

THOUGHT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AS CONFLICTS OF EPISTEMOLOGIES¹

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Abstract

In this paper, we will present a distinction between belief, religious belief, religion, theology as the religious teaching of belief, an explication of the concept of religious conflicts, the (im)possibility of realizing the ideal of theological epistemology, and the consideration of religious conflicts as a clash of epistemologies. Hypothesis, as a statement that is assumed to be true in order to explain certain facts or as an assumption based on facts, is reflected in the thesis that religious conflicts become serious clashes of epistemologies when we elevate our understanding from the realm of phenomena that religions largely operate within to the realm of principles upon which these phenomena are based. Thus, we will contemplate religious conflicts through the lens of theological epistemologies, which can be reduced to three basic categories: fundamental theology, with Revelation or Sacred Text as the source of faith; rational theology, which takes reason as the source of faith, and spiritual theology, which considers personal experience or revelation as the source of faith. Although the subject of this paper is the consideration of religious conflicts as clashes of epistemologies, it will become evident that it is necessary to contemplate the specific religious phenomena that emerge based on various theological epistemologies. This is in line with the necessity of understanding the phenomenal domain where religious conflicts arise. However, the main focus of this paper is the consideration of the clash of theological epistemologies as an explication of religious conflicts.

Keywords: religion, conflicts, belief, theology, epistemology, principles, phenomena, Revelation, reason, experience.

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Introduction

Guided by the idea that the most relentless conflicts are, by their own admission, conflicts over the loftiest matters: faith, philosophical worldviews, and different moral concepts of the good², we will attempt to problematize the concept of faith as one of the fundamental reasons for conflicts.

Faith and Conflicts

Starting from the standpoint of German idealism, "Kant placed faith between 'opinion' as the lowest degree of certainty and 'knowledge' as the highest, defining it as 'holding to be true' and emphasized that it is only 'subjectively sufficient,' but 'objectively must be considered insufficient.'³ In this context, since faith is an utterly subjective conviction, the phrase "conflicts of faith" proves to be inadequate, as beliefs cannot conflict due to their highly subjective nature. Instead, what we commonly refer to as "conflicts of faith" should be more accurately described as religious conflicts because they are conflicts attributed to the concept of faith and are waged in the name of belief, which is its primary attribution. Faith, as objectively insufficient, cannot seriously be the source of major religious conflicts since the phenomena of faith are perceived differently by everyone, making conflicts in such cases a war of all against all. Because faith is highly subjective, and its phenomena are mainly transcendent in the context of religious belief, it is challenging to express and, for the most part, inexpressible.⁴ Therefore, it is also difficult for it to be a source of conflict. In particular, conflicts of great magnitude in the context of questions of belief have been incited after attempts were made to objectify the phenomena of faith, which were positioned as objectively insufficient and rooted in extreme subjective convictions, through the concept of religion.

Religion and Conflicts

Faith is a much more complex phenomenon than religion, but religion, as a system of beliefs with a tendency toward their objectification, becomes a more substantial phenomenon due to the necessity of verifying the mentioned tendency. Consequently, religious conflicts emerge because of the impossibility of such objectification. As a system and/or institution of

² Cf. Rawls John, *Political liberalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996., 3.

³ See Kant Immanuel, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

⁴ See Derrida Jacques, *White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1974.

belief, religion must involve all believers in objectifying what is believed in. Since belief, as previously mentioned, is difficult to express or inexpressible, those who do not hold the objectification of their beliefs meticulously enough stir up religious conflicts.

Public opinion does not have clearly defined basic phrases regarding the issue of conflicts related to religion. It uses the phrase "religious conflicts," which attributes the concept of conflicts as a primary concern and implies that it involves conflicts between different religions as separate entities. In contrast, the phrase "religious conflicts" attributes the concept "religious" as the primary concern, indicating that it involves conflicts of a religious nature within a single entity. After religious conflicts concerning matters of truth, which is evident in history, here the term "religious conflicts" means conflicts within a single religion, as such conflicts have become prevalent following modern and Anglo-Saxon tendencies to replace the concept of truth with concepts like credibility, high probability, and justified belief.⁵ We can observe that religious conflicts occurring within a single entity are not conflicts over matters of truth but conflicts concerning fundamental epistemological beliefs, as reflected in the question of the source of faith.

Epistemological Triad⁶

Religions as systematic and/or institutionalized belief systems have their theologies, which teach the truths of faith defined through the institution of dogma—a teaching or doctrine that serves as a rule in belief formation, and which is accepted as indisputable without critical examination or regard for their concrete applicability. In defining the truths of faith systematically through questions of dogma, epistemology holds a crucial place. Epistemology, used as a method for understanding the sources of faith, divides monotheistic theology into multiple pluralistic theologies over time. However, we can categorize all theologies of all religions into three fundamental epistemological approaches: fundamental theology, which takes Revelation or Holy Scriptures as the source of faith; rational theology, which takes reason as the

⁵ Veljak Lino „Sonu stranu dogmatizma i relativizma“ In: *Filozofska istraživanja* 32 (3-4) Zagreb, 2012.

⁶ Here, we will only explain our distinction between three theologies: fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology in the context of epistemological foundations: Revelation or Holy Text, reason, and personal insight or revelation, without addressing the secondary or tertiary sources of faith, which can vary. For example, in the case of fundamental theology, there are theologians for whom the primary source of knowledge of the truths of faith is Revelation or the Holy Text, and reason serves as a secondary means through which they interpret Revelation or the Holy Text. On the other hand, there are theologians for whom Revelation or the Holy Text is the primary source of knowledge of the truths of faith, and personal insight or revelation serves as the secondary means through which they interpret Revelation or the Holy Text. This same example of gradation of sources of knowledge in the context of the relationship between Revelation – reason – revelation can be discussed in rational theology or spiritual theology, but that is not the case in this work.

source of faith; and spiritual theology, which takes personal insight or supernatural revelation as the source of faith. In this work, we will outline the essential characteristics of all three theological epistemologies concerning the principles.

Fundamental Theology

Various epistemological perspectives have been imposed on the concept of faith in the context of its source. Thus, every religious tradition recognizes a corpus of scholars advocating the epistemology of fundamental theology, also known as dogmatic theology or *theologia dogmatica* in literature. This theology encompasses all perspectives that serve as the foundation of theological teachings, along with their core principles. It promotes a return to ancient fundamentals that originally defined a particular theology. From this defining starting point, faith is understood as the measure of all things, an unquestionable truth, and a dogma that admits no doubt. It is considered to be a self-sufficient source that doesn't accept anything else as a source of faith except Revelation or Holy Scriptures. Of course, in some religious traditions, the corpus of works that compose the source of faith has expanded to include tradition, oral transmission, or commentaries on the fundamental text. Still, adherents of fundamental theology always refer back to the text as the ultimate authority.

In this context, reason is subordinate to faith and cannot engage in a dialogue from the perspective of fundamental theology about the conflict between faith and reason because reason is not at all compatible with faith; instead, it is subordinate to it. Here, reason is understood as of lower significance, insufficient for understanding religious truths without the authority of the text itself. Adherents of fundamental theology have never experienced conflicts between faith and reason because their method of demonstrating religious truths is not based on rational deliberation, which is characteristic of adherents of rational theology. Rather, it relies on the text itself, and they make judgments about the truths of faith based on the text. The dogmatics of followers of fundamental theology are unchanging since they are based on an immutable text considered self-sufficient and self-evident for revealing the truths of faith. Of course, certain aspects of fundamental theology in specific religious traditions encountered questions about the conflict between faith and reason when the text as the source of faith came into conflict with scientific issues, such as the appearance of the Earth, the position of the Sun, or the origin of comets. Nevertheless, adherents of this *theologiae* would never deviate from the authority of the text regarding dogmas related to questions of religious truths, such as the questions of the first cause, the soul, infinity, and the like.

Personal insight, characteristic of primary sources of faith in the epistemology of spiritual theology, is never superior to Revelation or Holy Scripture, but it is subordinated to the authority

of the text. It indicates that personal insight, revelation, and direct intuitive knowledge of the suprasensible can never serve as evidence for any dogmatic issue. Fundamental theology perceives personal insight as a personal matter that does not need to be treated as an explicitly theological issue as long as it remains on a personal, intimate, and private level. In particular, it is not open to criticism unless it deals with questions of religious truths and avoids the dogmatic issue. In some religious traditions, personal insight is secondary, immediately following the authority of the holy text. In others, it is tertiary, coming after the authority of the text and reason. Yet, in some religious traditions, personal insight has no place, and thus, *theologia spiritualis* is entirely excluded.

Rational Theology

The concept of the source of faith has imposed various epistemological viewpoints in the context of this question. Thus, every religious tradition acknowledges a corpus of scholars advocating the epistemology of rational theology, known in literature as philosophical theology or *theologia naturalis*. This theology involves rational deliberation on the truths of faith in a manner that places reason as the primary source of faith.

When adherents of fundamental theology were initially compelled to justify the truths of faith to those who denied Revelation or Holy Scripture as genuinely revealed or sacred, some of them initiated an epoch of rational theology. Rational theology, which uses reason as the tool for defending the truths of faith, is also called theodicy, *metaphysica specialis*, and it uses reason as the primary source of faith. From this defining starting point, reason is perceived as the measure of all things, an unquestionable truth, a dogma beyond doubt, and a source that is self-sufficient. In this context, it is not necessary to rely on anything else as the source of faith except reason itself, which is so profoundly distributed that everyone has it. Of course, in some religious traditions, the corpus of works that compose the source of faith has expanded to include tradition, oral transmission in the case of Islam, or commentaries on the fundamental text. Nevertheless, adherents of rational theology always refer back to reason as the ultimate authority. In this context, Revelation or Holy Scripture is subordinate to reason, and in this way, reason is self-sufficient to be the ultimate authority. As such, adherents of rational theology were put in a position to use reason exclusively to provide rationally acceptable answers to those who rejected the thesis of adherents of fundamental theology and their epistemological standpoint that took Revelation or Holy Scripture as the ultimate authority. Thus, adherents of rational theology, using reason as the sole source of faith, attempted to offer rationally acceptable responses to those who denied fundamental theology and its epistemological basis.

On the other hand, the position of personal insight in the epistemology of rational

theology is largely subordinate because reason is the primary source of knowledge, and personal insight cannot be founded on the sources of faith in rational theology. What personal insight, revelation, or experience represents as a source of belief in spiritual theologies is regarded as rationally unacceptable by adherents of rational theology. This is because rational theology aims to rationally justify the truths of faith in a way that makes these truths rationally acceptable to the majority of people.

Among the questions that adherents of rational theology contemplated, there were certainly those that exceeded the field of *metaphysicae specialis* and problematized questions about the appearance of the Earth, the position of the Sun, or the origin of comets. "Religious „Religious belief is different from scientific theory (ed. note) in that it claims to embody eternal and absolute truth, whereas science (ed. note) always investigates, expecting that changes in current theories will sooner or later be necessary and aware that its method is such that it is not logically capable of reaching complete and final proof.⁷ Nevertheless, institutionalized religion, whose dogma encompasses not only *metaphysica specialis* but also the field of scientific exploration, places itself in a position of conflict with science, which continues to this day.

Spiritual Theology

The concept of the source of faith has imposed various epistemological viewpoints in the context of this question. Every religious tradition knows a body of scholars advocating the epistemology of spiritual theology, known in literature as Gnosticism or Mysticism, which involves contemplation of the truths of faith in a way that places personal insight as the primary source of faith.

For adherents of spiritual theology, Revelation or Holy Scripture has layers that only a few individuals who have overcome the limitations of purely rational comprehension and superficial understanding of the Revelation or Holy Scripture by adherents of fundamental theology can access. Followers of this epistemological standpoint have often been expelled and even killed during theocratic rule. They hid their teachings, keeping them in secret and claiming that only selected individuals can understand their doctrines. They believe that their teachings can only be comprehended by those who have developed the sensitivity for personal insight. In this context, adherents of spiritual theology rely on personal insight regarding the truths of faith, believing that each person can possess their own truth of faith. Following this line of thought, the fluidity of the question of truth is fragmented to such an extent that some of them argue it is unnecessary to be a follower of any religion to attain the highest truth of faith. Hence, adherents of spiritual theology view dogmas as something that might apply to some and not to others, as something

⁷ Russell Bertrand, *Religion and Science*, Thornton Butterworth Ltd, London, 2017., 8.

that can be a path to truth for some but not necessary for others. This perspective emphasizes faith as an extremely subjective concept that precedes the intention to objectify religion.

Adherents of spiritual theology view Revelation or Holy Scripture as something limited to ordinary masses who lack the developed sensibility for personal insight. As not everyone can be an adherent of spiritual theology and interpret the truths of faith through personal insight, fundamental theology is accepted within circles of adherents of spiritual theology as the theology of the masses. It addresses them, whereas rational theology is understood as an attempt at dialogue with those who do not recognize Revelation or Holy Scripture as genuinely revealed or sacred. In this view, truths of faith cannot be justified even when religion attempts to objectify them, so faith must be taken as something highly subjective – a return to oneself.

Regarding the relationship between adherents of spiritual theology and adherents of fundamental theology, adherents of spiritual theology consider taking Revelation or Holy Scripture as the source of faith to be limited to ordinary people who lack the developed sensitivity for personal insight. As not everyone can be an adherent of spiritual theology and interpret the truths of faith through personal insight, fundamental theology is accepted within the circles of adherents of spiritual theology as the theology of the masses. It addresses them, while rational theology is understood as an attempt at dialogue with those who do not recognize Revelation or Holy Scripture as genuinely revealed or sacred. In this view, the truths of faith cannot be justified even when religion attempts to objectify them, so faith must be taken as something highly subjective – a return to oneself.

In this context, adherents of spiritual theology have never had a conflict between faith and reason because their personal insight is focused solely on questions about the truths of faith grounded in dogmas that are not the subject of scientific study. As such, they are not interested in questions about the shape of the Earth, the position of the Sun, or the origin of comets. Instead, they focus on how to free themselves from physicality, passions, and the world, or more profoundly, how to attain absolute knowledge about the first cause, the soul, and infinity, among other things. Thus, adherents of spiritual theology do not share the same source of knowledge as scientists because personal insight or revelation is not subject to scientific verification, as are the objects of the senses in scientific experiments. "Science depends on perception and inference; the follower of spiritual theology (ed. note) can be certain that he knows and feels no need to verify it scientifically."⁸

Moreover, adherents of spiritual theology, when surrounded by those who also advocate the epistemology of attaining the truths of faith through personal insight or revelation, do not need to prove their personal insight or revelation to others. These individuals, even if they often

⁸ Russell Bertrand, *Religion and Science*, Thornton Butterworth Ltd, London, 2017., 178.

do not understand or cannot penetrate the personal experience, accept and believe it as true or reject and doubt it.

The (Im)Possibility of Embracing the Ideal of a Theological Epistemology

It is evident that defining the principles advocated by a particular theology and based on which the phenomena of religion are explained makes it clear that we cannot unambiguously label a specific theology with a single epistemology. This is because it is evident that, both in terms of principles and phenomena, some questions from the realm of *metaphysicae specialis* within one theology can be proven by another theological epistemology other than the one it exclusively adheres to.

For example, followers of spiritual theology, even though they consider personal insight and/or revelation as a source of faith, occasionally refer to Revelation or Holy Scripture in some of their questions, which is the source of faith for fundamental theology. Similarly, followers of rational theology sometimes endorse an approach of personal insight and/or revelation in certain actions, such as hermeneutics, and then defend it with Revelation or Holy Scripture, which is the source of faith for fundamental theology. Furthermore, the followers of fundamental theology themselves do not differ significantly in their actions from the followers of rational theology and spiritual theology because, when they consistently use the method they employ, they sometimes prove certain aspects with reason, personal insight, and/or revelation, which are characteristic of the other two theological epistemologies mentioned earlier.

In essence, the actions of fundamental theology, which represent the entirety of views presented as the basis of theological learning with all its essential principles, and which promote a return to the ancient foundational tenets that defined a specific theology in its roots, are not consistent with their epistemological starting points in all questions. Therefore, it is possible to observe that followers of fundamental theology agree with the followers of the other two mentioned theological epistemologies on some issues of the epistemology of other theologies in the realm of religious phenomena.

Similarly, the actions of rational theology, which represents the rational contemplation of the truths of faith by placing reason as the primary source of faith, are not consistent with their epistemological starting points in all questions. It is possible to observe in the field of religious phenomena that followers of rational theology agree with the followers of the other two mentioned theological epistemologies on some issues of the epistemology of other theologies.

Of course, the same applies to the actions of spiritual theology, which represents contemplation of the truths of faith by placing personal insight as the primary source of faith.

These actions are not consistent with their epistemological starting points in all questions, and it is possible to observe in the field of religious phenomena that followers of spiritual theology agree with the followers of the other two mentioned theological epistemologies on some issues of the epistemology of other theologies.

Such actions can be thought of as the (im)possibility of embracing the ideal of a particular theological epistemology represented through fundamental, rational, or spiritual theology in an extremely meticulous and scientific manner without deviation in their methodology. It should be noted, however, that this ideal is not attainable in the field of phenomena, as we can clearly conclude from what is undertaken in practice.

Mathematics and natural science will never advocate one axiom for some of their questions and then give it up for another because they are precise, and deviations in the scientific process could be easily observed. If theology cannot rise to the level of a science, at least in its methodology, and achieve the exactness present in mathematics and natural science – even if not in the subject matter under study – but instead always remains at the level of belief and teaching, then the only possible solution to define a specific theology as theology fundamentalis, rationalis, or spiritualis would be through an analysis of its content and summing up which method is most prevalent in the proofs of questions regarding metaphysicae specialis. The theology that predominantly employs the method of fundamental theology for most of its tenets will be able to carry this methodological designation. However, it should be noted that this designation is conditional because it is based on the ideal of a theological epistemology that is unattainable in the field of phenomena, as clearly and distinctly deduced from what is practiced.

Furthermore, one of the reasons for the (im)possibility of embracing the ideal of one theological epistemology is that scholars of these theologies can make mistakes by not applying the same method to all the phenomena they deal with. Additionally, laypersons among the followers of one of the theological epistemologies dare to make judgments about the truths of faith without insight into the method of theology they follow. In other words, it is evident that anyone in the public sphere is willing to speak about God! Anyone who is otherwise uninformed and lacks knowledge in many other areas could easily be caught in falsehood if they were to speak so casually about mathematics and natural science. In the case of the truths of faith, individuals are willing to provide explicit judgments because they know they will not be caught in falsehood so easily, and that their shallow chattering will not be distinguishable from a thorough understanding of theological doctrine. Consequently, due to such lack of meticulousness in the realm of phenomena concerning the adherence to one of the methods of the above-mentioned theologies, we encounter religious conflicts.

Viewing Religious Conflicts as Conflicts of Epistemologies

Descending from the realm of principles, it is necessary to return to the concept of religious belief and problematize it on a phenomenological level within the context of the previously explained triad of epistemologies as reasons for religious conflicts. The concept of belief in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is not identical, just as the same concept is not uniform within a single religious entity, due to various interpretations of this concept by fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology.

In Judaism, the question of belief, from the standpoint of fundamental theology, revolves around Revelation or Holy Scripture, invoking words from Leviticus that state that someone can be a Jew if their mother is Jewish.⁹ The proof from the Old Testament is entirely sufficient for them, even though we won't find confirmation of this in the Torah. On the other hand, followers of rational theology, appealing to reason as the ultimate authority, argue that Judaism is a matter of faith rather than nationality, even though it originated from the twelve Jewish tribes. They maintain that nationality alone is not enough because a Jew must follow the law. According to them, anyone who adheres to the Jewish law is equal in their belief to other Jews. Particularly, followers of spiritual theology may argue that being a Jew has little significant connection to belief in the Jewish law, tradition, or even belief in God. They argue that it's a matter of personal insight into the concept of Judaism that can transcend any possible explication of the concept.

Religious conflicts in Judaism regarding the question of belief, in this context, manifest in debates about phenomena stemming from the principles of theological epistemologies, specifically, fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology. Followers of fundamental theology may clash, for example, with followers of spiritual theology regarding their statement about belief in Judaism, which is unacceptable to those who invoke Revelation or Holy Scripture as the source of belief. The followers of spiritual theology will defend their claim that being a believer doesn't necessarily mean believing in the Jewish law, tradition, or even believing in God because belief stems from personal insight into the concept of Judaism and is not grounded in what fundamental theology considers the source of belief, namely, Revelation or Holy Scripture. Spiritual theology does not rely on Revelation or Holy Scripture in a literal sense because the sources of faith for its followers are personal insight and revelation. Their conflicts are limited to the realm of phenomena without ascending to the level of principles based on which phenomena are given. These conflicts will persist as long as the phenomena remain the subject of religious disputes.

⁹ The Old Testament: *Leviticus* 24:10

A similar examination of religious conflicts in the context of the realm of phenomena and the question of belief can be found in Christianity. In Christianity, followers of fundamental theology refer to the Gospel according to Mark¹⁰ and John¹¹, which state that one will be saved if they are baptized. They consistently adhere to the principles of fundamental theology, where the source of faith is Revelation or Holy Scripture, and are unwavering in this belief. According to their thesis, only the baptized can access the other sacraments: confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, or matrimony. Nevertheless, religious conflicts arise when followers of rational theology present the argument that baptism is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by a belief in the correctness of the Christian faith. They argue that children do not need to be baptized before reaching maturity and professing their faith themselves. They suggest that individuals should be baptized only when they have grown up, acquired faith, and consciously decided to undergo the act of baptism. This viewpoint is in line with the source of faith in rational theology, which is reason. Intense religious conflicts emerge when followers of spiritual theology claim that salvation is for those who desire it, elevation is for those who seek it, and reaching God is for those who wish to come closer to God. They argue that baptism is not a prerequisite for belief, which is rooted in personal insight or revelation, making it the primary source of faith in spiritual theology.

Religious conflicts in Christianity concerning the question of belief, in this context, revolve around debates about phenomena stemming from the principles of theological epistemologies, specifically, fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology. Followers of fundamental theology may clash, for example, with followers of spiritual theology regarding their statement about belief in Christianity, which is unacceptable to those who invoke Revelation or Holy Scripture as the source of belief. The followers of spiritual theology will defend their claim that being a believer means that it doesn't matter whether someone is a Christian, a Jew, a non-believer, a fire-worshiper, or an idol-worshiper. They argue that one should embark on the path of personal insight and revelation, rather than being a slave to formalities, restrictions, and religious norms. They propose returning to unadulterated belief that transcends relativistic objectivization and subjectivity. This standpoint is not grounded in what fundamental theology considers the source of belief, namely, Revelation or Holy Scripture. Spiritual theology does not rely on Revelation or Holy Scripture in a literal sense because the sources of faith for its followers are personal insight and revelation. Their conflicts are limited to the realm of phenomena without ascending to the level of principles based on which phenomena are given. These conflicts will persist as long as the phenomena remain the subject of religious disputes.

¹⁰ New Testament: *Mark* 16:16.

¹¹ New Testament: *John* 3:5.

Religious conflicts among followers of different theological epistemologies in Islam regarding the question of belief are also observed. These conflicts originated in the early second century of Islam when the dogmatic thesis of followers of fundamental theology, which defined belief as comprising three rules: feeling belief in the heart, pronouncing the words of the testimony of faith with the tongue, and implementing religious laws in action, was challenged by followers of rational theology. They rejected this defined notion of belief, asserting that not practicing the faith in deeds does not equate to disbelief. They argued that it may be because someone is hindered, temporarily unable to perform the actions that religious law mandates, or their internal belief may be sufficient without an external manifestation. The followers of rational theology, rooted in reason as the source of faith, proposed that not demonstrating faith through deeds does not necessarily mean disbelief. This rejection gave rise to religious conflicts that have persisted throughout the history of Islam.

Particularly intense religious conflicts emerged when followers of spiritual theology proposed that salvation is for those who desire it, elevation is for those who seek it, reaching God is for those who wish to come closer to God, and that no one should be judged for the absence of external expressions of faith. According to spiritual theology, belief is rooted in personal insight and revelation, and it cannot be limited. They argued that it doesn't matter whether someone is a child, a person of a different religion, an idol-worshipper, or a fire-worshipper. Everyone should embark on the path of personal insight and revelation and should not be slaves to formalities, restrictions, and religious norms. Spiritual theology rejected the limitations set by fundamental and rational theology. These conflicts among followers of different theological epistemologies in Islam, concerning the concept of belief, focus on the debate about phenomena originating from the principles of theological epistemologies—fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology. Followers of fundamental theology may clash with followers of spiritual theology regarding their statement about belief in Islam, which is unacceptable to those who invoke Revelation or Holy Scripture as the source of belief. The followers of spiritual theology will defend their claim that being a believer means that it doesn't matter whether someone is a Christian, a Jew, a non-believer, a fire-worshipper, or an idol-worshipper, emphasizing that being a believer means embarking on the path of personal insight and revelation. This standpoint lacks grounding in what fundamental theology considers the source of belief, namely, Revelation or Holy Scripture. Spiritual theology does not rely on Revelation or Holy Scripture in a literal sense because the sources of faith for its followers are personal insight and revelation. The conflicts between these theological epistemologies are limited to the realm of phenomena and do not ascend to the level of principles based on which phenomena are given. These conflicts will persist as long as the phenomena remain the subject of religious disputes.

To summarize, religious conflicts within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam often revolve around differences in the interpretation of religious beliefs. The conflicts are rooted in the varying theological epistemologies, specifically fundamental theology, rational theology, and spiritual theology, which shape the followers' perspectives on belief. Fundamental theology often places a strong emphasis on religious texts and dogma, while rational theology prioritizes reason, and spiritual theology focuses on personal insight and revelation. These differing perspectives lead to disputes over the nature of belief and its prerequisites, such as baptism or adherence to religious laws.

These conflicts occur within the realm of religious phenomena and reflect the followers' commitment to their respective theological epistemologies. While these disagreements persist, it is essential to recognize that they are an inherent part of religious traditions and highlight the diversity of thought within these faiths.

Closing Speech

In this work, we have presented a distinction between belief, religious belief, religion, theology as the religious teaching of belief, an explication of the concept of religious conflicts, the (im)possibility of realizing the ideal of a single theological epistemology, and, finally, the understanding of religious conflicts as a clash of epistemologies.

After introducing the context of thought about religious conflicts as conflicts of epistemologies, we have shown that religious conflicts become serious conflicts when we move from the field of phenomena that religions largely operate within to the realm of principles upon which these phenomena are based. Along these lines, we have contemplated religious conflicts through the lens of theological epistemologies, used as a method of understanding the sources of faith, which divides monotheistic theology into a plurality of theologies that have multiplied over time. Thus, we have seen how all theologies of all religions can be categorized into three fundamental epistemological standpoints: fundamental theology, which takes Revelation or Sacred Text as the source of faith; rational theology, which regards reason as the source of faith, and spiritual theology, which considers personal experience or supernatural revelation as the source of faith.

We have demonstrated the (im)possibility of realizing the ideal of a single theological epistemology because by defining the principles supported by a particular theology, upon which religious phenomena are based, we realize that we cannot definitively label a specific theology with a single epistemology. This is evident in both the realm of principles and the realm of phenomena. Some issues within the domain of metaphysics specific to one theology can be

proven by another theological epistemology that is not exclusive to that particular theology. Along these lines, we have suggested that a theology that predominantly employs the method of fundamental theology may carry such a methodological characterization, but always conditionally, as it represents an ideal of a single theological epistemology. Moreover, a theology will be called spiritual theology if it predominantly supports the epistemology of spiritual theology in the majority of its arguments, even if it uses the epistemology of another theology for certain questions - the prevalent method is the determining factor. Accordingly, rational theology is characterized by a theology that, regardless of secondary issues such as hermeneutics, liturgy, or jurisprudence, advocates the idea that reason is the ultimate source of faith and that, for the majority of its phenomena, it supports this epistemology.

In conclusion, we have validated our initial hypothesis that religious conflicts become serious clashes of epistemologies when we elevate our understanding from the realm of phenomena that religions frequently operate within to the realm of principles upon which these phenomena are based. While our focus has been on thought about religious conflicts as conflicts between the aforementioned epistemologies, it became evident that it is also necessary to contemplate the specific religious phenomena that emerge based on various theological epistemologies. This is especially crucial to understand the phenomenal domain where religious conflicts arise, as demonstrated by the contemplation of religious conflicts as clashes of epistemologies, in particular.

THOUGHT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AS CONFLICTS OF EPISTEMOLOGIES

SUMMARY

In this paper, we will present a distinction between belief, religious belief, religion, theology as the religious teaching of belief, an explication of the concept of religious conflicts, the (im)possibility of realizing the ideal of theological epistemology, and the consideration of religious conflicts as a clash of epistemologies. Hypothesis, as a statement that is assumed to be true in order to explain certain facts or as an assumption based on facts, is reflected in the thesis that religious conflicts become serious clashes of epistemologies when we elevate our understanding from the realm of phenomena that religions largely operate within to the realm of principles upon which these phenomena are based. Thus, we will contemplate religious conflicts through the lens of theological epistemologies, which can be reduced to three basic categories:

fundamental theology, with Revelation or Sacred Text as the source of faith; rational theology, which takes reason as the source of faith, and spiritual theology, which considers personal experience or revelation as the source of faith. Although the subject of this paper is the consideration of religious conflicts as clashes of epistemologies, it will become evident that it is necessary to contemplate the specific religious phenomena that emerge based on various theological epistemologies. This is in line with the necessity of understanding the phenomenal domain where religious conflicts arise. However, the main focus of this paper is the consideration of the clash of theological epistemologies as an explication of religious conflicts.

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