

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Tolerance of Ambiguity, Ecumenical Theology, and World Peace

Joseph McGahan, Joseph Roberts and Keith Wilkerson

Joseph McGahan, Professor of Psychology and Co-Director of the Social Science Research Laboratory, The University of Louisiana at Monroe

Joseph Roberts, Student, The University of Louisiana at Monroe

Keith Wilkerson, Community Partner of the Social Science Research Laboratory, The University of Louisiana at Monroe

Abstract

Vahinger's (1924) philosophy of "as if" presumes fictions can enrich life. Aside from periods of respite, peace may be nothing more than fiction. Nevertheless, the power of this illusion, along with lives saved during lulls in conflict, make this goal "so worthy that it is glorious even to fail." However, state-sponsored warfare and global terrorism represent threats to this dream. Therefore, ways to reduce conflict are needed for this dream to have a chance. And, this paper proposes tolerance of ambiguity and ecumenical theologies can be helpful towards this end.

Indeed, tolerance of ambiguity (specifically, ambiguities and uncertainties intentionally exploited by terrorists and countries such as Israel) and an ecumenical approach to theology (based on the assumption humans are fools that, only occasionally, have insight into truth) could foster humility, appreciation for others, and greater periods of peace that could be useful in the quest for truth. Moreover, given the generic meaning of ecumenical, it seems reasonable an interdisciplinary approach may foster an open mind and, thereby, embolden us to resist the ubiquitous human default to dogma and the ultimate conflict that ensues when one group asserts its elitists ideology while, implicitly, if not explicitly, insulting everyone else.

Introduction

While pondering the nature of peace for this paper, two personal events one of the authors experienced served as two reminders of two daunting aspects of our human condition (i.e., foolishness, and feigned helplessness masquerading as realism). First, on a recent flight to New York, there was (what appeared to be) omnipresent reminders that it was just a short time ago that people: (a) were allowed to smoke on planes, and (b) did smoke on planes. Imagine the utter foolishness and selfishness inherent in such behavior. More recently, in response to learning that the he was working on a paper to address "world peace," one relatively strong young graduate student of this author sheepishly inquired whether such effort was "silly and wasteful." Add to this foolishness, a fundamental ignorance, and a propensity for savagery, not to mention the numerous failed attempts to achieve peace exist throughout the annals of history, and one can easily doubt the usefulness of such efforts.

Words are potentially powerful. As symbols, words often have emotional and cognitive linkages. Words such as "uncertainty," "ignorance," "illusions," "delusions," "fictions," and "beliefs" are especially powerful symbolic representations for potentially related constructs; indeed, given this subset of elements, ask yourself which words provide the best grouping(s), and

why? Allow yourself to ponder, for example, whether a belief in peace is delusional, whether peace is an illusion (perhaps, somewhat along the lines of the Muller-Lyer Illusion, that even professional carpenters cannot overcome), and-or what are the potential benefits of uncertainty.

Illusions are enigmatic; like ambiguity, sometimes challenging and entertaining and, as with the illusion of control, potentially beneficial. In other instances, given the relationship between illusory correlations and stereotypes, as well as the relationship between stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and intergroup conflict, the consequences of illusions are more dreadful.

Somewhat similarly, fictions, or adventures in untruth, can influence, at least, humans, and when these help (sometimes over the short term—sometimes over the long term), such fictions are “functional fictions.” Indeed, such fictions served as the basis for Adler’s (as cited in Liebert and Spiegler, 1993) claims about fictional finalism, and the possibility that believing in one’s potential can lead one to realize more of one’s potential than would be true otherwise. And, these fictions served as the basis for Vahinger’s (1924) philosophy of “as if,” whereby he argues that, at least, society benefits to the extent that people not only believe in idea(ls) like freedom and responsibility, but that these are positively correlated. And, further consider that, in the same way attitudes can influence behavior, believing in freedom, justice, and, perhaps, hope may influence a variety of decisions and behavior, some of which may involve beneficence towards others. Thus, believing in (or hoping for) and working towards world peace may, at least, temporarily result in greater peace and, at the risk of sounding like the proverbial teacher who justifies her efforts on the basis of success with one child, one less death, or perhaps, even just one delayed death. When one considers the horrible deaths resulting from war, and the terrible sacrifices soldiers, and even innocent civilians make during conflicts, perhaps we should not sheepishly inquire whether attempts to accomplish world peace are futile.

At the same time that people are working to limit nuclear proliferation, we have evidence of not just ignorance, but foolishness and savagery, though we are civilized savages. We allow others to do our dirty work so we can attend church on Sunday and maintain an air of righteousness and moral superiority. Mahir (2009) argued that a number of military operations conduct in Iraq are nothing short of savagery and acts of terrorism against Iraqi civilians. Moreover, such atrocities are committed under the veil of promoting freedom and democracy. And, DeLong (2009) has asserted that the spread of imperialism from various world powers has constituted a “campaign of terror” against the world’s native peoples.

Of course, fictions (or was it ideals?) generally are value laden, considered subjective inventions, and often treated with suspicion, maybe ridicule and disdain. Consider, for example, that, whereas at roughly the same period in history Frenkel-Brunwik (1949) regarded tolerance of ambiguity as adaptive, Jaensch (1938) claimed that it was intolerance of ambiguity that ultimately was adaptive. Similarly, whereas Pope John Paul I, by virtue of convening an ecumenical council in the 1960's, could be considered an advocate for ecumenicalism, an article discussing the current Pope's attitude towards the perceived superiority of the Roman Catholic Church made the following statement: "Pope Benedict XVI has ignited controversy across the world by approving a document saying non-Catholic Christian communities are either defective or not true churches, and the Roman Catholic Church provides the only true path to salvation (*WorldNetDaily*, July 11, 2007). Moreover, even though potentially shocking to peace advocates, not everyone considers peace (to be) beneficial. Hegel (as cited in Shiver, 1960), for example, regarded war as (the) greater purifier that, metaphorically speaking, "preserves the sea from the foulness which would result from the prolonged calm." Indeed, Hegel stated, "Periods of happiness are the empty pages of history because these are periods of agreement, without conflict."

Such perspective (i.e., peace as undesirable) is provocative, albeit unsettling, especially when one thinks in terms of dichotomies whereby one view is valid and, therefore, the other view is not valid. Clearly, in one respect, Hegel's thesis represents the exact antithesis of our premise that tolerance of ambiguity and ecumenicalism are adaptive for humans and, because of our lethal potential, the entire plane. That is, tolerance, inclusiveness, and cooperation may suggest happiness, since each represents constructive solutions for conflict mediation; however, by definition, there can be no doubt that tolerance of ambiguity and ecumenicalism are more about disagreement than agreement although, hopefully, without the bloodshed, ultimate sadness and, quite probably, from what we are learning about post-traumatic stress in veterans, a sincere and overwhelming sense of chronic regret. Indeed, given that ambiguity can be characterized as multiplicity of interpretations of some variable, and that ecumenical can be defined in terms of different interpretations of, at least, God, reality, or being, there can be little doubt the essence of these ideas is variability, and that opening oneself up to variability and uncertainty means excitement and arousal, with the possibility of being unsettled or anxious and, potentially, combative.

To make any discussion about ambiguity and tolerance of ambiguity (even) more interesting, one could argue that there are at least three definitions of ambiguity, which essentially boil down to one definition whereby there are multiple, but not necessarily equally probable interpretations of X. Similarly, Kreitler, Maguen, and Kreitler (1975) claimed there are “three faces” of intolerance of ambiguity, which Webster and Kruglanski (1994) thinks involves need for closure, close-mindedness, and rigidity at the core. For Kreitler, Maguen, and Kreitler, these included: (a) “the relative lack of readiness to accept multiple interpretations of a given situation,” (b) “the relative lack of readiness or ability to accept situations which cannot be clearly defined, clarified, understood, characterized into familiar categories, or interpreted in terms of habitual modes of cognition and experience,” and (c) “the relative lack of readiness to accept which includes contrasts, contradictions, inconsistencies, dichotomies of positive and negative polarities, or cues evocative of conflict and ambivalence.” (Kreitler, Maguen, and Kreitler 1975, 239)

Thus, variability affords ambiguity, thereby inhibiting closure and creating uncertainty. When the variance cannot be accounted for or explained, it is called ignorance or error, and regarded as unsystematic variability unless and until there is-are (a) valid explanation(s). Therefore, given the limits of our information processing capabilities, especially in foreign environments likely to be experienced as, what James and Piaget (as cited in Miller, 1983) considered, “booming buzzing confusions,” and that, according to Heidegger (1962), truth is inherently ambiguous, chances are that there will be ignorance and uncertainty. Presumably, Kant referenced this-these condition(s) when noting that, even with our cognitive assets, “our mind....creates the universe—at least as we experience it.” (Hergenhahn 2001, 169) Moreover, “Kant called the objects that constitute physical reality ‘things-in-themselves’ or *noumena*, and it was *noumena* about which we are forever and necessarily ignorant.” (Hergenhahn 2001, 169) And, perhaps this is why Nietzsche boldly asserted that nature did not fashion our intellects for the purpose of arriving at truth, but (instead) to calculate what is useful and advantageous. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, “...there are no abstract truths waiting to be discovered by all...” (Hergenhahn 2001, 195)

Of course, a question that naturally follows from such an assertion (i.e., ambiguity of truth), is: the truth about what: truth, reality, self, being, God? In this case, given the emphasis on ecumenical theology and world peace, it stands to reason one might wish to know the truth about

God (or gods). Therefore, consider the following sequence of thoughts: for those with belief systems referencing God, (only) God is omniscient. Despite the apparent brilliance and wisdom of humans, if one steadfastly clings to the belief in God's omniscience, we as humans must inevitably and always be miserable failures despite our futile efforts to understand even an iota of God; to believe otherwise may be an unequivocal and unambiguous example reminding us that humans are fundamentally ignorant, and (often) deluded by the belief they understand God.

In accordance with, at least, an English lexicon, we believe ecumenicalism can be defined in two or three ways. First, variations in Christianity exist, and all of these variations are valid. Second, based on the concept of universalism, all religions, regardless of whether these are characterized as so-called "great religions" are valid. Third, based on the idea that, at least, theologians ought to participate in the so-called scientific discussion about medical ethics, the views of all people, including agnostics and atheists, about religion, theology, spirituality and, perhaps, God are valid and, therefore, worthy of consideration. And, of these three definitions, we contend the latter definition represents the best fit with Bronowski's (2002) suggestion that respect and appreciation for life—or perhaps, understanding—is strongest given the interdisciplinary interaction of art and science; quite possibly, art, science, and religion (or theology). Moreover, given the implicit, if not explicit, respect for the variability inherent in another (indeed, all others), with an ecumenical approach, we might not only augment each other's perspective, we might nullify some of the ugliness resulting from the elitism and bigotry that continues to manifest itself throughout human history.

Many of the so-called great religions, however, stubbornly and arrogantly proclaim to have the answers to humankind's quest for understanding God; those not in agreement with their interpretation of God are construed as deficient and are branded as heretics. The informal hypothesis testing models we use to tackle such questions demonstrates how the ubiquitous presence of dogmatism influences our thinking. For example, were we to apply a hypothesis testing scenario to address, perhaps, the most basic question as to whether God exists, one or two potentially instructive issues become apparent. First, consider the null hypothesis pertaining to the existence of God; surely, it would come as no surprise, since scientists are encouraged, if not inculcated, to be conservative, to know that the null hypothesis representing their thinking, especially those who embrace atheism, would be commensurate with the idea: God does exist. However, given the extraordinary influence of religion, theology, and spirituality in cultures

throughout history, surely it would be short of fair not to consider the possibility that the null hypothesis for these people likely would be: God does not exist. Then, given the above-mentioned ubiquitous default to dogmatism, especially in the face of threatening uncertainty, what may be most important is that, given our inherent human limitations, neither group would really be interested in considering the (simple) alternative hypothesis. Indeed, the mere suggestion that there must be an alternative likely would result in irritation and, maybe anger, if not rage and hostility.

This attitude (i.e., attitude of spiritual superiority) has been the root of demarcation for many denominations within the Christian religion. Indeed, the spirit of the Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther and others, harbored deep-seated resentment towards the Roman Catholic Church for the unwavering position that the Pope and his subservient clergy were the only ones capable of interpreting the scriptures, thus outlining the requirements for achieving true salvation.

Throughout history, and continuing to the present, a number of religious establishments have wielded their power to either convert or punish those who would dare disagree with or challenge their authority. For many years Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire for refusing to acknowledge the Great Caesar as the ultimate world authority. However, upon converting to Christianity, the Roman Emperor Constantine decreed Christianity as the official religion for the Roman Empire. The spawning of the Great Crusades resulted from the desire of the Christian Church to establish its dominance in the world arena.

This apparent abuse of power by religious establishments has dominated much of world history. In the same fashion that religion asserts itself as the ultimate authority for understanding (or not understanding) the natural order of the universe, it condemns science for daring to open new paths of enlightenment for mankind to explore and, perhaps, exploit newfound knowledge for the betterment of our existence. Rather than admonishing humans to gauge his or her own moral compass, religious dogmatism defers ethical dilemmas to an authoritarian deity for the firm establishment of morality and social mores.

Given each religion's belief that their way is the only true way, it is without surprise that others not sharing their doctrine are perceived as heretical and subsequently are dismissed as false religions. But, what if each religion recognized that one can only hope to understand an iota of God's omniscience and omnipotence? Would it not be prudent to welcome ideas from other

religions in hopes that the pooling of many resources would result in a greater, if not nearly complete, understanding of the nature of God? That is, despite the dissimilarities inherent in each religion's belief systems, one would hope these dissimilarities would dissolve into a greater purpose, with the understanding that each belief represents a unique contribution to the end result of satisfying the age-old quest for understanding an omniscient God.

If one were to think of the concept of ecumenicalism in terms of r-squared and the pooling of variance estimates, one would understand that it is highly unlikely all of the variance will be explained. And, one could offer little to dispute that pooling of variance estimates results in a much better estimate than dependence upon a single variance estimate. Given that one individual (or, perhaps, one religion or denomination) can only hope to comprehend an iota of God, one should welcome different ideas from others of different faiths. What would be the total contribution towards understanding God if everyone possessed the same ideology? Or, what would be the total contribution towards comprehending the nature of God if different beliefs are taken into account? Would it possibly result in *iota-squared*? Therefore, it stands to reason that diversification of ideology and belief systems would result in a much more powerful estimate of the nature of an omniscient and omnipotent God.

Combined, these issues clearly position us to respect what Kahneman and Tversky phrased "judgments under uncertainty, whereby they argued that, "Uncertainty is a fact with which all forms of life must be prepared to contend (Kahneman and Tversky 1982, 509) Moreover, these issues lead to the importance of ecumenicalism and, presumably, tolerance of ambiguity. However, such an enterprise involves making self secondary, as well as allowing for compromise and cooperation, with the understanding that none of these are possible without considerable, sustained, and perhaps, Herculean effort.

As has been proven throughout history, and largely is true today, given religion is associated with ethnocentrism and in-group superiority, and intolerance of ambiguity, as well as with dogmatism and rigidity, even with a genuine commitment to ecumenicalism, there are at least four obstacles with varying degrees of formidability. First, ecumenicalism means the rejection of dogmatism in favor of open-mindedness and critical thinking, and this represents a threat to our most primitive psychological belief systems. Similarly, inclusion implies a threat to what is special, perhaps, sacred. Consider, for example, how professed believers in heaven often are appalled by the idea of their eternity of celestial bliss being there for all; (just) imagine: if the

anticipated linkage between in-group and superiority was not valid, then what? Thirdly, because ecumenicalism involves thinking about self inclusively (i.e., “we” instead of “I”), absent the capacity to think in terms of: (a) optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1998), (b) the possibility that “what unites us is greater than what divides us,” and, at least (c) “our antagonist ultimately is our helper,” ecumenicalism is a virtual oxymoron that poses a threat to cultural and social identity. In addition, ecumenicalism should increase ambiguity because it suggests that one’s beliefs represent “a way” as opposed to “the way”; that is, the very idea that there may be infinite paths to the sublime as opposed to just (was it my, or was it your) one. And, lastly, if one presumes at least some level of accommodation to effectively deal with the dissimilarity inherent in ambiguity and variability, that means effort and, more importantly, that one is at risk for losing what one had, perhaps what was the very core of one’s former being. Thus, it is difficult to imagine ecumenicalism without tolerance of ambiguity, with Webster and Kruglanski’s (1994) model of Need for Closure (NFC) being a major factor, largely because dogmatism represents the antithesis of ecumenicalism, just as it supposedly represents the antithesis of science.

Interestingly, although ecumenicalism can be related to each of the three types of ambiguity, the type of ambiguity that may be the most relevant involves apparent contradictions whereby “different cues suggest different structures.” That is, in the same manner that it only appeared contradictory when, for example, Charles Dickens (2003/1859) wrote “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” different religions may only appear different. Or, consider the apparent ambiguity in the statement “I am”: in one respect, completely unambiguous, and in another, as ambiguous and infinite as our collective imagination. However, the type of ambiguity whereby there are relatively clear interpretations, somewhat equally probable—though not always equally probable, certainly applies to religion. For example, the Trinity of God, postulated by Christians, at least, resembles the type of ambiguity that Attneave (1968) addressed in his discussion about triangles (equilateral triangles in particular) as ambiguous figures; that is, there are three interpretations, or perceptions, of triangularity, and each of these is equally probable and equally valid. Thirdly, the type of ambiguity that resembles what psychophysicists refer to as an absolute threshold seems likely to apply to those of us who think that may be God’s voice in the distance, but aren’t sure if that otherwise weak signal may be something more amorphous as the wind.

Given the previous discussion regarding humankind's quest for understanding the nature of the divine, perceived sufficiency ought to be addressed. That is, it could prove useful to know how much we need to understand, as opposed to how much we think we need to understand, before: (a) feeling comfortable, and (b) that our positions have predictive validity, as well as how we react to perceived insufficiencies. Moreover, perhaps it is not about understanding, but more about appreciation. There is little doubt art forms are designed for appreciation of their aesthetic qualities. Since the most primitive civilizations, the expression of art has been used not only as a form of beauty, but also as recognition of social identity. For example, ancient native peoples used totem poles to identify hierarchical rankings. Religious organizations use architecture as an expression of heritage, and to a large extent, status. Consider the architectural marvels of the Vatican and other world-renowned locations of religious assembly. This expression of status often leads to competition, and in some cases, conflict among various religious establishments. Many religions use this aesthetic appeal as a means of consolidating their following as well as establishing dominance. One can imagine the Roman Catholic Church equates its immense wealth with power. If used effectively, this type of power can position a religious organization into a place of superiority. Perhaps such an attitude of superiority has been a contributing factor in many of the religious conflicts spread across the globe.

Maybe trying to comprehend God is a waste of our time and energy—perhaps our efforts would be better spent understanding human suffering, so as to alleviate of it what we can, and find beauty and purpose in those forms of suffering which are invincible, for as the Buddhists believe, to live is to suffer. Perhaps we should value and employ the dialectic method to extract the essence of human suffering. Maybe this is the point of demarcation for spirituality and religion.

What is the relationship, if any, between spirituality and religion? “Spirituality” vigorously struggles against a solid and consistent definition. Generally, the word is used with reference to an unseen or immaterial dimension of reality, but also to expressions of art and experience. The ambiguous nature of spirituality may stem from our natural cognitive limitations, or, perhaps, from the broad range of experiences deemed spiritual.

Bronowski (2002) claimed that man was “an inexorable blend of scientist and artist.” As a variety of experiences, spiritual themes may flow naturally through the human experience, finding a measure of expression in art and culture. Religion may arise when that part of humanity

which seeks to explain nature, order, and reality—rather than merely experience it—captures the residue of spiritual experience in order to replicate it within the throws of ritual. A hierarchical element is further added, derived from the social nature of our species. Through this lens, religion appears to be a combination of government with numerous failed attempts at science before the scientific instinct in man was truly refined. As Bronowski further stated, “The most wonderful discovery made by scientists is science itself.”

The difficulty of explaining spirituality can be likened to what St. Augustine said of time: “I know what time is, until you ask me to tell you.” If human beings were incapable of spiritual experience, no doubt we would never have become religious. With this comes the acknowledgment that spirituality must precede religion, as an enigmatic category of perception and experience. Even though such a characterization is mildly evasive, it provides a basis for understanding spiritual phenomena on the level of the brain, and therefore a maturing science of the mind could potentially have much to add to our understanding of spirituality. Moreover, in the event we are provided a physical explanation for something that has, until fairly recently, enjoyed great success in remaining shrouded in a thick veil of cliché and otherworldly mystique, we could recognize the occasion for the inclusion of our dear atheists and materialists on the subject of spirituality—a group which would, at such an interval, undoubtedly be willing to come to the aid of the conversation with unwavering skepticism. That sort of discussion may imply that a rich spiritual life is possible without God or religion. In any case, such an inclusion has obvious benefits to the progress of ecumenicalism as well as the interdisciplinary approaches to problems for which we will need new eyes to solve.

In terms of the potential relationship between intolerance of ambiguity (as well as Need for Closure) and the discussion regarding ideological differences, Webster and Kruglanski’s (1994) model of NFC has garnered attention in researching sociopolitical conflicts. Golec and Federico (2004) found that foreign-policy officials serving during the Cold War Era, and who by proxy were discovered to have a relatively high NFC, were more likely to view the use of military force as the preferable option to conflict resolution. Similarly, Golec and Federico discovered politically conservative activists from Poland were more likely to prefer a competitive approach to conflict resolution than their liberal counterparts.

As the current global sociopolitical climate continues to morph in response to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the nature and source of the threat of

terrorism remain ambiguous (Richardson, 2007). In traditional warfare, battle lines are drawn and with the exception of guerillas, the enemy clearly is identified. The current so-called War on Terrorism defies traditional warfare tactics. In most cases, the enemy is among us, masquerading as our friends; this advantage is used to plot and carry out attacks on the unsuspecting population, whether in the U.S. or abroad.

In the days shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the U.S., and much of the world was in a state of confusion and disarray. Some have argued the presidential administration seized upon this opportunity to seek congressional approval for a declaration of war against an enemy that would prove difficult to identify and engage. Suskind (as cited in Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Victoroff, 2007) opined that due to the uncertainty and fear resulting from the attacks, the general public, as well as many congressional leaders, did little to challenge the administration's push for conflict, especially in Afghanistan. Further, Suskind stated, "...the administration could say anything it wanted to say and the public was motivated to accept its interpretation in order to escape the ambiguity, and attain cognitive clarity and closure (Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Victoroff 2007, 106)

Kruglanski, et al. (2007) have argued that in the midst of this conflict, little attention has been given to understand exactly the motivating factors behind terrorist activities, and that by simplifying the conflict "in terms of 'good' versus 'evil,'" the justification for war should be acceptable (Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Victoroff 2007, 106) Alternatively, one could argue that an understanding and acceptance of western civilization by Islamic extremists may reveal the futility in their attempts to impose potentially undesirable religious and cultural norms on a potentially unwilling people group, and vice versa.

Conclusion

Thus, consistent with the sentiments of Snyder and associates (as cited in Lane and Klenke, 2004), ambiguity is a pervasive aspect of spirituality, just as it is with terrorism.

Indeed, the link between ambiguity and terrorism is not implicit, as there are, at least, two instances where references to deliberate ambiguity are absolutely explicit, and one of these recently surfaced when a legal expert from John's Hopkins University indicated that "deliberate ambiguity" was an effective means of evading whether it was legal and ethical for the United States to use drones in Pakistan. Similarly, although more historical, consider the Israeli

application of “deliberate ambiguity” as a cornerstone of their defense policy (at least during the 1980’s). That is, in response to the inquiry or assertion that Israel has nuclear weapons, their official position appears to be “maybe,” or “we may.”

Of course, were the other (i.e., the out-group or the recipient of this deliberate utilization of ambiguity) intolerant of ambiguity, chances are such a deliberate use of ambiguity almost could be considered intentional antagonism and provocation. Therefore, unless one valued the irritation of another, the deliberate use of ambiguity surely would work better were the other tolerant of ambiguity.

Whether an action is an act of terrorism is difficult to tell without knowing all sides of the story. For example, should we consider Ed McMahon an eco-terrorist when on behalf of Publisher’s Clearinghouse he sent letters to people congratulating them because “they *may be* the winners” of an unfathomable amount of money, despite knowing the odds fail to even approximate a probability of .50? In this instance, it appears Ed McMahon is exploiting ambiguity and uncertainty to his advantage. (Friedlander 1986)

Regardless, there are different ways to exploit ambiguity, and in closing we would like to provide a rather humorous example, perhaps worth considering on a more serious note. Imagine yourself on a battlefield with people, representing various, presumably, incompatible positions, assuming the role of warrior. Then, imagine that instead of manna falling from the heavens, mild doses of pepper litter the air they breathe. Now, ask yourself: what would happen?

Presumably, people regardless of their military affiliation, would sneeze. Second, a chorus resounding around the phrase “God bless (you)” might fill the air. Thus, surely, those who were invoking God’s blessing would find themselves in the awkward position of wondering how they could maim and kill: (a) someone they just asked God to bless and (b) someone who may have been kind enough to wish God’s blessings upon them.

Wouldn’t that be a wonderful application of deliberate ambiguity, and even more so if it produced a state of what Kierkegaard (1994) referred to as “impenetrable ambiguity” that kept human aggression at bay eternally. And, of course, if that failed to work on a more pragmatic basis, consider that a greater tolerance of ambiguity, especially grounded in humility, with respect and appreciation for all, may help us to better able deal with moral justification, displacement of responsibility and, at least, attribution of blame when it comes to warfare and, apparent, terrorism.

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