



Why Islam Is Greater Than Your Religion In Philosophy: A Work In American Pragmatism

Nick Ruderman

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This work brings together the history of philosophy and its significant influence upon the religions of the world and subsequently on politics, culture, art, medicine, law, and ethics. While Western philosophy has its origins in Asia, having been imported to Athens by Pericles' wife Aspasia to help in the restoration of the democracy, it was through its citizens (and critics) Socrates and his student Plato that philosophy was popularized. Plato's foreign student and friend Aristotle introduced such disciplines as physics, metaphysics, logic, psychology, biology, and zoology to the philosophical tradition. While the philosophy of Plato and Socrates would go on to have an enormous influence in Europe through the writings of a Jewish philosopher named Philo and the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity in the 4th-5th centuries, it was to result in Aristotle's writings being banned from Europe and smuggled to Syria where they were translated into Arabic and then Hebrew. With the rise of Islam in the 6th-7th centuries Aristotle's works were given prominence and by the 8th century Arabic was the international language of science with influence in Andalusia (Spain) to half of Africa and all the way to East Asia. During what is called by historians 'the Dark Ages' of Europe was the Golden Age of Aristotle's scientific philosophies and the spread of natural and modern medicine. Eventually, Aristotle's works were translated from Arabic into Latin before the original Greek manuscripts were reintroduced in the West and the Muslim and Jewish influence upon the European renaissance in mathematics, science, and medicine cannot be overestimated.

Drawing upon the American philosophy of pragmatism, Ruderman discusses this multinarrative history and the effects it has had upon the human concern for justice, equality, community, and our relationship to other peoples and the world itself. Pragmatism is a post- Civil War philosophy borne in New England that emphasizes practicality, naturalism, and a respect for the plurality of different peoples and ways of life. If a century ago pragmatism had an enormous influence in America in the realm of politics, jurisprudence, psychology, and education, it has long been opposed to war and imperialism, and some say there is a pragmatic renaissance afoot in America today, with the need for a social philosophy to oppose the malignant legacy of the Bush administration: the crusades against Muslim countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, against citizens of the United States, and the divide and conquer stance toward the Palestine/Israel conflict.

Ruderman takes a pragmatic look at the arguments and writings of the ancient Greek trinity of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, alongside the books of religion that currently dominate philosophy, as well as the writings of such important classical American philosophers and activists as John Dewey, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jane Addams, and William James, and contemporary pragmatists and Aristotelians such as Hilary Putnam, Cornel West, and Alasdair MacIntyre. What can we hope for in the realms of politics, economics, justice, international justice, war, and the problem of cultural imperialism itself in its many manifestations of bigotry, hatred, fear, racism, jealousy, and the acquiescence with state terrorism and war known as ethical relativism? Where modern philosophy and post-modern philosophy continue to debate there being one story about the world, pragmatists have always celebrated the variety of beliefs, traditions, and ways of life.

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