

Purushottama Bilimoria • Andrew B. Irvine
Editors

Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion

 Springer

Contents

Introduction: The State of Philosophy of Religion and Postcoloniality	1
Andrew B. Irvine and Purushottama Bilimoria	
Part I Surveying the Scene	
What Is the “Subaltern” of the Philosophy of Religion?	9
Purushottama Bilimoria	
Philosophy of Religion as Border Control: Globalization and the Decolonization of the “Love of Wisdom” (<i>philosophia</i>)	35
Richard King	
The Third Eye and Two Ways of (Un)knowing: Gnosis, Alternative Modernities, and Postcolonial Futures	55
Makarand Paranjape	
Part II “India”	
Mispredicated Identity and Postcolonial Discourse	71
Bibhuti S. Yadav	
On the Death of the Pilgrim: The Postcolonial Hermeneutics of Jarava Lal Mehta	105
Thomas B. Ellis	
Western Idealism Through Indian Eyes: A Cittamatra Reading of Berkeley, Kant and Schopenhauer	121
Jay L. Garfield	
An Approximate Difference: Proximity and Oppression in the West’s Encounter with Sikhism	141
Navdeep Mandair	

Max Müller and Textual Management: A Postcolonial Perspective	159
Sharada Sugirtharajah	
Auto-immunity in the Study of Religion(s): Ontotheology, Historicism and the Theorization of Indic Phenomena	171
Arvind Mandair	
Part III “America”	
The Meaning and Function of Religion in an Imperial World	193
Nelson Maldonado-Torres	
Cultural Participation and Postcoloniality: A U.S. Case Study	213
Andrew B. Irvine	
Imperial Somatics and Genealogies of Religion: How We Never Became Secular	235
Eduardo Mendieta	
De-colonial Jewish Thought and the Americas	251
Santiago E. Slabodsky ¹	
Enduring Enchantment: Secularism and the Epistemic Privileges of Modernity	273
Walter D. Mignolo	
Part IV Uneasy Intersections	
“Uneasy Intersections”: Postcolonialism, Feminism, and the Study of Religions	295
Grace Jantzen	
Postcolonial Discontent with Postmodern Philosophy of Religion	303
Purushottama Bilimoria	
Afterword: Religion and Philosophy between the Modern and Postmodern	329
Kenneth Surin	
Index	337

Introduction: The State of Philosophy of Religion and Postcoloniality

Andrew B. Irvine and Purushottama Bilimoria

The prominent philosopher of religion, Robert Cummings Neville, has recently argued that in late modern times, “the world’s great religious cultures are confused by fragmentation in two directions.” The first confusion stems from uncertainty as to how the religions relate to one another, the second from the failure of the religions to address the distinctive forces of a complex world society (Neville 2002: 137–138).

Neville commends philosophy as a way to clarify and perhaps transform the religious fragmentation of the times. However, even in doing so, Neville urges a vigorous critique of philosophy of religion as presently practised. We quote at length:

[T]his discipline has almost incorrigibly insisted upon an eighteenth century angle of vision on religion, which sees little more than Christianity and through only epistemological perspectives. Ignoring the vast amount of information about other religions now available in English it is embarrassingly parochial, and innocent of so many other philosophical approaches to religion, many learned from other religio-philosophical traditions, that it is out of the loop for understanding religion in late modernity. . . . The real problem in philosophy of religion is not religion but philosophy. (Neville 2002: 5–6)

We do not here attempt to give an adequate description, let alone analysis, of the various ways in which “religion,” as the object of an eponymous, heuristic category, is challenged by and active upon the times. That work, which is the multi-faceted labor of the academic study of religions, and related areas of inquiry, is not properly within the scope of this volume (although it finds its way into the essays gathered here in many ways, with robust impropriety).

What is offered here is a sustained examination, from a variety of viewpoints, of philosophy, particularly the philosophy of religion. All the essays share an interest in critically reconstructing that endeavor, to conduct it responsive to the postcolonial experience of various dispossessed communities.

Philosophy of religion today is, by and large, a discipline pursued by way of overhauling a critically enfeebled Western tradition of philosophical theology. Different philosophers attempt to do this in different ways, but their efforts all may be understood as responses to the ground-shaking epistemological critique of Immanuel Kant.

Philosophical theology endures here and there, although its ability to survive in the current intellectual climate is uncertain. Some philosophers, such as Bernard Williams, believe that the days of philosophical theology are over, arguing that the conditions of its possibility collapsed under the twin onslaughts of positivism and criticism: thereafter, philosophical theology appears to be a science in much the same way that phrenology does.

On the other hand, some departments of religion and seminaries, mostly with Christian institutional affiliations, still concern themselves with philosophical theology. In some of these cases, at least, this is a matter of principle: a refusal to participate in modern errors. It represents a refusal to break with premodern traditions that felt no unbridgeable gulf between the things of nature and metaphysical realities. The persistent appeal of this kind of philosophical, or “natural,” theology lies in the claim to offer rational justification of religious belief, even if the belief must be, ultimately, adopted on other grounds. In the traditional way of speaking, this is philosophy adducing truths of reason in support of truths *beyond* reason. We do not dismiss this venerable tradition of philosophical theology out of hand. Yet, we note the difficulty it faces to dissociate itself from a wider, “fundamentalist” vector in late modern, especially Anglo and Anglo-American societies (currently being helped along in the U.S.A. by the undermining of responsible public control of science in the name of “intelligent design”).

In contrast to, and at least some times in direct reaction to, the practitioners of philosophical theology, contemporary philosophers of religion generally expect one another to represent themselves as free from apologetic preoccupations. If and when the “hard” analytic judgment on religion as meaningless activity is set aside, philosophers of religion are expected to concern themselves with critical investigation of claims that stem from or have their basis in vestiges of religious tradition and theological discourse, especially some persistent “problems” with a pedigree in the mainstream of Western philosophy, including God, (the) self, evil, faith and reason, and morality. But philosophy of religion does not presume doctrinal claims, one way or another, in the creation of its agenda. It does not hold on to positions which may be found unsusceptible or resistant to the light of logical analysis, critical reflection, scientific discovery, even common sense. Philosophy of religion is a rational and universal, secular inquiry, then.

Precisely because of this secular stance, and in view of its strong concerns in the area of metaphysics and ontology, philosophy of religion is now more readily distinguished from the older, suspect philosophical theology, and is catching on in the academy with renewed vigour. Having repeatedly deflected identification with confessional disciplines, it attracts increasing interest among undergraduates and graduates, in teaching and research areas within the liberal arts faculties. Straddling philosophical, religious, and theological studies, it has broadened its base and its appeal. In this respect, it follows in the footsteps of contemporary ethics, which has been led by numerous thinkers, sensitive to the mounting urgency of global pressures, well and truly beyond the imaginative confines of its genealogical predecessor, moral philosophy, to become involved with the plight of future generations, of animals, mountains, forests, and so on.

Also precisely because of this secular stance, though, few contributions to the academic philosophy of religion hitherto have attempted to search the “soul” of the discourse, to consider what it excludes, and what it otherwise might be. The casual willingness of a Richard Rorty, say, to discount commitment to Christianity (or to “Judeo-Christianity”) may have more to do with the rise in popularity of philosophy of religion among students in the West than we realize. After all, these are students looking to come to terms with the parental belief systems that impinge on their consciousness of every new decision they must make for themselves, and/or searching for deeper truth beyond teenage disillusionment. But – and this is rather a big but – the demographic profile of most of the societies thought of as the West has changed drastically in just a generation. Plurality and multiculturalism are become givens. This is true in North America, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and in a dramatic way in post-Apartheid South Africa. Israel, too, confronts these strains. Seemingly one of the conditions of Turkish accession to the European Union is that the state abandon its historically clear position and adamant role in the discourse on nation, culture, and religion.

However, even late capitalist marketing of ethnic and religious diversity has not yet succeeded in opening many doors inside, let alone between, discipline-based departments in Western universities. Political globalization, particularly of a cosmopolitan kind, advocating “world citizenship,” with moral rights and responsibilities based on an at least minimal universalism of values does, in fact, attract interest across a range of disciplines. Yet economic globalisation, which is far more effective in the daily experience of every person on the planet, has only here and there provoked attempts at a systematic “crossing of boundaries” into non-western traditions. Interestingly, quite a few of the attempts that have been made are the initiative of confessionally committed theologians (e.g. Küng 1993; Knitter 1995; Cobb 1999). One of us in Australia has often heard it asked, why, simply because there are large numbers of fee-paying Asian students in the major Australian universities, should a department attend to philosophies of Asia? Either “Asian philosophers” cannot compete with “mainstream” philosophers, anyway, or “Asian Philosophy” is not based on anything fundamental and universal, like “reason.” Of course, such preposterous excuses can only be sustained in virtually utter ignorance of so-called “Asian philosophers” and “Asian philosophy.”

Postcolonial philosophy of religion, as we understand it, operates a critique of the secular self-representation of modern, post-Kantian philosophy of religion, which permits such indefensible ignorance to be passed off as deliberate sagacity. *That* version of philosophy of religion remains determined by the religious dogmatics of “the West.” The experience of Europeans, and of Europe’s colonizing emissaries to the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, norms the construction of categories and categorial schemes, the recognition of informants (or, on special days, interlocutors), and the selection and synthesis of relevant information. This in very rough terms is what it means for modern philosophy of religion to be *Eurocentric*. It regularly plays out in such topics as, “Hinduism and the Problem of Evil,” or, “Daoism and Natural Law,” or “The Spiritual Conquest of America,” or “How Dreamtime became a Nightmare.”

To put it differently, the religion and religious beliefs *not* presumed by Eurocentrically disciplined philosophers of religion continue to be Christian, and those particularly of a Christianity instilled in the exercise of colonial power over others. As Grace Jantzen puts it in her essay in this volume:

The philosophy of religion in the west has largely assumed a male, “omni-everything” God. As a bishop wrote in *Church Times* a few years ago, “God is a relatively genderless male deity.” We need only add that he is also white, and that he favours democracy, the free market economy, and the USA/UK. It is of course always immediately added that God does not have a body, and therefore has neither colour nor gender; and that God loves all people equally. But lurking behind the denial is the imaginary: the body that God does not have is male and white. And probably he speaks English.

The secularity of much contemporary philosophy of religion has been the basis for purporting the neutrality and universality of its judgments. However, what we see is that this secularity is peculiarly Western *secularism*. Moreover, this brand of secularism has operated in a tacit manner across the field of studies of “other” religions and the people that practice them. We see it beginning to be articulated already in the coimplication of Discovery and Evangelization, Gospel and Science, that shapes colonizations as different as those of Mexico and India. (It is telling in this respect, perhaps, that Columbus held that Spain’s New World was none other than the old world of which Europe was a remote dependant; the novelty for him was a function of his intention to discover that world anew, by displacing it, as it were, to a European frontier.)

From the perspectives of colonized peoples, then, informed by “other” religious and philosophical traditions, much contemporary philosophy of religion evidently acquiesces to a Eurocentric ordering of the world and of knowledge. In doing so, the philosophers do Eurocentrism the favor of granting it foundational, if not absolute, importance. Thus philosophy of religion’s very claim to secularity raises a phantom Christianity – shall we call it *religion; the religious?* – to wander the colonial order of things, its uncriticized and uncriticizable spirit, both certifier and subject of the terrifying and fascinating mystique of colonial power. Suppliant to Eurocentrism, philosophy of religion renders itself deaf to appeals and assertions of religion(s), not to mention philosophies of religion(s), pursued otherwise.

As Kenneth Surin writes in his Afterword: Religion and philosophy between the modern and postmodern, in this volume, “every culture generates for itself its own ‘thinkability’ (and concomitantly its own ‘unthinkability’ as the obverse of this very ‘thinkability’), and its concepts are constitutive of that ‘thinkability’” (327). The label, postcolonial philosophy of religion, refers to the variety of efforts (a fair selection of which are essayed in the pages that follow) to criticize cultures of coloniality, and thereby free other possibilities. The project shares genetic traits with modern and postmodern philosophy of religion in general. But it reflects critique, and refracts it, through what colonized peoples have experienced.

Tracking the spirit of colonial power through philosophy of religion is no easy task, of course. There is significant debate about the fitness of the term “postcolonial” itself. We opt to use the term, but mainly denotatively, to tie the essays into the ongoing debate without taking upon ourselves the pretense of settling it. Yadav’s

contribution to this volume offers a critique of postcolonial critique, branding it a permutation of “internal colonialism” for the benefit of a Brahmanic elite. We may also acknowledge the critiques of, say, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, and Enrique Dussel. Whether pro, con, or ambivalent, one can hardly ignore the term now; it is a core motif in the discursive consciousness shared, albeit imperfectly, by critics of actually existing world society. We offer the work of the contributors to this volume in hope of further enriching this consciousness, and rendering it more acute in the ways it may enter into the philosophy of religion as hitherto practiced. The vibrance of postcolonial experience is well reflected in the essays gathered here, and the volume should open up horizons for readers seeking an introduction to the philosophical implications of that experience for religious studies.

Reference

- Neville, Robert Cummings. 2002. *Religion in Late Modernity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Küng, Hang. 2002. *Trans. John Bowd Tracing the Way: Spiritual Dimensions of the World Religions*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Knitter, Paul F. 1995. *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Cobb, Jr., John B. 1999. *Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way Beyond Absolutism and Relativism*. Edited and introduced by Paul F. Knitter. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

What Is the “Subaltern” of the Philosophy of Religion?

Purushottama Bilimoria

Philosophy of religion concerns itself with certain questions arising from the traditional tussle between the judgment of *reason* and the commitment to *faith*, augmented by disputes over whether it is language and conceptual analysis or some direct intuitive experience that provides access to the truth claims underpinning specific scriptural utterances, as articulated in philosophical (or “natural”) theology. The late Ninian Smart lamented that philosophy of religion as conventionally practiced in discipline-bounded departments rested on two mistakes, namely its singular focus on problems of natural theology (in the context of Western theodicy) and, apropos of this, its inattentiveness to religion, even less to *religions*, as a totality of worldviews, ranging over a wide compass of doctrines, ideologies, myths and symbolic patterns, sacred practices, ultimate beliefs (that deeply inform human life rather than simply provide a basis for propositional assertions), and so on.¹ (An analogue to this is the tendency once, in philosophy of science, to be divorced from the history of science, not to speak of the laboratory itself.) Smart went on to suggest a three-tiered prolegomenon for the philosophy of religion, structured around the *comparative* analysis of religions, the *history* of religions, and the *phenomenology* of a range of (religious) experience and action (Smart 1995: 31).

Now, on the one hand, Smart has been applauded for raising concerns in this way about the parochialism of contemporary “analytic” philosophy of religion that has led virtually to its marginalization within philosophy – a field now “as inbred as the Spanish Bourbons” (Levine 1997: 11). But, on the other hand, Smart has been equally criticized for thinking that the way out of this impasse is to abandon traditional philosophical methods and concerns and, along with the history of religions and anthropology, to “go wild,” that is, to take a structuralist approach and engage in what he calls “comparative systematics” (a strategy he adopts from “Biblical *comparare* or Systematics,” implying exegetical hermeneutics and intratextual morphology more than reductive dogmatics).

There are merits, indeed, both in Smart’s realist agenda and in the rebuff from his critics. However, in my brief essay here, I do not wish to get drawn too far into the Smart problematic; rather, I wish to come in from another direction and work out some implications elsewhere from Smart’s revisionist prolegomenon. I want to suggest that, if taken seriously, Smart’s position perpetuates rather than undermines at least one of the two central dogmas on which the comparative philosophy of religion

has been based, for better or for worse. The recent shift in emphasis toward a more “cross-cultural” philosophy of religion does not mitigate the situation all that much from the present concern, although it points in the right direction insofar as it allows the comparative phenomenon under purview to emerge in its uniqueness (although the similarity in meaning of “comparative” and “cross-cultural” could be a trifle overstressed).² My critique comes from what might be seen as more peripheral – or to the “left-out” – concerns within mainstream philosophy of religion; there are ramifications nevertheless. The focus here is more specifically on the comparative philosophy of religion in its historical genesis and its widespread impact across the board, as we have seen it echoing in Smart’s prescription as well, more forcefully expressed in an earlier incarnation by Raimundo Panikkar (1980: 357–383). But much of what I argue in the end is to be seen as a supplement to, rather than a dismissal of Smart’s critique. It is indeed an extension of his bold wake-up call, made very early on to philosophy of religion, to rethink its terms of reference vis-à-vis the persistent specter of logical positivism and the gradual collapse of colonial imperialism, signaling the arrival of pluralism, tolerance, and cross-fertilization of ideas and ideals (or “worldviews in tango,” as I once heard Ninian say – which is not the kind of nuance that a Samuel Huntington would draw).

My own general claim is that comparative philosophy of religion mistakenly builds on the two dogmas of, for example, (1) comparative religion itself (within which I include Smart’s aligned tier of the history of religions) and (2) natural (or philosophical) theology per se. To deal with the first, there is the popular belief that there are things common and therefore comparable between two or more traditions or systems, and that these objects of comparison are of scholarly significance. *Compare we must*: there seems to be an inexorable imperative to compare, simply because things present themselves as similar or as different, or both. But this enterprise is fraught with difficulties: just what does one compare, how does one choose what to compare or why, and through what methodological and epistemic tools, and *who* is it that carries out the tasks, arranges the comparative material, and sets the terms for the judgments to follow? There are epistemological questions of details, description, analysis, and explanation and the approaches or disciplines that inform the processes of religious investigation. Furthermore, how or what does one compare if categories in the typology of beliefs, crucial to understanding one side of the symbolic system being juxtaposed, are decisively absent in or irrelevant to the other tradition or system?³ *Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft* thought it had the answers, but in recent decades the cards have been stacked against this enterprise, and comparative religion has looked elsewhere for succor.

For example, some have turned to comparative religion as a platform on which to build a basis for a *synthesis* of religions, drawing upon the insights and wisdom that they believe to be contained in all religions, large and small. The guiding principle in this approach has been the assumption that people everywhere have some basic, essential, religious needs that they all seem to share, and some have gone so far as to suggest that the varying quests lead ultimately to one destination: archetypal perfection or uniqueness (“God,” the Transcendent, *Ur-Grund*). This is a prescriptive concern, in that it stipulates how religion *ought* to be. Many early Western studies

of religion carried with them European ideas and presuppositions of what religion was or ought to be, whether in their quest for a “primordial” religion or in describing the “highest” religion. This subconscious bias was often manifested in the kinds of questions asked and in the categorization and classification of non-Western religions, which went hand in hand with the belief that religion can be studied “scientifically.” This objectivist foray was further reinforced by the emergence of the disciplines of philology, mythology, folk studies, history, and the so-called social sciences, particularly anthropology, sociology, ethnology, and psychology. That is to say, comparative religion emerged as a discipline that used the method of objective description and impartial comparative analysis, eschewing all vested interests in any one religion. Like science itself, the “scientific” study of religion was believed to be “value free” and neutral. The evolutionary model characterized the development of religions as being like the development of living organisms.

During this period also, European thinkers were becoming increasingly aware of other cultures and their religions, and they thought it worthwhile to study and compare different religions in a systematic way comparable to the scientific study of different species of organisms on the evolutionary continuum. The model called for the study of the degree of development of each religion so as to indicate the place of each religion in this scale of development from a simple, undeveloped, “primitive” reality to the more complex, developed, and sophisticated forms in higher civilizations. But in its fetish with mythology, comparative religion was not unlike earlier attempts, for example by Megasthenes, to look for a prototype in all religions by tracing their mythologies and folklore back to their “origins” or “borrowed” roots. The nineteenth-century discovery by Europeans of Indian texts and the ancient traditions they recorded was a contributing factor to the development of the “comparative method” in its broad sense. The constant interaction between European orientalists and the absentee Indian writers (represented through the texts that reached Europe) fueled the hearth of comparative religion. Wilhelm Halbfass, in discussing the relation between India and the comparative method, made the following perceptive observation:

It is a well-known and conspicuous fact that the development of comparative studies in the humanities has a special affinity with the development of Indian studies, and that later on the Indians themselves took a very active part in the business of comparison. The discovery of Indian materials stimulated the comparative instinct of European scholars from the end of the eighteenth century. At this time the word and concept of *comparison* itself became much more explicit and conspicuous than it had been before, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the “comparative method” had found at least a few advocates in most scholarly disciplines – comparative mythology, comparative philology, and soon-after comparative literature and comparative philosophy.⁴

Because of its imperialist genealogy – and not simply because *difference* had been forgotten in the obsession with similarity or *semblance* (cf. Cabezón 1998) – some scholars abhor the continuing fetish with “comparative x, y, z.” These, then, are some of the problems and questions, well-rehearsed in the literature and numerous proceedings, that have continued to trouble the field of comparative religion (and, by implication, comparative theology and comparative systematics).

Coming to the second dogma, what has remained unasked and unanalyzed are the larger meta-questions concerning the motivation, civilizational presuppositions, cultural location, and legacies of orientalism and colonialism, or their persistent remnants, that together affect the boundedness of certain key categories and thematic issues taken up in the comparative enterprise such as, to name a few: God (the Absolute or the Transcendent), Creation, the Problem of Evil, the Afterlife, Immortality, Sin, Redemption, Purpose, and the End. As Garry Kessler has noted, philosophy of religion since Hegel has been the philosophy of theism, and it is Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that have provided the primary resources for reflection, also, on all religions and philosophies that refract off the *Ur-Spirit* (Kessler 1999: 7). But Kessler's foray toward a "global" perspective is, admittedly, shaped by his own Western philosophical "research tradition." I have had to look elsewhere, as I share a fragment only of that "research tradition," if this is what makes for a critique. Thus, in searching for a critique and alternative perspective, I have been moved to ask questions such as: what would an *after*-orientalist, postcolonial, gendered, and cross-cultural *Critique* look like if it were brought to bear on the comparative philosophy of religion in just the way in which this trend has triggered radical rethinking within the fields of comparative literature and history (or among other lesser social sciences) where it concerns "writing about the other"? I have been groping here, somewhat in the dark abyss of emptiness, for possible horizons, suggestions, criticisms, and a trajectory for the new millennium. Allow me to share some of my thoughts.

Let me go back to the first dogma noted above and ask a slightly different question with regard to it: is there anything left of comparative philosophy of religion that either has not been exhausted by an over-taxing, over-determination of the field, as has been the case with the parallel and in some ways related cross-disciplines of comparative philosophy and comparative religion? It might be instructive to note, incidentally, that unlike philosophy of religion in the narrow or mainstream sense, neither comparative philosophy nor comparative religion could claim for itself a strong disciplinary basis. This has been so partly because their progenitors and present-day advocates, who inherited eighteenth- and nineteenth-century orientalist preoccupations with mythology and *philosophia perennis*⁵ – implying the universality across all religious philosophies – lacked both a critical-theoretical sensitivity to historiography anchored in radical historical consciousness and a deep sense of philosophical argumentation or poststructuralist critique and a critical, cross-cultural hermeneutics of suspicion. (See Bilimoria 2008a) The latter would entail a form of reflection and engagement with ideas that is distinct from just discerning mythic patterns of textual (inter-traditional) disputations and their interpretative ramifications from another felicitous perspective, usually theology mitigated by whatever remains "modern" in the arts.

Philosophy of religion, on the other hand, has remained heavily straddled – perhaps too stridently for its own good – over the rigors of logic, reason, analysis, dialectic, *reductio*, aggressive refutation, and dismissive rebuttals within established frameworks drawing from the other branches of philosophy, namely, again, logic, epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics. And the moves it makes are enacted in

almost complete ahistorical, scholastic, and non-empirically grounded abstract reasoning or disquisitions, often without regard to developments in other fields, such as in the natural sciences and the empirical social sciences (history to psychoanalysis). Philosophy of religion has considered itself to be a branch of philosophy, but only just. What has distinguished philosophy of religion from other branches of philosophy, however, is that its subject matter, or rather the questions it takes upon itself, have been derived almost exclusively from theology, philosophical and natural. Philosophy of religion has always remained aloof, inward-looking, and immersed in its own Judaeo-Christian roots (with the occasional acknowledgment of Arabic scholastic *falāsifahs*, but where Ibn *Sīnā* becomes unrecognizably hellenized as Avicenna, and Ibn Rushd as Averroes), or occluded by the terms defined mostly since medieval (European) scholasticism, and has for the large part remained totally closed to possible responses and analyses that other traditions and cultures might have on the same “big questions” it sets out to solve or resolve. There is therefore an understandable movement to retrieve aspects of the “non-Western voices” in ancient and medieval scholasticism (such as those of the Muslim *mutakallimun*, Mu’tazilite, *khawari*, and Murji’ite theologians and Jewish rabbinic scholastics), especially where these “voices” were at the same time involved in comparative argumentation (or, better, the refutation of the adversaries’ position both within and outside the “authoritative” tradition, and so on).

Comparative scholasticism, however, cannot provide an adequate model for philosophy of religion, as the latter is analytically narrower and conceptually broader than the “archivism” of scholasticism. The reason for this is that the simulacra of reason and rational disputation (the “intellectualist” thrust) within scholastic practices are too often geared toward apologetics (the rational triumph of “faith,” “hope,” and “charity”) or “performatives” (redefining the “normative”) or misological conversion – ending at times in a crusading or inquisitional dissimulation – of the rival theology and intellectual culture in confrontation with diverse religious world-views or the emergent sciences or the Enlightenment (as in the case of “baroque scholasticism”).⁶ One may concede that in the contemporary chaos of epistemic relativism (where the postmodernist turn, along with postcolonialism, is viewed with an even greater hermeneutic of suspicion than modernism is) there may be good normative (meaning ethical) grounds for cultivating (or being in the pursuit of) an “ideal” or “paradigmatic” type of comparative scholasticism. I have no dispute with this wager and might even commend it in a different forum, but that is not the concern here (and not until scholasticism of whatever ilk has been liberated from its own historical condition or the scholars practicing the academic version are also deeply personally rooted in the very traditions they seek to unravel or interpret *qua comparare*) (cf. the chapter by Paul J. Griffiths in Cabezón [1998] and Cabezón’s remarks on it, p. 245).

Coming, again, to the second question, a starting point for a critique on this point would obviously begin with the thesis of Orientalism, as popularized by Raymond Schwab (1984) and Edward Said (1978, 1985, 1993), wherein Orientalism is described as a “technology of power” (exemplifying the Foucauldian relation of power and knowledge, as developed in, for example, Foucault 1972, 1980) by

which Europe or the Occident authorizes to itself the representation (in text) of its silent other, in the image of its own invulnerable essences and universalizing self (subject), but which it finds lacking, or lagging behind in the Oriental world that is the object. But Said in particular does not believe that there was or is any real discursive place called the “Orient,” because Orientalism was through-and-through a Western construct (even though Said is aware that some European scholars, such as Max Müller and the Romantics, had traced a historical placenta between the birth of modern Europe and ancient Indo-Aryan language cultures, which is linked also to the “Aryanization” of the Indo-European *mentalité*).⁷ Therefore, according to this non-foundationalist, anti-orientalist thesis, it is fruitless to look for “essentialist” answers as alternatives or counterpoints to Occidental discursive projections; it is sufficient that one de-centers the Western discourse by criticizing its discursive formation of the Orient, or the East, without necessarily substituting anything else in its place.

The bizarre consequence of this strategy would be – as with much of postmodern deconstructionism – that it eventually helps to wipe clean centuries, if not millennia, of *real* ideas of the sacred, community, and social organization, as well as aspirations to rationality, enlightened cultural development, intellectual ferment, and even resistance, in locations other than the mythic space constructed within the orientalist imaginary. Why, one is moved to ask, can there not be (or could not have been) indigenous attempts at writing their own narratives, histories, commentaries on literature, scholasticism if you will, social analysis, philosophies, and religious hagiographies, et cetera? The recognition (early on by Marxist scholars) that there have been such attempts, usually born out of resistance, even at the peak of European colonial domination, gave way to a series of critiques that stressed the shift away from colonial, nationalist, and, in the main, orientalist ways of seeing non-European cultures and how it might be possible to recover (“retrieve”) the “voice” of nativist authorship in the postcolonial period.

Such a non-teleological and “hands-on-the-ground” strategy might even be called “contestatory” or “insurgent reading,” as underscored in the enterprise of the subaltern studies group that has attempted to give prominence to the concept of *subalterneity* and the writing of “history-from-below” (Prakash 1990: 400), or from the “gaps.” For instance, while most writers within this powerful genre would dispute the all-too-easy romantic demarcation of the East (India) as the cradle of spiritualism and the West (Europe) as the site of decadent materialism, others have quibbled about the extent to which nineteenth-century Indian nationalism was born out of religious revivalism (a nascent Hindu “renaissance”), ideological shifts within the caste hierarchy, peasant unrest, the exacerbation of class divisions under colonial reconfiguration, or the slow collapse of capitalism (or a bit of each) (see Chatterjee 1986, 1995–1996; Chakrabarty 2000). While the notion of “*difference*” is what might unite the often internecine strands of the radical critique emerging from a variety of such quarters, what seems common, and also instructive for the present purposes, is their power to question the unmitigated bias and, at certain critical points, the sheer hegemony of the European, colonial, modernist, and nationalist reinscription of a project that would remain for the most part alien to, if

not oppressive of, the sensibilities of the other (“the other” not in Rudolph Otto’s sense of the “The Wholly Other,” or *Altarity*, but rather *alterity* as the “enslaved,” “dispossessed,” “displaced” other, which could peripheralize an entire civilization and cultures with the single brush of a pen, as it were).

So the general claim being contested in the kind of emergent critique just outlined is that each moment in the modernist onslaught structurally contributed to the suppression of indigenist insights, that is, an earlier or native rationality, the pluriform of worship or ritual discourse, a rich tapestry of iconography, diverse moral practices, customary legal or jurisprudential traditions and a magical cosmology undergirding much of these. The more specific concern is to test the observations of a handful of postcolonial Indian writers (Homi Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy, Gayatri Spivak, and Gyan Prakash) that asymmetrical translations and transcreations of non-Western texts displace the indigenous understanding by reframing and reencoding the signs precisely within a Euro-centered imaging of the world whose cognitive claims are derived from the historical experiences of European (modernist) cultures (cf. Dutton, discussing Tejaswari Niranjana’s critique). Roger Ames puts it elegantly in simpler terms, thus: “When a concept is assigned an English [or non-native] equivalent, much of the depth of the original concept tends to be lost: its word image, its allusive effectiveness, its morphological implications. At the same time, especially with philosophical vocabulary, inappropriate associations are evoked by the translated term to the extent that it is burdened by its own cultural history” (Ames 1989: 265).

Fine sentiments, one might remark, but how is all this particularly relevant to the concerns of philosophy of religion, and to a critique of comparative philosophy of religion? Precisely – since we are attempting to trace the “subaltern” of the comparative philosophy of religion. Let us begin with a simple example. The so-called problem of evil that has occupied the Western analytic philosophy of religion from Epicurus to J. L. Mackie, among others, has concerned itself with a conceptualization of evil at a very high level of abstraction supervenient upon the doctrine of God as omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, which has allowed it to be succumbed to – what one of its own protagonists has dubbed a “value-theory imperialism of morals” (Adams 1999: 3–4; Zupko 2002). This monolithic model, when it gets transposed across to comparative (philosophy of) religion, has sent scholars scrambling for similar explanations or responses to paradoxes as rehearsed in the Western tradition (Bilimoria 1995a, especially pp. 1–5).

Apart from the patent misfit or disjuncture, especially in the case of traditions that entertain none of the supervenient doctrines, the tendency has been to ignore other kinds of evils – lesser but none the worse or more real for it – and also suffering that have been experienced by and, in certain instances, visited upon people, other sentient creatures, and ecosystems by the machinations of corporate exploitation or institutional colonization and through the psychophysical aberrations of individuals (from murder, rape, pornography, and other crimes against people to cruelty to animals). Marilyn McCord Adams calls these “horrendous evils” (as distinct from natural evils such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and the like), but she also wonders whether the erstwhile freewill theodicy is all that is needed to

reductively place responsibility squarely on human choice and, as it were, get God off the hook for these horrendous evils – *or vice versa*? There is something curiously phlegmatic about such a preoccupation. Even McCord Adams' suggestion to look for a way out of this impasse in the resources within one's own "faith" tradition does not get us far, either, toward a convincing philosophical solution or a dismantling of this construction from the perspective of non-faith-based traditions (which might look, for instance, to a sense of community to reason through the problematic – and here I am thinking of the Buddhist and, to an extent, the Mencian, Daoist, and Confucian systems of thought). How does it help us to come to terms with and heal the horrendous evils committed by one culture, or one civilization, upon groups of people from another who have apparently (in the eyes of the intending colonizers at least) not been equally blessed in the same measure by the design of natural law with the same divine goods?

To press the example of the problem of evil in a slightly different direction, consider that the junction of European-instigated Oriental-Indological research and British colonialism at times led to immensely fruitful outcomes, but it also resulted in producing a philosophic culture marked by what some writers have called *ambivalence and hybridity* under the ruse of "deep orientalism" (cf. Bhabha 1994; on "deep orientalism," see Pollock 1990: *passim*). Thus, the "law of karma," when confronted, again, with the (Western) scholastic problem of evil, evoked at best an utterly "fatalistic" interpretation and ambiguous *apologia* for the Indian moral life-world. This amoral trope proved even more alarmingly antinomous for those theodicies that gave no place or prominence to an all-loving, all-forgiving Supreme Deity – an omnipotent deity or Omni-God, to be sure, who might have had some well-intended purpose (*providential telos*) in creating the best of all possible worlds with "evil" as part of its ontological fabric rather than reducing this palpable recognition to a form of suffering, as a vain consequence or psychic and ontic trace-effect (*apūrva*) of human action or lapsed sacrifices, as was discovered to be the case in Buddhist thought and the Hindu Mīmāṃsā, respectively (Bilimoria 1995a). Likewise, the Buddha's First Noble Truth on the existential facticity of suffering stood transformed into the axiomatic edict: "*that there is Evil, only so compounded with Suffering.*" (This effectively subverts the Buddha, turning him on his head; Raimundo Panikkar still recites this as an authentic comparativist or quaintly "imparativist" mantra, because it warrants space for Providence, which nontheist and pantheist cosmologies do not.) Outside a strong theistic (let alone monotheistic) framework, the problem of evil might wither away or be recast in less ontologically loaded terms, and the atheist (nontheist, pantheist, and Process theologues alike) would not be burdened with the onus of justifying the otherwise palpably obvious presence of evil in the absence of Providence to provide release from its sting.

Of course, the larger problematic (which is not my concern here) of the relation of European colonial philosophy with Indian thought generally has been examined by J. L. Mehta, Wilhelm Halbfass, and J. G. Arapura, and with Buddhist thought by Almond, Tuck, Lopez, and Cabézon, among others, and they all bring very helpful insights; however, the more specific terrain of a "deep orientalism" or colonialism operating within comparative philosophy of religion remains yet to be investigated.⁸

When applied to other disciplines beyond the excesses of Indian historiography, there are ramifications here also for the comparative history of philosophy and history of religions that focus on non-Western textual, so-called oral, and reconstructed premodern textualities of the “other.”

The Postcolonial/Subaltern Critique Revisited

My purpose in setting up the debate in this way (and one or two symposia ensuing from it) is to press the following question: indeed, has not philosophy of religion, especially when such a discipline is touted among unsuspecting non-Western traditions in its comparativist guise, been guilty of similar epistemic crimes or a philosophic “evil” as we have been told with respect to the history of British India? And this problematic can then be generalized to the rest of the (“third”) world space – hence the scourge of “third worldism.” But what would it *mean* even to attempt to think in terms of the “postcolonial/subaltern critique” in the context of Asian philosophy of religion and of the broader cross-cultural enterprise? One can become equally restless here and rush into making judgments about the Eurocentric, hegemonic, and homogenizing tendencies in much of the standard practice of philosophy of religion (cf. the various essays in Dean [1995]).

Still, I am interested in exploring this judgment and critique in one area of its practice – to wit, the eighteenth-to-nineteenth-century model of philosophy of religion as it emerged in India – and that has been the focus of the historical sketch I have presented elsewhere (and I will draw liberally from that work for this report). I want to understand how this “comparative” model might have been linked with the overarching colonialist discourse, in what way it could be said to be interventionist, and what impact it has had on thinking about problems of religion in the writings of non-Western philosophers generally to the present day.

For a more systematic inquiry, such a move may begin simply with a quibble from some quarter within, say, tradition A about the way in which a supposed “truth claim” is represented in a first-order adjudication of its apparent conflict with truth claims in traditions B, C, D, et cetera, even though it could go on to champion a theoretical critique to the problematic of framing and privileging with the intent of grading *truth claims* in the first instance. How many truths are we to admit, even if provisionally? Whose truth(s)? Whose miracles? Whose ontology?

To be sure, comparative religion had already made forays into evaluative judgments about the “truth” of religious and normative judgments concerning the value of religions, and perhaps prescriptive judgments about the best route by which the ultimate aim of religion can be achieved. This concern has surfaced more notably in the current vogue of “interreligious dialogue” or ecumenism and “cross-cultural studies of religion.” How should this task be carried out? But philosophy of religion has been more conscientious, and circumspect, about this because it has reminded itself constantly of the deep epistemological problems underpinning its problem areas, or else the discipline is made cognizant of the trappings of an uncritical

enthusiasm by its sheer affinity to other research programs in philosophy, from logic to ethics – and quite a few lessons have been learned from developments in astronomy, physics, and other branches of natural philosophy, but perhaps most significantly from conceptual advances in metaphysics (transcendental and naturalized). Thus, drawing on the latter, it is noted that the “big question” is as much about *existence qua being* as it is about the possibility of there being (or not being) a Supreme Deity whose essence it might be (or, then again, it might not be) to claim this status; but what if there is a disjuncture between existence and essence (as Kant pointed out), and what if *nothingness* (or non-self-existing) were taken to be the ultimate *potency* of all being? (In other words, taking the Thomistic perspective, if God’s *essentia* is the pure act of self-existence [*esse*], and God is the *prima causa* of everything, of all being, one might show that the idea of self-existence as an intrinsic essence in all possible worlds is incoherent, and that all things are interdependently, contingently originated and related as many potencies, or that, in any event, the thesis about self-being as an *essentia* needs to be demonstrated before any such claim could be made with respect to a “highest” being beyond which no greater can be conceived.)

Likewise, the requirement of falsifiability is widely accepted among philosophers of religion as it has become axiomatic in the philosophy of science, but this criterion is shunned for its stringency and logical empiricist overlays by theological philosophers who prefer some deferred model of verifiability (and, by implication, falsifiability *hereafter*), as John Hick had advocated with respect to the claim of the Christian God and generalized under a sort of Hindu Advaita vision of “Nondual trans-theism.”⁹ Or, they maintain, like Hare, a “*blik*-out-all-options-open” for the time-being, as though in waiting (on the theory that there are fundamental assumptions that are not open to scientific testing, hence *blik*).¹⁰ That might be a safer way to go, but we get nowhere nearer to the question of the criteria of truth and the basis for our acceptance of religious truth claims.

Furthermore, passing judgment on truth or falsity becomes a tricky task when religions all present themselves as alternative claimants to the ultimate truth. Are any of them right? By what tests do we evaluate competing religious traditions or subtraditions? Further, one might ask, can religions be evaluated as “better,” “superior,” “truer,” et cetera, without making additional value judgments? Can one admit some gradation of “truth” in these religions without putting one’s own religion in a compromised position? It is one thing to ponder the truth of religions (as a whole, under one paradigm, in contrast to its rival, say, science), but quite another to introduce the idea of “gradations of truth,” for this latter move prejudices that there is some *truth* – from a modicum to a whole lot – shared by religions across the board, and the only problem facing the philosopher of religion is to arrange them accordingly along a sliding scale. What would the religion that makes it to the top end of the scale “taste like”? – as an Indian Mīmāṃsāka asked his adversary, who seemed to be suggesting that the ultimate truth has the quality of being perfectly beautiful!

Scholars like Paul J. Griffiths and Delmas Lewis have argued that it is a legitimate task of comparative philosophy of religion to look at ways in which the truth claims, values, normative concerns, and fulfillment possibilities of one religion can

be measured against those of another from a vantage point outside all religions or from an objective frame of reference, such as might be provided by rationality or meta-cultural critique (Griffiths and Lewis 1983: 75–80; Bilimoria 1999). Evaluation may involve a grading of religions in terms of some agreed-upon criteria. Earlier on, R. C. Zaehner, for example, attempted to do this with the various forms of mysticism that he studied across different cultures. But in so grading and comparing religions, is one not presupposing that religions are somehow universal and not confined or localized to the particular people for whom they have unique meaning and value? Can one judge, for example, that the “Dreamtime,” as a concept of the “transcendent” in Australian Aboriginal religion, is less sophisticated than the concept of Brahman in Hinduism, or even that all such notions belong to the loose cannon of what Streng called the transcendental reality. Do all religions necessarily have to make reference to one or another conception of ultimate reality in any trans-human, transcendental form? Here the nontheistic and noninstitutional Chinese “religion” of Taoism has continued to present problems to scholars who begin with such a hard conceptual approach. What is one comparing, if not the different ways in which the comparative paradigm has been set up with its own essentialist and universal presuppositions to boot!

So the question comes down to this: can religions in reality be compared? A positive answer to this presumes that (1) there is a multiplicity of religious phenomena across various cultures, (2) they can be grouped into “religions,” and (3) they have something in common (e.g., a belief in the transcendent or in “sacred things” and in the possibility of salvation or liberation). But on the other hand, if we were to suppose that each religion is an organic whole and 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. For example, to labor this point somewhat, can one isolate the ritual consumption of animal blood in Australian Aboriginal religion and compare it with the consumption of wine as the “blood of Christ” in the Christian Eucharist, or with the alleged bloodthirsty tendencies of the Hindu goddess Kali? Again, would it make sense to compare the Aboriginal Serpent-Rainbow with Vishnu-on-the-serpent in the Hindu pantheon? How far can we get with such comparisons?

If religions are organic wholes, then it would be difficult to make any meaningful comparisons of the sort mentioned in the examples above. Some have argued that we can look for common *themes* across religions, such as scriptures, worship, gods, incarnation, sacraments, mysticism, salvation, and enlightenment. Again, there are problems in lifting aspects or parts out of their context whereby their meaning might be lost. Now, if we cannot isolate and compare parts for fear of removing them from their specific setting (historical, cultural, theological, or simply functional), how can we compare religions as *whole* units? Similar kinds of problems bedevil the comparative philosophy-of-religion enterprise as well, for the range or pool of issues or themes is even more limited, confined mostly to questions of theodicy and certain select problems from theology, as the examples we have discussed attest to.

Hence, it comes down to this: how one positions oneself in philosophizing with or on behalf of the other must indeed be a critical question (I am tempted to say *the* critical issue for cross-cultural philosophy of religion). Questions like this are supplements rather than substitutes for the central concerns in mainstream philosophy of religion, but they would consciously displace the erstwhile preoccupations and ill-formulated questions within the field of comparative philosophy of religion modeled on or instigated by the once-popular enterprises of comparative philosophy and comparative religion or, to use its other name, the *history of religions*. This point needs elaboration.

When P. Masson-Oursel in 1923 articulated the discipline of comparative philosophy, from which arose comparative philosophy of religion, he was arguably thinking of comparing existing and known systems of thought broadly within Western civilization, with possibly some perfunctory reference to comparable or analogous traditions in the distant past of the Christian West, most notably Arabic Islam. The comparative thrust has had more of an impact in the study of religions and cultures than it has had in philosophy as such, although those more inclined toward non-Western thought have taken rather fervently to the comparative enterprise than have their counterparts in the Western philosophical enclaves.

Speaking of nineteenth-century influences, there is a story – which cannot be related in its entirety here – that while Hegel was wrestling with the Orient in his more historicized march of Reason, and Schopenhauer was confidently proclaiming that “Indian wisdom is flowing back into Europe and it will produce a fundamental change in our knowing and thinking,”¹¹ Nietzsche stepped back and urged that it was time the West tied the Gordian knot again, regained its Greek integrity, and dispelled the magic of the East (Bilimoria 2008: 364–70; see also Mistry 1981, among other works on Nietzsche in relation to Asian thought and Buddhism). He cautioned that certain dangers lay in wait for those who made the detour away from the safe harbor of their own way of thinking. (Heidegger, much later, seems to have taken this message to heart, but he also turned briefly to dabble in non-Western thought, if only to caution the East to be wary of the “Europeanization of the earth.”)¹² Nevertheless, the ferment and excitement in Europe over Indian thought, the discovery of Sanskrit and the shared Aryan roots of Indo-European culture, and its possibilities as well as the negative downside for metaphysics, natural theology and philosophy, and aesthetics were to shape in a profound way a constructed “Indian renaissance,” beginning with Raja Rammohan Roy and proceeding through the long chain of modern Indian philosophers until the present-day lacuna wherein there are virtually no departments for the study of religion and hardly much interest in philosophy of religion in Indian universities. J. L. Mehta narrates how even before the infamous 1835 Minutes on Education of Lord Macaulay, Rammohan Roy in 1823 protested against a government Sanskrit College in Calcutta on the grounds that this would encourage the perpetuation of ignorance, of a sort of pre-Baconian Dark Age (Jackson in Mehta 1992: 146; Sarkar 1975).

While Rammohan Roy mingled freely with British orientalist (he was friendly also with Jeremy Bentham and the Mills), he drew up his own agenda for the “modernizing of India” that drew philosophical, religious, social, and political sustenance

more from a “bloodless cosmopolitanism” than it did from indigenous sensibilities (Bilimoria 1984).¹³ Among the set of “creeds” promulgated by the Brahmos, polytheism and idol worship are definitely denounced, and “faith in the doctrine of karma and rebirth [made] optional” (Bilimoria 1984: 47). The noted Bengali lyricists Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Meghnad Madhusudan, through their writings, would “purify” the linguistic habits of the natives (or bring back ordinary language from its vacation), and together with Keshab Chunder Sen’s “flaming enthusiasm” for the marriage of Eastern and Western religiosities, herald in a New Dispensation, modeled for all intents and purposes on (European) “classical” theism and its supporting ecclesia. Even to the ardent critics of their time, the linguistic monstrosities and the neo-Hindu congregation (Brahmo śamāḥ) looked more like a Calvinist Protestant reworking of Hindu śāstras into a rationally pragmatic-systematic worldview, with its philosophic theology sanitized of all the arcane magical, mystical, numinously ritualistic, and aberrant and superstitious tendencies of yore (Mehta 1992: 156).

In his numerous confrontations with orthodox and lay Hindu opponents, Rammohan Roy used the standard argumentative style and appealed to reason and Enlightenment morality to defend his own hybrid theology. This tradition of an articulate Hindu defense was already rife and mastered by Maharashtra *Pandits* like Vishnubawa Brahmachari in aggressive counterattacks against Christian doctrines in open confrontations with Christian missionaries like Dr. John Wilson,¹⁴ or against the views of Ruskin, in circulation after the 1857 Mutiny, that were dismissive of Indian philosophy as “childish” or “restricted in their philosophies and faith,” views that were echoed elsewhere in descriptions of Indian thought as pathetically illiterate, idiot-like, God-intoxicated, tantric aberrations,¹⁵ a sure sign of “the grossest fetishism,” as J. Murray Mitchell was wont to suggest (Mitchell 1885: 258).¹⁶ But, on the other hand, these fervent symbols, insights, arguments, and tropes also served as prolegomena for the patriotic stirrings and the nationalist struggle looming on the horizon.

In 1917 Beni Madhab Barua became the first Indian to earn a D.Litt degree from the University of London, and a year later he published a treatise, *Prolegomena to a History of Buddhist Philosophy* (Barua 1974), in which he perpetrated a myth that “Divine Philosophy” had chosen two separate countries as “her sacred homesteads of which the earlier one was India” (p. 5). He went on to show the “decadence of Buddhism,” which resulted from an excessive Yavana or Greek influence on the Indian mind. This subverts the German philological-philosophical ideology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which saw its roots in Greek origins, as distinct from Latin and Hebrew antecedents, to which it sought to return. But it is also arrogant in claiming such high purity for Hindu philosophy.

Other Bengali or short-term Calcutta-based savants who made their early careers on this rising tide of rationalism followed by the nationalist discourse that affected, wittingly or unwittingly, the twentieth-century philosophy of religion coming out of India emerged and immortalized themselves. Among them were: Akshay Sarkar,¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo (whose works in this context are legendary), Surendra Nath Dasgupta (who began by comparing Bradleyian idealism with Indian metaphysics and was

subsequently drawn to deist possibilities, publishing *Religion and Rational Outlook* in 1954), the very upright Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (busily saving appearances in Plato's academy),¹⁸ and an underrated Jadhunath Sinha (with his tomes on Indian philosophy and psychology). The logical theism of Udayana, a medieval *Nyāya* scholar, came increasingly to the attention of Indian philosophers because he offered "proofs" that more resembled the Five Ways of Aquinas. Thus, Georg Chemparathy spent a good part of his Christian academic life in Utrecht translating and commenting on Udayana's theism for a Western theological interest, as did Indian Jesuit scholars in Pune, and John Vattanky chose to focus on God (*Īśvara*) in *Gaṅgeśa's* monumental work on logic, language, and epistemology.¹⁹ Meanwhile Radhakrishnan practiced a pedigree of comparative philosophy of religion that drew India's wisdom equally close to the Gnostic insights of the West, which would go toward developing a rational Advaita metaphysics (a project still in the making between Varanasi, Hartford, and Montreal).

But what do we gain from such messengers, other than the glory of the medium? Do we need, for instance, to be told that Advaita *Vedānta* could be considered a strong metaphysical system on a par with McTaggart–Bradleyian idealism, et cetera, or with David Lewis' possible-worlds plurality (if there can be any comparison here at all)? Little wonder that the late and beloved Professor Bimal Matilal, who underwent the full classical training of a Sanskrit *Paṇḍit*-scholar (before he encountered Radhakrishnan in his own Sanskrit College and subsequently Quine and Ingalls at Harvard), was inspired to offer a thoroughgoing *logical* (meaning epistemological and linguistic) defense of "mysticism" in his inaugural lecture as the holder of the Spalding Chair at All Souls College of the Faithful Departed in Oxford (Matilal 2002; Bilimoria and Mohanty 1997). The imperative to show, as much as possible in rational terms, that Hindu philosophy was equal if not superior to all other philosophies, and the belief in some form of the Absolute (whether monist, monotheistic, dualistic, pantheistic, or the qualified variations in-between) gained increasing momentum, to the neglect or the undermining of those schools or systems that questioned the coherency of such beliefs. Thus, for instance, the *Mīmāṃsā* hardly received more than a passing mention in the works on Indologists of the more philosophical or theological bent. Dismissed as having "no philosophical doctrine" (Mitchell 1885: 201, 217), trading in exegetic scholasticism and ritual hermeneutics, it remained – as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa had complained back in the tenth century – reduced to the status of Lokayāta, or *Cārvāka-darśana*, of naturalistic materialism with its patently hedonistic ethic (*Śloka-vārttika* I.i.10).

Yet, *Mīmāṃsā* presented a profound scope for an articulated critique of all theodicies, alongside the philosophical doubts of Guano, Hume, Kant, Bacon, and the logical positivists, about the reality of a supremely divine being and about the absolutes of metaphysics. Its predisposition toward the deconstruction of "onto-theo-logos" of the kind that had emerged from the historical Indian tradition was further crushed when in 1923 one Pasupathinath Sastri, invoking Max Müller, mounted a vehement defense of the *Mīmāṃsā's* apparent theism or "belief in God," for which he (mis)took *belief* in the supremacy of the Veda (*āstikatva*) to be the necessary and sufficient condition. (So it follows that those who do not subscribe

to the Vedas – this includes Buddhists, but also Christians, Judaists, and Muslims – cannot be said to have a legitimate belief in God!) A profound category mistake that commits a theory of “Authorless Testimony” to an unabashed theodicy is an act of apologetics, not rational philosophizing. It was not until the early 1990s that papers such as “Hindu Doubts about God: Towards a Mīmāṃsā Deconstruction” (Bilimoria 1990; see also Krishna 1997) began to appear, showing that the key Mīmāṃsā protagonist, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, was possibly a Humean in disguise who hounded crypto-Hindu theists and deists a few centuries before Hume was to upset the cart of philosophical theology in the West.

Dreamy Scenarios

Moving away from India to a nearby Pacific colony, I shall give a very brief example from a study of Australian Aboriginal culture in a little more analytical detail even as present-day Australians are still struggling to reconcile themselves to their colonialist ancestors’ act of displacing native Aboriginal people from their spiritual identity with the land in the name of the exported Queen, Country, and God of the Church. Kenneth Maddock, a leading researcher on Aboriginal religion, commenting on earlier anthropological work on Aboriginal culture, notes that because Aborigines were “passive recipients of unmotivated gifts” that come through the powers of the All-Father/All-Mother in accordance with laws set down in the Dreamtime, they were morally denying “the creativity which is truly theirs.” Thus, he adjudges this as “false consciousness,” in contrast to the “true consciousness” that hermetically recognizes that “individuals are vehicles of their society’s traditions.” This “false consciousness” or unfounded beliefs of the Aboriginal people “abstracts imaginatively” what is “actually human creativity” as being “powers standing over and against men,” according to Maddock (cf. 1987a, b; also Maddock’s contributions in Morphy et al. 1989).

This amounts to saying that the Dreamtime is a figment of Aboriginal imagination, from the general premise that the idea of and belief in nonhuman powers (perhaps other than an almighty, freewill-respecting God) stems from imaginative abstractions. Hence, the All-Father/All-Mother and Rainbow Serpent of ambiguous gender, and the “Law” that they promulgate, merely provide a bridge between the imagined spirit ancestors and totems below. Note that Maddock has here locked himself into a “true-false”/“transcendental-totemic,” “belief-myth” dichotomy, just as Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade could not see beyond the “sacred-profane” oppositional binary, or as Otto was unable to go past the holy numinous ideation delimited by his noninclusive categories of *mysterium*, *tremendum*, *et fascinans*. Conversely, R. C. Zaehner was insistent on the irreducibility of belief in a monotheistic God, whether encountered as the transcendent, differentiated entity (Omni-God, the theophanic Krishna, *spirit worlds*, *poly-heno-panentheism*) or the transcendent existing in the center within (“soul,” *ātman*, *pudgala*, *totem*, *fetish*) (Zaehner 1957).²⁰ Or, for that matter, there is the suggestion that there has to be an

uncompromising *rational* ordering of the world. But it augurs even less well to read into these beliefs fideist assumptions that renegade Swanseans like D. Z. Phillips would want to import into the nonnaturalistic theory. (A telling example of a fideist thesis is the following: *religious beliefs cannot be affected by personal, social, or cultural events* [Phillips 1986: 15].)

Radcliffe-Brown had known better that religious beliefs *qua beliefs* in Aboriginal Australian religion by themselves were of little significance when seen within the context of the larger mythological and cosmological picture – “worldview” in the sense in which Ninian Smart has championed it is probably closer to their predilection. Clearly, then, the Aboriginal consciousness in Maddock’s Malthusian characterization is no more “false” than it is “true” that the alien Martians have green skin, or that if my Tibetan shitshu dogs were to conceive of the supremely transcendent in the dog-world *than that of which no larger herder can be conceived* that it will be a Super-Dog (*fido absconditus* notwithstanding). Must the rationality of the belief be dependent entirely or be modeled on the soundness of theistic or proto-theistic and ontological/metaphysical arguments (again, as in Anselm, or in Aquinas, Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Swinburne, and so on)?

Now here is a sound argument: “If two plus two equals four, then God exists; two plus two does equal four, therefore God exists” (cf. Nelson 1996: 7, and notes). Do people anywhere seriously base their beliefs on such arguments? Alternatively, need we even admit of the Barthian possibility, namely that the religious belief is properly *basic*, that is, is it rational to accept it without accepting it on the terms of any proposition or belief at all? But then Nāgārjuna, the second-century C.E. Buddhist dialectician, with a little help from J. N. Findlay, could argue that belief in the nonexistence of Omni-God is properly *basic*; or Charles Hartshorne, stretching Ṛigvedic insights on *asat* or Nonbeing, could justify Whiteheadian process-panteism.²¹ Need they, however, defer to any kind of rational justification – as necessary, essential, or basic? Wittgenstein, who became fond of Tagore’s writings, chided both Bertrand Russell and the parson for trying to win the argument either way, lamenting that these (postwar days) were indeed “a sorry time for the philosophy of religion in the English-speaking countries.”²² But simply because Wittgenstein refused to look for philosophical foundations and justifications for religious belief, it does not follow that theology and its fragmented reincarnations in comparative religion should unrepentantly transmigrate to far-off colonies! One wonders, therefore, if looking for the soundness of either theistic or nontheistic (i.e., atheistic and agnostic) arguments is any longer a tenable enterprise. In other words, such beliefs as we are concerned with need not be viewed as first-order truth claims but rather located as part of a complicated “language-game” built up through accepted cultural experiences, or as part of a normative “form of life,” as Wittgenstein would put it. Do people anywhere seriously base their beliefs on such arguments? As Nietzsche once complained, “I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar” (quoted in Solomon 1995).

Kant and Wittgenstein, of course, denied the possibility of personal experience of the transcendent in terms of the categories acceptable to empirical and rational understanding, insisting that all our knowledge of the transcendent remains highly symbolic: the inarticulateness of the *unconditioned*, or that all our talk can only be

talk of the *Sublime*, in supplemental discourses (as in the third *Critique*). But in those systems or traditions where personal experience of the transcendent is admitted, it is not intended to grant *universal* legitimacy to a particular cultural frame of reference and belief system. Rather one learns to negotiate different transcendent beliefs by interpreting them within a self-reflective epistemic discourse without the constraints of a limiting universal paradigm (See S. Akhtar, cited in Nielsen 1994: 11; see also Alston et al. 1992). It is important to pause for a moment at this juncture and really ask how concepts like necessity, universal, essential, analyticity, a prioricity, *ens realissimum*, the transcendent, and transcendental, enter into Western philosophy (and gradually affect philosophy of religion). It might not occur to many that each has a root in an earlier theological, even biblical, term expressive of notions, respectively, like eternity, immutability, distinguishing mark, predestined, never-before revelation (akin to the Sanskrit *apūrva*), identity of likenesses, God’s will for the natural, and of heavenly, et cetera. Whence they become *sui generis* concepts and assume a life all their own in propositional and logical formulations is something of an enigma, but we get some clues from St. Anselm’s so-called ontological preoccupations and from Augustine and Aquinas deferring to the ghosts of the philosophers, namely Plato, Aristotle, and Philo, among others.

Bringing these critiques and considerations toward a closure, I am tempted to say that the founders of natural theology, the precursor to classical and contemporary philosophy of religion, were ill aware that they had placed themselves in the half-self-deprecating *subaltern* position, as Gramsci might put it, and in this way invited the subordination of their own inner passions, cultural sensibilities, et cetera. But, simultaneously, this onto-theology instilled in them the desire or mission to civilize and uplift the moral and intellectual conditions of the near and remote pagans, barbarians, heathens, depraved, et cetera. The transcendent affirms its existence in and through arguments. Or perhaps natural theologians presupposed that Omni-God would like theistic arguments to succeed and nontheistic ones to fail. Even a disingenuous premise introduced stealthily into a prayer to stifle the Fool – as in Anselm’s famous *reductio* that what is *in re* is greater than what is simply *in intellectu* – would be pleasing to Omni-God. But would an Omni-God true to His (non-gendered) ethical form be more on the side of *dishonest* theists than on the side of honest *nontheists* (cf. Nelson 1996)? And it matters little what kind of Omni-God these arguments clinch “proofs” of – the God of classical philosophers, of *traditional* Christianity, of the revisionist rational reconstructivists (of the Alston and Hartshorne variety), of secularists in spite of themselves (like Hicks, Braithwaite, and D. Z. Phillips),²³ or of the Hindu theistic advocates (like Madhva, Caitanya, Krishnaism, Hindutva, Naipaul, and most modern-day Mahā-Gurus).

Finale

In closing I have one incident to report (with a useful background) that recounts and sums up the gist of the argument I have endeavored to sketch here. This comes from a symposium dedicated to a reappraisal of Gayatri Spivak’s critique of “postcolonial

reason”²⁴ that I think should help shed light on an issue raised earlier, namely: need one retreat to observations of faith, or an apologia for a superior position, when a charge is leveled from another tradition, A, that what is lacking in B is the full working out of the power, or “gift,” of reason and rationality? Kant, Rousseau, and Hegel led the charge in the post-Enlightenment era. Foreshadowed in the first *Critique* and worked out more fully in subsequent essays, Kant had drawn a sharp line between those whose cognitive faculties are not yet mature and those whose cognitive faculties are informed by the categories of understanding (even erring on the side of misunderstanding) such abstractions as concepts, laws, theories, principles, axioms, antinomies, and more complex deductive postulates – of God, freedom, and immortality. It is by virtue of the “internal purposiveness of organization” (Spivak 1999: 30) that the person cultivated by reason unifies nature with inner ethical laws and pursues them as duty, with a *telos*.

By contrast, the “raw man of the Analytic of the Sublime” is stuck, as it were, in the down-under “*Abgrund*-affect without surreptitiously” being able to “shuttle over to *Grund*.”²⁵ Kant would insist that the conditions of freedom are not for the *affective* (i.e., those given over to the passions, feelings, emotions – in short, to natural tendencies), even though their conduct may well appear to be morally innocuous and beneficial in other social respects – for instance child-rearing, community or filial cohesion, and friendliness (which rather signal their ready state for missionary colonization) – because even the principles and laws of practical workings must conform to and be derivable from the laws of pure reason, since theoretical reason alone knows or is the knowing Subject. Spivak captures this “foreclosure” perspicuously in this sentence: “The raw man has not yet achieved or does not possess a subject whose *Anlage* or programming includes the structure of feeling for the moral” (Spivak 1999: 14); he has not even fallen between the wedges of the *Critiques* (as the under-caste in a hierarchized order might be thought to be; he is not yet ready to be “cooked” by culture).²⁶ Would that the moral incentive of pure practical reason, which gives us moral laws, is forever debarred to them and also to their gods/goddesses. Rousseau and Hegel reinforced the divide in their own ways by invoking political-cosmopolitan registers and the trajectory of the historical march (or dialectic) of reason.

Recounting further the antics and textual moves by which the “Boys of Europe” foregrounded this radical-othering judgment in Enlightenment thinking, Spivak’s response in the end has been to dismiss the privileging of reason that is at stake here, and to say “woe” to those who believe that the worth and dignity of one human group is to be adjudged by the extent to which it has or has not developed the faculty of reason, rationality, the art of argumentation, logic, and so on. It is rather the ethical commitments, the human values of decency, compassion, community-building and hospitality, perhaps, that count more than the achievements of the might of reason and the technologies that follow from its mathematical discoveries. Not surprisingly, Spivak further draws a complicitous link between the puritan culture of reason and what passes today as a self-styled postcolonial discourse (hence “postcolonial reason”), following its corruption at the hands of *bhadralok bābus*, or the motley of ex-colonial “native informants,” displaced modernists, nationalist intelligentsia,

and colored neocolonialists alike, at the ready, literally, to assume the seats vacated by the former European masters. And we also noted earlier the incongruity of the nineteenth-century Indian attempt to rationalize a sanitized form of elite religion on the basis of reason without any real regard for the history and social structures of lived religious traditions. Just as the European *philosophes* (barring perhaps Voltaire and Spinoza) had faith in sober rational discourse as the means for understanding other cultures without stopping to ponder that their system could be just one of the many possibilities of rational treatment that each tradition evolves in its own way, the Indian (and early twentieth-century Chinese) nationalists became convinced of the irrationality of their own societies and, hence, by parity, the superior standards of rationality exemplified in the West. This is simply an instance of ethnocentrism, where a constructed artifact (and a historicized rationality is just that) is imposed, for *good reasons* and *their own lack* on another culture.

Nevertheless, despite this recent history and the present-day ethnocentric *mé-lange* into which reason might have descended, I have attempted boldly to defend an unassailable commitment to rationality and theories of reason in classical Indian philosophy, as exemplified particularly in the works of the second-century Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna and the founders of the Nyāya schools (Gautama to Gaṅgeśa), as well as its sustained development in the works of recent Indian philosophers, from the Bhattacharyyas to Mohanty and Matilal (by far its most vocal advocate) (Ganeri 2001). Paying her respect to Matilal, Spivak nonetheless has retorted that this was an instance of “*civilizationism*” – the “we have been there before you” syndrome, as she put it, implying that the effect of reclaiming reason and the rhetoric of rationality as being one’s own is on a par with such suspect suggestions as “We (let us, for argument’s sake, say northern Indian Hindu Brahmins) discovered human rights” – before Hugo Grotius in the sixteenth century breathed a word about entitlements, or Thomas Paine penned *The Rights of Man* (but perhaps we suppressed or integrated this insight in the interest of a wobbly caste ordering of society). In other words, the move palpably smacks of rank orientalism of an even more sinister kind, which is precisely one of the targets of Spivak’s assault on an unself-reflective faith in “postcolonial reason.”

I, of course, have amicably disagreed with Spivak on this, and argued that the Buddha (and his ardent sincere followers) certainly did *reason* through the *śrāmaṇic* (Indian Stoics’) disenchantment with aspects of the then dominant Brahmanical order (metaphysical, epistemic, and structural), such that Buddhist thinkers based their resistance to the orthodoxy on concepts (if not axioms) of decency, human dignity, and the desired equitable distribution of goods, if not on a fully articulated doctrine of human rights. A defense of precolonial reason is not in all instances a harkening back to the “Golden Age” and a recalling of the superiority of the Asian (and non-Western) civilizations, as has become a fashionable trend among fundamentalist and ultranationalist groups in many corners of the globe, who care less for reason and reasoning (whether analytical, dialectical, or ecological) and are single-mindedly interested in defending at all costs the truth of their own faith-tradition by whatever sort of epistemic violence rather than through dialogic argumentation. Nor is my (or Matilal’s) defense, on the other hand, as disingenuous as the

enthusiasm of the mercurial historian of religions to place “sex and psychology” or glamorous erotic intrigues in Asian cultural tracts ahead of “logic and epistemology,” as one writer has thought it prudent to claim.²⁷ There can be no dialogue from such positions where reason is muted or relegated to the dustbin of the fading post-Enlightenment and late-capitalist-hedonistic enterprise.

One must say, then, that Indian and comparative philosophy of religion fell into the lure of the concept and abstractions, in the Hegelian fashion – or, after Kant, with the idea of rationally ordering the world, but only on the Enlightenment model. The quest for perfection, for the goodness of the divinely gifted order, became an interminable project. Moving to the “cross-cultural” field, as the legacy of the earlier “comparative” enterprise following Max Müller and company should remind us, more often than not provokes *resentiment* followed by a zeal to reform, and an even more sterile response from the appointed “native informants” of the other tradition as a means of overcoming the very othering (*alterity*) entailed in this process. This has been a welcome insight of postcolonial and subaltern studies scholars. The subaltern critique, therefore, on the margins of comparative philosophy of religion, must remain, like the symbol of the goddess in mainstream culture, a “disturbing presence,” begging to differ and defer.

Notes

I dedicate this essay to the memory of Ninian Smart, who inspired it back in 1997. It has benefited from being heard and/or commented on (in part or in full) by Robert C. Neville, Sumit Sarkar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Roger Ames, Arindam Chakrabarty, and Laurie Patton, among others, at two separate seminars: one at the International Association for the History of Religions Congress, Durban, August 2000, and the other at the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, November 2000. Note 31 below has reference to the larger project from which this article is in part derived.

- 1 Smart (1997: 1–10), and also (1995: 17–31). Curiously, in his now classic little book *The Philosophy of Religion* (1970), Smart already gave some inkling of this by challenging the dogma that we can philosophize about religion without knowing anything about or having any experience of it; but there he was still battling against the excesses of logical positivists who had influenced the likes of A. J. Ayer, and he hadn’t matured into nontheistic thinking as in Buddhism.
- 2 Some scholars have argued for a resurrection of “comparative and cross-cultural perspective” in religious thought more generally and scholasticism or scholastic practice in particular, on the newfound recognition of the importance of “difference” as well as the common concerns across scholastic traditions *qua tradition* of certain other questions exegetical to epistemological concerns. I have sympathy with this devil (from the standpoint of the modernist cultural-studies type of pursuits), but I am just not so sure that the “comparative” strategy advances the cause very far. See Cabezón (1998), one of the last monographs in the series “Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religion.” I was invited to serve as a coeditor of this series; however, I insisted on changing the name to “Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion” (just to get away from the hangovers of the Comparativist era), but the State University of New York Press management considered this to be a new proposal and asked for its justification. Laurie Patton (continuing as editor from the previous series) and I were able to

- muster up an argument underscoring some of the criticisms and positive aspects discussed herein. The series is now re-launched, albeit with Springer (publishers of *Sophia*, Journal of Metaphysical Theology, Philosophy of Religion & Ethics, which already has a cross-cultural focus), under the title: ‘Sophia: Critical Dialogues in Philosophy, Religion and Culture’. www.springer.com/philosophy/philosophy+of+religion/journal/11841.
- 3 Alasdair MacIntyre had raised this perspicuously in his 1964 essay “Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing?” reprinted in MacIntyre (1999), although I think that the problems go far beyond the “belief/understanding,” “insider/outsider,” “descriptive analysis/reductive explanation” polarities.
 - 4 Wilhelm Halbfass (1985, 1988: 142) points out that the term “comparative philosophy” was actually not invented until after the 1923 publication of P. Masson-Oursel’s *La philosophie comparée* (translated as *Comparative Philosophy* in 1926), although Al-Burini, as well as the nineteenth-century “Renaissance” Indian philosophes, was unquestionably practicing this art. Three of the greatest exponents of comparative philosophy in the twentieth century, who lifted comparative philosophy out of the sort of chess-pool that comparative religion had come unstuck in, were Charles Moore (famously associated with *Philosophy East and West*, based in Honolulu), P. T. Raju, and Archie Bahm. For a partial history see Larson and Deutsch (1989).
 - 5 A term coined by Leibniz, for a more universal quest in philosophy (but appropriated and used by religionists to assert that all religions are species of a generic religion), emerged in India through the work of two powerful and influential writers, namely S. Radhakrishnan (1888–1974) and Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947). The latter believed that a universal, primordial “tradition” informs all premodern cultures and that the search in each religion is for the recovery and a fuller expression of this “tradition.” An interesting regeneration of traditionalists and transcendentalists (connected now with Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson) carried over to the recent West, with writers such as Frithjof Schuon, René Guénon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Frederick Streng, underscoring “The Transcendent Unity of Religions” (as Schuon’s book by the same name makes plain). Streng took Buddhism to be a Southern Methodist mold of whiskey, while Schuon came to a dirty end; but others, even from yonder, appear to have kept alive a burgeoning movement in what is sometimes also called “Transcendent Philosophy” (there is, incidentally, now a good scholarly journal by that name as well).
 - 6 See a fascinating account by Robert E. Goss, “Catholic and dGe lug pas Scholasticism,” in Cabezón (1998); and Clooney’s distinction between the “intellectualist” and “performative” types of scholasticism, which he projects onto the Indian scholastic systems of Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and Śrivaīṣṇavism, is summarized by Cabezón in Cabezón (1998: 243–244) (about which I have some reservations).
 - 7 Or a convergence, as Frauwallner was to put it as late as 1944, of the “scientific character of Indian and European philosophy” (cited in Pollock 1990: 94; cf. Halbfass (1988: 70ff.)
 - 8 To cite just a few such works: Mehta (1985, 1992), Larson and Deutsch (1988), Mohanty (1994); various papers by J. G. Arapura, Halbfass (1988), Inden (1990), Almond (1988), Tuck (1990), Lopez (1995). All of these attempt to show how the European colonial powers promoted a particular image of the Buddha as championing a simple ethical philosophy that was based on reason and restraint and opposed to ritual, superstition, and sacerdotalism.
 - 9 See Hick (1968), and Tooley (1977). See also Hick (1983), and Sharma (1995, particularly 215ff.). Sharma discusses Hick’s view in this light; note Sharma’s ambitious reiterations of the problematic terms in Hick’s title.
 - 10 It goes back to the notion of “blik” introduced by John Wisdom, which he develops in this context also in his “Gods,” reprinted in Santoni (1968).
 - 11 I have developed this discussion more fully in Bilimoria (2000).
 - 12 The phrase is, of course, Husserl’s, who was more sanguine about this inexorable movement of the intentional rational mind than Heidegger, who was both more involved in and (dis-?) affected by the draconian imperialism of Nazism; he took this disquiet to Japan and sent a similar message to Charles Moore on the occasion of the first *Philosophy East and West* gatherings in Honolulu, circa 1954. Jung also would voice very similar concerns in view of

- the twentieth-century interest in Eastern religions and a subsequent loss of belief in Western intellectual achievement, but he, more than most dilettantes, was responsible for the gross distortions, mystification, expropriation, and bastardization of Indian thinking.
- 13 The theosophical movement shortly after this should also be mentioned in this context.
 - 14 For a fascinating account, see Conlon (1992: 17). I have a copy of a book published in 1858 by John Wilson, *India Three Thousand Years Ago*, in which he discusses the “social state of the Āryas... in the time of the Vedas”; he boasts of European learning and European ingenuity, with partial assistance from the natives of India, for securing the manuscripts and translating them (p. 17). But it is entirely derivative of the works of Müller and H. H. Wilson. Fifty or so years later Cowell put together a collection of essays by various British writers on themes covering “Ancient India,” which was a vast improvement, but again the clear linkages with ancient Greek and European ancestral cultures is evident
 - 15 First part cited in Singhal (1969), vol. 2: 249; second part in Chatterjee and Pendey (1993: 42–45).
 - 16 See also two little books by F. B. Jevons, *The Idea of God in Early Religion* and *Comparative Religion* (both published in Cambridge ca. 1913), which together have only one index entry on “philosophy” and that, too, in the context of discussing the Buddha’s substitution of philosophy for psychology!
 - 17 Tapan Raychaudhuri discusses this intellectual in his unpublished Surrendra Paul Lecture 1995 for the Calcutta Ramakrishnan Institute for Culture, “Transformation of Religious Sensibilities in Nineteenth Century Bengal.”
 - 18 His idea of the playful Absolute (*Hiranyagarbha*) was halfway between the Brahman of Śāṅkara and the Concrete Absolute Spirit of Hegel. For passing discussion see Gopal (1989) and Bilimoria (1995b).
 - 19 John Vattanky’s *Gaṅgeśa’s Philosophy of God* (1984) also comes to mind, and Vattanky continues to underscore the importance of *Īśvara* in Nyāya Philosophy – as a Thomist perhaps would in Aquinas’ metaphysics – in his recent papers, e.g. Vattanky (2000). Most modern-day Naiyayikas tend to want to forget their Gods after the morning oblations and propitiation as they don their analytic vests for the office and desk-writing routine; Matilal and Mohanty left theirs behind in Calcutta or Calicut.
 - 20 On Durkheim and Weber’s intrusions into India see Romila Thapar, “Durkheim and Weber on Theories of Society and Race Relations to Pre-colonial India,” in Thapar (1993).
 - 21 On alternative strands in Indian thought derived from the *asat* or *Non-being* thesis since the Ṛgvedic insight, see Avatārā (1986).
 - 22 Cf. Phillips (1986: 1). Wittgenstein had blamed both “Russell and the parson” for the immense damage done to philosophy of religion. See Monk (1991: 410–415), where Ludwig narrates the virtues of a play by Tagore, “The King of the Dark Chambers,” which he translates. Ludwig is happier that God remains unknown but yearned for.
 - 23 See [note 20](#).
 - 24 Here, of course, the cracks and dissensions within the postcolonial following begin to show, as well as the heightened skepticism about the extent to which the “postcolonial” does not become just another aid-pumping and condescending trope such as “third worldism” or nationalist elitism, et cetera. This is powerfully argued by Spivak in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999).
 - 25 This is Spivak (1999: 30), in quotes extracting salient emphasis from Kant (pp. 15, 26), ignoring for now the resemblance that Spivak notes to the Freudian Oedipal scenario.
 - 26 This is not a term Kant uses, but a metaphor that may have been suggested to her, as Spivak notes rhetorically in the footnote, from the Vedic idea of a higher priest-caste cooking the world in/as sacrificial fire (1999: 14 [note 21](#)).
 - 27 Namely, Wendy Doniger, drawing up the division of labor that separated her from B. K. Matilal, which she gave as an excuse for declining to contribute to a volume of essays in memory of Bimal-da (personal correspondence). Although Professor Doniger has been very kindly disposed towards work on moral traditions of India and interactively chaired a symposium on *Indian Ethics, I* (Bilimoria et al. 2007; 2008b).

References

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. 1999. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Almond, Philip C. 1988. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alston, William P., et al. 1992. *Faith, Reason, and Scepticism: Essays*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ames, Roger T. 1989. Confucius and the Ontology of Knowing. In *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, edited by G. J. Larson and E. Deutsch. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Avatarā, Antonio de. 1986. *Avatarā, Antonio de. 1986 The Humanization of Philosophy Through the Bhagavadgītā*. Stony Brook, NY: Nicolas Hay.
- Barua, Beni Madhab. 1974 [1918]. *Prolegomena to a History of Buddhist Philosophy*. Second reprint edition. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal [Calcutta: Calcutta University Press].
- Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1995. *The Location of Culture*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 1984. The Renaissance Reaction to *Sruti*. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (Poona) 65: 43–58.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 1990. Hindu Doubts About God: Towards a Mīmāṃsā Deconstruction. *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30: 481–499.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 1995a. Duḥkha and Karma: The Problem of Evil and God’s Omnipotence. *Sophia* 34(1): 92–97.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 1995b. Saving Appearances in Plato’s Academy: Radhakrishnan on Philosophy. In *New Essays on Radhakrishnan*, edited by S. S. Rama Rao Pappu. Delhi: Satguru Publications/Indian Books Centre, pp. 327–344.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 1999. A Problem for (Onto-theos) Radical Pluralism. In *Philosophy of Religion: Toward a Global Perspective*, edited by G. E. Kessler, pp. 575–582. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press.
- Bilimoria, P., Prabhu, J., Sharma, R. (eds.). 2007, 2008b. *Indian Ethics Classical and Contemporary*. Aldershot: Ashgate; New Delhi: Oxford University, 2008.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama. 2008. ‘Nietzsche as “Europe’s Buddha” and “Asia’s Superman”’, *Sophia*, vol 47, no 3, November, pp. 359–376.
- Bilimoria 2008a. Dialogic Fecundation of Western Hermeneutics and Hindu Mīmāṃsā in the Critical Era. In R. Sherma and A. Sharma (eds.) *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought Towards a Fusion of Horizons*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 43–76.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama and Mohanty J. N. (Eds.). 1997. *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Bimal K. Matilal*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Cabezón, José Ignacio (ed.). 1998. *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World – A Derivative Discourse*. London: Zed Books.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1995–1996. Plural Worlds Multiple Selves: Ashis Nandy and the Post-Columbian Future. *Emergences* 7–8.
- Chatterjee, Partha and Gyanendra Pandey (Eds.). 1993. *Subaltern Studies 7*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Conlon, Frank, F., 1992. The Polemic Process in Nineteenth-Century Maharashtra Visnubawa Brahmachari and Hindu Revival. In *Religious Controversy in British India*, edited by K. Jones, pp. 5–26. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Dean, Thomas (Ed.). 1995. *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Dutton, Michael. Translating Theory: Orient-ing Postcolonialism. Draft paper, courtesy of author.
- Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, edited by C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
- Ganeri, Jonardon. 2001. *Philosophy in Classical India: The Proper Work of Reason*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Gopal, Sarvepalli. 1989. *Radhakrishnan: A Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Griffiths, Paul and Delmas Lewis. 1983. On Grading Religions: Seeking Truth, and Being Nice to People – A Reply to Professor Hick. *Religious Studies* 19: 75–80.
- Halbfass, Wilhelm. 1985. India and the Comparative Method. *Philosophy East and West* 35: 3–15.
- Halbfass, Wilhelm. 1988. *India and Europe*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hick, John. 1968. Theology and Verification. In *Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge*, edited by R. E. Santomi. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hick, John. 1983. *The Philosophy of Religion*. Third edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Inden, Ronald B. 1990. *Imagining India*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Kessler, Garry E. (Ed.). 1999. *Philosophy of Religion: Toward a Global Perspective*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press.
- Krishna, Daya. 1997. *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*. Delhi: Satguru.
- Larson, Gerald J. and Eliot Deutsch. 1988. *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Levine, Michael P. 1997. Ninian Smart on the Philosophy of Worldviews. *Sophia* 36: 11–23.
- Lopez, Donald. 1995. *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1999. Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing? In *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, edited by R. T. McCutcheon. London/New York: Cassell.
- Maddock, Kenneth. 1987a. All-Father. In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by M. Eliade et al., vol. 1, pp. 212–213. New York: MacMillan.
- Maddock, Kenneth. 1987b. Australian Religions: A History of Study. In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by M. Eliade et al., vol. 1, pp. 566–570. New York: MacMillan.
- Matilal, Bimal Krishna. 2002. *Collected Papers*. 2 volumes. Edited by J. Ganeri. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mehta, J. L. 1985. *India and the West: The Problem of Understanding – Selected Essays of J. L. Mehta*. Cambridge, MA: Center for the Study of World Religions.
- Mehta, J. L. 1992. *J. L. Mehta on Heidegger, Hermeneutics and Indian Tradition*, edited by W. Jackson. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Mistry, Freny. 1981. *Nietzsche and Buddhism: Prolegomenon to a Comparative Study*. New York/Bern: Walter de Gruyter.
- Mitchell, J. Murray. 1885. *Hinduism Past and Present*. London: The Religious Tract Society.
- Mohanty, J. N. 1994. *Essays on Indian Philosophy: Traditional and Modern*, edited by P. Bilimoria. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Reprinted 2002.
- Monk, Ray. 1991. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. New York: Penguin.
- Morphy, Howard, et al. (Eds.). 1989. *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.
- Nelson, Mark T. 1996. Who Are the Best Judges of Theistic Arguments? *Sophia* 35. pp. 1–12.
- Nielsen, Kai. 1994. Perceiving God. In *Faith, Scepticism and Personal Identity: Essays in Honor of Terence Penelhum*, edited by J. J. MacIntosh and H. A. Meynell. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Panikkar, Raimundo. 1980. Aporias of Comparative Philosophy of Religion. *Man and the World* 13: 357–383.
- Phillips, D. Z. 1986. *Belief, Change and Forms of Life*. London: Macmillan.
- Pollock, Sheldon. 1990. Deep Orientalism: Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj. *Asian Studies* 1990: 94.

- Prakash, Gyan. 1990. Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 (1): 383–408.
- Raychaudhuri, Tapan. 1995. Transformation of Religious Sensibilities in Nineteenth Century Bengal. Surendra Paul Lecture, Calcutta Ramakrishnan Institute for Culture. Unpublished.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Said, Edward. 1985. *The Text, the World, and the Critic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Santoni, Ronald E. (Ed.). 1968. *Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Sarkar, Sumit. 1975. Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past. In *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India*, edited by V. C. Joshi, pp. 46–68. Delhi: Vikas.
- Schwab, Raymond. 1984. *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Recovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, translated by G. Patterson-Black et al. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sharma, Arvind. 1995. *The Philosophy of Religions and Advaita Vedānta: A Comparative Study of Religions and Reason*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Singhal, D. P. 1969. *India and World Civilization*, 2 volumes. Delhi: Rupa.
- Smart, Ninian. 1995. The Philosophy of Worldviews, or the Philosophy of Religion Transformed. In *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on the Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, edited by T. Dean. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Smart, Ninian. 1997. Does the Philosophy of Religion Rest on Two Mistakes? *Sophia* 36: 1–10.
- Solomon, Robert C. 1995. Some Notes on Emotion, “East” and “West.” *Philosophy East and West* 45: 171–202.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988a. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. Urbana, IL/Chicago, IL: University Press of Illinois. Originally published in *Wedge*, Winter/Spring 1985, pp. 120–130.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988b. In *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Methuen.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Thapar, Romila. 1993. *Interpreting Early India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tooley, Michael. 1977. John Hick and the Concept of Eschatological Verification. *Religious Studies* 12: 177–199.
- Tuck, Andrew P. 1990. *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship on the Western Interpretation of Nāgārjuna*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vattanky, John. 1984. *Gaṅgeśa's Philosophy of God*. Adyar: Adyar Library and Research Centre.
- Vattanky, John. 2000. Is Theism Central to Nyāya? *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 27: 411–420.
- Wisdom, John. 1968. Gods. In *Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge*, edited by R. E. Santoni, pp. 295–314. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Zaehner, R.C. 1957. *Mysticism Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zupko, Jack. 2002. Marilyn McCord Adams: Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God, *Sophia*, Volume 41.1, May, pp. 135–138.