

**Dr Yaser Mirdamadi**

## Friendly (A)theism: A Philosophical-Theological Defense

One main theoretical root cause of intolerance among theists on theological issues such as *tawhīd* and between theists and atheists is the accusation of irrationality that each side throws at the other. Is there a way to consider both sides of the theism-atheism debate reasonable without lapsing into relativism or compromising one side for the other?

In the first half of my presentation, I will develop an epistemological model called ‘friendly (a)theism,’ initially suggested by William Rowe (1931-2015), an American philosopher. According to the friendly (a)theism model, theists and atheists could take, under certain circumstances, the other side of the debate reasonable without taking a relativist approach or compromising their own (a)theistic position. The same applies to different denominations within each monotheistic religion. I will argue that this model is logically consistent and epistemologically defensible. To develop this model, I draw on peer disagreement literature in social epistemology, especially a specific position called permissivism.

But even if this model is philosophically tenable, is it theologically viable? In the second half of the presentation, I will argue that the friendly theism model is also theologically defensible by defending an Islamic concept of faith. This thesis lies at the core of the Islamic concept of faith that *īmān* and *kufr* are mainly moral categories rather than doxastic ones. Although the doxastic aspect is not absent from *īmān* and *kufr*, it is not central to them.

This philosophical-theological approach to rationality paves the way for inter(a)-faith dialogue among Muslims and non-Muslims (theist or atheist) in the contemporary multicultural context.



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Yaser Mirdamadi has previously served as a Visiting Teaching Fellow in Muslim Ethics at Maktoum College, Dundee. He joined the Institute of Ismaili Studies in 2016 as a researcher in Muslim bio-medical ethics. He is the first recipient of The Muhammad Arkoun doctoral scholarship. In addition to his seminary background (from Hawza ‘Ilmiyya of Mashhad), he received his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the University of Edinburgh. His research fields are philosophical and political theology, philosophy of religion, modern Islam, and Muslim ethics. One of his recent publications is “Why I Am Muslim,” in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Mark Lamport, London, 2022.