The Journal of Interreligious Studies
A Collaboration Between Hebrew College and Boston University School of Theology

Special Issue in Partnership with Boston College *Engaging Particularities* XVI (2018)

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From the Managing Editor

Since 2003, the Boston College Theology Department has hosted an annual conference for emerging scholars in comparative theology. Drawing from its Jesuit heritage, the theology department seeks through this conference to accomplish the mission of Decree 5 (Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue) from the 1995 General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.[1] I have been aware of this ongoing conference, entitled *Engaging Particularities* (*EP*), for some time, and even participated in it myself years ago.[2] Given how impressed I have been with the quality of papers at this conference, I decided that a partnership with *EP* whereby the authors of some of the conference papers are invited to transform their talks into publishable pieces would be a worthwhile endeavor. And thus, the process of compiling this issue began.

The 2018 conference organizers, Michael VanZandt Collins and Hans Harmakaputra, were also the guest editors for this collaborative issue. This issue could not have been published without their diligent effort working with me; our Associate Managing Editor, Silvia Glick; and the authors in producing this collection of articles. Their introduction that follows situates the conference theme in the larger context of the discipline of comparative theology; therein they also prelude each of the articles with respect to the 2018 theme. That being the case, I will not reproduce their excellent work here. Rather, I will close with some words on the discipline of comparative theology as it relates to the mission of the *JIRS*.

The *JIRS* has published a few articles from the field of comparative theology in the past. However, when I began my role as the journal's Managing Editor, I suggested adding comparative theology explicitly to the journal's publication purview. The term "comparative theology" has had a mixed history, the details of which surpass the ambit of this introduction.[3] It has variably been called interreligious theology and intercultural theology. In brief and to generalize, a comparative theologian engages her "home" tradition in conversation with one or more other traditions in search of theological insights; she often writes confessionally and constructively for her "home" religious community of interpretation, but with proposals that others (e.g., adherents of other religious traditions, "nones," scholars in the field of religious studies or area studies) may find academically, intellectually, and/or spiritually meaningful. As such, comparative theology is a discipline that is interreligious by definition.

Interreligious studies is situated at the "interface between a more traditionally secular Religious Studies discipline, and a more traditionally confessional theological discipline,"[4] and its scholarly projects and products often contain prescriptive and normative proposals that relate

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[1] "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/docs/Dr%205_ENG.pdf, accessed Jan. 24, 2019.

[2] See https://engagingparticularities.com for more information, including details regarding past and future conferences.

[3] Three books offer extensive and critical introductions to the field: Francis X. Clooney: *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Francis X. Clooney, ed., *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010) (this volume in particular contains pieces that critique the field's looming hegemony and Eurocentrism); and Francis X. Clooney and Klaus von Stosch, eds., *How to Do Comparative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

[4] Paul Hedges, "Interreligious Studies," in *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions,* eds. Anne L. C. Runehov and Lluis Oviedo (New York: SpringerReference, 2013).

theory to praxis, i.e., there is an interest in social change, religious tolerance, mutual understanding, and being accountable as a scholar-activist to a religious or secular community broader than the academy.[5] But interreligious studies is also "a subdiscipline of religious studies that engages in the scholarly and religiously neutral description, multidisciplinary analysis, and theoretical framing of the interactions of religiously different people and groups."[6] Given the broad purview of the field, "interreligious studies is thus a malleable discipline of which comparative theology may be a first-order instantiation, or which may study particular exercises in comparative theology in a second-order analysis thereof."[7]

For this reason, I explicitly expanded the *JIRS*'s mission to include the discipline of comparative theology. It is my hope that the critical insights from interreligious studies will challenge the looming hegemony of comparative theology, given the latter's Eurocentric, Christian theological methods and conclusions.[8]

With this in mind, I hope that this partnership with Boston College's *Engaging Particularities* conference will remain an ongoing collaboration for many years to come.

Axel Marc Oaks Takacs
Managing Editor

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[5] See, e.g., Hedges, "Interreligious Studies," as well as Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace, and Noah J. Silverman, eds., *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), xii.
[6] Kate McCarthy, "(Inter)Religious Studies: Making a Home in the Secular Academy," in *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies*, 12.
[7] Axel Marc Oaks Takacs, "Comparative Theology and Interreligious Studies: Embracing and Transgressing the Dialogical Relationships Among Religious Traditions," in Volume 4 of *The Brill Companion to Comparative Theology* (forthcoming, 2019).
[8] See Takacs, "Comparative Theology and Interreligious Studies," for how interreligious studies may critically and constructively relate to comparative theology in terms of the former's intersectional methods.

Figures and Reconfiguring: A New Direction in Comparative Theology?

Michael VanZandt Collins and Hans Harmakaputra

On December 10th, we remembered the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Thomas Merton (1915–1968), the popular American writer and Catholic monk. Coincidentally, in an uncanny Trappist fashion, the date marks not only his passing but also the anniversary of his entrance into Trappist life as a postulant in 1948. However, in 2018, shortly on the heels of the five hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 theses in Wittenberg, we are drawn to a different sort of coincidence. Remembering these two events together, Merton's passing and Luther's transformative protest, from the perspective of comparative theology might occasion further inquiry and reflection into how encountering major figures effectively reconfigures our understanding of our tradition, as well as the tradition of the other. Particularly in cultural contexts that are increasingly characterized by religious diversity, comparative theology may serve as a discipline that addresses the various ways that such diversity affects our religiosity. For Thomas Merton, despite spending most of his adult life at the Trappist monastery in Gethsemane, Kentucky, countless fruitful exchanges across religious boundaries both challenged and nourished his sense of being a monk, and a Christian. In addition to his ecumenical interests, notable examples included his dialogues with D. T. Suzuki; his longest letter correspondence with a Pakistani Sufi, Sheikh Abdul Aziz; interactions with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and, of course, his meetings with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1968 shortly before his death. For present purposes, an earlier and more formative instance of interreligious encounter from Merton's vita claims our attention, specifically an episode with Mahanambrata Brahmachari (1904–1999), whom Merton calls "a little Hindu monk" when recounting the encounter in his best-selling 1948 autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*.[1]

In June 1938, according to this autobiographical account, Merton joined his Columbia classmate Sy Freedgood at New York's Grand Central Station in order to pick up "a Hindu in a turban and a white robe and a pair of Keds."[2] A reader would not be mistaken in assuming that Brahmachari simply became a long-term fixture in their dormitory, "living in their room, perched on top of a pile of books." In reality, after earning his PhD from the University of Chicago, Brahmachari was their guest in New York for just a few weeks.[3] Writing from Our Lady of Gethsemane a decade later, Merton recalled a mutual fondness between the two, "especially since he sensed that I was trying to feel my way into a settled religious conviction, and into some kind of a life that was centered, as his was, on God."[4] For the young Merton, fresh from reading Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means* and hungry for Eastern wisdom, Brahmachari represented a possible source for satisfying his curiosity for all things "mystical." Yet with the

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[1] See Thomas Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain: An Autobiography of Faith* (1948; New York: Harvest Book, 1998), esp. 209–17; hereafter, abbreviated to *SSM*. In various writings, as he does in *Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton transliterates the name of Mahanambrata Brahmachari as "Bramachari." This introduction chooses the standard form of transliteration.

[2] Ibid., 210.

[3] Brahmachari arrived in the United States in order to represent his *guru* at the World's Parliament of Faiths in 1933 but, by the time he arrived, the Congress was finished; he completed a doctorate instead. See his own memoir, *Lord's Grace in My Race: Taken from His Diary* (Assam: Mahanam Mela, 1987).

[4] *SSM*, 214.

stage set for the student to learn from a master, rather than indulge his curiosity, Merton's Brahmachari redirected his attention to Christian wisdom traditions, particularly Augustine's *Confessions* and *Imitation of Christ*. "Yes, you must read those books," Brahmachari said. As Merton confessed in his autobiography, "Now that I look back on those days, it seems to me very probable that one of the reasons why God had brought him all the way from India, was that he might say just that."[5] For Merton, tracing this to his eventual choice of the monk's habit, the figure of Brahamachari was providential in steering him toward Christian religious life.

By way of commemorating Merton and Brahmachari, as well as Luther, the cohort of Boston College doctoral students and candidates in comparative theology called for proposals under the theme of "Figures and Reconfiguring" for the sixteenth annual Engaging Particularities conference (EP 2018).[6] Whereas comparative theology typically proceeds through established frameworks of intertextual reading, symbolic engagement, or more recently even ritual participation, this issue thus explores the implications of such encounters as specific sites for interreligious learning. The intellectual obstacles to the comparative endeavor regarding religious figures and a scholar's relation to this object is not our chief concern here, and others have already capably addressed this criticism.[7] In fact, we might agree that the intellectual concerns have loomed so large that practical concerns such as these have suffered from relative neglect.

For example, take Merton. Most of us who read Merton are familiar with this autobiographical element, namely, the existential quest for wisdom that expresses his own desire to overcome all obstacles and boundaries. Reviewing the corpus, we may find little explicit mention of his old friend: his letters to their mutual friend Robert Lax, an extant correspondence with Brahamachari in 1965, and a report with sparse details of Merton's failed visit to Brahmachari's ashram in 1968 on his fateful Asian voyage. Still, those references are revealing of a deeper impact. Writing to his fellow convert Lax after taking the habit, Merton wrote in passing of his own sense that Brahmachari belonged somehow within the "whole mystical body of Christ." Later in 1965, responding to Brahmachari's interest in another U.S. tour, Merton updated him about becoming a hermit and compared this new phase to *vanaprastha*, the developmental period of detachment that is common in South Asian ashrams. In his homily at Merton's funeral mass, Gethsemane's abbot Flavian Burns shared Merton's state of mind before his fateful Asian voyage: "The possibility of death was not absent from his mind. We spoke of this before he set out—just jokingly, then seriously. He was ready for it. He even saw a certain fittingness in dying over there amidst those Asian monks, who symbolized for him man's ancient

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[5] Ibid., 216–7. See also the authoritative biography, Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (1984; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 113 (113–8), as well as Michael Higgins, *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 25, (as "instrumental"); Lawrence Cunningham, *Thomas Merton and the Monastic Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 3, 9–10.

[6] As a graduate and postgraduate conference focused in comparative theology and related areas, such as theology of religions, missiology, and interreligious dialogue, the conference was born as an initiative out of an articulated commitment to dialogue by the Society of Jesus in their General Congregation 32.

[7] See, e.g., David Clairmont, "Persons as Religious Classics: Comparative Ethics and the Theology of Bridge Concepts," *JAAR* 78, no. 3 (2010): 687–720, and *Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics: On the Person as Classic in Contemporary Theological Contexts* (Malden: MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), esp. 17–31. By contrast to an approach with focus on traditional figures, see a comparative theological exploration of foundational figures in Francis X. Clooney, *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother: Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and perennial desire for the deep things of God."[8] Fifty years later, although we most often associate Merton's comparative interests with either Buddhism or Taoism, at the very least Brahmachari prefigures this interest.

Emphasizing the practical concerns of interreligious encounters with powerful religious figures, comparative theological inquiry may consider the impact of such events on one's cultural horizon. Revised from papers presented at EP 2018, this collection of essays offers readers a set of scholarly approaches that probe the meaning of this theme of reconfiguration according to various disciplines, cultural contexts, and religious traditions. Situated as such, the scholar's own theological interests and concerns shape his or hers hermeneutical lens and also inform the context in which the topic is considered. So contextualized, in turn, readers may consider in these articles how a comparative theologian's goals and methods shape different answers. Readers may also use this as an opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of the significant figures whom they confronted across religious boundaries and the practical lessons to be drawn from such encounters. Alternatively, with interests and concerns similar to those of the contributors to this issue, readers would do well to consider their own analogous examples.

Format

Inasmuch as it is practical, the notion of interreligious encounter entails not only chances but potentially also risk and even "spiritual danger." As the first contributor to this issue, Joseph Kimmel introduces the concept of spiritual danger in dialogue with recent explorations in comparative theology. Based on a case of evangelical Christians wary about entering into sacred Buddhist space, on the one hand, he shows how it is both a practical, pedagogical concern. On the other, it can be related to the hermeneutical question of comparative theology if the practice is to operate in the mode of mediating interreligious encounter. In dialogue with various approaches, Kimmel suggests that this might be useful in not only pointing out the blind spot of comparative theology but, first and foremost, enhancing the experience of the practitioners.

Secondly, John Sampson examines the prominent twentieth-century Chinese theologian T. C. Chao through Francis X. Clooney's notion of "intertexting." In Chao's attempt to make Christianity more appealing within the Confucian paradigm of Chinese society, he emphasized through the cross the redemptive role of Jesus Christ as a moral exemplar. Beyond the comparison of religious texts, as Sampson argues, Chao himself as an intertexted figure profoundly exemplifies the efficacy of a different, more contextual way of comparative theology.

Relatedly, focusing on figures brings to the forefront the particular power of a master as present in the text. Reflecting on the intratraditional discussion of Hasidic Judaism, David Maayan weighs in on one of the most debated issues in the hermeneutical discourse of comparative theology, namely, whether the theologian must necessarily situate herself as being "insider" or "outsider." Hasidism is developed around the figure of a tzaddik, or a Hasidic saint, as the direct encounter with the master is essential in elevating the spiritual state of the disciples. However, as pointed out by Maayan, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira cultivates a unique approach to the rule by emphasizing the writings of a tzaddik as a new mode of encountering a

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[8] Flavian Burns, OCSO, "Epilogue: A Holy," in *Thomas Merton, Monk: A Monastic Tribute*, ed. Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983), 220.

master, specifically, encountering his presence through the texts. The latter approach is perhaps more beneficial to fostering spiritual development because each disciple would have ample room to construct meaning for her or his own self.

In the final article, Christina Atienza utilizes Dōgen's non-dualistic approach to reconfigure the relationship between reality, language, and thought in Thomas Aquinas's systematic theology. While encountering such figures across religious boundaries may reconfigure our sense of religiosity, interreligious learning may also affect relations to significant figures in our own tradition. Contrary to some who perceive Aquinas's logic as a proponent of a dualist mode of thinking, Atienza argues that both dualism and non-dualism are neither mutually exclusive nor unrelated to one another. Rather, foregrounding Aquinas himself, she displays how both tendencies are evident in his writings. Atienza highlights some significant occasions when his non-dualistic tendency becomes apparent, and thus might shed a new light on understanding Aquinas.

In the end, this issue offers various kinds of hermeneutical engagement with figures as the focus of comparative theological inquiry and reflection. It aims to recognize the basic reality that, sometimes, we enter the religious world of another not through a text, doctrine, symbol, or ritual, but through a compelling figure. Such a figure may radically reshape and reorient a person's sense of self, community, and world. If this might serve as a specific site for doing comparative theology, then it provides an approach suitable for addressing interreligious contexts with its messy cultural factors, and possibly shared ethical concerns. Furthermore, lending a focus in terms of dispositions rather than doctrine, this approach may be especially useful in helping relate comparative theology to the classroom. For a setting increasingly defined by religious diversity and the emergence of the "nones," this might serve as a new point of access that is especially useful in the teaching of introductory theology.

Acknowledgments

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Spiritual Danger and Interreligious Participation

Joseph Kimmel

This article explores the significance of a particular attitude toward religious others, drawing on recent insights about interreligious participation. Based on the author's own experiences living among evangelical Christian missionaries in Tibet, this article highlights cautionary voices that often go unheard in discussions of interreligious learning. While many people eagerly learn from figures who advance interreligious engagement through dialogue or ritual participation, how can we also learn to heed the perspectives of those who warn of the potential dangers of such engagement? How can we make sense of the relationship drawn by some religious devotees between interreligious participation and spiritual danger (e.g., spiritual contamination, malevolent beings)? How can we take seriously this oft-neglected religious perspective, even as we may seek to distance ourselves from its apparent shortcomings and blind spots? What, more generally, is the role of supernatural power(s) in the context of comparative theological study and interreligious engagement? Tackling such questions, this article addresses concerns about the spiritual power that is accessed through participation in religious rituals and the danger, perceived by many people, that results from interreligious engagement. In short, it elucidates how concerns about malevolent spiritual powers can be taken seriously, possibly learning from this perspective without demonizing religious others and thereby undercutting any possibility for interreligious participation.

Keywords: interreligious participation, interreligious learning, spiritual danger, spiritual power, spiritual contamination, demons

About ten years ago, while studying Tibetan in Lhasa, Tibet, I became friends with several Swedish engineers. These engineers had moved to Lhasa with their families a few years prior to my arrival through a partnership between a Swedish nonprofit organization (NPO) and the Chinese government. In return for visas, Tibetan residence permits, and a modest salary, the Swedes assisted Chinese engineering teams in the planning and construction of bridges and other infrastructure projects throughout central Tibet. But while at some level the Swedish crews genuinely were committed to improving the infrastructure of the Tibetan countryside, their primary mission in Tibet, I soon learned, was a religious one. Each of the Swedish engineers was an evangelical Christian working through an NPO whose fundamental goal was spreading the Gospel and converting non-Christians.

One day while talking with these covert missionaries, I casually mentioned that from time to time I liked to walk through some of the beautiful, historic Buddhist temples featured prominently in the Lhasa cityscape. Upon hearing of my visits to these temples, the conversation grew awkwardly quiet until one of the older Swedes advised me never to enter any of Lhasa's temples again. He told me that these are not places of harmless, picturesque beauty but—quite the opposite—they overflow with dangerous spiritual power. For him, those places possess a demonic power that a Christian need not fear but should not provoke. By way of illustration, my friend told me that a few months before I arrived in Tibet, a short-term missions team from America came to Lhasa in order to evangelize the local population. Upon entering the city's main temple, several members of the group immediately began vomiting and could not stop until

they left the temple grounds, at which point all their symptoms suddenly ceased. My evangelical friend reasoned that such symptoms offered strong evidence of demonic power directed against the missionaries when they entered the demon's residence.

Of course, other viable explanations exist for the American missionaries' physiological reactions. But for the purposes of this essay, I would like to take seriously the possibility of theological truth residing in the sense meant by my Swedish interlocutor. In this light, I explore here the implications of such a view while referencing recent approaches to interreligious ritual participation and comparative theological study. Such a worldview, at first glance, does not seem particularly conducive to interreligious ritual participation or comparative theology. Nevertheless, I believe that it raises a host of very important questions and considerations regarding such activities that require critical attention, namely: What is the role of supernatural power in the context of comparative study and interreligious participation? How do we, as comparative religious or theological scholars, address concerns about the power that is engaged and accessed via religious rituals, i.e., the power of spiritual beings (e.g., gods, demons) who in the theologies of many people may pose some degree of danger to those joining the rituals of others?[1]Although interreligious participation may be engaged purely from a theoretical viewpoint, or even for the sake of personal spiritual enrichment, how do we address concerns that such behavior can unintentionally open oneself to malevolent spiritual forces beyond one's control? Furthermore, how do we take seriously this religious perspective, perhaps even learning from it, even as we may wish to distance ourselves from its shortcomings and blind spots? In this spirit, is there space for interreligious engagement that may simultaneously maintain such theological views regarding demons vis-à-vis religious others without demonizing religious others themselves and thereby undercutting any possibility for interreligious learning?

Accordingly, in the remainder of this essay, I would like to engage at least some of these questions by considering them in light of insights raised by scholars Mark Heim,[2] Anantanand Rambachan,[3] and Rachel Reedijk.[4] Each one of these scholars contributes a perspective in the 2015 volume *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue*, edited by Marianne Moyaert and Joris Geldhof, that complicates interreligious participation. While Rambachan writes most optimistically about the value of religious education in enabling participation in the spiritual traditions of others, Heim and Reedijk articulate counter-perspectives that urge caution due to the potential dangers of such participation. In the section that follows, a brief overview of the main arguments of each of these scholars aims to elucidate their specific insights concerning the

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[1] Related questions not directly addressed in this essay include whether these concerns about the "dangerous power" of other religious traditions are truly justified. For example, to what extent are there ontologically real "powers" that need to be taken seriously (despite Enlightenment-influenced protests to the contrary)? If so, what is the relationship between these "dark powers" and other religious traditions? When is the conservative Christian outcry about "demons" an important call to heed, and when is it merely misinformed, and possibly a neocolonialist demonization of the religious other? Reflexively, is this a false dichotomy altogether?

[2] Mark Heim, "On Doing What Others Do: Intentions and Intuitions in Multiple Religious Practice," in *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations*, ed. Marianne Moyaert and Joris Geldhof (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 19–32.

[3] Anantanand Rambachan, "Offering and Receiving Hospitality: The Meaning of Ritual Participation in the Hindu Temple," in Moyaert and Geldhof, *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue*, 125–37.

[4] Rachel Reedijk, "Transgressing and Setting Ritual Boundaries: A Puzzling Paradox," in Moyaert and Geldhof, *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue*, 181–94.

limitations to interreligious participation. In particular, one's sense of danger in such situations comes into focus, along with whether and how these limits might be transcended.

The Protestant theologian Mark Heim, for instance, explores the interaction of personal intention, intuition, and interreligious learning in relation to one's practice of multiple religious traditions. As a comparative theologian, Heim discusses how an individual's desire to "do what (religious) others do" often creates a situation in which that person practices others' rituals without necessarily sharing precisely the same intentions as members of the religious community in which the rituals find their home. He cites as an example Brian McLaren, an American pastor who observes the fast of Ramadan with Muslim friends but does so to "express his concern and respect for Muslims."[5] Yet these intentions, of course, are unlikely to be motivating the fasts of McLaren's Muslim companions. In turn, Heim then analyzes the role spiritual intuitions play in shaping one's desire for and practice of the religious rituals of others. Referencing research in moral psychology conducted by Jonathan Haidt, Heim discusses how deeply embedded and possibly subconscious concerns can influence one's experience of interreligious participation.[6] In reflecting on the role that interreligious education can play in shaping these spiritual intuitions— and thereby also influencing one's desire to participate in the rituals of others—Heim then observes that a sense of spiritual danger may powerfully prevent certain people from seeking to learn and experience more of others' religious traditions. Reflecting some of the concerns expressed by my Swedish friends, Heim writes:

> There are sometimes those for whom physical entry into [a religious] building or site itself is a matter of serious debate. This reaction is sometimes fueled by ignorance about the tradition involved or a prior demonization of it. But this is not always true: [...] there is a kind of negative reverence for the sacred character of the place in question, a recognition that it represents and conveys *real spiritual powers* that are not identical with and may not be controllable by [a person's] own religious resources. They believe that real effects are exercised on a visitor by presence and practice in that place, regardless of the intention with which a visitor may enter.[7]

Intention, for some, may be largely irrelevant as a matter of interreligious participation, according to Heim. Due to the "real spiritual powers" that reside in such locales, for example, visiting the sacred space of another religious group poses a risk regardless of one's personal intentions or intuitions.

This observation complicates the assumption, advanced by Anantanand Rambachan, that education alone is sufficient to overcome "demonization" of other religious groups and can enable all people to participate across religious boundaries.[8] Rambachan expresses such a

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[5] Heim, "On Doing What Others Do," 22.

[6] Ibid., 25. This discussion adopts and is organized around Haidt's six binaries, specifically care/harm, fairness/cheating, liberty/oppression, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. For further consideration of these binaries, see Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012).

[7] Heim, "On Doing What Others Do," 27. Emphasis is mine.

[8] Those who perceive the sacred spaces of other religious traditions as dangerous may be prevented not only from participating in the rituals of religious others, as discussed above by Heim, but may also avoid the various kinds of

position in his essay "Offering and Receiving Hospitality: The Meaning of Ritual Participation in the Hindu Temple," in which he contends that interreligious learning has significant value in helping to correct misunderstandings and unfounded fears about the practices of other religious groups. Toward this end, Rambachan explains for a non-Hindu audience the features of a typical Hindu *pūjā* ritual, thereby seeking explicitly to counter misperceptions that such worship is either "idolatrous" or "polytheistic."[9] Specifically, Rambachan casts the *pūjā* ceremony in terms more easily acceptable to those of a monotheistic background by explaining how the apparent "polytheism" is really a celebration of "One True Being" in that Being's multitudinous forms. Moreover, what may appear to some as "idolatry" is, according to Rambachan, the worship of a singular Divinity in his or her many manifestations.[10] By thus walking an imagined non-Hindu visitor through the stages of a *pūjā* ceremony and explaining aspects of the ritual that either a Jew or a Christian, for example, might find especially confusing or difficult to accept, Rambachan illustrates how education can break down ideological barriers that exist more so in one's religious imagination than in reality.[11] Deftly anticipating the potential misinterpretations of religious others, Rambachan shows how increased understanding can challenge common objections raised by those of Judeo-Christian backgrounds to participating in acts of Hindu worship. By showing that such objections are often rooted in misunderstanding, such attitudes may thus be overcome through religious learning and in turn may lead a non-Hindu toward interreligious participation.

But can this kind of education be effective in fostering interreligious participation for those, like the evangelical Swedes in Lhasa, who are convinced that "real spiritual powers" dangerously lurk in the sacred spaces of others? Is such an educational approach even an appropriate or a wise course of action if those who hold such viewpoints are correct? Addressing these concerns about transgressing ritual boundaries, the anthropologist Rachel Reedijk examines Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities in four European countries—the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands.[12] Through in-depth interviews of forty-four

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interreligious learning that can occur through comparative theological study. Perceptions of spiritual danger may thus pose a challenge to each of the four types of comparative learning that Catherine Cornille identifies— intensification, recovery/rediscovery, reinterpretation, and appropriation—in "The Problem of Choice in Comparative Theology," in *How to Do Comparative Theology: European and American Perspectives in Dialogue*, ed. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. and Klaus von Stosch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 19–36; esp. 29–31. This discussion, however, lies beyond the scope of this essay.

[9] Rambachan, "Offering and Receiving Hospitality," 133.

[10] Ibid., 133–5.

[11] From a Christian perspective, see, e.g., Michael Barnes, S.J., "Living Interreligiously: On the 'Pastoral Style' of Comparative Theology," in Clooney and von Stosch, *How to do Comparative Theology*, 301–23. Rambachan's approach dovetails nicely with how Michael Barnes, S.J., describes London's Buddhapadipa Temple. For Barnes, learning about the sacred spaces of other religious traditions illustrates how a "prayerful 'reading' of another [religious] world" (302) reveals the compatibilities in style between comparative theology and pastoral theology. Read together, Barnes's and Rambachan's articles reinforce each other and particularly show how descriptions of the religious "worlds" conveyed through others' sacred spaces can enable both interreligious ritual participation and comparative theology. Moreover, consider Emma O'Donnell, "Methodological Considerations on the Role of Experience in Comparative Theology," in Clooney and von Stosch, *How to do Comparative Theology*, 259–70, especially whether such an approach creates comparative theological possibilities that are experiential, rather than purely textual. If so, it may address and even develop, as O'Donnell indicates, "new ways to take into account the ritual, performed, and experiential nature of religion" (260).

[12] Reedijk, "Transgressing and Setting Ritual Boundaries," 181–94; see esp. 182, where she defines her interdisciplinary methodology as "anthropological, theological, philosophical, and psychological."

"key figures of Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue," concentrating on their experiences of interreligious dialogue and participation in the rituals of religious others, Reedijk found that the majority of her respondents spoke of their interreligious experiences in positive or neutral terms. However, seven of the forty-four interviewees voiced strong concerns about engaging in others' rituals. While not referencing demonic beings or malevolent, "real spiritual powers," these seven still perceived interreligious participation as inherently imbued with danger.

These perceptions of spiritual danger fall broadly into two categories: first, the threat of the slippery slope and, secondly, spiritual contamination. As for the first, one Jewish man expressed concern that simply dialoguing with religious others will lead one to associate more intimately with members of the other faith: moving from talking with them to eating with them, and then even to marrying them. Ultimately, this slippery process would lead one to "forget" and perhaps abandon one's own tradition. Similarly, an Orthodox Christian worried that simply "watching" another's rituals, if done "with a curious mind, unavoidably opens the door to the relativization and hence corruption of the truth."[13] Both of these respondents thus perceived interreligious dialogue and participation in terms of danger and threat, constituting in effect a slippery slope that is virtually certain, beginning with either dialogue or observing others' rituals and then ending in the corruption of "the truth" and the abandonment of one's tradition.

Spiritual contamination is the second type of danger that Reedijk's interviewees identify as a result of celebrating religious rituals with members of another faith tradition.[14] This fear was expressed by one Muslim man who described how the "first-generation immigrants" in his mosque do not want outsiders to visit the mosque because "they think that the mosque will become ritually unclean if a non-Muslim who has eaten a pork sandwich sets foot on their premises."[15] This danger, in a sense, thus represents the inverse concern of the evangelical Swedes. On the one hand, both the evangelicals and first-generation Muslim immigrants perceive interreligious participation as a dangerous, spiritually contaminating activity. However, for the evangelicals, this danger is incurred if they were to enter a Buddhist temple whereas, for the Muslims, it arises whenever non-Muslims enter their mosque.

Such views of the danger of interreligious dialogue and ritual participation—whether from malevolent beings, a slippery slope leading to loss of faith, or ritual impurity—complicate the tacit belief in the educative approach of Rambachan that interreligious learning will enable members of different religious traditions to participate in each other's rituals. While learning across religious boundaries certainly may aid some people who already possess some degree of openness to learning about—and even perhaps from—others, it is unlikely to be effective for those who see interreligious education itself as a threat to be avoided or resisted. Moreover, Rambachan's approach may have limited, if any, effect upon those who seek to learn about others only to convert them to one's own tradition.[16] In addition, when resistance to

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[13] Ibid., 185.

[14] For a seminal analysis of the relationship between rituals and perceptions of purity, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). See esp. ch. 1 on understandings of ritual uncleanness and ch. 8 on the relationship between impurity and behavior deemed immoral by one's community.

[15] Reedijk, "Transgressing and Setting Ritual Boundaries,"187.

[16] See Glenn R. Willis, "On Some Suspicions Regarding Comparative Theology," in Clooney and von Stosch, *How to Do Comparative Theology*, 132. Willis seems to view the interreligious learning that occurs in comparative theology as

interreligious engagement occurs at the level of entire communities, as substantiated in Reedijk's example of first-generation Muslim immigrants, efforts to educate across religious borders may be particularly unwelcome and perhaps seen as unethical. Such educational efforts, from the perspective of these communities, likely will be seen not as a pathway toward personal spiritual growth and increased understanding but actually as a means for becoming deluded and manipulated by forces that oppose those of one's trusted spiritual community.

If learning across religious boundaries through interreligious ritual participation is thus resisted as profoundly threatening, what about less experiential approaches, such as learning about other religions' ideas and doctrines through comparative theology and/or religious literacy? In regard to the former, Francis Clooney articulates a way of learning from the texts of other traditions in a manner that does not require one to participate in other religions' rituals. In fact, while eagerly learning from Hindu texts, he details his own reticence to participate in Hindu rituals, when he writes, for example, that during a visit to a temple of the Hindu goddess Lakṣmī, he watched the temple's activities but did not participate in its worship, because "Christians do not worship Goddesses."[17] By contrast, Clooney has no qualms about pairing Christian and Hindu devotional texts and, via a "double reading" of each text in light of the other, learning from both traditions.[18] While this approach may have the advantage from a conservative religious viewpoint of not requiring one to participate in a foreign set of rituals, I doubt whether Reedijk's Muslim respondents or my Swedish evangelical friends would regard such interreligious learning as significantly less dangerous than ritual participation. This is due, I believe, to a fundamental difference at the level of one's theology of religions between the welcoming inclusivism of a comparative theologian like Clooney and the sharp exclusivism[19] of more conservative individuals for whom the paraphernalia of other traditions—regardless of whether these are rituals, texts, ideas, spaces, sounds, or something else—are by virtue of their spiritual "otherness"[20] perceived as dangerous and to be avoided.[21]

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beneficial only insofar as it aids one in promulgating the tenets of one's religious tradition: "A comparative theology should be an apologetic theology if it is to be constructive and vital." Such a perspective utilizes interreligious learning only to solidify one further in the "truth" of one's own tradition and not to facilitate interreligious participation. Willis's use of interreligious education thus challenges Rambachan's belief that such learning beneficially supports interreligious ritual engagement.

[17] Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 88.

[18] As he does, for instance, in: Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Beyond Compare: St. Francis de Sales and Sri Vedanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008).

[19] In using the terminology of inclusivism and exclusivism, I reference the theological vocabulary of Alan Race—discussed at length in James Fredericks, *Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999)—whose schema of exclusivism/inclusivism/pluralism articulates three perspectives on the value (soteriologically, epistemically, etc.) of other religions in comparison with one's own. The soteriological aspect of Christian exclusivism is often emphasized as paramount, and while this concern was certainly a priority of my evangelical missionary friends, I believe their exclusivism extended to proximate areas like epistemology and ethics, such that visiting Buddhist temples was perceived as dangerous not only in a salvific sense (i.e., the threat to the salvation of one's soul) but also in a more immediate sense due to other dangers associated with entering a "demonic" residence (e.g., spiritual confusion, increased temptation to act immorally).

[20] This spiritual "otherness" is particularly salient among groups espousing an exclusivist theology of religions because, in contrast to inclusivist or pluralist perspectives that might view religious differences favorably, such "otherness" is associated, as seen above, with threat, including that of contamination, falsehood, and the demonic.

[21] Also relevant to this discussion is the scholarship of Amos Yong, especially his *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow Through the Middle Way?*. In the third major section of this text, Yong articulates a theology of "divine absence," in which he argues that Christian and Buddhist approaches to the demonic, while differing in

For such individuals perhaps the only kind of interreligious engagement that may be welcomed would be one that would facilitate learning *about* other traditions without necessarily learning *from* them.[22] While this approach may still be resisted by those, like the respondent in Reedijk's study, who see any kind of interreligious exposure as toying dangerously with the corrupting force of religious curiosity, instruction in basic religious literacy may be perceived by other conservative practitioners as relatively harmless and perhaps even valuable.[23]

In summary, Heim, Rambachan, and Reedijk each address the issue of spiritual danger in interreligious participation from different angles that nuance and to some extent mutually complicate one another. While Heim primarily focuses on interiority in ritual engagement across religious boundaries, specifically on the roles played by intentions and intuitions, he acknowledges that for some people the danger posed by "real spiritual powers" is so threatening that interreligious participation, regardless of intention, becomes an impossible activity. Rambachan has a somewhat different focus, as he optimistically outlines how interreligious learning might break down—or at least erode—boundaries of misunderstanding that prevent Jews or Christians from participating in Hindu ceremonies. Largely directed at those who already possess some willingness to learn about other religious communities, this approach may not be particularly effective among those who see the sites, rituals, and communities of other religions as potentially dangerous because, for example, they are believed to mediate the malevolent presence of threatening spiritual beings. Such concerns over spiritual danger are clearly expressed by several of Reedijk's interviewees, for whom interreligious participation is fraught with various forms of threat, including personal "contamination" and a "slippery slope" that gradually leads one away from one's home tradition. Spiritual danger, in the views of these respondents as well as those of my Swedish missionary friends, thus comprises the threat from other religious traditions that adopts any of a variety of forms (from personal, harmful beings (e.g., demons) to impersonal states of spiritual impurity) and provides strong impetus to avoid the sites and experiences believed to convey such harm. Alternate approaches for interreligious learning, such as the comparative method of Francis Clooney, are not likely to be warmly embraced, given the tendency to tie all aspects of other traditions (whether rituals, texts, or something else) to a common, dangerous denominator. Basic religious literacy, by contrast, may be welcomed, but likely only insofar as one can learn *about* other traditions—a strategy by which one maintains a high degree of control (or at least a sense of control) over the interreligious encounter—without having to embrace the relatively more vulnerable position of learning *from* them.

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key respects, can generally be understood as allies against a common enemy. In articulating this theological inclusivism vis-à-vis demonic encounter, Yong conveys a theology of religions that, like Clooney's, would likely be resisted by Christians who consider demons not (or not only) a common enemy of multiple religious traditions but actually inherent to all traditions other than one's own. See: Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow Through the Middle Way?* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[22] See, for example, the religious literacy approach of Diane Moore in: Diane Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[23] Such value may be understood in a variety of ways. While in Lhasa, my evangelical friends asked me to hold some brief classes for their children on "world religions." I believe a number of goals lay behind this request: on the one hand, their children could learn basic information about other religions and cultures, while on the other hand such knowledge could be used to inoculate their kids against these alternate traditions by emphasizing their contrast with Christianity. Such prizing of the apologetic value of interreligious learning echoes the position of Glenn Willis who sees comparative theology as beneficial only insofar as it pursues apologetic goals (see footnote 16).

Finally, what are we to conclude about this cautionary way of regarding religious others? Though this approach may strike us in liberally minded universities as a narrow, misinformed, or even pathetic way of interacting with the surrounding world, can we really be so sure that such assumptions are correct? To state the issue differently, in the spirit of comparative inquiry, what might we learn from the conservative perspectives expressed by Reedijk's Muslim respondents and my Swedish evangelical friends? How do we honor these views, considering where they may illuminate our own blind spots, rather than ignoring or rejecting them as "obviously" wrong? While I do not in any way wish to endorse the demonization of religious traditions, I believe that a commitment to interreligious learning demands listening carefully to the perspectives and concerns of these conservative groups. When one does so, one is challenged to come to terms with the risks and dangers potentially inherent in any interreligious engagement—risks and dangers that fundamentally challenge notions of agency and control in interreligious ritual participation. More specifically, conservative cautionary voices suggest that one who participates in the rituals of other religions, while perhaps believing oneself to be in control of the religious experience, actually may open oneself to a variety of unexpected dangers, including spiritual confusion, contamination, and/or attack from malevolent spiritual beings. My point is not that such dangers are necessarily or always "real," but that taking interreligious learning seriously demands that we seriously consider that very possibility: in other words, that we honor not only the pluralistic impulse to learn from—and participate in—the traditions of others, but that we also listen carefully to those voices urging caution against doing so. Ironically, in articulating their concerns, conservative believers, like my Swedish friends, actually may afford other traditions more respect than those who facilely dabble in their rituals, because in taking seriously the spiritual "power" (interpreted as "danger") of other traditions, conservatives implicitly honor these traditions as spiritually and ontologically significant, albeit dangerously so.[24]

In the end, I did not follow the advice of the evangelical engineers from Sweden. I continued to visit Lhasa's temples, allowing repeated engagement with the Tibetan Buddhist culture around me to reshape my own religious presuppositions and to teach me ways of "being religious" that I had not previously encountered. But the evangelical missionaries' profound concerns over the danger of interreligious encounter, and their conviction of the real threat from malevolent spiritual beings residing in Buddhist temples, provoked within me a host of challenging questions about the nature of evil, the risks of interreligious participation, and the project of comparative religious study—questions that revealed how my own assumptions might blind me to religious correlations, even realities, that others perceive more clearly.

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[24] A recent American example of such "backhanded" religious respect may be seen in the evangelical Christian response to the proposed introduction of yoga in elementary schools of the Encinitas Union School District in Encinitas, California. While school administrators touted the physical and psychological benefits of yogic practice, the evangelical outcry against its introduction focused on yoga's spiritually transformative power, including its ability to aid practitioners in moving through a series of spiritual stages that culminate in "absorption in the Universal." Evangelical Christians' resistance to the introduction of yoga into public schools on the grounds of not wanting these spiritually transformative effects to be experienced by their children arguably affords this Hindu practice greater respect than those who promote it as a de-spiritualized exercise regimen. See: Will Carless, "Yoga Class Draws a Religious Protest." *New York Times*, December 15, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/us/school-yoga-class-draws-religious-protest-from-christians.html.

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The Cross and the Confucian Imagination: T. C. Chao's Confucian Christian Theology of Salvation

John Sampson

T.C. Chao (1888–1979) is considered one of the greatest Chinese Christian theologians of the twentieth century. He strove to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ in touch with Chinese culture, and bring Christianity in dialogue with Confucianism. This article explores the ways Chao furthered reflection on Christian salvation in his early career (c.1922–1937), especially as he attempted to align it with Confucianism's emphasis on cultivating virtue. It argues that Chao develops his own moral exemplar theology of the cross, depicting Jesus Christ as the virtuous sage of Confucianism whose personality was capable of engendering widespread moral reform in society. The article highlights how Chao furthers this thinking against the background of Confucianism and observes the ways he engaged in comparative theological reflection as a Chinese Christian. It sheds light on the ways such representative Christian theologians from the Majority World are deeply "intertexted" within multiple religious traditions and practice Christian theology from such a vantage point.

Keywords: T. C. Chao, Christianity, Confucianism, virtue, moral exemplar, multiple religious belonging

T. C. Chao (1888–1979) was one of the foremost Chinese Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. Among scholars in the Western academy, however, much of his theology remains relatively unexplored.[1] Throughout his life Chao attempted to bring Christianity in correspondence with the Chinese mind, a mind that he believed was steeped in Confucianism. He did this in order to demonstrate Christianity's potential for China's social reconstruction in the early twentieth century, as well as to overcome what he felt were Western barriers to Chinese belief. A gifted intellectual and prolific writer, Chao taught at Suzhou University and later became the dean of the School of Religion at Yenjing (Beijing) University.[2] Actively involved in the International Missionary Council (IMC), he was elected in 1948 as one of the six presidents for the World Council of Churches (WCC), representing East Asian Christians. His career spanned one of the greatest periods of upheaval and transition in modern Chinese history. The Qing Dynasty (1640–1912) collapsed, the New Culture Movement (*c.*1919) confronted the inpouring of Western science and democracy, the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) devastated the Chinese population, and the founding of the People's Republic of China (*c.*1949) brought to an end the ongoing civil war between China's Nationalist and Communist parties.

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[1] The major monographs on Chao's theology in English and German include: Yongtao Chen, *The Chinese Christology of T. C. Chao* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016); Daniel Hoi Ming Hui, *A Study of T. C. Chao's Christology in the Social Context of China* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017); Winfried Glüer, *Christliche Theologie in China: T. C. Chao: 1918-1956* (Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979).

[2] Chao's collected works are assembled in a four-volume Chinese edition and another volume consists of his English writings. See T. C. Chao, *Collected Works of T. C. Chao*, ed. Yong Wen and Yan Jiu Yuan Yanjing, vols. 1–4 (Beijing: Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 2003); T. C. Chao, *Collected English Writings of T. C. Chao*, ed. Yong Wen and Yanjing Yan Jiu Yuan, vol. 5 (Beijing: Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 2003).

These were the circumstances under which Chao practiced Christian theology and sought to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ in touch with his Chinese context. His extensive theological and literary output covers various developments in his thought. Although several periods mark his development, it is his early theological career (*c.*1922–1937) that is of special interest to us here, particularly for its significance for comparative theology.[3] After all, it was specifically in this period when Chao crafted a theologically robust, contextually sensitive understanding of Christian salvation that incorporated the Confucian emphasis for transforming society by the cultivation of virtue. Chao was, by no means, the only Chinese theologian of the time who attempted to reconfigure Christian theology within a predominately Confucian worldview.[4] However, due to his voluminous scholarly output, his privileged position at Yenching University, and his ecumenical involvement with both IMC and WCC, he is arguably one of the most noteworthy. In this article, I argue that in his early career, seeking to bring Christianity in correspondence with the Chinese mind, Chao developed his own moral exemplar theology of the cross, depicting Jesus Christ as the virtuous sage of Confucianism whose personality was capable of engendering widespread moral reform in society. I believe that Chao was in this way deeply "intertexted" as a Chinese Christian committed to Confucianism on the one hand and Christianity on the other.[5] Fully aware of how the Chinese responded to "exemplary" moral action, he drew upon Christianity and Confucianism and advanced comparative theological reflection with the hopes that the Chinese people might see Christianity's appeal, and find embodied in Jesus Christ the true sage who could save the Chinese people.

To demonstrate this, I will touch briefly on the moral exemplar theory of the cross as it was first put forward by Peter Abelard. I shall then examine Chao's understanding of Jesus Christ's death at the cross against the background of Confucius's emphasis on the virtuous sage, or man of humanity (*ren*). Finally, in observation of the ways Chao integrates his understanding of Jesus Christ's personality with this Confucian emphasis, the significance of Chao's multiple religious belonging and comparative theological reflection may come to the fore.

The Moral Exemplar Theory of the Cross

It is difficult to say when the moral exemplar theory of atonement was first developed, or under what circumstances it first became widely accepted. Peter Abelard (1079–1142), usually considered the first proponent of the theory, laid emphasis on the cross's power to evoke inspiration and moral influence in light of Christ's display of love at the cross in dying for sinners.[6] Abelard

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[3] This is the period Peter Ng considers as typifying Chao's early theological reflection. Ng sets out the three periods that he considers capture the key developments in Chao's thought, viz., 1922–1937, 1937–1949, and post-1949. See Peter Tze Ming Ng, *Chinese Christianity: An Interplay Between Global and Local Perspectives* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 169.

[4] Another figure would be L. C. Wu (Wu Leichuan, 1870–1944), also a professor at Yenching University, who believed the Confucian understanding of *ren* was amenable to the Christian gospel. See John C. England, Jose Kuttianimattathi, John Mansford Prior, Lily A. Quintos, David Suh Kwang-sun, and Janice Wickeri, eds., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 3: 141–3.

[5] "Intertext" is a term that Francis Clooney uses to describe both the process of comparative theology and an important effect in the practice of such theology, to which I will return in due course. See Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 148; and Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), 226–7 n17.

[6] Alister McGrath argues that historians of dogma mistakenly trace the origins of the moral exemplar theory of atonement back to Abelard, and that Abelard, instead of propounding such a theory, saw it contained within a theology

held that "redemption is that greatest love kindled in us by Christ's passion, a love which not only delivers us from the bondage of sin, but also acquires for us the true freedom of children, where love instead of fear becomes the ruling affection."[7] With this in mind, Abelard disagreed strongly with Anselm of Canterbury's view that the atonement functioned as a "satisfaction" for sins, instead arguing:

> How cruel and wicked it seems that anyone should demand the blood of an innocent person as the price for anything, or that it should in any way please [God] that an innocent person should be slain—still less that God should consider the death of his Son so agreeable that by it he should be reconciled to the whole world![8]

While many variations on the moral exemplar theory abound, a consistent emphasis has been the cross's power to evoke love and kindle affection. Rather than functioning as a mere act of the past, Jesus Christ's voluntary act of self-sacrifice possessed the power to move human beings by the evocation of love. As Abelard believed, "Christ died for us in order to show us how great was his love for humanity and to prove that love is the essence of Christianity."[9]

T. C. Chao, Confucius, and the Cross of Jesus Christ

T. C. Chao, raised in a Buddhist family and educated at Suzhou University, was steeped in the Confucian classics.[10] Yet it was also at Suzhou where he became a Christian, prompting him to study theology at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee before returning to China in order to teach in the religious studies department at Suzhou University. It was this period of Chao's life and academic context that establishes the basis for much of his early reflection on "indigenizing Christianity"—a preferred term of his that reflects his attempt to reconfigure the Christian gospel within a Chinese, Confucian mindset, and thus free it from what he believed were Western obstacles to Chinese belief. While Chao's debts to Abelard are unclear, his understanding of the cross's moral influence certainly brings him close to the medieval theologian, albeit with appropriate adjustment for his Chinese context. Chao's central emphasis was the power of the cross of Jesus Christ, with Christ's embodiment of self-sacrifice putting on display for the Chinese people a virtuous example to follow. This, Chao believed, came close to the very heart of the Chinese culture and religiosity, at the centre of which was Confucius and the entire school of thought that followed him.

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of redemption that was more thoroughly "objective" rather than merely "subjective." Whether this is in fact the case, it seems that in this commentary Abelard is unmistakably putting forward a theory that would either later become, or in his mind already was, the moral exemplary. See Alister McGrath, "The Moral Theory of the Atonement: An Historical and Theological Critique," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38, no. 2 (May 1985): 205–20.

[7] Peter Abelard, "Commentary on the Book of Romans 3:19–26," in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene Rathbone Fairweather, Library of Christian Classics 10 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 284.

[8] Abelard, 283.

[9] Abelard, 283.

[10] The Four Books (四书) of the Confucian canon are *The Analects*, *The Book of Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Book of Mencius*. These four books came to complement the five Classics of Confucianism (五经) *The Book of Changes, Book of History, Book of Songs, Classic of Rites, Spring and Autumn Annals*. See Wing-Tsit Chan, ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

Confucius himself laid emphasis on the ways in which leaders in society, by serving as a moral example, could garner a widespread following in the path of cultivating virtue. Confucius said, "A ruler who governs his state by virtue is like the north polar star, which remains in its place while all the other stars revolve around it."[11] Julia Ching notes that one of Confucius's great merits was his "discovery of the moral character of human relationships."[12] In this tradition, the person who lived a righteous life evoked righteous living in the people around them, like an overflowing well they shifted the entire sociopolitical landscape. For instance, Confucius said, "A man of humanity [*ren*], wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent."[13] However, what was so striking about Confucius's ancient message about the wisdom he retrieved from the sage kings of China's most ancient dynasties was the attainability of moral virtue: any person could become a sage. Reflecting on his own journey Confucius said:

> At fifteen my mind was set on learning. At thirty my character had been formed. At forty I had no more perplexities. At fifty I knew the Mandate of Heaven. At sixty I was at ease with whatever I heard. At seventy I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing moral principles.[14]

Confucius believed it was incumbent upon rulers, however, those at the vanguard of society, to pave the way for moral living and give others a genuine example to imitate. This is certainly the way Confucius's teaching is understood in the *Book of Great Learning*, one of the four books of Confucianism:

> A ruler will first be watchful over his own virtue. If he has virtue, he will have the people with him. If he has the people with him, he will have the territory. If he has the territory, he will have wealth. And if he has wealth, he will have its use. Virtue is the root, while wealth is the branch.[15]

This affinity for moral virtue in leading a people would become a dominant theme in Confucianism throughout the ages, in contrast especially to Legalism, the school of thought that emphasized the efficacy of law, order, and punishment in governing a people and directing their course. It would leave an indelible mark on Chinese cultural and religious identity with the establishment of Confucianism as the official state ideology in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).

Chao was deeply aware that Confucianism permeated Chinese cultural identity and characterized Chinese religiosity. "The Chinese people," Chao said, "are a moral people." Morality lies close to the heart of Chinese philosophical reflection and captures the ambitions of Chinese philosophers throughout the ages, from Confucius down to the present. According to Chao, despite the fact that China had fallen short of its ancient moral splendour, the Chinese mind still thinks in ethical terms; it responds "with gladness to moral heroism and [condemns] with wrath immoral things." The Chinese people, Chao believed, saw morality as written into the fabric of the universe, with the result that a person began by bringing to light the manifest virtue inherent

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[11] Confucius, Analects 2:1, as quoted in Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 22.
[12] Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 57.
[13] Confucius, Analects 6:28, as quoted in Chan, *Source Book*, 31.
[14] Confucius, Analects 2:4, as quoted in Chan, *Source Book*, 22.
[15] Book of Great Learning, 10, as quoted in Chan, *Source Book*, 92.

in themselves, and ended "in assisting Nature to perform its work of nourishing and developing life."[16] In keeping with the Confucian pursuit of virtue, which unfolds outwards from within oneself, to their familial relationships and society, Chao held that the virtuous person commences with a sincere heart and a rectified will, then "controls their family, manages [their] state, and extends [their] moral work and influence till they establish the universal moral empire among [humanity], through the realization of themselves, then of others, then of all things."[17]

The work of morality in one's own life had the potential to bring about large-scale moral reform among members of society. In thinking of such a moral figure, Chao drew upon Jesus Christ and looked especially to the cross as the means of supplying the kind of ethical vision conducive to changing the hearts of the Chinese people. For the cross contained a kind of power because of what Jesus Christ's sacrifice could evoke in the hearts of human beings.

In a sermon delivered in January of 1936, Chao expounds on the relevance of the cross for China. "When Jesus died on that instrument of death . . . it did not have a halo around it, nor the glory that our wishful thinking or idealizations imparted to it." It was the means of the most terrible and humiliating kind of execution, such that it was not surprising that Jesus's friends and disciples believed the crucifixion had terminated the whole movement Jesus started. But the most ignoble death of Christ, Chao states, "only serves as the gate through which the life of indomitable righteousness takes on its glorious hues."[18] What is more, the cross reveals the law of moral life, with the self-sacrifice of the righteous human, Jesus Christ, delivering humanity from sin and destruction. Any person with a spiritual vision could read from the cross the very meaning of life. For the cross stood for shame and death before Christ was nailed to it, the negation of all values and hopes, but after Christ's crucifixion it "turned out to be the symbol of the highest moral glory, the very hope of [humanity] after [Christ] died on it." The cross contained the means of putting love and righteousness on display, with the potential to save [humanity] from moral ruin and make "the world a place where the children of God may live in love, joy, and peace."[19]

The message of the cross according to Chao was God's response in Christ to moral evil, being as well a means of knowing how one ought to act rightly. It was a sign of "the adventurous and revolutionary spirit of righteousness."[20] This, however, was a morally instructive righteousness: the cross *teaches* "not submission to unrightful authority or endurance of moral injuries, but insists on *doing right* under all circumstances."[21] What we see in Jesus's death at the cross, according to Chao, was not primarily his punishment in the place of sinners, but the revelation of God's moral character in the face of darkness and evil. This is while "the cross has . . . no power in itself to do anything." The power comes from God as he brings it in touch with one's own existence, as Chao states:

> The believing heart knows that the power of Christianity lies in the very powerlessness of believers themselves. It is this and this alone in the *religious experience*

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[16] T. C. Chao, "Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind," *Chinese Recorder*, no. 45 (May 1918): 292.

[17] Chao, 293.

[18] T. C. Chao, "Message of the Cross for China," *Chinese Recorder*, no. 47 (March 1936): 135.

[19] Chao, 136.

[20] Chao, 138.

[21] Chao, 138. Emphasis added.

of [human beings] that drive them to the almighty God who can use the weakest thing to defy the greatest strength of the world.[22]

God displayed his love on the cross in Christ and as a result men and women in experiencing such love became empowered to live out God's righteousness.

According to Chao, this powerful life conferred upon believers at the cross was not actualized in another world to come, but had profound present-day implications for members of Chinese society. "Words about another world beyond, to which the human soul may go," Chao maintains, "may indeed be a part of the message, but these words are the opiate of the people if they are moved from its periphery to its core."[23] Concerning the poorest in China, Chao argued that it is incumbent upon Christians to impart to them a "revolutionary spirit," creating in their hearts and minds a love of the values that make the cross necessary in human life.[24] Concerning the intelligentsia and those of the educated class, what they needed was religious faith and power, which they would only accept upon a "clear demonstration of such realities in actual life." While such an aim of preaching to the intelligentsia of China for Chao seemed an endeavour doomed to fail, the only possible means of approaching them was through a "*demonstration* of the power of the cross in our lives and in the services that Christian people can render to China in times of emergency."[25]

Given the Chinese orientation towards social conduct and harmonious human relationships, Chao believed that it was Jesus Christ who embodied moral perfection in going to the cross and dying for humanity. What is more, he demonstrated filial piety by submitting to his Father in heaven. This filial piety, which has remained a defining feature of the Confucian tradition throughout the centuries, was—Yongtao Chen notes—the reason Jesus "thoroughly followed God's will throughout his whole life."[26] "Christianity," Chao believed, "makes the ethical appeal and presents a moral system and life which will at once fulfill the requirements of Chinese ethics and provide a perfect ideal, a realized norm, and an adequate power for moral living."[27] This was not an abstract ethical code, but concrete moral action. Chao believed that the appeal of Christianity to China must be the appeal of "real, visible moral power and spiritual *personality*."[28] Jesus Christ was the moral exemplar, the Confucian sage who possessed the personality amenable to imitation by those who followed him, for the benefit and transformation of society at large. Chao held that "as Christ appeals through his loyal disciples to all [people], so he uses us in his appeal to the Chinese mind. Reveal to the Chinese mind the miracle of a holy *character* and the battle is won."[29]

Christianity, Confucianism, and Comparative Theology

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[22] Chao, 137.
[23] Chao, 138.
[24] Chao, 139.
[25] Chao, 140. Emphasis added.
[26] Chen, *Chinese Christology of T. C. Chao*, 157.
[27] Chao, "Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind," 379–80.
[28] Chao, 380. Emphasis added.
[29] Chao, 380. Emphasis added.

Chao went to great lengths to give Jesus Christ a home in Chinese thinking, seeking to dialogue extensively with China's rich philosophical and religious heritage.[30] The sophistication of Chao's message of the cross for China, however, the cultural and religious literacy that enabled him seamlessly to bring Christianity and Confucianism across a single horizon, is likely due to the reality of his "multiple religious belonging." This, Peter Phan argues, refers to the fact that

> some Christians believe that it is possible and even necessary not only to *accept in theory* certain doctrines or practices of other religions . . . but also to adopt and live in their personal lives the beliefs, moral rules, rituals and monastic practices of religious traditions other than Christianity.[31]

In considering himself "Chinese," Chao made evident the fact that his thinking "belonged" to Confucianism as much as it did to Christianity. For him, to think about Jesus Christ's death on the cross, and make a case for his exemplary moral action, necessarily entailed that he grapple with those religious and moral aspects of Confucianism. This was neither in paradoxical tension with Christianity nor a syncretic blending of the two traditions. As a Christian drawing upon Confucianism, he engaged many of its central beliefs, which is an important aspect in multiple religious belonging that Phan identifies as relating closely with the idea of inculturation and interreligious dialogue.[32] Chao's thinking, however, was attentive to Confucianism not merely as a cultural or historical movement, but to its religious character concerning the ethical ultimate and moral transformation.[33] A man steeped in a Chinese worldview, committed to engaging seriously

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[30] While Chao was in many ways charting new territory in his engagement with Chinese philosophy and religion, these efforts were not without some precedent among Western missionaries who strove to bring Christianity in touch with Chinese culture. The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) became learned in Classical Chinese and retrieved the ancient Chinese notion of the Lord of Heaven (*tian zhu*) to describe the God of the Bible. Not unlike Ricci, Hudson Taylor also sought to align the Christian gospel with a Chinese perspective, taking up Chinese custom and dress to express his solidarity with the Chinese. See R. Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci, 1552–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); John W. O'Malley, Gauvin A. Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, eds., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 364–65; See also Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor: The Growth of a Soul & The Growth of a Work of God* (Littleton, CO: OMF International, 2012).

[31] Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 61. Emphasis added.

[32] Phan, 61.

[33] The senses in which Confucianism is a religion or has religious elements is highly contested by scholars. However, Julia Ching believes that in Chinese traditions in general, one can find what is functionally equivalent to the religion or religions in the West, describing Confucianism in particular as a "humanism that is open to religious values." Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 2, 52. Those interpretations of Confucianism that have understood it as a humanism *devoid* of religious character, Rodney Taylor believes, are deeply mistaken. See Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1. Many scholars seek to identify and make evident Confucianism's religious dimensions, with its doctrinal as well as ritual and ethical prescriptions for proper behaviour in family and society. Simon Chan notes in this sense how Confucianism's "religious character . . . is confirmed by its interface with the cult of ancestors going back to very ancient times." Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014). Ching observes this with Confucian teachings, in how they "helped to keep alive the older cult of veneration for ancestors and the worship of Heaven, a formal cult practised by China's imperial rulers who regarded themselves as the keepers of Heaven's Mandate of government." Ching, *Chinese Religions*, 60. For more on the religious character of Confucianism see also Tu Wei-ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). For an account of Confucian spirituality and multiple religious identity see Robert Cummings Neville, "Contemporary Confucian Spirituality and Multiple Religious Identity," in *Confucian Spirituality*, ed. Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, vol. 2 (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004).

with his cultural and religious context, Chao remained firmly grounded in Confucianism—and yet as a convert to Christianity and a firm believer in Jesus Christ, he was committed to Christianity.

In light of Chao's example of navigating these two traditions in an attempt to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for the Chinese, I believe it would not be inaccurate to consider him a practitioner of comparative theology. Comparative theology, as Clooney remarks, is the "practice of rethinking aspects of one's own faith tradition through the study of aspects of another faith tradition."[34] The word "comparative" in comparative theology is theological and necessarily a spiritual practice according to Clooney, with the result that it is a "reflective and contemplative endeavour by which we see the *other* in light of our *own*, and our *own* in light of the *other*."[35] This captures the ways in which Chao believed his becoming a Christian and engaging in the practice of Christian theology never severed his ties to or lessened his appreciation for Confucius. As Chao himself reflects:

> While I am an aspiring follower of Jesus, I have not been able to see that this should hinder me at all as a faithful student of Confucius and other Chinese sages. In fact, I have growingly become attached to Confucius, seeing in him also a clear revelation of God, though only in certain particulars.[36]

For Chao, this operated not merely at the level of cultural admiration or religious affiliation, but entailed a crucial ingredient in the task of theological reflection itself. Exemplifying a definitive feature of comparative theology, he considered how he might make Jesus Christ a compelling figure in the Confucian imagination by engaging these two traditions in their particularity.[37]

As noted above, Confucius emphasized the efficacy of virtue in leading people on the way: "A ruler who governs his state by virtue is like the north polar star, which remains in its place while all the other stars revolve around it."[38] In his essay "The Appeal of Christianity to the Chinese Mind," Chao cites this saying of Confucius and then makes a clear connection with the incarnation, stating that it is the "Christian north star" around which other stars gather: "Christ represents not only the harmony between the human and divine, but also humanity's reconciliation to fellow creatures and whole creation."[39] Chao saw in Christianity the Confucian moral sage, and Jesus Christ in Confucianism. As Confucianism's virtuous sage, Christ's exemplary moral action, he believed, left human beings a personality to emulate.

In this way, it seems that Chao's Christian identity was both complexified and deepened by his familiarity with and utilization of the Classics of Confucianism that served to resource his understanding of Jesus Christ. He was an attentive reader across the textual boundaries of Christianity and Confucianism, reflecting from his Confucian vantage point on God, Jesus Christ, and Christian salvation. In a sense, this may broaden what Francis Clooney means when he

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[34] Francis X. Clooney, S.J., "Comparative Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain R. Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 654.

[35] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 11. Emphasis added.

[36] T. C. Chao, "Jesus and the Reality of God," in *Collected English Writings of T. C. Chao*, ed. Xiaochao Wang (Beijing: Zongjiao Wenhua Chuban She, 2009), 5:343.

[37] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 32.

[38] Confucius, Analects 2:1, in Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 22.

[39] Chao, "Appeal of Christianity," 378–9.

suggests, "if . . . we bring to our spiritual understanding and practice images that belong to more than one tradition, we ourselves begin to belong to those multiple religious traditions in new and complex ways."[40] Clooney believes we are in this way deeply "intertexted in our spiritual practice," when we draw upon and inhabit another tradition and begin to imagine differently God's presence and accommodation to us.[41] This seems to be the case for Chao. And yet he also provides a different way of understanding "intertexting" in his attempts to further reflection on the cross of Jesus Christ. Clooney observes how intertexting and religious belonging relate especially to one's contemplation of God. He believes that in contemplation we construct a "path of religious belonging that suits our own spiritual imagining; we do this according to our traditions but also the possibilities available in our time and place."[42] I believe that Chao furthers Clooney's understanding by showing how religious belonging and intertexting relate not only to one's contemplation of God, but factor into how one reflects on their faith and articulates the knowledge of God in their context. Comparative theology happens from no isolated standpoint nor in a vacuum. As surely as it is a contemplative endeavour, it is also a concrete undertaking.[43] It unfolds not only through the reading of texts, which Clooney considers as one of its "foremost prospects";[44] it is a practical mode of negotiating how to communicate to others the knowledge of God. As a theological endeavour, it is also a contextual activity, such that the way one draws comparisons or identifies the continuities between two different traditions may vary depending on their circumstances, sociocultural location, and practical judgment. In this time of China's cultural transition, Chao saw the cross of Jesus Christ as an effective means of drawing upon and making evident the intersection of Christianity with Confucianism.[45] For him, Christianity's continuities with the Confucian tradition were apparent: Confucius was intent that any person could achieve the development of their moral nature,[46] and likewise Jesus Christ left human beings a model, or personality, which they themselves could attain.

It is here, however, where Chao, like many Chinese Christians who revered their cultural and religious heritage, had trouble holding together two of the traditions' central and yet seemingly conflicting emphases: the status of human nature. Chao's comparative theology was in this way no mere theoretical enterprise or neutral engagement with religion. It encompassed the lived reality of his decisions and practices as a theologian who cared deeply for the traditions to which he believed his thinking "belonged." In Confucianism, the attainability of moral perfection in one's life was predicated upon the reality of humanity's natural goodness, a central feature of the tradition from as early as Mencius (372–289 BCE), who believed that humanity (*ren*), righteousness, propriety, and wisdom were not "drilled into us from the outside"; rather "we originally have them within us."[47] Just as water naturally flows downward, Mencius believed that there was "no person

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[40] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 148.

[41] Clooney, 148.

[42] Clooney, 130.

[43] This relates to what Phan believes is a productive way to discuss the dynamics of multiple religious belonging, not from abstract consideration but, drawing upon Jacques Dupuis's understanding, on the "concrete experience" of those pioneers who have attempted to combine their own Christian commitment with that of another tradition. See Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously,* 70.

[44] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 58.

[45] For more on China's cultural transition especially in the wake of the May Fourth Movement, see Chow Tse-tung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[46] For more on this particular aspect of Confucianism, see Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 12.

[47] Book of Mencius, 6A:6, in Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 54.

without this good nature."[48] This orthodox strand in Confucian thinking was in tension with Christianity's position on sinful human nature.[49] In his early years, with debts to Protestant Liberalism, Chao was inclined towards emphasizing this natural goodness latent within the human soul, with it being actualized upon following Jesus Christ's virtuous example shown at the cross.[50] In this way, however, it appeared as though the difference between Jesus Christ and the rest of humanity was a difference in degree, not in kind. Alexander Chow observes how for Chao, Jesus was "described as the 'Son of God' not because of any divine qualities or relationship with God. He gained this title because he lived a morally perfect life."[51] It was only upon witnessing the violence of the Second Sino-Japanese War and finding compelling aspects in the theology of Karl Barth (1886–1968) that Chao came to see the theological significance of affirming Christianity's traditional understanding of human sinfulness, Christ's divinity, and salvation as a divine act of God who was capable of doing for men and women what they could not do for themselves. He would, however, continue to find ways of bringing Christianity in correspondence with his Chinese context, and make comparative connections with Confucianism along the way without denigrating its core elements.

Conclusion

T. C. Chao is remembered by Chinese Christians as one of the pioneers of indigenous Chinese Christianity, striving his entire life to articulate Christian wisdom for his cultural and religious context. In his early career, that is the period between 1922 and 1937, Chao's theological and literary output was immense. This period also marks one of his most robust and sophisticated attempts to reconfigure Christian theology within a Confucian worldview. Aware of the ways the Chinese people responded to exemplary moral action in society, and conscious of how unstable was China's cultural and political environment in the wake of the New Culture Movement (*c.*1919), Chao developed his own moral exemplary theology of the cross, believing that Jesus Christ possessed the personality capable of advancing China's social reconstruction. As the Chinese sage, Jesus Christ could give men and women a model to imitate, such that by their own character and cultivation of virtue, all of society would be changed. Chao's sustained engagement with Confucianism made apparent the reality of his multiple religious belonging, and shored up the varying aspects of his comparative theology as I have examined here. His legacy extends beyond China and serves as a good example of what it looks like in practice to bring the Christian gospel in touch with the religious and cultural sensibilities in the non-Western world.[52]

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[48] Book of Mencius, 6A:2, in Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 52.

[49] For more on orthodox Confucian thinking in the wake of Mencius, see Chan, *Source Book*, 49.

[50] Protestant Liberalism is a movement, typically associated with Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and his successors, that attempted to respond to modern challenges posed to orthodox Christianity.

[51] Alexander Chow, *Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment: Heaven and Humanity in Unity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 77.

[52] See Winfried Glüer, "The Legacy of T. C. Chao," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6, no. 4 (October 1982): 165–9.

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Hasidic Devotional Reading and Comparative Theology

David Maayan

Comparative theologians and devotionally motivated readers of interreligious studies face profound hermeneutical questions in their projects. As seekers of religious truth, there is a devotional dimension to such study. And yet, commitments outside of the tradition of the text studied may make one feel like a kind of "outsider." This study focuses upon a model of devotional reading found within the Jewish hasidic tradition. Hasidic rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno (1889– 1943), building on his bedrock conviction of the essential value of the cultivation of one's own unique personhood, presents a model in which the devotional encounter with the living essence of a sacred text is intertwined with the discovery of one's own unique perspective and approach to the Divine. This living essence is a figure, the author, whose presence when encountered causes us to reconfigure our own self-understanding as well as our understanding of the Divine. I suggest that this model may provoke reflection and prove constructive in terms of the hermeneutics of comparative theological textual study, calling into question some of the assumptions of traditional study as "insider" readings, and the implications of a "devotional" approach.

Keywords: master; disciple; devotional individuation; Hasidism; tzaddik; hermeneutics; practice of authorship; religious reading; comparative theology; interreligious reading

Introduction: Comparative Theology and Hasidism

Comparative theology, particularly when pursued through the comparative study of texts from different traditions, must wrestle with fundamental questions about the stance of the author. Does the comparativist situate herself in a relatively detached, "objective" position[1]—or does the author place himself within a "home" tradition, owning the subjective commitments that render the description of the "other" tradition as always, to some extent, etic? Alternatively, does the comparative theologian emphasize the blurring of boundaries and definitions, or claim dual belonging?[2] At times, the implicit assumption is that the religious texts being studied have a dimension of meaning that is only available to a religious "insider," who identifies with the text and approaches it devotionally. The question is to what extent this dimension of meaning can be accessed by one who is not fully (or exclusively) such an insider.

However, even devotional reading practices within a tradition, outside of the context of comparison, may in fact recognize the need for an insider/outsider dialectic of sorts. Spiritual

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[1] Termed by Catherine Cornille "meta-confessional," associated with the work of Robert C. Neville among others. See the exploration of the continuum from confessional to meta-confessional in Catherine Cornille, "The Problem of Choice in Comparative Theology," in *How To Do Comparative Theology,* ed. Francis X. Clooney and Klaus von Stosch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 19–36. Cf. the remarks about Neville's "elegant detachment" and the author's contrast with his own approach in Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 45–49.

[2] See the essays collected in Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), and her "Double Religious Belonging: Aspects and Questions," *Buddhist–Christian Studies* 23 (2003): 43–49. Cf. also Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 155–62.

directors may feel that, together with the value of identification with the text and its author, it is important for the student to maintain and further develop her own individuality through the engagement with sacred texts. The purpose of this essay is to present one such model of devotional reading from the hasidic tradition, that of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno (1889–1943). I believe that Shapira's approach can shed original light on some hermeneutical issues in comparative theology, precisely because it originates in an intrareligious context in which issues of comparison, and scholarly objectivity, are not at issue. Nonetheless, Shapira frames reading hasidic texts as an exercise in gaining a vision of the spiritual essence of the text and its author, while simultaneously differentiating from the text so as to develop one's own uniqueness in the devotional path. Before we come to the specifics of Shapira's teaching, we must briefly situate him in the wider context of Hasidism, and the devotional attitude he takes toward its leaders, the tzaddikim.[3]

Hasidism, a pious revival movement originating among the Jews of Eastern Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century, rapidly expanded to become a major force in modern Jewry. Although often associated—by critics and adherents alike—with archconservatism and traditionalism, scholars have recognized with increasing clarity that Hasidism must be seen as a modern movement.[4] From its inception, Hasidism was a reorientation of Judaism that placed the infinite value of the unique human personality at its center. As Gershom Scholem writes, Hasidism's "whole development centers round the personality of the Hasidic saint; this is something entirely new. *Personality* takes the place of *doctrine*."[5] It is not that doctrines disappear, of course, any more than ritual practices do. But all the elements of Judaism find their new center in the mystery of the "bottomless depths" of the personality of the hasidic saint, known as the tzaddik. The tzaddik's every teaching, ritual act, or interaction was treasured as a revelation not only of the Divine, but also of the unique, cultivated personhood of the tzaddik.

This new focus or orientation, however, is amenable to quite different forms of development. In one model, the tzaddik is almost a species apart, such a rare and unique type of individual that the vast majority of people should strive only to attach themselves to a tzaddik and then endeavor to embody, on their own level, the insights and approach of their master. In this model, the tzaddik is the head of the mystical body of his followers. This model found early and emphatic expression in Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye, an important disciple of the traditional

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[3] Lit. "the righteous." This ancient and biblical word became a technical term for hasidic leaders.

[4] See David Biale et al., "Introduction: Hasidism as a Modern Movement," in *Hasidism: A New History*, ed. David Biale et al., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 1–11. The authors succinctly place the question of the interpretation of Hasidism within a broader questioning of the popular notion of modernity and secularization, which tends to conflate the former with a direct movement toward the latter. The authors conclude that "Hasidism throughout its two-and-a-half-century history represents a case of 'modernization without secularization'" (Biale et al., 11). It is worth noting that the term "secularization" here assumes a debatable definition. In Charles Taylor's phenomenological history *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), he distinguishes three senses of "secularity." The third sense he terms changes in the conditions of belief, or the tacit "background," of explicit beliefs and practices. Ibid., 2–3, 12–14, and passim; see also the references under *Secularity (3)* in the Index. In Taylor's terms, much of Hasidism could be seen as "Jewish piety under the conditions of secularity (3)." On the wider issue of Jews in modernity, see Ari Joscowitz and Ethan B. Katz, eds., *Secularism in Question: Jews and Judaism in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[5] Emphasis in original. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 344.

"founder" of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer (also known as the Ba'al Shem Tov).[6] Ya'akov Yosef's elitist division of the Jewish people into the few "men of form" (*tzurah*) and the many "men of matter" (*khomer*) made it clear that the latter were not to engage in original self-creation but rather were to allow themselves to be shaped by their inspired leaders.[7] However, a second model would see the tzaddik's development of his own unique self as *itself* a model for those who would be inspired by him to develop their own uniqueness. The tension between these two models is captured neatly in a hasidic tale, as presented by Martin Buber in "In His Father's Footsteps":

> When Rabbi Noah, Rabbi Mordecai's son, assumed the succession after his father's death, his disciples noticed that there were a number of ways in which he conducted himself differently from his father, and asked him about this. "I do just as my father did," he replied. "He did not imitate, and I do not imitate."[8]

Yet this story, presenting succinctly the model of non-imitation, or phrased positively, a "model of individuation," is still about one tzaddik learning from another (in this case, his father). Indeed, the disciples' question indicates that they cannot grasp such a model, and one senses that they are perhaps disconcerted by it. Rabbi Noah's response, in addition to its ironic model of "imitating non-imitation," contains its own ambiguity. It can be read either as opening the door for the disciples to become non-imitators, or alternatively as an explanation that cements his own special status as a tzaddik, that is to say, one marked by and entitled to his own uniqueness.

This study is focused on a hasidic tzaddik, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira,[9] who combined a pious and traditionalist way of life with an extremely heartfelt passion for the bedrock value of each person cultivating his or her unique selfhood. Shapira's own "revivalist" project strove to imbue new life into Hasidism in his day. His writings show an extensive knowledge and profound sensitivity to the textures of early hasidic thought. A gifted writer and penetrating thinker, he consistently draws on aspects of early hasidic thought that highlight the value of the unique individual. Simultaneously, he creatively reinterprets some of Hasidism's central teachings in the light of this nonnegotiable value of individuation, creating a model that I refer to as "devotional individuation." After sharing Shapira's articulation of this value, I will discuss his presentation of

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[6] See Biale et al., *Hasidism: A New History*, 67–70, on the shaping of the notion of Hasidism as a movement, and the Ba'al Shem Tov as its founder, in the decades after his death. Essential biographies on the Ba'al Shem Tov include Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) and Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2005).

[7] Cf. Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (New York: Schocken, 1960), 113–41 and passim. On "form and matter," see 136–37. Dresner correctly notes that the hasidic tzaddik had "not yet become an institution" in Ya'akov Yosef's lifetime (p. 132), and therefore his "men of form" are an elite sector without being communal leaders necessarily.

[8] Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 2:157. N.b., this is the second half of the book, and the pagination begins again in *The Later Masters*, which was originally published as its own volume, separately from the first half of the book, *The Early Masters*. References to this compiled text will be located in the proper volume. Cf. Nahman of Kossów's anti-imitation slogan, "Pay no heed to the fathers!" (*al tifnu el ha-avot*), a pun on the prohibition against turning to occult forces (*el ha-ovot*) in Lev. 19:31, which is twice cited by Ya'akov Yosef in his *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef,* often considered the first hasidic book published. See the discussion of this in terms of the demographics of early Hasidism in Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 179–81, and n. 76 there.

[9] For an excellent study of Shapira's life and thought, which focuses on his teachings from the Holocaust years, see Nehemia Polen, *The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto* (London: Jason Aronson, 1994.)

the central reality of the tzaddik in his particular hasidic philosophy, with an eye toward its comparative implications.

In the space of this brief study, I will contrast the hermeneutics advocated by Shapira's devotional individuation model with those that emerge from a contrasting model found in a teaching by the influential early hasidic master, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1772–1810). This latter model I conceive of as "devotional impressionism," in which the disciple attempts to make himself like a blank page or, to use another metaphor employed by Nahman, like wax in order to receive the impression from the tzaddik in as undistorted a manner as possible.[10] This article thus explicitly engages in comparative analysis within one tradition. However, two issues of fundamental concern to comparative theological projects are at the heart of this article. Firstly, it engages a core hermeneutical question: To what extent should one attempt to enter the inner world of a text and/or its author? This itself has two aspects, for one may question both the possibility and the desirability of such an attempt. Secondly, the notion of the deepest core of a sacred text being a sacred personhood that one is attempting to contact through the text has deep and rich roots in many traditional devotional hermeneutics. For all of the focus on Jewish hermeneutics and midrash,[11] such forms of devotional hermeneutics in Jewish sources are not widely known, particularly their development in hasidic literature. Thus, the intratraditional analysis offered here may point to directions for future comparative theological work in the area of devotional hermeneutics.

I. The Religious Imperative of Individuation

Shapira presents a passionately argued case for the religious imperative of individuation in his spiritual journal *Tzav v'Zeruz*.[12] Here, Shapira wishes not only to describe this value, but to instill a will in the reader to strive toward individuation. To this end, he often uses the first- and second-person voices to evoke the reader's inner feelings, and to call out to the reader personally. Thus, Shapira begins by presenting a first-person voice, a person who laments "about himself," crying out "where is my free choice?" The person senses that he is trapped, unable to master himself, unable to determine his choices or his will. For Shapira, this state is not due to some evil force overcoming the person. Rather, this state is the natural result of an absence:

> Please be aware that, for every act of choice whose origin is in the one willing and not in outside forces, the necessary prior condition is that the one who is choosing exists independently. That is, he must be a particular individual differentiated [*nivdal*] unto himself, for only then may he will for himself. If the individual is not

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[10] See Nahman of Bratslav's *Likkutei Moharan* (Jerusalem: Meshekh ha-Nakhal, 1996), no. 140. Note that this text reflects the complex nature of Nahman's thinking: He is also playing with the impossibility of receiving such an impression, as the tzaddik's mind is simply too elevated to be perceivable. Thus, like a wax impression from a seal, the ideal student is both a perfect "impression" of the consciousness of the tzaddik and yet a kind of opposite or mirror image of the tzaddik, just as the image is reversed from looking at the seal directly.

[11] These writings include the extensive work of Michael Fishbane, esp. *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and David Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

[12] Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *Hakhsharat ha-Avreikhim, Mevo ha-Sha'arim, Tzav v'Zeruz* (Jerusalem, 2001), 321–87; henceforth, HMTZ. *Tzav v'Zeruz* has been translated into English by Yehoshua Starrett under the title *To Heal the Soul: The Spiritual Journal of a Chasidic Rebbe* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1995).

particular, differentiated unto himself, rather a mere "type" [*min*], it is not possible to speak of choice or individual will in relation to him. For who is it that might choose? Other than the decrees of the collective [*ha-klal*], there is nothing here. Please, look inside yourself! Have you brought forth the authenticity of your self [*amitut atzmekha*]? Are you a particularized individual unto yourself, or just a part of a species…?[13]

Shapira goes on to emphasize that a true individual must be distinguishable not merely in a statistical sense, as one may have greater intelligence or other abilities compared to another. After all, animals can be distinguished in these ways as well, but the fastest wolf in the pack is still not an *individual* in the human sense. An individual is she who has developed a particular self not in a quantitative sense, but rather a unique quality of her selfhood that is inimitable and expresses itself in her every word and action. Thus, "a person must differentiate with a characteristic quality all his own," exhorts Shapira, adding, "He should bring forth from within a personal essence and image (*diyukon*), unique unto himself." For one who has attained this, all of her Torah and Divine service becomes an act of self-expression. All will recognize the specific mind and particular devotee behind his words of Torah and manner of worship, for they are stamped with a unique quality. Shapira concludes with a plea to the reader: "Elevate yourself from the world, and reveal your personhood separate from [being merely an example of] the species of humanity, and become a person who can choose, and [who can] worship the Divine."[14]

For Shapira, the project of cultivating one's own unique selfhood is at the very core of the purpose of human life. Whereas many "traditionalists" argued that the modern emphasis on self was a kind of idolatry and that we should focus on the worship of God *instead*, Shapira insisted that the development of one's unique selfhood is itself the most fundamental prerequisite for the worship of the Divine.

Turning now to Shapira's discussion of the tzaddik, we will see that much of it centers around the role of texts—both the role of the spiritual master in composing texts, and the manner of devotional reading that the hasid should bring to the text. We will also contrast Shapira's model of devotional reading here with that of the influential early hasidic master Nahman of Breslov, whose writings contain an understanding of devotional reading that has remarkable similarities with Shapira's, while differing from it in a most revealing manner.[15]

II. The Engraved Self

In the opening paragraphs of *Tzav ve'Zeruz*, Shapira describes the tragedy that, after a lifetime of slowly and with great effort gaining wisdom, one must pass away. If only one could begin again, and live a second life beginning with all of the insights gained during the first one. But since this is not possible, writes Shapira,

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[13] HMTZ, no. 10, 331. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[14] Ibid., 321–2.

[15] On Nahman's shifting thoughts about writing, reading, and the self, see David B. Siff, "Shifting Ideologies of Orality and Literacy in Their Historical Context: Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav's Embrace of the Book as a Means for Redemption," *Prooftexts* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 238–62.

> It is good for a person to record all of his thoughts. Not in order to make a name for himself as an author of a book, but rather to engrave himself [*lakh'rot et atzmo*] on paper, to preserve all of the movements of the soul, *its fallings and its risings*. All of its being, its form, its knowings and all that it acquired for itself in the expanse of its life should remain alive…[16]

This language makes it crystal clear that Shapira is interested in preserving the unique self through his writings, the individual self in its full form created through the narrative of its particular experiences. Consider: This opening paragraph could have ended with a declaration that he should record his "pearls of wisdom" for future generations, those thoughts and insights that occurred to him during inspired moments. Yet Shapira does not merely want to preserve wisdom in an abstract sense, he wants to preserve the self that he has cultivated throughout his lifetime. Thus, it is imperative that the voice of that self's fallings should be recorded as well, for it is not the impersonalized "highlights" that he wants to be preserved, but the full force of his selfhood that he wants to truly live on.

Is this narcissistic? Is such a focus on the self inherently egotistical or selfish, with the negative connotations of those terms? Is Shapira's self-proclaimed desire to live on eternally in the lives of those who learn his teachings a reflection of the hasidic focus on the tzaddik, and at odds with his call for the student to be a unique individual?

I suggest that further investigation of Shapira's thought shows that this is not the case. While the experience of the teacher's full selfhood may perhaps be temporarily overwhelming— and it must be, in the sense that the student should open to the presence of the teacher—still the result is that the student's own selfhood and sense of her own uniqueness emerge more clearly. Just as a model of wisdom or piety can evoke the same for those who witness it, the unique selfhood of the teacher (or really of any person) is a model to evoke *unique selfhood* in the student. It is only if the image of the teacher becomes frozen, static, idealized, and impersonalized that it runs the risk of being an idol with all of the negative connotations—in Jewish discourse, as in many others—of that word.

III. Encountering the Presence of the Tzaddik in the Text

In his 1929 sermon on the first section of Exodus, Shapira emphasizes the necessity of the presence of a spiritual master, termed the tzaddik in hasidic discourse.[17] This is, of course, a common theme in hasidic writings, and the development of the doctrine of the holy leader (tzaddik) has rightly received much scholarly attention.[18] Both in hasidic stories, and in homilies, the need for the presence of the tzaddik is often justified in answer to the question: "[W]hy is it necessary to travel to see the tzaddik? Are there not many holy books which one can learn in one's

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[16] HMTZ, no. 1, 321. Emphasis added.

[17] Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *Derekh ha-Melekh* (Jerusalem, 1995), *parshat Shemot* (sermon on Ex. 1:1–6:1), 87–92; henceforth, DHM.

[18] See, e.g., Ada Rapoport-Albert, "God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present,* ed. Gershon David Hundert, 299–329 (New York: New York University Press, 1991); Arthur Green, "The *Zaddiq* as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45, no. 3 (1977): 327–47, and "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddik," in *Jewish Spirituality,* ed. Arthur Green (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 2:127–56.

hometown?"[19] While a variety of answers are offered to this question in hasidic literature, what fundamentally unites them is their insistence on the necessity of experiencing the presence of the master.[20] It is not sufficient to merely examine ideas in a book.[21]

Fascinatingly here Shapira, while agreeing wholeheartedly that one must encounter the presence of the tzaddik, teaches that it is quite possible to do so from a book if one knows how to approach the text. However, one must recognize the true nature of a book written by a holy author. Punning on a Hebrew word for author (*mehaber)*, Shapira states that a true author is one who is able to "join" (also *mehaber*) together heaven and earth. When such a holy author writes a book about the service of God, it is not merely a collection of scattered ideas but a vehicle through which his or her spiritual persona can be transmitted to a sensitive reader. As Shapira writes:

> A person could mistakenly think that a book has no essence of its own [*etzem l'atzmo*], but rather is merely a sort of collection of notes in one place, like a mountain which is merely the gathering together of many grains of dirt. However, this is not the case. The book has an essence of its own.[22]

This "essence" is the spiritual persona of the author,[23] which Shapira refers to as the author's *shiur komah,* his "full stature (or 'full structure')."[24] This phrase has deep roots in Jewish mysticism, which uses it to refer to the full structure of the Divine in some of the most boldly anthropomorphic texts.[25] In our context, it serves to emphasize both the form and the wholeness of this persona. It is not the "soul" of the author, in the sense of some holy essence that he was given by God. Rather, it is a "body composed of holiness" that the spiritual master cultivated over time through his service

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[19] See, e.g., the opening paragraph of Nahman of Bratslav's Lesson 19 in the first volume of his *Likkutei Moharan*. This is the main collection of Nahman of Bratslav's teachings.

[20] A story highlighted by Buber tells that Rabbi Leib son of Sarah went to the Maggid not "in order to hear Torah from him, but to see how he unlaces his felt shoes and laces them up again." See Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, 1:107. A variation on this anecdote is also deployed by Scholem in illustrating the new elevation of the "character" of the tzaddik as more important than his "opinions." Scholem, *Major Trends*, 344. Assumedly, the latter may more easily be transmitted in written form than the former. The teachings of Shapira explored in this study may be seen as an argument that it is possible to access the "character" through a particular hermeneutic of reading the "opinions" and teachings, and thus to encounter the presence of the master in the text.

[21] In *Likkutei Moharan* no. 19, Nahman emphasizes that there is a great distinction between hearing the words of the tzaddik directly and hearing them from another who heard it directly from the tzaddik, how much more so if there are more intermediaries. He concludes: "But [the distinction] between one who hears from the mouth of the *tzaddik* and one who looks into a book, is a very great distinction."

[22] DHM, *parshat Shemot*, 88.

[23] It is worth noting that Shapira's emphasis on the oneness of this essence—it is "not merely the gathering together" of disparate components—is an example of his emphasis on the oneness of the human self. Further, Shapira's emphasis (as we will see shortly) that this oneness or identity is only revealed through the multiple examples of the author's insights illustrates his sense that this oneness of self can only be revealed through a narrative of particulars. Both of these points are discussed more fully in my "The Call of the Self: Devotional Individuation in the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno." Master's thesis, Hebrew College, 2017, Ch. 4, Sections V and VI.

[24] DHM, *parshat Shemot*, 88.

[25] This phrase is in fact the title given to one such early text. On *Shiur Komah* (also transliterated *Qomah*), see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 63–7, and Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 74–124, esp. 85–7. In future work I hope to trace the development of this term in hasidic works that Shapira cites, as this would surely be the more immediate source for his own usage of the phrase and its universe of associations. These include the notion of the *shiur komah* as the full structure of the inner work in constructing a particular character trait, and as referring to the Torah in all of its fullness.

of the Divine.[26] Continuing the corporeal metaphor, this *shiur komah* has parts and limbs. The different thoughts in the book should be seen not as isolated parts; rather, each one helps to reveal a portion of this "holiness body." When a sensitive reader approaches the text in search of this *shiur komah*, looking into the text slowly, carefully, and at length, eventually the *shiur komah* of the master is revealed to the reader.[27]

If one approaches the text superficially, however, looking only at "one or two" teachings, this will not occur. This Shapira compares to understanding the body through its parts, writing: "Specifically, for one who wants only to see and hear a good saying or homily, he will hear only one limb of all of the limbs. He will not have seen the full persona, and he will not have encountered the one who reveals prophecy."[28] By prophecy, Shapira clarifies, he does not mean predicting the future. Although the Hebrew prophets sometimes engaged in this, this is the trivial aspect of their profession; fundamentally, the prophets acted as a conduit to help to connect the people to God. So too, all tzaddikim and holy masters "unite Heaven and Earth." Echoing the strongest formulations of Hasidism about the necessity of the tzaddik, Shapira writes:

> The main work of the prophet was to guide Israel on the path of God, sanctifying them and drawing them close to God. For this, too, a prophet is needed. For every virtuous act of will which arises in a person of Israel, and every thought of holiness, and every type of apprehension in matters of Torah and divine service is a kind of revelation from above within the person. It is not possible for this revelation to occur except through a prophet, who is the aspect of 'the kissing of heaven and earth.'[29]

This emphatic claim of the absolute necessity of a tzaddik as the source—or better, the indispensable channel—for revelation, including every virtuous thought, act of volition, or grasp

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[26] DHM, *parshat Shemot*, 89.

[27] Ibid., 91.

[28] Ibid., 90. By "prophecy," Shapira does not intend the revelation of future events, but rather the creation (or revelation) of a bond uniting the human self and the Divine—as will be explicated shortly. The category of prophecy in Shapira's teachings is undeniably central, although easily misconstrued. For an excellent overview of Shapira's views, see Daniel Reiser, "To Rend the Entire Veil: Prophecy in the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piazecna and its Renewal in the Twentieth Century," *Modern Judaism* 34, no. 4 (2014): 334–52. Reiser challenges the sufficiency of scholarly models that divide prophecy into two types, the "ecstatic" and the "emissary." Reiser argues that this imposes a false dichotomy for many rabbinic and later Jewish models of prophecy that see some of these elements as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. This is true in a simple way; for example, when Rabbeinu Bahya discusses the prophet's transcendence of both ecstasy and the physical, he does not mean that the prophet is therefore not concerned with society and ethics, or not involved in the world. Indeed, the ecstatic experiences may inspire the prophet to emerge determined to manifest proper ethical behavior, and guide society toward an ethical living out of God's will. Shapira's views certainly challenge the aforementioned dichotomy, but in an even more fundamental way. It is not only that the prophet's ecstatic experiences inspire him to ethical behavior and instruction of others. In fact, part of the purpose of the prophet is to help others come to experience this ecstatic "light," fundamentally the holy spirit or closeness to the Divine. To miss this point is to miss the essence of the prophet and see only his actions. If the prophet's only purpose was to instruct others in ethics, surely a teacher who is not a prophet can do this as well. Thus, it is not only the external content of the instruction but the inner experience that the prophet seeks to convey, to channel, to make open. As Reiser puts it, "For the Piazecner, the role of the prophets is to bring the spirit of God to the people. The content of their prophecies, such as visions of the future and ethical rebuke, is simply a garment surrounding the light of God that passes through them into the community" (Reiser, 339). See also Zvi Leshem, *Between Messianism and Prophecy: Hasidism According to the Piaseczner Rebbe.* [Hebrew] Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 2007.

[29] DHM, *parshat Shemot*, 88.

of matters Divine, would certainly seem to suggest a kind of obliteration of self. The person can have nothing of his own, rather all his virtues are from the tzaddik. Yet Shapira does not intend this and therefore he immediately clarifies his meaning:

> It is not that it is impossible for a person of Israel to will, think, and so on anything other than that which the prophet or tzaddik says to him! Rather, each person of Israel requires a *mehaber* to join together heaven and earth, the supernal world and this world. Then the lights and the holiness will descend to each individual—for each one according to his situation, reflecting the manner and extent to which he has prepared himself.

> This is like the story they tell of the Rebbe Reb Zusya[30] (may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing): When the great Maggid (of Mezeryzec)[31] opened his holy mouth to say Torah, and had recited the verse that he wanted to teach Torah about, the Rebbe Reb Zusya would already have begun to shout and make a scene. He explained that when the Rebbe Reb Dov[32] (may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing) says the verse, he opens the gates of light and of Torah.[33]

The tzaddik is necessary to make the connection. Shapira thus evokes the language common in hasidic literature that the tzaddik is a channel (*tzinor*) who helps to connect Heaven and Earth—or the hasid and God.[34] And yet, although preserving this traditional language and not openly critiquing it, Shapira demurs from its obvious implication. If the tzaddik is the necessary channel, the Hasid's experience of the Divine is assumedly mediated through the tzaddik. Yet Shapira clarifies his view: Once the tzaddik makes the connection, the student receives the lights directly from above, unmediated through the tzaddik. In Shapira's own words, those who "grasp" the *shiur komah* of the tzaddik "receive holy lights from above, beyond that which they hear from him. Rather, directly [*yashar*] from the supernal world, [lights flow] to their hearts and souls."[35]

We see here that, rather than the self of the hasid being obliterated, it is the specificity of the tzaddik that recedes to make room for the uniqueness of the Hasid's own connection. This is most dramatically illustrated in the story of Reb Zusya, who clearly needed the presence of the Maggid to open the gates—and yet he could do without the latter's interpretation of the verse. In contrast to those who extract interpretations but leave aside the presence of the master, Reb Zusya is able to experience the presence of the master without even hearing the interpretations.[36] Ultimately, this leads him not only to a place beyond the specifics of the interpretations, but also beyond the specifics of the persona of the master. For Shapira, Reb Zusya shows the possibility of

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[30] Meshulam Zusya of Hanipoli (1718–1800), student of Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezeryzec (1704–1772). On Zusya, see Biale et al., *Hasidism: A New History*, 145. On Dov Baer, and his role in the crystallization of Hasidism as a "movement," see ibid., 77–85, 98–99.

[31] See previous note.

[32] See n. 28.

[33] DHM, *parshat Shemot*, 88–9.

[34] See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 189–207.

[35] DHM, 89.

[36] A standard version of the story of Zusya's excitement, sparked by hearing the Maggid quote the opening words, "And God spoke," ends with him being forcibly removed by the other disciples to the hallway, where he pounded upon the walls and cried allowed, "And God spoke!" By the time he had calmed down enough to rejoin the Maggid's table, Dov Baer had already completed his teaching. See Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, 1:236–7.

a student finding his or her own direct connection to the Divine by means of the encounter with the "body of holiness" of the tzaddik.

Of course, Reb Zusya could experience what he did without hearing the Maggid's specific thoughts and interpretations because the very presence of the tzaddik was directly before him. What of the later hasid who has only the books of the Maggid and other holy masters? The only way to access the presence of the tzaddik by means of the book is to learn his interpretations. However, it is essential to recall the wider goal, to gain a vision of the "holiness body" of the tzaddik. The form of the book requires that this whole presence be revealed one limb and part at a time. Yet the ideal reader remembers always this bigger picture, and strives to contact the presence of the master, which is an organic whole, not simply a "collection of parts."[37]

IV. The Validation of the Book

We remarked above on Shapira's positive assessment of the possibility of contacting holiness through the books of tzaddikim. In fact, he doesn't even hint in this piece at this being in any way secondary to being able to be in their direct physical presence—a hierarchy emphasized often in earlier hasidic teachings. What could account for this change?

It may be that Shapira felt that the great tzaddikim of early generations were simply not prevalent in contemporary times, and therefore it is urgent to discuss how to come into contact with the personas of these earlier figures. We could thus see Shapira alongside his contemporary, Martin Buber, as involved in the attempt to revive and make relevant what they perceived as the best of early hasidic insight through book-learning. However, Shapira never directly denigrates hasidic leadership or speaks openly of a "decline." Buber, in contrast, was generally blunt in his assessment that the hasidic movement went into sharp decline by the mid-nineteenth century. In his introduction to the "later Masters" in *Tales of the Hasidim*, he closes his portrait of this decline by depicting R. Mendel of Vorki's silence as a kind of soundless weeping or scream, a reaction to the realization that "the present too is corrupted." Concludes Buber, "The time for words is past. It has become late."[38] Ironically, it is precisely by means of words, particularly his condensed and extremely influential *Tales* that Buber presented to the world, that Buber attempted to carry forth what he perceived as the best of the hasidic message into his present and beyond.[39]

More speculatively, it is also possible that Shapira recognized that the effort to contact the presence of masters through books has advantages as well as disadvantages. One learning a book may fail to seek the presence of the master, and thus lose the chance for certain types of self-transformation and spiritual illumination. However, in the presence of a charismatic master, one may be in greater danger of self-obliteration, as one surrenders one's own uniqueness before the impressive presence of the master, and attempts merely to reflect the master's holiness and his holy

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[37] DHM, 91.

[38] Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, 2:7–46, see esp. 46.

[39] Buber's own ambivalence about the adequacy of words and the (possible) legitimacy of the role of the living tzaddik comes through in many places in his writings, and indeed is hardly surprising given his philosophy of "meeting" and "dialogue," which requires a living other for the fullness of the encounter. Yet Buber was hardly naïve about the dangers and corruption of this role in Hasidism. For his fascinatingly ambivalent description of his childhood encounter with a hasidic tzaddik in Sadagora, see *Hasidism and Modern Man*, ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 18–20.

thoughts. Thus it may be that encountering holy people through their texts is in fact the healthiest way to both transform and retain one's individuality.

V. Shapira and Nahman: On Blank Pages and Replication

It is instructive to contrast Shapira's model of contacting the tzaddik through his writings with a particular teaching of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav from his *Likkutei Moharan*.[40] For Nahman, it is indeed possible to contact the presence of the master through his writings; he teaches that the face, image (*diyukon*), and intellect of the tzaddik are contained in his writings. This is so, because if the tzaddik's mind had been different, the words in his book would be different in a manner that would reflect this. To offer a modern metaphor: We might say that the book is the DNA of the living being of the tzaddik.[41] Quoting the Palestinian Talmud,[42] Nahman recommends that one should "visualize the author of the teaching standing before him" while learning his words. The goal is to nullify the self and receive the imprint of this holy presence, ideally onto the "blank page" that remains once the self of the hasid is wiped clean.[43] Nahman here borrows the metaphor from the Rabbis of the Mishnah—"[W]riting with ink on new [blank] parchment cannot be compared to writing with ink on old [used] parchment [even if] that [ink] has been erased."[44] Nahman explains that receiving the undistorted image of the tzaddik is only possible to the extent that the self or mind of the hasid has become this blank page. There is no need for critical thought, for the words of the true tzaddik are "pure truth," with no "admixture" of any kind.[45]

Despite their similar concepts of the availability of the presence of the tzaddik in the text, including their use of identical terms (e.g., *diyukon*) to describe this presence, the *goals* of this contact stand in stark contrast. In Nahman's teaching, the ideal hasid is a blank page; whereas, for Shapira it is the ideal tzaddik who is a blank page. One senses that, for Shapira, Reb Zusya was in some sense an ideal student, who was able to use the presence of the Maggid, absent his specific words, as a blank page on which to write his own unique Torah insights. Other students who focused more on the interpretations of the Maggid for the sake of his words might be better able to repeat accurately the undoubtedly profound teachings of the tzaddik, yet for all that the tzaddik's ink on the page could distort their own ability to perceive—and cultivate—their own unique form of Divine service.

This emphasis on the unique quality that each individual should bring to his or her devotional life is precisely what we saw before, in the selection from Shapira's spiritual diary. In

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[40] See Lesson 192 in *Likkutei Moharan*. Note that although Rebbe Nahman is never named in Shapira's writings, he did have access to this work. Shapira's personal copy of *Likkutei Moharan* is housed in the rare books collection at Bar Ilan University, as noted by Zvi Leshem, *Between Messianism and Prophecy: Hasidism According to the Piaseczner Rebbe.* 46 n. 122. As for Bratslav Hasidism, increasingly influential in Israel particularly in recent decades, it has inspired a vast body of scholarly literature. The classic studies of Nahman's life and teachings include Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1992), and more recently, Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness: The Religious Thought of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

[41] See Shaul Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Construction of Modern Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 31–50, esp. 39, where Magid remarks that in his book "the flesh of Nahman became the word."

[42] T. J. Shekalim ch. 2.

[43] Cf. also *Likkutei Moharan,* Lesson 230.

[44] Mishnah Avot 4:20.

[45] Nahman emphasizes this in the opening words of Lesson 192.

looking at Shapira's teaching on the necessity of the tzaddik, we have seen how he maintains many tropes in the traditional hasidic doctrine of the tzaddik while simultaneously subverting the implication that the tzaddik serves as an intermediary.[46] For Shapira, the tzaddik is a role model in the sense that he cultivated his own uniqueness and personalized connection to the Divine, and thus can help inspire those who encounter him to forge *their* own unique connections.

It is worth noting that Shapira's framing of the very concept of tzaddik contains an implicit critique of a simple understanding of the mystical goal—frequently exalted in early hasidic teachings—of self-nullification (*bittul*). Shapira's emphasis on the non-nullification of the self of the student in the presence of the tzaddik is intertwined with his very notion of the tzaddik's accomplishment. Where many hasidic texts speak of the tzaddik as being "nullified" and nothing (*ayin*) in relation to the Divine, Shapira emphasizes the tzaddik's unique persona and "body of holiness." Rather than becoming nothing before the Divine, the tzaddik precisely models how to develop a unique self and "body of holiness" with which to serve the Divine.

One sometimes hears of the risk of making an idol of one's own self, which prevents devotion to the Divine. Yet for Shapira, the self of the spiritual master—as indeed one's own individuated self—is not an idol but an icon (*diyukon*), an *aid* to devotion. It is not the self that is at risk of becoming an idol, but an imitation of it. Idolatry is characterized not by a focus on self, but rather precisely by the depersonalization of the object of focus.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, I have presented two contrasting hasidic models of devotional reading. The model of devotional impressionism that I have presented from Rabbi Nahman helps to highlight, by contrast, the structure of Shapira's model of devotional individuation. The contrast is most sharp in terms of the goal. In devotional impressionism, the student or reader aims to nullify the self in order to receive the impression of the spirit and mind of the master, who has a special connection to the Divine. By contrast, Shapira's devotional individuation calls on the student's or reader's encounter with the master to lead to the revelation of the reader's own unique spirit, mind, and ultimately, direct connection with the Divine. However, it is also important to note the ways in which these two models are anything but simple opposites. Rather than preserve the self by analyzing the ideas of a text in a detached and independent manner, Shapira fully agrees with Nahman that it is necessary to open the self to a true encounter with the living essence of the master in the text. The sophistication of Shapira's model lies in the way that he explains how this encounter can not only coexist with, but is indeed necessary to, the process of individuation. This is a theoretical working out of the model of "imitating non-imitation" contained in inchoate form in Buber's tale from Rabbi Noah. In Shapira's hands, in addition, this model is decidedly read as applicable, indeed imperative, for every individual and in no way restricted to the hasidic leader or tzaddik.

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[46] To be clear, that the tzaddik serves as intermediary in many forms of Hasidism and hasidic thought is abundantly clear, and often explicit. In contrast, though Shapira draws on earlier language that seems to carry this implication, he explicitly rejects this understanding of the tzaddik, emphasizing the ability of the student to receive through his or her own direct connection with the Divine. See quotation on p. 38, above.

As explored in the opening of this essay, one of the central tensions in comparative theological work, particularly when focused primarily upon textual study, is the question of the theologian's "insider" or "outsider" status in relation to the texts and traditions that he or she is studying. Legitimate concerns about hegemony and colonialist discourse, with much history behind them, tend to intensify the stakes in these discussions. By admitting one's own "outsider" status, one may preemptively admit to the limitations of one's own understanding, and own the active nature of one's own project that seeks to construct meaning for oneself and one's "own" particular community or tradition.

Shapira's hermeneutic model of devotional individuation can be translated into the realm of comparative theological hermeneutics, suggesting ways to reframe questions within this discourse and offering a constructive model. For Shapira, no reader is, or should strive to be, an "insider" in the sense of simply internalizing and being able to recapitulate and mimic the inner content of a sacred text. Yet the great advantage of the "outsider"—the ability to construct meaning from her or his own center—is, for Shapira, not to be gained by the detachment that this term may seem to imply. This is because, for Shapira, one's own center is not simply a given that one brings to the text. Rather, the encounter with the text, even as the reader seeks to encounter its inner life, can make possible a revelation of the self of the reader as well. Shapira's model suggests that there is a subtle interdependence between the attempt to sincerely encounter the otherness of a text or tradition and the search for self-understanding and self-construction.

For a comparative theologian, it seems, part of the understanding derived from the text may be related to another tradition, or to theological sensibilities that are conceived as not native to the text. For obvious reasons, this aspect of comparative study may seem not to "belong" to the text and tradition being studied. Although Shapira does not have comparative study in mind, of course, his model suggestively calls into question some common dichotomies. For Shapira, the attempt to encounter the emic perspective of the text is not a surrender of self; so too, the attempt to develop one's own unique perspective is itself a devotional act. This maps well onto forms of comparative theology that are both devotional and scholarly, opening to the inner dimensions of texts being studied while allowing new meanings to emerge from the juxtaposition with texts from other traditions, and the unique perspective of the theologian.

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Illuminating Dualism and Non-Dualism in Thomas Aquinas's Thought Using Dōgen's Non-Metaphysical Approach

Christina M. Atienza

Japanese Sōtō Zen founder, Dōgen, articulated a holistic paradigm that recognizes and expounds upon the complementarity of dual and non-dual perspectives as a means of illuminating delusion. Can such dual and non-dual perspectives be discerned in the thought of Thomas Aquinas? By way of example, this essay examines Aquinas's ideas on the reality–language–thought relationship, analogical predication, the simplicity of God, and the Eucharist, and finds in these ideas what, by Dōgen's standards, are non-dual perspectives. Being able to recognize dualism and non-dualism in Aquinas's thought in general could be useful on several fronts: to shed light on ideas that may seem paradoxical or contradictory; to add to our knowledge of his innovative use of otherwise limited language to talk about God; to identify areas that have a dualistic bias; to help to integrate his scholastic and mystical insights; and to serve as a foundation for identifying additional areas of dialogue with Dōgen's ideas.

Keywords: dualism, non-dualism, Aquinas, Dōgen, comparative Buddhist-Christian theology

Introduction

This essay analyzes and classifies some of Thomas Aquinas's key ontological and theological ideas through the lens of Buddhist dualism and non-dualism, specifically as rendered by Dōgen, founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen, who used these concepts to illuminate the differences between delusion and enlightenment. I suggest that the dynamic between dual and non-dual perspectives, which has been more emphasized in the Eastern religious traditions, was implicitly present in Aquinas's thought and, made explicit, can provide a potentially useful paradigm for engaging some of his more difficult ideas. Specifically, I suggest that knowing which lens is being applied—dual or non-dual—can provide additional clarity to teachings that appear paradoxical or contradictory; add to our knowledge of his innovative use of otherwise limited language to talk about God; identify areas that have a dualistic bias; help to integrate his scholastic and mystical insights; and serve as a foundation for identifying additional areas of dialogue with Dōgen's ideas.

The essay proceeds in four parts. The first part contrasts Aquinas's and Dōgen's views on the relationship between reality, language, and thought, as a way of illustrating the difference between dual and non-dual perspectives. The second part presents Dōgen's views on the dynamic between dualism and non-dualism. The third part identifies three examples of what I suggest are non-dual views in Aquinas's thought. And the fourth and final part identifies some possibilities and challenges for using the dual/non-dual frame for Aquinas's and Christian thought in general.

Comparing Dualism in Aquinas to Non-Dualism in Dōgen

What are dualism and non-dualism? For Dōgen, dualism has to do with the

discriminating mind, which separates things into subject and object, right and wrong, good and bad, enlightenment and delusion, and so forth, and which tends to over-rely on thinking and intelligence. Non-dualism in turn has to do with knowing the limited consciousness associated with dualism, and directly experiencing the samadhi, or the highest state of consciousness, of the oneness or seamlessness of reality, although not necessarily in a mystical sense. The task of (spiritual) practice is not to get rid of the discriminating mind, but to understand it, and to have it be grounded in a deep realization of oneness.[1] Dōgen notes: "Learning through the mind describes clarification of how the mind is. Clarifying the mind . . . means illumination of the buddha-mind. . . . The selfish mind, though idly proud of knowledge and understanding, possesses only thinking and discrimination. Old One Śākyamuni[2] said, 'This Dharma[3] cannot be understood by thinking and discrimination.'"[4] This is not to suggest that dualism/non-dualism can be reduced to discrimination/nondiscrimination, for it is much more than that, as will be seen later; however, such distinction suffices as a starting point.

To illustrate the difference between dual and non-dual thought, we can compare Aquinas's and Dōgen's views on the relationship between reality, language, and thought. Neither Aquinas's nor Dōgen's view is exclusively dual or non-dual, but rather expresses a particular emphasis: for discrimination in Aquinas and therefore tending more toward dualism, and for seamlessness or nondiscrimination in Dōgen and therefore tending more toward non-dualism. I use their views on the relationship between reality, language, and thought because this is also foundational to their more complex ideas on ontology and theology, which will be discussed later. And I continue to use the word "theology" even for Buddhism, to refer to the soteriological dimensions of that tradition, even if not necessarily tied to theism.

Aquinas's View of the Relationship Between Reality–Language–Thought

Aquinas did not articulate a well-developed theory of language or rational discourse that we know of,[5] but we do know that he was influenced by Aristotle and by the normative thinking in the early thirteenth century that considered reality, language, and thought to be isomorphic, that is, alike in some way and also related.[6] The key concepts for understanding the isomorphism between reality and language for Aquinas are his ideas on *being* and *predication*. In his *Commentary*

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[1] For a good introduction to some of Dōgen's core teachings, see Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi, "Commentary on *Fukanzazengi*," in *The Art of Just Sitting: Essential Writings on the Zen Practice of Shikantaza*, 2nd ed., ed. John Daido Loori (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004). For specifics on the discriminating mind and non-dual consciousness, see pp. 75-80.

[2] Śākyamuni is an epithet for the Buddha, meaning sage of Śākya.

[3] "Dharma" here refers to the Buddha's teachings; also, enlightenment or truth.

[4] Eihei Dōgen, "The Matter of the Ascendant State of Buddha (*Butsu-kōjō-no-ji*)," in *Shōbōgenzō: Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (herein *Shōbōgenzō*), vol. 4, trans. Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Jodo Cross (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007), 332. The essay quoted is from the version that is included in the *Secret Shōbōgenzō* and not the essay that bears the same name that is included in the 95-fascicle edition of the *Shōbōgenzō*. The quotation within the quotation is from the *Lotus Sutra, Hōben* 1.88–90. I use the Nishijima and Cross translation of the *Shōbōgenzō* unless otherwise noted.

[5] Gyula Klima, "Theory of Language," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 371.

[6] Jorge Gracia and Lloyd Newton, "Medieval Theories of the Categories," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. Accessed June 27, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/medieval-categories/.

on [Aristotle's] *"Metaphysics,"* he divides being into three modes: 1) as found outside the mind, 2) as found in the mind, and 3) as either potentiality or actuality.[7] The first mode, being as found outside the mind, he further divides into three types, which he then specifically associates with Aristotle's ten categories of predication, or the ways in which we can linguistically respond to the questions of what, when, where, how, etc. of a thing. The first type of being as found outside the mind is "what a subject is," which corresponds to the predication category of *substance*, which is the primary mode of being. The second type is "what inheres in a subject," which corresponds to the predication categories of *quantity*, *quality*, and *relation*. The third type is "what does not inhere in a subject but somehow affects it," which relates to the predication categories of *state*, *time*, *location*, *position*, *action* (being acted upon), and *passion* (changing as a result of being acted upon).[8]

The way in which Aquinas extends the isomorphism between reality and language to thought, which mediates between reality and language, can be understood from his concepts of *ratio*, *abstraction*, and the *inner word*. The *ratio* of a thing is what the name of the object signifies. The *ratio* is both in the intellect, as the conception of the object, as well as in the object, as embodying the very thing that the concept signifies.[9] When the *ratio* in the intellect and in the object are the same, the conception of the object in the intellect is said to be true. Aquinas says, with regard to the importance of words or the names we give to things: "[Since] words are signs of ideas, and ideas the similitude of things, it is evident that words relate to the meaning of things signified through the medium of the intellectual conception. It follows therefore that we can give a name to anything in as far as we can understand it."[10] Thus understanding plays a key role in the correspondences between language and thought and between thought and reality.

To understand something requires the ability to abstract from the thing and the mental images we have of the thing.[11] Adopting from Aristotle, Aquinas notes that we are able to abstract because of two operations of the intellect—the "understanding of indivisibles," by which we come to know what a thing is, and composition and division, by which we can form affirmative or negative statements. These operations correspond to two principles in reality—the nature of the thing (its quiddity) and its existence (more on this in the third part of this essay). With regard to the operation of composition and division, the intellect can separate only what is truly separate in reality, for example the statement that "Humans are not stones;" otherwise, the abstraction would be a false one. But with regard to the operation of "understanding by indivisibles," the intellect can abstract what is not truly separate in reality without the abstraction being a false one, for example, we can understand in the abstract the greenness of a green apple.[12]

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[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia super Metaphysicam* (herein *In Meta*) V, lec. 9, n. 889. For the difference between potentiality and actuality, see *In Meta* IX, lec. 5, n. 1824. The difference is illustrated by the example of a piece of wood and a sculpture that is carved from that piece of wood. Before it is carved, the sculpture is in the wood potentially. After it is carved, the sculpture is in the wood actually.

[8] *In Meta* V, lec. 9, nn. 890–892; Gracia and Newton, 4.

[9] Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences: Questions V and VI of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius* (herein *BDT*), trans. Armand Maurer, 3rd ed. (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 29; Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* (herein *Super Sent*) I, d.2, q.1, a.3 and d.33, q.1, a.1, ad 3ᵐ, quoted in same, 29 note 12.

[10] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (herein *ST*) I, q.13, a.1.

[11] *ST* I, q.85, a.1.

[12] *BDT* q.V, a.3 (Maurer trans., 28–29); *ST* I, q.85, a.1, ad 1. See also *ST* I, q.16, a.2 on truth as conformity between intellect and thing and on knowing this conformity as knowing truth.

The *ratio* and the inner word are at times synonymous for Aquinas,[13] but there is more to his concept of the inner word than the definition of an object and that in the object to which the definition corresponds. The inner word is the efficient cause of the outer word—that which is vocalized, written, imagined, or meant (as in figures of speech)—and is that to which the outer word refers.[14] The inner word corresponds to realities, while the outer word reflects cultural conventions and designations.[15] The inner word involves the intellectual operations of forming definitions as well as judgments.[16] The inner word is both a product of the mind and is the object of thought.[17] The inner word is the medium between the intellect's idea of a thing that is apprehended and the reality of the thing itself.[18] The inner word is tied to the act of *intellegere*, which can be taken to mean "understanding."[19] Importantly, the inner word is not known immediately, but emerges as "an expression of the cognitional content of the act of understanding;"[20] and the greater the understanding, the greater the number of inner words that are synthesized into one view.[21]

How is Aquinas's view of the isomorphism between reality, language, and thought dualistic? What the above illustrates is that the key concepts that undergird his isomorphic view—the three divisions of reality, the two operations of the intellect that permit abstraction, the *ratio* in the object and in the mind, the inner word and the outer word—reveal an approach that emphasizes discrimination, the act of separating into distinct parts and operations. This emphasis on discrimination and the operations of the intellect will become even more pronounced once we look at Dōgen's view.

Dōgen's View of the Relationship Between Reality–Language–Thought

Dōgen opens *Genjōkōan*, one of his most celebrated essays, which can be roughly translated as "the actualization of enlightenment," with: "As all things are buddha dharma, there is delusion, realization, practice, birth and death, buddhas, and sentient beings. As myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddha, no sentient being, no birth and death. The buddha way, in essence, is leaping clear of abundance and lack; thus there is birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas. Yet in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread."[22] What can we discern at first blush from this passage? There seem to be two parts: the first, comprising the first three sentences that deal with

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[13] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 7–8 and *passim*.

[14] Lonergan, 1–2; *Super Sent* I, d.27, q.2, a.1 sol., quoted in Lonergan, 2 note 5.

[15] Lonergan, 3–4; Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Peri hermeneias* (herein *In Peri herm.*) I, lec. 2, sec. 21, quoted in Lonergan, 3 note 13.

[16] Lonergan, 4. Note that Lonergan reviews and cites four works of Aquinas with regard to the division of inner words into definitions and judgments; see note 12.

[17] Lonergan, 5–6; Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* (herein *QDP*) q.9, a.5 c and Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (herein *QDV*) q.4, a.1 c, quoted in Lonergan, 6 notes 25 and 26.

[18] Lonergan, 8–9; *QDV* q.3, a.2 c, quoted in Lonergan, 9 note 37.

[19] *QDV* q.4, a. 2 ad 5m; *QDP* q.8, a.1 and q.9, a.5; *ST* I, 27, a.1 c, quoted in Lonergan, 9, note 38.

[20] Lonergan, 10; *QDV* q.4, a.2.c, quoted in Lonergan, note 46.

[21] Lonergan, 11; *ST* I, q.85, a.4; q. 55, a.3; q.58, aa. 2–4; q. 12, aa.8–10.

[22] Eihei Dōgen, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point," in *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, vol. 1, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), 29. Here, "dharma" refers to phenomena in general.

the same subjects in different ways; and the second, comprising the last sentence, which seems to be a commentary on the first part. The first part has a cyclical structure, beginning with an affirmation of things and processes, then a negation of the same things and processes, and finally ending with a return to the affirmation of things and processes. The first part is paradoxical, asserting both the affirmation and negation of the same things and processes. The second part seems allegorical and appears to further qualify the assertions of the prior cyclical, paradoxical part. Such perplexing use of language is typical of Dōgen's writings. Taigen Dan Leighton characterizes Dōgen's discourse style as "usually not explanatory, discursive, or logical in the linear manner of modern rationality or cognition. Rather, Dōgen seemingly free-associates, making illuminating connections based on doctrinal themes or imagistic motifs, aimed at proclaiming the non-dual reality of the present phenomenal world as fully imbued with the presence of the Buddha and of the ongoing possibility of awakening."[23]

Hee-Jin Kim states that "the single most original and seminal aspect of Dōgen's Zen is his treatment of the role of language in Zen soteriology."[24] While this is not necessarily echoed by most Zen scholars, Dōgen's use of language is indeed quite remarkable and continues to gain much scholarly attention, [25] including recent comparisons of his style and thought to that of philosophers Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricœur, Martin Heidegger, and Christian mystic-scholastic Meister Eckhart. There are several notable features in Dōgen's work to indicate that he uses language not simply as a medium between thought and reality, but to advance his overall realization agenda. Following are some aspects of Dōgen's view of language.

First, for Dōgen, language is expression. Every single thing, including non-sentient beings, has a unique way of expressing itself, which allows communication and connection across the universe.[26] In *Keisei-sanshiki*, Dōgen relates the story of Layman Tōba, who one night was enlightened upon hearing the sound of a stream. The day before, he had heard a Zen teacher speak about insentient beings expounding the truth. Dōgen asks reflectively whether it was the teacher's words or the sound of the stream that awakened Tōba, and also whether it was Tōba who was awakened or the stream. The story illustrates the notion that nature itself is always speaking the truth and its preaching can be heard by those who are awakened.[27] The second question also destabilizes the notion of subject–object and highlights the two-way-ness of communication, with both parties simultaneously expressing and receiving.

Second, language is perspectival. In *Sansuigyō*, Dōgen explains that the word "water" is a human designation based on human understanding. Nonhuman beings, however, see water

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[23] Taigen Dan Leighton, *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dōgen and the Lotus Sutra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24.

[24] Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection on His View of Zen* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 59.

[25] In addition to Kim's work, there are several excellent articles and monographs on Dōgen that include analyses of his unique treatment of language. See Steven Heine, "Kōans in the Dōgen Tradition: How and Why Dōgen Does What He Does with Kōans," *Philosophy East and West* 54, no. 1 (Jan. 2004): 1–19; Leighton, *Visions of Awakening Space and Time*; and Shohaku Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan: The Key to Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010).

[26] Kim, 60–61.

[27] "*Keisei-sanshiki:* The Voices of the River Valley and the Form of the Mountains," in *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, 109–111 including translator's note.

differently. For fish or gods or hungry ghosts, the thing that we refer to as "water" would have a different designation altogether. In this panoply of perspectival understandings, the human designation is by no means primary, but just one among many. There is no common understanding shared by all beings, and language therefore carries with it all linguistic possibilities. Based on this, Dōgen invites reflection upon this question: Is it one object that is perceived differently by different beings or different things mistakenly thought to be one object? He suggests that there is not one object, "original water" as it were, nor water of many kinds. Water is only itself, independent of the understanding or designations of beings.[28] Kim notes, mutatis mutandis, that there is no "original language" and that such a "*radicalization* of language calls for a complete changeover of humanity's collective delusion and self-centeredness with respect to the nature and function of language."[29]

Third, human language, while limited, can serve as a vehicle for realization. Kim explains that "enlightenment, from Dōgen's perspective, consists of clarifying and penetrating one's muddled discriminative thought in and through our language to attain clarity, depth, and precision in the discriminative thought itself."[30] In *Sansuigyō*, Dōgen speaks harshly against Zen Buddhists who eschew rational thought and understanding and hold the view that enlightenment lies only in practices, expressions, and stories that are nonrational and incomprehensible (which are ubiquitous in the Zen tradition, for example the story of a student getting hit by his teacher with his "training stick" every time the student asked what is the meaning of Buddhism). This is a thoroughly incorrect interpretation according to Dōgen, for the incomprehensible is either comprehensible to buddhas or incomprehensible not for the reasons that these people think them to be. Dōgen says, "How pitiful they are who are unaware that discriminative thought *is* words and phrases and that words and phrases *liberate* discriminative thought!"[31] According to Kim's analysis, "if the cause of affliction and suffering lies in language, the way to release oneself of this predicament is in language itself. In fact, such a language-bound situation ... is the only locus where one can attain realization. Dōgen thus focalizes languages as the *agent* of liberation."[32]

Fourth, language is alive for Dōgen and integral to existence itself. Language is not just a way of capturing and describing reality, but is a way of constructing reality.[33] To illustrate this, consider some examples of Dōgen's rhetorical strategies. One strategy involves freely switching an expression of the form ABCDE to other permutations, as for example when he switches from "Mind itself is Buddha" to "Itself Buddha is mind."[34] Another is reconstructing meaning through syntax changes, as in changing "All sentient beings without exception have Buddha-nature" to "All sentient beings, all existence, are Buddha-nature" or to "All sentient beings in their completeness, Buddha-nature."[35] A third is to be self-referential. In Dharma hall discourse 60 in the *Eihei Kōroku*, Dōgen notes that he gives a Dharma hall discourse for the assembly, and then does not give it, leading one to wonder whether it is forthcoming, until the realization that the

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[28] "*Sansuigyō:* The Sutra of Mountains and Water," in *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, 221–2.
[29] Kim, 61–62.
[30] Ibid., 63.
[31] *Sansuigyō* as translated in Kim, 62.
[32] Kim, 63.
[33] Ibid., 63–64.
[34] Ibid., 65–66.
[35] Ibid., 67–68.

announcement itself must have been the discourse to which he was referring.[36] Part of the reason that Dōgen engages in such rhetorical strategies is because for him, the expression of truth (*dōtoku*), in verbal language or otherwise, simultaneously and dynamically contains what has been (explicitly) expressed, and (implicitly) what has yet to be expressed, what is possible to be expressed, and what is inexpressible.[37] When an expression of truth is first intuited and affirmed, it takes time for the expression to express itself with all its energy. There is no discontinuity in its expression during that time. Dōgen says, "Expression of the truth now and insights of former times are a 'single track,' and they are ten thousand miles apart."[38]

Comparison

How does Aquinas's isomorphism illustrate dualism and Dōgen's realizational use of language illustrate non-dualism? As noted previously, Aquinas's thought is not purely dualistic, nor is Dōgen's purely non-dualistic. In fact, my overarching aim in this paper is to show that they are using both dualism and non-dualism in skillful ways. What I hope to have shown in the above accounts of Aquinas's and Dōgen's views of the relationship between reality, language, and thought are tendencies: toward dualism for Aquinas and toward non-dualism for Dōgen.

In a simplistic way, we can think of the difference between dualism and non-dualism in terms of what Aquinas identifies as one of the operations of the intellect: that of joining and dividing.[39] Dualistic thinking, with its focus on separating and discriminating, emphasizes the operation of dividing. In Aquinas's account, we can tell what is the difference between reality, language, and thought. They are isomorphic, meaning that they share a certain likeness, but are also different, at least in terms of what occurs in the mind and what occurs outside of the mind. Non-dualistic thinking, with its focus on the seamlessness of reality, emphasizes the operation of joining. In Dōgen's account, the differences that were clear in Aquinas's account are destabilized: language is not confined to humans, but is the way in which all things express themselves; names of things are radically perspectival and carry with them all linguistic possibilities; language is both limiting and liberating; and language is integral to existence and is a way of constructing reality itself.

Another, perhaps even simpler, way of clarifying the difference between dualism and non-dualism is illustrated by the example of "running" and "runner." Aquinas says that we signify one thing by "running" and another thing by "runner;" "running" signifies in the abstract, whereas "runner" signifies in the concrete.[40] In contrast, Shohaku Okumura says of the practice of Dōgen's Zen that "there is no such thing as the self outside of our action. There is no runner beside the action of running. Runner and running are exactly the same thing. If there is a

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[36] Leighton, 23–24.

[37] Kim, 64.

[38] "*Dōtoku*: Expressing the Truth," in *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 2, 333–334. This touches a bit on Dōgen's views of time and space, which are of great scholarly interest and too complex to be treated here. See Leighton's *Visions of Awakening Space and Time* for an excellent exposition of, and reflection on, Dōgen's views.

[39] *BDT* q.V, a. 3, trans. Armand Maurer, 30.

[40] Thomas Aquinas, *Exposition in librum Boethii De hebdomadibus* (herein *BDH*), trans. Janice L. Schultz and Edward A. Synan, 22, quoted in Eleonore Stump, "God's Simplicity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 140.

runner outside of running, then the runner is not running."[41] From this comparison, we gain the impression that dualism and non-dualism are not just conceptually different, but that they are actually fundamentally different ways of understanding.

Dualism and Non-Dualism in Dōgen

With this sense of the difference between dualism and non-dualism, we can now delve a little more deeply into Dōgen's views on the dynamic between them. In *Genjōkōan*, Dōgen says, "When you see forms or hear sounds, fully engaging body-and-mind, you intuit dharma intimately. Unlike things and their reflections in the mirror, and unlike the moon and its reflection in the water, when one side is illumined, the other side is dark."[42] What Dōgen is describing in this passage, according to Kim's exegesis, is the dynamic between dualism and non-dualism as salvific foci. Specifically, Kim says, "Non-duality, as the core of the middle way, is designed to overcome the limitations, restrictions, and dangers inherent in all dualities such as being and nonbeing, defilement and purity, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, and life and death. Its purpose is to free ... [people] ... from clinging to and fixating on those dualities, in order to realize the state of non-duality."[43] In Kim's analysis, non-duality is not superior to duality, and neither does it refer to something metaphysical,[44] nor is it some "pure enlightenment experience," as has been propounded by D. T. Suzuki and some members of the Kyoto School.[45] Kim stresses that "non-duality is *not* extra-, trans-, pre-, post-, or antiduality. It is always necessarily rooted in duality. Therefore, *non*-duality functions within, with, and through *duality*. The non in non-duality signifies dynamicity."[46] It is the dialectic between what can be understood as "not two and not one" or "neither the one nor the many." Duality is predicated on non-duality and vice versa. This intimacy is what Dōgen means when he says, "when one side is illumined, the other is dark."[47] So this way of seeing is primarily an epistemological claim, but with ontological implications.

How is this salvific? Kim says that for Dōgen, dualism and non-dualism are paradigmatic of all x and non-x pairs.[48] For instance, let us take delusion and realization. Dōgen says in *Genjōkōan*, "Those who have great realization of delusion are buddhas; those who are greatly deluded about realization are sentient beings."[49] According to Shohaku Okumura, realization for Dōgen is about becoming enlightened as to one's delusions.[50] Realization and delusion then are not two and not one. When one side is illumined, the other side is dark. It is the dynamic process of getting clarity in the mess of our discriminative thinking.[51]

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[41] Shohaku Okumura, "To Study the Self," in *The Art of Just Sitting: Essential Writings on the Zen Practice of Shikantaza*, 2nd ed., ed. John Daido Loori (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 106–107.

[42] "Actualizing the Fundamental Point," in *Shōbōgenzō* (Tanahashi trans.), 29–30.

[43] Kim, 32.

[44] Ibid., 33.

[45] Ibid., 35–36.

[46] Ibid., 33–34.

[47] Ibid., 34.

[48] Ibid., 34–35.

[49] "Actualizing the Fundamental Point," in *Shōbōgenzō* (Tanahashi trans.), 29.

[50] Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 57–58.

[51] Kim, 63.

Examples of Non-Dual Views in Aquinas's Thought

In Aquinas's thought, there are some concepts that I suggest have this same quality of not-two- and not-one-ness, although they are not explicitly categorized as non-dual. The following three examples, which correspond to some of Aquinas's key ontological and theological concepts, illustrate this.

Analogical Predication

The first example is his analogical predication when it comes to language about God, which differs a bit from the predication that was discussed earlier. The primary difference stems from the sharp distinction that he draws between God and creatures, particularly as to God not having attributes that are distinguishable from Godself and God's identity, from what can be affirmed of God. Aquinas notes that when we use words, we typically do so either univocally, that is, the same word has the same meaning each time, e.g., the word "tomorrow," or equivocally, that is, the same word has different, unrelated meanings, e.g., the word "pitcher." In reference to God, however, neither of these apply. For example, the sense in which we use the word "good" is different in the statement "God is good" versus "Mother Teresa is good." It is not univocal because goodness is identical to God's identity, whereas goodness is an attribute of Mother Teresa. And yet the two uses of "good" are also not unrelated, so they are not equivocal. This is because the way in which we can speak of Mother Teresa's goodness bears some similitude to God's goodness. When we speak about God in this manner, Aquinas says that our predication is analogical and that what we say is literally true of God; except, of course, when we are talking about God in figurative or metaphorical terms.[52] I am suggesting that analogical predication is a non-dual rendering of predication because it is neither equivocal, that is, not-two, nor univocal, that is, not-one. We can also notice that he switches between the dual rendering of predication for creature-talk, that is either univocal or equivocal, and the non-dual rendering for God-talk.

Simplicity of God

The second example is Aquinas's concept of the simplicity of God. Aquinas distinguishes between the *essence* of something, which is what makes something what it is and that makes it recognizable and understandable to us as such; and the *existence* of something, which refers to the presence of that thing, which we affirm or deny. For example, we can recognize a unicorn, and deny that such animals exist. To Aquinas, *being* involves both essence and existence.[53] Here again his sharp distinction between God and creatures is relevant. God is the only being whose essence and existence are one and the same, and this is what it means to be simple.[54] For creatures, what something is (its essence) is different from the fact that something is (its existence).

Aquinas has three primary claims associated with God's simplicity. First, God has no parts in terms of space and time; God is everywhere and always. Second, God has no accidental

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[52] *ST* I q.13, a.5; Brian Davies, "The Limits of Language and The Notion of Analogy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 392–396.

[53] *ST* I, q.3, a.4; John F. Wippel, "Being," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

[54] *ST* I q.3, a.4; *BDH*, 33 and 35, quoted in Stump, 140.

properties; God is pure essence. And third, whatever can be said about God's intrinsic attributes is simply the unity of God's essence.[55] We can see from these claims how difficult it is to engage in clear discriminative thought when it comes to God.

Aquinas acknowledges that God's simplicity can be rather enigmatic for us. He says, "We signify one thing by '*esse*' [the act of being that makes a thing to be] and another thing by '*id quod est*' [that which is] just as we signify one thing by 'running' . . . and another thing by 'runner'. . . . For 'running' and '*esse*' signify in the abstract . . . ; but '*id quod est*,' that is 'an entity,' and 'a runner,' signify in the concrete. . . ."[56] Herein lies part of the dilemma, for how could anything be abstract and concrete at the same time? This has led some to argue that God must be either only *esse* or only *id quod est*. Eleanore Stump argues that this goes blatantly against what Aquinas himself says. To make matters even more complex, Aquinas also says, "With regard to what God himself is, God himself is neither universal nor particular."[57] To resolve the conundrum of simultaneously abstract and concrete and neither universal nor particular, Stump suggests quantum physics as a useful metaphor. She says that in quantum physics we can acknowledge the depth of what we do not know, but still be able to reason and say much about the subject; and we can think of God's simultaneous *esse* and *id quod est* in a way similar to how we conceive of light as being either particle or wave, and when we talk about it, we just need to be careful to know to which aspect we are referring. For example, we can say that God is love, knowing this is meant in the abstract sense, and that God is loving, knowing this is meant in the concrete sense.[58] Recalling that for Aquinas language is isomorphic with thought and reality, Stump adds that perhaps one of the most important claims that relates to God's simplicity is that "the ultimate metaphysical foundation of reality is something that has to be understood as *esse*, but also as *id quod est*."[59]

In this example we encounter again the limitations of dualistic discriminative thinking, which separates things into either abstract or concrete, or either universal or particular, which is sufficient for creaturely existence, but inadequate for Aquinas's view of God. Is it just a matter of perspective, as Stump suggests? This proposition should strike us as still a dualistic way of thinking, another way of framing the problem as an either-or. I suggest instead that what Aquinas is pointing to in his doctrine of the simplicity of God is a non-dual, nondiscriminative way of thinking, that is predicated on the dual, discriminative way of thinking. The fundamental problem that Aquinas confronts is how to use language, which is inherently discriminative, to talk about God, who is inherently beyond discrimination. David Burrell suggests that what Aquinas has done is to admit as possible a form of predication that applies only to God, namely, the form of "to be God is to be," which looks like, but is syntactically and ontologically different from, the form of predication that we are accustomed to, namely "to be ___ is to be ___." The former differs syntactically and ontologically from the latter because the latter applies to creatures or

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[55] Stump, 135.

[56] *BDH* 22, quoted in Stump, 140.

[57] *ST* I, q.13 a.9 ad 2; Stump, 141. According to Aquinas, we abstract the universal, i.e., something that can refer to many individuals, from the particular by considering the nature of the species and removing those aspects that apply only to the particular, e.g., abstracting "horse" from a particular horse. See *ST* I, q.85, a.1, ad 1.

[58] Stump, 135–137.

[59] Ibid., 140.

objects that are of composite nature, which God's nature is not.[60] Thus all of the statements that Aquinas does say of God—that he is perfect, good, eternal, one—while appearing to be affirmative statements, are actually indirect statements of denial because they deny that which can be logically affirmed of creatures.[61] While Burrell does not categorize Aquinas's move in terms of dual/non-dual, his observation aligns well with the image of "when one side is illumined, the other is dark."

The Lord's Supper

Perhaps the signal exemplar of the pattern of not-two and not-one in Christian thought is the person of Jesus Christ himself: singular in his personhood/subjectivity and hypostatis, and dual in his fully human and fully divine nature, in unconfused, unchangeable, indivisible, and inseparable manner.[62] The third and final example flows from Aquinas's understanding of Jesus Christ's non-duality, and involves Aquinas's view of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the celebration of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples before he was to suffer. In the following discussion, I refer specifically to the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church, which differs in some significant ways from the celebration in other Christian Churches.

For Aquinas, the Eucharist has a three-fold meaning that has to do with the past, the present, and the future, each of which he assigns other names in addition to "Eucharist." With regard to the past, the Eucharist is seen as a Sacrifice that commemorates the passion of Jesus Christ.[63] This commemoration is not a simple remembrance, for Aquinas notes that "the Sacrifice which is offered every day in the Church is not distinct from that which Christ Himself offered;"[64] while also maintaining that " . . . Christ's passion and death are not to be repeated, (for) the virtue of that Victim endures forever. . . . "[65] Here we see clearly that Aquinas's rendering of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that transpired in history and its commemoration in the sacrament of the Eucharist can be understood as another instance of not-two and not-one, and therefore non-dual.

With regard to the present, the Eucharist is seen as Communion or Synaxis (an assembly for liturgical purposes, from the Greek word for "gathering") because it is the sacrament that gathers people to achieve ecclesial unity. With regard to the future, the Eucharist is seen as Viaticum (a special term for the Eucharist given to one who is dying or in danger of death, from the Latin word for "provisions for the journey") because the sacrament both foreshadows our full enjoyment of God, which will happen in heaven, and also supplies the means to get there. The sacrament is also seen qua Eucharist (from the Latin and Greek words for thanksgiving and gratitude) as thanksgiving for the gift of Christ, "because it really contains Christ, Who is full of

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[60] David B. Burrell, C.S.C., *Exercises in Religious Understanding: Jung, Anselm, Aquinas, Augustine, Kierkegaard* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 96–97.

[61] Ibid., 94–95.

[62] See the Chalcedonian Definition.

[63] *ST* III, q.73, a.4.

[64] *ST* III, q.22, a.3, ad 2. See also *ST* III, q.75 for Aquinas's exposition on transubstantiation, the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at the level of substance, subsequent to consecration. And see *ST* III, q.48, a.3 for Aquinas's understanding of the passion of Jesus Christ as sacrificial.

[65] *ST* III, q.22, a.5, ad 2.

grace."[66] Here Aquinas's rendering of the significance of the Eucharist in the past, the present, and the future is reminiscent of Dōgen's view of the expression of truth as simultaneously and dynamically containing what has been expressed, what has yet to be expressed, what is possible to be expressed, and what is inexpressible, as well as the continuity of the expression from which insights flow, forward and backward, along a single track. This is the dynamicity of non-dualism.

Conclusion

What I hope to have demonstrated are some of the skillful ways in which both Aquinas and Dōgen addressed what they understood to be the limitations of dualistic, discriminative thinking for describing the nature of reality. Dualism and non-dualism were key for Dōgen, who used these concepts to illuminate the differences between delusion and enlightenment. His way was to see non-dualism as predicated on dualism, and as being in a dynamic dialectic with it, which not only gets beyond the limitations of discriminative thought, but also clarifies those limitations and opens a new realm of understanding that is not-two and not-one. Contrasting Aquinas's and Dōgen's views on the relationship between reality, language, and thought highlighted some of the limitations in Aquinas's account, such as its anthropocentric bias. Analyzing Aquinas's thoughts on analogical predication, the simplicity of God, and the Eucharist through the lens of Dōgen's dualism/non-dualism in turn allowed us to see that Aquinas was switching between dual and non-dual perspectives in these reflections, which hopefully made some of these thoughts seem less paradoxical.

Beyond the examples analyzed in this essay, I suggest that it would be salutary to discern and explicitly distinguish dual and non-dual perspectives in Aquinas's thought for several reasons. First, the not-two and not-one paradigm may be a useful lens in general as another tool for understanding how Aquinas modifies creature-based language to apply to God-talk. Second, a non-dual lens may illuminate additional areas in Aquinas's thought that might benefit from de-anthropocentrism. Third, a non-dual perspective might also serve as a focal point for integrating Aquinas's scholasticism with his mysticism. And fourth, the dynamicity of dual/non-dual perspectives, given its importance in Dōgen's thought, might serve as a foundation for additional explorations into dialogues between these two great thinkers.

As mentioned at the outset however, dualism and non-dualism are not just conceptually different. Non-dualism, even if it is rooted in dualism and vice versa, resists a purely rational understanding. In Dōgen's Zen, a deep understanding of non-dualism arises only through assiduous meditation practice and guided study of the nature of discriminative thinking.[67] There are no parallel practices in Christianity. While the Eucharist as understood by Aquinas has significant non-dual aspects, these are not highlighted as such.

Another challenge is that non-dualism tends to either flatten or conflate concepts that we may be accustomed to thinking of separately, like runner and running, or to open up myriad possibilities that transcend our usual ways of thinking, like Dōgen's polysemantic understanding

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[66] *ST* III, q.73, a.4.

[67] Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 75–77.

of language. When applied to Aquinas or to Christian thought in general, non-dualism may reveal conflicts with teachings that are intentionally hierarchical or dualistic. These challenges notwithstanding, I suggest it is a worthwhile and promising endeavor to experiment with seeing Christian thought through the lens of Zen Buddhist dualism and non-dualism.

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The late stage of Paul Tillich's thought encountered the phenomena of intensifying globalization and religious pluralism. Despite the fact that Tillich's systematic theology lacks a full-fledged theology of religions, many aspects of it have furnished valuable resources and posed appealing questions for later scholars to continue their exploration in comparative studies of religions, theologies, and philosophies.

The aim of this edited volume is to employ Tillich's thought in a variety of ways either to reflect upon Tillich's theology of religions itself or to compare Christian thought, as it is interpreted by Tillich, to Asian religions, mainly Buddhism and Confucianism. After an introductory remark on Tillich's thinking on religions and his dialogue with Japanese Buddhism, chapter two analyzes Tillich's "metalogical" methodology in connection to his more studied methodology of "correlation," and suggests ways these methodologies may influence Tillich's interreligious understanding. The chapter is followed by three meticulously devised chapters on Tillich and Buddhism. Their common focus is to test whether Tillich's understanding of religion as "ultimate concern" can be used to analyze those fundamental metaphysical ideas of Buddhism such as *Dhama*, nothingness, and emptiness. Chapter six applies Tillich's theory on religious symbols to study the origin, meaning, and efficacy of the Daoist and Buddhist symbol of "lotus-birth." Following largely the same methodology as the three chapters on Buddhism, the last four chapters introduce Confucianism as the major interlocutor of Tillich's Christian thought, focusing on varying ideas such as love, the structure of religious ethics, self-transformation, and cosmic humanity.

There are three major conclusions that readers may draw from the comparisons that the volume makes between Tillich's Christian thought and Asian religions.

Intensification. Despite the fact that the authors of the three chapters on Buddhism try hard to interpret Buddhist understandings of reality using Tillich's terms, insightful readers may become more aware of the fundamentally different metaphysical views underlying Tillich's Christian thought and Buddhist religions. For Tillich, the ultimate reality that anchors his deepest concern is God, as His creativity is construed by the tradition of Christian philosophical theology as *"creatio ex nihilo"* and reinterpreted by Tillich as the "ground of being." Since God is the ontological origin of worldly creatures, divine creation is understood here as deriving from a state of non-being, i.e., the *ouk on* (Greek), absolute type of non-being that signifies the ontological unconditionality of divine creation. However, since divine creation gives rise to all creatures, it can be simultaneously understood as the "ground of being" or Being itself, and thus transcends both the *me on* (Greek), relative type of non-being and its corresponding type of being that describes concrete existential states of cosmic beings. Nevertheless, what is central to varying schools of Buddhist thought is their understanding of the most generic feature of reality as a universal cosmic network of "co-dependent origination." Seen from a micro perspective, this idea leads to the extinction of any nondependent self that is inherent to each individual cosmic entity. Hence, the Buddhist teaching of no-self. Seen from a macro perspective, this most generic feature of reality would not be altered despite concrete traits of changing realities and limited facilities of human languages intended to describe the former. Hence, there is the teaching of emptiness and nothingness. Understood as such, Buddhist metaphysics is more comparable to Western metaphysical discourses that are not following the Christian model of *creatio ex nihilo*, such as the

metaphysics of Aristotle, Spinoza, or Hegel. It is therefore very insightful for the volume's editors to express their concern in the first chapter that (1) because there is no question into the beginning or end of the world (p. 16), and (2) because emptiness is not a grounding reality, but the reality as it is (p. 17), it would be a challenge for scholars to use Tillich's term "ultimate concern," especially its objective connotation on features of reality, to describe the Buddhist religiosity.

Accommodation. Despite these fundamentally different metaphysical views, since Buddhism sees "co-dependent origination" as the most generic feature of reality, this featured reality is susceptible to being thought over as a whole, and the thinking would accordingly share a similar tendency toward ontology as its Christian counterpart. As a result, Buddhist scholars in this volume also try to accommodate Tillich's thought within a Buddhist expression, albeit with varying degrees of success that may succumb to readers' judgment. For example, LAI Pan-Chiu asserts that *Dharma* and "emptiness," two related terms to describe the ultimate features of reality, and the "Buddha nature," which is an agential power to know and practice those features, can be seen as the Buddhist ideas of "ultimate reality" in Tillich's sense (p.62). However, compared with Buddhist scholars' efforts at accommodation, Confucian scholars contributing to this volume appear to be more at ease in arguing for the similarity of Tillich's Christian thought and Confucianism. Sometimes, the elucidated similarities are so intense that they tend to another consequence of the comparative studies in this volume, to which I now turn.

Integration. The finest chapter on this aspect is Anthony WANG Tao's comparative study on the Christian (mainly Thomas Aquinas's and Tillich's) ideas of love and their possible integration with the Confucian idea of *ren* (humaneness). After a masterly textual analysis, WANG dismisses a stereotype on the contrasting features of the Christian and Confucian conceptualizations of love, which renders the former as "impartial" and the latter as "partial." Instead, WANG concludes that "Confucianism and Christianity cannot be superficially distinguished as consanguinitism and super-consanguinitism as two distinctive types because they both incorporated consanguity and super-consanguity" (p. 168). Furthermore, WANG also thinks of "the integration of Confucianism and Christianity" as "a great academic task with many possibilities" (p. 168). Although WANG has not yet pursued a constructive theology on love based upon comparisons, this is definitely one possibility to which his sort of comparative scholarship can lead.

With these insightful contributions to the comparison between Tillich and Asian religions, the studies in this volume also open many avenues for further research. The following are several examples.

First, since it is shown that Confucianism may share more similarities with Tillich's thought than Buddhism, readers will be eager to learn more about the dialogue between Buddhism and Confucianism as it is inspired by Tillich's thought. These expected, yet missing, chapters on this topic are even more needed when we take into consideration that the dialogue between Buddhism and Confucianism started long before Asian scholars knew anything about Tillich. Accordingly, issues such as emptiness, no-self, the Confucian *li* (pattern-principle), *qi* (cosmic vital-energies), and their related ethical commitments, as well as other issues, have been the topic of Buddhist–Confucian debates for more than a millennium.

Second, compared with the Buddhist scholars' lengthy discussions on metaphysics, the chapters on Confucianism focus disproportionately on ethics. Keith CHAN Ka-fu's chapter on cosmic humanity does include a discussion of "Chinese cosmogony." Even so, his presentation of Confucian metaphysics relies heavily on the contemporary Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming, whose metaphysical thought mainly draws on one neo-Confucian thinker, Zhang Zai (1020–1077 C.E). However, there is a long tradition of metaphysics in Confucianism starting from its earliest commentary on the *Classic of Change* and persisting through the debates on varying visions of cosmology and ontology among neo-Confucian and contemporary Confucian thinkers. Since whether the objective reference of "ultimate concern" registers in Asian religions is a central concern in the chapters on Buddhism, this volume appears to be lacking a critical engagement with metaphysics in the Confucian tradition.

Third, despite contributing invaluable scholarship, some of the volume's chapters could have been even more inspiring had the authors better coordinated them. For example, in order to accommodate Tillich's thought of existentialism within the Buddhist term of "no-self," Ellen Y. Zhang creatively states that "Tillich's idea could be understood as human existence being devoid of its self-nature, that is, 'essence' since it is 'dependently rising' through the 'essence of divinity'" (p. 104). This statement apparently runs counter to Tillich's own view that compared to Buddhism, the Christian mystical experience never yields to a "non-self" stance, and this view has been carefully introduced in the first chapter (pp.11–12). Another example of the lack of mutual scrutiny among authors is Andrew Tsz Wan HUNG's comparative understanding of love. HUNG says that "The nature of Confucian *ren* is partial; it stresses loving one's family first and then extends such love towards all humans. However, Christian agape is a kind of universal and impartial love towards all humans" (p. 188). This is directly opposite to what Anthony WANG Tao argued in the aforementioned chapter. Given WANG's integrating efforts on Christian and Confucian ideas of love, I believe HUNG should also rethink a part of his conclusion that due to the lack of the Christian idea of grace, Confucian ideas would undermine their contribution to democracy, which is historically rooted in a more radical awareness of human nature as flawed (p.195).

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, the volume offers an outstanding multifaceted and profound interreligious study of three major traditions: Christianity as interpreted by Paul Tillich, Buddhism, and Confucianism. I believe scholars will benefit greatly from this study as they pursue research that includes, but is not limited to, the issues set forth above.

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