

SRP 5TH DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
AND INTER-RELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM

Countering Exclusivism, Promoting Inclusivism for Positive Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies

3 April 2019
Marina Mandarin Singapore

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SRP 5th DISTINGUISHED LECTURE AND INTER-RELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM

Since antiquity, many inspirational religious leaders exhorted their followers and societies with strong messages to promote justice, freedom, well-being, and the happiness of humanity. These teachings can provide the impulse for diverse religious communities to come together, as they constitute the foundations for a shared common space that underpin a cohesive society. Nevertheless, the historical experience of religions within the political realm of human societies has produced motivations leading to paths of exclusivism, especially toward those perceived as religiously, racially, and culturally Other. While acknowledging factors extraneous and internal to religious traditions which promote exclusivism, the Distinguished Lecture and Inter-Religious Symposium seeks to re-position religion as a force to cohere society in spite of differences by building upon traditions that promote inclusivist conduct.

By attending the event, participants can expect to gain the following benefits:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of how tendencies to exclusivism and inclusivism occur within and across religious traditions.
- New perspectives on how inclusive attitudes are inherent and may be promoted within religions for promoting greater interreligious understanding and dialogue.
- Awareness of how exclusivist attitudes may, sometimes, be linked to violent and extremist worldviews.
- Global, regional, and local patterns of exclusivist and inclusivist attitudes, worldviews, and ideologies and how these relate to the Singapore context.

ABOUT S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education and networking, it produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security and Terrorism Studies.

For more details, please visit <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/>. Follow us at www.facebook.com/RSIS.NTU/ or connect with us at www.linkedin.com/school/rsis-ntu.

ABOUT STUDIES IN INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN PLURAL SOCIETIES PROGRAMME

The Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme aims to study various models of how religious communities develop their teachings to meet the contemporary challenges of living in plural societies. It will also deepen the study of inter-religious relations, formulate models for the positive role of religions in peace-building and produce knowledge to strengthen social ties between communities. The Programme seeks to be at the forefront in the development of scholarship and applied knowledge on the roles of religion and inter-religious relations in plural societies today.

For more details, please visit <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/srp/>, or follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/srpprogramme/>.

PROGRAMME

10.00am – 10.15am	WELCOME REMARKS Ambassador Ong Keng Yong <i>Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS</i>
10.15am – 11.15am	5th SRP DISTINGUISHED LECTURE “Countering Exclusivism, Promoting Inclusivism: Being Human in a Global Civilisation” Professor Leonard Swidler <i>Founder and President of the Dialogue Institute, and Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue, Temple University</i>
11.15am – 11.50am	KEYNOTE LECTURE 1 “One Humanity, Many Religions: Being Inclusive in a World of Diversity” Professor Zhuo Xinping <i>Research Professor, Institute for the Study of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</i>
11.50am – 12.00pm	LAUNCH OF INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS SERIES
12.00pm – 1.25pm	LUNCH
1.25pm – 2.00pm	KEYNOTE LECTURE 2 “Exclusivism, Fundamentalism and Violence” Professor Julius Lipner <i>Emeritus Professor of Hinduism, and the Comparative Study of Religion, Cambridge University</i>
2.00pm – 2.35pm	KEYNOTE LECTURE 3 “Religious Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion: Global Trends and Future Prospects” A/P Patrice Brodeur <i>Associate Professor, Institute of Religious Studies, University of Montreal, and Senior Advisor, KAICIID</i>
2.35pm – 3.10pm	KEYNOTE LECTURE 4 “Countering Exclusivism, Promoting Inclusivism: The Way Forward for Singapore” Professor Lily Kong <i>President, Singapore Management University</i>
3.10pm – 3.35pm	TEA AND COFFEE BREAK
3.35pm – 4.50pm	PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A SESSION
4.50pm – 5.00pm	CLOSING REMARKS A/P Paul Hedges <i>Associate Professor of Interreligious Studies, SRP, RSIS</i>
5.00pm	END

LECTURE ABSTRACTS

SRP Distinguished Lecture

Countering Exclusivism, Promoting Inclusivism: Being Human in a Global Civilisation

Professor Leonard Swidler

The lecture will begin by exploring the endless ramifications of the fundamental truth of our expansive, inclusive human nature, asking among other questions, how this expansive, inclusive force works to our individual and communal welfare, if we would but embrace our birthing instincts. Fortunately the wise ones in our community have enshrined it for us in our communal human history, especially in the “Golden Rule,” which was articulated across multiple civilizations, in that global formative period we have come to refer to as the “Axial Period,” 800-200 BCE. Broad as these ancient civilizations were, however, they still tended to be restricted to their geographical areas. However, today, we can no longer live in such isolation, no matter how large. The lecture will emphasise the need for us overcome our fear and embrace our fundamental “nature,” which is expansive and inclusive, especially as we encounter differences while living in a burgeoning *Global Civilization*.

Keynote Lectures

One Humanity, Many Religions: Being Inclusive in a World of Diversity

Professor Zhuo Xinping

The lecture will begin by commenting on the era of globalization, where different nations and religions live together and interact closely as members of a *Global Village*. However, our contemporary world is still a world laden with uncertainties and instability, especially with many religious confrontations and conflicts which we could term as a “Clash of Civilizations”. Faced with realities of religious exclusivism and intolerance, the lecture will highlight ways in which we can build a community for a shared future for mankind. Firstly, cultivating a positive attitude toward various religions, including positive evaluation of the nature and value of religion. Secondly, developing an objective analysis of the social function, cultural character and political involvement of religion. Thirdly, encouraging religious dialogue and promoting mutual understanding among religions. Fourthly, creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness and tolerance, and guaranteeing freedom of belief and critical thinking in society. And finally, forging cooperation with one another to build a hopeful world of lasting peace, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness.

Exclusivism, Fundamentalism and Violence

Professor Julius Lipner

The lecture will start with comments on the different kinds of society in our world: religious societies and secular societies with some examples, and will then commend the desirability of a secular democracy where freedom of belief whether religious or non-religious is encouraged. A good example of secular democracy is that supported by Singapore's Constitution. Inclusivism of beliefs and peoples, as opposed to religious and other forms of exclusivism; experience-based and reason-based belief and practice, as opposed to fundamentalist commitments; and, goals and attitudes towards peace-building and reconciliation, as opposed to the use of violence in religion to achieve religious legitimacy will be explained and championed. The lecture will highlight the aim of a secular democracy, that is to express personal and group freedom without violating rights and freedoms of others, and with solidarity as the norm within the terms of the Constitution.

Religious Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion: Global Trends and Future Prospects

Associate Professor Patrice Brodeur

This lecture will provide a framework to not only map the global trends of religious narratives of inclusion and exclusion, but will also demonstrate how they relate to the whole spectrum of traditional right-left politics. In its conclusion, this lecture will suggest how these global trends are interrelated to each other in part due to opposing epistemologies, raising important questions about future prospects.

Countering Exclusivism, Promoting Inclusivism: The Way Forward for Singapore

Professor Lily Kong

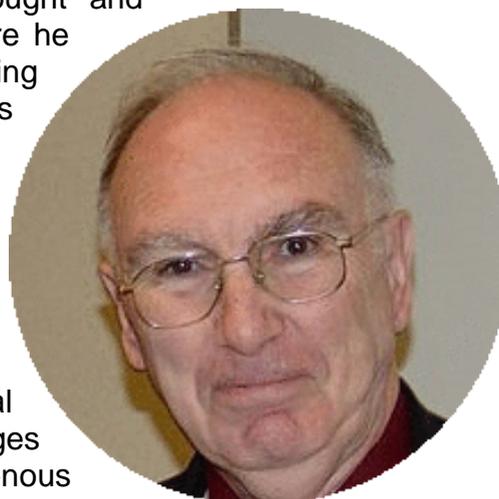
This lecture will address the question of how Singapore, which has enjoyed religious harmony for a few decades, nevertheless encounters skirmishes and tensions periodically as a consequence of exclusivist attitudes held by those with religion and those without religion, as well as across religions. It will outline some of the strategies that have been in place to address such exclusivist behaviours, but question the extent to which they have been successful in addressing, more fundamentally, exclusivist attitudes and beliefs. It will propose three key dialectics that need to be addressed if exclusivism in Singapore is to be countered and inclusivism promoted. The first is the dialectic between ideology and praxis – or between what people think and what they actually do. The second is the dialectic between enhancing religious understanding and enhancing religious community. The third is the dialectic between emphasising the personal and private in religion, and the communal and public.

PROFILES



Ambassador Ong Keng Yong is Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Concurrently, he is Director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) and Head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) in RSIS. Ambassador Ong continues to hold the position of Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also Singapore's non-resident High Commissioner to Pakistan and non-resident Ambassador to Iran. He has been the Chairman of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) since 2015.

Leonard Swidler is Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University, where he has taught since 1966. At Temple and as a visiting professor at many universities worldwide, he has mentored a generation of international scholars in the work of interreligious dialogue. In 1978, Professor Swidler founded the Dialogue Institute and has been its President since. He is the author of more than 80 books, and co-founder and editor of the quarterly *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. He has proposed a 'Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic', aimed at different religious, ethnic, and ethical communities in various regions, which encourages work and generates discussion on drafting indigenous versions of a global ethic.



Zhuo Xinping was Director of the Institute for the Study of World Religions within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences from 1998 to 2018. Currently, he continues to be a Research Professor with the Institute. He also served as president of the Chinese Religious Studies Association since 2001 and has held visiting positions at Tsinghua University and the University of Birmingham. In 2006 he was elected to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and in 2008 he was elected to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Dr Zhuo has authored some 20 books and more than 100 articles on religious studies, with a focus on Christianity and its development around the world and in China.

Julius Lipner is Emeritus Professor of Hinduism and the Comparative Study of Religion at the University of Cambridge. His expertise is in the study of Vedantic thought, 19th century Bengal, and intercultural and inter-religious understanding. Professor Lipner has lectured widely in and outside the UK, and has been appointed Visiting Scholar and Visiting Professor in a number of universities across the world. He is currently a Fellow and former Vice-President of Clare Hall – a postgraduate college in the University of Cambridge – and in 2008 he became a Fellow of the British Academy. Professor Lipner is also Advisor to SRP, and Visiting Professor at RSIS, NTU, Singapore.



Patrice Brodeur is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Religious Studies, University of Montreal (Canada) as well as Senior Adviser at the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) in Vienna (Austria). From 2005 to 2015, he had a Junior Canada Research Chair on *Islam, Pluralism and Globalization* at the University of Montreal, leading an interdisciplinary research team on contemporary Islamic thought as well as on various forms of dialogue. From 2013 to 2015, he set up the Research Department at KAICIID, leading to the publication online of its Peace Map, with now over 500 organisations promoting interreligious/interfaith dialogue internationally. An esteemed author and multilingualist, Assoc. Prof. Brodeur has received numerous prestigious awards including an "Interfaith Visionary Award" from the Temple of Understanding (2010).

Lily Kong is President and the Lee Kong Chian Chair Professor of Social Sciences of the Singapore Management University. An award-winning researcher and teacher, Professor Kong has received five international fellowship awards including the Commonwealth Fellowship Award and the Fulbright Fellowship Award. As a prolific writer, Professor Kong has 13 books and monographs to her name, as well as over 100 papers in international refereed journals and chapters in books. Her major research interests include geographies of religion, cultural economy and cultural policy, cultural and heritage landscapes and constructions of 'nation' and national identity.



Paul Hedges is Associate Professor in Interreligious Studies at RSIS, NTU, Singapore. He has previously worked for, or lectured at, other universities in Asia, Europe, and North America. He researches, teaches, and publishes widely in such areas as Interreligious Studies, theory and method in the study of religion, contemporary global religious ideologies, and interreligious hermeneutics. He has engaged in work beyond academia with the media, NGOs, faith groups, and governments. He has published eleven books and over sixty papers. He is currently working on a book exploring method and theory in the study of religion, provisionally entitled *Understanding Religion: Method and Theory for Exploring*

Religiously Diverse Societies (California University Press, due 2020). He is co-editor of *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*, and sits on the editorial board of a number of other international journals and book series.

INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS SERIES

Interreligious Relations (IRR) is a peer-reviewed Series of Occasional Papers covering issues of religious diversity, including questions relating to social cohesion, religious contextualisation, religious-secular interactions, bridge-building between faiths, religiously-motivated violence and peacebuilding, as well as cognate areas. Its focus is contemporary contexts of religious diversity, but it will also consider historical and methodological questions. Though the coverage is international in scope, the *IRR Series* has a special focus on Asia.

You may access the *IRR Series* via this link: <http://bit.ly/srp-irr>

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NOTES

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