

A CRITIQUE OF MANDAIR'S  
**RELIGION**  
AND THE SPECTER OF THE WEST



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# Religion And The Specter Of The West

**Michael Philipp Brunner**



## **Religion And The Specter Of The West:**

**Religion and the Specter of the West** Arvind-pal Singh Mandair, 2009 Arguing that intellectual movements such as deconstruction postsecular theory and political theology have different implications for cultures and societies that live with the debilitating effects of past imperialisms Arvind Mandair unsettles the politics of knowledge construction in which the category of religion continues to be central Through a case study of Sikhism he launches an extended critique of religion as a cultural universal At the same time he presents a portrait of how certain aspects of Sikh tradition were reinvented as religion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries India's imperial elite subtly recast Sikh tradition as a sui generis religion which robbed its teachings of their political force In turn Sikhs began to define themselves as a nation and a world religion that was separate from but parallel to the rise of the Indian state and global Hinduism Rather than investigate these processes in isolation from Europe Mandair shifts the focus closer to the political history of ideas thereby recovering part of Europe's repressed colonial memory

**Religion and the Specter of the West** Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, 2009-10-22 Arguing that intellectual movements such as deconstruction postsecular theory and political theology have different implications for cultures and societies that live with the debilitating effects of past imperialisms Arvind Mandair unsettles the politics of knowledge construction in which the category of religion continues to be central Through a case study of Sikhism he launches an extended critique of religion as a cultural universal At the same time he presents a portrait of how certain aspects of Sikh tradition were reinvented as religion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries India's imperial elite subtly recast Sikh tradition as a sui generis religion which robbed its teachings of their political force In turn Sikhs began to define themselves as a nation and a world religion that was separate from but parallel to the rise of the Indian state and global Hinduism Rather than investigate these processes in isolation from Europe Mandair shifts the focus closer to the political history of ideas thereby recovering part of Europe's repressed colonial memory Mandair rethinks the intersection of religion and the secular in discourses such as history of religions postcolonial theory and recent continental philosophy Though seemingly unconnected these discourses are shown to be linked to a philosophy of generalized translation that emerged as a key conceptual matrix in the colonial encounter between India and the West In this riveting study Mandair demonstrates how this philosophy of translation continues to influence the repetitions of religion and identity politics in the lives of South Asians and the way the academy state and media have analyzed such phenomena

*The Origins of Religious Violence* Nicholas F. Gier, 2014-08-20 Religiously motivated violence caused by the fusion of state and religion occurred in medieval Tibet and Bhutan and later in imperial Japan but interfaith conflict also followed colonial incursions in India Sri Lanka and Burma Before that time there was a general premodern harmony among the resident religions of the latter countries and only in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries did religiously motivated violence break out While conflict caused by Hindu fundamentalists has been serious and widespread a combination of medieval Tibetan Buddhists and modern

Sri Lankan Japanese and Burmese Buddhists has caused the most violence among the Asian religions However the Chinese Taiping Christians have the world record for the number of religious killings by one single sect A theoretical investigation reveals that specific aspects of the Abrahamic religions an insistence on the purity of revelation a deity who intervenes in history but one who still is primarily transcendent may be primary causes of religious conflict Only one factor a mystical monism not favored in Judaism Christianity and Islam was the basis of a distinctively Japanese Buddhist call for individuals to identify totally with the emperor and to wage war on behalf of a divine ruler The Origins of Religious Violence An Asian Perspective uses a methodological heuristic of premodern modern and constructive postmodern forms of thought to analyze causes and offer solutions to religious violence Secularism and Religion-Making Markus Dressler, Arvind

Mandair, 2011-10-03 This book conceives of religion making broadly as the multiple ways in which social and cultural phenomena are configured and reconfigured within the matrix of a world religion discourse that is historically and semantically rooted in particular Western and predominantly Christian experiences knowledges and institutions It investigates how religion is universalized and certain ideas social formations and practices rendered religious are thus integrated in and subordinated to very particular mostly liberal secular assumptions about the relationship between history politics and religion The individual contributions written by a new generation of scholars with decisively interdisciplinary approaches examine the processes of translation and globalization of historically specific concepts and practices of religion and its dialectical counterpart the secular into new contexts This volume contributes to the relatively new field of thought that aspires to unravel the thoroughly intertwined relationships between religion and secularism as modern concepts

**Religion, Theory, Critique** Richard King, 2017-07-18 Religion Theory Critique is an essential tool for learning about theory and method in the study of religion Leading experts engage with contemporary and classical theories as well as non Western cultural contexts Unlike other collections this anthology emphasizes the dynamic relationship between religion as an object of study and different methodological approaches and openly addresses the question of the manifold ways in which religion secular and culture are imagined within different disciplinary horizons This volume is the first textbook which seeks to engage discussion of classical approaches with contemporary cultural and critical theories Contributors write on the influence of the natural sciences in the study of religion the role of European Christianity in modeling theories of religion religious experience and the interface with cognitive science the structure and function of religious language the social scientific study of religion ritual in religion the phenomenology of religion critical theory and religion embodiment and religion the impact of colonialism and modernity theorizing religion in terms of race and ethnicity links among religion nationalism and globalization the interplay of gender sex and religion and religion and the environment Each chapter introduces the topic identifies key theorists and issues and respects the pluralistic nature of the scholarship in the field Altogether this collection scrutinizes the explicit and implicit assumptions theorists make about religion as an object of

analysis      **What Is Islam?** Shahab Ahmed, 2017-10-31 A bold new conceptualization of Islam that reflects its contradictions and rich diversity What is Islam How do we grasp a human and historical phenomenon characterized by such variety and contradiction What is Islamic about Islamic philosophy or Islamic art Should we speak of Islam or of islams Should we distinguish the Islamic the religious from the Islamicate the cultural Or should we abandon Islamic altogether as an analytical term In *What Is Islam* Shahab Ahmed presents a bold new conceptualization of Islam that challenges dominant understandings grounded in the categories of religion and culture or those that privilege law and scripture He argues that these modes of thinking obstruct us from understanding Islam distorting it diminishing it and rendering it incoherent *What Is Islam* formulates a new conceptual language for analyzing Islam It presents a new paradigm of how Muslims have historically understood divine revelation one that enables us to understand how and why Muslims through history have embraced values such as exploration ambiguity aestheticization polyvalence and relativism as well as practices such as figural art music and even wine drinking as Islamic It also puts forward a new understanding of the historical constitution of Islamic law and its relationship to philosophical ethics and political theory A book that is certain to provoke debate and significantly alter our understanding of Islam *What Is Islam* reveals how Muslims have historically conceived of and lived with Islam as norms and truths that are at once contradictory yet coherent      *The Materiality of the Past* Anne Murphy, 2012-11-29 Anne Murphy offers a groundbreaking exploration of material representations of the Sikh past showing how objects as well as historical sites and texts have played a vital role in the production of the Sikh community as an evolving historical and social formation from the eighteenth century to the present Drawing together work in religious studies postcolonial studies and history Murphy explores how relic objects such as garments and weaponry have like sites played dramatically different roles across political and social contexts signifiers of authority and even sovereignty in one collected revered and displayed with religious significance in another and are connected to a broader engagement with the representation of the past that is central to the formation of the Sikh community By highlighting the connections between relic objects and historical sites and how the status of sites changed in the colonial period she also provides crucial insight into the circumstances that brought about the birth of a new territorial imagination of the Sikh past in the early twentieth century rooted in existing precolonial historical imaginaries centered in place and object The life of the object today and in the past she suggests provides unique insight into the formation of the Sikh community and the crucial role representations play in it      *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion* Michael Stausberg, Steven Engler, 2016-11-17 *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion* provides a comprehensive overview of the academic study of religion Written by an international team of leading scholars its fifty one chapters are divided thematically into seven sections The first section addresses five major conceptual aspects of research on religion Part two surveys eleven main frameworks of analysis interpretation and explanation of religion Reflecting recent turns in the humanities and social sciences part three considers eight forms of the expression of religion Part four provides a

discussion of the ways societies and religions or religious organizations are shaped by different forms of allocation of resources Other chapters in this section consider law the media nature medicine politics science sports and tourism Part five reviews important developments distinctions and arguments for each of the selected topics The study of religion addresses religion as a historical phenomenon and part six looks at seven historical processes Religion is studied in various ways by many disciplines and this Handbook shows that the study of religion is an academic discipline in its own right The disciplinary profile of this volume is reflected in part seven which considers the history of the discipline and its relevance Each chapter in the Handbook references at least two different religions to provide fresh and innovative perspectives on key issues in the field This authoritative collection will advance the state of the discipline and is an invaluable reference for students and scholars

*Sacred and Secular Musics* Virinder S. Kalra, 2014-11-20 How does the sacred secular opposition explain itself in the context of musical production This volume traces this binary as it frames Western Classical music and Indian Classical music in the 18th and 19th centuries laying the ground for a contemporary exploration of what is ostensibly sacred music in South Asia Offering a potent critique of musicological knowledge making Virinder S Kalra explores examples of South Asian musics in various domains and traverses a new cartography of music in which the sacred and the secular overlap Drawing on examples which include Qawwali kirtan and popular devotional genres *Sacred and Secular Musics* offers new empirical material as well as new insights into conceptualising religion and music and the ways in which music performs sacredness and secularity across the contested India Pakistan border in the region of Punjab Through its deconstruction of the sacred secular opposition *Sacred and Secular Musics* explores the relationship of religion and music to wider questions of religion and politics Its postcolonial approach brings Asia into the Western sacred secular opposition and provides a set of analytical tools a language and range of theories to allow further exploration of non western religious music

Punjab Reconsidered Anshu Malhotra, Farina Mir, 2012-02-21 What is Punjabiya What are the different notions of Punjab This volume analyses these ideas and explores the different aspects that constitute Punjab as a region conceptually in history culture and practice Each essay examines a different Punjabi culture language based and literary religious and those that define a community rural urban and middle class and historical contemporary and cosmopolitan Together these essays unravel the complex foundations of Punjabiya The volume also shows how the recent history of Punjab partition aspirations of statehood and a large and assertive diaspora has had a discernible impact on the region s scholarship Departing from conventional studies on Punjab this book presents fresh perspectives and new insights into its regional culture

*Education and Modernity in Colonial Punjab* Michael Philipp Brunner, 2020-11-23 This book explores the localisation of modernity in late colonial India As a case study it focuses on the hitherto untold colonial history of Khalsa College Amritsar a pioneering and highly influential educational institution founded in the British Indian province of Punjab in 1892 by the religious minority community of the Sikhs Addressing topics such as politics religion rural development militarism or physical education the

study shows how Sikh educationalists and activists made use of and localised communal imperial national and transnational discourses and knowledge Their modernist visions and schemes transcended both imperialist and mainstream nationalist frameworks and networks In its quest to educate the modern Sikh scientific practical disciplined and physically fit the college navigated between very local and global claims opportunities and contingencies mirroring modernity's ambivalent simultaneity of universalism and particularism

**The Legacy of Vaiṣṇavism in Colonial Bengal** Ferdinando Sardella, Lucian Wong, 2019-11-25 This book offers a focused examination of the Bengali Vaiṣṇava tradition in its manifold forms in the pivotal context of British colonialism in South Asia Bringing together scholars from across the disciplines of social and intellectual history philology theology and anthropology to systematically investigate Vaiṣṇavism in colonial Bengal this book highlights the significant roles religious social and cultural that a prominent Hindu devotional current played in the lives of wide and diverse sections of colonial Bengali society Not only does the book thereby enrich our understanding of the history and development of Bengali Vaiṣṇavism but it also sheds valuable new light on the texture and dynamics of colonial Hinduism beyond the discursive and social historical parameters of an entrenched Hindu Renaissance paradigm A landmark in the burgeoning field of Bengali Vaiṣṇava studies this book will be of interest to scholars of modern Hinduism religion and colonial South Asian social and intellectual history

**Bad English** Rachael Gilmour, 2020-07-28 **Bad English** examines the impact of increasing language diversity in transforming contemporary literature in Britain in the context of its contested language politics Exploring a range of poetry and prose it makes the case for literature as the preeminent medium to probe the terms and conditions of linguistic belonging

**Sikh Philosophy** Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, 2022-07-14 Sikhism one of the major spiritual philosophical traditions of India is often missing from discussions of cross cultural philosophy In this introduction Arvind Pal Singh Mandair an internationally acknowledged expert in Sikh studies provides the first rigorous engagement in the West with Sikh philosophy Sensitive both to the historical formation of Sikh thought and to the decolonial context in which he writes Mandair examines some of the key concepts of Sikh philosophy and how they inform its vision of life He asks what Sikh philosophical concepts tell us about the nature of reality the relationship between mind self ego and whether it is possible to discern broad contours of a Sikh logic epistemology and ontology Additionally the book looks at how these concepts address broader themes such as the body health and well being creation and cosmology death and rebirth the nature of action and intention bioethics and a theme that undergirds every chapter spirituality Each chapter concludes with a set of bullet points highlighting the key concepts discussed a set of questions for further discussion and teachings points to aid discussion Through this much needed introduction we understand the place of Sikh Philosophy within modern Sikh studies and why the philosophical quest became marginalized in contemporary Sikh studies Most importantly we recognize the importance of looking beyond the well trodden terrain of Hindu and Buddhist thinkers and involving Sikh philosophical thought in the emergent field of world philosophies

*The Legacy of Wilfred Cantwell Smith* Ellen Bradshaw Aitken

(1961-2014), Arvind Sharma, 2017-03-15 First work to address the legacy of Wilfred Cantwell Smith and his influence on the development of religious studies and Islamic studies in the twentieth century This is the first work to address the legacy of Wilfred Cantwell Smith 1916 2000 whose intellectual and institutional contributions helped shape the field of religious studies in the latter half of the twentieth century As a young scholar Smith taught Indian and Islamic history in Lahore for several years and witnessed the partition of India Upon his return to North America he obtained his PhD at Princeton University before embarking upon a long and distinguished career He founded the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University and served as director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University Smith emphasized the place of the scholarly study of Islam in the Western academy long before Islam occupied its current position at the center of global politics challenged the notion of monolithic world religions and argued for the importance of dialogical processes and a personalist approach to the study of religion Contributors to this volume many of whom were Smith's students provide a wide ranging exploration of his influence and legacy

Nonviolence in the World's Religions Jeffery D. Long, Michael G. Long, 2021-09-23 The twenty first century began with the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 Much has been written and debated on the relationship between faith and violence with acts of terror at the forefront However the twentieth century also gave rise to many successful nonviolent protest movements Nonviolence in the World's Religions introduces the reader to the complex relationship between religion and nonviolence Each of the essays delves into the contemporary and historical expressions of the world's major religious traditions in relation to nonviolence Contributors explore the literary and theological foundations of a tradition's justification of nonviolence the ways that nonviolence has come to expression in its beliefs symbols rituals and other practices and the evidence of nonviolence in its historic and present responses to conflict and warfare The meanings of both religion and nonviolence are explored through engagement with nonviolence in Hindu Buddhist Chinese Sikh Jewish Christian Islamic Jain and Pacific Island religious traditions This is the ideal introduction to the relationship between religion and violence for undergraduate students as well as for those in related fields such as religious studies peace and conflict studies area studies sociology political science and history

**Contesting Islam, Constructing Race and Sexuality** Sunera Thobani, 2020-12-10 The current political standoffs of the War on Terror illustrate that the interaction within and between the so called Western and Middle Eastern civilizations is constantly in flux A recurring theme however is how Islam and Muslims signify the Enemy in the Western socio cultural imagination and have become the Other against which the West identifies itself In a unique and insightful blend of critical race feminist and post colonial theory Sunera Thobani examines how Islam is foundational to the formation of Western identity at critical points in its history including the Crusades the Reconquista and the colonial period More specifically she explores how masculinity and femininity are formed at such pivotal junctures and what role feminism has played in the wars against radical Islam Exposing these symbiotic relationships Thobani explores how the return of religion is reworking the racial gender and sexual politics



by which Western society defines itself and more specifically defines itself against Islam Contesting Islam Constructing Race and Sexuality unpacks conventional as well as unconventional orthodoxies to open up new spaces in how we think about sexual and racial identity in the West and the crucial role that Islam has had and continues to have in its development

Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, 2013-08-08 Discussion of Sikhism and traditionally difficult themes such as the relationship between politics and religion violence and mysticism culture and spirituality or particularity and globalization

**Time, History and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia** Anne Murphy, 2012-03-12 Religious imaginary is a way of conceiving and structuring the world within the conceptual and imaginative traditions of the religious Using religious imaginary as a reference this book analyses temporal ideologies and expressions of historicity in South Asia in the early modern pre colonial and early colonial period Chapters explore the multiple understandings of time and the past that informed the historical imagination in various kinds of literary representations including historiographical and literary texts hagiography and religious canonical literature The book addresses the contributing forces and comparative implications of the formation of religious and communitarian sensibilities as expressed through the imagination of the past and suggests how these relate to each other within and across traditions in South Asia By bringing diverse materials together this book presents new commonalities and distinctions that inform a larger understanding of how religion and other cultural formations impinge on the concept of temporality and the representation of it as history

*Religion and US Empire* Tisa Wenger, Sylvester A Johnson, 2022-08-23 Shows how American forms of religion and empire developed in tandem shaping and reshaping each other over the course of American history The United States has been an empire since the time of its founding and this empire is inextricably intertwined with American religion Religion and US Empire examines the relationship between these dynamic forces throughout the country's history and into the present The volume will serve as the most comprehensive and definitive text on the relationship between US empire and American religion Whereas other works describe religion as a force that aided or motivated American imperialism this comprehensive new history reveals how imperialism shaped American religion and how religion historically structured enabled challenged and resisted US imperialism Chapters move chronologically from the eighteenth century to the twenty first ranging geographically from the Caribbean Michigan and Liberia to Oklahoma Hawai'i and the Philippines Rather than situating these histories safely in the past the final chapters ask readers to consider present day entanglements between capitalism imperialism and American religion Religion and US Empire is an urgent work of history offering the context behind a relationship that is for better or worse very much alive today

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