

NON/ECUMENICAL SECTARIANS = EVERYBODY, OR ON DOING JUSTICE TO INFIDELS

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OCCASION: Today, while wondering how to "do justice" to an infidel's request that I identify, in his MS, "sectarianisms that would impede general readership," I had a freeing & frustrating opening. While picking at his wordings, I suddenly said to myself "This whole thing is sectarian!" Yet the MS is ecumenical in aim, & most of it also in spirit. How could he, anybody, be ecumenical & sectarian at the same time? Why not? said another voice inside me: (1) People divide roughly into narrow/broad-minded, ex/in-clusive, of provincial or ecumenical spirit; & (2) Everybody "follows" some community & tradition of visioning reality ("sectarian" being Latin for "follower")--as this Thinksheet's title puts it, "non/ecumenical sectarians" doesn't leave anybody out. Further, in addition to being (as I am) sectarian, most people are infidels (as I am not: "in-fidel" means not believing as I believe)...The fact that "infidel" & "sectarian" normally are pejorative only encourages me to use them for the purpose of this Thinksheet, which is about "doing justice" to people "not like us" in how they see reality, & to their efforts toward more humane communities & toward global (ecumenical, of the world-"house") justice, peace, unity.

1. A spiritual leader of fame, though less of it than he deserves, says "Here's how I know I'm awake in the morning. I prop up a Thinksheet & read it as I sip my coffee (he's Swedish, but you don't have to be Swedish to...); when it begins to make sense, I know I'm awake." Well, even before that, he'd not be surprised to see a grid--say, this grid:

"B" is bolder because it's the right position, ie mine, & I have it by revelation confirmed by tradition & my own experience: I am a sectarian for the Holy Trinity, to which by grace I have "humble access" (as the PB puts it), in which spirit I am to approach all who differ from me & all that differs from my view & views,

		dualists	monists	pluralists & agnostics
		BELIEVERS	INFIDELS	
S E C T A R I A N S	nonecumenical	A	C	E
	ecumenical	B	D	F

in prayerful hope of correction, clarification, cultivation, & convergence (& thus I am an ecumenical)....Some of my fellow-believers (in dualism, that the world has a creaturely & obligatory relation with the Only God) are closed-minded ("A"), sorry to say. They tax my will to "do justice" to them more than do some other sectarians.

As for the infidels, they come in two kinds, each kind in two types....The question "How many is reality?" (my #424, a NYTS article), which can have no fact-answer, can have five faith-answers. In addition to the relative ("two from and at one") dualism I've described, there are absolute dualisms teaching that reality is basically & ultimately two (Zoroastrianism-Parseeism, Manicheism, gnosticisms East & West, Taoism)--so we could split our grid's first column into biblical believers (relative dualists, "A-B") & infidels (absolute dualists, "A°-B°")....And we can count two positions among third-column infidels, (1) those who believe reality is neither one nor two but more (the metaphysical pluralists--eg animists, including the foundational feel of Shinto & Arabism [the deepest layer of Islam]; Leibnitz's monads; Wm. James' theistically modified pluralism; Irwin Lieb's quadrism); & (2) those who do not conclude for any particular ontic-numeric reality-picture (whom here, without prejudicial connotation, I call agnostics). All in this column will be either closed ("E") or open ("F") to the otherwise persuaded & their views, as are the (column-two) monists ("C" & "D").

2. So back to the "sectarianisms" I promised to weed out of that MS, whose author is a "D" (monistic sectarian ecumenical). Since there's no religion Esperanto, almost any religious expression will seem "sectarian" (ie objectionable) to some religious folk; so if I elided all those "sectarianisms" there'd be almost no MS left! But if I elide what I personally consider "sectarian" (ie objectionable to me), there'll be almost no MS left, as its leitmotif is monist. But I must say a yes because the MS's spirit is ecumenical! You see my problem.

3. What bearing has all this on the theme on which this Thinksheet is one of a series? To my monist author (& all other monists, c/overt, East/West, "D" [my author, New Agers of all kinds including Shirley MacLaine's spiritualism, secular holistic mystics, bioenergeticists, crystal channelers, et al) & "E" (zealous Eastern missionaries, Hindic (eg Hare Krishna) & Buddhist (eg Nichiren), **justification & justice** cannot have the meanings they have in their original context, viz the relative-dualist biblical worldview. Monists cannot accept the doubly radical split between sinful human creatures & the Holy Creator, whose righteousness is the base of any **justice** worth the name & whose love effectuates **justification** as the bridge to that righteousness-justice which the grateful redeemed are to live out in the world joyfully & evangelically (ie witnessing the good news of this world Story). To put it polemically, as I must, monists are among the enemies my religion requires me to love. Our accounts of reality, theirs & mine, are irreconcilable except in the hearts of some mystics, eg Eckhart, father of German Christian mysticism, which leads me to this issue:

4. Has mystical experience conclusive metaphysical evidentiary value? ie does it prove nonduality (Skr., *a-dv-aita*, "not-two-ness")? It's one of a number of modes of consciousness & has equal speech-rights with the rest. But when it speaks, what should it say? Monists say it should dominate the conversation: the mystical disappearance of the subject/object distinction proves, eg, that self-realization & God-realization are the same thing seen as from the opposite ends of a tube, which is really not a tube because it's really not, ie it's maya, an illusion necessary to nonmystical, ie dual, & therefore unreal, consciousness. (Biblical folks agree the tube doesn't exist: what exists is rather a wall, a metaphysical & moral distinction between the Holy Creator-Redeemer & sinful humanity.) But monists here violate the law of parsimony: the evidence does not require their giving dominance to mystical experience among the modes of human experiencing. We believers ("A" & "B") view mystical experience relationally, as com-m-union (divine-human & human-human being mirrors of each other). The point of Rudolf Otto's classic MYSTICISM EAST AND WEST is to clarify this distinction, using Sankara the Hindu for radical mysticism ("East") & Eckhart the Christian for relational mysticism ("West").

5. Love, mysticism, & philosophy are connection-making & thus ecumenical. Do any of them require a particular metaphysic (view of reality)? No, but they're all used to support various metaphysics. At first sight, love might seem to support monism; but does not true love make the lovers more themselves & so, indirectly, each not the other? Philosophy loves bridges, & Western philosophy & theology today have many "process" bridge-engineers; but philosophy also loves "de-construction," & we're just now coming to the end of a generation-long analyticism ("analytic philosophy," "linguistic analysis," neo-positivism). As for East-West connections of religion-philosophy-science, I'll mention a few names as they pop into my head: (1) Sun Moon, who merges biblical & Sinic mentalities ("A" + "A°"); (2) Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whose double fraud is (a) that his "Trancendental Meditation," a covert form of Hinduism, is not a religion, & (b) that TM's a science, "the Science of Creative Intelligence"; (3) Thos. Merton, Christian monk who died in a Buddhist monastery while finding materials to build a Christian-Buddhist bridge (& of course finding what he was looking for: there's a lot of stuff lying around just for the taking); (4) Paul Tillich, whose last book was on the West-East bridge....I shouldn't have gotten into list-making: I'm hearing so many voices (no, not as a mystical experience, just as total recall, a growing blessing in the aging & affliction on their listeners)....Think about the distinction between **connection-making** & **connection-finding**, especially about how tempting it is for the egoist to collapse the latter into the former & for the mystic to do the opposite. (My monist MS author is a passionate gematrist, believing there's revelation in numbers-connections he finds [? makes?]. I neither deny nor affirm: coincidences? revelations? Jungian synchronicities?)

6. **English** is a model of the particular/universal, sectarian/ecumenical, more than any other language ever. It combines a unslakable thirst for word imports & glues the whole mess together with a simple grammar & positional syntax....Monism is often a.k.a. "the perennial philosophy," on which learned debates are perennial.