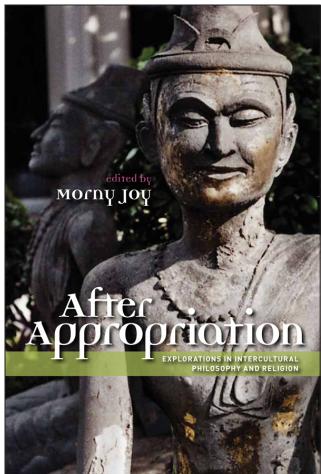




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**AFTER APPROPRIATION:  
EXPLORATIONS IN INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY  
AND RELIGION**  
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# introduction

MORNY JOY  
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This edited volume is the result of a special workshop funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and held at the University of Calgary in 2006. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together a group of leading scholars in the two fields of what has been called “comparative religion” and “comparative philosophy.” The mandate was to explore the current state of affairs in these fields and to explore whether there can be a rapprochement between them. To further this task, it set out to investigate certain problems and/or to suggest alternative approaches. While there may already be numerous specialized books in the fields of comparative philosophy and comparative religion, there are a limited number of scholars who can address both disciplines. Such scholars attended this workshop. It thus marked the beginning of an interdisciplinary and intercultural project to bring these scholars together to initiate discussion that would continue to take place on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup> The unique aspect of the workshop was that this was the first time to my knowledge that a group of scholars had been intentionally assembled where there were scholars with expertise in both areas of comparative philosophy and comparative religion. As such, it is a ground-breaking volume.

While the division between the two disciplines of Religious Studies and Philosophy is commonplace in Western academia, this bifurcation does not necessarily apply in non-Western settings, where religion and philosophy tend to be integrated. As a result, when the disciplines are virtually mutually exclusive, as in the West, a full appreciation of non-Western approaches to either religion or philosophy is not easily attained, and distortions, such as appropriation, often occur. Within the last ten years, there has been a concerted effort on the part of a number of scholars to try to address these deficiencies, but it is necessary to distinguish this project from others that are occurring. It is not a project in inter-religious dialogue, which occurs only among believers and practitioners. Nor is it an exercise in apologetics where one religion would maintain dominance. Instead, it is an academic activity, undertaken with the goal of re-examining many ideas that have been misappropriated or otherwise excluded in comparative studies. These errors have resulted from a traditional approach where the religions and philosophies of non-Western peoples have been interpreted by reducing or manipulating their ideas and values to fit solely with Western concepts and categories. As such, this project is conducted with full awareness of the post-colonial critique of such enterprises. As a result, the overall aim of the project is not to reach a final solution or to recommend a definitive procedure – the intricate and often impenetrable jargon employed in many undertakings of comparative philosophy has been noted by many scholars. It is easy to get lost. This book seeks to avoid such interferences with a more modest endeavour of initiating constructive discussion.

In undertaking to organize this conference, there was also the intention, in accordance with SSHRCC regulations, to have a significant number of Canadian scholars represented, and to have a balance of gender as well as of scholars at different stages of their career. The actual impetus for this conference resulted from two new joint appointments to the departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Calgary in 2006. These two appointees are: Chris Framarin (Hinduism and Analytic Philosophy) and Katrin Froese (Chinese Philosophy/Religions and Continental Philosophy). This brought about a critical mass of scholars in these departments working in the area of comparative religion and philosophy – adding to the work of Morny Joy (Comparative Method and Theory in History of Religions/Continental Philosophy) and

Tinu Ruparell (Hinduism and Christianity). The four of us comprised the organizing committee of this workshop. I take this opportunity to thank my Calgary associates for all their dedicated work, which helped to realize the conference. At this stage I would also like to acknowledge and thank the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, without whose grant to Scholarly Conferences and Workshops this venture – including publication of this volume – would not have been realized. The University of Calgary was also generous in granting both a Conference Grant and a Grant for a Visiting Speaker.

One of the central questions that interested us was how comparative philosophy and religion would change if the concepts and categories of non-Western philosophies and religions were taken as primary in their terms of reference. This is the principal reason that we determined to frame this project as an exercise in intercultural philosophy and religion in a way that attempted to bridge the two various areas of study. While some scholars preferred to retain the term “comparative” – their approach was not uncritical and their usage was basically compatible with what we understand by the term “intercultural.” This workshop is timely and constitutes a major contribution to the burgeoning field of intercultural study in philosophy and religion.

We each nominated a number of thinkers that we considered to be doing groundbreaking work in this area. Seven scholars accepted our invitations. Of those who accepted, only five could come. Those who could not come submitted papers that were discussed at the conference. All papers were then revised as a result of the discussions. As a result, the volume comprises an excellent selection of essays that touch on vital issues in all the major religions and their relation to philosophy, from both substantive and methodological perspectives.

All participants were asked to reflect on the problems and difficulties that they had encountered in their attempts to undertake work of such an interdisciplinary, intertextual, and intercultural nature. The essays that were presented at the workshop reflected the diverse nature of the dilemmas and insights that had been perceived already, or arose in the course of writing the workshop paper. The workshop examined the overlapping terrain between the fields of philosophy and religion. On the one hand, one workshop was particularly pertinent because it allowed not only for the examination of the religious undercurrents that have informed

philosophy, but also for the exploration of whether the division in the West has served to narrow the horizons of much contemporary Western philosophy in a way that excludes modes of thinking that are not amenable to its procedures of classification. On the other hand, the academic study of religions has often tended to focus on one aspect in an in-depth study of one particular religion, and it has made grandiose claims of similarity with non-Western religions, based on broadly organized typologies of a phenomenological nature.<sup>2</sup> This often led to vague generalizations or inaccurate accommodation in accordance with Western constructs.

In contrast, this workshop on intercultural philosophy and religion fostered a philosophical dialogue between diverse traditions that allowed for a re-examination within Philosophy and Religious Studies of ideas that have often previously been taken for granted. Such an approach also threw into question the predominant trend towards specialization in academia. In this spirit, the conference also encouraged interdisciplinary discussion between scholars working in a wide variety of cultural, religious, and philosophical fields. The book that has resulted from this workshop consists of thirteen essays, all of which address an issue or illustrate a problem in the interdisciplinary field of intercultural religion and philosophy as it is presently conceived.

At this stage it would seem appropriate to delineate the understanding of the notions of “intercultural philosophy and religion” that are being used here, as the concept “culture” is itself a loaded, if not overdetermined, word. In this context, we have adopted the term “intercultural” to acknowledge its recent usage in a number of conferences and publications. It has come to be employed instead of the term “comparative” so as to distinguish its approach as one that neither privileges nor takes as normative Western concepts, categories, or methods. Such a usage of “intercultural” is to be applauded as it attempts to remedy what are viewed as past distortions and impositions.<sup>3</sup> Yet any unqualified use of the term “intercultural” is unacceptable without further investigation of its implied meaning(s). This is because the term “culture” is by no means objective or innocent in the way that it is being applied today.<sup>4</sup> In an article on human rights, Martin Chanock supplies a reason why the contemporary Western usage(s) of the word “culture,” are in need of interrogation because of its past compromised employment as an agent of imperial enculturation: “All we can say about ‘culture’ comes from a history of imperialism, and from the current dual

framework of ‘orientalising’ and ‘occidentalising’ in a world of globalised symbolic exchange. If we are to treat ‘culture’ as a fundamental factor in our analyses of rights, and of government and institutions we need a very high degree of self-awareness of the history and current circumstances of the deployment of the concept.”<sup>5</sup>

It is somewhat ironic, in contrast to the above colonialist deployment of “culture” by western nations, that in non-Western and formerly colonized countries a contemporary use of the word “culture” promotes it as a conservative defence against any change – especially those that are associated with “Western values.” In some instances, it is connected with appeals to either an idealized or pristine society that predated colonization, or to rejection of the impact of selective Western influences. Uma Narayan eloquently discusses fascinating variants of this phenomenon in her book *Dislocating Cultures*.<sup>6</sup> Contemporary anthropology also has had something of importance to add, particularly given the lively discussions that have taken place since James Clifford’s book, *The Predicament of Culture*.<sup>7</sup> As I have said elsewhere: “Clifford acknowledges the seemingly paradoxical engagement in ethnography as it both negotiates and evaluates the very procedures it both introduces and participates in.”<sup>8</sup> The resultant self-reflective stance, which incorporates an examination of one’s own presuppositions, would seem to recommend a stance whereby anthropology no longer regards culture as a consistent or timeless and stable entity. As Sherry Ortner observes in relating the development of her own understanding of the construction of culture: “[There] are larger shifts in the conceptualization of ‘culture’ in the field of anthropology as a whole, [that go] in the direction of seeing ‘cultures’ as more disjunctive, contradictory, and inconsistent than I had been trained to think.”<sup>9</sup> “Culture” then, while it still needs to be understood as the amalgamation of influences such as ideals, forces, institutions, and traditions, including those of religion and philosophy, should never be reified as a static entity. It would seem that all of the above observations need to be kept in mind when the term “intercultural” is invoked. They function as a healthy precaution against the attempted enforcing of any one particular viewpoint as holding any special prerogative to authority or precedence. A healthy hermeneutics of suspicion would seem necessary.<sup>10</sup>

Questions of method and theory are obviously essential to such an undertaking, and another task envisioned by this workshop was to provide

as clear an exposition as possible of the respective contributions of both Philosophy and Religious Studies to this interdisciplinary venture. The late Raimundo Panikkar suggested that the basic business of comparative philosophy and religion was what he called “diatopical hermeneutics.” This is the practice of bringing one culture, language, or philosophy into another culture, language and religion/philosophy for the purposes of a clearer exposition of the relevant questions, contexts, and topoi. It also undertakes a constructive search for new and more useful responses to these questions and topoi. In such a context, comparative philosophy and comparative religion engage in an encounter between fundamentally different traditions and address issues of how to deal with the “foreign.” Not only does this necessitate working between languages that may not readily lend themselves to translation, but it also demands an exposure to ways of thinking that may be either unknown or marginalized within one’s accustomed canon. In one respect, however, this project seeks to enlarge on this accustomed understanding of the “foreign.” Not only must one avoid the pitfalls of simply superimposing familiar categories onto another tradition in order to achieve a comfortable synthesis but, by venturing into such unfamiliar terrain, one needs also to examine familiar traditions from the “outside” and thereby reveal presuppositions that are often taken for granted. This may well foster an awareness of incongruities within “known” paradigms that might otherwise go unnoticed. Almost all the papers contain reflections on the nature of such foreignness or otherness, or, as Vincent Shen termed it, adapting a Chinese word *waitui* (外推), “strangification.” At the same time, there is one position that is evident in all the papers. This is that each tradition involved in a comparison is accorded equal weight. No tradition is regarded as having a superior stance or a more privileged access to truth, however that may be understood.

Over the past fifty years, the journal, *Philosophy East and West*, has published numerous insightful articles of a comparative nature, where both philosophy and religion have been featured. But there has not been a specific issue where the methodological problems of such interactions have been addressed in a systemic or thematized way. There have also been, of course, a large number of single-author volumes written from either a philosophic or religious studies perspective of a comparative nature that reflect the accepted methods of their respective disciplines. One example is Lee Yearley’s highly nuanced comparative study of Aquinas

and Mencius on both virtue and courage. His astute readings broach both philosophic and religious topics. Distinguishing carefully between areas of theory and practice, or reason and ethics, Yearley is particularly sensitive to differences as well as to commonalities in both traditions in the way they foster human flourishing.<sup>11</sup> Another example of comparative work that illustrates how attitudes can be changed is that of Roger Ames. He demonstrates that an encounter with Chinese thought sensitizes the reader to the truly original nature of a thinker such as Nietzsche who is a maverick within his own tradition.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars have highlighted certain issues of a methodological nature pertaining to comparative philosophy. The work of Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch<sup>13</sup> and that of Fred Dallmayr<sup>14</sup> have been particularly helpful. Katrin Froese, who is a contributor to this volume, has also written an excellent comparative philosophical study.<sup>15</sup>

It needs to be observed that this type of investigation has not been the prerogative of Western scholars alone, as recent books by Chinese scholars illustrate. For example, Cheng Zhongying (1991)<sup>16</sup> has drawn parallels between Confucianism and western hermeneutics, and Li Chenyang in *The Tao Encounters the West*,<sup>17</sup> describes how democracy and eastern values can fruitfully be combined. Another recent edited volume in the same vein is that of Shun Kwong-loi and David B. Wong.<sup>18</sup>

It is also noteworthy, that there have not been many edited collections comparing and contrasting eastern and western philosophy and religion. There has been, however, one such volume already published. This was entitled, *East-West Encounters in Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Professor B. Srinavasa Murthy and Ninian Smart, published in 1996.<sup>19</sup> It was Professor B. Srinavasa Murthy who first organized a conference of this nature in Mysore in 1991, with a second one taking place in Long Beach, California, in 1993. The book comprises selected papers from both conferences. Examples of papers or sections in the book have titles such as: "Person: East and West," or "Asian and Western Thought." It is obviously wide in scope but contains very little reflection on issues of methodology. Nevertheless, it marked a rich and eclectic attempt to take the measure of the immense interest stimulated by the two conferences.

I believe that our workshop and the resultant papers can make an extremely important contribution to the continuance of such undertakings, both nationally and internationally, to the rapidly expanding field of

intercultural studies in both philosophy and religious studies. Thus far, there has been no book published that attends to a multi-faceted discussion of method and theory from an intercultural philosophical and religious perspective. I also believe that it is both a substantial and an original undertaking. One of our principal intentions in inviting scholars in philosophy from both analytic and Continental backgrounds as well as scholars in religion, all of whom are well versed in method and theory, was to raise the discussion on these issues to a more sophisticated level, particularly in light of contemporary debates on the role of pluralism and globalization. The aim was not to find solutions, but the hope was to arrive at some clearer insights into the various obstacles that can hinder such exchanges.

\* \* \*

**Vincent Shen** proposes the term “strangification” – a translation of the Chinese term *Waitui* – as a constructive way of appreciating the task that is involved in undertaking intercultural study in philosophy and religion. His intention in using this term is to describe a process of “going outside oneself in order to go to many others”; that is, to strangers and to strange worlds that engage with different forms of philosophy and religion. His paper contributes to this volume by laying out certain methodological foundations for his philosophy of contrast as a strategy of strangification. As part of this strategy, dialogue is understood as a process of mutual strangification. In his study, Shen illustrates his discussion by contrasting Chinese philosophy with Western philosophy. He does this by first clarifying his concept of “many others,” as well as those of contrast and strangification, with reference to their origin in Chinese philosophical traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism. He then places these terms in dialogue with a number of Western Continental philosophers. Shen’s own discussion is set against the contemporary context of globalization and with particular reference to his own traditions of Chinese philosophy and religions.

After defining globalization as a historical process of deterritorialization or border-crossing, Shen places intercultural studies within a framework of cross-cultural philosophy and religion. From his perspective, intercultural study can be appreciated as leading to potential communication with a view to mutual enrichment, instead of simply doing comparison

simply for comparison's sake. By replacing certain post-modern French thinkers' concept of "the other" with a concept of "many others," Shen also elaborates on the concept of "contrast." For Shen, comparison, communication, and dialogue always start with a mutual act of going outside of one's self-enclosure to many others, an act initiated by an original act of generosity that makes reciprocity possible. In the resulting process of mutual strangification, all parties involved endeavour to make their own scientific/cultural/religious/life world understandable to each other. From a methodological position, Shen's paper focuses on the strategy of strangification and the idea of dialogue as mutual strangification as ideas and processes that can take place on a number of levels – linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological.

**Michael McGhee** wonders about a different sort of strangeness – that of the philosopher who, in ancient times, as described in the work of Pierre Hadot, was a seeker of wisdom and thus not necessarily motivated by the same goals as ordinary citizens of the world. McGhee reflects on his own feelings of estrangement from contemporary philosophy – specifically that of analytic philosophy – and suggests ways that could revitalize contemporary philosophy from its basically secular preoccupations. He considers comparative philosophy as one possibility – but not simply as an exercise that would enlarge the canon. McGhee considers the impetus that prompted Henri Corbin to undertake his explorations in comparative philosophy, but McGhee seeks to move beyond its idealistic Platonic orientation. Nevertheless, he recognizes the need for a skilled application of the Platonic tools of dialogue, both *agon* and *elenchus*, in any comparative exercise where searching questions need to be asked, though probably to different ends than Plato and Corbin had in mind. This is because McGhee is only too well aware that the present situation, with its globalized networking and commodification, needs to be taken into consideration. In such a complex world, a solution can no longer be sought in easy appeals to former times, such as Corbin's approach. McGhee is seeking a way that would mediate between the all-too-familiar contemporary extremes of nihilism and idealism, or other simplistic dualisms that tend to occur in contemporary debates of inclusion/exclusion. From a comparative perspective, McGhee finds guidance for a responsive and tolerant approach in his own Buddhist practice. He finds it particularly helpful in the way it provides insight into how states of consciousness influence

either the expansiveness or constraint of human experiences and action. Such knowledge is a form of wisdom and would be helpful in intercultural philosophy as a way of encountering strangeness or otherness. It could help foster the innovative connections that can take place when a philosopher, as a stranger, enters into previously alien or unknown ways of philosophizing that challenge ideals regarded as normative in his or her own time, culture, and philosophical tradition.

**Tinu Ruparell** is also interested in the question of strangeness and the stranger as a component of intercultural philosophy and religion – but this time the stranger is cast as the Other. As Ruparell attests, the authentic voice of the Other is a subject that has exercised many scholars. This includes those who, from a postcolonial perspective, view colonialism, with its mandate of “civilizing” the religious other as involving the imposition of foreign values and beliefs. At the same time, there are philosophers, like Emmanuel Levinas, who seek to rectify the failures of the Western ethical code that did not prevent the Holocaust from occurring. As Ruparell observes, Levinas’s prescription for a new understanding of an ethical orientation is to place one’s responsibility for the other person before one’s self-related inclinations, be they charitable or egocentric. In his own search to find a process that would be suitable for intercultural philosophy and religion – one that allows an alienated person or subaltern figure to find his or her voice – Ruparell proposes that Levinas’s approach might be of help. In this approach, the philosopher goes towards the other, in a manner similar to Shen’s “strangification.” In fact, again one becomes a stranger to oneself on order to be open to the other. Ruparell, however, would see a further qualification to Shen’s proposal to initiate a dialogue by means of a *kenosis*, or emptying of self. This is because for Ruparell, in attempting to constitute him- or herself in a different mode of receptivity, a person must not just become receptive but place oneself entirely at the disposal of the other. Only by taking such a radical step, Ruparell proposes, can a genuine self-transformation take place.

All the above three variations on the theme of strangeness and the stranger by Shen, McGhee, and Ruparell find echoes in other essays in this volume, though different terms are employed to describe such a moment or movement. They are all symptomatic of the difficult situation involved when a Western academic tries to come to terms with a legacy that has prevented him or her from full appreciating the dimensions of

religions and philosophical systems that are substantially at variance with their own particular notions of belief or ethical ideals.

The contribution of **Arindam Chakrabarti** is a study of the Sanskrit philosophical concept of “*manas*”, controversially translatable as “inner sense.” Among the many functions assigned to this internal instrument by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.5.3), such as desire, resolution, doubt, memory, and introspection, one crucial function is that of cross-modal comparison and connecting the data from different external senses. The paper discusses seven distinct arguments for postulating such an inner sense. In the Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and Nyāya schools of philosophy, it becomes a distinct sense organ, responsible for attention, comparison, imagination, and reflective awareness of cognitive and hedonic states. Since it is an organ of comparison, *manas* deserves special attention of comparative philosophy. Chakrabarti illustrates this point by actually comparing the Indian concept of inner sense with a corresponding conception in Aristotle’s *De Anima* (425a–426b), where such a sixth inner sense is proposed and rejected. But the comparable idea of a *sensus communis* is taken seriously by Aristotle. In Kant’s philosophy, inner sense also has a very crucial role to play, but it is distinguished from the common sense, which is central to aesthetic reflective judgment. Chakrabarti suggests a richer theory of a sixth common sense-organ for imaginatively perceiving possibilities. The essay concludes by discussing Ibn Rushd’s (Averroës’) original metaphysics of the inner common sense, in his commentary on *De Anima*, and indicating the possibility of connecting the concept of sense-organs with the Vedic Hindu concept of multiple divinities.

**Ahmad Yousif**’s paper is a constructive proposal that would help situate the notion of comparative religion as an acceptable approach in Islam. In this way it features more as a preamble to the further development of intercultural philosophy and religion. Yousif understands his contribution to constitute the beginnings of a move towards a possible dialogue of Islam with Western and Eastern religions. He states that, in most institutions of higher learning in the Muslim world today, scant attention is given to the field of comparative religion. This is in distinct contrast to similar institutions in Western countries. Yet, to bring the situation into perspective, Yousif states that this was not always the case. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, Islamic civilization witnessed the rise – and also eclipse – of the discipline of ‘ilm al milal wa n-nibal (literally,

“knowledge of religious groups and sects”). Classical Muslim scholars, such as al-Shahrastani, al-Biruni, al-Kalbi, al-Baghdadi, Ibn Hazm, and others, made numerous investigations and contributions to the field. The modern period has also witnessed the emergence of a number of Muslim intellectuals, such as al-Faruqi, Shalaby, al-Hashimi, Daraz, and others, who have made serious endeavours to investigate the field. Frequently, the methodology utilized by Muslim scholars towards the study of major world religions, however, differs from their Western counterparts. Yousif’s paper first explores the historical developments of the discipline of comparative religion from Islamic and Western perspectives. Second, it compares and contrasts methodological approaches among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in the field of comparative religion. Then, it examines some of the challenges encountered by scholars studying “other” religions. In conclusion, it discusses the importance and significance of studying major world religions at the tertiary educational level, in the West and in the Muslim world, to help in the mutual understanding and appreciation of both philosophy and religion.

**Katrin Froese**’s exercise in intercultural philosophy and religion is achieved by putting seemingly disparate philosophers in dialogue on a particular subject. In her paper, she examines the criticisms of ethics undertaken by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard as well as in the Daoist philosophies of the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*. All of these thinkers expose an unethical underbelly to ethics. They reveal an intractable paradox at the heart of ethics, which is that the same processes that enable human beings to become moral also produce immorality. Such a formulation suggests that morality and immorality may share a common core. By way of comparison, Froese first portrays Nietzsche as seeking redemption from selfish Christian morality by attempting to infuse life into what he views as its moribund precepts. He does this by adopting a universal ethic of embracing life that is based on affirmation of this world rather than self-contempt and a longing for eternity. Then, by describing Kierkegaard’s critical philosophy, Froese demonstrates the trouble that western ethics has in accommodating the radical other. This is due to the spectre of egoism that undermines all such human endeavours. As a remedy, Kierkegaard states that faith demands a readiness to relinquish all attachments of the ego so as to be able to enter into a direct relationship with God.

Froese also portrays the way that Daoist thinkers view morality as worrisome because it is directly linked to the use of language. For Daoists, language, by definition, must parcel the world into fragments. Thus language constrains, and, because of this, it is often linked to the desire for closure or possession. The resultant addiction to language suggests that moral imperatives are very closely wedded to the desire for knowledge, which is understood as a way of rendering the world amenable to human comprehension. Words thus divide, and so exclude, as well as include. As a result, morality, by positing the good, must inevitably depend on the notion of evil against which it defines itself. This means that moral systems all too often rest on the ostracism of the stranger who symbolizes the unknown and cannot so easily be embraced within the linguistic paradigm. In order to counteract this, Daoist philosophy, both in the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, underlines the importance of an attunement to nothingness. This is because nothingness represents a kind of radical openness that has banished desire. Thus, despite their seemingly obvious differences, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Daoist thinkers would concur that conventional morality is predicated on a kind of resistance that can stamp out the particularity of others, rather than celebrating it. As such, Froese's exercise in comparative philosophy and religion helps to demonstrate commonalities of viewpoint regarding ethical ways of living in traditions that are often regarded as completely distinct.

In his paper, **Michael Oppenheim** begins with a guiding question to help him in his explorations: "What might a conversation between comparative philosophy of religion and modern Jewish philosophy contribute to each participant?" While he appreciates that such a conversation is only just beginning to take place, he believes that there are important insights that each side can contribute to the other. He begins by reflecting on the nature of contemporary philosophy and Jewish philosophy from a comparative perspective. This is followed by an examination of some basic problems in these two areas. In terms of comparative philosophy, he first examines the failure of philosophy generally to respond to contemporary feminist philosophy. He then laments its failure to include Jewish philosophy (as well as Islamic philosophy) and to recognize them as having historic roles in its own narrative history. Oppenheim then highlights what he considers to be the two problem areas in contemporary Jewish philosophy: 1. the way the relationship between (Western) "philosophy"

and Jewish philosophy is usually depicted, and 2. its own reticence to recognize and enter into dialogue with feminist Jewish philosophy. In the concluding section, Oppenheim explores the potentialities for each side to address these problem areas in the mode of the other as proposed by Levinas.

**Dan Lusthaus**'s essay is a wide-ranging rumination on what it has meant to do comparative philosophy of religion. In his approach, since all thinking is comparative – where, hopefully, comparative philosophy stimulates insightful thinking – comparative philosophy and religion needs to draw its strength from expanding the range of philosophies and religions it compares. In Lusthus's view, for a Western philosopher to think about Indian or Chinese or Arabic or Jewish philosophies is basically no different from a North American philosopher thinking about Plato, Spinoza, Hegel, or Wittgenstein. Each task requires looking at the other through similarities and differences of language, culture, context, foundational categories, historical developments, and a host of other factors. Lusthaus posits that the basic differences are not between East and West, as is often assumed, but between styles of philosophizing and root metaphors from which different traditions take their orientation. In this vein, Lusthaus explores the similarities and differences between religion, philosophy, and science, especially medicine. Taking the fact that *pramāṇa* theory (the means of acquiring knowledge) first appeared in India in a medical text, the *Caraka-saṃhitā*, as a jumping-off point, he illustrates that philosophy, religion, and medicine have always been intertwined, especially in ancient and medieval philosophy. He concludes with a concise examination of the *Caraka-saṃhitā*'s *pramāṇa-theory*, with special attention to a unique *pramāṇa* found only in one text, *yukta-pramāṇa*. This is an inductive synthetic type of reasoning that seeks to analyze transformation in terms of coordination of multiple factors converging into a transformative trajectory. Lusthaus's analysis thus proposes a fascinating mode of pursuing comparative studies in philosophy and religion. In a sense, such an exercise is also in the spirit of intercultural philosophy and religion in that it does not privilege a specific religion but attempts to discern their similar roots.

In his essay, **Francis X. Clooney** proposes that religious texts – considered seriously, and in depth – constitute a most appropriate and fruitful place for reflection on philosophical and theological issues in a

comparative context. Such texts provide access to worlds of thought that are invariably complex and inhabit diverse terrains – partly accessible and partly particular – or present insider discourse that can all branch off in various diverse and elusive ways. For Clooney such texts are also often especially rich in style as they are in readers' expectations. Two such texts from two traditions, in this instance, Hinduism and Catholicism, if they are read together, create an array of comparative possibilities that, in turn, can then generate a considerable range of philosophical and theological reflection. Clooney regards this kind of reflection on complex texts that are both philosophical and theological, both highly rational and richly imaginative, as being superior to thematic comparisons. This is because the texts resist conclusive generalizations and keep introducing cultural and religious specificity back into such generalizing discourses.

Because the emphasis is on thinking-through-reading, half of Clooney's essay is dedicated to giving a passage from each of the two classic texts that are to be read together – that *need* to be read together, if their religious and philosophical significance is to be made accessible in a comparative context. Each of the texts that are excerpted – the *Treatise on the Love of God* (*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*) of Francis de Sales, a major seventeenth-century Catholic theologian, and the *Essence of the Three Mysteries* (*Śrīmad Rahasyatrayasāra*) of Vedānta Deśīka, a major medieval Hindu theologian – “works” on multiple levels and makes connections among linguistic, philosophical, theological, mystical, and other tradition-based resources. When the texts are read together, their possibilities are maximized and intensified, and the new text thus generated, comprised of traditional, religious, and rational insights, facilitates further conversation.

Such a shared reading provides a complex starting point – reference, foundation, directions – for intercultural reflection, philosophical or religious. This is because each text is itself a synthesis compounded by its author. Together, the paired texts constitute a still more complex conversation in which the reader who is philosophically or religiously inclined reads his or her way back and forth across the spectrum of matters both philosophical and religious, or rational and affective.

**Chen-kuo Lin** explores the Buddhist phenomenology of awakening as exemplified in the philosophical writings of Zhiyi (538–597 C.E.), the founder of the Tiantai School of Buddhism, and then investigates in

what way the Western notion of phenomenology, especially as pursued by Edmund Husserl, could be enriched by comparison with this Chinese philosopher's work. The phrase "phenomenology of awakening" is deliberately used in contrast to "phenomenology of mundane experience." In the Buddhist context, the former may be referred to as "phenomenology of insight," whereas the latter is classifiable as "phenomenology of consciousness." In both forms of phenomenology, a distinct method is required for the disclosure of truth. Lin's article is mainly concerned with how the truth of awakened experience is disclosed through the meditative method in the Buddhist phenomenology of Zhiyi. As an illustration of one of the impetuses of this volume, which is an attempt to investigate the ways in which Western philosophy and religion can be rethought through non-Western categories, two questions are raised by Lin. The first asks: in what sense can Zhiyi's Tiantai philosophy be characterized as a form of phenomenology? The second asks: in what way can Husserlian phenomenology be further developed into a phenomenology of awakening as envisioned in the Buddhist tradition? In reply to these questions, Lin divides his study into two sections. The first section lays out the Buddhist distinction between mundane knowledge and trans-mundane insight. In the second part, Lin focuses on Zhiyi's soteriological phenomenology with special attention to the problems of truth, meditation, and insight. In conclusion, he sums up the religious spirit in Zhiyi's phenomenology, where the experience of awakening should never be regarded as exclusionary. In this way, it differs from Husserl's more explicitly personal approach. For Zhiyi, true awakening, which manifests the enlightened world, must be experienced *along with* all other worlds that have yet to be enlightened. That is, true liberation must be experienced *along with* all other worlds that are still in suffering. In his study, Lin describes how Husserl's understanding of phenomenology can be enriched by an intercultural study with Chinese philosophy, which is indeed a reversal of many earlier ones where the terms of reference were usually provided by the Western scholar and traditional categories of analysis.

**Tamara Albertini's** paper is an appeal to study, discuss, and assess philosophy in non-Western traditions by returning to criteria afforded by these same traditions. It is an appeal that Islamic philosophy should be read and appreciated on its own terms, rather than assessed according to Western standards. Rather than being preoccupied with what "counts" as

philosophy, or with what constitutes a “good thought” or a “good methodology” according to standards developed to measure the philosophical merits of Western texts, the focus of inquiry ought to be placed on the devices, concepts, and strategies that are of concern to the tradition to be studied. Ideally, for Albertini, the inter-cultural investigation begins once the intellectual intricacies of the two (or more) traditions involved in an in-depth study or discussion have been appreciated – each one in its own right.

Albertini then graphically illustrates what happens when centuries of misunderstandings and missed opportunities stand in the way of Western scholars’ “appreciation” of another tradition of thought, such as, for example, Islamic philosophy. Ironically, the difficulty in this comparative setting lies not in Muslim thought being perceived as being too *different* but rather as too *similar*. This over-emphasizing of the commonalities has its roots in an approach that has long looked upon Islamic philosophy and sciences as a gold mine for Western intellectual needs. For Albertini there is, nevertheless, something to be gained from recognizing this ill-balanced perception: Islamic philosophy has been no stranger to the European historical landscape in the past. Yet while the scientific, philosophical, and, to a lesser degree, cultural debt toward Islamic civilization has long been acknowledged, contemporary research on Muslim thought requires a new direction. In Albertini’s view, what needs to be created is an understanding of why it should matter to study Islamic philosophy for its own sake, independently of how or whether it *speaks* at all to the Western world. To achieve this, a non-utilitarian approach should be adopted, or, at the very least, one in which the primary *use* of studying Muslim thought is to know it on its own terms.

**Chris Framarin** examines an approach that is utilized in Indian philosophy and explores how *lakṣaṇā* and its application could be of benefit to Western scholars in their own work of interpretation and translation of Indian texts. *Lakṣaṇā* is an Indian exegetical principle that permits an interpreter to revert to a less literal reading of a claim when the literal reading is sufficiently implausible. If the literal reading implies a contradiction or absurdity, for example, an interpreter is often permitted – and sometimes required – to understand the claim figuratively. Contemporary interpreters of Indian philosophy employ this strategy extensively, but often without acknowledging its limitations. In this paper, Framarin argues that

contemporary interpreters of Indian philosophy should adopt and utilize the principle of *lakṣaṇā*, but only in accord with the criteria set forth by classical Indian philosophers.

**Morny Joy's** paper introduces the topic of women's rights as human rights as a subject that could benefit from intercultural discussion by both philosophy and religion. It may not seem immediately to be a relevant topic for such an undertaking, but it is an emerging area of interest and concern that needs to be addressed by women. At stake is the shifting boundary between public/private as this affects the secular/religious divide. In many recent instances, fundamentalism has attempted to interfere in the public and political sphere, while keeping women under tight private control. At the same time, many feminists have proclaimed "the personal is the political." Such diverse impulses would only seem to confuse the situation. Yet what is being contested in both cases concerns the rights of women, particularly with reference to the control of their bodies. Joy discusses how in the wider parameters of the globalized women's movement, reactionary activities by fundamentalists from a number of religions and countries at the United Nations have tried to prevent any further advances by women in the area of rights, citing reservations on matters of culture and tradition. These are basically shorthand terms for religion. Such cases involve extraordinarily complex and sensitive issues that need extremely careful discernment of the religious sensibilities involved. They are not easily solved. Yet they are in need of input from scholars in religion because of their specific skills in both religious/ethical traditions and fine-tuned exegesis or textual interpretation. As yet there has not been much work done on a comparative basis that would bring scholars of religion and philosophy into dialogue with activists from all regions and religions of the world to address this most important issue. This paper is an attempt to bring it to notice and further discussion from a comparative perspective.

## Notes

- 1 As a follow-up to this conference, the group decided that it would like to continue the conversation that it started and applied for Seminar status at the American Academy of Religion. It has met at its annual conference for the past four years and has one more year of its five-year mandate.
- 2 Perhaps one of the more popular examples of this genre is Mircea Eliade's work, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed. (New York: World Publishing, 1972, c1958).
- 3 There is always the fear that the introduction of such a new term could be just the latest fad in academic circles. As with all such terms, it is necessary to keep a careful watch on the development of its continuing usage.
- 4 See Morny Joy, "Method and Theory in Religious Studies: Retrospect and Prognostications," *Temenos* 43, no. 2 (2008): 199–222.
- 5 Martin Chanock, "Culture and Human Rights: Orientalising, Occidentalising and Authenticity," in *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk*, ed. Mahmood Mamdani (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 15–36.
- 6 Narayan describes the manner in which such claims function in contemporary forms where there is movement to unite nationalism with religion, as in India. She is as concerned about the "demonic other" produced by colonialism, as she is about the ensuing manufactured nostalgic essentialism of an idealized, ancient India. See Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures, Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminisms* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 33.
- 7 Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- 8 Morny Joy, "Beyond a God's-Eye View: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Religion," in Armin W. Geertz and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), *Perspectives on Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, Adjunct Proceedings of the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 132.
- 9 Sherry B. Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 175.
- 10 Paul Ricoeur introduced this term in his book, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. He there referred to Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud as the "masters of suspicion." By this term, he wished to alert people that they may not always be totally in control of what they presume to be their free and transparent thoughts. But there is also another element to the definition of this term. He has also stated that: "The hermeneutics of suspicion functions against systems of power which seek to prevent confrontation between competing arguments at the level of genuine discourse." This is found in an essay, "Imagination,

- Testament and Trust,” in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 17.
- 11 Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990).
- 12 Roger Ames, “Nietzsche’s Will to Power and Chinese Virtuality,” in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- 13 Gerald Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
- 14 Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996).
- 15 See Katrin Froese, *Nietzsche, Heidegger and Daoist Thought: Crossing Paths In-Between* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006).
- 16 Zhongying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).
- 17 Chengyang Li, *The Tao Encounters the West: Explorations in Comparative Pluralism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999).
- 18 Shun, Kwong-loi, and David B. Wong, *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- 19 Ninian Smart and B. Srinivasa Murthy, eds., *East-West Encounters in Philosophy and Religion* (Long Beach, CA: Long Beach Publications, 1996).