

FREILICH FOUNDATION PRESENTS: EMINENT LECTURER SERIES AUGUST 2007

PROFESSOR SUSAN MENDUS
PHILOSOPHY YORK UNIVERSITY UK

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN AN AGE OF TERRORISM

LECTURES 6 PM , 7, 14, 21 & 28 AUGUST

FINKLE THEATRE, JOHN CURTIN SCHOOL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH
GARRAN ROAD, ANU

THESE LECTURES ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



PROFESSOR SUSAN MENDUS



Professor Susan Mendus studied Classics and Philosophy at the University of Wales. Her first degree was in Philosophy and, after graduating, she went to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she studied for the B.Phil in Philosophy. On completing the B.Phil, Susan Mendus moved to York University. Initially, she held the post of Lecturer in Philosophy but, in the mid-1980s, she developed a special interest in political philosophy and became Morrell Fellow in Toleration in the Politics Department. From 1986 to 1990 Susan Mendus was Morrell Fellow in Toleration; from 1995 to 2000 she was Director of the Morrell Centre for the Study of Toleration. Susan Mendus has been Professor of Political Philosophy at York since 1996, and a Fellow of the British Academy since 2004.

Her recent publications include

- (2006) *'Innocent before God: Politics, Morality and the Case of Billy Budd'* Forthcoming
- (2002) 'Choice, Chance and Multiculturalism', in Paul Kelly (ed) *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*, Polity Press.
- (2002) *Impartiality in Moral and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press.
- (2000) *Feminism and Emotion*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- (1996) 'Some Mistakes About Impartiality', *Political Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2.
- (1998) 'Teaching Morality in a Plural Society', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 33.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN AN AGE OF TERRORISM

In his book, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Mark Jürgensmeyer writes: 'Perhaps the first question that came to mind when televisions around the world displayed the extraordinary aerial assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th 2001 was why anyone would do such a thing. When it became clear that the perpetrators' motivations were couched in religious terms, the shock turned to anger. How could religion be related to such violent acts?' That question - 'how can religion be related to violent acts?' - is the question Professor Mendus wishes to address in these lectures. In addressing that question, she will discuss the concept of toleration; the history of religious intolerance; the differences between modern and historical understandings of religious belief; and the relationship between religion and politics. Her overall aim is to see whether the history of religious tolerance and intolerance can offer some lessons to us, now, in our attempts to secure political peace in the face of religious difference.

LECTURE 1 - PARADOXES OF TOLERATION TUESDAY AUGUST 7

In this lecture, Professor Mendus will discuss the concept of toleration and draw attention to some paradoxical features of it. In particular, she will note that toleration is not equivalent to mere licence, nor to indifference. Toleration requires the disapproval of the thing tolerated. Why, then, should we tolerate things we disapprove of, and how can we believe it morally right to permit what is (or is believed to be) morally wrong? This paradoxical feature of toleration is especially problematic for religious toleration, because having the right religious beliefs is often thought to be a condition of attaining salvation. There is, then, a general paradox of toleration, and this paradox is of special significance when discussing the toleration of religious beliefs.

LECTURE 2 - RELIGION & TOLERATION TUESDAY AUGUST 14

In this lecture, Professor Mendus will focus on the causes of religious intolerance in 17th-century Europe, and trace the ways in which, and the reasons for which, that intolerance gradually gave way to toleration and peaceful co-existence. She will compare the religious conflicts of the 17th century with the religious conflicts of the 21st century and ask whether we can learn useful lessons from the experiences of the past.

LECTURE 3 - TERRORISM & TOLERATION TUESDAY AUGUST 21

Professor Mendus' focus, in this lecture, will be on the ways in which modern commentators understand and respond to religiously motivated acts of violence, and she will pay particular attention to their claim that terrorist acts are fundamentally political rather than religious. The central questions of the lecture will be 'how are politics and religion related to one another?' and 'how should we understand and respond to demands for the political recognition of religious claims?'

LECTURE 4 - A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS? TUESDAY AUGUST 28

In the final lecture Professor Mendus will ask whether an emphasis on religious belief is itself politically dangerous and distorting. Does it serve to disguise the many other ways in which people understand themselves and thus amount to a version of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis? Her hope is that it does not, and she shall argue, on the contrary, that it is only by acknowledging the special significance of religious belief that we can avoid a clash of civilizations and secure the conditions of religious toleration and peaceful political co-existence.

The views expressed in this lecture are those of the presenter and do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian National University.

All enquiries should be directed to:

Renata Grossi
The Herbert and Valmae Freilich Foundation
Research School of Humanities
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia

Phone: +61 2 6125 5527

Fax: +61 2 6248 0054

Email: freilich.foundation@anu.edu.au

Visit our website at www.anu.edu.au/hrc/freilich

