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Puripetal Force in the Charitable Field

This article sets out to clarify the wide range of relationships between religions and humanitarian traditions as ideological movements, taking Islam as a case study. It postulates that the concept of the "sacred," which is culturally restricted, is a special case of boundary maintenance or "purism." Metaphorically, "puripetal force" is defined as a tendency common to all ideological systems, a resistance to social entropy or anomie. The importance of purity in Islamic doctrine is well attested, but within that wider sphere we may identify the specially puritan version of Islam known as Wahhabi-Salafism. As for humanitarianism and philanthropy, these occupy in the West a "space" protected by special laws and conceived of as untainted by either politics or economics. Within the wider sphere of humanitarianism we may locate a more concentrated form in Dunantism, which has underpinned the world view and habitus of the International Committee of the Red Cross. This article outlines how the policies and programs of various Islamic charity and welfare organizations—originating in Britain, Indonesia, and Saudi-Arabia—interact differentially with on the one hand Islamic doctrines and on the other hand humanitarian traditions. Finally, it is suggested that this explanatory model could equally be applied to Christian and other religious traditions, with the concluding thought that the common ground between the institutions of international humanitarianism and religion is currently expanding.

KEYWORDS: Islam—humanitarianism—purity—Wahhabi-Salafism—Islamic Relief Worldwide—Muhammadiyah—Saudi-Arabia—Dunantism—Faith-Based Organizations

Iɴ 2009 I paid a visit with a Swiss colleague to the president of an Islamic charitable committee in the Palestinian West Bank, a Fatah nominee, shortly after a reorganization and centralization of the West Bank *zakat* (the Qur'anic tithe) committees that had been effected at the end of 2007 following the Fatah/Hamas split (Sᴄʜᴀᴇᴜʙʟɪɴ 2009, 49). The president said that "the new *zakat* committees are like a pool of water" and that one drop of ink would pollute the whole pool. The drop of ink was anybody with links to Hamas.

Tʜᴇ ǫᴜᴇsᴛ ꜰᴏʀ ᴘᴜʀɪᴛʏ

This article will compare many different types of purity seeking. It is itself an attempt to clarify the muddy no-man's-land between religion and humanitarianism. I assume as axiomatic that all organized disaster relief is informed by values, whether publicly stated or implicit, that furnish some kind of moral order in the face of unlimited human needs. Some years ago, contributors to an edited book on this subject were asked to suggest a snappy title. I suggested "Pure Aid" but this was turned down in favor of "Sacred Aid," under which title the book was duly published (Bᴀʀɴᴇᴛᴛ and Sᴛᴇɪɴ eds. 2012). This leaves me free to use the idea of "pure aid" to animate this article, which will argue that purity-seeking—which I shall call "puripetal force"—is a more fundamental concept than sacralization and hence more useful for comparative analysis. Purity is at its most basic the maintenance of boundaries. Whereas in Newtonian physics "centripetal force" draws bodies towards a central point, and is always balanced by centrifugal force, we may envisage puripetal force as a culturally universal resistance to social entropy or *anomie*.

"Sacred" is a word with complex connotations. It was the linchpin of Durkheim's theory of religion, referring to special kinds of beliefs and ritual activity that promote social cohesion, as opposed to the "profane," by which he meant the mundane or everyday. It is true that some commonalities can be observed in religious spaces and timetables all over the world. But a number of social anthropologists have questioned the cross-cultural validity of the sacred-profane distinction that originated in ancient Rome, arguing that it is "vague and ill-defined" (Evans-Pritchard 1960, 12) and "unusable" (Stanner 1967, 229) and may have lim-

ited usefulness even in interpreting the Christian tradition. In Arabic, the same verbal root *ḥaruma*, to be forbidden, gives us *al-ḥaramain*, the two most sacred places in Islam, Mecca, and Medina; the *ḥarīm*, that part of a house reserved for women; and *ḥarām*, prohibited actions such as gambling. In Buddhist thought, the nearest we find is the distinction between *samsara*, the Conditioned, and nirvana, the Unconditioned, but these are both categories of dharma that merge into one another, so that they cannot be called a mutually exclusive dichotomy (Orrú and Wang 1992, 54–58); and moreover in Buddhist practice we find great emphasis on the salvific possibilities of everyday actions.

The quest for purity is, I suggest, a universal component of ideological systems. My intention here is to use the concept to enable us to avoid using "religion" or "faith" as analytical terms, thus sidestepping the difficulty which these terms present, considered by some scholars such as Jonathan Z. SMITH (1982) and Timothy FITZGERALD (2007) to be insuperable. I am not of course claiming that religion can be reduced to purism—though the values of chastity, abstinence, asceticism, and general obedience to rules may be loosely called "puritan" and probably have homologous tendencies in all religious traditions. There is a "paradox of purity," as pointed out by the literary critic Kenneth Burke, in that purity can be logically defined only by its opposite (BURKE 1966, 323).[1] He also called it (BURKE 1945, 34–35) the "paradox of the absolute." Moreover, purity is arguably sterile. Much is summed up in the very title of Mary DOUGLAS's anthropological classic *Purity and Danger* (1966). Purity goes with cleanliness, control, coherence, precision, and asexuality, whose antonyms are all dangerous but all essential to life and creativity. Hence, as another anthropologist, Edmund Leach, pointed out, the figure of the ascetic monk in religious traditions is balanced by that of the ecstatic shaman who has some kind of access to the supernatural powers that can bring peace, fertility, and blessings—but also disasters in the form of earthquakes, epidemics, and wars (LEACH 2000, 348–51).

The aim of this article is, by drawing on the meditations on purity by Burke, Douglas, and Leach, to facilitate discussion of various traditions of ethical order, including religious ones, without having to distinguish sharply between the religious and the secular. It will juxtapose two traditions of ethical order that function at a global level and interact with each other, Islam and humanitarianism; but will close by briefly considering other purisms so as to sketch a multidimensional map of rival ethical orders that try to impose their own definitions of purity, sometimes generating conflict and sometimes finding common ground. I shall argue finally that the common ground between humanitarianism and the major religious traditions is expanding.

PURITY IN ISLAM

Islam since its foundation inherited a world in which all the major religious traditions were imbued with strong prohibitions and rites of purification surrounding the bodily functions of ingestion, evacuation, and sexual activity.

This applied even to Christianity, despite the priority that Jesus gave to purity of heart as opposed to ritual practices (Katz 2002, 3–4). Such a tenet necessarily entails an extensive overlap between moral and material values. We find in the Qur'an two important lexical fields concerned with purity. One is centered primarily on the body but also on rectitude; the other on the intellectual principle of monotheism and the rejection of idolatry (into which category was subsumed Christian Trinitarianism as understood in the Qur'an).[2] It is debatable to what extent there was a crossover between the two lexical fields, but if we see Islam as an historical offshoot of Judaism, it is helpful to adduce the precedent of the Hebrew Bible, where Mary Douglas has shown that idolatry was classed together with other defilements such as corpses, falsehood, betrayal, and shedding of blood (Douglas 1993, 152). Denial of God, polytheism, and apostasy have always been strongly rejected and condemned in Islam. One scholar of Islam identifies it as "the pure religion," meaning that this was how its original followers saw it (Ringgren 1962). More precisely, Islam was especially explicit in asserting its purism, and the purity affirmed by foundational Islam pertained more to a prior ideal condition than to a messianic future (Wansbrough 1978, 147–48).

Islam owed much of its expansionary success over the centuries to its ability to accommodate local belief systems without compromising the commitment to monotheism. Yet within the doctrines and practices of historical Islam we may identify tendencies of varying "puripetal force." Of these, the most powerful today is Wahhabism,[3] the version of Islam which has strengthened that force from its pact with Arab petromonarchies. This has mutated more widely into jihadi extremism among a small and toxic minority through interactions with the tribal Muslim periphery and its discontents (Ahmed 2013)—though there is no inevitable historical connection between "tribal" Islam and political activism.

Purity in philanthropy

The ideological system that I want to spotlight alongside Islam for purposes of analysis is the whole sphere that we call philanthropy or humanitarianism—considered as a complex of social relationships, irrespective of its historical roots in religious traditions. The word "charity" may also be used here provided that, for this purpose, its strong Christian associations are set aside, for it is one of the English words used to translate the Greek New Testament word for spiritual love, *agapē*, the highest Christian virtue. Charity in a universal sense may be seen as grounded in compassion, the *pitié* that Rousseau saw as a restraint on our *amour de soi*. Charity at its most basic is a bodily act: extending a hand to a stricken traveler, or sharing food with a neighbor. All such acts imply an inequality between donor and beneficiary, which opens the way to political relations as soon as actions coalesce into institutions. Yet great efforts have been made to ring-fence areas of charitable activity as distinct from politics and commerce: examples are the Charities Acts in England and the French Law of Associations of 1901, and the recently fashionable idea of "humanitarian space"—the scope for independent action available

in conflict zones (or not, as the case may be) to relief agencies, on the analogy of physical safe zones and corridors.

It is now a commonplace that charity and humanitarian aid have, and have always had, an inescapable political dimension in practice (DONINI 2012). But this does not detract from the ideological power of the principle of ring-fencing, which amounts, for liberal Western society, to what the anthropologist Roy RAPPAPORT has called an "ultimate sacred postulate" (1999, 263). The "space" allotted to charity is conceived as being unadulterated by either politics or economics. The holding of institutional religion at arm's length from charity is more ambiguous. Organizations that combine religious and humanitarian goals have always been widespread and influential, and are still legal under most jurisdictions. Nowadays, however, under widely accepted codes of conduct, proselytizing among the recipients of aid, and religious discrimination by aid agencies within a given territory, are both prohibited as abuses of power. Hence overtly Evangelical aid agencies (such as the US-based Southern Baptists and Samaritan's Purse) have become outliers in the Christian world whereas they used to be mainstream.

And within the broader charitable sphere we may identify what I have called puripetal tendencies. One such tendency is exemplified by the demand of a recent author, Shawn Flanigan, that aid and Evangelism should be legally decoupled, and that international NGOs seeking partnerships among local NGOs should select only the secular ones (FLANIGAN 2010, 140, 145–46). This view, that the values of "development"—a euphemism for the now discredited term "modernization"—are essentially inimical to religion, is probably widely held among many aid professionals, though it is seldom articulated with such candor. Philip Fountain diagnoses Flanigan's assumption, that secular development values are neutral and superior, as arising from "the Enlightenment zeal for binary purifications" (FOUNTAIN 2013, 20).

A puripetal tendency of great historical importance has been crystallized in the institutionalization of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), founded by Henry Dunant and others in 1864, and in the specialized meaning given to the word "humanitarian" in the Geneva Conventions and other branches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Much confusion has been caused by IHL's restrictive understanding of a word that is also used colloquially, often encompassing human rights and "development" and sometimes meaning no more than "compassionate."[4] Geneva law, embodied institutionally in the Swiss Government and in duties delegated to the ICRC, is mainly concerned with the protection of people in situations of conflict when they have lost their normal protector. "Within the humanitarian community," write Michael Barnett and Janice Stein, "the ICRC is routinely referred to as the 'high priests,' a designation that simultaneously mocks a holier-than-thou attitude while also paying respect to venerated status" (BARNETT and STEIN eds. 2012, 26). The ICRC, as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is officially non-confessional, though the semiotics of the red cross and red crescent emblems has a complex history (BENTHALL and BELLION-JOURDAN 2003, 45–68). An important trend in debate about

humanitarianism today calls for a restoration of the original clarity of Dunant's vision of aid givers as neutral third parties in the battlefield, as set out in his *Un Souvenir de Solferino*. But Rebecca Gill has convincingly shown that the history of modern relief aid was much more messy than the retrospective myth of Dunantism allows. Before World War I, the red cross was better known in Britain as the blazon of its military ambulances and VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) than as the emblem of the Swiss committee, whose members were widely disparaged by British diplomats as sentimental utopianists. Only after that war did the ICRC successfully establish itself as the moral conscience of the Red Cross movement, and Dunant's masterpiece was not available in English translation till 1947 (GILL 2013).

Médecins Sans Frontières, which had a turbulent relationship with the ICRC for many years after its foundation in France in 1971, is loyal nonetheless to Dunantist principles of neutrality and independence; and after its expansion into a transnational agency it has earned almost equal respect (REDFIELD 2013). It is as puripetal in its own way as the ICRC, and satisfies many of the criteria of a faith-based organization (BENTHALL 2008, 96–107).

I have already illustrated how the purism of humanitarianism can overlap with the purism of one religious tradition, Christianity; and it can do so in many different ways, for there is a world of difference between the fundamentalist Southern Baptists and the UK-based Christian Aid, which has more in common with the non-confessional Oxfam. But the interface that I will review here in some detail is with Islam.

ISLAMIC CHARITY

The central concept in this interface between the two purisms is that of *zakat*, the Qur'anic tithe, which is literally central in that it is the third of the five "pillars of Islam," an affirmation of faith as well as an act of social solidarity. The word is derived from the verb *zakā*, which means to purify, but also with connotations of growth and increase. By giving up part of one's wealth—in broad terms, one-fortieth of net assets per year—one purifies that portion which remains, and also oneself, through a restraint on one's selfishness, greed, and imperviousness to the sufferings of others. Likewise, the beneficiary is purified from jealousy and hatred of the well-off. *Zakat* is mandatory, and if it is neglected no amount of prayer will be efficacious. It is distinguished from *ṣadaqa*, which is optional or voluntary, but closely associated with it: the Arabic *ṣadaqa* had connotations of moral rectitude. *Zakat* is conceived as the opposite of usurious interest or *riba*, which is essentially corrupting. The most important historical institutionalization of *ṣadaqa* was the *waqf* (plural: *awqāf*), the Islamic equivalent of the European charitable trust, which meant literally a "stopping" or "tying up" of property for good causes under legal guarantee.

All schools of Sunni Islam are agreed on the importance of *zakat*, which has inspired many idealistic tracts expounding its potential to generate a society free from the disadvantages of both capitalism and socialism, and linked to the casu-

istic subtleties of "Islamic economics," which unlike *zakat* is entirely a modern construct. There is in practice a wide variation ranging from the administration of *zakat* by the state, as in a few countries such as Pakistan, to informal payment of *zakat* to individuals whom one knows personally.

I will show how the interface between the two purisms is handled in different ways, with special reference to disaster relief in Asia by British Islamic charities and their counterparts in the Arabian Gulf. Marie Juul Petersen has elaborated a neat contrast between the two types of charitable ideology, characterizing the former as "secularizing Islam" and the latter as "sacralizing aid," though she abstains from evaluating their operational effectiveness (JUUL PETERSEN 2016). My own formulation is similar to hers, but I would see both "secularizing" and "sacralizing" as forms of purity-seeking that come into conflict with each other. A third example I shall take, drawn from Indonesia, does not fit into Juul Petersen's dichotomy and will be treated here as an intermediate case.

ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

Of the British Islamic charities, easily the largest is Islamic Relief World-wide (IRW). It would be enlightening to trace the exact process whereby conservative interpretations of the Qur'anic *zakat* rules were replaced, in at least two respects, by the more liberal interpretation observed by IRW. The first point is whether all in need are eligible to receive *zakat* funds, or only Muslims. The traditional view was "only Muslims," and this rule is by no means extinct. But some time during the first eight years after the foundation of Islamic Relief in Britain in 1984, the decision was made to extend its aid to all communities without distinction, and indeed to target that aid to those in greatest need. The change of view enabled this new charity not only to gain a favorable reputation in Britain and subsequently worldwide, but also to benefit from funding from the British government and European Community institutions. (Muslim Aid, the second largest British Islamic charity, founded in 1985, followed suit later, in about 2003.) The test as to whether this principle of non-discrimination has been observed can only be set within the confines of each operational territory where there are mixed religions and ethnicities. In practice, all Muslim aid agencies devote most of their resources to working in Muslim-majority countries, which they justify by drawing attention to the high levels of deprivation and political unrest in large swathes of the Muslim world (DE CORDIER 2009).

The second adaptation to the modern charity environment has concerned the understanding of jihad. The seventh of the eight categories of beneficiary eligible for *zakat*, according to Qur'an 9.60, is those "in the way of God," which is interpreted as meaning "those in jihad." This is a highly equivocal term whose meaning always varies with its context. One sense of jihad is that it is a striving to overcome one's own weaknesses of character; an important manifestation of this striving can be taking practical steps to alleviate the suffering of others. But the military sense of jihad has also survived the centuries, and some Islamic authorities

still maintain that it is admissible for *zakat* funds to be spent on military efforts in the cause of true religion.[5] For this reason, scholars such as Timur Kuran have been able to argue that *zakat* is not the same as Christian charity, since a proportion of the resources which it raises can legitimately be spent not only on "good works" but on various other authorized purposes including the military defense of religion (Kuran 2004). It has thus been extremely important for IRW, Muslim Aid, and the other British Muslim charities to display their unequivocal attachment to humanitarian values—nonviolence, and also abstention from "political activities" according to the dictates of the Charity Commission of England and Wales, which has set out "red lines" (subtly changing over the years) that accredited charities have to steer clear of in their campaigning. (Current English charity law, however, like the historic Islamic rules of *zakat*, accommodates military objectives to some extent in that one of the charitable purposes permitted under the Charities Act 2011 is "the efficiency of the armed services of the Crown," which includes the subsidy of officers' messes.[6]) IRW has claimed that it "intentionally and explicitly integrates Islam's perspectives with professional relief and development" (Abuarqub 2010).

A third decision made by IRW was to refrain from any religious activities:

> *Da'wa*, or inviting others to Islam, is obligatory for each Muslim, always through reasoning rather than luring and coercion. But *da'wa* has very little to do with international development and should remain a separate activity from humanitarian work. Therefore, while it is important for IR to demonstrate and maintain its faith identity and meet the expectation of its religious donors, the primary focus of the organisation will always be the needs of the poor and vulnerable.
>
> (Abuarqub 2010)

This resulted in a policy that has sometimes puzzled: an abstention from building or repairing mosques, whereas members of the Caritas family of Catholic aid agencies have been willing, on occasion, to repair damaged mosques on the grounds that they are cultural assets valuable to a suffering community.

IRW's efforts to balance competing principles have been well explained in a study by Victoria Palmer of the agency's short-lived operation to assist unregistered Rohingya refugees around Teknaf in the Cox's Bazar District, the southernmost point of mainland Bangladesh (Palmer 2011). In the summer of 2013, only some 30,000 refugees who had fled from persecution in the Rakhine State of Myanmar were registered with UNHCR; between 200,000 and 500,000 were unregistered. Since Palmer's field visit in 2008, their plight has deteriorated. In July 2012, the Bangladesh government not only decided to turn back these Muslim refugees from its borders with Myanmar, but also ordered European NGOs to suspend their services to unregistered refugees in the region. The result was (at the time of writing this) an increasingly serious crisis in shelter, public health, nutrition, schooling, and law and order.[7]

Palmer's field visit took place two weeks after IRW undertook the planning and management of a new unofficial camp, known as the Leda Camp, to which some 9,600 refugees were moved from Tal Camp, which had been condemned by

human rights groups as unsatisfactory. Funding came from the European Commission. MSF had moved on and handed over its health care services to IRW, which also took responsibility for water and sanitation, a feeding center for young children and mothers, and camp management, though the government was responsible for the camp as a whole and deliberately provided only a minimum of services in order to try to make camp life less attractive to prospective refugees. (IRW left in June 2010 and handed over to Muslim Aid.) Palmer examines critically the postulate of "cultural proximity," which proposes that faith-based organizations have an operational advantage when working with beneficiaries who are co-religionists. "Culture" in the current debates is in effect a euphemism for religion, but Palmer aptly draws attention to other commonalities—of language, diet, dress, and physical appearance—between IRW's staff, almost entirely recruited in this case from the local area, and the refugees. Her conclusion (in which she is not alone) is that there is no automatic advantage in cultural proximity, religious or otherwise: it has to be worked for through superior performance. While one should be careful not to generalize from the specific case of this refugee camp, which evidently presented particular difficulties, it is noteworthy that, according to Palmer, most of the 50 Muslim staff members (out of a total of 65) claimed that the religious character of IRW was not a motivating factor for them, and some had transferred from the employment of MSF.

IRW in Bangladesh was caught between two stools: regarded with suspicion politically by the secular government (which has generally been hospitable to every kind of NGO), and criticized by others as not Islamic enough. The question of mosques was specially significant: "ECHO [the European Community Humanitarian Office] prohibited the building of purpose-built mosques in Leda Camp (in line with their policy of not supporting religious institutions)" (PALMER 2011, 103). IRW designated some community centers as alternative spaces, but they were inadequate: far too small, with no pulpit, no mihrab (niche) showing the direction of Mecca, no carpet, no loudspeaker for the call to prayer, and no nearby water facilities for the obligatory ablutions. "It is very much a shaming issue for us," the project coordinator told Palmer; "We are Muslims, our name is also in the name of Islam, but there is no mosque."

Any aid agency that takes on the responsibility of running a refugee camp runs into the problem that they are almost by definition authoritarian institutions—AGIER (2010) uses the phrase "humanitarian government"—and even in the nearby camps for UN-registered refugees it was found by a Danish fact-finding team that until 2008 they were run by a mafia system (DANISH IMMIGRATION SERVICE 2011, 21).

My own field experience of IRW's work in Asia, and its participation in reconstruction in Aceh, Indonesia, after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, showed it in a favorable light, especially with regard to its rebuilding of houses and schools. But this success seemed largely due to its having committed on a relatively small scale (compared to the over-extension by some larger agencies which led to costly humiliation) and to its effective management practices. The religious motivation was there in the background, however, engendering an impressive solidarity

among their staff, and also facilitating cooperation with other faith-based aid agencies, CAFOD and Latter Day Saints Humanitarian Services, which found it difficult to operate in an almost entirely Muslim society and entrusted IRW with their funds for rehousing (BENTHALL 2008). In 2008 IRW was not yet a member of the London-based Disasters Emergency Committee. A year later, it became clear that IRW had been accepted as a leader among British aid agencies when its general manager spoke on television after massive floods in Pakistan, appealing on behalf of all the members of the Disasters Emergency Committee—no doubt because IRW was the best equipped of them to take the lead in a disaster in that country.

I would also argue that, apart from the contribution that IRW makes to British overseas aid, it has been a force for integration within Britain itself, following the lead of Christian agencies such as Christian Aid and CAFOD, which are held in great respect even by those who are critical of traditional religious leaders. Though founded by Egyptians, who in general have not played a prominent role in the British charitable scene, IRW has achieved an astute, if sometimes contentious, balance between the two purisms of Islam and humanitarianism, but with a leaning towards the latter. It has even been able to do the same in the United States, where several other Islamic charities ran into serious problems after 9/11 (ACLU 2009).

The muhammadiyah

Another factor that facilitated IRW's early and energetic response in Indonesia to the tsunami was its prior links with the two leading Indonesian Islamic organizations, the reformist or modernist Muhammadiyah, founded in Jogjakarta by Ahmad Dahlan in 1912, and the more traditionalist Nahdatul Ulama (NU). In general, the domestic Indonesian contribution to humanitarian relief after the tsunami was grossly underrated by Western evaluators, but recently it has begun to be documented.[8]

Unfamiliar to most Western commentators, the record of the Muhammadiyah in humanitarianism goes back much earlier in time than the late twentieth century "Islamic resurgence." It is better known in Indonesia for its network of schools, universities, and health and welfare institutions—some 11,700 in number (FAUZIA 2013, 264). But its subsidiary PK—standing for Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum, "Assistance for the Relief of Public Suffering"—was first founded by Muhammadiyah members in 1918 as an independent organization to provide emergency services for victims of the eruption of Mount Kelud. Relief work was subsequently undertaken for victims of floods, famines, epidemics, and earthquakes. Amelia Fauzia, the historian of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia, records that the early work of the PKU was influenced by "Al-Ma'un theology"—which alludes to Surah 107 of the Qur'an, "The neighborly assistance," a stern warning to those who fall short in their charitable obligations; but also more practically by the examples of the Al-Azhar waqf in Cairo, of Christian orphanages, poorhouses and hospitals, and of the Red Cross. The secretary of the PKU wrote in 1929:

> Muhammadiyah's PKU works for and assists the alleviation of public suffering without looking at other parties' work, and without serving other people who want to obtain public influence. It works solely because of the instruction of Islamic teachings brought by our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and following his tradition. So, Muhammadiyah's PKU aims to be like an oasis that is pure (*jernih*) and clean, located in a place accessible to everyone no matter what nationality and religion they have. It is there for whoever wishes to drink the water as long as they do not deliberately destroy the stream and close the oasis. Muhammadiyah's PKU does not aim to act like a dragnet to attract people to become Muslim or join Muhammadiyah, but it solely fulfils the Islamic obligations for all nations, irrespective of religion.[9]

Though one of the motivations for the original foundation of the Muhammadiyah had been to provide a counterbalance to Christian missionary activity, the PKU subordinated *da'wa* to humanitarian principles and was fully committed to non-discrimination, as also to cooperation with the Dutch colonial authorities—for which it was criticized by Islamic hard-liners. Since 1939, however, according to Fauzia, the inclusive principle became attenuated and was later comprehensively replaced by an exclusive concern for the welfare of the Muslim *umma*. This change was correlated with the ascendancy of what is often called a "puritan" (or "Salafi") form of Sunni Islam, which was always strongly represented in the Muhammadiyah, notably in its opposition to syncretism and *takhayul* ("superstitions" such as magical healing), but which never took on the political colors of Wahhabism such as became dominant in Saudi Arabia. The Muhammadiyah always included a strong modernizing and outward-looking tendency. The movement, which claims a membership of some twelve million, is currently split between a conservative backlash, especially with regard to the role of women, and projects for revitalization (VAN BRUINESSEN 2012; BURHANI 2013). The anthropologist Mitsuo Nakamura has noted that the Muhammadiyah has been successful in "purifying" the world view and practice of Javanese Muslims from *kejawen*, that is to say "Javanese-ness," including pre-Islamic elements both indigenous and Hindu-Buddhist; but the result may be a spiritual or cultural "dryness" that needs to be refreshed (NAKAMURA 2012, 331). Much of the debate within the Muhammadiyah is in fact framed around rival ideas of religious purity: whether cultivation of the self or good deeds should have priority. Nakamura argues that the ethical principle of *ikhlāṣ*, the name of a Qur'anic Surah,[10] embraces both (NAKAMURA 2012, 200–201).

In the Muslim world as a whole, as noted above, we find a wide variety of different implementations of *zakat*—varying from full incorporation in the tax system to informal giving to personal acquaintances. The entire spectrum of possibilities is found in Indonesia, and has been the subject of energetic debates. In recent years the tension between hierarchic state control and civil society has assumed warlike proportions (FAUZIA 2013, 248), and government efforts to channel Muslim citizens' *zakat* payments into official funds have met with resistance. In 1978 the Muhammadiyah founded its own *zakat* institution, Bapelurzam (Badan Pelaksuna Urusan Zakat Muhammadiyah), in the Kendal region of northern

Java. Insisting that *zakat* should be given to institutions rather than to the poor, it is committed to non-discrimination and accountability (Fauzia 2013, 203–10). However, according to a survey carried out in 2004, 45 percent of Indonesian Muslims claimed to pay their *zakat* directly to individuals, and 51 percent through local *zakat* committees (Fauzia 2013, 244).

In 2007 the Muhammadiyah's disaster relief operations, which had risen to prominence after the 2004 tsunami, were brought together as the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre (MDMC), which cooperates with every kind of national and international organization. Among its strengths one may single out two. First, in a country of 17,000 islands, 30 percent of whose roads are unpaved, MDMC has been able to draw on the Muhammadiyah's huge network of branches to scale up a community's response at the grassroots to an emergency and thus to increase the efficacy of external aid (Husein 2012). Second, MDMC's knowledge of local cultures gives them a sensitivity to varying interpretations of disasters. According to Mohammad Rokib, the conviction of Muhammadiyah members that a disaster such as the Mount Merapi eruptions of 2010 was a test of moral and spiritual strength—as opposed to mere bad luck, or a punishment for past sins—came to be a source of social cohesion, both in recovery from the disaster and in practical steps taken to mitigate its recurrence in future. Moreover, whereas professional psychosocial counselors left the area soon after the immediate crisis, the Muhammadiyah provided teachers, preachers, and prayer leaders to help survivors overcome long-term post-traumatic shock (Rokib 2012).

In its scale and experience the Muhammadiyah should be better known globally as a model for Islamic social activism.[11] The strength of the Muhammadiyah and that of its slightly larger sister organization, the NU, are unique in the Islamic world, and the Muhammadiyah is specially notable for the density of its nationwide networks and degree of administrative rationalization and internal democracy. Their ethos may be distinguished from that of the welfarist networks which emerged in the Middle East and North Africa under the inspiration of the Muslim Brothers of Egypt, who always commingled welfarism, religion, and political opposition. Martin van Bruinessen has suggested that the Muhammadiyah's pattern of organization is partly due historically to the demands imposed by the Dutch law of associations during the colonial period (email, 12 May 2013). I suggest that the Muhammadiyah has realized a remarkably firm congruence between Islamic purism and humanitarian purism.[12]

The cordon sanitaire of saudi charities

Reverting to what Juul Petersen calls the sacralizing of aid by Gulf-based Islamic charities, we will take as examples the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO or IIROSA), both based in Saudi Arabia and both affiliated to the Muslim World League. A third major Saudi Islamic charity, Al Haramain, was closed down in 2004 after allegations of supporting terrorism which remain contentious, since it is probable that

the main offenders were local operatives who were given latitude by ineffective head office controls to commit nefarious acts (BOKHARI et al. 2014).

In August 2012, WAMY announced a program of relief and rehabilitation for the Rohingya minority of Myanmar, victims of abuse including murder, rape, and forcible expulsion.[13] WAMY was following the lead of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who had recently allocated US$50 million for aid to the Rohingya. The head of WAMY coupled his announcement with a plea to the international community to defend the Rohingya's human rights, calling specially on Arab and Islamic countries and lamenting that the Western media had been largely silent about the massacre of Muslims in Myanmar. Western governments and even Aung San Suu Kyi had turned a blind eye. (This was before President Obama's speech in November 2012.)

WAMY, founded in 1972, claims to have branches in fifty-six countries and affiliations with some five hundred youth organizations all over the world. It is an educational and humanitarian charity whose declared aims include preserving "the identity of Muslim youth" and helping them overcome the problems they face in modern society; introducing Islam to non-Muslims "in its purest form as a comprehensive system and way of life"; and promoting dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim societies.[14] What is seen in Saudi Arabia as the purest form of Islam appears to outsiders as a strict variant that adheres to literalist readings of the Qur'an, emphasizes dress, bodily deportment, and gender segregation, and excludes popular traditions such as the cult of local saints. As a vehicle of the Hanbali school of Sunni Islam, WAMY has set itself up to compete with laxist, Christian, and secular influences, as well as with the Shia denomination of Islam which happens to be dominant in several petroleum-producing regions of the Middle East. In common with many other humanitarian institutions in the Gulf States, both governmental and private or semi-private, WAMY gives de facto preference in allocation of its resources to Muslim populations.

WAMY's two principal commitments are to youth education, including practical warnings about the dangers of addiction, integrated with religious teaching, and to the care of thousands of orphans—a category of beneficiary that is invariably given special attention by Islamic charities (BENTHALL 2012, 79–81). WAMY's ability to intervene after disasters has been much reduced by measures taken by Gulf governments in response to the "war on terror" (LACEY and BENTHALL eds. 2014); and in any case none of its programs have as far as I know been the subject of serious research. But linguistic analysis of a speech by the secretary general published in English in 2005 gives a revealing hint of the WAMY world view. Looking back on the year, he recalls the "natural disasters" that "emphasize the need for cooperation among nations to face the challenges of time, and thus ease the sufferings of the masses of the world": the Indian Ocean tsunami, refugee movements in Darfur, famine in Niger. Finally, just before earthquakes in south Asia, he mentions: "It pains me immensely to illustrate the tragic events that rocked the London city subway, Sharm-el-Sheikh, and more recently Bali, which resulted in great loss of innocent lives" (*Report of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth* 2005, 8). The secretary

general's train of thought could impel us to adapt for the Salafi context the theory advanced by some sociologists that cultural categories are routinely "naturalized" as part of a strategy to dominate (see for example Bourdieu 2003, 105). "Islam is without flaw," the subtext seems to run; "the perpetrators of the 'tragic events' of 2006 claimed to be Muslims; therefore rather than allocating responsibility we will characterize them as destructive forces of nature."

iirosa, founded in 1978, more pragmatic than wamy but still deeply grounded in Salafi Islam, was particularly active in Afghanistan in the 1980s and later in the former Eastern Bloc during the 1990s, when it saw its role as repairing the divisive damage done by Communism to the Muslim religion and culture. In a largely critical interpretation of Saudi charities, the francophone author Abdel-Rahman Ghandour described them (2002, 242) as implementing a *cordon sanitaire* to maintain ideological influence on the Middle East. The iiro in its heyday was the most powerful of these charities, strongly committed to "reislamization" (*i'ādat aslamah*), that is, protecting the identity of Muslim communities from the twin evils of secularization and Christian proselytism. Material relief was sometimes used, for instance in the Bosnian conflict of the early 1990s, to undertake *da'wa* or spiritual relief (Bellion-Jourdan 2003, 142–44)—for instance, by distributing militantly anti-Christian videocassettes.

In the 1990s the iiro developed innovative fundraising techniques and opened communications with Western humanitarian organizations through the energy of one of its co-founders, Dr. Farid Yaseen Quraishi. In 1996, however, he was dismissed and iirosa reverted to a discretion more palatable to its Saudi sponsors. After 9/11 and the "designation" or blacklisting of two of its branches in the Philippines and Indonesia, it went through a lean period and its annual budget, formerly of the order of $85 million, is thought to have been at least halved. More recently it has undertaken a revival: not yet through implementing large-scale emergency programs, but through reaching out energetically to interact with environmentalists and agronomists, also with diplomats and non-Muslim aid agencies. In 2013 iirosa seemed to be struggling to escape from isolation, as in the 1990s under Quraishi. For instance, a regular columnist in its magazine *Egatha* presented futuristic ideas such as the application to emergency relief operations of artificial intelligence, and the quantification of the needs of each hundred victims of a disaster as Relief Units (Ezz Eldin 2011; 2012). The relationship with international humanitarianism was still awkward, though likely to be eased in future by the search in the West for so-called "new humanitarian donors" to compensate for pressures on aid budgets.

Peering into purity of motives

But iirosa has come up against another form of purism: that currently espoused by the us Government and judiciary with regard to humanitarian activity. Whereas iirosa's head office, as opposed to two of its former branches,[15] is not "designated" as a terrorist entity, it was still in early 2015 regarded with suspicion

in the US, for the US Government places high priority on probing into the purity of motives as opposed to that of effects.

Imagine a major earthquake such as the one that hit the Kashmir region in 2005. One voluntary association, let us call it Al-Aleph,[16] has the best local knowledge to reach isolated mountain villages to bring help to survivors. It happens to be affiliated to a group that has been designated by the US as a terrorist organization. You are the leader of a foreign rescue unit with technical resources but no knowledge of the region. Is it your priority to cooperate with the voluntary association to help search for survivors, dig them out from the rubble, give them medical attention, and secure a proper burial for the dead? Most people would answer "yes," and indeed in 2005 international agencies were quite willing to cooperate with such a group; but if you have any connections with the US you would now risk being prosecuted in the criminal courts for giving "material support" to terrorism, which is considered equivalent to terrorism itself and can be punished by a life sentence in prison.

Let us take another hypothetical example, a hospital called Al-Ba' located in the Gaza Strip. It specializes, let us say, in obstetrics and mother and baby care. It provides its services without any enquiry into the religion or political affiliations of patients, that is to say it functions on the basis of need—with graduated fees depending on the patient's ability to pay, sometimes without charging any fee at all. But it is deemed by the enemies of Hamas to be part of the Hamas network on the grounds that it is controlled by, or affiliated with, an Islamic charity. Whether the supposition is justified is another matter. This is a delicate matter and according to research in which I have participated, until the split between Hamas and Fatah in 2007 the Islamic charities in the Palestinian Territories were much less politicized than the Israeli and American counter-terrorist advisers believed—though by 2013 such a hospital has been much more likely to be directly controlled by the Hamas government in Gaza (SCHAEUBLIN 2012).[17] If the hospital were turning away patients who rejected Hamas's political ideology, or using medical care as a way of recruiting Hamas supporters, then it would probably be more justifiable for the Al-Ba' hospital to be blacklisted, and for any donor who sent it money to risk criminal prosecution. But I have hypothesized that the evidence is that Al-Ba' provides its services "without adverse distinction," as the Geneva Conventions put it[18]—thus making it eligible for protection as a humanitarian institution. Current US law, however, will have none of this. It is less interested in the actual provision of humanitarian services than in the question of whether or not the motives of the hospital managers and its donors are tainted. To which it adds the doctrine of fungibility or convertibility, which holds that $10,000 sent to Al-Ba' hospital liberates money that Hamas would otherwise have spent on medicines, so that it can spend $10,000 on bombs, with the result that the hospital's entire medical activities are deemed to be beyond redemption.

Actually the US Government and Islamic *'ulama'* would be in agreement as to the all-importance of purity of intention—*nīyah* in Arabic. The US Government goes further and argues that even if one's intention is pure, one is still liable to

be criminalized if one allows one's acts to be corrupted by the intentions of others. Proof of this is the much criticized decision of the US Supreme Court in 2010 (Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project) which makes it illegal for a peacebuilding or mediating NGO to try to persuade a terrorist organization to put down its weapons and have trust in the political process. Why? Because it could be lending that terrorist organization legitimacy. Yet in Northern Ireland, peace would surely not have come without decades of work by church groups, women's groups, youth groups, and others to take the initiative away from the paramilitaries.

One danger of clamping down on decent Islamic charities is that a humanitarian vacuum is left that can be filled by extremists, including those of the Al-Qaeda persuasion. Ultimately we need to form balanced judgments on the basis of outcomes, which I suggest are more important than purity of intention—especially because, despite the best efforts of our law courts to "read" the states of mind of individuals, this is not an exercise where certainty is possible. The UK Charity Commission's approach to problems relating to terrorist abuse of charities seems to strike a sensible balance, based on the concepts of risk reduction and proportionality and on the core principle that funds raised for charitable purposes must be spent faithfully for those purposes and protected from abuse. Purity is ascribed to the verifiable conditions on which the funds were solicited (generally in the context of concessions by the taxation authorities).

Unresolved tensions are currently in play between the international NGO sector, which observes that an overreaction against Islamic charities has put at legal risk the operations of NGOs in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia (in addition to the physical risks of working in conflict zones), and the US Government position which dominates the policies of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)—a powerful organization under the OECD, effectively controlling the compliance procedures of the international banking system.[19]

Interlocking spheres

I have chosen to describe and interpret the relationship between the purisms of humanitarianism and Islam. FIGURE 1 is intended to schematize the relationship between these two spheres, each rough-hewn at their edges but including concentrations of puripetal force. The sphere of Christianity could be added with ease in this scheme, embracing a wide variety of contemporary puripetal movements including conservative Evangelicalism, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and conservative tendencies in Roman Catholicism—though we may go further back in time to include the Reformation, the Religious Society of Friends, and Unitarianism.[20]

The interactions are multidimensional. For instance, a key concept in Christian moral theology is service—in Greek, *diakonīa*. The social teaching of the Gülen Movement—founded in Turkey but now markedly transnational—has been realized in such organizations as the Istanbul-based international relief organization Kimse Yok Mu ("Is there anybody there?").[21] It is consistent with modern interpretations of the Qur'anic *zakat* prescriptions, but gives much more emphasis

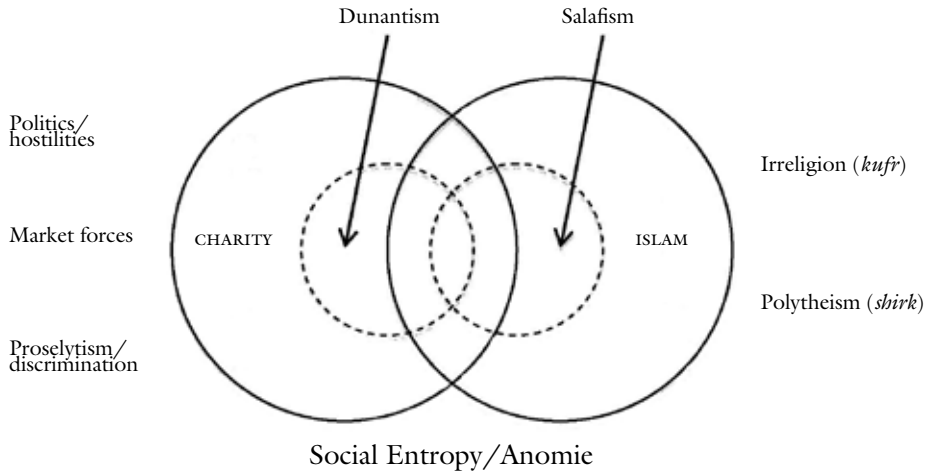Interlocking Spheres of Puripetal Force

FIGURE 1. This figure is a visualization of the quest for purities as analogous to competing gravitational forces. The Dunantism of the ICRC and the Salafi trend are forms of intense puripetalism within their respective spheres. The figure could be expanded multidimensionally to include other religious and quasi-religious movements, and various schools of law.

to the concept of *hizmet*—a common Turkish word meaning "service," used in both secular and religious contexts—which is indeed an alternative name for the movement (HARRINGTON 2011, 11–13). Arabic Bibles translate the Greek *diakonīa* as *khidma*, which does not appear in the Qur'an (unlike the term *'abd*, "slave," whose derivative *'ibāda* is used to signify devotion to God). It is as if the intention has been to purify Islam of the contentious resonances of jihad and (in some anti-Muslim circles) *zakat*, with the unacknowledged aid of New Testament theology.[22]

The main pressure points today between the spheres of institutional religion and the sphere of humanist ethics are at the level of individual autonomy: where theological principles are brought to bear on legislation concerning sexuality, reproduction, and euthanasia—issues that secular liberals prefer to regard as belonging to the domain of individual choice, provided only that the vulnerable are protected (PERREAU-SAUSSINE 2012, 137). The chosen stand of the Abrahamic monotheisms against the tide of secular humanitarianism will be to defend the purity of theological principles, variously formulated. Yet with regard to issues of social justice and responses to disasters and extreme deprivation, the points of tension are now reduced. And all these systems of thought face the same dilemma: that they are in practice subordinate to the ungentle and impure realities of the "structurally violent" world whose sufferings they hope to alleviate.[23] In some limited compensation for the sharpness of these class and sectarian divisions, I would argue that there is a significant convergence between the institutions of international humanitarianism and religion—exemplified in the work of Islamic Relief Worldwide and the Muhammadiyah, Caritas, and Christian Aid—or, in

schematic terms, an enlargement of the area of overlap between competing puripetal forces. Which gives some grounds for hope.

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NOTES

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1. I was led to Burke's writings on purity by Grano and Zagacki, who analyze the reopening of the New Orleans Superdome for Monday Night Football in September 2006 as a purification ritual to purge post-Katrina guilt, because in the aftermath of the hurricane "poor, predominantly African American evacuees [had been] cast as an animalistic mass" in the same space (GRANO and ZAGACKI 2011, 202).

2. The key Arabic roots of the former are *ṭ-h-r*, *ṭ-ī-b*, and *z-k-t* (KATZ 2002); of the second, *kh-l-ṣ* (RINGGREN 1962), as in the title of Surah 112 of the Qu'ran, *Al-Ikhlāṣ*, "The Purity of Faith." For further analysis see BENTHALL and BELLION-JOURDAN (2003, 24–25); see also GAUVAIN (2013). Neither he nor Katz make a connection between the two lexical fields, but there appears to be such a connection with the root *ṭ-h-r* in Q. 3:55.

3. Wahhabis generally prefer to call themselves Salafis—an extremely protean term. The original Salafiyya of the late nineteenth century, based in Egypt, had modernizing aspects, for instance in insisting that Muslims free themselves from the "imitation" (*taqlīd*) of traditional authority. Samira Haj has argued persuasively that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1702/3–1791/2), the founder of the Wahhabi movement and its alliance with the house of Sa'ud, when viewed in his historical context "differed from other reformers both in his condemnatory attitude toward certain practices [such as the veneration of saints and shrines] and his reliance on force to correct them. However, neither his alliance with the Sa'udi tribal chiefs nor his restrictive attitudes can be attributed, as mainstream scholarship does, to a violent, fundamentalist, or traditional strain in Islamic thought" (HAJ 2009, 65–66). Yet her study confirms that the Wahhabiya was essentially a purification movement, the pursuit of *ikhlāṣ* (HAJ 2009, 51).

4. A lucid history of the word "humanitarian" is given in DAVIES (2012).

5. See for example AL-QARADAWI (n.d., 57–73). Similarly, the fourth category of eligible beneficiary, "those whose hearts are made to incline to truth," can be understood to legitimize spending on proselytism and religious propaganda; and the fifth category, "captives," to legitimize support for anti-colonial movements or Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim tyrannies.

6. For example, the Royal Air Force Coningsby Officers' Mess, registered charity no. 1137559.

7. Refugees International field report, "Rohingya in Bangladesh," 30 October 2012.

8. See RADCLIFFE (2007) for early recognition of this, and HUSEIN (2012).

9. Translated from the Indonesian and cited by FAUZIA (2013, 152).

10. See note 2.

11. In November and December 2012, the Muhammadiyah organized a large centennial research conference at one of its universities, in Malang, Eastern Java, reviewing "a renewed identity for its post-centennial era." Remarkably, the convenors allowed and encouraged candid criticism of the organization as well as praise for its achievements and academic analysis—recognizing new challenges such as the threat of infiltration by violent extremists.

12. These two important organizations are not alone in providing humanitarian services in Indonesia, for "... [W]e can assume that there is a wide ideological spectrum of Islamic humanitarian agencies that have emerged in response to communal conflicts, and that their

political orientations are as varied as the social and educational backgrounds of their found-ers and volunteers" (Latief 2012, 106). Jihadi groups in Indonesia such as Laskar Jihad have followed a mixed agenda of religious militancy and humanitarian relief, but not to the same extent as some similar groups in, for instance, Pakistan.

13. See Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "wamy seeks further measures to help Myanmar Muslims," *Arab News*, 26 August 2012, http://www.rohingyablogger.com/2012/08/wamy-seeks -further-measures-to-help.html (accessed 11 April 2016).

14. See http://www.wamy.co.uk/index.php?sub=subpageandmod=about.

15. The two former branches were in the Philippines and Indonesia. Given that Saudi soci-ety is hierarchic, the situation seems anomalous.

16. Pseudonyms have been used here for organizations in order to draw attention to the issues of principle that are raised, irrespective of ethnographic data which may be contested.

17. As for the West Bank, the actual outcome was that in 2013 the new Fatah-controlled *zakat* committees had sacrificed most of the trust, and funding flows, built up over many years before 2007 by the until then decentralized, and relatively unpoliticized, *zakat* committees which the PA and Fatah decided in 2007, under pressure from the US Government, to dismantle.

18. See Additional Protocol II (1977), Article 18.

19. For sustained coverage of these issues, see the website of the Charity and Security Net-work, Washington, DC: www.charityandsecurity.org.

20. I must leave others to test the applicability of the model to other ideological move-ments, both religious and political—some of them highly contentious, especially where Juda-ism and Israel are concerned. But here we may note the importance of another ideological sphere, that of jurisprudence, which impacts on humanitarianism and charities but is also bound up in religious teaching through Halakha, Shariah, and ecclesiastical law.

21. The name was inspired by the call made to identify survivors in the rubble after an earthquake.

22. Michael Feener points out, however, that in Indonesia and some other postcolonial contexts, Christian *diakonīa* has been viewed by many Muslims as a form of enticement to lead Muslims astray (email, 2013). I have not come across this pejorative association of the word in Arab contexts.

23. Key texts for understanding the general crisis of humanitarianism include Donini (2012), Fassin (2012), and Duffield (2001). I have tried myself to analyze the "stable system" or disaster–media–aid nexus, whereby representations of misery in the South are turned into consumables for the North, which reciprocates with aid flows (Benthall 2010, ix–xxvii).

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