condemnation must survive even the supposition that these religious experiences are genuine and do reliably reveal truths about God — otherwise there is no conflict with what externalist theories predict. This brings us back to the question with which I opened: If we suppose, for a moment, that this religious believer really has been in contact with God, and his religious beliefs are true, would it *still* be right to condemn him as negligent when he acts upon these beliefs?

While principles like ENA clearly do have significance for debates over externalist approaches to justification and to the justification of religious beliefs in particular, Rizzieri may, in the end, overplay his hand here. Contrary to what he suggests, ENA does not force us to give up on externalism about justification — it merely forces us to be consistent in our treatment of justification and of epistemic negligence. More precisely, it forces us to adopt a picture on which facts about whether religious beliefs are justified and facts about whether it is negligent to act on religious beliefs are tethered to the same underlying factors, be they internal or external.

While I am not convinced that justification-action principles have quite the significance that Rizzieri finds in them, it is clear that exploring the epistemic and religious consequences of these principles is an intriguing and worthwhile project. There is much in this book that deserves careful thought and discussion. It should be of considerable interest to those working in the epistemology of religion and to many working in mainstream epistemology.

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Brian Leiter: *Why Tolerate Religion?*. Princeton University Press 2013.

Reasons for tolerating religion are not specific to religion but apply to all claims of conscience. Such is the central thesis that underlies Brian Leiter's book. The practical conclusion that he draws from that principle is that individuals with claims of religious conscience have no special right to request exemptions from generally applicable laws. In fact, unless their claims are

not burden-shifting, they should be rather subject to the No Exemptions approach, alongside the individuals with the 'merely' secular claims of conscience. In brief, Leiter's answer to the title question is that, if the state is to *tolerate* religion at all, it should do so only due to the ability of a particular claimer to prove his or her entitlement, not based on anything that has to do with religion as such.

The book is arranged in five sections. Chapter 1 examines the nature of the moral ideal of principled toleration as opposed to merely pragmatic ('Hobbesian') compromise, on the one hand, and indifference or neutrality, on the other. The author also outlines moral and epistemic arguments for such an ideal and the limits of toleration indicated by harm to others and damage of the public order. Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to the question, 'What makes religious claims of conscience distinctive?' Leiter comes up with the two key-marks of religion, namely categoricity of religious commands and religious belief's insulation from evidence, and argues that none of these features warrants singling out religion for toleration. What is more, he cautions that favouring special legal solicitude towards religious beliefs and practices may encourage precisely this conjunction of categorical fervour and its basis in epistemic indifference, which he obviously disapproves. In chapter 4, the concept of *respect* for religion, conceived as the moral foundation of religious liberty, is considered as an alternative to the ideal of toleration. Leiter makes a distinction between a mere 'recognition respect', which he basically identifies with toleration, and 'appraisal respect', tantamount to esteem or reverence, and he concludes that the religious belief system can hardly justify the latter attitude. Finally, chapter 5 argues that, regardless of the nature of the claims of conscience (religious or irreligious), there should be no exemptions to general laws with neutral purposes if shifting burdens or risks onto others is involved. In addition, Leiter maintains that a tolerant state could, in principle, be either a religious or antireligious one.

This provocative book provides the reader with comprehensive framework for probing the phenomenon of preferential treatment of religion in both law and public discourse. Those interested in political philosophy and constitutional theory will certainly find it stimulating. However, as a philosopher of religion and theologian, I cannot remain uncritical of Leiter's reflection on the features that distinguish religious belief from other kinds of belief

potentially warranting toleration. Before turning to my critique of his reductionist — as I will argue — approach to religion, let me first acknowledge both the general strengths and shortcomings of his analysis.

Once labelled 'the most powerful man in academic philosophy' (mainly due to his famous rankings), Leiter guides us steadfastly through the jungle of definitions, distinctions, and controversies surrounding the concept of principled toleration. As an illustration one could mention his criticism of the ideal of neutrality as being inconsistent with an inevitable state's commitment to a (however understood) 'Vision of the Good', and thus illusionary. He masterfully depicts the discrepancies between legal practices characteristic of different states, with an emphasis on American 'viewpoint discrimination', British establishment of a religious Vision of the Good (Anglicanism), and French laïcité. Those who have read Leiter's previous books — notably *Objectivity in Law and Morals* (2001) and *Nietzsche and Morality* (2007) — will certainly appreciate the same critical insight, wry humour, and remarkable clarity with which he grasps the challenges faced by Western democracies. *Why Tolerate Religion?* undeniably witnesses to his philosophical acuity and impressive background in legal scholarship.

Minor limitations of Leiter's work, in terms of a broadly understood methodology, can be found in slight inconsistency in defining toleration ('putting up with the *existence* of the other, differing, group' [p. 8] in contrast to, actually purported by the author, 'putting up with [*beliefs and*] *practices* of which one disapproves' [p. 3]) as well as in the lack of terminological distinction between 'tolerance' and 'toleration' (the latter is understood by certain scholars as tolerance backed by law or judicial precedent, while Leiter happens to use the terms interchangeably [cf. p. 19]). It is also regrettable that the author does not refer to other, more diverse, case studies, leaving us basically with the textbook example of the Sikh boy who was allowed by the Canadian court to wear his *kirpan*, a dagger symbolising religious devotion, in the public school.

However, the major deficiency of Leiter's argumentation, I would say, consists in his reductionist and arbitrary treatment of the distinguishing features of religious belief. While reading chapters 2 and 3, one can sense that Leiter is no longer *in his field*. The reasons he gives to prove that there is no principled argument for tolerating religion qua religion are likely to strike the

critically thinking, impartial reader (if such a thing exists!) as theoretically weak and ideologically biased.

Leiter seems to impose on religion the criteria relevant, strictly speaking, only to science; in this sense, his interpretation of religious belief's insulation from evidence brings to mind the early Wittgenstein and logical positivism. To realise that there is a wealth of philosophical alternatives, suffice it to mention John Hick's concept of rational proof *without evidence* or the late Wittgenstein, for that matter, whose theory of language games maintains that there is something special about the very linguistic framework of religious believers (and scientifically understood evidence definitely does not belong to it). The author correctly assumes that a *metaphysics of ultimate reality*, involved in religious beliefs, neither claims support from empirical evidence, nor purports to be constrained by such. That leads him, however, to the oversimplifying conclusion that metaphysics of ultimate reality is but a 'variation on the idea that religious belief is insulated from evidence' (p. 47). By deeming religious views on the 'ultimate nature' of things insignificant for his enterprise he deprives it of a promising candidate for a distinguishing feature of religious belief that could, at least potentially, grant it a special claim for toleration. If he took that aspect of religious belief for what it is, instead of wrongly reducing religious metaphysics to its epistemological ramifications, he might have found it more meaningful for his investigation. Several of Leiter's remarks suggest that *rational* cannot be conceived of differently than in conjunction with *verifiable* (i.e., empirically provable). If that was the case, religious belief would indeed have to be deemed *irrational* and, as the author puts it, epistemically indifferent. But what about categories such as *trans-rational* or *non-empirically provable*? They seem not to fit his somewhat positivist outlook.

The only challenge to his view that Leiter acknowledges in his book (and rightly so!) is that posed by Thomism and natural theology in general. Unfortunately, he is highly dismissive of both of them reducing them to 'post-hoc rationalization' which fails to follow the evidence where it really leads, manipulating it instead to fit preordained ends (p. 40). One may wonder whether the author of this accusation has actually read *Summa Theologica* or simply repeats the stereotypes functioning in certain academic circles. He also states that 'it is doubtful… whether these intellectualist traditions capture the char-

acter of popular religious belief, the typical epistemic attitudes of religious believers' (p. 39). Even if he is right (which I am not too sure about, after all — whether someone likes it or not — Thomism is constitutive of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition which can hardly be reduced to 'high' academic theology), bracketing the classical theism should by no means follow. The fact that popular faith tends to be more 'fideistic' than 'rationalist' in no way prevents Catholics (to stick with the example) from defending the view of the compatibility and complementarity between faith and reason. In his criticism of John Finnis's Thomistic interpretation of 'norm of rationality' (pp. 86-90), Leiter raises a few accurate objections, but again it seems that he discards its relevance to the issue of toleration/respect of religion all too hastily. Expressions such as 'irrational' and 'long-discredited' or 'everyone outside the relevant sectarian group' indicate clearly where his philosophical sympathies lie.

To sum up, it has to be established how Leiter's view of religious belief is related to his central thesis. In many cases one is inclined to agree with the disapproval of singling out religious liberty for special legal protections. But, as the author himself points out, fair legal solutions require case-by-case judgments in light of the prevailing cultural norms of the communities affected, since often we deal with the differences of degree, rather than those of kind. On the one hand, the selective application of toleration to the conscience of *only* religious believers is not morally defensible. On the other hand, religious claims of conscience, when juxtaposed with the secular ones, appear generally as more deeply integrated into the cultural and normative practices of societies and therefore provide a potentially richer evidential base for assessing their genuineness. When it comes to matters of religion, one can appeal to the *regulatory core* of religious doctrine to rule out certain claims as inconsistent with it or even manipulative, i.e., attempting to manoeuvre religion into justifying practices that are de facto unjustifiable. The evaluation of the individual or group claim that is not backed by the tradition and community of faith seems to involve more vagueness and relativism. In any case, Leiter's conclusions — however seemingly plausible — are unconvincing due to the major flaw in his argument. As he admits, there is no reason to think that principled toleration demands tolerance of religious beliefs in particular *provided* he is right about the features that distinguish religious belief (p. 54). If he is not (or if his reflection on what makes a claim of conscience distinctively 'religious'

is fragmentary and inconclusive), then the question that he tackles: 'Is there any *special* reason to tolerate belief whose distinctive character is defined by the categoricity of its demands conjoined with its insulation from evidence?' (pp. 60-61) must be simply considered irrelevant.

The above critique is by no means aimed at discouraging potential readers from taking interest in Leiter's book. Quite the contrary, it is highly recommended to all those interested in the relationship between religion and the state. It will certainly leave its readers with much to ponder.

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Patrick McNamara: *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*. Cambridge University Press 2009.

The emerging literature on neuroscience and religious experience is thought-provoking, to say the least, and may well revolutionize our understanding of religious experience. The focus in this review will be on religious experiences and the relevant neuroscientific structures and processes, as well as the central claims made about religious experience itself and its relationship with such structures and processes; important work in the book on the 'self', practices and rituals, various concepts of God, ecstatic states and so on, and the things that may be external to, or *follow or flow from*, religious experience, will not be the focus of this review, due to necessary restrictions on length.

McNamara argues that religious experience highlights the relationship between oneself and God: 'self and God are intimately connected at the cognitive and psychological levels' and the 'level of experience can be measured to some extent by looking at brain and cognitive mediation of religious experience' (p. 80). If this is correct, and if religious experience can be understood in terms of this kind of relationship, then neuroscience might illuminate the nature of this relationship. Moreover, if certain regions of the brain are 'implicated' in religious *experience*, then one might find some clues about the functions of religious experience also (p. 81). Now much depends on the question