Terrorism, Story-Telling and Existential Communication

By

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(Moderator: Dr. Loy Hui Chieh)

Abstract

The range of fundamental disagreements in respect to issues of deeply held beliefs in philosophy and everyday life is extraordinary. Clearly the domain of the religious is one central arena of deeply cherished but fundamental beliefs which radically diverge. Here we may think of the disputes that often violently divide the Muslim from the Jew, the Hindu from the Buddhist and all of the religious traditions from the atheist. This is true not just between religions but within religious traditions as is so painfully witnessed in the internecine conflict between various Christian denominations as too the tensions between the Sunni and Shia factions of Islam. Such religious disagreements are often enough supervened by political dimensions. In philosophy too whole departments in the academies have on deeply held beliefs fallen apart. The sheer amount and intensity of contested beliefs surely forces us to ask whether there is a position or positions (beliefs) that are incontestably true. The battlefield of warring beliefs apparently suggests a negative response. The late philosopher David Lewis wrote that: "Whether or not it would be nice to knock disagreeing philosophers down by sheer force of argument, it cannot be done… Once the menu of well-worked out theories is before us, philosophy is a matter of opinion." But should the discussion end as perilously as so many contemporary writers think? Does it all come down to the shrill clamor of assertion and counter assertion as Alasdair MacIntyre thinks? In this paper I argue that there are strategies to continue conversations at an even more meaningful level than on the basis of competing conceptions of reason. I propose "story-telling" and an account of emotional relatedness as two such strategies before presenting an account of the pathemata (the experiences we fatefully undergo) that underlies such strategies.
T. Brian Mooney completed his doctorate at La Trobe University and subsequently taught at University of Melbourne, Deakin University, University of Ghana, and University of Notre Dame. His most recent publications include "If Pigs could Fly. Should They?" (in the December 2006 issue of Ethical Perspectives); and "The Curious Case of Mr. Locke's Miracles" (in the 2006 issue of International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion). I have a book forthcoming with Rob Imre, Terrorism: Causes and Cures–Philosophical, Legal and Political Perspectives (Ashgate Press, 2007). My major research areas are in Moral Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy and Philosophy of Love and Friendship.