Philosophies of interreligious dialogue: Practice in search of theory

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss how insights from Martin Buber’s and Emmanuel Levinas’ philosophies of dialogue have enlightened my own experience of inter-faith dialogue in Norway. Central perspectives here are Buber’s notion of ‘the realm of the between’ and Levinas’ emphasis on asymmetry and vulnerability. Some other philosophers’ reasonings about dialogue are also considered, from the overall perspective of ‘practice in search of theory’. In connection with a distinction between different types of dialogue (‘spiritual’ and ‘necessary’), the difference between government initiated ‘dialogue’ and initiatives originating from the faith communities (i.e., civil society) are discussed. The last part of the article analyses the notion of ‘(mutual) change’ which is often brought forward when discussing the aims of interfaith dialogue. In this connection, religious education in school is also considered as a possible arena for dialogue—and ‘change’.

Keywords: Religions -- Relations, Buber, Martin, 1878-1965, Lévinas, Emmanuel, 1906-1995, Religious education, Norway, Scandinavia, Schools, Education, Philosophy and religion, Pluralism, Religious, Politics and religion, Dialogue (Theology)
The author states that the main purpose of interreligious dialogue is the harmonization of the relationships between the followers of different religious traditions, develops the model of interreligious dialogue proposed by the modern philosopher S. S. Khoruzhii, suggests calling it a "personal" one, and tells that personal model is based not on the identity and similarity of the certain elements of religious doctrines (in dogmatics, ethics, mysticism), but on the attempt to "understand" the Other, considering his religion as a special way of life and aspiration to God – &
Languages, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria. Abstract The encounter of people of different faiths is the hallmark of our times. It may be a dangerous encounter where difference is wielded as a weapon of conflict. Page 2 of 5 theories of intervention which approach issues as if persons, groups, culture or creed can accommodate a uniform approach. Acts 4:12 - “And whoever goes in search of a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him.” (3V85). Supporters of theologies of exclusion in both faith...