

## **IRCI Philosophy Workshop on Comparative Philosophy of Religion**

**11-12 November 2024**

**Level 4 Conference Room, 250 Victoria Parade**

### Speakers

Nevin Climenhaga (ACU)

Tyler McNabb (Saint Francis University)

Zain Ali (University of Auckland)

Jamie Turner (University of Birmingham)

Robyn Horner (ACU)

### Schedule

#### *11 November*

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|---------------|--|
| 9:30 – 11:00  | Nevin Climenhaga, “Noumenal Molinism”  |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Morning tea  |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | Tyler McNabb, “The Shentong Tradition and Classical Theism: A Synthesis?”  |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Catered lunch  |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Zain Ali, “Religion and Moral Transformation: Cottingham v. Oppy”  |
| 15:30 – 16:00 | Afternoon tea  |
| 16:00 – 17:30 | Jamie Turner, “Skeptical Theistic Steadfastness and Interreligious Disagreement: An Islamic Ash‘arite Perspective” |

#### *12 November*

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| 9:30 – 11:00  | Robyn Horner, “On seeing the world relationally”   |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Morning tea  |
| 11:30 – 12:30 | Roundtable on comparative philosophy of religion: Tyler McNabb, Zain Ali, Jamie Turner, and Robyn Horner |
| 12:30         | Catered lunch  |

## Abstracts

### *Nevin Climenhaga, "Noumenal Molinism"*

According to Molinism, there are contingently true counterfactuals about what agents would freely do if put in specific circumstances, God knows these prior to creation, and God uses this knowledge in choosing how to create. *Noumenal Molinism* combines Molinism with a Kantian theory of free will, on which human persons are noumenal beings outside of the phenomenal world of spacetime, choosing the laws that they will act in accordance with. In the noumenal realm, you make a series of conditional decisions: you decide how you will act, when you find yourself in such-and-such a situation. These decisions are the counterfactuals of freedom that guide God's creative will. I argue that noumenal Molinism answers almost all major contemporary objections to Molinism. I then consider the extent to which noumenal Molinism is compatible with orthodox Christianity and Islam, with a focus on the view's implications for the pre-existence of souls.

### *Tyler McNabb, "The Shentong Tradition and Classical Theism: A Synthesis?"*

McNabb and Baldwin have recently argued that Classical Theism and Buddhism can be rendered in a logically consistent way. That is, one could theoretically endorse the theses of Classical Theism and the metaphysical theses of what they call mere Buddhism. One criticism of their project goes something like this: McNabb and Baldwin's project, typical to analytic philosophy, is ahistorical. While McNabb and Baldwin's argument might go through with respect to some very generalized form of Buddhism, McNabb and Baldwin don't show that actual Buddhists who belong to robust Buddhist traditions can adhere to theism. In this paper, I put forward the hypothesis that the Shentong tradition shows promise as an actual Buddhist tradition that is consistent with Classical Theism. I first give a brief history on the Shentong tradition and put it in conversation with modern Christian and Buddhist dialogue. Second, I argue that there is reason to think that the Shentong tradition fits well with the Classical Theist tradition. Third, I engage an objection that the Shentong tradition better fits with Shankara's Advaita tradition.

### *Zain Ali, "Religion and Moral Transformation: Cottingham v. Oppy"*

John Cottingham has recently called for a more humane approach to the philosophy of religion. Cottingham observes that religion, takes as its central focus the deep structural problems of human life and our pressing need for moral transformation. He notes that moral transformation is made possible through spiritual practices, and that such practices can be assessed, by reference to the moral difference it makes in the

lives of practitioners. Accordingly, a more humane approach to the philosophy of religion would need to be sensitive to the subjective and transformational dimensions of religion. Graham Oppy, in response to Cottingham, argues that spiritual practices do not lead to moral transformation. My aim is first to explore Cottingham's view of religion, then outline and evaluate Oppy's response. I argue that if we take into account divine grace, we can broaden Cottingham's view of religion and also address Oppy's critique.

*Jamie Turner, "Skeptical Theistic Steadfastness and Interreligious Disagreement: An Islamic Ash'arite Perspective"*

Abstract: In a recent article, "Skeptical Theistic Steadfastness", I defended a potential strategy that religious believers might wield in escaping the epistemic problem of religious disagreement over the truth of theistic belief with non-believers. Roughly, the idea is that a believer can partially overlook the epistemic credentials of non-believing peers due to God's prerogative to self-reveal to whom He wills. But what about when there exists interreligious disagreement between believers of different faiths both of whom can plausibly adopt the same strategy? In the absence of some asymmetry, perhaps both parties to the dispute deploying the same move cancel each other out. I aim to consider whether a certain model of God adopted by Muslim Ash'arite thinkers might overcome worries about the force of this move in contexts of interreligious disagreement. I argue that Ash'arites might be positioned to dismiss worries over the epistemic credentials of their apparent epistemic peers, even if they also adopt the same skeptical theistic steadfast strategy, given their specific conception of God's radical omnipotence.

*Robyn Horner, "On seeing the world relationally"*

If it does at all, how does the phenomenological tradition perceive the radical interrelatedness of all things? In this paper, I begin by examining briefly Catholic theology about the destiny of creation, especially where it moves from triumphalist anthropocentrism to a recognition that the fundamental interrelatedness of all things involves decentering the human in particular ways. I then consider another means of being brought to perceive 'creation' as a whole, bringing hermeneutic phenomenology into conversation with Australian First Nations knowing.