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After appropriation: explorations in intercultural philosophy and religion

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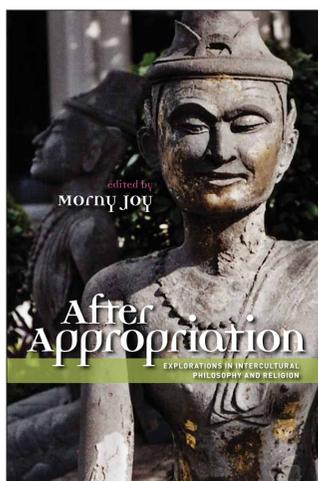
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Locating Intercultural Philosophy in Relation to Religion

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A central problem for comparative or intercultural philosophy[1] – one that continues to both irritate philosophers interested in the area and elude their attempts at an adequate response – is that of maintaining the authentic voice of the Other. I refer not to the now-famous question of whether the subaltern can speak, though this is a facet of the issue, but rather to the broader problem of the potential incommensurability of "categories in the typology of beliefs crucial to the understanding of [the] side[s] of the symbolic systems being juxtaposed."[2] When the foundations required to understand a philosophical system in one tradition are either absent from or irrelevant to the other being compared, whither comparative philosophy? This is a well-known issue in the field and I need hardly rehearse the problem in full here. Suffice it to say that the fundamental problem, for the business of intercultural philosophy, of the extent and nature of conceptual incommensurability still haunts us. I want to suggest that one way of shedding light on this issue may lie in considering the intended audience for intercultural philosophy, that is for whom is philosophizing

"in a comparative mode" done? In what follows, then, I will propose a *location* of intercultural philosophy: its relation to its practitioners and its intended audience.

Of course "location" can refer in many and diverse ways: geographically, socially, professionally, economically, discursively, and so on. One might also consider location as a form of tracking: a snapshot of a moving discourse. I do not here intend to provide a map or history of the field in relation to other forms of philosophy; rather, I wish to consider the question on more pragmatic grounds, namely through the question of who is intercultural philosophy for? If, following Dewey, all rationalization is at the same time a "doing for the sake of," then for whose sake is this practice? What good is it and what does it enable for its intended beneficiaries? Clarifying the target audience of intercultural philosophy will in turn make better sense of its rationalization, its particular form and suitability to its purposes, and thus how it might provide grounds for a response to charges of conceptual incommensurability. To some extent this question leaves aside for the time being the more basic question of what intercultural philosophy is and whether the notion is coherent. The issue of incommensurability arises from this more basic question and will reappear in what follows, but to begin with and for the sake of argument let us allow that intercultural philosophy is indeed a possible and coherent practice. The question, then, is who is its audience?

At least three possible audiences for intercultural philosophy are typically identified – to which I shall add a fourth, non-typical alternative later: (1) society at large, that is the public whose taxes support the academic and other institutions in which most if not all intercultural philosophy is now done – at least in the West; (2) some subset of society as in, for instance, what we might call the philosophical public – namely those who may be both interested in these topics already and have some training and/or expertise in philosophy (and this would include most professional philosophers); and finally, (3) adherents of or believers in the philosophical systems being compared; that is, the members of philosophical schools of thought or religious communities. I will dispense with audience (1) at the outset since, while it may be a laudable aim to educate and enrich the wider society in which one lives with the information and wisdom gleaned from years of study as well as frequent intellectual forays into foreign thought-worlds, it is highly unlikely that many of our neighbours

and friends will have the required background or interest in what can be quite abstruse philosophical meanderings for the project of intercultural philosophy to be worthwhile for them. Put in a nutshell, most people do not care to what extent Mencius and Aquinas agree on the nature of our ethical duties or just how Leibniz and Rāmānuja might together supply a metaphysic relevant to quantum theory, and so, if intercultural philosophers are to work for them in any direct way, I fear their efforts will go even less rewarded than at present.

The second potential audience would make intercultural philosophy merely an academic affair. If intercultural philosophers are writing mainly or solely for other philosophers – a distinct possibility given the institutional nature of philosophical and theological social projects – then comparative philosophy risks being a very small and perhaps not very important activity in the academy (already a marginalized institution within most societies). Doing comparative philosophy for other philosophers or theologians is no doubt interesting for its practitioners and, within the field, perhaps a necessary task; however, if philosophic professionals are the only or main audience for such philosophy, then perhaps it deserves its place at the margins of "mainstream" philosophy and theology – comparative philosophy being, after all, a minority practice. This puts intercultural philosophers in a bind to some extent since it is other philosophers and scholars of religion who are their best audience, having among them the requisite understanding, skills, and commitment both to critically judge the ideas and proposals arising from their comparative philosophical experiments and to suggest new and more fruitful avenues for their research. But this gives rise to various problems of over-specialization endemic to the modern academic practice of philosophy. No doubt one of the reasons many philosophers and humanists are suspicious of comparative projects, and I suggest one of the unsaid reasons why religious studies scholars are so as well, is due in part to the culture of training academics that has taken hold in Europe and North America. Where once the doctorate was seen to be the bleeding edge of development in a field, having taken account of all that was done before and thus acquiring a synoptic standpoint from which to speak to a broad range of scholars, the sheer growth of literature now available to scholars, as well as the quasi-professionalization of academia, has meant that such a requirement is now seldom required and much less realized. Rather, it is presently sufficient to corner a small segment of

the literature, showing adequate mastery over its languages, concepts, and contours, in order to contribute an increasingly small increment to the conversation. The academy no longer aims to create generalists capable of creatively traversing disciplines but rather rewards those who lay claim to expertise in an increasing variety of small and tightly defined niches.[3] The cliché of academics devoting themselves to knowing more and more about less and less has never been more true, so it should come as no surprise that the broader philosophical and religious community of scholars look to projects such as, for example, a comparative evaluation of Indian and Greek metaphysical systems, with a good deal of suspicion.

Some might argue that these "professional issues" are beside the point: that intercultural philosophy faces substantive questions concerning its very cogency and that issues concerning how philosophy happens to be done in some Western universities are not really germane. While I do not want to dismiss any substantive debate, I would argue, however, that the criticism fails to see philosophy and intercultural philosophy in particular as social projects, embedded within economic, social, and institutional contexts. The biases and rules of propriety implicit within these contexts both guides how philosophy is carried on in a given society and partly determines what gets studied and funded. Nicholas Rescher makes a persuasive case that meta-level assumptions inchoate in social projects are to a large extent the cause for philosophical disagreements among scholarly communities otherwise unified with respect to the theory and methods of their disciplines.[4] Such "orientational pluralism," as he labels it, must be accounted for if we are to understand the basis of disagreement on the value of intercultural philosophy. Context is often the largest determinant of the shape and possibility of discourse and one cannot neglect its effect in evaluating the location of intercultural philosophy.

Various "professional issues" problematizing intercultural philosophy are, I suspect, also at the bottom of much (though not all) of the discourse in religious studies concerning the post-modern valorization of the Other and its concomitant suspicion of any form of constructive metaphysics. The dilettante followers of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Barthes (among others) have, in the name of the destruction of any and all metanarratives, so demonized metaphysics that even the possibility of strategic comparison between philosophies is now greeted with barely muffled hisses; yet, one wonders just how much of this is little more than

guarding the small bit of turf on which philosophers are trying to build an academic career. It is ironic that such a fashion has taken hold to such a degree in religious studies, which itself grew from the nineteenth-century practice of comparative religions. The oedipal battle with their forebears in philology, anthropology, sociology, history, and philosophy in which many contemporary scholars of religion are locked, means that to utter the words "comparative/intercultural philosophy of religion" in academic company is now almost as bad as admitting one's admiration of Fox News. There are, I suspect, a number of mewling infants in the streets along with the remnants of their ablutions and perhaps it is high time to forego any queasiness about tenure applications and go pick them up. Comparison is indeed a fundamental mode of understanding – compare we must[5] – and there is simply too much at stake in comparative/intercultural philosophy of religion to demur for the sake of professional conservation in the guise of post-modern angst. This is not to say that intercultural philosophy is an easy task, but it is, I submit, a necessary one, and I shall suggest a few avenues by which we might move forward later.

But first we still must clarify for whom the practice is done, and we come now to the third typically proposed audience, namely those who belong to the particular schools of thought or religious traditions under comparison. By this category, I do not mean to suggest that philosophers or religionists are non-problematically classifiable into such schools. It will come as no surprise that a philosopher or religionist who categorises him or herself a follower of Wittgenstein, Hume, or Shankara, for instance, or indeed a Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu, may well have many disagreements with aspects of their group's founding beliefs and/or the views of their fellow philosophers and religionists. By isolating this potential audience for intercultural philosophy, I do not wish to impute any necessary degree of homogeneity to them. As with most such communities, the binds that tie are usually quite fluid – in reality, at least, if not by design – and for my purposes here we can safely leave it this way. Such communities are effectively self-policing with respect to their membership so that belonging to these groups is won through a once or continuing series of negotiations. On this view, continuing as a good Wittgensteinian, for instance, is something I would more or less regularly have to demonstrate through my words and actions submitted to the *ad hoc* community of other Wittgensteinians with whom I wish to have fellowship. If I start writing

or teaching that Wittgenstein did not in fact repudiate his earlier work in the *Tractatus*, then my error will soon be pointed out to me by other Wittgensteinians, either in the corridors of my university or, more disastrously, in the pages of academic journals. If I subsequently maintain my position and cannot convince my fellow Wittgensteinians of the truth of my views, again my errors will be corrected; however, this time, the methods will be through marginalizing my work through refusing to publish it and/or perhaps personal marginalization in academic and social situations – the invitations to speak at conferences and other venues will dry up.[6] My membership in the group labelled "Wittgensteinians" is thus the result of a continuous series of negotiations between me and relevant others in the group and is impacted by numerous factors directly and indirectly related to its putative raison d'être.

These negotiations, whether straightforward or subterranean, are important to consider at this stage since they effectively remove the spectre of what has been called the insider/outsider problem for comparative philosophy. If what is meant by "insider," in the case of such social groups like "Wittgensteinians" or "Buddhists," is never fully settled but always at least in principle liable to revision through a process of negotiation between the relevant stakeholders, then we need not worry greatly about the issue of whether an outsider comparativist can legitimately carry on his/her work merely due to him/her being an outsider. While the situation is no doubt complicated by particular historic factors, for instance systems of hierarchical power, it is by these very tokens that we can factor them out of our understanding of what makes the group. My point is that we need not be waylaid by the insider-outsider question since upon closer scrutiny this distinction may be found to be quite permeable. No essence hides here and inclusion and exclusion may be due more to extrinsic, non-substantive factors. Comparativists simply need not be "in the group" in order for them to carry on their research because what counts as being "in" is not settled except by rather artificial and quite arbitrary criteria. This leaves the nature of inclusion just too slippery to afford any strong grip to those who wish to close ranks.

I do not expect many disagreements at this stage. On one level, what I have pointed out is quite obvious. Religious as well as philosophical social groups are non-natural and thus cannot themselves uphold any significant barriers to comparison. Claims that Indian thought, for example, is in its

fullness open only to Indians are easily defeated by the question "who is an Indian?" But it is important to note here that these kinds of claims are indeed made in the literature critiquing the possibility of intercultural philosophy. The claim is not so much centred on the membership status of the erstwhile philosopher but rather on the requirement that a philosopher be insinuated in the relevant community in order for the meaning of philosophical texts and ideas to be fully appreciated:

> […] if we were to suppose that each religion is an organic whole and that to that extent a system complete in itself in a way that no part of it can be isolated and considered separately from the other parts, how is comparison possible? If each part had a particular function that could not be explicable outside the system of which it is a part then any assumptions about a "comparable" part in another religion might well be spurious.[7]

The view here is that religions are whole and well-defined, but what is implied, I argue, is that such wholeness and definition are also extended to the social religious group such that one must belong in order to understand properly, one must be nurtured in the faith to avoid taking things out of context, and policed by the discourse in order not to make foolish comparisons. How are these requirements unlike the demand that one be fully contextualized in the language and literature of a tradition before being able to make tentative steps outside that tradition? George Lindbeck's contextual-linguistic model of religion[8] here stretches to a kind of Wittgensteinian fideism where a structural aspect of a religion or philosophy is extended to social groupings to exclude outsider comparativists. The pragmatic picture I sketched above concerning membership in social groups, however, works in the opposite direction. If that view of membership is correct, then one can argue that religions and philosophies are equally ragged unities. The organic wholeness of religion quoted above turns out to be a misleading model. What one needs instead is a kind of structured open-endedness where one can make sense of the connectedness and contextuality of cultural-linguistic units without assuming the same structure holds for the social groups that define or embody this structure.[9]

So where does this leave us with respect to the audience for intercultural philosophy? The general public lacks the requisite knowledge to enter into discussion and the requisite interest to care; other philosophers and religionists may be the best conversation partners and critics, but intercultural philosophy must transcend this group if it is to avoid the Scylla of over-specialization with its concomitant irrelevance and the Charybdis of professional politics and petty turf wars; and those true believers in their religious and philosophical traditions turn out to be difficult to form into coherent groups without either drawing highly arbitrary and artificial boundaries around them or reifying misleading models of their discourses into too-cosy social groups. While admitting that contextual rootedness is essential to intercultural philosophy, the practice still needs a proper audience, and this, I suggest, may in fact be the comparativist him/herself. And if this is the case, that intercultural philosophy is for the person undertaking the comparison, then the practice becomes a vehicle of transformation – a way, to borrow Michael McGee's phrase, for the philosopher to become strange to him or herself.

What I want to argue is that the practice of intercultural philosophy is doing philosophy from a particular standpoint – not a real place in the sense of an objective Archimedean vantage point outside cultures, histories, and languages, but a narrative, ironic locus of intersection sustained through a dialogical redescription. What Michael Barnes labels the space in between traditions.[10] which I call the 'interstitial mode,' is a discourse through which a hybrid or double position is created between traditions in comparison. This is a shifting and evanescent area of intersection or overlap – but not of identity – wherein religions being compared or philosophies in contact are mutually redescribed in the creation of the self as other or stranger. To be the audience for intercultural philosophy is to take up this position and become strange to oneself, to become Other, yet never lose grasp of one's self. There are at least two ways in which one might make sense of the position I am proposing: through the notions of *translation* and *mimesis*.

The business of *translation* will be familiar to many comparative philosophers. Translators insinuate themselves for a time between conversants, texts, or thinkers in order to play[11] double agents. It is a position very clearly between traditions and for this reason has been an obvious model for the comparative philosopher. To the extent that a translator excels at his/her

job, they become invisible, and this ideal is of course just the problem critics of intercultural philosophy decry. Ironically, the perfect translators of a text or tradition would have mastered the languages, cultures, and histories of the objects of comparison; yet, by that very mastery , they efface their own biases and prejudices. The perfect translator thus tries, and of course fails, to inhabit the view from nowhere; however, intercultural philosophy as translation is still instructive in its highlighting the piecemeal and subjective nature of its practice. The intercultural philosopher as translator is a *bricoleur* both in respect to the specificity of the elements he or she brings together in comparison as well as the "at-hand-ness" of the tools he or she brings to the job. Moreover it is often the translator him/herself who is best able to judge the quality and elegance of the translations – the members of the translated sets being themselves essentially rooted within their own contexts. Intercultural philosophy as translation, as I am suggesting it, then becomes a practice for the sake of the philosopher as audience. The mutual translation involved in intercultural philosophy is then a piecemeal construction of the self for the immediate requirements of living, a form of temporary philosophical consolation: what Richard Rorty refers to as edifying discourse. By locating its audience as the *bricoleur* him/herself, intercultural philosophy may also avoid the charge of obfuscating its own position since the goal is precisely its opposite – to highlight the position of *bricoleur* as beneficiary. Moreover, in *bricolage*/translation, difference is conserved since every translation is to some extent merely to construct an artifice – one that draws attention to its put-together nature and its rendering of parts-at-hand to effect the job of communication.

The second way in which we might make sense of the claim that the audience for intercultural philosophy is the philosopher him/herself is through the notion of *mimesis*. If one of the central problems of intercultural philosophy boils down to a question of authenticity, the difficulty of speaking in another voice for the sake of the Other, then locating oneself as the proper audience of the practice (inhabiting the "for-the-sake-of" position) makes intercultural philosophy an imitation of one imitating oneself.[12] There is an inherent reflexivity built into intercultural philosophy as mimesis: one "plays" at the foreign philosophical position for the sake of oneself as the audience. In so doing, one makes the foreign position imitative of one's own position so as to make it commensurable and understandable. In order for the foreign position to be known, it has

to be interpreted in a hermeneutic of recovery – to do anything else would be to avoid the project of intercultural philosophy entirely[13] and in doing so the foreign position becomes imitative of the home position. In intercultural philosophy, therefore, one is imitating an Other imitating oneself. This would seem to efface the other but for the difference upheld in intercultural philosophy as translation/*bricolage*. The dialectic that ensues between translation and mimesis is, I would argue, at the heart of the transformative power of intercultural philosophy.

Locating intercultural philosophy in this way, with the practitioner as audience, avoids both disingenuousness as well as obfuscation. The twin movements of translation and mimesis ironize and make possible the other. Moreover, translation highlights the specificity and serendipity of intercultural philosophy, while mimesis clarifies its transformative power as well as its potential to open up new options for living. It is this second possibility that I wish to take up briefly here since not only will it help illuminate the notion of intercultural philosophy as mimesis but it will also elucidate one of the motivations for practising comparative philosophy. To illustrate a particular element in the motivation behind comparative philosophy, I shall use a problem in interreligious dialogue, namely that of the reluctant other, where there is an absent or recalcitrant party in a dialogue between religious believers. This example parallels the problem of authenticity for intercultural philosophy through the silent refusal of the other to engage in dialogue. Just so, the compared tradition resists potential amalgamation or integration by erecting a firewall of incommensurability and charges of disingenuousness.

What I propose is that in the face of resistance, when the only options seem to be reversion to monologue or self-imposed silence, one option is for the intercultural philosopher to consciously hybridize their religious or philosophical position with the other's, and, because of their position as audience, hybridize even themselves. Through the use of mimesis – that is, imitation of the other imitating for the sake of oneself – one can consciously and carefully seek to hybridize one's own religious and philosophical commitments, practices, and beliefs with those of the reluctant Other. In so doing, one creates a novel discursive location liminal to oneself and the Other. One also redescribes the Other's and one's own positions in order to contribute new options for living. This is the practice of comparative philosophy as constructive metaphysics.

This is, I believe, a fairly radical proposal. In the context of inter-religious dialogue, what I am arguing for is that when the would-be dialogue partner refuses to engage in open, honest conversation, due either to contrary ideological commitments or mere disinterest, it may be one's responsibility to carry on the conversation oneself. This is not simply to play the other part in some perverse pantomime, but something much more significant – through the reflexive double mimesis where the philosopher is the audience, it is nothing less than allowing the Other's tradition to interrogate, supplement, edit, magnify, or significantly change one's own tradition in a hybridizing redescription. It becomes the job of the reflexively mimetic, intercultural philosopher to create an intermediary position between themselves and the compared tradition. And this would not be a mere intellectual exercise but would need to create new options for living/thinking. It is, therefore, not a simple, one-time affair, but rather entering into a process whereby one risks comfortable certainties for the sake of creativity. This brings forth several questions, not least the problem of motivation: why would anyone seek to do this? Surely to loosen one's grip on one's own religious or philosophical commitments for the indeterminacies of a strange hybrid would negate the very reasons one sought comparison in the first place – and for what? – a mutant hybrid of one's own deeply felt religious commitments with those of a silent or reluctant Other? How would one know that what one is hybridizing with is even remotely close to the tradition of one's silent partner? Is this not simply a muddled way of creating even more confusion?

There are, I suggest, religious and non-religious reasons why one would wish to lay oneself open to hybridization. In the context of inter-religious dialogue with a reluctant other given above, an example of such hybridization can be seen in the Christian theological idea of kenotic incarnation.[14] The self-emptying required in mimetic hybridization such as I have described has a close analogue, I would argue, in the theological concept of *kenosis*. I should note here that I do not understand kenosis as a form of self-denial in the sense of complete eradication, but rather as a conscious opening up to the Other in order to partially become the Other. The intercultural philosopher becomes a stranger to herself precisely through such openness to transformation just as the God-man is precisely the kind of interstitial hybrid required when one party is trying to communicate a new option for living to an obstinate partner. In kenosis

the divine condescension both changes its own nature and creates a new option for its partner – God becomes human in order that humans may discover their divine likeness. A kenoticly inspired **intercultural philosophy** can thus create the possibility of a new option for the Other – one that may be freely accepted or refused, but one that is required if any progress is to be made beyond the stalemate of a reluctant other.

But what about the problem of religious or philosophical syncretism, or the possibility that one loses one's self altogether? If the locus of **intercultural philosophy** is the philosopher who undergoes the transformation of becoming strange to herself, is there not a danger of her being overtaken by the other? I suggest that the dialectic of mimesis ensures that neither syncretism nor assimilation becomes a significant problem. Since mimesis, like metaphor, always begins in otherness – indeed *requires* this otherness to be conserved for its redescription to work – the worry that one loses oneself in an interstitial hybrid is groundless. What happens to the self is that it is redescribed, not annihilated, so there is little worry that one becomes something else altogether. Identity is conserved so that the self grows rather than being replaced. The problem of syncretism is also a non-starter since, apart from legitimate analyses of syncretism as primarily a political rather than an ontological issue,[15] mimetic redescription may also be understood to stretch the semantic horizon of one's tradition but not to supplant it. Intercultural philosophy in this mode is not a method of grafting and absorbing the Other onto oneself but a form of re-organization, a re-creation of oneself in a fundamentally artistic or imaginative act. This is wholly appropriate and in keeping with contemporary discussions of identity as "oneself as another." Worries about syncretism ignore the accretions necessary in one's own development and owe more to eighteenth-century fear of impurity than anything else.

There is legitimate worry, however, in the question of whether or not what one is imitating bears any resemblance to the tradition being compared. As the comparativist is also the audience, one might be liable to caricaturing the Other's tradition. To some extent, this is inevitable, but absolute fidelity to the Other's tradition is not necessarily required, nor, it must be said, possible. In any comparison, one may only grasp a similitude of the positions represented – even one's own. Certainly, great care and much time is required when one seeks to represent the Other, but this is the same kind of care and respect shown to one's own tradition, not

different. Intercultural philosophy's potential for creating novel, liminal positions may, however, make the risks acceptable.

Let us now move to the non-religious motivations for embarking on comparative philosophy as reflexive mimesis. My example of kenosis above would, obviously, speak most eloquently to Christians, so we need a more "generic" motive if my proposal is to have greater usefulness.

For this I turn to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, whose morality based on the face of the other gives a clarion call for an ethics that makes supererogatory kenosis a first responsibility for all people. While I have too little space to fully develop his thought here, we can focus on the fact that Levinas seeks to ground subjectivity in the Other. Our very being as a subject is construed by Others, and thus we have at the very core of who we are an ethical relationship – nay, an ethical duty.[16] Indeed, this relationship with the "otherness" of the Other – what Levinas calls "the face" – brings me as a subject into being and demands my ethical regard. Levinas writes:

> I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity.… It is precisely insofar as the relationship between the Other and me is not reciprocal that I am subjection to the Other; and I am subject essentially in this sense.[17]

Levinas argues that the creation of our subjectivity relies on the Other and this constitution entails and demands responsibility to and for the Other in a non-reciprocal way. This is particularly apropos for intercultural philosophy as it is precisely in the redescription of our own subjectivity that the ethical call of the face beckons. Levinas claims more than that we are duty-bound to take on aspects of the Other's selves. He suggests that in authentic ethical behaviour we have already done so. For the intercultural philosopher, Levinas's requirement furnishes not only motivation but also the promise of self-transformation wherein we ironically find ourselves in and through being made strange. Levinas's theory of the ethical construction of the self in the face of the Other parallels the kenotic attitude towards the other: in each case there is a prior call to both recognize and facilitate one's own essential hybridity with those with whom we wish to converse, to understand, and, ultimately, to partially become. This recognition, facilitated through the dialectic of translation and mimesis, is the

true *telos* of intercultural philosophy. It is in this *telos* that intercultural philosophy discovers its location.

In conclusion, I have argued that the locus of intercultural philosophy, the "for-whom" it is undertaken may best be understood as the self and that locating the discourse in this way sheds light on some of the problems and critiques regularly levied against its practice. To be consistent with my own pragmatic principles, however, I must admit that my conclusions can only be a temporary pause in a wider discussion concerning the nature of comparative philosophy and that my views must ultimately furnish the materials for other intercultural philosophical *bricoleurs*.

Notes

1   In what follows I shall use the terms 'comparative' and 'intercultural' more or less synonymously. While some will argue that the use of 'comparative' carries too much nineteenth- and early twentieth-century baggage, I see it as a fundamental task to rehabilitate this altogether useful and clear term. While 'intercultural' is somewhat more descriptive of the perspective taken by the research herein under consideration, as well as the resultant product, it lacks the active connotation that 'comparative' so clearly expresses. So while I do not want to draw any hard and fast distinctions between these terms, I shall use 'comparative' when I wish to accentuate the practice of philosophical thinking consciously using and reacting to two or more diverse philosophical traditions or texts, and 'intercultural' when I wish to accentuate the perspective and product of philosophizing in this comparative mode. Needless to say, I intend no pejoratives through my choices in any particular instance.

2   Purushottama Bilimoria, "What is the 'Subaltern' of the Comparative Philosophy of Religion?," *Philosophy East and West* 53, no. 3 (2003): 341.

3   For a useful discussion of the origins of the academic virtue of specialization, see Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin's *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1989).

4   Nicholas Rescher, *The Strife of Systems: An Essay on the Grounds and Implications of Philosophical Diversity*

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985).

5   I would agree with Jonathan Z. Smith's tenor when he writes of the necessity of comparison as a unique mode of rationality in his "In Comparison a Magic Still Dwells," in K. C. Patton and B. C. Ray, ed., *A Magic Still Dwells* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 23–46.

6   At this point, it might be possible to resurrect my membership through other means: perhaps I could begin to dress like Wittgenstein and affect an Austrian accent; or maybe I could become extraordinarily taciturn and wave pokers in the direction of my philosophical enemies. Thus, a number of non-philosophical factors might also contribute to my readmission to the society.

7   Bilimoria, "What is the 'Subaltern,'" 350.

8   George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine, Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984), 33.

9   Delineation of such a model is beyond the scope of this paper. It seems to me, however, that there is no *necessary* connection between the level of structure found within a particular discourse and that found within the community practising that discourse. While evidence of such mirroring can be found, it would, I submit, be a result of historical accident rather than essential connection between the discourse and its practitioners.

10 See his *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

11 I use the term *play* very consciously to connote both an activity without a particular goal – that is play as a self-authenticating activity needing no external goal or *telos* for its sensibility – as well as that of performance as in a theatrical production. Both ideas of play are relevant to the practice of comparative philosophy, though I do not have space here to develop them.

12 Wendy Doniger relates a little known fact about the film *Singing in the Rain*. In the story, one of the characters, Lina Lamont (played by Jean Hagen) is a Hollywood starlet during the silent picture era. When her new film is turned into a 'talkie' she has to sing the film's finale, but Lina has been cursed with a voice which, to put it mildly, is perfect for silent films. The decision is made to have her song dubbed by Kathy Selden (played by Debbie Reynolds). All goes well and the movie is a big hit, but it all comes unravelled when the actors Lina Lamont and Don Lockwood (played by Gene Kelly) take their show on the road and Lina is asked to sing the show-stopping finale. Of course hilarity ensues. What most people do not know, however, is that Jean Hagen, the actress playing Lina Lamont, actually dubbed Debbie Reynolds in the final song. So we have the case of Jean Hagen playing Debbie Reynolds playing Kathy Seldon playing Lina Lamont played by Jean Hagen. Such playful mimesis in this reflexive mode is not unlike what I suggest is going on in comparative philosophy and locates the audience of comparative philosophy in the philosopher/translator/actor herself.

13 Donald Davidson's idea of radical translation is apropos here. A necessary charitable imposition of one's own rules of holism and normativity is required for the very possibility of understanding. In this case, the played, foreign philosophical position is so translated.

14 The Buddhist example of a bodhisattva could also be used here.

15 See Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stuart, ed., *Syncretism/Antisyncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London: Routledge, 1994).

16 Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Phillip Nemo*, trans. R. A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press), 95–101.

17 Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 98.