



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT

Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic
and Islamic Science and Philosophy

MONTHLY SEMINAR

LEIBNIZ AND THE RELIGION OF THE MOHAMMADANS

BY
CHRISTOPHER JOHNS, PHD

In 17th century Germany (as the Holy Roman Empire) “Islam” signified a religious as well as a political threat from the Empire Next Door (the “Turks”). While recent literature on Leibniz’s political and historical writings on Islam tended to reveal, unsurprisingly, his typical Eurocentric prejudices, I aim to focus on Leibniz’s knowledge of and interest in “the religion of the Mohammadans.” While he did not know much about it, he was interested in the way Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation were understood by the early Mohammadans as idolatrous. Beyond this, I take a look at what Leibniz could glean about Islam from the Mutakallimun and the so-called “Christian Averroists.” More speculatively, I discuss some similarities between Leibniz’s “best possible world” theodicy and Al-Ghazali’s “perfect rightness of the actual.” In the end, Leibniz generally praised Islam for its natural (rational) theology, its strict conception of God as a unity, and as a corrective to tendencies toward idolatry that persisted within Christianity, which could then explain for him why Islam prevailed in the Near East.

Christopher Johns is an associate professor in the Department of Philosophy at AUB since 2009. His research interests are primarily in Leibniz’s jurisprudence, ethics, and metaphysics. His publications include several articles on the deontic foundations in Leibniz’s practical philosophy and two books: *The Science of Right in Leibniz’s Moral* and *Political Philosophy* (Bloomsbury 2013) and *Leibniz’s Discourse on Metaphysics: A New Translation and Commentary* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

**Monday,
March 24, 2025
12:30 PM**
IFI Conference Room
4th Floor

For more info:
faroukjabrecenter@aub.edu.lb
01 35 00 00 Ext. 4254