

Editorial

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY, HUMAN AGGRESSION, AND MENTAL HEALTH

ISLAM AND SCIENCE IN THE FUTURE

This issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* features a Symposium on “Islam and Science in the Future,” organized by Majid Daneshgar. The Symposium brings together four articles, introduced by Daneshgar, that offer a philosophical understanding of the notions of Islam and science. The authors are affiliated with institutions in the United Kingdom, Morocco, Iran, and Germany, with Daneshgar having a truly global background that spans Iran, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Germany. The aim of the Symposium is to enlist the help of Islamic philosophy in removing the tension between Islam and science in the future and to provide a wide audience in the science and religion discussion with exemplars of how to analytically read and understand the relation between religion and science. The first article, by Biliana Popova, brings a variety of Islamic philosophical schools to bear on very topical discussions around artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. She addresses epistemological and ontological arguments dealing with death, (im)mortality, and afterlife, and how these should be positioned in the discourse of AI development in the future. The second article, by Mohsen Feyzbakhsh, investigates the relation between conceptualizations of religion and the question about the future of Islam and science. He argues that different understandings of the concept of religion lead to extremely different readings of that question. The third article, by Ali Hossein Khani, aims to clarify the conditions that make having a conversation between Islam and science possible and plausible. His main concern is with facilitating a situation in which different proponents can engage in a genuine conversation with each other, for which, he argues, sharing a common ontology is essentially required. The fourth (and final) article, by Majid Daneshgar, revolves around the viability of Darwin’s evolutionary thought in the Muslim world, which is confronted by various groups of Muslim commentators and scholars. He argues that both today and in the future there is a tendency of political and theological engagement with Darwin’s thought, leading to a marginalization of science in the Muslim world.

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS AND BIOLOGICAL FINDINGS ON
HUMAN AGGRESSION

In a double article, Marcia Pally uses findings in evolutionary biology and psychology to engage with philosopher René Girard's work on questions pertaining to human cooperativity, competition, aggression, play, art, ritual, and ritual sacrifice. She shows how biological findings can be invoked to illustrate questions about the origins of severe, systemic aggression that arise in the mimetic theory of Girard. She concludes in Part I that systemic aggression might be relatively recent and that its occurrence depends on ecological, resource, and socioeconomic conditions additional to our mimetic and social nature. From this it follows that distinguishing the conditions that prod aggression from those that support prosocial behavior might aid us in structuring society today. Part II investigates Girard's theory of ritual sacrifice—especially human sacrifice—as a societal steam-valve for the systemic aggression explored in Part I. It draws on theories of play, theater, and art to examine the role and function of such ritual sacrifice. She concludes that at present, the evidence is insufficient to support Girard's hypothesis that ritual human sacrifice is the codification of preagriculture, intragroup scapegoating violence, and that the final assessment of Girard's ideas awaits further findings. Similarly, evidence is insufficient to claim that the occurrence of severe, systemic aggression can be dated to an early, preagriculture period or can be attributed to a spontaneous escalation throughout the hunter-gatherer period.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE GOSPEL


The Boyle Lecture of 2020, included in this issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, was given by Cristopher Cook, a theologian from Durham, UK, and deals with the contributions that spirituality and religion can make to dealing with mental health. He observes the sharp separation that had arisen between the professional and scientific domain of mental health and the more subjective, transcendent, and private concerns of spirituality. Critical interdisciplinary conversations between science and theology, aided by scientific research demonstrating the positive benefits of spirituality and religion for mental health, are now leading to a reevaluation of psychological strategies. Cook proposes, for instance, that Jesus' life and teaching are presented in the synoptic Gospels as fundamentally concerned with what we now call mental health, and that Jesus' teaching on worry offers various psychological strategies for dealing with anxiety. Fraser Watts acted as respondent to this year's Boyle Lecture. He cautions against a too simple understanding of the relationship between religion

and mental health. The discourses of religion and psychology need to be distinguished. This does not alter the fact that positive correlations do occur, and it is a consistent feature of Jesus' interactions that he encourages people to believe that more is possible than might have been imagined. Watts concludes that Jesus' impact on the mental health of those around him seems to have been largely a matter of what might now be called positive psychology.

OTHER ARTICLES

The five articles that this issue starts with deal with a number of long-standing themes in the science and religion discussion, including transhumanism, the (un)controlability of technology, mind and matter, and typologies of science and religion. Travis Dumsday engages with Serguis Bulgakov's work, who had developed an Orthodox systematic theology in engagement with western philosophical and theological movements in the early twentieth century. He analyzes in particular a critique offered by Bulgakov of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov's account of humanity's prospects for a technologically facilitated eschatology, and he discusses the ongoing relevance of that critique vis-à-vis current and future Christian dialogue with the transhumanist movement. Gábor Ambrus provides a critical analysis of the role of Facebook and sees parallels with the Jewish tradition of the golem, an image of human beings, created by them in a reenactment of their own creation by God. Like a golem, Facebook is analyzed as having turned into a magic servant with an inherent dynamic running between its human and its subhuman characteristics; this dynamic is the main cause behind its becoming uncontrollable. Steve Taylor presents "panspiritism" as an alternative to "materialism" and "panpsychism." He summarizes the fundamental principles of this approach, discussing how it links to earlier (mainly Eastern) philosophical perspectives, how it differs from panpsychism, and how it relates to idealism and theism. Edward Epsen proposes an idealist view of divine action in nature. He shows that there is a coherent account of mind's place in nature that denies physical realism, and claims that such an account would enable a theological description of God's sustaining and governing action in nature through the ontological mediation of minds and laws causally constraining their sensations. Finally, Robert Geraci reflects on complexity in the study of religion, science, and technology, for instance, in evaluating climate response and AI, and he criticizes a tendency in the field of science and religion to commit to typological classification. He argues that, instead, what he calls a "hydra-logical" stance can be adopted, in which one recognizes that there are cultural monsters, possessing scientific, technological, and religious heads that may agree or disagree, and for which new heads may grow if one is cut off.

This issue ends with two book reviews: Peter Heasley reviews *Stanley Jaki Foundation International Congress 2015*, edited by Paul Hafner and Joseph Laracy, and Paul Carr and Paul Aveson review Max Tegmark's *Our Mathematical Universe: My Quest for the Ultimate Nature of Reality*.

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