



THEOLOGY PUB



WELCOME TO THEOLOGY PUB, SOME GROUND RULES:

- **Everyone's voice has the right to be heard**
- **If your voice is causing others NOT to be heard...take a break and *listen***
- **There won't be any "wrap up" in the end, no sense of "this is what you should believe."**
We gather here together as seekers, all on our own spiritual journeys.
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Levinas & Othering

- Levinas: Jewish philosopher, born in Lithuania, was captured by Nazis, lived out the war in a work camp
- **"We have an infinite responsibility for the Other."**
- According to Levinas, "Here I am!" in the scriptures indicates "At your service" – availability to the Other – whether it's to the Divine Other or the Human Other, of welcome/openness/forgiveness/hospitality – "Here I am! For you!"
- The key thing for him spiritually is when the death of the Other becomes more imp. than you than your own death.
- "the way to God passes through the face of the other."

Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth)

- "Yeah. It seems to me that one of the things we most fear is the stranger. And at most times in human history, most people have lived among people who are mostly pretty much the same as themselves. Today, certainly in Europe and perhaps even in America, walk down the average Main Street and you will encounter in 10 minutes more anthropological diversity than an 18th-century traveler would have encountered in a lifetime."
- "So you really have this huge problem of diversity. And you then go back and read the Bible and something hits you, which is we're very familiar with the two great commands of love: Love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might; love your neighbor as yourself. But the one command reiterated more than any other in the mosaic box — 36 times said the rabbis — is love the stranger for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Or to put it in a contemporary way, love the stranger because, to him, you're a stranger. This sense that we are enlarged by the people who are different from us — we are not threatened by them — that needs cultivating, can be cultivated, and would lead us to see the 21st century as full of blessing, not full of fear."

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/dignity-difference/188>

Fear & Othering in Current Events

Aurora Shooting

July 20, 2012

Mass shooting at The Dark Knight Rises Gunman (James Holmes) killed 12 people and injured 58 others. Obviously questions of mental insanity of shooter, but how does one get to the point of being able to OTHER others to that extent?

Chick-fil-A

August 1, 2012

After Dan Cathy stated the company opposed same-sex marriage, many began supporting/ protesting the company. "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day" = August 1. Did people who attend fear LGBT folk? Did they know LGBTs?

Sikh Gurdwara

August 5, 2012

Wade Michael Page (a white supremacist) walked into a Sikh gurdwara and killed 4 people & wounded 6 others. The shooting took place before their services. Sikh response similar to Amish - with love & hospitality.

FRC in DC

August 15, 2012

Floyd Lee Corkins walks into Family Research Council (FRC) office, disapproves of politics & begins shooting. Southern Poverty Law Center labels FRC as hate group, FRC claims that's why it was attacked.

Some questions to think about tonight:

- Where do we see *Othering* and *Fear* played out in our politics, current events, etc. today?
- What would the world look like if we were magically able to not *Other* people?
- What do we do about the fear that many people have about different groups of people (LGBT people, Sikhs and those of other religions many aren't knowledgeable about or comfortable with, those who are simply a part of society as a whole)?
- How can we take small steps to work against fear & othering in our world? **What can you do?**

Some Quotes:

"I call it hater appreciation day," said Andrew, who asked that his last name be withheld out of fear he'd be fired. "It's very, very depressing." (<http://rdd.me/48sv91lg>)

"To fear the anger and resentment of your neighbors for being who you are is not the freedom that the American dream promises." (<http://rdd.me/juwu8qug>)

It perpetuates the fear among many conservative Christians that part of the so-called "gay agenda" involves restricting free speech and persecuting Christians. This will only further entrench the "us vs. them" mentality and break down any potential the sort of meaningful, constructive dialog that actually leads to change. (<http://rdd.me/yz3boonz>)

Last week, Alise Wright highlighted some of the problematic elements of Family Research Council in particular, which has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and has consistently tried to link gays and lesbians to terrorists and pedophiles. She concludes: "This is why I, and many others, choose not to patronize Chick-fil-A. Not because we disagree with the owner's views on marriage equality. Not because we believe that denying marriage rights means that you hate those to whom you are denying those rights. Not because we believe that Dan Cathy's statements constitute hate speech. But because Chick-fil-A has funded a hate group." (<http://rdd.me/yz3boonz>)

"We make every inch of America holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other." (Eboo Patel in his new book, "Sacred Ground").

Take the Other to Lunch

- Elizabeth Lesser, author & activist - <http://malcolmmarler.com/listeningtotheother/>
- We tend to demonize the Others in our country and world today.
- Negative otherizing can morph to violent extremism
- launching a new initiative to counteract the tendency to Otherize: "Take The Other to Lunch"
- Take someone to lunch who is on the other side of an issue / anyone whose lifestyle might frighten you (example of ELCA church and pro-LGBT groups buying lunch tickets for LGBT people to sit with others)

Guidelines

1. Decide on a goal - to get to know one person from a group you may have negatively stereotyped
2. Before you get together, agree on some ground rules. Don't persuade, defend, interrupt. Be curious, be conversational, be real.
3. Share some of your life experiences with me. What issues deeply concern you? What have you always wanted to ask someone from the *other* side?

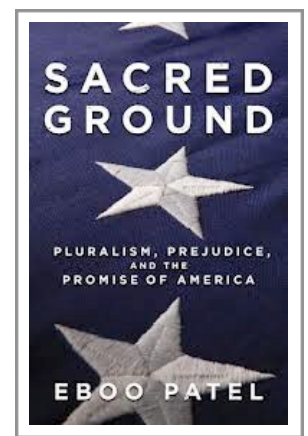
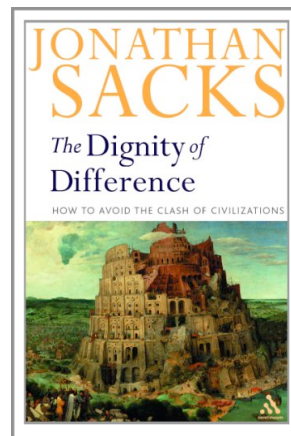
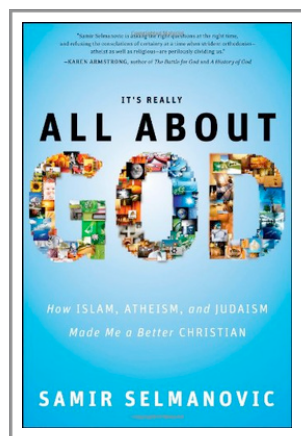
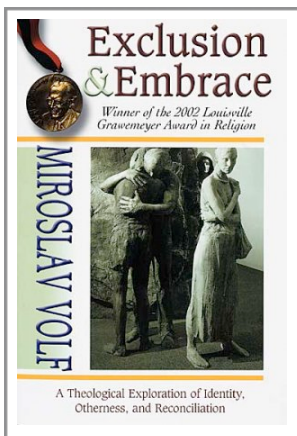
Books & Resources:

Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation, by Miroslav Volf

It's Really All About God: Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian, by Samir Selmanovic

The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations, by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice and the Promise of America, by Eboo Patel



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