debates on Names and Actuality," Studies in Logic, no. 6, 2024.
- [7] Wang Haicheng, "The Concept of 'Legitimacy' in Early Confucianism and Its Influence: Starting from the 'Shao Music' Chapter in the Analects," Northern Forum, no. 6, 2015.
- [8] Yan Jinghua, "Early Confucian Construction of the Legitimacy of King Wu's Campaign Against Zhou: Centered on Confucius's Theory of 'Perfect Beauty but Imperfect Goodness,'" Jingu Wenchuang, no. 39, 2025.
- [9] Hu Shi, Xianqin Mingshixue (History of Pre-Qin Logic), trans. by the Translation Group of Xianqin Mingshixue, Xuelin Publishing House, Shanghai, 1983.
- [10] Sun Zhiqiang, "Confucian 'Name Rectification' and Debate Practice from the Perspective of Generalized Argumentation—A Case Study of Mencius," unpublished.
- [11] Zhao Qi (Eastern Han) (annot.) & Sun Shi (Northern Song) (subcomm.), Mengzi Zhushu (Annotations and Subcommentaries on the Mencius), collated by Liu Feng, Peking University Press, Beijing, 2023, pp.83-84.
- [12] Zhu Xi (Song), Sishu Zhangju Jizhu (Collected Annotations on the Four Books in Chapters and Phrases), Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing, 2011, p.45.
- [13] Zhang Shi (Song), Guisi Mengzi Shuo (Explanations of the Mencius, Compiled in the Guisi Year), Siku Quanshu edition, online, p.41.
- [14] Hu Bingwen (Yuan), Mengzi Tong (Comprehensive Guide to the Mencius), punctuated by Song Jian, East China Normal University Press, Shanghai, 2020, p.57.
- [15] Jiao Xun (Qing), Mengzi Zhengyi (Correct Interpretations of the Mencius), punctuated by Shen Wenzhuo, Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing, 2017, p.121.

The Structure of Huiyuan's Theory of Gan-ying and Its Place in Chinese Intellectual History

Zhanhui Ren, Sun Yat-sen University, China, renzh26@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

This study offers a systematic reconstruction of Huiyuan's (334–416) theory of gan-ying (, "being-moved and responding," often rendered "resonance" or "sympathetic resonance"). Huiyuan, the founding figure of the Lushan Buddhist community, took the proposition "the Changes takes gan as its substance" (Yi yi gan wei ti) as his guiding principle, and thereby integrated such Indian Buddhist doctrines as karmic retribution, the imperishability of the spirit (shen), the dharmakāya (), and buddhānusmṛti-samādhi () into a single philosophical system centered on the mind (xin) and structured around "quiescence and being-moved" (ji-gan) [1]. As Gu Jiming has shown, the proposition "the Changes takes gan as its substance" grew out of the Daoist-Buddhist synthesis in the sixth-century exegesis of the Changes [5]. Adopting the method of close textual reading supplemented by philosophical analysis, this paper examines the internal mechanism of this system — above all, the sequence by which its three levels are transformed into one another — and re-situates Huiyuan's theory within the broader coordinates of Chinese intellectual history.

Existing scholarship on Huiyuan's theory of gan-ying has developed along three lines. Fang Litian has examined Huiyuan's "gan" across the theories of retribution, the imperishability of the spirit, the dharmakāya, and buddhānusmṛti-samādhi, and his comprehensive collection of materials remains foundational [2]. Li Ming (2009) proposes a "dual gan-ying" structure — gan-ying of the affections, whose core is karmic retribution, and gan-ying of the spirit, whose core is buddhānusmṛti-samādhi — and judges the two to be "two faces of one body" [3]. Zhao Xiang (2017) extends the structure into three levels (karma, dharmakāya, cognition) and brings its influence on landscape poetry and painting into view [4]. Two problems, however, remain unresolved. First, the mechanism of transformation between the levels: Li Ming's "two faces of one body" marks the relation between the two gan-yings but does not explain how "delusion" becomes "awakening," nor whether there exists a describable sequence of practice leading from the passive undergoing of gan-ying within karmic entanglement to the active sympathetic communication within buddhānusmṛti-samādhi. Second, the philosophical character of Huiyuan's divergence from Kumārajīva, which has generally been reduced to a doctrinal conflict between the "imperishability of the spirit" and "Prajñā-emptiness."

First, this paper reconstructs the three-level structure and the sequence that transforms one level into another. The system comprises three levels. Gan-ying of the affections () is grounded in karmic retribution under the condition of delusion: ignorance and craving operate through the spirit, congealing the affections and coagulating the four great elements into bodily form, so that retribution is experienced as the "spontaneous" () result of one's own being-moved, without any external sovereign. Gan-ying of the spirit () is grounded in the imperishability of the spirit — the spirit "responds perfectly without arising," "is moved by things

yet is not a thing" — and in the responsive manifestation of the dharmakāya, whereby the practitioner's sincerity "sounds forth" a response. Gan-ying of meditation-and-wisdom () is grounded in the cooperation of concentration and wisdom, "illumination not separated from quiescence, quiescence not separated from illumination." Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi, the primary scriptural basis of which, as Yang Jinglin has shown, is the Wuliangshou jing rather than the Banzhou sanmei jing [6], serves as the pivot connecting the latter two levels. From the Ming baoying lun (), the paper extracts a four-stage method of practice: "viewing affairs from retribution" (), tracing the fruit back to its cause; "interrogating the mind through affairs" (), returning from affairs to the mind; "the mind can be turned around" (), in which the mind undergoes reversal — here Huiyuan's use of "can" (ke) rather than "must" (bi) preserves the space of the practitioner's own decision; and "deluded feelings are released" (), whereupon wisdom manifests of itself. This four-stage sequence accomplishes the leap from the gan-ying of the affections to the gan-ying of the spirit; the further advance to meditation-and-wisdom is borne by a different mechanism, the mutual aid of concentration and wisdom (dinghui xiangzi). The philosophical ground of the transformation lies in Huiyuan's affirmation of the dual nature of the mind: ignorance "veils" rather than destroys the original luminosity, so that reflective de-veiling is possible precisely because the original luminosity is undestroyed.

Second, this paper re-characterizes Huiyuan's debate with Kumārajīva as a confrontation between two incompatible approaches rather than a mere doctrinal conflict. Huiyuan's gan-ying approach rests on three presuppositions: a real subject that is moved (the spirit), a real object that is moved-to (the dharmakāya, which must be more than a provisional name), and a real medium connecting the two (supernormal power, the four great elements and five faculties, or "a single qi"). Kumārajīva's dependent-origination-and-emptiness approach dissolves these three one by one through the simile of "an image in a mirror" (): the dharmakāya is like a mirror image, vividly experienced yet not to be grasped as existent or non-existent; supernormal power "issues from the Buddha's mind" () and does not rely on external instruments; and the subject itself is a stream of consciousness arising from causes and conditions, ultimately empty in nature. Kumārajīva does not deny the experiential efficacy of gan-ying; he denies the philosophical demand that Huiyuan attaches to it — that a substantive vehicle must be presupposed behind it. The irreducibility of this confrontation reveals the fundamental difference between the Chinese mode of "substance-function sympathetic communication" () and the Indian mode of "dependent origination and emptiness" ().

Finally, this paper situates Huiyuan's theory within intellectual history at three coordinates. First, within the native Chinese discourse of gan-ying, Huiyuan accomplishes a focusing from cosmology to the theory of mind. Before him, "gan-ying" had undergone three transformations — the cosmological mechanism of the Book of Changes, the political theology of Han Dong Zhongshu, and the inner "emptiness" of Wei-Jin xuanxue — but it remained a descriptive concept. Huiyuan changed its conceptual type from descriptive to operative, supplying the practical ladder of practice that xuanxue had marked out but could not provide. Second, in the sinicization of Indian Buddhism, Huiyuan constitutes a shift from "dependent origination and emptiness" to "substance-function sympathetic communication." His substantialist "spirit," though not yet "Buddha-nature," already possessed the structural features — immanence, transcendence, sympathetic communicability, and cultivability — that prepared Zhu Daosheng's decisive conversion of the "spirit" into the principle-based "Buddha-nature." Third, among the three teachings, Huiyuan marks the pivotal juncture at which Buddhist doctrine turned from reliance on Daoism toward continuity with Confucianism: he continued the Confucian retributive notion of "accumulated good leaving surplus blessings," responded to the political challenge of

Vātsyāyana on the Counterfactual Cognition of Absence

Aditya Guntoori, McGill University, Canada, aditya.guntoori@mail.mcgill.ca

Vātsyāyana's brief remarks on absence in the Nyāya-bhāṣya pose a problem for any account of early Nyāya epistemology: if knowledge is produced by pramāṇas, and if the accepted pramāṇas do not include a separate faculty of non-apprehension, then it remains unclear how absence can be known at all. The central textual case is the commentary on Nyāya-sūtra 1.1.1, where Vātsyāyana defines truth as both the being of what is and the non-being of what is not, and explains that when something is not grasped in the presence of a revealing pramāṇa, it may be judged absent. I argue that this passage gives us neither a straightforward perceptual theory of absence nor a Mīmāṃsā theory of anupalabdhi as an independent pramāṇa. Rather, Vātsyāyana's view is best reconstructed as a counterfactual account of absence-cognition, in which non-apprehension grasps a non-existent only when assisted by the method of tarka. The relevant reasoning is not simply "x is not perceived, therefore x is absent." It is instead: if x were present under the appropriate causal and perceptual conditions, x would have been apprehended. Under those conditions, x is not apprehended; therefore, x is absent.

The reading shows that Nyāya's contribution to logic is not exhausted by formal debate, inference, or later technical developments in Navya-Nyāya. Already in Vātsyāyana, logic is tied to the problem of how a knower can reliably determine reality, including the reality of what is not there. Absence-cognition is therefore not merely a semantic puzzle, but part of a larger Nyāya concern with truth, error-removal, and the conditions of liberating knowledge. By reconstructing the relation between tarka, anupalabdhi, and pramāṇa, this paper shows how early Nyāya develops a distinctive account of logical reasoning as a means of knowing absence.

Cultivating Dao-Like Rulership in the Laozi

Emily Kluge, Duke University

The Laozi as political treatise resists a singular interpretation due to its paradoxes, ambiguities, and inconsistencies. These features support divergent reading, exemplified by the longstanding anarchist—non-anarchist debate. This paper develops an alternative reading that considers these features as part of a philosophical strategy. Through feminine imagery, paradox, correlative pairs, and oscillation between practical and mystical tones, the Laozi cultivates a cluster of epistemic virtues, including epistemic humility and cognitive flexibility, doing so to temper the political tendencies of overconfidence, over-governance, and excessive use of coercion. On this view, the Laozi is a political technology for reshaping the ruler's psychology. While the anarchist—non-anarchist debate rightly identifies the Laozi's commitment to political minimalism, its minimal rule is grounded in the cultivation of the ruler's epistemic stance and self-restraint that results from it, rather than a fixed set of policies or a specific institutional arrangement.

The Virtue of Interpretive Charity, the Demands of Religious Praxis, and the Jain Haribhadrasūri's Logic of Non-One-Sidedness

Anil Mundra, University of California, Santa Barbara, amundra@ucsb.edu

The pre-eminent Śvetāmbara scholar-monk of the late-first millennium, Haribhadrasūri, is famous for his wide engagements across religious difference, nowhere better on display than in his Compendium of Current Teachings (Śāstravārtāsamuccaya). In this treatise, he locates agreement amidst disagreement by rebutting wrong doctrines while qualifiedly affirming what is right in them -- a definitive application of the characteristically Jain theory of non-one-sidedness according to which the whole truth requires qualified affirmation of apparently opposing claims. This Compendium is basically a work of theory; but Haribhadra takes a similar approach in his seminal formulation of Jain praxis, A Distillation of Yoga (Yogabindu). In both works, he gives even opponent religions the benefit of the doubt, presuming their figureheads to be authoritative even if their pronouncements are not exactly true. This presumption thus demands various interpretive strategies: sometimes the qualifications of the theory of non-one-sidedness, and sometimes pragmatic re-interpretations that read their pronouncements as soteriologically useful even if not metaphysically true. Across both works, then, Haribhadra enacts the virtue of interpretive charity across difference in order to develop a full vision of what is true and right beyond the confines of narrow partisanship, often allowing the demands of religious praxis to supplement, complement, and even to override concern for metaphysical truth.

Intellectual Aparigraha and the Problem of Jain Contextualization

Chris Rahlwes, Florida Atlantic University

Logic of Religious Dialogue

Organiser: Marcin Trepczyński, University of Warsaw

Keynote: Stan Krajewski, University of Warsaw

Religious Dialogue is a complex process in which its actors present the tenets of their religions and try to better understand each other. It often happens that they represent different views, which are rooted in different assumptions. However, the process goes on. It is possible due to the fact that the actors follow special patterns which can be described in terms of non-classical logics or special models based on specific logics, such as the Oscillation Model proposed by Stan Krajewski. This is a basis for many interesting questions concerning logic and religious dialogue.

Moreover, actors of logical dialogue often present argumentation, which is interesting from different perspectives, including the classical aspects distinguished by Aristotle: logos, pathos and ethos.

Additionally, the recent development of Large Language Models opened the door to include them as actors or even moderators of such dialogue. As a consequence, new questions arise, such as: should they follow certain logical patterns in the context of such a dialogue.

- Logical problems of religious dialogue.
- Logical interpretations of religious dialogue.
- The models of religious dialogue and their logic.
- Argumentation in religious dialogue (logos, pathos, ethos).
- Standards of reasoning in religious dialogue.
- Is it necessary for religious dialogue to be logical?
- Do all religions which enter the dialogue must be logical?
- Are there logical patterns that LLMs should follow as actors or moderators of religious dialogue?

Epistemic Humility, Dialogue, and the Sikh Way of Knowing: Toward a Contemplative Pedagogy

Jasreen Grewal Kang, Yorkville University, Canada, jgrewal@yorkvilleu.ca, Dr. Gitanjali Chhabra, University Canada West, Canada, gitanjali.chhabra@ucanwest.ca

This paper examines Sikh philosophical traditions as a praxis to dialogue, ethical relationality, and public discourse. Drawing on the concept of holistic education [1], which emphasizes the integration of intellect, emotion, body, and spirit in the learning process, we argue that meaningful dialogue requires more than cognitive exchange; it requires an embodied transformation of shared becoming.

First, central to this inquiry is the Sikh affirmation of Ik Oankar (the unity of all existence), which challenges hierarchical divisions based on caste, gender, social identity, and human exceptionalism by grounding dignity in the interconnectedness of all beings. Second, through the lens of HKL's (Humility, Kindness and Love) interpretation of Sikh teachings, we explore how dialogue becomes an ethical and contemplative practice that requires the cultivation of epistemic humility -- a willingness to recognize the limitations of one's own knowledge and remain open to the presence and experiences of others in a process of becoming. Through a phenomenological lens, HKL can be understood not simply as a moral message but as a lived transformation of consciousness: a movement from haumai, or ego-centeredness, toward relational awareness, inner awakening, and compassionate action. Third, through the concepts of Naam Simran (remembrance of the divine), seva (service), sangat (collective gathering), and langar (shared community practice), we examine how embodied practices serve as forms of contemplative education that lessen haumai (ego-centered consciousness). These practices do not merely transmit philosophical principles; they cultivate awareness, relational responsibility,

and ethical responsiveness through lived experience. In dialogue with phenomenological approaches to embodiment [2] and contemplative education [1], we argue that Sikh practices create spaces where participants learn through the body, relationships, and shared presence.

Further, this paper foregrounds author 1 and author 2's embodied experiences of engaging with Sikh practices across different cultural contexts. Drawing upon personal encounters with HKL practices, Sikh teachings, and lived experiences of Sikh communities in India and Canada, we explore how dialogue emerges as a practice of presence, humility, and relational responsibility. These experiences reveal that dialogue is not produced solely through the exchange of ideas, but through embodied ways of being with others through listening, serving, sharing, and recognizing the dignity of all beings.

By bringing together lived experience, phenomenological reflection, and Sikh philosophical traditions, we argue that Sikh practices offer a transformative understanding of dialogue and contemplative education. In increasingly polarized societies, Sikh philosophy invites us to reconsider belonging not as agreement or sameness, but as the ongoing practice of becoming responsible to one another through humility, care, and shared presence.

References

- [1] Miller, J. P. (2014). *The Contemplative Practitioner: Meditation in Education and the Workplace*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [2] Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge.

Algorithmic Anointing: Prosperity Gospel, Facebook Visibility, and Digital Religious Authority in the Case of Pastor Victor Kanyari

Joan Letting, University Canada West, Canada, joan.letting@ucanwest.ca

This paper intervenes in debates on the logics of religious dialogue by examining how social media platforms reorganise who can speak, be heard, and be believed in Kenyan Pentecostalism [2][7][8]. It argues that within digital prosperity Christianity, algorithmic visibility itself can function as a sign of divine legitimacy: likes, shares, followers, comments, and livestream views operate as quasi-epistemic cues through which preachers are perceived as credible, anointed, and spiritually effective [2][4][7][12]. Focusing on the case of Pastor Victor Kanyari, whose ministry combines prosperity theology, spectacle, scandal, and ongoing digital reinvention, the paper shows that platform metrics do not simply measure religious attention; they actively participate in the production of religious authority and shape the dialogical space in which prosperity claims are contested, defended, and negotiated [5][6][9][11].

Pastor Kanyari is a particularly revealing case because his public profile did not vanish after the widely publicised “Mbegu ya 310” exposé, which framed his Sh310 seed-offering practice as deceptive and exploitative [5][11]. Media reporting in 2024 documents how he retrospectively describes the scheme as a means to escape poverty and financial hardship, while maintaining a recognisable religious presence across broadcast and social media platforms [5][11]. This continuity suggests that in an attention economy, scandal does not automatically annihilate charismatic authority; instead, outrage and fascination can feed circulation, and circulation can sustain visibility. Under these conditions, the logics of religious dialogue are reconfigured: critical exposures, confessions, endorsements, and testimonies circulate through the same algorithmic systems, turning controversy itself into a resource for ongoing religious conversation and recognition [2][5][7][11].

The analysis is grounded in mediatization theory, digital religion scholarship, Weberian approaches to charisma, and critical work on algorithmic power [2][3][4][7][8][12]. Mediatization scholars argue that media do not merely transmit religion but reshape religious practice, authority, and experience according to their own institutional logics and genres [8]. Digital religion research further shows that religious life is increasingly embedded in networked environments where interaction, visibility, and participation become constitutive dimensions of spiritual practice and dialogue [3][4]. At the same time, studies of algorithms highlight how ranking and recommendation systems help decide what counts as relevant, knowable, and visible in public culture [1][2][7][12]. Bringing these strands together, the paper conceptualises Facebook and YouTube as infrastructures of religious dialogue in which metrics, algorithmic amplification, and networked attention co-produce perceptions of importance, anointing, and the very terms on which prosperity claims are argued [1][3][4][8][12].

Empirically, the study draws on textual and media analysis of Kanyari’s appearances in Kenyan digital and broadcast media, focusing on Facebook and YouTube content alongside recent reporting by Citizen Digital and Pulse Kenya [5][11]. These include news articles, interviews, sermon and prayer clips, public confessions, and audience interactions such as comments, reactions, and shares. These materials are read through scholarship on African Pentecostalism, which has long linked divine favour to visible outcomes such as healing, financial breakthrough, and public success [6][9][10]. This interpretive tradition intensifies the significance of platform metrics: when blessing is expected to show itself, counts and rankings become easy to read as contemporary signs of divine favour and as tacit warrants in religious dialogue about who is truly “anointed” [6][9].

Analytically, the paper advances four claims. First, it shows how visibility becomes a form of legitimacy in platformed religion: preachers who appear frequently in feeds, viral clips, and livestreams can be perceived as more spiritually significant than less visible counterparts, as popularity and presence are mistaken for proof of divine favour [1][3][4][8]. This transforms the logics of religious dialogue by privileging highly visible voices and marginalising less amplified preachers. Second, the paper examines Kanyari’s ministry as performance and spectacle calibrated to platform logics, emphasising emotional intensity, testimony, repetition, and direct audience address that travel effectively in short, attention-grabbing

digital formats [4][8][10]. These performances structure dialogical exchanges by inviting responses, amen comments, prayer requests, affective reactions, that are immediately legible as engagement metrics [3].

Third, the study analyzes the intersection of scandal and algorithmic survival, demonstrating that the “Mbegu ya 310” controversy is absorbed into Kanyari’s ongoing digital persona, generating discussion, outrage, and fascination that continue to drive interaction and, consequently, algorithmic amplification [2][5][7][11]. Here, denunciations, defences, and negotiations of truth claims all circulate through comment threads, reposts, and reaction counts, so that critical dialogue about fraud and repentance simultaneously contributes to the preacher’s continued visibility. Fourth, the paper explores parasocial intimacy and networked community, showing how followers’ ability to comment directly, request prayer, and feel personally addressed produces mediated forms of closeness that strengthen authority even when institutional legitimacy is contested [3][4]. These interactions create dialogical relations in which spiritual care, dispute, and confession unfold through platform interfaces, rearticulating older logics of pastoral conversation into algorithmically mediated exchanges [8].

The paper proposes “algorithmic anointing” to name the emerging epistemic and dialogical order in digital prosperity Christianity, where metrics function as signs [2][6][7][9][12]. Under this order, like counts can be interpreted as public approval, share counts as social confirmation,

and large livestream audiences as evidence of relevance or divine favour, even if followers do not explicitly equate numbers with God [3][4][6][9][12]. Kanyari’s continued visibility after scandal demonstrates how African Pentecostalism’s existing emphasis on visible blessing is rearticulated through the metric economy of platform culture, making algorithmically amplified visibility a practical reason to believe in a preacher’s spiritual efficacy and a powerful structuring principle for religious dialogue [6][9][10]. By bringing to the fore an underexamined African case in which visibility, charisma, prosperity theology, and algorithmic power are deeply intertwined, the study contributes to the panel’s concern with logics of religious dialogue under contemporary media conditions and to wider scholarship on digital religion, philosophy of religion, and media and communication [3][8].

References

- [1] Bishop, S. (2019). Managing visibility on YouTube through algorithmic gossip. *New Media & Society*, 21(11-12), 2589-2606.
- [2] Bucher, T. (2018). *If...Then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- [3] Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (Eds.). (2021). *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in digital media*. Routledge.
- [4] Campbell, H. A. (2013). Religion and the Internet: A microcosm for studying Internet trends and implications. *Sage*, 15(5), 680-694.
- [5] Citizen Digital. (2024, January 31). Pastor Kanyari: “Mbegu ya 310” was a means to get out of poverty. <https://citizen.digital/article/pastor-kanyari-mbegu-ya-310-was-a-means-to-get-out-of-poverty-n335836>
- [6] Gifford, P. (2004). *Ghana’s new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a globalising African economy*. Indiana University Press.
- [7] Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. J. Boczkowski, & K. A. Foot (Eds.), *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society* (pp. 185-193). MIT Press.
- [8] Hjarvard, S. (2011). The mediatization of religion: Theorising religion, media and social change. *Culture and Religion*, 12(2), 119-135.
- [9] Kalu, O. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- [10] Meyer, B. (2015). *Sensational movies: Video, vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. University of California Press.
- [11] Pulse Kenya. (2024, July 29). Pastor Kanyari finally admits to exploiting his followers with Sh310 scam. <https://www.pulse.co.ke/story/pastor-victor-kanyari-finally-confesses-to-deceiving-followers-with-sh-310-scam-2024072915481343981>
- [12] Sierocki, R. (2024). Algorithms and faith: The meaning, power, and causality of algorithms in Catholic online discourse. *Religions*, 15(4), 431. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040431>

Logical Approaches to Understanding in Interreligious Dialogue

Marcin Trepczyński, University of Warsaw, Faculty of Philosophy, Poland,
m.trepczynski@uw.edu.pl

In the interreligious dialogue at least two parts representing different religions have a conversation concerning religious issues. One of the crucial aspects of such a dialogue is understanding.

In my paper I single out and discuss four models of understanding in such a dialogue. All of them follow main principles of dialogue indicated by Stanisław Krajewski, namely: principle of respect and principle of faithfulness [3]. The first model (Model 1) adds the following principle:

understand what the other part says. The additional principle of Model 2 is: Conditionally accept the other part's conclusion. Model 3 states: temporarily accept the other parts premises, while Model 4: oscillate in understanding.

Next, I show different logical approaches to these models. In the example of Aquinas's interpretation of the sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), we can see how including the Jewish understanding, according to Model 1, deepens the debate and enables serious argumentation [1]. I also present that Stanisław Jaśkowski's discussive logic (see [2], [4]) is a good framework for Model 2. In the last step, I show how Stanisław Krajewski's paraclassical logic defined for his oscillation model gives grounds for Model 3, inspired by Richard Rorty [5], and Model 4, based on Krajewski's applications of the oscillation [3].

Finally, I address the question in what way Large Language Models can be useful in better understanding within interreligious dialogue according to the above mentioned models.

References

- [1] Thomas Aquinas (1974), *Super Isaiam*. In: *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia*, t. 28, cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum, Editio Leonina, Editori di San Tommaso, Roma.
- [2] Jaśkowski, Stanisław (1948). *Rachunek zdań dla systemów dedukcyjnych sprzecznych*. *Studia Societatis Scientiarum Torunensis, Sectio A*, 1(5), 57–77.
- [3] Krajewski, Stanisław (2023). *On the Oscillation Model and Its Logic*. In Vestrucci Andrea, *Beyond Babel: Religion and Linguistic Pluralism*. Cham: Springer Verlag. pp. 133-145.
- [4] De Martin Polo, Fabio (2025). *Exploring Jaśkowski's Discussive Logic*. *J Philos Logic* 54, 935–993. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10992-025-09808-4>
- [5] Rorty, Richard (1989). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Inkar as a Logical Criterion for Religious Dialogue: Beyond the Believer-Disbeliever Binary

Kenan Çetinkaya, Ph.D., Independent scholar, Turkey, kenancetinkaya@yahoo.com

The standard typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism shares a common logical defect. Each position evaluates the salvific status of the religious Other by measuring them by faith-based assessments [1]. This paper argues that this shared architecture produces structurally circular reasoning and proposes an alternative logical criterion grounded in the Arabic-Turkish concept of *inkar* (conscious, free-will rejection) [2].

The circularity is not incidental but constitutive. Exclusivism measures the Other against fixed point of evaluator's own creed and finds a deficit; inclusivism measures the Other against the same fixed point and finds partial approximation; pluralism relativizes the fixed point itself but still requires each tradition to be assessed for how well it tracks a posited Ultimate Reality defined, in practice, from within one interpretive vantage or another [3]. In each case, the standard of judgment and object being judged share a single confessional source, so the verdict is guaranteed before inquiry begins. No amount of internal refinement — softening exclusivism's severity, broadening inclusivism's scope, multiplying pluralism's accommodations — can escape this, because defect lies in logical structure of comparison itself, not in any particular tradition's application of it. A criterion is needed that does not presuppose very content whose validity is in question.

Inkar supplies such a criterion by changing object of inquiry. Instead of asking whether Other's beliefs match one's own — which is a question that can only be answered by appeal to one's own beliefs, and is therefore unfalsifiable by design — the *inkar* criterion asks whether a person has consciously and freely rejected a religious message after adequate encounter with it. This is a question about an act and its epistemic preconditions, not about doctrinal content, and it is in principle answerable independently of which tradition is asking it. The paper treats this substitution as paper's central logical move, and traces three implications that follow from it.

The first implication concerns burden of proof. Faith-based typologies treat the Other's exclusion as a default position, occasionally softened by inclusivist concession. The *inkar* criterion inverts this: condemnation of the religious Other is treated as a claim requiring justification, not a baseline requiring exception. That justification must satisfy jointly demanding epistemic conditions. Namely, a clear and direct encounter with message in question, freedom from coercion or distorting circumstance, and epistemic adequacy sufficient to ground a considered rather than a reactive judgment. These conditions must all occur together. In daily life, that rarely happens. Therefore, conscious rejection is set to a higher threshold. It requires stronger justification. By contrast, rejection that is uninformed, pressured, or based on inadequate knowledge does not need such justification. In those cases, disbelief is not concluded.

The second implication concerns criterion's portability across traditions. A principle built from one tradition's confessional content cannot be applied by another tradition without first being translated into, or subordinated to, that tradition's own categories, which reintroduces the very circularity the model is meant to avoid. *Inkar* criterion avoids this by locating its operative standard not in doctrine but in *vicdan* (moral conscience) and its expression through the Golden Rule, a constant that operates beneath and independently of confessional variation [4]. Because *vicdan* is not proprietary to any single tradition, the criterion can, in principle, be applied symmetrically. So, a Muslim may ask whether a Christian has committed *inkar* by the same logical procedure a Christian may apply to a Muslim, without either side first requiring the other's doctrinal system to validate terms of inquiry. This symmetry is what makes the criterion tradition-independent in a logical, and not merely a rhetorical, sense.

The final implication is descriptive instead of normative: the coarse believer/disbeliever binary inherited from the standard typology cannot capture the actual distribution of religious actors, because it collapses two distinct axes — depth of conviction and direction of conviction — into one. The paper's four-level belief-*inkar* matrix (conscious faith, imitative faith, imitative rejection, conscious rejection) restores this missing axis, distinguishing deliberated, examined commitment from inherited, unexamined conformity on both the affirming and rejecting sides of the boundary. Since conscious faith and conscious rejection

are, on any plausible account of

ordinary religious life, minority conditions, most actual cases fall into the imitative categories that the binary simply has no vocabulary for. It is a gap the paper treats as a further symptom of the standard typology's inadequacy, and one the matrix is built specifically to close.

Finally, paper turns criterion on itself and asks what happens when it is honestly applied. Because the criterion's conditions are individually demanding and must be jointly satisfied, the paper claims that in overwhelming majority of real cases the honest conclusion is not a verdict of conscious rejection but an acknowledgment that such a verdict cannot be reached on available evidence. This generates, by the criterion's own internal logic instead of external condition, a default posture of salvific openness toward the religious Other. The paper insists that this outcome is not evidence of the framework's indeterminacy or weakness. But it is about its central logical contribution. Namely, it is a criterion for interreligious dialogue whose chief effect is disciplined epistemic restraint, which is doing exactly work such a criterion should do.

References

- [1] Race, A. 1983. Christians and religious pluralism: Patterns in the Christian theology of religions. SCM Press.
- [2] Turkish Language Association (TDK). (n.d.). Güncel Türkçe Sözlük. Retrieved from <https://sozluk.gov.tr/>
- [3] Hick, J. 2004. An interpretation of religion: Human responses to the transcendent (2nd ed.). Yale University Press.
- [4] Wattles, J. 1996. The Golden Rule. Oxford University Press.

Paradoxes, Religious Dialogue, and the Logic of Oscillation

Stanisław Krajewski, University of Warsaw, Poland, stankrajewski@uw.edu.pl

Religious dialogue can refer either to an interfaith exchange or to a debate within a single religious tradition. While it is generally recognized that religious statements can contradict the tenets of another religion, it is also true that internal discourse within a single tradition can give rise to inconsistencies or paradoxes. In my presentation I will show different ways of addressing the problem of such inconsistencies. The last one is based on the concept of oscillation between incompatible approaches seems to offer a promising way of engaging with these theological tensions. Considered as a general concept, oscillation is not an additional ingredient but an essential aspect of the situation. It takes place between two incompatible approaches to an experienced reality: from one approach to another, then back, and then again, and again. Both approaches are needed, but having adopted one of them, the participant is led to realize the need for the other.

Payipwât's Wager: Three Epistemological Arguments

Eric Wilkinson, University of British Columbia, Canada, eric.wilkinson@ubc.ca

Chief Payipwât (c. 1816–1908) was an eminent nineteenth-century leader of the Plains Cree in what is today Saskatchewan. As a proponent of preserving traditional Cree religious practices, he would often debate epistemology and religious philosophy with Christian religious leaders and government administrators. Payipwât had one such conversation with Father Joseph Hugonard (1848–1917), the principal of Qu'Appelle Industrial School. In their exchange, Payipwât gave several epistemological arguments in favour of religious pluralism. In particular, he says that Hugonard lacks justification for believing in the truth of Christianity, as opposed to any other religion. Accordingly, Payipwât determines that the epistemically responsible approach is for one to become knowledgeable about multiple religions. In this article, I present Payipwât's arguments for religious pluralism and epistemic humility by drawing on records of his debate with Hugonard, and his interactions with government officials. In doing so, I analyze those arguments using concepts from both western philosophy and Indigenous epistemology. Additionally, I contextualize Payipwât's arguments by exploring how they relate to his resistance to the Canadian government's suppression of Indigenous religious practices.

Remarks on Three Ontological Proofs and One Disproof

Tomasz Kąkol, Assistant Professor, Institute of Philosophy of the University of Gdańsk, Poland,
tomasz.kakol@ug.edu.pl

The so-called proofs for the existence of God are unnecessary for those who know God personally—that is, mystics—just as I do not need proof for the existence of my wife or my son. Nevertheless, if you are not a mystic, you have every right to be interested in the issue of proofs for the existence of God.

Although the distinction between immediate and indirect knowledge has long been contested, let us assume that it makes sense. In that case—apart from mystics—people are limited to, at most, indirect knowledge of God. Traditionally, indirect knowledge boils down to reasoning, while immediate knowledge boils down to perception. Reasoning vel proof can be deductive or reductive, to use Jan Łukasiewicz's terminology. If we argue that the existence of God explains, for example, the existence of the world, experiences called mystical, or anything else, we are dealing with reductive proofs. Such is the type of proof proposed by R. Swinburne or M. Heller. St. Thomas's "Five Ways" or the ontological proofs of St. Anselm, Descartes, Spinoza, or Leibniz are of a deductive character. A deductive proof is nothing other than a Hilbertian proof, that is, a standard proof in the metamathematical vel metalogical sense.

In this presentation, I would like to share a few remarks regarding three ontological proofs for the existence of God and one disproof, namely the alleged ontological proof for the non-existence of God. The first proof (in [7]) is inspired by Leibniz's philosophy, the second one (in [2]) is an attempt to formalize Anselm's famous proof; the third one (in [3]) is a formalization of Anselm's proof that is closer (and perhaps the closest) to the original. The disproof, on the other hand, was reconstructed by P. Hajek (in [1]) as an argument presented by Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz (1606–1682). As usual, I will focus on what, if anything, in these proofs might be problematic—problematic from the perspective of someone seeking a formally valid proof with intuitive premises.

Basic findings are as follows:

The first proof, the most sophisticated among the ones discussed here, suffers from several formal (logical) errors (some of them were also detected by Rygalski in [8]) and material (extra-logical) (possible) errors. However, a drastically modified, in particular, simplified version of this proof is OK:

$\{\forall x [x \leq |g|, |x| \leq |y| \wedge E(x) \rightarrow E(y), \exists x E(x)]\}$ entails $E(g)$

where ' $|x|$ ' means 'the degree of the reality of x ', ' g ' is the constant denoting God and ' E ' is the predicate of existence (understood in a non-quantificational sense, of course). Obviously, $\leq := < \text{ or } =$.

The second one has the unacceptable definition of the notion of coherence, nested in axiom 3:

$Em(x) \rightarrow K(x)$

where the first predicate signifies the intentional existence and the second one – coherence, defined as the possibility of conceiving that there exists (in fact, in reality) an object indistinguishable from x in every respect except for existence. One can also have doubts about the n -arity of the key relation in the argument – the same goes for the next proof. Axiom 2 of the third proof, i. e.:

$\neg E(g) \rightarrow \Diamond \exists x (E(x) \wedge x > g)$

(if God does not actually exist, then it is possible to conceive consistently that there actually exists something more perfect than God)

is not obvious in the light of axiom 1:

$\neg \Diamond \exists x (x > g)$

(it is impossible to conceive consistently of anything more perfect than God).

The disproof, in turn, is unclear – I suggest three interpretations and under each at least one axiom is doubtful. Only at first glance it looks correct:

$\{\Diamond \neg \exists x E(x), E(g) \rightarrow \Box E(g), \Box \text{ - monotonicity}, \Box A \rightarrow \neg \Diamond \neg A\}$ entails $\neg E(g)$.

Finally, some remarks about the aim and scope of ontological proofs in general are also given, especially this one: from the perspective of a theist (i.e., a proponent of the thesis that there is at least one God who is a person), the worst thing may seem to be that the proofs assume such a poor characterization of God that it does not rule out a God understood in a non-theistic sense. And yet, ontological proofs have always been about the God of theism.

This objection can be met: let us not demand more from ontological proofs than they can provide. The fact that even an a-theist, i.e., a non-theist (e.g., a pantheist—let me remind you that Spinoza also formulated ontological arguments [see, e.g., [4], [5] and [6]) can accept an ontological argument without contradiction, it need not be a reason to reject it.

References

- [1] Hajek, P. (2008). Ontological Proofs of Existence and Non-Existence. *Studia Logica*, 90, 257–262. doi.org/10.1007/s11225-008-9151-4
- [2] Jarmużek, T. and Nowicki, M. (2004). Ratio Anselmi. In: J. Malinowski, A. Pietruszczak (eds.). *Wokół filozofii logicznej* (165–178). Wydawnictwo UMK.
- [3] Jarmużek, T. and Nowicki, M. and Pietruszczak, A. (2006). An Outline of the Anselmian Theory of God. In: J. Malinowski, A. Pietruszczak (eds.). *Essays in Logic and Ontology* (317–330). Rodopi. doi.org/10.1163/9789004332966_021
- [4] Kąkol, T. (2011). Spinozjański argument za substancjalnym monizmem numerycznym. In: J. Żelazna (ed). *Filozofia XVII wieku: twórcy, problemy, kontynuacje* (163–176). Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK.
- [5] Kąkol, T. (2012). W kwestii dowodów Spinozy na istnienie Boga i dowodu na jedyność Spinozjańskiej substancji. *Filo-Sofija*, 17(2), 83–100.
- [6] Kąkol, T. (2015). Aquinas and the Ontological Argument. In: M. Szatkowski (ed.). *Analytically Oriented Thomism* (79–91). Editiones Scholasticae.
- [7] Perzanowski, J. (1991). Ontological Arguments II: Cartesian and Leibnizian. In: H. Burkhardt, B. Smith (eds.). *Handbook of Metaphysics and Ontology*, Vol. 2 (625–633; the proof discussed here is on pages 630–633). Philosophia Verlag.
- [8] Rygalski, A. (2015). Analiza dowodu ontologicznego Jerzego Perzanowskiego. *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, 43(1), 53–60.

Mysticism and the Logic of Panentheism

Organisers: Ricardo Silvestre, Benedikt Paul Göcke

Keynote: Philip Clayton, Claremont School of Theology, USA: The Logics of Infinity and Inclusion: Rāmānuja, Śaṅkara, and Contemporary Panentheism

The workshop explores the rich and often underexamined relationship between panentheistic models of the divine and mystical experience, while bringing into focus the logical structures that underlie panentheistic thought. Particular attention will be given to how panentheism seeks to articulate the coexistence of divine immanence and transcendence, and to the ways in which this dual affirmation both motivates and challenges a formal philosophical analysis. By integrating perspectives from philosophy, theology, and religious studies, the workshop aims to foster a deeper understanding of panentheism as both a conceptual framework and a lived, experiential orientation.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Mysticism and panentheistic metaphysics;
- The impact of a panentheistic worldview on spiritual practice and religious life
- The logical coherence of panentheism;
- The demarcation problem (distinguishing panentheism from pantheism, classical theism, and related models);
- Panentheism in relation to other models of God;
- Panentheism and contemporary science;
- Ecological implications of panentheism.

Karl Christian Friedrich Krause as Panentheistic Process Philosophy

Benedikt Paul Göcke

Karl Christian Friedrich Krause receives little attention in contemporary philosophy in the German- and English-speaking world. This is surprising, since Krause's philosophical system provides a paradigmatic example of rational systematic thinking that, both in method and content, responds remarkably well to the philosophical needs of the present. Through transcendental-phenomenological reflection, it leads to the immediately certain cognition of the one infinite and unconditioned organism of reality, discloses this organism as the ever-already-presupposed whole of being and cognition, and renders everything finite intelligible as a moment of the divine organism. That is, Krause's theory of the divine organism is panentheism, and as panentheism it is process philosophy: the whole of reality reveals itself as the one infinite and unconditioned organism of reality. Everything is organically interconnected in its being and determinate character in and through the divine organism itself, whose inner organic self-realization in the form of time constitutes the One inner Life of God. Science is directed toward the cognition of this organism and its parts and strives toward the ideal of the self-whole-essence intuition of its respective objects of cognition in the form of their respective infinite fundamental concepts, their *conceptus completus*. Since everything is interconnected in and through God and unfolds organically, and since the divine organism in itself is infinite and unconditioned in every respect, science is inscribed upon the human spirit as an infinite task and, as such, can only be the work of humanity unfolding itself historically. The individual, synchronically and diachronically connected with humanity as a whole, builds upon its achievements and participates organically in its development without ever being able to await its completion:

God Beyond and Within: Rethinking Monotheism through Panentheism in Suhrawardī and Schelling

Mohamad Mahdi Davar, PhD Student in Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

This paper, using the concept of Light (Nūr) in the philosophy of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and the concept of Ground (Grund) in the late philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, seeks to explain the panentheistic worldview of these two philosophers concerning being. By examining their views, it is found that their understanding of God is based on monotheism while also containing panentheistic aspects. The study addresses the tension between monotheism and panentheism regarding the relation between God and the world, asking what philosophical and mystical structure allows them to coexist without identifying God with the world. In this paper, I show that despite their different foundations, Suhrawardī and Schelling share a common point: the presentation of a panentheistic form of monotheism in which divine unity is preserved within a panentheistic framework. This study employs comparative metaphysical and logical analysis and focuses on the concepts of Light in Suhrawardī and Ground in Schelling. I argue that Suhrawardī explains the relation between Light of Lights (Nūr al-Anwār=God) and the world through the manifestation of light, while Schelling accounts for it through the distinction between existence and Ground. It can, therefore, be argued that this study redefines panentheism as a logical, metaphysical, and mystical alternative to pure monotheism and pantheism.

Keywords: Panentheism, Monotheism, Light, Ground.

The Logics of Infinity and Inclusion: Rāmānuja, Śaṅkara, and Contemporary Panentheism

Philp Clayton, Claremont School of Theology, USA, pclayton@cst.edu

The competing options in the study of panentheism stand out for their vastly different starting points. In the South Asian debates, what we call panentheism is supported by the eternality of the world, whereas Jewish and Christian thinkers discussing a created world have argued that the only “place” God could create a world would be within the Divine itself.

The array of approaches to panentheism only expands from there. Western philosophers and theologians in the modern period have turned to panentheism as the best solution to the problem of evil, the God-world relation, the apparent conflicts between science and theology, the problem of divine action, and the problem of evil—just to name a few. In a highly influential article [1], Benedikt Göcke has argued that the necessity of the world is the chief distinguishing mark of panentheism: “I argue that panentheism and classical theism differ only as regards the modal status of the world. According to panentheism, the world is an intrinsic property of God—necessarily there is a world—and according to classical theism the world is an extrinsic property of God—it is only contingently true that there is a world.”

Since my second book [2], and over the intervening years since then, I have come to believe that the case for panentheism turns on the logics of infinity and inclusion. For Hegel the logic of infinity was sufficient to make the case: only *das schlechte Unendliche* (the “bad” or “spurious” infinite) separates the finite and the infinite, often by imagining a finite quantity endlessly growing larger and larger, a sort of *progressus in infinitum*. The only adequate concept of infinity (*das wahre Unendliche*), Hegel insists, is one in which all finite things are included within the infinite—*aufgehoben*, as he says: transcended yet preserved.

Infinity and inclusion are deeply intertwined in both the Eastern and the Western discussions. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* describes Brahman as “truth, knowledge, infinite” (*satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*, TU 2.1.1). Despite vast differences in philosophical backgrounds, sacred texts, and religious interests, I suggest that the logics of Eastern and Western panentheism are similar.

The metaphysical notion of infinity has important epistemological implications. For we must immediately ask: to what extent can human reason grasp and make claims about a metaphysical reality that is absolutely without limit, qualitatively different from the finite realities that we experience in our ever-expanding pursuit of knowledge within an ever-expanding universe?

It’s at this point that the intersections of logic and mysticism call for attention. Panentheism postulates that the ultimate metaphysical reality possesses at least some person-like qualities. For shorthand, let’s use the term “relational ultimate” for those metaphysical views that affirm qualities of the ultimate at least distantly analogous to qualities that we associate with persons. Isn’t it clear that finite rational agents will not have the capacity to construct a complete, comprehensive account of a relational ultimate that is infinite? Our efforts will break down or fall short at some point; we won’t be able to go the full distance.

If indeed philosophical attempts to describe and defend a relational ultimate often (or even always) hit a limit, it’s crucial to connect metaphysical proposals with some amount of epistemological account-keeping as to where those limits might lie. More precisely, rational arguments that defend a metaphysical thesis must be paired with ongoing epistemological reflection on whether (and if so, how) the philosophical language begins to fall short as it attempts to describe ultimate reality in human language.

In this workshop we are focusing on relations between the logic of panentheism and mysticism. I understand mysticism to refer to unmediated internal psychological experiences of individuals, usually experiences that they associate with religious or spiritual contexts. In *Varieties of Religious Experience* William James argues that these experiences usually have content (a “noetic quality”), even when the insights seem ineffable. The experiences seem to come to the person, rather than being created by them (“passivity”), and they are eventually pass (“transiency”).

In religiously oriented contexts, the breakdown of philosophical language is often associated with the turn to some sort of mystical experience. Thus it’s not surprising that we find

examples of panentheisms that combine (what appear to be) philosophical and mystical uses of language. But how exactly are philosophical and mystical elements related? It's often argued, for example, that the mystical dimension arises as philosophical languages approaches its limits—a well-known claim that is both attractive and problematic at the same time.

But, first, not all cases of the breakdown of language give rise to mysticism. There are no mystical overtones at the end of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, which concludes with the famous proposition: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen). Something can be ineffable and not mystical. Second, not all mystical experiences have to do with the breakdown or limits of language. It's not as if only apophatic experiences are associated with mysticism; kataphatic texts and images can be mystical as well.

Among philosophical topics, however, mysticism is most often associated with metaphysical proposals that affirm a "relational ultimate" as defined above—keeping in mind that a relational ultimate is not necessarily a personal being. Mystical elements are pervasive in Rāmānuja's work, for example; after all, his panentheism is central to the bhakti or Devotion tradition in Hinduism. We find the same inclusion in many (but certainly not all!) panentheist theologians and philosophers who work in the Abrahamic traditions. But these are only the obvious examples. Many also speak of a mystical dimension in Spinoza's metaphysics—most boldly the German philosopher Novalis, who described Spinoza as a "God-intoxicated man" (ein Gott-betrunkener Mensch). And the same is true of Eastern thinkers who use the categories of consciousness or awareness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*) to define the ultimate, as Śaṅkara does when he uses the Sanskrit compound often transliterated as *sat-cit-ānanda*.

So clearly not only personalist theism, but a wide range of relational metaphysical views spawn mystical responses. I have stressed the connections between mysticism and relational ontology; now, however, I must admit that the relationship between metaphysics and mysticism is not limited to these connections. The *Tao Te Ching*, one of most famous examples among mystical texts, centers on the Tao, which is a completely non-relational ultimate. Indeed, even naturalistic metaphysics are often associated with mystical responses, as my co-author argues in our recent book on *Science and the Sacred* [3].

One final point: mystical experiences may be associated with the gradual failure of language to grasp the insights that a metaphysician is seeking to express. The strongest panentheistic philosophies in both East and West are immensely complex; to fully grasp them requires years of study. When one masters the full sophistication of the panentheism of Hegel or Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara, or the Vishishtadvaita school of Rāmānuja, one also becomes aware of their limitations, realizing where they fall short. I can assure you that the failures of the theories, after decades of study, can indeed lead to "unmediated internal psychological experiences" of one kind or another. Which of these experiences count as genuinely mystical is a question I must leave to you to decide.

References

- [1] Göcke, B.P. (2013). Panentheism and Classical Theism. *Sophia*, 52, 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-011-0292-y>.
- [2] Clayton, P. (1998). *God and Contemporary Science*. Edinburgh University Press and Eerdmans.
- [3] Clayton, P. & Pearce, C.S. (2025). *Science and the Sacred: Beyond the Gods in Our Image*.

Distinct but Not Separate: Cartesian Theism, Panentheism, and Mystical Participation

Joshua Farris, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, joshua.r.farris@gmail.com

In previous work, I argued that contemporary emergent-theisms inherit significant explanatory problems from the naturalistic frameworks from which they emerge. In particular, emergent accounts struggle to explain the primitive particularity of conscious subjects, the unity of consciousness, and the relation between divine agency and the natural world. I suggested there that Cartesian theism has resources for explaining what emergent theism leaves unexplained, while an Edwardsian and idealist extension of Cartesian theism might provide something approaching an eschatological panentheism. I develop that proposal here. I begin by extending the critique of naturalism and theological naturalism before arguing that substantial distinction need not entail metaphysical separation. This opens a neglected Cartesian route toward panentheism. Drawing upon recent proposals concerning divine spatiality, I consider whether creation might exist within a divine field of presence while remaining substantially distinct from God. I then connect this metaphysical proposal with Christian accounts of mystical participation and deification. Finally, I consider whether the resulting view is genuinely panentheistic or instead represents a particularly strong version of classical participatory theism. I suggest that the answer turns on the metaphysics of the claim that the world exists in God

Rethinking the Demarcation Problem of Panentheism: Bhedābheda Vedānta and the Panentheistic Paradox

Ricardo Silvestre, Universidade de Campina Grande, Rss.logos@gmail.com

Panentheism is commonly understood as a position intermediate between pantheism and classical theism. It seeks to affirm both God-world unity and God-world distinction: the world is somehow “in” or united with God, while God nevertheless remains distinct from and more than the world. This combination, however, generates a persistent demarcation problem. If unity is emphasized too strongly, panentheism appears to collapse into pantheism; if distinction is emphasized too strongly, it becomes difficult to distinguish it from other forms of theism. This difficulty is closely connected with what Gregory Peterson calls the “panentheistic paradox”: the claim that God both is and is not the world, that God and the world are united yet distinct.

I approach this problem through Bhedābheda Vedānta, a family of Indian philosophical traditions according to which Brahman is simultaneously different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from individual souls and the world. I focus particularly on the Acintya Bhedābheda theology of the sixteenth-century thinker Jīva Gosvāmī. Jīva’s position can be interpreted in different ways, ranging from non-contradictory accounts of difference and non-difference to stronger paradoxical and contradictory interpretations. I argue that the stronger interpretations are philosophically significant because they bring into focus a limiting structure in which the two characteristic aspirations of panentheism—God-world unity and distinction—are jointly preserved and pushed toward their limits.

This suggests a different approach to the demarcation problem. Rather than seeking necessary and sufficient conditions for panentheism, I propose understanding it as a graded category organized around an ideal or limiting case. On this similarity-based approach, contradictory panentheism functions as an ideal, and particular models count as panentheistic insofar as they sufficiently resemble it. The framework can be formalized in terms of degrees of commitment to unity and distinction and degrees of opposition between them, allowing comparison among models such as those of Thomas Oberle, Charles Hartshorne, Ryan Mullins, and Philip Clayton, as well as classical theism and pantheism.

The resulting account treats borderline cases not as failures of definition but as expected features of a graded concept. The broader lesson is that the panentheistic paradox may be more than a problem to be eliminated: it may provide an important clue to the conceptual structure of panentheism itself.

Rethinking the Demarcation Problem of Panentheism: Bhedābheda Vedānta and the Panentheistic Paradox: Panentheism and God's Motive to Create

Ryan T. Mullins, Universität Luzern, rtmullins@gmail.com

Abstract: Why would God create anything at all? Why would God create this particular universe? These are difficult questions in philosophical theology that every model of God must address. In this talk, I will critically examine the panentheist answers that arise from Jonathan Edwards and Thomas Jay Oord. I argue that Edwards is unable to answer either question, whereas Oord is able to answer both questions. However, I will argue that Oord's view might face other difficulties related to an ultimate explanation of reality.

The Intimate Infinite: Testing Panentheisms by Mysticism and Logic

Stephen Priest, University of Oxford, stephenpriest99@hotmail.com

Could panentheism be confirmed or refuted by mystical experience? Some versions of panentheism are distinguished and analysed: Krause-Panentheism, Clayton-Panentheism, Göcke-Panentheism, Hartshorne-Panentheism, and some possible Panentheisms in Vedanta and Plotinus. The logical relations of these types (or putative types) of panentheism to classical theism are clarified. Panentheism emerges, not as a homogeneous doctrine, but as characterised by some or all of the following theses:

- [a] The One in itself is the All (Krause)
- [b] The One through itself is the All (Krause)
- [c] The world is within God (Clayton)
- [d] God transcends the world (Clayton)
- [e] The world is an intrinsic property of God (Gocke)
- [f] The world necessarily exists (Gocke)
- [g] The world is God's body (Hartshorne)
- [h] God is the whole (Hartshorne)
- [i] The world is God's parts. (Hartshorne)
- [j] Part and Whole Panentheism (Rig Veda)
- [k] God includes the universe. (Hartshorne)
- [l] God is not identical with [the universe]. (Hartshorne)
- [m] God is present within all things (Plotinus)
- [n] God pervades the universe. (Bhagavad-Gita)
- [o] All things abide in God. (Bhagavad-Gita)
- [p] God does not abide in things. (Bhagavad-Gita)

Each panentheistic thesis is tested against some findings of meditation, especially as conducted by Vedantic, Buddhist, and Christian mystics. Whether panentheism may be confirmed or refuted by mystical experience crucially depends on the distinction between (1) 'God is everywhere', and (2) 'God is everything' and the grounds for interpreting, on a fundamental level, what there is as possessing the essential properties of God.

Psychoanalysis, Spiritual and Logical Dimensions

Organizers: Christos Sidera and Maira de Cinque

Keynote: Loray Daws, The International Masterson Institute

This workshop explores the intersections between psychoanalysis, spirituality, and logic, with particular attention to how each domain articulates different forms of meaning, truth, and subjectivity.

Psychoanalysis has long engaged with questions that exceed empirical description: desire, unconscious structures, symbolic formations, and the limits of rational articulation. Spiritual traditions, in turn, often address experiences that resist formalization, invoking transcendence, faith, and transformation. Logic, by contrast, has historically been associated with clarity, structure, and formal rigor.

Rather than treating these domains as mutually exclusive, this workshop invites contributions that examine their tensions, overlaps, and possible integrations. What forms of reasoning emerge when unconscious processes, spiritual experience, and logical structures intersect? Can logic account for the paradoxes found in psychoanalytic and spiritual discourse? Or do these domains reveal limits internal to logical systems themselves?

We welcome papers that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- The logical structure of psychoanalytic concepts (e.g., desire, lack, repetition, the unconscious)
- Paradox, contradiction, and negation in psychoanalysis and spirituality
- The role of language in shaping psychic and spiritual experience
- Psychoanalysis and religious experience: convergence or irreducibility
- Formal versus non-formal reasoning in therapeutic and spiritual practices
- The limits of rationality in relation to faith, belief, and subjectivity
- Logic and the symbolic: from classical systems to alternative logics
- Embodiment, affect, and their resistance to formalization

We particularly encourage interdisciplinary approaches that bring together philosophy, psychoanalysis, religious studies, cognitive science, and related fields.

A Philosophical Defense of Freud's Unconscious

Gaudi Costa, gaudisps5@gmail.com

Within psychological and philosophical discourse, much emphasis is given to the mind as rational faculty, studying the form and structure of thought, creating a notion of the intellect as the supreme source of clarity and certainty. There is, however, an element equally fundamental to a thorough discussion of the mind; one which is mostly implicit in the extensive literature of the mind, lying covert in our every action and thought. This element we may term desire. The fact of attraction, of want and need, is one which must be investigated to its depth in order to proclaim any sort of knowledge of the human condition. Evidently, the inclusion of desire into a philosophy of mind demands a departure from purely rational psychology, and thus a shift into the realm of empirical observation.

Logic, as a science of the formal conditions for knowledge, inherently belongs to the rational aspect of the mind, being, as Kant puts it, [1] a negative test of truth, a *sine qua non* of argumentation. A statement is produced, and it is the work of the logician to examine whether such a statement is compatible with this or that system. A logician, thus, never gains the authority to make a positive claim about Nature, but only examines the structure of such claims in regard to the formal laws of thought, eliminating contradictions and paradoxes. Therefore, the most complete knowledge of logic provides us not with insight about the mechanisms of the mind, but with a critical foundation to analyze its potential and limitations.

The proposition of unconscious mental processes creates an obstacle for the logically inclined, since the very premise of thought is entangled with the notion of consciousness. This is most natural, since thought is characterized as a phenomenon observed directly in experience. But upon an expansive investigation of the mind's structure, departing from empirical facts, one confronts the explanatory inadequacy of our current model of the mind in the analysis of phenomena. The claim of unconscious mechanisms asks the question of the thought's origin, and its intention. Thus, the proposition does not claim that a thought is present which cannot be experienced, but that there is a series of events which lead to the very formation of a thought, and to discuss it we must expand our concept of thought itself. Thought must no longer be considered the pure and immediate product of an abstracted thinking subject, but instead, as held by psychoanalysis, merely the superficial manifestation of a chain of events enacted within the psyche, which are not experienced directly, but must be inferred from phenomena.

Psychoanalysis began not from speculation, but from the direct study of pathological patients. Analysts were constantly faced with cases which deeply confounded scientific knowledge. It is from the fertile ground of observation that the proposition of unconscious mental activity arose. The unconscious, epistemologically, is not directly experienced, but rather inferred as an

explanatory hypothesis from conscious phenomena, symptoms, dreams, slips, and behavior. It surged as an undetermined X, underlying the essence of a variety of pathological cases, one which is still under much discussion within psychoanalytic literature, but nevertheless a valuable hypothesis, since it paves the way for a new language for the mind. Wittgenstein [2], criticizing psychoanalysis, called this language mythological, rather than scientific, an observation which makes salient the unscientific aspect of this pursuit, opening doors to an investigation of the deep, even primordial nature of the mind. While contemporary psychiatry often approaches mental illness through diagnosis and biological or pharmacological intervention, psychoanalysis has a different aim: the interpretation of symptoms as expressions of underlying psychic processes.

Kant's Critique of Pure Reason investigates the conditions and limits of human cognition, rather than the mind as an empirical psychological object. In doing so, he posits the existence of "faculties" whose activity makes cognition possible, particularly sensibility, understanding, and reason. In his "Ego and the Id", Freud proposes a theory of the psyche which parallels Kant's investigative route, positing the existence of psychical agents which condition thought and behavior. The two thinkers share an interest in searching further than immediately given experience toward the conditions that make conscious thought and behavior possible. Yet their methods and aims differ fundamentally: Kant investigates the transcendental conditions of cognition, whereas Freud constructs a psychological model of

processes inferred from experience. In other words, Kant's inquiry is transcendental and epistemological, whereas Freud's is psychological and clinical. The psyche, as contrasted with mind, is a more ancient concept, and one which is bound to desire, as seen in the myth of Psyche, who is the immortal wife of Eros. The investigation of the mind as purely rational faculty, isolated from desire, is a relatively new pursuit, characteristic of an Enlightenment faith in reason. Therefore, a psychological system that seriously investigates the role of desire in phenomena enters into discourse with the likes of Plato [3] and Schopenhauer.

This article intends to demonstrate the compatibility between Freud's and Schopenhauer's psychological systems, opening a new way to discuss and investigate desire. Further, this article explores the shared essence investigated by both thinkers, namely, the characterization of desire as an underlying force that precedes and conditions conscious representation. Finally, the text argues for its connection to ancient spiritual traditions, such as Hinduism and Taoism. While the synthesis of modern psychology and ancient spirituality is certainly no revolutionary addition to our total knowledge, this article aims not merely to stimulate discourse, but to promote a new perspective which brings ancient wisdom into familiar language to the modern world.

References

[1] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason : "This part of logic may, therefore, be called Analytic, and is at least the negative test of truth, because all knowledge must first of all be estimated and tried according to these laws before we proceed to investigate them in respect of their content, in order to discover whether they contain positive truth in regard to their object."

[2] "Conversations on Freud" p 1-11 Wollheim and Hopkins 1982

[3] Plato, Phaedo

Freud's Better Illusion: The Rhetoric of Debunking

Houman Mehrabian, University Canada West, Canada, houman.mehrabian@gmail.com

Like Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud unsettles the common ways in which reality has long been viewed. Michel Foucault [1] and Paul Ricoeur [2] call these three thinkers

the “masters of suspicion.” Despite their differences, what unites these masters of the school of suspicion is an interpretive attitude (Ricoeur, pp. 32-36)—they introduce, according to Foucault, a “modern hermeneutics.” In matters of religion, Marx describes it as the opium of the masses [3]. Nietzsche regards it as an expression of slave morality—a moral system born from the resentment of the weak toward the strong [4]. Freud holds that religion is immaturity [5]. According to the father of psychoanalysis, belief in a divine figure emerges from a profound human longing for comfort and protection. Psychologically, the idea of God, Freud argues, operates as an ideal father figure who makes the believer feel safe against the harms of nature and the demands of civilization. In God, the believer finds a superior substitute for their real father (with all his disappointing human imperfections). For Freud, therefore, religion proceeds from “the projection of omnipotence” (Ricoeur, p. 233).

In this essay, I will present a rhetorical analysis of Freud's investigation into religion in “The Future of an Illusion” (*Die Zukunft einer Illusion*) (1927). In the classical rhetorical tradition, every case hinges upon an underlying question—what the ancient Greeks referred to as *stasis* and the Romans as *status* or *constitutionem*. The principal types of this point at issue, according to Quintilian, are conjecture, definition, and quality: whether a thing exists at all, what precisely the thing that exists is, and what character or value ought to be attributed to it [6]. I will demonstrate that Freud's criticism of religion begins with a conjectural basis, arguing that religion is founded on childish illusion rather than truth. But after making this controversial claim, Freud does not simply dismiss religion. He goes on to define and classify it, explaining its origin and the human need for it. At this point, the subject under discussion revolves around a definitive basis. However, Freud cannot stop here. The alternative he offers—namely scientific reasoning—is not able to escape the classification Freud assigns to religion. The claim that logical thinking can completely protect us from the dangers of nature and the relentless expectations of civilization can be nothing but another illusion. Freud himself admits this: “But I will moderate my zeal and admit the possibility that I, too, am chasing an illusion” (p. 48). At this critical point in his argument, I will illustrate, Freud shifts to a qualitative basis. In order to save himself from the trap he himself laid, in order to prevent his critique of religion from collapsing into a critique of his own position, Freud then argues that his illusion is qualitatively superior to the religious one.

At its core, then, Freud's speculative theory—a rhetorical argument founded on the idea of the outward projection of paternal omnipotence—contends that religion is an illusion sustained by fear, while his proposed alternative constitutes a better illusion because, unlike religion, it remains open to criticism, revision, and doubt.

References

- [1] Foucault, M. (1998). Nietzsche, Freud, Marx (J. Anderson & G. Hentzi, Trans.). In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Aesthetics, method, and epistemology* (pp. 269-278). The New Press.
- [2] Ricoeur, P. (1970). *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation* (D. Savage, Trans.). Yale University Press.
- [3] Marx, K. (1970). *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of right"* (A. Jolin & J. O'Malley, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Nietzsche, F. (1998). *On the genealogy of morality: A Polemic* (M. Clark & A. J. Swensen, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.
- [5] Freud, S. (1961). *The Future of an Illusion* (J. Strachey, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company.
- [6] Quintilian. (2002). *The orator's education* (D. A. Russell, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

The 22 Trumps of the Viscontian Tarot (c.1440) Come From the 12 Miniatures of Le Myésier's Llullian Breviculum (c.1325): How Could Dummett's Logician "Scientific Study" of the Tarot Be So Misleading? A Link of This to Some Psychoanalytical Concepts

Alessio Moretti, Università telematica eCampus, Italy, alessio.moretti@unicampus.it

The "tarot" is a strange and mysterious ancient artefact, a deck of 78 cards, among which 22 intriguing "triumphs" or "trumps", which has turned into some kind of popular "pocketreligion", still viral nowadays [1].

Michael Dummett (1925-2011), a distinguished logician and "analytical" philosopher (and Roman Catholic thinker, [2,7,8]), led a crusade for demolishing such an esoteric aura of the tarots. After decades of works on the subject, surprising in a specialist of mathematical logic, his main claim was that tarots, in the origin, were only Renaissance, North-Italian playing cards, only much later (around the 19th century) transformed (by French occultists and self-proclaimed "magi") into alleged means of divination and esoteric "religion". "Logically inferred" from that, Dummett strongly recommended tarot-researchers to stop once and for all looking for the very idea of a purposed origin of the tarot, urging them instead towards the idea that the tarot's strange 22 trumps just emerged, chaotically, by simple progressive, unintended mechanical agglutination, by now almost impossible to reconstruct historically, but also, as such, not very much interesting in itself [5-6].

Dummett's bold claim has been immediately vividly cornered by the famous Renaissance scholar Frances A. Yates (1899-1981), as being very simplistic and, worse, highly unplausible with respect to what we consistently know about Renaissance beliefs, mentality and artistic production [20]. But Yates died almost immediately after such a protestation and Dummett, after that, did little effort to provide an answer to this fundamental objection of her. As it happens, Yates's serious reasons for doubting were lazily forgotten and Dummett's simplistic position became, progressively, almost standard ([9]): from one side, many historians of tarots passively accepted this idea that more spectacular discoveries about the tarots' origin were neither to be expected, nor to be looked for, and, from the other, this idea of an origin forever factually impossible to elucidate pleased even the esoteric "tarotists" (in principle, the intended polemical targets of Dummett's "rationalist" reform of the tarot-studies!), who founded on it, implicitly, their persistence in believing (against Dummett) that the Tarot is "ancestral" and bears a magical religious meaning and some "archetypical" power.

But, in the last ten years, Dummett's consensual claim has been irremediably refuted by two spectacular, if not yet duly noticed, unexpected discoveries on the historical morpho-genesis of the 22 trumps of the first tarot decks. First, Christophe Poncet has drawn attention ([17-18]) on the previously unseen fact that one of the most famous and inspiring families of tarot decks, the mysterious and puzzling "Marseilles tarots", is in fact - in its content - not French of the 17th-18th centuries (as is classically - although very problematically - believed), but Florentine of around 1470 (so, one of the very first tarots!), seemingly devised by none other than the great Italian Renaissance Neo-Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), the head of the Medicean semi-secret "Florentine Platonic Academy". This means that the tarot, no later than around 1470, pace Dummett, far from being "just a deck of playing cards", is, naturally enough, already full of serious conceptual content, magic-oriented conceptuality and intended symbolical-allegorical power (Poncet puts patiently and convincingly into relation the many,

until then puzzling visual elements of the Marseilles tarot with Ficinian scriptural and conceptual elements and even highlights one possible cryptic but convincing key allusion, by the Florentine philosopher, to his own creation and destination of that tarot). Poncet's groundbreaking discovery, has, de facto, successfully and usefully reduced (against Dummett's discouraging - and falsely grounded! - labyrinthic pessimism) the "complexity degree" of tarotist research. But it has left untouched the main, anterior and crucial question of knowing where from emerged, no later than in 1440 (i.e. 30 years before

Marsilio's presumed invention, around 1470, of a new, philosophical interpretation of the tarot-structure), near Milan, under the strict political rule of the paranoid ([4]) Duke Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447), the first known full-fledged tarot (with its fully original and still now surprising 22 "trumps"). It is in that respect that, second, in 2024 we have found an unexpected solution to this lasting riddle ([14]): we discovered that, beyond any reasonable doubt, almost all the 22 trumps are, either very explicitly, or seminally enough, contained, as details, in the 12 big square miniatures of a remarkable French late-gothic codex of around 1325: Thomas Le Myésier's (?-1336) famous *Breviculum* [16].

The *Breviculum* is, in fact, a remarkable medieval "comics" relating the ideas, memorable deeds and holy mission of Le Myésier's master, the great Catalan philosopher, Roman Catholic theologian and illuminated missionary Ramon Llull (1232-1316) [19]. Of our discovery we highlight here three aspects.

First, the material displacements of this codex, from Paris (where it was offered in 1325 by Le Myésier to the Queen of France, Joan the Lamé (1293-1349)) to Poitiers (where it suddenly appeared in 1582) and finally to Karlsruhe (where it appeared in 1736 and still stands now) are obscure. But we know that one of the grand-daughters of queen Joan the Lamé, Princess Isabelle de Valois (1348-1372), was given as spouse (1360) in Milan to Gian-Galeazzo Visconti (1351-1402), so that our hypothesis (the tarot's 22 trumps as "translatio Breviculi") is not only very convincing from the bare imaginal viewpoint (insofar there is a very strong matching of images between the *Breviculum* and the tarot's 22 trumps), but also from the material viewpoint (the *Breviculum*, we can now suppose, very probably went from Paris to Milan, to the Visconti family, where, in fact, the first tarot later appeared).

Second, the crucial question of who later created (and why, and how...) the first tarot (presumably for the disturbed Duke Filippo Maria Visconti, around 1440) and on what theoretical and cultural basis and project, is a question that we face in full detail in another study ([15]), where we will propose a solution to these important tarot-riddles.

Third, in this paper, after recalling this basic contextualisation, we propose a retrospective philosophical reflection on what seems to have been a remarkable methodological, persisting, harmful mistake of Dummett on the tarot-puzzle. After analysing it, we will suggest that this is, in fact, an instance of an even more general problem, active not only in the history of ideas, but also in pure mathematics. As an example, we analyse this with respect to one of our own mathematical discoveries, the "geometry of oppositions" [13], based on the concept of "simplex" (i.e. the geometrical counterpart of natural numbers). The logicist tradition, old and new, all focussed on "logic as such", has not only been unable to develop by itself a comparable mathematical model of "opposition" (a notion, in principle, of the highest importance for logic!), it has, worse, been quite active in durably hindering it (with misleading obsessive reasonings about "existential import"). These general harmful logicist mistakes, among others, involve, in general thinking, denying any meaningfulness to mathematically extra-logical concepts. These include some of those adopted by psychoanalysis, like in Lacan and Matte Blanco [3,11], who have fruitfully used non-logicist formal concepts (like simplexes or "topologemes"), in order to

investigate the psychiatric-psychanalytic complexity of the mind. As an example of this last point, we will argue that "perversion" [10,12], in its 3-contrariety with "neurosis" and "psychosis", is a useful candidate-concept for explaining something crucial of the invention of the tarot's 22 trumps.

References

- [1] Giordano Berti, *Storia dei tarocchi. Verità e leggenda sulle carte più misteriose del mondo*, Om, Bologna, 2022.
- [2] Cesare Cozzo, *Introduzione a Dummett*, Laterza, Bari-Roma, 2008.
- [3] Marc Darmon, *Essais sur la Topologie Lacanienne*, (Nouvelle édition, revue et augmentée) Editions de l'Association Lacanienne Internationale, Paris, 2004 (1990).
- [4] Pier Candido Decembrio, *Lives of the Milanese Tyrants*, (tr. Gary Ianziti, ed. Massimo Zaggia), Harvard UP, Cambridge MA, 2019 (1447, 1462).
- [5] Ronald Dekker, Thierry Depaulis and Michael Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards. The Origin of the Occult Tarot*, Duckworth, London, 2002 (1996).
- [6] Ronald Dekker and Michael Dummett, *A History of the Occult Tarot*, Duckworth, Richmond, 2019 (2002).
- [7] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, Harvard UP, Cambridge MA, 1991.

-
- [8] Michael Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*, Columbia UP, New York, 2010 (2001).
- [9] Helen Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot. From Entertainment to Esotericism*, Bloomsbury, London, 2009.
- [10] Sigmund Freud, *Névrose, psychose et perversion*, PUF, Paris, 2010.
- [11] Ignacio Matte Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets. An Essay in Bi-logic*, Karnac, London, 1998 (1975).
- [12] Catherine Millot, Gide, Genet, Mishima. *Intelligence de la perversion*, Gallimard, Paris, 1999.
- [13] Alessio Moretti, "B42: the Geometry of 4-Valued Contradiction", in: Lemanski J., Johansen M.W. (eds.), *Diagrammatic Reasoning and Inference*, 14th International Conference, *Diagrams 2024*, LNAI, vol. 14981, pp. 84-100, Springer, Cham, 2024.
- [14] Alessio Moretti, "Is Le Myésier's Breviculum, with its Twelve Gothic Miniatures on Llull's Life and Thought, the Visual Source of Most of the First Tarot's Trumps?", *Programme of the International Medieval Congress 07-10 July 2025*, University of Leeds, 15 May 2025.
- [15] Alessio Moretti, *Translatio Breviculi: The Historical (and Conceptual) Morpho-Genesis of the Tarot-Structure*, (draft book), 2027?
- [16] Thomae Migerii (Thomas Le Myésier), *Breviculum seu electorium parvum*, (edited by C. Lohr, T. Pindl-Büchel and W. Büchel), Brepols, Turnholt, 1990 (1325).
- [17] Christophe Poncet and Philippe Truffault, *Les mystères du tarot de Marseille*, (documentary film), ARTE France, 2015.
- [18] Christophe Poncet, *The Tarot of Marsilio. An Inquiry into the origins of the Tarot de Marseille. Volume I - Down Here*, Scarlet Imprint, London, 2024.
- [19] Villalba i Varneda, Ramon Llull Escriptor I filòsof de la diferència. Palma de Maiorca (1236-1316), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra, 2015.
- [20] Frances A. Yates, "In the Cards", *The New York Review of Books*, Feb. 1980, 1981 issue.

The Logic of Profit and Faith

Organizer: Maira de Cinque

Keynotes:

David Silver (University of British Columbia)

Samir Gandesha (Simon Fraser University): Capitalism as Religion

The workshop explores the tension and possible dialogue between the logic of profit and the logic of faith.

Rather than assuming that one can be reduced to the other, this workshop invites contributions that examine the irreducibility, conflict, and possible intersections between these two domains. What kind of “logic” governs profit? What kind of “logic” governs faith? And what happens when these logics intersect in human, institutional, or cultural practices?

Drawing on philosophical, theological, and interdisciplinary approaches, we aim to open a space for reflecting on how value is created, expressed, and negotiated across different forms of life.

- What distinguishes calculative reasoning from forms of reasoning grounded in faith, trust, or commitment?
- Can economic rationality account for values such as mercy, dignity, or sacrifice?
- Is there a limit to what can be measured, priced, or optimized?
- How do language, power, and social practices shape what counts as “value”?
- What role does uncertainty, chance, or contingency play in economic and ethical life?
- How do religious traditions challenge or reinforce contemporary economic systems?
- Can business ethics accommodate demands that exceed profit-oriented frameworks?
- What are the ethical implications of treating human life, labor, or relationships as economic variables?
- How do different cultural or religious traditions conceptualize wealth, obligation, and responsibility?
- What tensions arise between institutional logics (corporations, markets) and lived moral experience?

We particularly encourage work that engages with philosophy, logic, theology, economics, and critical theory, as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

Economics as Servant, Not Master: A Christian Reordering of Economic Rationality

Trevin S. Hannibal, University Canada West, Canada, trevin.hannibal@ucanwest.ca

Economic reasoning provides important tools for making choices under conditions of limited resources. Principles such as scarcity, rational self-interest, cost-benefit analysis, opportunity cost, and interdependence help individuals and organizations identify constraints, compare alternatives, recognize trade-offs, and respond to changing circumstances [1–3]. The concern of this paper is not that these principles are inherently incompatible with Christianity. Rather, the problem arises when principles developed to explain or assist economic decision-making move beyond their instrumental role and begin to function as ultimate governing principles of life. The central argument is that Christianity does not reject economic rationality; it reorders its ends. Economic reasoning can help determine how objectives may be pursued, but it cannot independently establish which objectives are ultimately worthy of pursuit.

Scarcity provides the starting point. Economics recognizes that resources have alternative uses and that not every objective can be achieved fully and simultaneously [1, 2]. Christianity accepts this material reality but introduces a normative question concerning human wants themselves. The biblical account of the Fall portrays human beings desiring something beyond the boundaries established by God despite abundant provision already available to them [4]. The Christian response to scarcity therefore involves more than allocation and production. It also involves examining desire, cultivating contentment, exercising stewardship, and recognizing that creation ultimately belongs to God. Scarcity explains why choices must be made; it does not determine which desires ought to govern those choices.

A similar distinction applies to homo economicus and rational self-interest. Economic reasoning can represent individuals as purposeful decision-makers who select alternatives expected to advance their objectives under existing constraints [5]. Those objectives need not be exclusively financial. Nevertheless, contemporary evidence demonstrates the substantial role money can play in perceptions of well-being: 71% of 2,034 surveyed American adults agreed that more money would solve most of their problems [6], while 42% of 2,010 surveyed Canadians identified money as their greatest source of stress [7]. Christianity does not condemn income, wealth, or purposeful decision-making. It instead asks which objectives should possess ultimate authority. Rational self-interest is therefore placed within a higher ordering of faithfulness to God, love of neighbour, justice, stewardship, and service.

Cost-benefit analysis further illustrates both the usefulness and limits of economic reasoning. Comparing expected benefits and costs can support responsible stewardship [3]. Evidence from employment decisions demonstrates that financial considerations remain influential alongside important nonfinancial considerations. Randstad's Workmonitor 2026, for example, identified pay as the leading attraction factor among surveyed workers, whereas work-life balance was the leading retention factor [8]. Cost-benefit analysis can therefore help identify responsible means once a legitimate objective has been established. It cannot independently determine whether the objective itself is morally worthy. Christian reasoning introduces a logically prior question: What end should this analysis serve?

Opportunity cost raises the related question of sacrifice. Economics identifies the value of the next-best alternative forgone when a choice is made [2, 3]. Yet opportunity-cost reasoning becomes morally insufficient when relationships, vocation, integrity, or covenantal obligations are treated as alternatives to be continually optimized. Research on romantic relationships, for example, associates perceived alternatives with commitment [9, 10]. Christianity consequently changes the question from merely "What am I giving up by choosing this?" to "What should I be willing to give up in order to remain faithful?" Economics identifies the sacrifice; Christian moral reasoning asks whether it is the right sacrifice.

Economic interdependence presents a final boundary. Economic actors depend upon employers, customers, governments, financial institutions, markets, and future conditions [2]. Recognizing these connections supports prudent planning and risk management, yet many interconnected conditions remain outside individual control. Surveys of British and

Canadian entrepreneurs demonstrate substantial concern regarding factors such as market uncertainty, cash flow, inflation, taxation, and interest rates [11, 12]. These findings do not establish that economic interdependence causes distress; they illustrate the pressures associated with operating within conditions over which economic actors possess limited control. Christianity does not deny interdependence but distinguishes relative dependence upon human systems from ultimate dependence upon God. Responsible stewardship therefore requires prudent participation in economic systems without making them the final foundation of identity, security, hope, or peace.

Taken together, these principles reveal a consistent pattern. Scarcity is addressed not only through allocation but also through contentment and stewardship; self-interest is bounded by love and responsibility; cost-benefit analysis is subordinated to morally worthy ends; opportunity cost raises the question of right sacrifice; and economic interdependence is distinguished from ultimate dependence upon God. Christianity therefore offers a reordering of economic rationality rather than its rejection.

The fundamental limitation of economic reasoning is not that it cannot help human beings choose effectively, but that it cannot, by itself, determine what is ultimately worth choosing. Profit may sustain a business without becoming its supreme purpose, and efficiency may support stewardship without justifying the abandonment of moral commitments. Economic reasoning is therefore most valuable when it remains a servant rather than becoming a master. From a Christian perspective, the decisive question is not merely, “Which alternative provides the greatest benefit to me?” but also, “What has God called me to pursue, what has He entrusted to me, and how can I use it faithfully?”

References

- [1] L. Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1935.
- [2] CORE Econ, *The Economy: Economics for a Changing World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- [3] R. H. Frank, B. S. Bernanke, K. Antonovics, and O. Heffetz, *Principles of Economics*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2024.
- [4] Holy Bible: New Living Translation. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015. Original work published 1996.
- [5] C. Lütge, M. Uhl, and T. Armbrüster, *Business Ethics: An Economically Informed Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- [6] Empower, “The price of financial happiness? \$1.2 million,” 2023.
- [7] FP Canada, 2025 Financial Stress Index Results Deck, 2025.

Leadership, Organization and Management for the Flourishing of Life, Work, and Society

Stacie Chappell, PhD, Principal, Stacie Chappell Consulting, Ladysmith, British Columbia, Canada, Stacie.Chappell@gmail.com; Peter McGhee, PhD, Professor, Department of Management, Technology, and Organization, Faculty of Business, Economics, and Law, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, Peter.McGhee@aut.ac.nz

This paper provides an editorial introduction for the special issue of the Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion. It responds to a growing recognition that conventional models of leadership, organisation, and management are no longer adequate to the conditions of the present moment. Rising ecological strain, entrenched inequality, declining institutional trust, and a widespread sense that work has lost its meaning together suggest that approaches built on instrumental reasoning, behavioural competencies, and narrow economic return have reached their limits. The six curated papers take up an invitation to think differently: to hold spiritual, social, environmental, and economic concerns together in service of the flourishing of people, work, society, and the wider world. Drawing on Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and secular traditions, the contributions collectively challenge the assumptions of *Homo economicus*—the model of the human being as a rational, self-interested utility maximiser—arguing that this framing does not merely fail to check the egocentric self but actively reinforces it.

The first paper is an account of Ignatian leadership, which draws on five centuries of Jesuit spiritual tradition to identify seven interlocking attributes, self-knowledge, inner freedom, discernment, magis, meaning, love, and transcendence, as dimensions of an integrated process of personal and organisational transformation [1]. The second paper turns to empirical inquiry, using narrative interviews to show that spiritual capital is neither uniform nor stable, but varies along a continuum shaped by individual, organisational, and cultural context, and is complicated by an enduring sacred/secular divide that makes spirituality difficult to discuss openly at work [2]. A third contribution develops Human Field Theory, bridging Kurt Lewin's field theory with the Vedāntic distinction between *kṣetra* (field) and *kṣetrajña* (knower of the field) to describe leadership as arising from progressively more coherent states of awareness [3]. The fourth paper advances self-transcendent leadership, building on Ken Wilber's developmental framework to distinguish the ego-centred self of conventional leadership discourse from a greater Self, linking this distinction to compassion, ethical sensitivity, and collective flourishing [4]. Höppner et al. draw on Buddhist-informed Eastern Inner Science (*nangdön rigpa*) to connect states of consciousness to organisational and planetary flourishing, explicitly bridging individual interiority with systemic change [5]. The issue closes with a qualitative analysis of Qur'ānic and prophetic sources that develops an Islamic account of *khair al-'amal* (quality work) organised around three principles, *al-itqān* (precision and excellence), *al-dawām* (consistency and timeliness), and *al-anfa'* (beneficence and utility), reframing competence as morally accountable action [6].

Despite their different traditions, methods, and conceptual vocabularies, the six papers converge around five shared themes. First, all reject competency-based models in favour of understanding leadership as inner development and formation, in which motive, consciousness, and identity precede and shape behaviour. Second, each paper resists any sharp separation of spirituality from ethics, treating leadership as a spiritually grounded and morally accountable practice rather than a value-neutral instrument. Third, every contribution identifies the ego as a central obstacle to good leadership and points toward some form of its transcendence, whether through inner freedom, coherence of awareness, dissolution of ego boundaries, recognition of interconnectedness, or accountability to a source beyond the self. Fourth, the papers consistently orient leadership toward service and flourishing rather than efficiency and control, redirecting attention toward dignity, justice, and meaningful work for people, organisations, and the wider ecological system. Fifth, each paper situates its argument as a response to contemporary crises, echoing Goodpaster's (1994) diagnosis of organisational "teleopathy", a fixation on narrow goals detached from moral reflection and human and ecological consequence, suggesting that this diagnosis has only become more urgent in the decades since [7].

The papers also diverge in instructive ways. Metaphysically, they range from explicitly theistic (Ignatian, Islamic) to non-theistic and consciousness-based (Hindu, Buddhist) to transpersonal and empirically bracketed (self-transcendent leadership, spiritual capital)

accounts of ultimate reality and value. They differ in level of analysis, with most focused on the individual leader while the Eastern Inner Science paper explicitly bridges individual and systemic transformation. Methodologically, the issue spans conceptual development, systematic review, narrative qualitative research, and textual analysis, reflecting a field that remains methodologically pluralistic rather than settled. These divergences are treated not as weaknesses but as evidence that the convergent themes of inner formation, ethical integration, ego transcendence, service, and response to crisis, carry genuine intellectual weight precisely because they emerge independently across such different starting points.

The issue identifies several priorities for future scholarship: stronger empirical validation of constructs such as consciousness, transcendence, and spiritual capital; longitudinal research examining whether inner development translates into lasting organisational change; comparative and cross-traditional research that puts these frameworks into direct dialogue rather than parallel development; closer integration with mainstream leadership studies; and explicit application to global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and technological disruption. Taken together, the contributions argue that leadership in the contemporary world cannot be reduced to competence, technique, or strategy alone. It requires a particular understanding of the self that acknowledges the limits of egocentric reasoning, an orientation toward others and the wider system, and a willingness to engage the questions of meaning and ultimate value that wisdom traditions have long kept alive, even, and perhaps especially, within organisations whose operating logic tends to reduce human beings to their economic function. In this sense, the special issue invites not merely an addition to leadership theory but a reconsideration of its foundational assumptions about what human beings are, what work is for, and what kind of leadership the present moment demands.

References

- Villanueva, J. M., García-Mina Freire, A., & Aza Blanc, G. (2026). Ignatian leadership as an emerging paradigm: Attributes for personal and organizational transformation. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X). <https://doi.org/10.51327/MGMA9612>
- Lusk, C., & Gibson, C. B. (2026). How spiritual capital motivates purpose-driven leadership in a profit-driven world. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X). <https://doi.org/10.51327/PPAM4853>
- Kaipa, P. L., Anantanarayanan, R., Sambat, S., & Sreekumar, T. S. (2026). Human field theory: A wisdom-based framework for leadership. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X). <https://doi.org/10.51327/VGDA9676>
- Gruman, J. A., & Smith, G. A. (2026). Promoting flourishing through self-transcendent leadership and self-transcendent leadership development. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X). <https://doi.org/10.51327/XIYU9954>
- Höppner, K., Tzouramani, E., & Molthan-Hill, P. (2026). Unlocking leadership potential through Eastern inner science: A consciousness-based leadership approach towards human and planetary flourishing. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X).
- Mas'ud, F., Khakim, U., & Hidayatullah, R. A. (2026). Competence in Islam: An exploration of Qur'anic and prophetic sources. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 23(X). <https://doi.org/10.51327/FPTK4063>
- Goodpaster, K. E. (1994). Work, spirituality and the moral point of view. *International Journal of Value-Based Management*, 7(1), 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00892148>

Logic and Illogic in Capitalism and Religious Faith

David Silver

The Logic of Profit Maximisation in the Age of AI: High-Frequency Algorithmic Trading and the Common Good in Catholic Social Teaching

Somnath Sarker, University Canada West, somnath.sarker@myucwest.ca

Many arguments in philosophy of religion presuppose that possible worlds can be ranked by their overall value. Perfect-being theology asks whether God would create the best possible world; theodicy asks whether the goods of creation outweigh its evils; and some versions of Pascalian reasoning appeal to infinite or indefinitely large values. But what happens if a possible world contains infinitely many goods and infinitely many evils? In such cases, the thought that a world has a determinate total value is no longer innocent.

This paper develops a puzzle about infinite creation by drawing on recent debates about conditionally convergent sums. Lee's "A Puzzle about Sums" argues that Riemann's Rearrangement Theorem has metaphysical significance: when an infinite collection contains positive and negative quantities, its total quantity may not be fixed simply by summing over its members in an arbitrary order (2024). Lee's expansionist analysis instead appeals to the limits of finite subcollections contained within ever-expanding regions of space. Pérez Laraudogoitia's "On a Puzzle about Sums" challenges this approach, arguing that the relevant lesson of conditional convergence concerns the rules by which infinite systems are composed or generated, especially the distinction between synchronic and diachronic composition rules (2025).

I argue that this debate has direct consequences for the logic of theodicy. Suppose a created world contains an infinite sequence of goods and evils whose values form a conditionally convergent series. Depending on how those values are ordered, distributed, or generated, the world may appear to have one total value, another total value, or no determinate total value at all. This threatens simple appeals to "overall goodness," "outweighing," or "the best world" in infinite contexts. The problem is not merely mathematical. It concerns what, if anything, fixes the total value of an infinite created order.

The conclusion is modest but important: infinite theodicies require an explicit account of value aggregation before claims about divine choice, permission of evil, or world-ranking can be well-defined. If there are possible worlds with infinitely many goods and evils, then the logic of theodicy must include a logic of infinite value.

References

- Lee, Andrew Y. 2024. "A Puzzle about Sums." *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*.
Pérez Laraudogoitia, Jon. 2025. "On a Puzzle about Sums." *Analysis* 85(4): 882–891.

Feminisms and Religious Thought

Organiser: Tasneem Alsayyed

Keynotes: Fatema Amijee, University of British Columbia, and Sherif Salem, Simon Fraser University

This workshop explores topics at the intersections of feminism, logic, and religion. It provides a space to center religious thought and critique by scholars who are underrepresented due to their gender and/or sexual identities, as well as the marginalized nature of their work. This brings to the forefront the way different methodological and foundational starting points shape our systems of reasoning and belief.

Liberatory and feminist critiques of religion have exposed how major religious frameworks frequently naturalize patriarchal structures, exclusive language, and gendered hierarchies of knowledge. Importantly, feminist work has actively reshaped religious discourse from within, reinterpreting texts, recovering marginalized voices, and proposing new models of the divine that center relationality, embodiment, and liberation.

Topics may include, but are not restricted to:

- Feminist epistemologies that challenge or expand classical theological and metaphysical models.
- Topics at the intersections of feminist religious thought and social, political, or ecological issues. This can engage with frameworks such as ecofeminism, technofeminism, and feminist critiques of war.
- Intersectional and decolonial feminist perspectives on religious texts and/or practices.
- The logical reconstruction or subversion of traditionally patriarchal religious concepts.
- How the centering of embodiment, affect, and lived experience in feminist thought disrupts traditional, abstract philosophical theology.
- How specific religious traditions (e.g., Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian) uniquely shape, resist, or generate their own internal feminist critiques.

Modesty as an Ethics of Attention: Rethinking Islamic Dress

Fatema Amijee, University of British Columbia, Canada, fatema.amijee@ubc.ca

Muslim women's dress occupies a peculiar position in contemporary political and moral discourse. In some secular liberal states, forms of Islamic dress are restricted in the name of neutrality or gender equality, whereas in some Muslim-majority nations, particular forms of covering are legally mandated in the name of religious morality. Both approaches seek to exert control over Muslim women and their bodies. But the debate over Muslim women's clothing obscures a crucial question: How should Islamic norms governing dress be understood, and what role do they play in Muslim moral life? Answering this question requires approaching Islamic dress not merely as a contested public symbol, but from within the Islamic moral framework.

Focusing on the Qur'an, I ask what, if anything, makes modesty in dress an Islamic moral virtue? I argue that the moral significance of Qur'anic modesty derives ultimately from the role that norms governing self-presentation can play in regulating human attention.

I begin by distinguishing moral modesty norms from other norms that may govern dress. Qur'anic prescriptions concerning dress can plausibly serve prudential purposes, such as protection from harassment, and identity-constituting purposes, such as marking membership in a religious community. But these functions do not fully explain their normative force. The Qur'an applies modesty norms to men as well as women, connects modest conduct with purity, and places it alongside paradigmatically moral virtues such as truthfulness, patience, and charity. These features suggest that at least some Qur'anic modesty norms have a specifically moral dimension.

I show that at least some norms concerning dress and behaviour in the Qur'an derive their moral authority from humility, understood in terms of patterns of attention, and as a prerequisite for worship. The Qur'an presents worship as the fundamental human purpose on earth and repeatedly connects it with *dhikr*, or remembrance of God (51:56; 20:14). I argue that *dhikr* in this context is best understood as a form of attentive orientation: a sustained turning of oneself toward God. An important upshot of my account for contemporary Islamic ethics is this: we must ask which practices of self-presentation promote humility and properly directed attention under present social conditions.

References

- [1] Amijee, F. (2023). How to be a feminist Muslim. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 9(2), 193-213.
- [2] The Qur'an. (1997). (Sahih International, Trans.). Abul-Qasim Publishing House.

The Body Against Abstraction: The Logic of Isolation and the Logic of Encounter

Maira de Cinque, University Canada West, Canada, mairadecinque@gmail.com

This presentation examines the ethical consequences of subordinating the body to the spirit. Beginning with the body-soul distinction inherited from Greek philosophy and elaborated in later Christian thought, I argue that separating the body from its spiritual counterpart does more than establish a conceptual distinction between two dimensions of the person. Traditionally, this separation installs a hierarchy in which the body is treated as inferior and the spirit is granted authority to govern it. And from this hierarchy follows an ethical consequence: depending on the view taken of the ontological status of body and soul, responsibility can become detached from the concrete consequences of our actions on others. To develop this argument, I distinguish between two competing frameworks, which I call the logic of isolation and the logic of encounter. I treat them as logical systems insofar as they depart from different premises about existence and, consequently, lead to different understandings of ethical responsibility.

The logic of isolation departs from the premise that only the immutable truly exists. From this premise, embodied existence, marked by contingency, acquires an ontologically inferior status. Dependence on others appears as a distraction from, or an obstacle to, self-reliance or reliance on God. The pleasure and pain experienced by bodies individually, and the pleasure and pain caused through interaction between bodies, may be regarded as illusory, secondary, or insignificant in comparison with the transcendent - understood as the rule, the norm, or the Word. Consequently, responsibility toward the other becomes only an indirect product of a more fundamental responsibility: to oneself, to God, or to a law that transcends particular existence. The logic of encounter, by contrast, departs from the premise that human existence is embodied. From this premise it follows that pleasure and pain are realities in their own right, and that interdependency is not an obstruction but a condition from which responsibility emerges. Consequently, responsibility is understood as an obligation to particular others, especially those who have been harmed by our actions or omissions.

I explore these two logics through passages from the twelfth-century correspondence between Heloise and Abelard, read alongside Simone de Beauvoir's account of eroticism in *The Second Sex* [1], [2]. Beauvoir presents erotic experience as a revolt of the individual against the universal: the singular, embodied encounter that resists absorption into abstract categories such as "woman," "man," or "mankind." I extend this insight from eroticism to ethics more broadly. When the particular resists abstraction in this way, responsibility calls for care toward the person who is, or might be, affected by our actions - or else, the specific body that has suffered -and for the concrete possibility of repair between two or more embodied beings, human and nonhuman alike. In this ontological inversion, responsibility is directed toward particular embodied beings rather than toward a general rule, principle, or spiritual narrative that subsumes the particular case.

My aim is to expose the premises each logic puts into operation within the correspondence itself to show that although Heloise and Abelard shared the same faith, the ontological status they assigned to the body, and to its relation with the soul and with God, shaped how each of them carried themselves, interpreted their shared story, and arrived at life-altering decisions.

Abelard interprets his castration as a blessing in disguise, since it redirects him toward God [2]. In doing so, however, he gives insufficient attention to the damage done to himself and to Heloise and to the obligations that arise from their shared history together. His relationship with God becomes the primary ethical relation, while his relationship with Heloise is treated as secondary and ultimately resolvable through that higher relation. This structure isolates sin and redemption from the actual bodies affected by them, allowing Abelard's spiritual reconciliation to proceed independently of Heloise's continued suffering.

Heloise's correspondence interrupts this movement toward abstraction. Her letters keep the consequences of attachment alive. She admits that even within the cloister she still burns with the desire she is supposed to have renounced, and she questions the worth of a chastity she did not choose but was compelled toward by devotion to Abelard rather than to God. Her insistence

on the concrete other establishes the ethical priority of encounter over isolation. Although she shares Abelard's Christian faith, and with it a great deal of guilt, she does not let that guilt resolve into his abstract narrative of providential redemption; even her penance remains addressed to him. Her stated desire to make amends for the wound inflicted on his body represents her sense that responsibility remains irreducibly interpersonal, even when divine absolution is imagined as possible or even assured.

Heloise and Beauvoir thus converge in their resistance to the displacement of singular, embodied experience by universal abstraction. This convergence is not incidental to feminist thought, nor does it depend on the fact that both writers are women. Feminist theory has long identified the same abstracting move at work in the subsumption of "woman" under "mankind" — the particular absorbed into a category defined from elsewhere. Heloise's resistance to having her wounded body and interrupted history dissolved into Abelard's providential narrative repeats this same structure in a religious register: a spiritual "mankind," defined by its relation to the transcendent, absorbing the particular body in exactly the way the universal "man" absorbs the particular woman. Her insistence on the concrete other is therefore more than a defense of erotic love; it is a philosophical challenge to the spiritualization of ethics, and a basis for a religious ethics attentive to singular lives rather than to the categories that claim to speak for them. This is not a rejection of transcendence or religious belief, but a call for a framework in which erotic experience and repair are recognized as central ethical realities that any adequate account of responsibility must take seriously.

References

- [1] de Beauvoir, S. (1953). *The second sex* (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1949).
- [2] Heloise & Abelard. (2007). *The letters and other writings* (W. Levitan, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

Divine Love as a Mode of Knowing: Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya and the Paradox of Knowing the Infinite

Sherif Salem, Lasalle College Vancouver, Canada, gamalsalem.sherif@gmail.com

This paper explores the conception of divine love articulated by Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 801), a Sufi mystic associated with the second ascetic school of Basra. It addresses the epistemological paradox of divine love, suggested in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: how can a finite human being come to know the infinite Divine? Rābi‘a’s approach diverges from both rationalist and traditionalist Islamicate “regimes of sense” by offering a “third path” grounded in the transformative experience of love rather than in reason or textual exegesis alone. Her distinction between “selfish love” (ḥubb al-hawā) and “disinterested love” (ḥubb huwa ahlun lahu) marks a shift from devotion motivated by reward or fear to love directed toward God solely because of His intrinsic worthiness. To clarify Rābi‘a’s position, the paper proposes reading her conception of divine love through Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* — the unity or oneness of being — understood here as a pre-logical mode of inquiry. In this framework, reason plays a limited role: it can make only general judgments concerning divine transcendence and the incompatibility of certain attributes with God, but it cannot itself disclose the fullness of divine reality. This paradigm offers a possible resolution to the paradox of divine love by showing how love allows the finite human being to participate in knowledge of the infinite Divine.

The Hijab as a Multidimensional Social Practice

Tasneem Alsayyed, University of Waterloo, Canada, alsayyedt@gmail.com

This paper focuses on Wallada bint Al-Mustakfi, the 11th-century poetess and princess, daughter of one of the last Umayyad caliphs, Muhammad III of Córdoba. Bint Al-Mustakfi's life and work represent a protest against marriage, traditional gender norms, and heterosexual normativity. Importantly, however, she voices these protests in alignment with her Islamic faith, rather than in tension with it. In this paper, I guide readers through her poetry and the societal reactions it provoked to demonstrate her construction of a counter-imaginary that is thoroughly pro-queer and pro-feminist. I take into consideration the historical context, as well as poems commenting on her and her beliefs, written by her peers, lovers, and ex-lovers.

Popular literature across the Abrahamic tradition, including the medieval Islamic tradition, emphasizes an association between a woman's voice and her physical body—conflating the intellectual with the physical and reducing women to the physical; i.e., to sex and to what is considered shameful and even sinful (see Fadwa Malti-Douglas and Barbara A. Olive). Against this background, the voice and example of Bint Al-Mustakfi represent a powerful counter-imaginary. She offers a model that reconciles faith with a firm commitment to sexual liberation, embodying a holistic religious power that can guide Muslims navigating outside traditional Islamic gender and sexual expectations today.

complementary, the object is contradictory. When this happens, the object breaks the chain, and transitivity is not valid.

In his book, Priest introduces a contradictory object that he calls gluon. By analogy, I consider a kind of substance — whatever that substance might be — akin to the gluon. From this, it follows that the bread and the body are identical to the substance, but they are distinct from each other. The same applies to the wine and the blood. This explanatory strategy shows that Jesus's words are contradictory but not nonsensical.

I develop this work in three parts. First, I present the logical problem of the Eucharist. Second, I explain my paraconsistent/gluon-theoretic solution to the problem. Finally, considering similarities among Luther's perspective on the Eucharist, Consubstantiation, and my proposal, I conclude my talk by proposing a dialogue among them.

References

- Beall, J. C. 2019. "Christ, a Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology." *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7: 400–433. <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat2019-7.090202010411>.
- Beall, J. C. 2021. *The Contradictory Christ*. Oxford University Press.
- Beall, J. C. 2023. *Divine Contradiction*. Oxford University Press.
- Gómez Gutiérrez, Susana. 2007. "Language and Logical Pluralism: Some Aspects of a Wittgensteinian Perspective on the Nature of Logic." *Logic Journal of the IGPL* 15 (5–6): 603–19.
- Gómez Gutiérrez, Susana. 2020. "Divino y Humano: Una Aproximación Dialeteísta a La Doctrina de La Encarnación." PhD thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.
- Gómez Gutiérrez, Susana. 2023. *Divino y Humano: Contradicción, Lógica y Racionalidad de La Doctrina de La Encarnación*. Editorial Universidad El Bosque.
- Gómez Gutiérrez, Susana. 2025. "The One, The Many, and the Trinity: A Dialetheist Response to the Trinitarian Contradiction." In *Contradictions and the Absolute*, edited by Graham Priest and Behnam Zolghadr. De Gruyter Brill.
- Páramo, Guillermo. 1989. "Lógica de Los Mitos: Lógica Paraconsistente. Una Alternativa En La Discusión Sobre La Lógica de Los Mitos." *Revista Ideas y Valores* 38 (79): 27–67.
- Peña, Lorenzo. 1981. *La Coincidencia de Los Opuestos En Dios*. Ediciones de la Universidad Católica de Quito.
- Priest, Graham. 2014. *One. Being an Investigation into the Unity of Reality and of Its Parts, Including the Singular Object Which Is Nothingness*. Oxford University Press.

Religious Paradoxes

Organiser: Jean-Yves Beziau, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Keynotes:

Ryan Haecker, Methexis Institute, Austin, Texas: Origen Against Paradox: A Theological Analysis of the Liar's Paradox in Titus 1:12

Susana Gomez, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogota: This is my body, This is my blood: paraconsistency, identity, and the logical problem of the Eucharist

Logic is full of paradoxes. One of the oldest and most famous is the liar paradox, for which no fully satisfactory solution has yet been universally accepted. Interestingly, this paradox is also mentioned in the Bible, in the Epistle to Titus 1:12-13.

Religion, too, is rich in paradoxes. One of the most well-known examples is the stone paradox, or paradox of omnipotence: can an omnipotent being create a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it? In this sense, the notion of paradox provides a strong and fruitful link between logic and religion.

This workshop welcomes contributions on religious paradoxes from all religious traditions and philosophical perspectives. Talks may address classical or contemporary paradoxes related to divinity, omnipotence, omniscience, incarnation, creation, evil, faith, revelation, ritual, mystical experience, or any other topic at the intersection of logic, paradox, and religion.

This is my body. This is my blood: Paraconsistency, Identity, and the “Logical Problem of the Eucharist”

Susana Gómez Gutiérrez, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana

In recent years, paraconsistent logic has proven to be a valuable tool for addressing traditional theological issues. (Peña 1981); (Páramo 1989); (Gómez Gutiérrez 2007); (Beall 2019); (Beall 2021); (Beall 2023); (Gómez Gutiérrez 2020); (Gómez Gutiérrez 2023); (Gómez Gutiérrez 2025).

The issue I address is what I call the “logical problem of the Eucharist.” In the words of the institution—“This is my body,” “This is my blood”—Jesus seems to assert an identity between non-identical things: the bread and his body, the wine and his blood. These statements appear contradictory, for they equate what is distinct. Since this contradiction involves the notion of identity, it invites a logical inquiry into that very concept. Accordingly, the question I intend to answer in this work is:

What can paraconsistent logic and dialetheism contribute to understanding the relation of identity that Jesus establishes between the bread and his body, and the chalice and his blood, enabling us to address what I have termed the “logical problem of the Eucharist”?

The thesis I plan to explore applies the idea of non-transitive identity and the concept of a *gluon*, which (Priest 2014) uses to address the problem of the One and the many. Transitivity is a property of identity. It says that if $a=b$ and $b=c$, then $a=c$. In paraconsistent logic, the object in the middle has properties of both objects in the extremes. If these properties are

Religious Paradoxes: who are these strange creatures, and how should the Logic and Religion Project take good care of them?

Jean-Yves Beziau, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, jyb@ufrj.br

Religion is a paradise for paradoxes. They appear in many forms and in every major religious tradition, wherever apparently plausible principles, practices, or descriptions lead to an apparently unacceptable conclusion. The familiar question of whether an omnipotent God can create a stone too heavy to lift is only one specimen in a much larger and more diverse population. Other cases concern evil and divine goodness, foreknowledge and freedom, creation from nothing, ineffability and sacred speech, the plurality of religions, liberation from desire, the relation between path and truth, and the use of ritual or symbols to approach what is said to transcend every finite form.

The workshop asks who these strange creatures are. A religious paradox is not merely a difficulty, a mystery, or a joke directed against belief. It has an argumentative structure: claims that seem individually acceptable become jointly unstable. Yet instability has different sources and therefore requires different forms of care. Some paradoxes disclose a genuine contradiction; others result from ambiguity, equivocation, a category mistake, a hidden presupposition, or a confusion between levels and contexts of discourse [1, 2]. Still others are deliberately cultivated as instruments of spiritual practice, as in mystical formulations, Taoist reversals, and Zen koans.

The investigation is comparative without assuming that all religions say the same thing. It distinguishes five broad families: theistic paradoxes involving divine attributes; soteriological paradoxes concerning salvation, karma, liberation, or enlightenment; cosmological paradoxes involving creation, time, and the universe; ethical paradoxes involving divine commands, human freedom, and responsibility; and epistemological or mystical paradoxes concerning revelation, language, knowledge, and direct experience. These families traverse Abrahamic, Indian, East Asian, indigenous, polytheistic, and non-theistic traditions, while taking different conceptual shapes within each of them.

How, then, should the Logic and Religion Project take good care of such creatures? First, it should collect and reconstruct them charitably, making their premises and inferential structure explicit before attempting to solve them. Second, it should classify them according to both logical form and religious function. Third, it should test proposed resolutions through distinctions, alternative logics, and contextual analysis. Finally, it should resist premature domestication. A paradox may need to be dissolved, but it may instead reveal a limit of a concept, expose an unresolved tension within a doctrine, or protect the depth of the sacred from reduction to a single literal description [3, 4].

between reason and faith, word and silence, symbol and reality, purity and contact, law and miracle, desire and liberation, universality and plurality. Properly cared for, they become methodological companions of the Logic and Religion Project: they sharpen concepts, broaden logical inquiry, promote serious comparison among traditions, and show how contradiction and tension can be not only threats to religious thought but also sources of philosophical understanding.

References

- [1] R. M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.
- [2] Nicholas Rescher, *Paradoxes: Their Roots, Range, and Resolution*, Open Court, Chicago, 2001.
- [3] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Harcourt, New York, 1959.
- [4] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Truth is a Pathless Land*, Ommen, 1929.

Why Neo-Aristotelian Accounts of Transubstantiation Fall Short. Two Structural Problems and a Way Forward

Constanti Cabestany, University of Barcelona, Spain, ccabesmo7@alumnes.ub.edu

The most developed neo-Aristotelian account of Transubstantiation aims to answer what its author calls the intelligibility question: what does it mean, ontologically, for Christ to be substantially present in the Eucharistic element while it retains every sensible quality of bread? (Sijuwade, 2022, p. 310). This Neo-Aristotelian Account (NAA) reconstructs Eucharistic change as a kind-change within Lowe's Four-Category Ontology: the element ceases to instantiate the kind Bread and begins to instantiate the kind Host, whose essential attributes (the h-attributes) are the properties necessary and sufficient for being Christ; this kind-change operates exclusively at the dispositional level of exemplification, leaving the element's occurrent characterisation by bread-modes (and thus its appearance as bread) intact. We argue that the NAA does not fully satisfy two desiderata that any adequate metaphysics of Eucharistic presence must meet. The argument is presented as two structural objections to the model:

(1) The relationship between kind-instantiation and numerical identity. The NAA grounds Eucharistic presence in the instantiation of a kind characterised by properties necessary and sufficient for being Christ, and defends this by appeal to an abstractist reading of the Incarnation (Sijuwade, 2022, 328–9). However, abstractism about natures does not entail that personal presence reduces to kind-instantiation: a kind-instance that exemplifies the h-attributes is at most qualitatively indistinguishable from Christ, not numerically identical with him. The account therefore fails to explain why kind-instantiation should amount to personal presence rather than mere qualitative conformity. Any attempt to close this gap by introducing individual essences or haecceities (Koslicki, 2018) either exceeds the explanatory resources of Lowe's kind-based ontology or requires independent theoretical justification that the NAA does not supply.

(2) The Fraction Problem. The NAA explains the moment of consecration as a synchronic kind-change, but says nothing about what happens to Eucharistic presence when the consecrated Host undergoes physical alteration. If it is broken into several pieces and each resulting portion counts as a new instance of the kind Host, then the NAA entails an unwanted multiplication of instances, i.e. a "plurality of Christs", in direct tension with the very doctrine that it purports to make intelligible; if instead a single presence of Christ is preserved across all portions, then the account requires a theory of multilocation that Lowe's ontology does not provide (and multilocation cannot simply be read off from the kind-based framework). The model is therefore structurally incomplete on its own terms.

The NAA is a sophisticated attempt to render Eucharistic change metaphysically tractable. We argue, however, that insofar as it operates within a framework that reduces substantial presence to kind-instantiation and leaves spatial distribution untheorised, the NAA addresses a philosophically streamlined version of the doctrine rather than its full philosophical content. We suggest that a more doctrine-friendly account might benefit from: (a) recovering the semantics of substantial predication (Hochschild, 2023), in order to articulate a form of presence that goes beyond mere qualitative conformity; and (b) incorporating a formal theory of location capable of accounting for the persistence and distribution of Eucharistic presence under physical alteration, along the lines of the multilocal frameworks developed by Pruss (2009, 2013).

Whether such supplements can be coherently integrated within a broadly Aristotelian framework remains an open question.

Could God Create a World with No Total Value? Infinite Sums and the Logic of Theodicy

Xiaobin (Elvie) Lin, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States, elvielin@mit.edu

Many arguments in philosophy of religion presuppose that possible worlds can be ranked by their overall value. Perfect-being theology asks whether God would create the best possible world; theodicy asks whether the goods of creation outweigh its evils; and some versions of Pascalian reasoning appeal to infinite or indefinitely large values. But what happens if a possible world contains infinitely many goods and infinitely many evils? In such cases, the thought that a world has a determinate total value is no longer innocent.

This paper develops a puzzle about infinite creation by drawing on recent debates about conditionally convergent sums. Lee's "A Puzzle about Sums" argues that Riemann's Rearrangement Theorem has metaphysical significance: when an infinite collection contains positive and negative quantities, its total quantity may not be fixed simply by summing over its members in an arbitrary order (2024). Lee's expansionist analysis instead appeals to the limits of finite subcollections contained within ever-expanding regions of space. Pérez Laraudogoitia's "On a Puzzle about Sums" challenges this approach, arguing that the relevant lesson of conditional convergence concerns the rules by which infinite systems are composed or generated, especially the distinction between synchronic and diachronic composition rules (2025).

I argue that this debate has direct consequences for the logic of theodicy. Suppose a created world contains an infinite sequence of goods and evils whose values form a conditionally convergent series. Depending on how those values are ordered, distributed, or generated, the world may appear to have one total value, another total value, or no determinate total value at all. This threatens simple appeals to "overall goodness," "outweighing," or "the best world" in infinite contexts. The problem is not merely mathematical. It concerns what, if anything, fixes the total value of an infinite created order.

The conclusion is modest but important: infinite theodicies require an explicit account of value aggregation before claims about divine choice, permission of evil, or world-ranking can be well-defined. If there are possible worlds with infinitely many goods and evils, then the logic of theodicy must include a logic of infinite value.

References

- Lee, Andrew Y. 2024. "A Puzzle about Sums." *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*.
Pérez Laraudogoitia, Jon. 2025. "On a Puzzle about Sums." *Analysis* 85(4): 882–891.

Pain as Devotion: Ritual Suffering and Collective Belonging in Contemporary Religious Practice

Soumyadeep Sarkar, Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur, India, soumyadeepsarkar750@gmail.com

The existence of physically painful religious rituals in the twenty-first century raises a question about the nature of religion and its physical manifestation in today's world. Based on early theories of secularization, modernization, rationalization, and advancements in science and medicine would inevitably result in the disappearance of the unnecessary bodily manifestations of piety. Practices like piercing, suspension, fasting, and self-harm were expected to disappear or survive only as symbolic remnants of old religions. However, events like Thaipusam among Tamil Hindus and Charak Puja in Bengal continue to exist and even thrive both in their home environment and internationally.

This paper seeks to examine the importance of painful religious rituals in today's technologically and scientifically advanced world. Far from being primitive and irrational rituals, these practices have become complex cultural tools of identity formation, affiliation, and connection to the divine. Employing an interdisciplinary approach to religion, the paper will explore how pain is culturally constructed as an essential part of collective religious ceremonies. In this regard, pain transforms from self-punishment or destruction into transcendence, recognition, and rebirth.

A Modal Logic for Latin Trinitarianism

Agnieszka Czepielik, Doctoral School in the Humanities, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland,
a.barszcz@doctoral.uj.edu.pl

Latin Trinitarianism is one of the main positions in analytic debates on the Trinity. However, determining how to formalise problematic doctrinal statements such as ‘The Son is God’ or ‘There is one God’ within this framework appears to be problematic. The leading proponent of Latin Trinitarianism is Brian Leftow (2004). Attempts have been made to interpret and formalise his position in various ways (including as contradictory (Hasker 2009) or as a version of the relative identity solution (Rea 2009)), yet Leftow himself has rejected all attempts to formalise his position proposed to date (2012).

In my paper, I argue that if we take seriously Leftow’s proposed analogy likening the Trinity to a time-travelling dancer, and his claim that each of the Persons is strictly identical with God, we can arrive at a consistent formalisation of his position, provided we employ modal logic similar to temporal logics. I define such a logic and show how it works for the Trinity – how it can be used to formalise problematic statements from the doctrine whilst avoiding contradictions.

Finally, I highlight the advantages and disadvantages of this interpretation of Latin Trinitarianism. I also examine how it relates to Leftow’s proposed account of God’s timelessness (Leftow 1991).

Hasker, W. (2009). A leftovian Trinity?. *Faith and Philosophy*, 26(2), 154-166.

Leftow, B. (1991). *Time and eternity*. Cornell University Press.

Leftow, B. (2004). A Latin trinity. *Faith and Philosophy*, 21(3), 304-333.

Leftow, B. (2012). Time travel and the Trinity. *Faith and Philosophy*, 29(3), 313-324.

Rea, M. C. (2009) The Trinity. [In] Thomas P. Flint, and Michael C. Rea (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, Oxford Academic, 403-429.

Computational Demons

Nicolas Fillion, Simon Fraser University, Canada, nfillion@sfu.ca

Science can be regarded as a body of knowledge, as a social institution, and as a sphere of human activity, among other things. More specifically, scientific activity is performed by humans, is structured within human social institutions, and results in human knowledge. Accordingly, to the extent that philosophy of science focuses on scientific knowledge and practice, it takes as its object the sort of things humans can know, and tries to properly characterize what is distinctive about the human practices and knowledge that are deemed scientific. This is typically accomplished by reflecting upon the best science humans produce; yet, there is also an extensive tradition that is premised on the idea that we ought to devote attention to science produced by beings that massively outperform puny humans, typically gods and demons. Paying proper dues to Laplace [2], this paper refers to this tradition by the name “scientific demonology.”

Building on a recent paper [1], this paper critically discusses scientific demonology by considering what science would be like if it were performed by a supernatural omniscient creature instead of being performed by puny humans. The omniscience of such beings is multifaceted, but it always involves claims to logical and computational omniscience. The nature of the logical omniscience here considered has been much discussed, and criticized, especially with respect to its commitment to determinism. Firstly, the paper will briefly flag philosophical considerations and theoretical limits that set bounds even to the logical capabilities of omniscient creatures. Secondly, and less briefly, the paper develops the view that the proposed philosophical methodology is more strikingly seen to be fundamentally deficient when we consider the computational nature of the claimed omniscience, for other

reasons having to do with the foundations of mathematics and the nature of knowledge. The core idea behind the critical evaluation is the uncontroversial observation that even when there are determinate facts about objects representing states of dynamical systems and determinate functions from state to state, such facts are in most cases not representable. The paper makes the further argument that, as a result, the facts in question cannot be meaningfully said to be known, even by an all-knowing demon. The lesson to be drawn is that, far from improving on the classical philosophy of science methodology consisting in drawing lessons about the nature, scope, and limits of science by examining the best human science, speculations about demonic science obfuscate scientific epistemology.

[1] Fillion, N. (2026). “Scientific demonology and the philosophy of scientific practice: a critical discussion of the concept of computational omniscience,” in *Research in History and Philosophy of Mathematics*, The CSHPM 2024 Volume, pp. 21-31.

[2] Laplace, P-S. (1814), *Essai philosophique sur les probabilités*, Mme Vne Courcier, Paris, 2nd edition.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and World Religions

Organizer: Daniel Sarvestani and Deborah Baker

Keynotes: Bartholomew Dean, Brent E. Metz

This workshop explores the relationships between Indigenous structures of thought and major world religions, with particular attention to how different traditions articulate meaning, truth, community, and the sacred.

Indigenous philosophies often emerge from deeply relational frameworks, where knowledge is not abstracted from life but embedded in land, language, ancestry, and lived practice. These structures frequently challenge dominant philosophical assumptions grounded in universality, formalization, and separation between subject and world.

Major world religions—such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others—have developed rich and diverse systems of belief, often combining metaphysical claims, ethical prescriptions, and symbolic narratives that seek to account for human existence, transcendence, and order.

Rather than treating these traditions as isolated or hierarchical, this workshop invites contributions that examine their points of contact, tension, and transformation. How do Indigenous structures of thought interact with, resist, reinterpret, or coexist alongside major religious traditions? What forms of reasoning, narrative, or symbolic logic emerge in these encounters?

- Can Indigenous epistemologies be understood within the frameworks of formal or philosophical logic, or do they require alternative conceptions of rationality?
- How do concepts such as land, relationality, and community reshape theological or metaphysical claims?
- In what ways have major world religions adapted when encountering Indigenous traditions?
- Can apparent contradictions between belief systems be understood as different logical structures rather than errors?
- What role do language, ritual, and oral traditions play in shaping systems of thought?
- How might these encounters challenge dominant models of universality in philosophy and religion?

Against the Ontological Sublime: Sacred Historicity, Christian Remaking, & the Limits of Amazonian Perspectivism

Bartholomew Dean

Indigenous Relational Sustainability: Ontology, Knowledge, and Competing Logics

Sophie Farmani, University Canada West, Canada, sophie.farmani@ucanwest.ca

Dominant Western approaches to sustainability commonly frame environmental challenges through efficiency, measurement, management, and the optimization of economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Indigenous perspectives, however, may rest on fundamentally different assumptions about reality, knowledge, and the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. This study examines these differences through interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous university faculty members in British Columbia, Canada.

The preliminary findings suggest that Indigenous participants understood sustainability not primarily as a technical or managerial objective, but as a relational way of being grounded in interconnectedness, reciprocity, stewardship, lived relationships with land, and responsibility to future generations. These perspectives contrast with more instrumental approaches emphasizing resource management, behavioral interventions, and measurable environmental outcomes.

Four interconnected themes emerged: relational sustainability as ontology; sustainability as lived and land-based practice; structural tensions between Indigenous relational knowledge and Western academic systems; and sustainability as cultural continuity and intergenerational responsibility. Together, these themes inform the provisional concept of Indigenous Relational Sustainability.

The study argues that these differences may extend beyond alternative perspectives on a shared problem. They may reflect partially overlapping yet potentially incommensurable ontological and epistemological logics. By foregrounding Indigenous relational knowledge, the study raises broader questions about how institutions recognize different ways of knowing and whether Indigenous knowledge can be meaningfully engaged within systems organized around assumptions of measurement, standardization, and control.

Indigeneity in context: Case study comparison between the Americas and North Africa

Daniel Bagheri Sarvestani, University Canada West, Canada

This paper explores the concept of indigeneity, focusing on the logic of systems of colonization in the Americas and in North Africa, particularly Algeria. While the term, "indigenous" is recognized today within international human rights frameworks, its origins are entangled with European colonialism/imperialism. This paper provides a comparative case study between the Americas and North Africa, examining how colonizers legally and socially constructed the category of "the indigenous" (and its historical cognates) to serve distinct imperial agendas. Rather than a reflection of inherent identity, this study argues that the label was strategically deployed by colonial administrations as a tool for subjugation, resource extraction, and social engineering.

In the Americas, the broad categorization of diverse, sovereign nations into a singular "native" or "indigenous" monolith served the settler-colonial project; it facilitated the legal fiction of terra nullius, justified mass land dispossession, and established systems of paternalistic wardship. Conversely, in North Africa, French colonial authorities weaponized the indigène

label as a divide-and-rule mechanism. By heavily promoting the "Berber Myth"—which sought to distinctly categorize and separate the indigenous Amazigh populations from the Arab majority—the colonial state attempted to fracture anti-colonial resistance and assimilate the Amazigh into the European sphere. Ultimately, this paper highlights how the universalizing gaze of the colonizer imposed the same terminology across vastly different geographies, fundamentally altering the social and political realities of both regions through deeply divergent mechanics of control.

Sustainability Through Balance: Indigenous and Islamic Perspectives on Water, Natural Resources, and Collective Governance in Canada

Renata Faizova, University Canada West, Canada, renata.faizova@ucanwest.ca

Sustainability is usually treated as a modern problem to be solved with modern tools: emissions targets, water pricing, impact assessment, ecosystem accounting. Yet two knowledge systems present in Canada today carry fully developed understandings of sustainability that predate and exceed these tools. Indigenous peoples practised sustainability on this land for thousands of years without needing the word, and the Islamic tradition, now the faith of close to five percent of Canadians, holds a vocabulary of trusteeship, restraint, and balance older than any environmental ministry. This paper brings the two into conversation, with Indigenous knowledge as the primary lens and the Islamic perspective as a secondary one, to ask what they offer environmental governance in Canada and why their agreement matters.

The paper first shows how sustainability is embedded in each system. In Indigenous knowledge, sustainability rests on kinship and reciprocity. Land, water, plants, and animals are relatives with their own standing rather than resources, and because the land gives, people owe. This produces concrete rules of quantity, timing, and distribution, captured in the Potawatomi teaching of the Honorable Harvest, in Anishinaabe water law, and in Nuuchah-nulth *hishuk ish tsawalk*, and it is transmitted through ceremony, story, and the mentoring of the young by Elders. Water holds a special place: it is a living relative with spirit, to which people, and women in particular, hold responsibilities rather than rights. In the Qur'an, sustainability rests on three concepts. Humanity is *khalifah*, placed on the earth as trustee (2:30); the earth is held as *amanah*, a trust accepted by humans that the heavens and mountains declined (33:72); and creation is made in *mizan*, a balance that people are commanded not to transgress (55:7-8). Everything is created in due measure (54:49; 15:21), non-human creatures are communities like our own (6:38), and corruption on land and sea is traced to what human hands have earned (30:41). A recent content analysis of the Qur'an's first two suras confirms that these are not scattered proof-texts but a coherent whole, yielding lessons on gratitude, trusteeship, accountability, long-term perspective, collective action, and the avoidance of corruption.

The paper then turns to balance, which sits at the centre of both systems. In Indigenous teaching the limit on use is set by need: take only what you need, never the first or the last, never more than half, and give back. In Islam the same limit is named *wasatiyyah*, the middle path of the "middle community" (2:143), elaborated across the Qur'an's commands to eat and drink but not be excessive (7:31), to spend neither extravagantly nor meanly (25:67), to give the harvest its due without excess (6:141), and to shun waste as the conduct of the devils' brothers (17:27). Classical scholarship understood the Qur'anic middle as justice and excellence, not mediocrity, and contemporary work has proposed that sustainable development itself be defined as the state in which *wasatiyyah* is achieved across every dimension of human need without depriving future generations. Read together, the Indigenous and Qur'anic rules converge on a single principle: the limit on taking is set by balance and need, not by technical capacity or market price. Both also share a temporal horizon, whether seven generations ahead or the future consequences the Qur'an demands be weighed, and both begin from gratitude.

From principle the paper moves to the management of water and natural resources. Both traditions treat water as shared rather than owned. Indigenous water declarations across

Canada assert responsibility to water as natural law; the Prophet's statement that Muslims are partners in water, pasture, and fire, and his rebuke against wasting water even at a flowing river, produced a law in which flowing water cannot be privately owned, the right to drink has priority, and upstream users may not deprive those downstream. Both built institutions that withdraw part of the natural world from use in order to sustain the whole: the Honorable Harvest and the Islamic *hima* and *harim* protected zones. And both converted the ethic into governance by distributing responsibility across the community, by role and kinship in Indigenous systems, by universal trusteeship and common ownership in Islamic law, rather than concentrating it in an office.

Finally the paper examines how these arrangements fared in Canada and what their return means. Settler colonialism displaced Indigenous water and resource law by asserting Crown ownership and reducing Indigenous authority to consultation, leaving the ethic of responsibility without an institutional home and producing the drinking water crisis on reserves. Islamic resource ethics survive in Canada as religious teaching and community practice but have no legal standing and little policy voice. Indigenous resurgence is now bringing the first tradition back into law through declarations, community monitoring, litigation, and the legislative openings of the TRC Calls to Action and the UNDRIP Act; Muslim environmentalism is younger and more diffuse but rests on a tradition that already treats water as a trust that cannot be owned. The paper argues that this alignment gives coalitions between Indigenous nations and Muslim communities an unusual stability, and that Canadian resource governance should treat Indigenous water law as law, test allocation and extraction against a standard of need and balance, and engage faith communities as partners with a substantive tradition of resource ethics. Its contribution is to read the two traditions together and to establish balance as a principle of collective governance rather than a private virtue.

General Session

Organiser: Daniel Molto (University of Sussex)

Keynotes:

Paul Bartha (University of British Columbia, Canada): A Tale of Two Infinities: Infinite Utility and Infinitesimal Probability in Pascal's Wager

Daniel A. Dombrowski (Seattle University, USA): Is the Ontological Argument Worthless? A Neoclassical (Process) Theistic Response

Samir Gandesha (Simon Fraser University, Canada): Capitalism as Religion

Session Overview

The General Session brings together foundational inquiries across formal logic, rational decision theory, metaphysics, and social philosophy to examine how reason and formal systems intersect with core questions of religious belief, divine existence, and secular institutions. Thus, this session engages both classical problems in the philosophy of religion—such as the formal rationality of faith commitments and proofs of God's existence—and contemporary critiques of political and economic structures that operate with quasi-religious authority.

Central to the session is the critical re-examination of canonical philosophical arguments and their modern reformulations. Key contributions evaluate decision-theoretic models of belief under uncertainty, investigating how infinite utility and infinitesimal probabilities challenge classical decision theory within Pascal's Wager. Simultaneously, the session reassesses the ontological argument through neoclassical and process theism, questioning whether traditional proofs of God retain vital philosophical power when freed from classical substance metaphysics. Expanding beyond formalisms, the session also interrogates how secular structures—such as modern capitalism and computational infrastructure—appropriate religious dynamics of debt and technological redemption.

Questions to Consider

- How do infinite utility and infinitesimal probability reconfigure classical decision theory, and what are the implications for the rationality of Pascal's Wager?
- What insights do neoclassical and process metaphysics offer to contemporary defenses or evaluations of the Ontological Argument?
- In what ways does contemporary capitalism function as a cultic, debt-driven religion, and how do modern digital technologies (such as AI) embody techno-optimist redemption fantasies?
- How can formal logical frameworks clarify the boundaries between rational justification, metaphysical necessity, and existential commitment?
- What are the limits and possibilities of applying formal decision theory, probability models, and modal logic to theological and ethical claims?

A Tale of Two Infinities: Infinite Utility and Infinitesimal Probability in Pascal's Wager

Paul Bartha, University of British Columbia, Canada, paul.bartha@ubc.ca

Pascal's Wager ([1]) is a classic decision-theoretic argument that continues to fascinate philosophers, for good reasons. The Wager pioneered a pragmatic approach to the philosophy of religion. The argument has inspired, and continues to inspire, innovations in decision theory – and in particular, in infinite decision theory. The Wager combines deeply interesting strengths and weaknesses that defy our efforts to settle things one way or another. Yet those efforts can still advance our understanding of the many complex issues that play a part in Pascal's argument, in both its historical and contemporary formulations.

This paper reviews some of the recent work on infinite utility and infinitesimal probability – the “two infinities” – in contemporary discussions of the Wager. Technical work on infinite utility ([2] - [5]) and infinitesimal probability ([6] - [8]) has been invaluable in devising solutions to classic objections to the Wager, but this work has also generated new challenges. As we know, Pascal himself acknowledged, but then recoiled from, the idea that God's existence might have infinitesimal probability. His original argument combines infinite utility only with classical (real-valued) probability. With some exceptions (such as [9]), technical work has tended to concentrate either on infinite utility or infinitesimal probability, but not both. New work, principally by Wenmackers ([10]) and Chen and Rubio ([11]), develops a “harmonious” decision theory within which we can combine the two infinities. My main purpose in this talk is to emphasize the high cost of a “harmonious” approach, and to suggest an alternative. Contra Pascal, we do need to allow infinitesimal probabilities. But Pascal was, arguably, on the right track in thinking that they can't be readily combined with infinite utilities.

Long ago, Oppy [6] conjectured that infinitesimal probabilities would invalidate the Wager. The consensus that emerges from the harmonious approaches is that Oppy is correct ([10] - [12]). Once infinitesimals and infinite utility are both in the picture, we can no longer “vindicate Pascal's conclusion that one ought to wager for God regardless of one's (positive) credence in God's existence” ([12]). A more significant consequence of adopting these infinite decision theories, however, is that Pascal's Wager loses its distinctive sharpness. On the most widely known version of Pascal's original argument, wagering for God is rational given any positive probability that God exists. This result requires a framework where one's preference for the good of salvation is discontinuous with other preferences. For Wenmackers and for Chen and Rubio, however, the rightness of wagering depends upon an expected utility calculation very similar to what we find in ordinary finite decision theory, except that the calculation involves balancing infinitesimal probabilities and infinite utilities against finite utilities.

Harmonious decision theories are exemplary: they illustrate one fruitful way to develop infinite decision theory that has a number of advantages. In an important respect, however, these theories bake in non-neutral a priori intuitions about the relationship between infinite utility and infinitesimal probability. In particular, they rule out a type of discontinuity that is plausible, explicitly embraced by Pascal, and vital to the sharpness of his argument. Furthermore, the point generalizes: harmonious decision theories rule out other plausible forms of discontinuity.

Infinite decision theories constructed with unrestricted utilities and probabilities drawn from the hyperreal or surreal numbers are legitimate tools for philosophical exploration. At the same time, if a more conservative approach to infinite decision theory can take care of the most pressing issues surrounding Pascal's Wager, such an approach merits attention. This type of conservatism was well expressed by Hammond in an early effort ([9]) to develop a decision theory that combined the two infinities: “How rich should the range of allowable probabilities be?” Hammond's answer is striking: “As small as possible, provided that some essential requirements are met.”

In past work on Pascal's Wager, I argued for a conservative approach to infinite utility, taken in tandem with classical finite probability. The first part of this talk rehearses some classic objections to the Wager (many-gods objection, mixed-strategy objection, conceptual concerns about infinite utility) and shows how they can be effectively handled by a modest notion of infinite utility – my relative utilities approach. That approach preserves Pascal's

ideas about discontinuity.

The latter part of the talk takes on the challenge of extending these ideas to accommodate infinitesimal probability. I first explain how harmonious decision theories rule out important types of discontinuity and cannot be considered as conservative extensions of finite decision theory. I then outline how a conservative approach to infinitesimal probability, developed along lines similar to the relative utilities approach to infinite utility, can be used to extend decision theory to a small field of infinitesimal probabilities, and how this can be done in a way that preserves the sharpness of the Wager. In particular, it does not forbid a priori the types of discontinuity that seemed reasonable to Pascal and that may still seem reasonable to a latter-day Pascalian.

References

- [1] Pascal, B. (1670/2004). *Pensées*. Translated by R. Ariew, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004, pp. 211–214.
- [2] Hájek, A. (2003). Waging war on Pascal's Wager. *The Philosophical Review*, 112, pp. 27–56.
- [3] Bartha, P. (2007). Taking stock of infinite value: Pascal's Wager and relative utilities. *Synthese*, 154, pp. 5–52.
- [4] Bartha, P. (2016). Probability and the philosophy of religion. In A. Hájek and C. Hitchcock (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of probability and philosophy* (pp. 738–771). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Jackson, E. & A. Rogers. (2019). Salvaging Pascal's Wager. *Philosophia Christi*, 21, pp. 59–84.
- [6] Oppy, G. (1991). On Rescher on Pascal's Wager. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 30, pp. 159–168.
- [7] Benci, V., Di Nasso, M., & Forti, M. (2006). The eightfold path to nonstandard analysis. In N. J. Cutland, M. Di Nasso, & D. A. Ross (Eds.), *Nonstandard methods and applications in mathematics* (Vol. 25, pp. 3–44). *Lecture Notes in Logic*. Wellesley, MA: Association for Symbolic Logic, AK Peters.
- [8] Wenmackers, S. (2016). Infinitesimal probabilities. In R. Pettigrew & J. Weisberg (Eds.), *The Open Handbook of Formal Epistemology* (pp. 199–265). PhilPapers Foundation.
- [9] Hammond, P. (1999). Non-Archimedean Subjective Probabilities in Decision Theory and Games. *Mathematical Social Sciences*, 38(2), pp. 139–56.
- [10] Wenmackers, S. (2018). Infinitesimal probabilities and Pascal's Wager. In P. F. A. Bartha & L. Pasternack (Eds.), *Pascal's Wager (Classic philosophical arguments)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Chen, E. & D. Rubio. (2020). Surreal decisions. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 100, pp. 54–74.
- [12] Hájek, A. & Jackson, E. (forthcoming). Pascalian Expectations and Explorations. In R. Ariew & Y. Avnir (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Pascal*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Logical Expressivism and The Rationality of Religious Claims: A Vindication

Alex Ribolli, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brazil, alex.ribolli@hotmail.com

The main purpose of this paper is to approach, to deliver an unassuming response to a general problem of Philosophy of Religion: is religion, in a wider sense, rational? May - or even shall - we speak of a rationality of religious propositions, such as, for instance, "God exists", "Jesus Christ did emerge from the dead on the third day", "Karma pushes one's life beyond death", "the soul will reborn into another life form" etc.? According to a wide range of authors, the answer is overtly negative; for others, on the other hand, mainly theologians, the answer is precisely the opposite. We will not appreciate the content and arguments of the statements of those who either deny or defend the rationality of propositions such as those above-mentioned, but we will focus, to begin with, on the conception of rationality underlying the negative theses. Thus, this

work, put in simpler terms, is envisaged to put forward an alternative proposal in defense of religious reasoning, centered on an animating idea of Robert Brandom's project: the fine structure of rationality - a wide-encompassing complex built upon main beams tied together: commitment, entitlement, and notably logical expressivism. Thereto the present paper will be divided into two major sections.

At first, one seeks to show that the rejection of and scorn for the rational aspect of religious reasoning (or religious propositions), as championed by authors such as David Hume, Ludwig Feuerbach, Bertrand Russell, and Sigmund Freud, is relying on a deflationary conception of rationality. According to them, any religion is based on, or stem from, untamed instincts of human nature, those instincts being characterized by passions and arousal rather than reflection, understanding, logical thinking or, mainly, experience. Indeed, Hume argues, in *The Natural History of Religion*, that religion is not a product of reason, but a psychological phenomenon rooted in our fears and afflictions [1]. Feuerbach, in *Das Wesen des Christentums*, claims that "religious truths" fly in the face of "truths of reason", so that they fall prey to an impossible reconciliation [2]. Russell asserts that religion is an expression of primitive desires, whose foundation lacks rational evidence [3]. Freud, at long last, holds that religion consists of a social disorder, in fact neurosis, sustained by illusions rather than by facts [4]. Although the four thinkers intend to debunk religious claims from different (historical, anthropological, logical, and psychological respectively) stances, they, in a way or another, present a similar criticism, in that all of them reject the very rationality of religion by saying that its claims are not observable. To put it in other words, religious claims, according to them, are irrational because they are not traced back to or mediated by experience. In sum, rationality is limited to the domain of empirical evidence, beyond which our reason is not allowed to reach out. If our reason is bound to the empirical evidence, our rationality itself is made of the same empirical nature. In Mircea Eliade's parlance, religion is irrational for it lies outside man's natural experience [5].

Consequently one aims to demonstrate the flimsiness of such a rationality's deflation as being empiricism fallout (to whose historical development Ernst Cassirer [6] and Charles Taylor [7] devote thorough reflection to which our reader may resort). A rationality so construed - one which believes and acts by weighting evidence only - cannot stand some criticism. (1) To deflate rationality into an evidentialism of empirical flavor is to make it irrational. If one's reason operated solely upon evidence-stacking, no man would act; but "man does not act" is a far-skeptical proposition, which is denied by the very one's reading of it, which in turn denies the very idea of an empirical evidence-based rationality. (2) There is no sufficient amount of empirical evidence for it. (3) Such a rationality presupposes just necessitatis perception, which means one's five senses. Notwithstanding, in case one's sight and taste fade away, how come? Is she irrational or a half-rational person? If reason is reduced into sense perception, once our senses are totally or partially gone, our rationality is in jeopardy of disappearing.

Once the weaknesses of an empirical rationality have been shown and discarded thereupon, our pathway is open, in the second segment, to present Brandom's "fine structure of rationality", a notion articulated upon his logical expressivism: the role of logical vocabulary is to make explicit the relations that articulate the semantic contents of concepts. In Robert Brandom's view, logic, "the organ of semantic self-consciousness", serves the purpose of

letting one express judgments under the form of propositions. Judgments and meanings expressed by them, in turn, are composed of a twofold template: commitment and entitlement. Commitment corresponds to the circumstances of applying a concept, whereas entitlement concerns the consequences of doing so [8]. For instance, if one is committed to the proposition “Jesus Christ arose from the dead”, one is ipso facto entitled to the consequence “He lives”. Logical expressivism, therefore, is just,

so to speak, the formal aspect of an equally expressivist rationality: those logical-conceptual-content relations (to make explicit meaningful contents through the employment of logical tools) are social practices we are engaged in, practices according to which we give and ask for reasons to act and to believe. To be committed and to be entitled are things we, as humans, do, for which we offer and ask reasons. An important element of this kind of rationality is its inherent normative dimension: when we transact reasons for actions and believes, when, for example, we put forward a commitment (“this object is made of copper”), we ought to accept the ensuing entitlement (“it melts if heated to 1084°C”). To sum it up, “to be rational is to be a consumer and producer of reasons” [9]. The conclusion is that this expressivist rationality, one which privileges reasoning over representing, by privileging human-normative dimension to the detriment of mammal-natural one, is much more suitable to tackle problems of rationality. In sum, if the nature of the rational is defined in terms of a rationality plus large, the rational of religious claims will be warranted in terms of an expressivist rationality.

References

- [1] David Hume, *História Natural da Religião*, Unesp, São Paulo, 2005.
- [2] Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1984.
- [3] Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, Routledge, Oxfordshire, 2004.
- [4] Sigmund Freud, *O Futuro de uma Ilusão*, L&PM, Porto Alegre, 2010.
- [5] Mircea Eliade, *O Sagrado e o Profano*, Martins Fontes, São Paulo, 2018.
- [6] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment*, Princeton Press, Princeton, 2009.
- [7] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Harvard Press, Cambridge, 2007.
- [8] Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, Harvard Press, Cambridge, 2001.
- [9] Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, Harvard Press, Cambridge, 2002.

Atheism Based on Divine Hiddenness: A Critical Perspective

Akbar Qorbani, Assistant Professor, Philosophy of Religion, Ardestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ardestan, Iran, qorbani61@gmail.com, akbarqorbani1403@iau.ac.ir

Followers of monotheistic religions believe in a personal God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly benevolent; a God who observes the world and human life and with whom human beings can communicate through prayer and supplication. Nevertheless, believers sometimes encounter an experience that may be described as divine hiddenness or the “absence of God.” They may feel that God does not answer their prayers, remains silent in the face of suffering and injustice, or is not clearly present in their lives. This experience, particularly when combined with the problem of evil, can pose a serious challenge to religious faith.

The problem of divine hiddenness has a long history and can be found in religious, mystical, and philosophical texts [1]. In contemporary philosophy, it has become particularly prominent in the work of John L. Schellenberg. Schellenberg attempts to argue against the existence of the God of monotheistic religions by appealing to justified atheism and the absence of God’s clear presence [3]. This article examines the deductive and inductive versions of the divine-hiddenness argument and argues that neither is sufficient to establish atheism.

The Deductive Version of the Divine-Hiddenness Argument

According to the deductive version, divine hiddenness is incompatible with the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly benevolent God. The argument can be formulated as follows: If God exists and is perfectly benevolent, He must reveal Himself to sincere seekers; however, God is not clearly revealed to some sincere seekers; therefore, such a God does not exist.

The central issue concerns the first premise: Does God’s perfect benevolence necessarily require Him to reveal Himself clearly and continuously to every sincere seeker? The answer is not necessarily affirmative. It is possible to conceive of a benevolent God who, for wise reasons, does not always reveal His presence in an obvious and direct manner. In the monotheistic tradition, God is not merely benevolent but also wise, and His actions are based on a wisdom that human beings may not fully comprehend. Consequently, God’s benevolence does not necessarily entail His constant and unambiguous manifestation.

Moreover, the concept of divine hiddenness itself requires examination. The claim that God is “absent” from the world or “does not reveal Himself” presupposes a clear criterion for divine presence and manifestation. Yet such a criterion is difficult to establish. An experience that constitutes evidence of God’s presence for one believer may not have the same meaning for another. Therefore, divine hiddenness depends, to a considerable extent, on how an individual understands and experiences God’s presence.

Anthropomorphism and the Problem of Divine Presence

One explanation for the emergence of the idea of divine hiddenness is anthropomorphism, or the tendency to conceive of God in human terms. Human beings sometimes imagine God as though He were similar to a human being who should respond to every immediate request in the manner of a compassionate person. According to such a conception, when someone prays and their request is not fulfilled, they may conclude that God does not see them or does not care about them.

Yet in monotheistic theology, God is not a limited being resembling human beings. Islamic mysticism likewise emphasizes the combination of divine transcendence and resemblance. God is utterly beyond comparison with creation, while His signs and manifestations are nevertheless present throughout the universe. The Qur’an describes God as both the “Manifest” and the “Hidden” (Qur’an 57:3). Thus, divine presence need not mean direct and observable intervention in every event of human life.

God may govern the world through the system of causes and effects, natural laws, and human actions. Therefore, expecting direct divine intervention in every event or the immediate fulfillment of every request is not necessarily justified. Such expectations may

arise more from an anthropomorphic conception of God than from the deeper teachings of monotheistic theology [5].

The Inductive Version of the Divine-Hiddenness Argument

In the inductive version, divine hiddenness is presented as evidence against God's existence. Schellenberg argues that if a God of infinite love exists, then justified nonbelief should not occur; yet justified nonbelief does occur; therefore, a God of infinite love does not exist and, consequently, the God of monotheistic religions does not exist [3&4].

This argument also faces significant difficulties. First, God's infinite love does not necessarily entail that no human being should ever become an atheist. Human beings are influenced by

numerous epistemic, psychological, moral, and cultural factors and may fail to recognize God's presence even if God exists. Second, the claim that "justified atheism" occurs requires independent justification. The mere existence of atheists does not establish that their atheism is epistemically justified.

The problem of evil is also particularly important here. William Rowe emphasizes the existence of suffering that appears to lack any greater good or sufficient justification and argues that such cases create serious difficulties for belief in a perfectly benevolent God [2]. Nevertheless, the existence of suffering, even if it constitutes a serious problem for theists, does not by itself establish that there can be no wise reason for God to permit it.

Conclusion

An examination of the deductive and inductive versions of the divine-hiddenness argument demonstrates that neither can logically establish the nonexistence of the God of monotheistic religions. In the deductive version, the central premise—that God's perfect benevolence necessarily requires His clear and constant manifestation to every sincere seeker—has not been established. In the inductive version, neither the existence of atheism nor the experience of God's silence is sufficient to demonstrate that atheism is justified or that God's existence has become improbable.

A significant part of the problem of divine hiddenness appears to arise from anthropomorphic conceptions of God and from mistaken expectations concerning the manner of divine presence and action. In monotheistic theology, God is understood as both transcendent and near, both manifest and hidden, and His presence does not necessarily take the form of direct and observable intervention. Furthermore, prayer should not be understood merely as a means of obtaining personal desires; rather, it is fundamentally a means of maintaining and deepening the human relationship with God.

Therefore, divine hiddenness, although it can be a real and sometimes deeply difficult experience for believers, cannot by itself provide a logical basis for atheism. Indeed, manifestation and hiddenness can both contribute to the development and deepening of religious experience. Religious faith is formed and sustained in the space between hope and despair, presence and absence, manifestation and hiddenness, question and answer. Divine hiddenness, therefore, may be understood not so much as an argument against God's existence, but as one of the most difficult and, at the same time, profound experiences within religious faith.

References

- [1] Buber, M., *The eclipse of God: Studies in the relation between religion and philosophy*, Harper, New York, 1957.
- [2] Rowe, W. L., *The problem of evil and some varieties of atheism*, In R. D. Geivett & B. Sweetman (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on religious epistemology*, Oxford University Press, 1992.
- [3] Schellenberg, J. L., *Divine hiddenness and human reason*. Cornell University Press, 1993.
- [4] Schellenberg, J. L., *Divine hiddenness and human philosophy*. In A. Green & E. Stump (Eds.), *Hidden divinity and religious belief*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- [5] Weidner, V., *Divine hiddenness*, Cambridge University Press, 2021.

From Oracle to Auditor: Machine-Checked Reasoning about Gödel’s God and the Impossible Devil

Christoph Benz Müller, Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg & Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

When people turn to artificial intelligence with questions about life, meaning, or faith, AI usually plays the role of an oracle: it speaks fluently and confidently, and we are invited to take its answers on trust. This talk presents a different — and deliberately more modest — role for the machine: that of an auditor. An auditor does not answer the question whether God exists. It checks whether a stated conclusion really follows, within a chosen logic, from explicitly stated assumptions, and nothing more. It cannot tell us whether those assumptions — or the choice of logic itself — are true, plausible, or rightly interpreted; these questions, at least for now, remain with us. What it guarantees is that the derivation itself is complete and machine-verified — so that any remaining disagreement is located where it belongs: in the premises and in the chosen logic. Today’s generative AI chatbots and such symbolic auditors can moreover divide the labour: the former propose conjectures, draft formalisations, translate between everyday language and logical notation, and explain results, while the latter rigorously verify what has actually been established. Combining the two may be the most promising route to trustworthy AI [1].

The talk illustrates this with a famous example. The logician Kurt Gödel left behind a short handwritten proof of the existence of God, dated 1970. Standing in a tradition reaching back to Anselm and Leibniz, it defines God as a being that possesses every “positive” property and derives, from a handful of axioms about such properties, that such a being necessarily exists. When the manuscript was encoded and checked with automated theorem provers, using the methodology, several things came to light [2]. First, a faithful formalisation of the manuscript’s own axioms and definitions turns out to be inconsistent — a subtle defect in Gödel’s definition of “essence” that the published commentary had not identified. Second, two small modifications each restore consistency — one, due to Dana Scott, strengthens the definition of “essence”; the other, more recent, adjusts the notion of property implication — and the intended conclusion — the necessary existence of a God-like being — then verifiably follows, from weaker assumptions about necessity and possibility than the debate had commonly presupposed. One of the modifications even resonates with Gödel’s private notebooks, where he associates the Devil with “the empty set — an amphibian between nothing and something”. Third, relative to the axioms of these consistent variants, a “perfect Devil” — a being possessing every non-positive property — provably cannot exist; whether that tells us anything about reality depends entirely on whether one accepts the axioms. Fourth, the auditing continues: a recent machine-checked note [4] corrects specific claims about the argument in the current scholarly literature, with countermodels that anyone can rerun and inspect. [LogiKey.org](https://logikey.org)

What do such results establish? Not theological truth. A verified proof shows that a conclusion follows from a specific formalisation of specific premises within a chosen logic — no more, but also no less. And different reasonable choices — of logic, or of how “property” and “necessity” are read — can yield different verdicts. This logical pluralism [3] need not be seen as a defect; arguably, it is the deeper lesson: formal verification cannot eliminate philosophical disagreement, yet it can make the sources of disagreement explicit, shifting debate from rhetoric to clearly identified assumptions. This is almost the mirror image of today’s chatbots, whose fluent answers tempt us to mistake confidence for truth. If AI is to mediate questions of

faith at all, the talk concludes, the auditor is the role worth cultivating — machines that make our arguments explicit, checkable, and contestable — and a basic education in logic is what empowers people to look over the auditor’s shoulder instead of kneeling before the oracle.

References

- [1] C. Benz Müller, X. Parent, and L. van der Torre. Designing normative theories for ethical and legal reasoning: LogiKey framework, methodology, and tool support. *Artificial Intelligence* 287:103348, 2020. doi:10.1016/j.artint.2020.103348.
- [2] C. Benz Müller and D. Scott. Notes on Gödel’s and Scott’s variants of the ontological argument. *Monatshefte für Mathematik* 208(4):569–611, 2025. doi:10.1007/s00605-025-02078-x.

-
- [3] C. Benzmüller, D. Kirchner, and L. Pasetto. Many Logics, One Methodology: A Plea for Logical Pluralism in Formalised Reasoning. arXiv:2605.27246, 2026. doi:10.48550/arXiv.2605.27246.
- [4] C. Benzmüller. A Comment on Modal Collapse and Ultrafilters in Gödel's Ontological Argument. arXiv:2608.07578, 2026. doi:10.48550/arXiv.2608.07578.

Free Will and The Theory of Singular Causal Agent: A Contemporary Vedic Perspective

Sanjiv Desai, Gitayog Organization, United States, sanjivdesai2000@gmail.com

The free will debate is often reduced to two main positions: either human beings possess free will, or the universe is governed entirely by predeterminism. The deterministic position argues that all motions and actions can be traced back to the initial conditions of the universe and the laws of classical mechanics.[3] In contrast, proponents of free will emphasize the direct experience of agency, such as the apparent ability to choose between alternative actions. Quantum theory, particularly Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, has further complicated this debate by introducing indeterminism at the quantum level.[2] This provides a potential entry point for free will within the dynamics of physical laws.

The paper neither defends strict predeterminism nor what the author refers to as the classical individual free-will theory. The latter refers to the traditional view that an individual's own free will is the direct cause of his or her actions. Instead, the paper proposes the Theory of Singular Causal Agent (ToSCA). According to this theory, all motions in the universe, including the Big Bang, deterministic motions governed by classical mechanics, quantum motions, and actions that appear to originate from individuals, ultimately arise from the free will of the Absolute. Although actions seem to emanate from individuals, they are theorized here to arise from the free will of the Absolute rather than from the individual directly.

The paper further argues that Vedic philosophy simultaneously affirms both the existence of individual free will and the proposition that the individual is not the ultimate doer of actions. Bhagavad Gita Verse 3.27 states that "the soul, deluded by false identification with the body, thinks itself to be the doer." [1] Within this framework, the individual possesses intent, while the Absolute manifests the corresponding action. The theory therefore distinguishes between intention and the cause of action, assigning the former to the individual and the latter to the Absolute.

To clarify this distinction, the paper presents the analogy of a speaker addressing an audience. Although the audience freely wills the speaker to give the speech, the motions themselves are attributed directly to the speaker rather than to the audience members. Similarly, according to ToSCA, individuals possess free will in the form of intent, but the actions themselves are carried out by the Absolute. Just as the speaker may choose not to act in accordance with the audience's wishes, the Absolute may choose not to manifest the individual's intent. This framework also provides a basis for explaining karma, where moral responsibility is associated primarily with intent rather than with direct physical execution.

The paper then examines the nature of primary causes and argues that all proposed primary causes ultimately belong to one of three categories: individual free will, randomness, or the Absolute's free will. This classification is intended as a logical partition rather than a historical survey of philosophical positions. The proposed classification begins by distinguishing primary causes as intentional or non-intentional. If intentional, the agency must belong either to the individual or to the Absolute. If non-intentional, it belongs to the category of randomness. This yields three logically distinct categories of possible primary causes.

The paper critiques reductionist accounts that readily attribute quantum uncertainty to randomness. It argues instead that quantum uncertainty does not necessarily imply randomness as its underlying cause, but may instead result from the free will of the Absolute. The paper argues that randomness fails to qualify as a coherent singular causal agent. Randomness is not itself an entity or agent, but a label applied to events that lack an identifiable intentional cause. Consequently, randomness cannot function as a singular causal agent in the same sense as either an individual or the Absolute. Moreover, if random events were governed by a single coherent principle, they would no longer be random in the ordinary sense of the term.

The argument can be taken a step further by considering rationality itself. If the ultimate basis of reasoning were fundamentally random, it would become difficult to explain why logical reasoning itself should be reliable. The very act of making a logical argument assumes that our reasoning is guided by principles that are more than mere chance. Finally,

unlike an intentional agent, randomness does not explain why a particular outcome occurred rather than another. It merely describes the absence of an identifiable determining cause. The paper ultimately argues that, unlike randomness, the Absolute's free will satisfies the requirements of a coherent singular causal agent and is therefore the only remaining viable explanation underlying all motions and events.

The search for unification is one of the defining characteristics of modern physics. The ongoing pursuit of a Theory of Everything (ToE), although unresolved, reflects the expectation that the diverse phenomena of nature can be described within a single coherent framework. The Theory of Singular Causal Agent (ToSCA) extends this same principle of unification to the domain of causation.

In addition to eliminating competing accounts of primary causation, ToSCA offers a unified explanation for deterministic motion, quantum uncertainty, human free will, and the Vedic doctrine of non-doership within a single coherent metaphysical framework.

References

- [1] Bhagavad Gita. (n.d.). Chapter 3, verse 27.
- [2] Heisenberg, W. (1958). *Physics and philosophy: The revolution in modern science*. Harper & Brothers.
- [3] Hoefer, C. (n.d.). Causal determinism. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Hegel's Sublation of the Antithesis of Faith and Reason in the Absolute Idea

Donald Burke, University Canada West, Canada, donald.burke@ucanwest.ca

In *Faith & Knowledge* (*Glauben und Wissen*) (1802), G.W.F. Hegel contends that Enlightenment Reason has rendered the medieval adage, that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology (Aquinas), obsolete. Philosophy has asserted its absolute autonomy vis-à-vis faith and religion, so the story goes. However, Hegel argues that Enlightenment philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte have restricted Reason by asserting that the finite is absolute, and that philosophy can only long for the Absolute Idea, once again setting up an opposition between faith and reason that Enlightened Reason had supposedly overcome.

In this paper I will argue that Hegel's early formulation of the Absolute Idea as that which exceeds the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi, anticipates his later formulation of the Absolute Idea in his *Science of Logic* (1812/1816).

Is the Ontological Argument Worthless? A Neoclassical (Process) Theistic Response

Daniel A. Dombrowski, Seattle University

Capitalism as Religion

Samir Gandesha

“Capitalism is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction.”

Walter Benjamin 1921

How can capitalism as one of the greatest secularizing forces in human history be understood as a religion? In his 1921 fragment entitled “Capitalism as Religion,” written immediately prior to the infamous German hyper-inflation, the Jewish-German critic and writer Walter Benjamin makes the case that capitalism is a religion not just in the sense that, as Max Weber argued that Protestantism furnished the “spirit” of capitalism, but that capitalism was itself a “cultic religion.” After contextualizing and examining Benjamin’s argument, which centers on what he calls the “demonic ambiguity” of the German word *Schuld* (meaning both guilt and debt), I ask what this strange and provocative text might have to say to us today? I suggest that, driven by enormous and accumulating debt, digital technology, especially the eagerly anticipated artificial general intelligence, evinces the convergence of capitalism and religion insofar as both entail the logic or structure of expectation in which the future elides the present. The breath-taking acceleration of technology geared to maximizing capital accumulation produces an illusion of what “techno-optimist” and venture capitalist Marc Andreessen calls following Nick Land the endless “upward spiral of techno-capital.” Religion, similarly, devalues the present in the interest of the fullness or plenitude of meaning to come with the judgement at the end of days. Today, these twin logics of “accelerationism,” on the one hand, and the redemption of the world, on the other, converge in the mass construction of AI data centres around the globe. These new digital “temples” require unprecedented quanta of land, energy and water. Such resources are increasingly sacrificed to the techno-optimist fantasy of omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent super-intelligence, which promises nothing less than a redemption of the world.

Evolutionary Debunking Arguments and the Problem of Evil

Louis Ward, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, louis.ward@stx.ox.ac.uk

Evolutionary theory is often taken to strengthen the evidential problem of evil against theism. In particular, the vast history of animal suffering described by evolutionary accounts is thought to increase the probability that there exist gratuitous evils, and thus to count against the existence of a perfectly good God. Such arguments typically rely on our ability to judge that certain evils are gratuitous and to use divine psychology to infer that God would not permit them. This paper argues that the same evolutionary framework used to support the problem of evil may instead undermine its epistemic foundations. Drawing on evolutionary debunking arguments (EDAs), I examine how evolutionary accounts of the development of our cognitive faculties bear on the reliability of our judgements about gratuity and divine psychology. I firstly consider the extent to which EDAs for morality undercut the problem of evil, arguing that these give us reason to doubt that our judgements about gratuitous suffering and divine psychology are truth sensitive. I then propose novel EDAs targeting gratuity and divine psychology directly, arguing that even if moral judgements in general can be truth-sensitive on an evolutionary account, evolutionary mechanisms are unlikely to produce reliable gratuity and divine psychology judgements. I conclude that evolutionary accounts of human cognition, far from straightforwardly supporting the problem of evil, generate good reason to doubt its success.

The Intersection Between Faith and Rational Thinking

Teresita Dela Cruz, University Canada West, Canada, teresita.cruz@ucanwest.ca

Various perspectives about faith have prompted many to ask: "Is faith rational?" This paper explores how can faith and rational thinking support and enhance each other towards humanity's well-being. For believers, faith is a way of life. The foundational text for nearly all Christian theologians is Hebrews 11:1, which states: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Critics may claim that this text implies blind obedience – following rules, orders, or authority figures without question, critical thought, or personal moral evaluation. Obedience comes from a Latin word *Oboedire* which means a strong sense of deep listening rather than forced compliance. Faith is deeply rooted in active

listening which leads to understanding, a fundamental cognitive process that influences every decision we make. St. Thomas Aquinas defined faith as "an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will." Humanity is endowed with three types of thinking – egoistic, socio-centric, and rational. Egoistic acts primarily out of selfish interest, socio-centric validates one's beliefs through other's opinions and group norms, and rational focuses not only on one's well-being but also on others. Given how we use our free will, faith and rational thinking can complement and enrich each other. Reason helps to critically examine and ground our beliefs, while faith offers meaning and purpose to the truths we discover. Reflecting on God's words on how we relate with each other – "Love your neighbor as yourself. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." – and responding positively demonstrate that faith is rational.

Keywords: faith, rational thinking, obedience, free will, types of thinking, humanity's well-being.

On the Polish Roots of the Analytic Theology

Marek Porwolik, Institute of Philosophy, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland,
m.porwolik@uksw.edu.pl

Analytic theology is a theology in which the methods and concepts of analytic philosophy are employed. It is characterized by methodological directives regarding language and ways of justifying propositions. The term "analytic theology" came into common use in the early 21st century. A natural question is to what extent this new approach in theology is truly novel. We can question this thesis, taking into account the program of the Cracow Circle, whose members were active in the 1930s. In addition to Józef Maria Bocheński (1902–1995), the Circle's members included Jan Salamucha (1903–1944), Jan Franciszek Drewnowski (1896–1978), and Bolesław Sobociński (1906–1980). The Circle was considered a branch of the Lvov-Warsaw School. It operated primarily in the areas of Catholic philosophy of God and theology. The program of the Cracow Circle was methodological in nature and concerned the ways of practicing theology and philosophy of God. In this paper, we compare the program of the Cracow Circle with the methodological directives of analytic theology. Ultimately, we conclude that the members of the Circle can be viewed as pioneers of contemporary analytic theology.



*A worldwide initiative to promote academic research
on the relationship between logic and religion,
reason and faith, rational inquiry and divine revelation.*

