

Section 10: Christian Philosophy

A critical understanding of the religious other

Peter Jonkers, the Netherlands

This paper examines the possibility of religious critique in a context of (radical) religious and societal heterogeneity. The paper starts with explaining that societal and religious heterogeneity is the main reason why the public and interreligious debate about religious diversity seems to have arrived at an impasse, and why religious critique is so often rejected as unfair, biased or prejudiced. Because of this heterogeneity there is no common ground (e.g. the language of public reason, advocated by Habermas and Rawls) that serves as a common frame of reference in the discussions of religious diversity and enables fair religious critique. In the next sections, three models of understanding the religious other are examined as to whether they make religious critique possible: first, Gadamer's idea of a fusion of horizons (through an article by Charles Taylor), second, Ricoeur's idea of religious hospitality (through a book by Marianne Moyaert), and finally Derrida's analysis of the antinomy between the unconditional Law of hospitality versus the plural, conditional regimes of hospitality. I will argue that Derrida's approach has the best potential for a critical understanding of the religious other in a context of religious heterogeneity.

Key-words: Interreligious dialogue, religious diversity, critique, Gadamer, Taylor, Ricoeur, Derrida.