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WITHOUT  
BORDERS

*editors*

ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI  
RALPH WERTBER

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# Comparative Philosophy without Borders

Edited by  
Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber

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# Introduction

Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber

*Because the human being is the connecting being who must always separate and cannot connect without separating—that is why we must first conceive intellectually of the merely indifferent existence of two river-banks as something separated in order to connect them by means of a bridge. And the human being is likewise a bordering creature who has no border . . .*

Georg Simmel (1909), “The Bridge and the Door”<sup>1</sup>

## On borders

Three concepts need to be clarified before we can speak intelligibly about *Comparative Philosophy without Borders* avoiding calculated confusion or foreseeable misunderstanding: the concept of *philosophy*, the concept of *comparison* (from which the concept of “comparative” is derived), and the concept of *borders*. Everybody understands and agrees that “without” simply means *lacking*, which, in this context, must signify coming to lose or erase rather than never having had. Therefore, we need not dwell separately and tediously on the meaning of “without,” although in some branches of classical and contemporary Indian metaphysics, the meaning of the particular sort of negation that expresses that peculiar “absence” whereby one thing lacks or sheds another thing or property is also a hot topic. Of the three crucial concepts, then, let us start with the concept of a border, since the concept of philosophy is inexhaustibly controversial (two sides across a border often do not mean the same by “philosophy”) and paradox-generatingly self-inclusive and we shall have much more substantial and provocative things to say about *comparison*.

A border, literally, is a line, often conventional, seldom natural, that separates two regions of space. Borders connect what is separated and separate what is connected. In principle, borders can be crossed. Frequent unstoppable crossings often result in the borders being redrawn. They can be redrawn, undone or un-thought, as bridges can be traversed from one to the other side and doors can be opened. When borders are crossed, the separating connections may linger on as if untouched, or, indeed, come to be no more, having fallen into pieces. Were there borders that we could not cross at all, they would have to be the sort of borders that do not connect what is separated; they would have to be limits. If they were limits, then we would be unable to get to the other side, let alone separate or connect both sides. Hence, these boundaries are not limits.

They are borders. We put up such borders that can be crossed if needed. It might even be thought that the function of some borders is to make it appear to most people on both sides that they are insurmountable walls. Still, since we are such creatures who constantly erect frontiers and barriers that in principle can be transcended, Simmel is right to suggest that we have no borders (*Grenze*) that would really be, rather than appear to be, limits (*Grenze*). The mobility or openness of doors is the metaphor that Simmel uses to capture the very significance and value of such borders, that is, the possibility at each moment to step out, beyond the conditional confinement that borders might represent, into the open and into freedom, or perhaps into another confinement.

Borders—between philosophy and science and religion within the Western tradition, between epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics within Western philosophy as a whole, between continental and analytic philosophy, between rationalism and empiricism within epistemology or libertarianism and determinism within metaphysics; between Chinese philosophy and European philosophy and African philosophy, between African and Hawaiian philosophies, between Nyāya and Buddhist philosophy within Indian philosophy, between Mu'tazilites and Asharites within Islamic philosophy, between Chinese and Indian Buddhism, between Utilitarian and Kantian ethics within Western moral philosophy, between Daoists and Confucians within Chinese philosophy, between European, Russian, and Chinese Marxism within Marxism, and so on—have to be first drawn in order for us to open up possibilities of infiltrations if not mergers.

Comparative philosophy is all about the erecting, detecting, smudging, and tearing down of borders, borders between philosophical traditions coming from different parts of the world, different time periods, different disciplinary affiliations, and even within a single period and pedigree, between opposite or at least distinguishable persuasions. Philosophical comparisons, more often than not, separate and connect at the same time what are very likely or unlikely pairs of, or entire sets of, *comparanda* (that which we set out to compare). Aaron Stalnaker, in his book on Xunzi and Augustine (an unlikely, therefore interesting, pair), has observed that the challenge of comparative study is that “it must bring distant ethical statements into interrelation and conversation, and it must simultaneously preserve their distinctiveness within the interrelation.”<sup>2</sup> This familiar dialogical view of comparative ethics may not turn out to be the magic formula to which all comparison can be reduced. How can one put one view or tradition next to another and conduct the comparison as if they have the *same* agenda, if it is clear from the beginning that the two traditions or views are *different*? This is the circle that comparison apparently squares. And the task is far from impossible if one is sufficiently careful about what precisely “same” and “different” mean. Take the concept of rationality. A good comparative philosopher, if she does not slide back to the nineteenth-century view that rationality is exclusively or originally a European concept simply missing outside of Europe, would say something inconsistent like “the Chinese concept of rationality is utterly distinct from the European concept of rationality, but they both are and are not versions of some more general concept of rationality.” In other words, that comparison is all about this same-yet-not-the-same, if put too bluntly, becomes no more than a cliché.

## On the inescapability of comparison

Let us pause here and think in deeper detail about the very concept of comparison. In a most intriguing passage of his voluminous eleventh-century Sanskrit work on literary aesthetics titled “Illuminating the Erotic,”<sup>3</sup> the poet-philosopher Bhoja tries to prove that not only is comparison a reliable means of knowledge, but also that all means of knowledge including direct sense perception are, indeed, at heart forms of comparison. One can imagine how all inferential reasoning would be reduced to analogical reasoning by similarity, but the hardest bit of this radical reductionist thesis is to show that even simple sense perception consists in seeing resemblances. Let us try to translate this bit of Bhoja’s text:

For a perception to be usable in practice (such as seeing water as water that a thirsty person could pour in a container and drink, or seeing a snake as a cobra and running away from it to be safe), it must be predicative or judgment-like (*savikalpaka*). For a perception to be predicative judgment-like, it must involve implicit employment of words (*śabda*) one understands (for there is no concept-application or categorization without some minimal semantic coding, in this very general sense or preparedness to use a word). For a word to be mastered, at the time of first grasping its meaning, a particular sample or set of the meant entity or process has to be presented. Every subsequent application of that word/phrase works (arouses the awareness of its meaning) by means of resemblance or similarity with the original instances perceived at the time of acquisition of the vocabulary. Thus, how can we deny that every perception is a case of comparison?<sup>4</sup>

What is the relevance of this strange insight, that comparison encompasses all the accredited sources of knowledge, in the present context? Suppose one is teaching or writing just about Sanskrit epistemology or aesthetics in English (as we did in the immediately preceding paragraph). On the surface, it is not a comparative exercise. It is simply and purely Indian philosophy. But one has to use words such as “perception,” “word,” “judgment,” “categorization,” each of which is saturated with thousands of years and pages of European theorizing. A parallel implicit switch of putatively equivalent terms would be inevitable when one spoke of Greek philosophy in English or Spanish or of Daoism in Sanskrit (e.g., using terms like “*śūnyatā*” or “*mārga*”). Thus, even pure classical Indian philosophy, done in the most expository, historical, “Orientalist” style, unless it is done in archaic Sanskrit (even the Sanskrit that one would write today would be imperceptibly influenced by translational, hence comparative, considerations!), would be inescapably, albeit unavowedly, comparative. That is the relevance. Even within one single culture and language-family, if one writes in a modern idiom about an ancient system of thought, one’s observations are bound to be based on comparison.

## The subject matter of comparative philosophy

As early as 1977, Archie Bahm confidently affirmed that “comparative philosophy has become a recognized philosophical discipline or field.”<sup>5</sup> It is quite true that comparative

philosophy has been increasingly institutionalized as a subdiscipline of philosophy throughout the twentieth century, most successfully in terms of professional associations,<sup>6</sup> conferences, monograph series,<sup>7</sup> and journals.<sup>8</sup> As is the case with most disciplines, however, there is no common definition of what comparative philosophy is about, but the subdiscipline assembles different, in parts even mutually contradictory, views. Two frequently cited definitions of comparative philosophy are taken from Internet encyclopedias. Ronnie Littlejohn writes in his entry on *IEP* (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy):

Comparative philosophy—sometimes called “cross-cultural philosophy”—is a subfield of philosophy in which philosophers work on problems by intentionally setting into dialogue sources from across cultural, linguistic, and philosophical streams.<sup>9</sup>

While the metaphor of dialogue is often employed to characterize the nature, aim, and method of comparative philosophy,<sup>10</sup> the definition is conspicuously unclear as regards the entities that are put into dialogue: on the one hand, the dominant understanding of comparative philosophy as cross-cultural philosophy is mentioned, but the use of both the inverted commas and the phrase “cultural, linguistic, and philosophical streams” seems to leave open the possibility that comparative philosophy could simply be concerned with different languages or philosophical streams without a commitment to the notion of “cultures.” The matter is not elucidated when Littlejohn thereafter demarcates comparative philosophy from “more traditional philosophy in which ideas are compared among thinkers within a particular tradition; comparative philosophy intentionally compares the ideas of thinkers of very different traditions, especially culturally distinct traditions.”<sup>11</sup>

David Wong, the author of “Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, begins his entry with the following sentence:

Comparative philosophy brings together philosophical traditions that have developed in relative isolation from one another and that are defined quite broadly along cultural and regional lines—Chinese versus Western, for example.<sup>12</sup>

Here, besides the oddity of writing an entry on comparative philosophy with the restriction of “Chinese versus Western” and then mentioning as an example of two philosophical traditions “Chinese versus Western,” the criterion of “relative isolation” is introduced. It remains, however, unclear whether, for instance, the development of Islamic philosophy would be considered “relatively isolated” (P. T. Raju, in his own map of comparative philosophy, apparently ignores Islamic philosophy for lack of such isolation<sup>13</sup>); or how the copresence of Buddhism in Indian, Chinese, and Japanese philosophy would be dealt with.

Yet another set of questions might be posed in view of Koji Tanaka’s characterization:

Comparative philosophy is a branch of philosophy which examines and contrasts different traditions of philosophy. For example, a comparative philosopher may

examine African, Buddhist, Chinese, Indian, Muslim and Western traditions of philosophy in comparison with one another. Comparisons may also be made between sub-traditions within a tradition: one may compare Confucianism and Daoism within the tradition of Chinese philosophy, for example.<sup>14</sup>

Like Wong, and, indeed, like most commentators of comparative philosophy today, Tanaka sees the subdiscipline as inquiring into different philosophical traditions,<sup>15</sup> which are usually, but not always, presented in some combination with terms such as “cultures” (including “intercultural” and “cross-cultural”), “civilizations,” and “world-views.” Tanaka, who seems to confine comparative philosophy to the comparison of philosophies (“examines and contrasts”), adds a rather peculiar (but by no means unusual) list of philosophical traditions, comprising religious and nonreligious traditions (mentioning Muslim, but not Christian or Shinto, and Indian, but not Hindu “philosophical tradition”). He also alludes to comparison between “sub-traditions *within* a tradition”; it is probably fair to assume that he would also be prepared to include comparisons between “sub-traditions” *across* different philosophical traditions (say, Indian Buddhism with Chinese Buddhism), even if his example of Confucianism and Daoism might suggest a more clear-cut picture of different traditions, each boasting a different set of sub-traditions. Tanaka is certainly aware of the problem of general talk about traditions, but he sees it less in the sort of entanglement, for instance, of Buddhism across traditions, and more in internal disagreement within any one tradition, which must—he writes—in any case still be based on some common ground, since otherwise communication would not be possible and development of any one tradition unlikely.<sup>16</sup>

Entanglement of (sub-)traditions is today often acknowledged, as with Edelglass and Garfield, the editors of the *Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, who stress “intercultural philosophical influence” and hold that “the notion of hermetically sealed traditions in parallel development is largely a historical fiction.”<sup>17</sup> Tanaka would probably readily agree, but his—as well as Littlejohn’s and Wong’s—characterization of comparative philosophy showcases the difficulties involved in delineating a subject-matter that would form the subdiscipline’s proper domain of research.

Whether or not comparative philosophy has an object and methods clearly its own has been disputed. Robert E. Allinson has insisted:

All philosophy is comparative philosophy and in this sense the term is too wide to be very useful. In this regard, the notion of comparative philosophy, as a unique self-subsistent discipline in itself, is a myth. Philosophy always has been comparative philosophy. The phrase “comparative philosophy” is redundant. All philosophy must contain a comparative basis for its inspiration and as part of its data base.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, “in this sense,” comparative philosophy is tantamount to philosophy. Yet, in another sense, Allinson comes to reserve an exclusive domain for comparative philosophy “in its more proper understanding” as “integrative philosophy,” which he sees in “the service of intercultural dialogue.”<sup>19</sup>

## The need for a third in comparing two philosophies

When we compare two philosophies (in whatever way we might have drawn their borders), we need a *tertium* or third element in two senses. In the *first sense*, initially, the comparer who notices similarities and dissimilarities between the two, with or without the motive of evaluating which is more cogent, more acceptable, more philosophically fecund etc., needs to position himself or herself in a neutral third place or at least a third philosophical point of view. Frits Staal commented half a century back, “It passes our understanding how scholars have been able to compare two philosophies, without realizing that a standard of comparison is needed resulting from a third philosophy (which in special cases, may be the same as the first or the second).”<sup>20</sup>

The *second sense* of a *tertium* is this: When we compare A and B we always have to specify with respect to what. So “compare” is a three-place rather than a two-place verb/predicate. We compare A and B with respect to F, compare Plotinus and Samkara with respect to the concept of God or the concept of Oneness (as did Frits Staal himself). To be more precise, following this second sense of a required “third” for any comparison and combining it with the first sense, “compare” turns out to be a four-place predicate: “From his specific historical cultural context P compares A and B with respect to F”

Hence, in what follows, we want to present to the reader an account of comparison, first in its naked form as a mechanism from which some important insights that would be true for each and any comparison can be gleaned. We then complicate matters by introducing that mediating creature that would be the comparer who is at once border-circumscribed and borderless. Being such creatures, we all work in a time and place that has some historical coordinates. We should hence assume that there are contending narratives of the “history” of comparative philosophy, which inform the comparers’ doings. Rather than attempting a comprehensive taxonomy of existing narratives and their predicaments, we should like to sketch the narrative that informs our advocacy of fusion philosophy. Needless to say, the urgency of theorizing on or problematizing comparativism is brought upon us by the political/cultural/economic phenomenon controversially called “globalization.”

So, can there be a comparison without a *tertium comparationis*? Several notions of similarity are available in the literature ranging from Western to Eastern metaphysics. From Wittgenstein’s family resemblances, through the debate between Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya as to whether similarity is a separate sort of objectively real entity or not, all the way up to Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, one needs to examine, then compare and contrast distinct notions of resemblance. In comparative philosophy, similarity stands as a notion seemingly in no need of further differentiation, which forms a marked contrast to the high level of discussions about similarity elsewhere in philosophy. A separate philosophy of comparison may draw profitably on work about comparison done in disciplines other than philosophy.

### Naked comparison

A comparison always involves two or more *comparanda*, which are put next to each other in view of an aspect that is presumed to be common to both *comparanda*, the

mentioned *tertium comparationis*. If, for example, early Chinese and Greek ethics are selected for comparison of their articulated views on honor, then early Chinese (A) and Greek (B) ethics each come to serve as a *comparandum* and some concept of honor as a *tertium comparationis* (F). Such a comparative framework presumes that there is a concept of honor to be compared here and there, which is in some sense the same concept. The framework also presumes other commonalities between the *comparanda*, which, clustered together, might be called the pre-comparative *tertium*, such as the common description or qualification of both Greece and China as being “early,” and possibly some common background against which a distinction between Greece on the one side and China on the other is drawn (e.g., Greece and China as “cultural traditions,” “civilizations,” “empires,” “antiquities,” etc.). To be sure, the distinction between pre-comparative *tertium* and the *tertium comparationis* is mainly a matter of emphasis, as each refers to commonalities describing or qualifying the *comparanda*. But the former refers to commonalities that are not explicitly, or not primarily, put up for comparison, whereas the latter specifies the common aspects at the center of the comparative inquiry.<sup>21</sup>

A comparative inquiry does not necessarily—and certainly does not explicitly—proceed from a familiar *comparandum* to one or several other unfamiliar *comparanda*, say, by inference or analogy. Two unfamiliar *comparanda* may well come to serve as objects of inquiry, and there need not be more interest in one than in the other. Of course, when we speak of “familiar” or “unfamiliar,” somewhat like “native” and “alien,” we are speaking from the point of view of P, the comparer. A specialist of contemporary ethics might be comparing early Chinese and Greek ethics while being unfamiliar with both and claiming a roughly equal interest in their respective ethics and their notion of honor. But, of course, the comparer in this case is a specialist of contemporary (let us admit with self-critical candor, Western) ethics, or, if no specialist, is at least familiar with ethics to some degree. From this point of view, it might be fair to say that each comparer sets out to compare from the standpoint of a certain “cultural tradition.” This can be phrased more hermeneutically or it can be fashioned as an implicit comparison,<sup>22</sup> so that our example would feature three rather than two *comparanda* at work (contemporary ethics, Chinese ethics, and Greek ethics), with the comparer being more familiar with one *comparandum* (contemporary ethics) than with the other *comparanda* (Chinese ethics and Greek ethics). In each way, the comparer emerges as a further variable to contend with, so that a fuller conceptualization of comparison would read as follows:

1. A comparison is always made by someone (person P);
2. At least two *relata* (*comparanda*) are compared (A and B);
3. The *comparanda* are compared in some respect (*tertium comparationis*) (F);
4. The result of a comparison is at least a four-term relation between the two *comparanda* on the basis of the chosen respect and the comparer.

In their book *Philosophical Questions: East and West*, Gupta and Mohanty list a series of earlier, rather simplistic and sweeping, comparisons.<sup>23</sup> Hegel, of course, “accepts” the Indian and Chinese philosophical temper as earlier and less mature “stages” of Reason’s dialectical march toward progress, which would reach its pinnacle with Hegel’s own thought. So his comparison is the most ridiculous of all. With Hegel as P

and Western, Indian, and Chinese philosophies as A, B, and C, to be compared, the *tertium* F with respect to which he compares them would be “the central focus of philosophical attention,” which, for the West is concepts, for the Indian is intuition, and for the Chinese is action. It is staggering to see how influential this uninformed, crude, and false stereotyping has been and still is. Radhakrishnan—the philosopher President of India in the 1960s—for example, would take philosophical temperament (F) as the basis of comparison and pass the verdict that the West is intellectual, India is intuitive, and China is active! It is outrageous that being steeped in Indian philosophy and Sanskrit learning he would buy Hegel’s myth and manage to simply not notice two millennia of purely intellectual wrangling tradition in India, but would also be ready to classify a Zhuangzi or a Dogen as merely an action-oriented thinker! With respect to pure theory (F), Husserl (P) compares the West, India, and China (A, B, C) and comes up with the judgment that the West has pure theory but India does not because it is practical-spiritual and China also does not because it is practical-ethical. Albert Schweitzer (P) compares Western philosophy (A), Indian philosophy (B), and Chinese philosophy (C) with respect to attitude toward life/world (F) and comes up with the generalized answer that the West affirms it, India denies or negates it, and the Chinese affirm it. Charles Moore compares the same trio with respect to a determinate concept of reality, coming up with the comparative verdict that the West has such a determinate concept of objective reality, India does not have it because Indian philosophy is perspectivist and subject-dependent, while the Chinese have a hierarchical notion of reality. Obviously, much hinges on the time and the epistemic-political milieu in which the comparer comes to believe that (although everything is somehow comparable with everything else) the chosen *comparanda* are particularly worthy of being thrown together side by side (παραβάλλειν), that is, that they should be compared.

A fifth aspect, the mentioned pre-comparative *tertium*, is hence profitably distinguished:

5. The two (or more) *comparanda* share a pre-comparative *tertium*, constituted by at least one commonality (i.e., being chosen for comparison by the comparer) and likely by many more commonalities (*tertia*).

One advantage of separating out these terms of the complex relation of comparison is that once we lay out who is doing the comparison between what and what with respect to which concept, different comparisons can be compared with one another.

Crucially, most of these commonalities are already well established (pre-theoretically, if only vaguely, implicitly or unconsciously absorbed by the comparer like the popular Euro-American blatantly false background belief that Hindus do not eat the flesh of a cow because they fear that the cow could be their own dead ancestor reborn—that is assumed to be what it is to be a Hindu) before the comparer sets out to compare them. From this perspective, there are certainly no naked comparisons, let alone history-less perspective-less context-free comparers, but it is as Mark Twain has observed a long time ago: “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.”<sup>24</sup> The clothed comparer has a standpoint, which reflects a



specific hermeneutical background, but at the same time a set of purposes which the comparison is designed to serve (ranging from the most innocent of “scholarly” interest to a straightforward political agenda). If naked comparison offers a limited perspective, then it seems that inquiries into the mechanisms of how comparison works have to take into account the comparer more fully. As we will see, some interesting insights about the mechanisms of comparison emerge, once we elaborate the point about familiarity touched upon above.

## Clothed comparison

Familiarity, which is what *re-cognition* makes and finds, is always at work in comparison, because what we call seeing the “same” things, processes, or patterns of thinking consists in noticing more or less close resemblances between different occasions of encountering distinct things and distinct events. In what follows, we shall for the sake of simplicity restrict our reflections to the more blatant (but structurally similar) case of a comparer who is more “familiar” with one *comparandum* than with the other, which is often said to fundamentally distort the results of the comparison, as when, say, a specialist of Plato or John Rawls dares casting a comparative glance at the Confucian *Analects* or Kautilya’s *Artha Śāstra*.

A rather crude version of the criticism holds that “one-sided” comparisons unduly take one *comparandum* as a *tertium comparationis* and thereby distort the results of the comparison with the other *comparandum*. The specialist of Plato cannot but come to completely Platonize the *Analects* or the *Artha Śāstra* with the disastrous but necessary consequence of presenting Confucius or Kautilya as a deficient version of Plato. A radical criticism along this line could be called to constitute the fallacy of mistaking A for F, in terms of our symbolic representation above. If this is meant to say that a domain like early Greek ethics could come to serve as both the *comparandum* and the *tertium comparationis*, then the criticism simply seems to misunderstand how comparison works. A domain such as Greek ethics can be understood as constituted by an empirical referent and statements about it. Now we should very much like to fancy the empirical referent as singular, even if our description of the domain (because of the impossibility of a private language, let alone the description of somebody else’s private language) already takes away from the presupposed singularity. Singularity cannot be captured conceptually, which is why we help ourselves with the use of proper names. Saying that something is singular (or unique, peerless, incomparable, *sui generis*) like something else is singular undermines its singularity. Singularity, in the sense of uniqueness, hence, could not possibly serve as a *tertium comparationis*. If the *tertium comparationis* is adopted from some empirical referent, then it has to be an abstraction of the singularity of that referent, that is, an abstraction that, like a concept, can be predicated over the many, at least in the sort of relatability that is the minimal condition for a productive *tertium comparationis*. Perhaps it is useful to imagine the abstraction on a scale running from maximal particularity (bordering on singularity) to the highest universal generality, where both ends of the scale appear “singularly”

unattractive for the purposes of comparison. Both maximal particularity and maximal generality would preempt the result of the comparison and thus undermine the openness of the inquiry, since with the former only differences and with the latter only commonalities could possibly be captured. In this respect, comparison comes down to choosing an appropriate level on the ladder of abstraction.

What exact level of abstraction is chosen in a case at hand has myriad implications. The level of abstraction chosen anticipates to no minor extent the results of the comparison and crucially qualifies how the results have to be understood. There seems to be a direct relation between the level of abstraction and the result of a comparison in terms of commonalities and differences (or similarities and dissimilarities). Any move on the scale of abstraction toward more generality should produce more commonality and less difference, and any move in the opposite direction, toward more particularity, should end up showing more difference and less commonality. The relations between the levels of abstraction chosen for a *tertium comparationis* and the outcome of a comparison deserve more attention and critical study. An important preliminary observation concerns the qualification of the results of a comparison as being necessarily contingent, insofar as any set of commonalities and differences that come out of the comparison are directly related to the chosen level of abstraction. Comparative inquiry is a powerful tool, but much of its power is lost when the resulting commonalities and differences are not understood as fundamentally relational notions, that is, as fundamentally related to the level of abstractness that the comparing person chooses to adopt. From this point of view, it seems, indeed, apposite to understand the results of comparison as necessarily relational relations, that is, the relation of A and B with respect to F, but also and constitutively in relation to the level of abstractness that is chosen by the comparer P.

## Can comparative philosophy be hard-core philosophy?

Comparative religion cannot be and does not claim to be a religion. Comparative politics is not a politics. But comparative philosophy, as we conceive of it, has to be philosophy. Not just peripheral but absolutely central to the enterprise of philosophy done in the current politically and culturally interconnected world, though this remains a utopia.

In his Commentary on *De Anima*, 426b7, Thomas Aquinas remarks: “There is always more pleasure to be gained from combinations than from simplicity.” Comparison is a special sort of combination or complexity, which is why asking “Did Plato mean by ‘*eidos*’ what Nyāya means by ‘*sāmānya*’” gives more philosophical pleasure than simply asking what Plato meant by “forms” (which, by the way, is already comparative, for we are using an English translation of the Greek word). Unfortunately, in actual mainstream academia in Europe and America, comparative philosophy is not only treated as a marginal or fringe phenomenon, but also taken as a “soft option” meant for those who cannot handle hard-core analytic or genealogically rooted continental philosophy. This is most ironic since any comparative philosophy, like comparative literature, probably requires much harder work than a mono-cultural

or monolingual philosophy or literature. In a review essay, Alisdair MacIntyre wrote in 1983:

The Indian political theorist has a harder task than his Western counterpart. He first of all has to be a good deal more learned, for he is required to know the history of Western political thought as well as the history of Asian thought. . . . He has to possess an array of linguistic skills that are uncharacteristic nowadays of Western political theorists. Second, he has to sustain a relationship with his Western colleagues in which he takes their concerns with a seriousness that they rarely . . . reciprocate. Thus a genuine dialogue is for the most part lacking. It is we in the West who are impoverished by our failure to sustain our part in this dialogue.<sup>25</sup>

Thirty years after this, in spite of so much more lip service to intellectual cosmopolitanism, the Western political theorist has only chosen to be even more impoverished. What we shall idealize in this introduction as a “fusion” of traditions, concepts, and styles of thinking is dismissed as intercultural flotsam. It is almost taken for granted that one either gets into comparative philosophy with an adolescent zeal of radical counter-culturalism or culture-tourism, or slows down into soft-core “New-Age” comparative philosophy at the senile end of one’s (not-so-)successful career in one of the hard-core mainstream philosophical disciplines such as Epistemology or Metaphysics or Philosophy of Mind or Aesthetics or Philosophy of Language or Philosophy of Science or Ethics or Political Philosophy or Phenomenology or American Process Philosophy. Yet, for an entire generation of astute Asian, African, or Latin American (and perhaps fewer European) philosophers, comparative philosophy has been both the passion of their youth and the preoccupation of their top-of-the-career maturity. Some had to read both Plato and the *Upaniṣads*, both Aquinas and Udayana, both Confucius and Aristotle, both Kant and Dharmakīrti, both Wittgenstein and Nāgārjuna, both Kukai and Quine, as they were taught how to philosophize. Long before one was aware of the “dangerous liaisons” of international academic politics (where colonialism still rules under the garb of the postcolonial), not just one’s thought and talk, but even one’s everyday sensibilities had become incorrigibly “comparative.” Now, when one painfully finds out that, in the insular power-enclaves of philosophy, even a mention of non-Western theories of mind, Indian theories of knowledge, Japanese theory of *amae*, or South African theory of *ubuntu* is punished by polite exclusion, well-preserved prestigious ignorance about other cultures, that mono-cultural hubris defines the mainstream of professional philosophy in Euro-America, that the discovery of exciting connections, sharp oppositions, or imaginable dialogues between some ancient or modern Eastern and ancient or contemporary Western ideas is going to be greeted with condescension or cold neglect, it is already too late. While we lament the misfortune of our purist (and power-blinkered) colleagues who are missing out on this fun, one of the best ways to deepen the collective celebration of culture-straddling contemplation is to reflect, critically and analytically, on the very concept of philosophical comparison. This is what we are doing and shall continue to do in the next two or three sections of this introduction.

Quoting Borges, in his preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault wonders at “a certain Chinese encyclopedia’s” division of animals into (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) suckling pigs, (c) stray dogs, (d) innumerable, (e) frenzied, (f) fabulous, etc. And he uses a deeply sarcastic phrase (see the emphasis below), even while deconstructing the sense of impossibility or absurdity of such an “alien” (Chinese) system of classification. “In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as *the exotic charm of another system of thought*, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*. But what is it impossible to think, and what kind of impossibility are we faced with here?”<sup>26</sup> Yet, the standardized taxonomy of the types of philosophy courses that one can teach in contemporary American academia is no less “exotic,” indeed, it is bizarre. Philosophy courses and philosophers are usually divided into (a) Analytic (b) Continental (c) Feminist and (d) Asian/Comparative. Sometimes the species “American philosophy” (which one might expect to be the overarching genus!) is added to this list with the good intention of recognizing Process Philosophy and Pragmatism. Yet, everybody knows that some feminist philosophers are formidably analytic, that some very good analytic philosophers are pragmatists, that wonderful work in analytic philosophy of mind, language, or mathematics is routinely produced on the European continent, and that some comparative philosophers are very continental in their phenomenological or deconstructive style of doing philosophy.

## On the putative comparative-analytic rift

The only place where this category-mistaken cross-division is often thought to have a modicum of justification is the alleged rift between the analytic and the Asian/comparative. “I have done enough of left-brain exercise through analytic philosophy,” one senior philosophy professor from a liberal arts college told the participants at the start of a Summer Institute on Indian philosophies and religions, “and now, I want to develop my right brain, the non-rational emotional side of my personality through learning about Indian thought.” The rift between reason and intuition, between argumentation and direct experience, between conceptual clarification and supra-conceptual edification resurfaces regularly in the form of this conviction that the gulf between analytic philosophy and Asian-comparative philosophy could not and should not be bridged. Later in this Introduction, we will try to give one obvious example of the fruitful practice of comparative analytic philosophy, showing that the above mentioned rift is a figment of politically motivated or blinkered imagination. Of course, everyone knows that such great comparative philosophers as Bimal Matilal and Karl Potter have been uncompromisingly analytic in their methodology. But, to the extent that they did and do Indian philosophy at all, the academia refused to regard them as straightforward analytic philosophers. In spite of his path-breaking work on the logic, ontology, and epistemology of negation, Oxford University Sub-faculty of Philosophy hesitated a lot before listing Professor Matilal’s classes on Indian Logic or Indian Epistemologies in the philosophy lecture list. Karl Potter’s seminal work on free will and truth has never been anthologized in an analytic philosophy reader

on those topics. This seems to be the price one pays for mastering and writing about hard-core Indian philosophy: notwithstanding one's perfect facility with and original contributions to analytic philosophy, one ceases to qualify for the narrow sense of an analytic philosopher simply because one has crossed the cultural/historical border of the Frege-to-Quine tradition. Ignorance of Indian philosophy, at least a decade or two back, was a necessary qualification for a hard-core analytic philosopher of good standing in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. We know of at least one very established American analytic philosopher who has not only studied and taught but even published on technical classical Indian philosophical semantics in addition to pursuing his interest in Meinongian semantics and metaphysics of events. He reported in private conversation that when one of the topmost West coast philosophy departments was about to hire him, he told them of this newly acquired additional expertise and they pretended not to hear and thought that he was changing the subject. Needless to say, in this analytic philosophy department, he cannot teach Indian philosophy of language, which he has researched well.

That indeed is the fear: if we allow comparisons or fusions with a "foreign" (most often meaning non-Western, since philosophy is taken to be native to Europe only) tradition, then the purity of the Aristotle-Kant-Frege-Wittgenstein-Quine-Kripke tradition or the Plato-Plotinus-Spinoza-Hegel-Husserl-Heidegger tradition will somehow get tainted. The subject would change. It would no longer be philosophical analysis or existential phenomenology as we know it. The sheer fear of such comparisons degenerating into (comparative) religion or comparative history of cultures surely does not explain this Euro-American myth-preservation about the spiritual, therefore non-analytic, East! One never needed to be a radical atheist like Bertrand Russell in order to get a membership to the analytic or continental clubs. Some of the stalwarts of current Anglo-American analytic philosophy are frankly Christian and proudly practice analytic philosophy of religion. Indeed, anti-theistic Western philosophers can find fresh chewable meat in the Buddhist (e.g., Santaraksita) or Jaina (e.g., Haribhadrasuri) arguments against the existence of any sort of God. So the old uninformed argument about most Eastern philosophy being overly religious and hence unfit for secular rational analysis no longer holds any water.

Luckily, Indian philosophy as practiced for the last sixty years has not had the converse fears or insecurities. Much first-rate philosophy in India has been done in English in the twentieth century—and we are not talking about Sri Aurobindo or Tagore or Gandhi, or Radhakrishnan from the colonial period—using a mixed Western and Indian philosophical idiom, raising questions that revel in straddling traditions, such as: "What is the objectively graspable meaning of the first person pronoun 'I'?" "Is *prāmāṇya* truth or knowledgehood?" "Is *apoha* a negative nominal essence or a complement-set of particular images?" "Is the five-skandha self a Humean bundle?" "Is karma retributive causation?" "Is knowledge derived from verbal testimony reducible to inference?" Why have the Western philosophers of language, mind and knowledge not asked the converse type of trans-traditional questions? Why do we not hear the interrogatives: "Does Russell's theory of error and false belief count as an 'anyathākhyāti' (misallocated predication) theory?" "Is Armstrong a Carvaka-style 'dehatmavadin'?" Now, we have grown up believing that liberal, cosmopolitan,

nonhierarchical rationality and multicultural openness are typically Western ideals, whereas provincial insularity, considerations regarding who has the right to which kind of knowledge, and privileged access to special disciplines were features of caste-dominated Hindu sort of thinking. Yet, Western analytic philosophy has, in general, shown little interest in opening up to the vigorous and rich traditions of epistemological, metaphysical, linguistic, and aesthetic analysis found in the—now-translated—major works of Nyāya, Vedānta, and grammarian and literary theoretic traditions in Sanskrit. Indeed, we have heard both Richard Rorty, whose “linguistic turn” ended in a neo-pragmatist relativistic/deconstructive cul-de-sac, and Timothy Williamson, whose Oxford-style philosophical analysis has led to staunch metaphysical realism, remark that Western analytic philosophy has nothing to learn from Asian thought.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, some very sincere and competent specialists of Asian, even Indian, thought agree with this precisely because they have a rather exotic soteriological (liberation-obsessed) image of “Indian ways of thinking” and a rather crude and narrow notion of what analytic philosophy is up to.<sup>28</sup>

Four major arguments are given in different contexts in support of this persistent image of Indian thought as typically nonanalytic: (1) Analytic philosophy is motivated by the Aristotelian search for pure theory whereas most Indian philosophies are motivated by the practical soteriological purpose of eradicating existential suffering. (2) Analytic philosophy is historically connected to the enlightenment project of individualistic antiauthoritarian free thinking, whereas all Indian thought is deeply rooted in unquestioning reverence to revealed tradition or prophetic authority. (3) Analytic philosophy reaches its conclusion on the basis of deductive, inductive, and abductive arguments whereas Indian philosophies routinely base themselves on alleged intuitive mystical experiential knowledge. And finally, (4) there is no clear conception of formal logic, deductively valid arguments, or a priori truth or analytic propositions in Indian thought, whereas analytic philosophy is crucially based on such notions. These allegations against the very idea of Indian analytic philosophy are very easy to answer.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes a more serious worry is expressed, not from the analytic (Western) side but on behalf of the authentic traditional Indian philosophers (especially of the Yoga-Vedānta type) about doing Indian comparative philosophy in an analytic vein. The worry as expressed by Stephen Phillips<sup>30</sup> is that “success on the front of (analytic) legitimization may have come at the cost of distorting some of the history of Indian philosophies” and losing sight of the “mystic empiricism” that grounds much Vedāntic thought. But we wish to point out that this is a baseless worry. The intellectual clarity achieved by well-defined conceptual distinctions, intricate rational argumentation, and skeptical flushing out of conflicting metaphysical beliefs is very much at the service of that spiritual experience of direct encounter with the Self or Emptiness that one hears about. A traditional Samkhya, Yogacara Buddhist, or Kashmir Shaiva philosopher would not have any anxiety that such logical noise would be distracting for a mystical poise. Indeed, as Abhinavagupta (early eleventh century), the greatest champion of direct mystical experience, has maintained in his magnum opus *Tantraloka* (pt IV), good logical reasoning is the surest means to Yogic perfection: “*tarko yogangam uttamam.*”

## An example: On reflexivity of consciousness and concept-free perception

To illustrate comparative philosophy as hard-core philosophy most vividly, with a rather detailed example, let us look at the narrow but vibrant topic of the reflexivity of consciousness, which has most recently been discussed again by Paul Bernier in the latest (January 2015) issue of *Philosophy East and West*.<sup>31</sup> The following rehearsal of that debate (not based on Bernier's discussion) is offered here as an example of one of the ways one can do analytic comparative philosophy of mind. This is the topic of a research-program in what Mark Siderits has called "fusion philosophy" and that derives its inspiration from an in-depth study of Buddhist epistemology, contemporary cognitive science, and Abhinavagupta's epistemology of self-consciousness. Abhinavagupta (the dynamic non-dualist philosopher-aesthete from early-eleventh-century Kashmir) observes that even the nonverbal bodily perceptions of a running man are functions of a discursive spontaneity of self-consciousness (*vimarśa*), such that the implicit awareness "I am running" is pregnant with conceptual-linguistic capacities, which get triggered in imitating others' actions (an observation uncannily anticipating the mirror-neuron debates in the twenty-first century).<sup>32</sup> John McDowell, a contemporary philosopher who worked first at Oxford and then at Pittsburgh, also comes to a similar conclusion that even the rawest sense experience involves employment of concepts, using a similar argument:

In the throes of an experience of the kind that putatively transcends one's conceptual powers . . . one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience, by uttering a phrase like "that shade," in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample.<sup>33</sup>

In the light of these two similar lines of thought from two very different times and climes, let us explore the links between two distinct issues of philosophy of consciousness and perception.

Whenever I perceive a brown cat, must I directly perceive that I am perceiving a brown cat? Those who answer "yes" to this question can be called "reflexivists." Reflexivists believe that a state's being a conscious mental state consists in its being transparent, that is, immediately and incorrigibly known to the subject. Those who answer "no" to our opening question would take a cognitive event to be as external to the subject's mind as any other event (such as a stimulation of the C-fibers in one's own brain) and therefore capable of happening without the subject's knowledge. We can call these philosophers "irreflexivists." They insist that the existence of the first perception is not dependent on or constituted by any synchronous and necessary recognition by the possessor of the cognitive state.

In classical Indian epistemology, reflexivism took the form of the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā theory of the self-illuminating nature of consciousness. It is true, the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā philosopher argues, that a knife does not cut itself and the eyes do not see themselves. But, unlike material or sensory tools, awareness is conscious and self-luminous. Its job is to reveal. How can an awareness reveal its external

intentional object to the subject, if it itself remains unrevealed to herself? If I do not know *that* I have known, how would I know *what* I have known? All awarenesses arise in the form “I am aware of this,” and not in the form “some awareness of this object has occurred” or “this is presented.” When I disclose an object with the light of my awareness, both the object and the awareness get disclosed together. So, basically, the reflexivist is rejecting the externalist observational model for our knowledge of our own cognitions.

In the classical Indian scene, opponents of reflexivism came in two major teams. The first group insisted that while my eyes can see the brown cat, my seeing of it is an event or act that even I—the first person—cannot directly perceive. Actions in general, according to this school of Vedic hermeneutics, are imperceptible. They have to be inferred from their results. Even by the perceiver herself, the cognitive act, because it is an act, has to be inferred from its effect. In this case, the effect of the cognitive act is the peculiar feature of known-ness that is noticed in the cat besides its brownness and felinity. The perception of the cat has to be postulated as the only explanation of this occasion-specific feature of cognizedness. The other group rejected both the self-illumination theory and the opposite, extreme theory of holding that cognitions are imperceptible by the subject herself. They held that my own perception of the cat can be known and ascribed to myself by myself through a distinct but equally perceptual awareness episode operating through the inner sense. While the first cognition is verbalized as “That is a brown cat,” the second apperceptive one is verbalized as “I see a brown cat.” Thus, perceptions are neither self-intimating nor only inferable. They are accessible by a second “look within,” or a kind of metacognitive glance.

Now, there is, on the face of it, a totally separate issue, which too has proved its vitality by showing up in both classical Indian epistemology and contemporary analytic philosophy of mind. This is the question of nonconceptual or pre-predicative perceptual content. Philosophers such as John McDowell and Bill Brewer (and, in the Indian tradition, Bhartṛhari and Vyāsātīrtha) have maintained that all perceptual cognitions have conceptual content, whereas philosophers such as Christopher Peacocke, José Bermudez, and Susan Hurley hold that there must be nonconceptual perception first if we are to ever have verbalizable concept-enriched experience. In Sanskrit philosophical traditions, the supporters of nonconceptual perception came in two varieties. The radical champions of non-conceptualism were the Yogācāra Buddhists, who held that all genuine perceptions are concept-free and untainted by language, which is the vehicle of imaginary conceptual generalities. When we make perceptual judgments, we have already slipped into inferential cognition and lost touch with the pure self-featured or featureless particulars that are given to the senses. Yogācāra Buddhists also argued that cognitions are reflexively self-aware. More moderate non-conceptualists were the Nyāya realists who felt compelled to postulate a pre-predicative, concept-free perception in order to explain the full-fledged predicative and concept-endowed perceptions that also directly reveal the world as it is. While the Buddhists were suspicious of concepts or generalities and therefore of language, the Nyāya direct realists considered publicly verbalizable determinate perceptual judgments to be their philosophical life-supports. So they held that perceptions can be nonconceptual or conceptual, and that only the latter can be correct or incorrect,



whereas the former are only logical postulates that we can never apperceive, let alone put into words.

This last bit of the moderate non-conceptualist stance of Nyāya is crucially significant. If the complex Nyāya argumentation about this issue is correct, then the price at which nonconceptual perceptions are accommodated in the theory is the admission of a form of fully intentional perceptual cognition that is not only not self-intimating, but also incapable of being apperceived or directly intuited in any fashion. For deeply Kantian reasons, it seems inconceivable that a perceptual cognition would be such that one could not apperceptively or introspectively claim it to be one's own. This suggests that the idea of concept-free perception must be given up, unless we want to get committed either to reflexivism, which collapses perception with apperception and therefore puts no constraint on its content, or to the complete inaccessibility of one's own intentional cognitive state. Now, there could be dispositional properties of one's own knowledge, or sub-personal states that constitute one's broad perceptual field and enable one to have object-recognizing sensory cognitions. These could very well be un-apperceivable precisely because they are not episodes of one's own perceiving something as this-such. What is hard to stomach is the combination of the reflexive introspectibility theory of cognitive states with the celebration of nonconceptual cognitions as full-fledged perceptions.

In any case, it seems that the two issues—"Is awareness necessarily self-aware?" and "Are there non-conceptual perceptions?"—are closely linked. It may be wrong to assert the particular link that has been asserted here, but there exists some link between them. Only an uncompromisingly analytic and fusion style of thinking that does not primarily ask for historical or cultural causes of views, but judges them for cogency and truth as seriously offered philosophical options can do justice to the comparative insights that one can get by reconstructing the debates between Indian and contemporary Western reflexivists and nonreflexivists on the one hand, and those between conceptualists and non-conceptualists on the other.

### Three grave objections threatening the possibility of comparative philosophy

Apart from the political resistance against comparative philosophy that we have hinted at above, there is one extremely frustrating charge against it that should worry all of us who have dedicated considerable parts of our intellectual careers to this risky business of boundary-breaking cross-cultural thinking. Let us formulate that problem through an anecdote. Once, in a small American university, one of us had to co-teach an Introduction to Philosophy class with a well-known Kant-expert American philosopher. When we came to Logic as the foundation of philosophy, there was a request that we should take one class-period to acquaint the Mid-Western American freshmen with the basics of Indian Logic. When that was done, the American Co-teacher's reaction was the following: "Interesting, but, the technical terms are too alien sounding and it does not sound like what we would call 'Logic'! Could you try

tomorrow to explain these same rules of reasoning to our students in more recognizably Western terms?" When that too was done the next day, the reaction was: "Well, this is just familiar Aristotelian logic! What is new or different in Indian logic that we should take the trouble of learning it when we already have this kind of logic in the West?" The charge, when formulated abstractly, is this: either we represent an Asian (or African or Islamic or Hawaiian etc.) philosophy in its own original terms, which are utterly alien to Western philosophy, in which case it is not philosophy proper, or we rephrase it in Western terms, in which case it risks ending up as just a repetition of what we already have in the West. Thus we either have no need of comparison with foreign ideas because they are just the same or too similar to our own native ideas, or we cannot allow it to count as hard-core philosophy because it is too different from how philosophy is done in the Western tradition. We have given an American's example, but the same can be the experience when one tries to share Western metaphysics or epistemology or ethics with Sanskrit or Chinese traditional scholars of philosophy. If it is alien it is not philosophy, if it is philosophy we already have it, why bother? This objection has a vague similarity with Meno's Paradox of Inquiry. If one does not know something at all one cannot ask a question about it, but if one already knows what one is asking about, why need one ask? This so-called paradox of inquiry, by the way, has been raised by Śrīharṣa (twelfth century) who could not by any stretch of imagination have had any knowledge of Plato.<sup>34</sup>

Our response to this objection is predictably similar to the standard reply to Meno's Paradox of Inquiry: There can be a state of undetailed knowledge of a topic, which is also a state of ignorance that one can wish to seek relief from. In the present context, though we cannot cater to the uncurious or the exclusivist, there must be a non-flaky "middle way" of doing philosophical comparison, the content and the concerns of which would resonate with the non-comparative analytic or continental philosopher's preexistent conception of what is genuinely philosophical and yet, push the boundaries of any familiar ways of thinking and introduce new ideas not only in the host (in this act of intellectual hospitality), but into the guest cultures themselves. Something like this must have happened in China when early Mahayana Buddhist Tantra was translated *en masse* into Chinese, which changed both Chinese philosophy and Indian Tantra. Whether this happened historically or not, this *space between* unrecognizably and unintelligibly alien and boringly familiar has to be found by any comparative philosopher who wishes to be heard by the mainstreams of both of the traditions that she is trying to bring together, either in conflict or in cooperation, in conversation or contestation.

The second objection has to do with interpreting versus changing. In our own volume, even as Sor-hoon Tan essays to reconcile Rawlsian and Confucian notions of justice, she cautions us against such a distorting influence of cross-cultural comparison. Comparison in philosophizing is often valued for its illuminating effects, but at the same time, cross-cultural comparisons in comparative philosophy risk distortion of the thought of a very different culture and time by imposing alien lenses. When we compare, for example, Japanese Zen Buddhist concepts of "dependent" social self and the American pragmatist concept of relational "I-Me" self (as Steve Odin does in his magisterial study on Nishida Kitaro, Doi Takeo, and G. H. Mead—a paradigm example

of what we describe below as the third stage of comparative philosophy), are we not thereby changing both the *comparanda*, in the name of interpreting them? The best response to this charge is to welcome transformation as a healthy rather than repugnant consequence of interpretation. Both Steve Odin and Karl Jaspers (in his small but insightful chapter on Nagarjuna) have tried to draw analogies and disanalogies between their *comparanda*, but end up taking a position of candidly biased preference. To quote the last lines of Odin's Chapter 10: "For Nishida the I-Thou relation is symmetrical, while for Mead the I-Me relation is asymmetrical in character. . . . In the evolutionary process cosmology of Whitehead and Mead, then, it is this notion of *asymmetrical* theory of becoming *in the arrow of time* which . . . constitutes the autonomous nature of selfhood as a creative advance into novelty."<sup>35</sup> The fusion here results not only in a Zen that is recognizably Whiteheadian, but even a Mead whose progressive and creative I-Me dialectic has been transformed in a subtle way into a "dependently arising" self that strives to be less and less egocentric.

A third objection could go as follows: Either you are interested in objective truth, in which case, you will have to evaluate and grade different views coming, let us say, from Christian Europe, Buddhist Japan, and Islamic Arabia about the relation of human actions and the moral status of the world, and end up exposing the errors or relative inferiority of some traditions in comparison to others. If you are not a believer in such realist absolutist appeal to truth, all you can do is juxtapose an anthropological account of all these "ethno-philosophies" of other cultures, which each of them—it is often assumed—can do anyway with better justice, entitlement, and accuracy. In the first case, you are encouraging a destructive contest or clash of civilizations and in the second case, you are not doing philosophy at all. Since there appears to be no third option, comparative philosophy is either odious, as is sarcastically said of comparison more generally, or perniciously anti-cosmopolitan. We would like to think of fusion philosophy as a third option, in which one neither risks the pitfall of supposing that one tradition has reached the truth (or could possibly have reached the truth) nor references back to different traditions in a manner that leads to unwelcome destructive consequences. Fusion philosophy makes use of different traditions (or rather different philosophical standpoints) in a consciously methodological or instrumental fashion. The imputation of definite philosophical standpoints might help add clarity about the exact problem at hand and certainly encourages disagreements of all sorts. If the reference is to entities such as "traditions" or "cultures," it is to be expected that there is already enough internal disagreement on any philosophical question, which undermines the unitary thrust of the respective reference itself. In that sense, the comparative exercise with the aim of doing fusion philosophy comes to propel rather than dispel the project of truth. In fusion philosophy, given the emphasis on the comparer, it is, furthermore, more than evident that the interest in objective truth lies with the comparer and his or her argument and not with what tradition or school got it right. The comparer appropriates the variety of philosophical standpoints—and eventually transcends the borders between them. In the end, far from arguing for one tradition or the other, the comparer is arguing his or her own case. And it would seem odd if in some sense or another *that* case would not aim at truth, however provisionary or pragmatist it may be fashioned.

## Three stages of comparative philosophy

It is time to say something about the narrative that informs our advocacy of fusion philosophy. We believe that the history of comparative philosophy can be divided roughly into three stages.

The imperative at the first stage amounted to something like: modern Western philosophy has sophisticated debates about, say, freedom of the will, so let us find in Indian philosophy something similar. The bottom line of this exercise resulted in statements such as “we/they had something similar (but something which had to be looked for, retrieved).” From another point of view, there might have been a more strategic motivation in finding various resemblances, overlaps, anticipations, namely to draw attention to non-Western traditions in the first place. It was thus happily and often apologetically claimed that Chinese thinkers *also* had philosophy and ethics in the Greek sense, that there was *also* logic and phenomenology in India! More boldly (with the arrogance of cultural insecurity), some asserted that “we said all of that long ago,” and “we said it much better long before you.” The basic idea at this stage is universalism.

At the second stage of comparative philosophy, the impetus was more to find contrasts and context-dependent culture-immanent peculiarities in non-Western philosophies, and to detect specific lacks compared to the Western tradition. The resulting lack-discourse ran a gamut of asserting that there was no possibility, no propositions, no deductive validity, no free will or apriori in Indian philosophy, no ontology, no logic and no truth claims in Chinese philosophy, no formal logic in African philosophy and so on and so forth. The moderate version drew the conclusion that these missing elements had to be introduced and adapted into Indian, Chinese or African philosophy. A more strident version of the second stage had it that these philosophies, if they were to retain their unique character, are better off without this Western theoretical stuff. Indian philosophy can easily do without the idea of “possible worlds,” which shows that it is far from being a necessary or compelling topic to discuss. It thus became an intellectual option to assert with confidence the lack of this or that, that there was no notion of correspondence truth or a creator God transcending the empirical world in Chinese philosophy and no notion of logical necessity or deductive validity in Indian logic. That was in fact not a lack, but a major strength. The implication was that Western philosophy should question these notions because there could be such rich traditions eschewing such notions altogether. The basic idea here is localism.

The third stage comprises some of the best comparative philosophy written today, that is, at the critical juncture between universalism and localism. The imperative is to re-interpret Indian, Chinese, or Japanese philosophy in terms of (oppositionally or positively) Western philosophical ideas as much as contributing back into English-language philosophy by bringing in elements of Asian or African or Hawaiian philosophy. Such crisscrossing comparative philosophy harks back to the regional or intra-traditional philosophical traditions, the Western analytic, the Continental phenomenological, the Indian analytic, the Indian sociocultural, the Asian literary, the Feminist European, the historical-political, the literary aesthetic,

and enriches them with the lessons of comparison. When we ask “how would a *rasa*-theorist explain the beauty of Goya’s painting ‘Saturn Eating his own Child?’” a prior question is likely to arise. “Is it legitimate,” asks a closet-Orientalist of sorts, “to take an ancient or medieval Indian theory of art-experience and try to explain a modern European painting in its terms? Is the cultural baggage of the former not totally incommensurable to the complex semiotic milieu of the latter?” Without entering the larger issue of cultural relativism within the hermeneutics of art, we want simply to point out that the reverse has been done often, perhaps too often. For centuries, thanks to epistemological colonization, Oriental literary or artistic practices have been “interpreted” through Occidental theories, partly because it was regarded as a truism that any “theory” worthy of its name would have to be European. Even negatively it seems more apt to call the architecture of Dilwara Temple, in Mount Abu, similar to but not quite Baroque, than to judge Hamlet as not a *dhirodatta nayaka*. Besides anthropology and sociology, the histories of which in the West are histories of explaining Oriental raw data with the help of Western pure theories—did Husserl not remark that the Oriental mind is too crude and practical to fashion pure theories? Right now, even the postcolonial experts apply Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Max Weber, Antonio Gramsci, Julia Kristeva and Giorgio Agamben in order to understand Indian art, mysticism, politics, philosophy, poetry and purity-pollution taboos etc. In principle there is nothing wrong with this, but it is about time that we also try the cross-cultural enterprise the other way. An earlier generation of “admirers” of the East believed or at least would have us believe that there simply is no dry complicated theories of aesthetics in India: there are only those juicy uncensored poetry, voluptuous erotic sculptures on the temple walls and cave-frescos of full-bodied damsels in Ajanta, and a bunch of blissed out Tantrics and Yogis who tell us to transcend all theoretical disputes and pass straight from Kamasutra postures and Tantric rituals to Nirvana or Samadhi, skipping all “why” questions! We now certainly know better. If we have to test and rejuvenate by creative criticism and adaptation those numerous intricate theories of making, communicating, enjoying, suffering, interpreting and assessing art that are already available in Sanskrit theoretical literature, then we must try it out on the literally outlandish examples and see if they work. The cultural difference between Elizabethan England and ancient Greece did not stop anyone from trying out Aristotle’s theory of catharsis or mimesis on King Lear! Of course, the theories need to be changed and enriched to fit examples undreamt of by the original philosophers of art living in radically different times and places. But that is no reason to freeze the ancient theories with their own local and contemporary examples or to be skeptical about the point of assessing Yeates’s work by the interpretive tools of Anandavardhana. Especially at a time when philosophers have loosened up considerably about finding the “correct meaning” of a work of art and are not always looking for what the poet or artist herself meant, a South Asian theory may very well throw new light on the meaning of European art. This, a ramified *rasa*-theory of disgust, may well unravel the mystery of how a creepy face of an obese man made of skinned dead chicken be the subject of a masterly painting by Giuseppe Arcimboldo.

In this volume, we want to put a spin on the practice of comparative philosophy at the third, current stage, which eventually might lead us to a fourth stage. The spin

would take us beyond comparative philosophy. It would amount to just doing philosophy as one thinks fit for getting to the truth about an issue or set of issues, by appropriating elements from all philosophical views and traditions one knows of but making no claim of “correct exposition,” but just solving hitherto unsolved problems possibly raising issues never raised before anywhere.

In this fourth stage, comparative philosophy can become truly borderless and eventually drop its epithet “comparative,” although one should anticipate strong resistance against this last phase of dropping the qualifier “comparative.” Good creative philosophy in a globalized world should spontaneously straddle geographical areas and cultures, temperaments and time-periods (mixing classical, medieval, modern, and postmodern), styles and subdisciplines of philosophy, as well as mix methods, sprinkling phenomenology, and political economic analysis into analytic logico-linguistic or hermeneutic, or culture studies or literary or narrative methods—whatever comes handy. The result would be either very flaky mishmash or first-rate original work. Philosophers, especially those who strive for clarity and truth, have to live with more confusions than clear and distinct ideas, when they welcome fusion philosophy as their preferred genre.

## Celebrating the collaborative philosophical eclecticism of this collection

Such healthy eclecticism shows up at three levels in our collection of essays: At the level of choice of topics, which do not fit into any special branch of philosophy; at the level of choice of method, let us say of Patton’s, Weber’s and Nusseibeh’s essays, which adopt entirely different methods, at the level of proportion or ratio between Western and non-Western philosophical preoccupations and contexts. Where Weber’s essay is based on mostly modern European materials, Patton or Ho are mainly dealing with ancient Indian and Chinese texts.

Beyond all suspected philosophical borders between branches of philosophy, different methods, and Western and non-Western philosophical preoccupations and contexts, the problem of philosophy in different languages, and translation among them, has been a key concern for long. And if every language has its own unique, albeit changing, conceptual scheme, and no two languages share these basic conceptual schemes, then philosophically responsible translation across them should be impossible. Of course, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism originally arose out of centuries of translation projects from Sanskrit and Pali. But now when we translate Sanskrit, Chinese, or Tibetan into English, the conceptual scheme which draws sharp distinction between, let us say “a cow” (indefinite article and count noun), “the cow” (definite description), “cows/all cows” gets into confusions and misunderstandings not only appearing weird and implausible but also doing injustice to the originals. In Tibetan *Collected Topics* arguments, subject terms are quite frequently not translatable by the count nouns they would apparently require in a Western target language, with the result that such count-noun translations would seem not to preserve truth. Some of our chapters engage with such meta-methodological issues of translation, albeit by

way of an exemplary discussion of the very possibility of translating into an African or classical South Asian language some key-terms in philosophy such as “truth.”

Tom J. F. Tillemans, in his chapter on “Count Nouns, Mass Nouns, and Translatability: The Case of Tibetan Buddhist Logical Literature,” engages the primary and secondary literature on Tibetan *Collected Topics* (*bsdus grwa*) arguments in light of the now classic arguments on intertranslatability and its philosophical limits proffered by W. V. Quine and Donald Davidson. He thus sets into conversation two different philosophical traditions. There are even more fusions undertaken in his text. Tillemans additionally weaves into his discussion some of the arguments made in the parallel debate regarding the Tibetan cousin, that is Chinese language, both arguments of long-standing (Christoph Harbsmeier, Chad Hansen) and more recent contributions (Chris Fraser, Dan Robins). Finally, there is also fusion between the philologist’s care for linguistic and textual matters of detail—which may serve as helpful hindrances forestalling too-swift philosophical conclusions, but also as hints toward philosophically important distinctions and therefore potentially important conclusions. Thus the philosopher’s concern for clarity and an argument that can stand on its own is addressed. Tillemans shows how the philological game must not ultimately come to stand in the way of the philosophical aim, but can be fruitfully combined to form what is perhaps a more substantial philosophical argument. Tillemans defends the argument that languages themselves do not have inherent features that would limit their inter-translation, but he adds and showcases an important exception at the level of theoretical writings about language. Pushing the effort at fusion philosophy one step further, Tillemans offers a short appendix with a comparison to Gongsun Longzi’s white horse dialogue and the question of a possible entanglement with the Tibetan *Collected Topics* literature.

Finding also a point of departure in the work of Quine, Barry Hallen sets out in his chapter “Translation, Interpretation, and Alternative Epistemologies” to examine, compare, and, in terms of topic, fuse the philosophy retrieved from the semantics of the West African languages of the Akan of Ghana, the Yoruba of Nigeria and of the English language (apparently and interestingly in no need of an indication of a particular people or a particular country) with regard to the underlying problematique of intertranslatability. Hallen especially focuses on the criteria for “truth” in ordinary language, which—he argues—differ fundamentally and may be productively exploited to tackle, and even resolve, some epistemological problems. There are at least three different interventions evident in Hallen’s chapter. He unmistakably contributes to the many efforts underway to correct and balance some earlier sweeping characterizations (and more often than not disqualifications) of African philosophy, as when he emphasizes that “Yoruba discourse does employ terminology and systematic criteria for the evaluation of any type of information.” Moving beyond issues of African philosophy to comparative philosophy, Hallen offers a series of meta-reflections on comparative and intercultural philosophy including on the very project of fusion philosophy. Finally, Hallen offers an interesting example of fusion philosophy when relating and using Yoruba epistemology to question the paradigm of propositional knowledge and also to problematize and reject one of Gettier’s famous counterexamples.

Straddling over Indian Buddhist, Chinese Buddhist, and Hindu philosophical materials is Chien-hsing Ho’s method in his chapter on “Resolving the Ineffability

Paradox.” Ho’s text has a very clear and focused topic that put in form of a question would read: how can one *say* that something is *unspeakable* without getting irretrievably implicated in paradox or self-refutation? This is what Ho terms the “ineffability paradox.” Section after section, in a double movement of encircling and closing in on his topic, Ho rehearses positions defended in contemporary philosophy, such as the common division of the functions of human language into cognitive and noncognitive, or positions represented, for instance, by Graham Priest or Ludwig Wittgenstein. Ho then sets out to complicate and elucidate the issue. To do this, he alludes to an impressive array of texts from thinkers that all lived between the fourth and eighth century CE and include—keeping the exact wording used by Ho—the prominent Indian Buddhist epistemologist Dignāga, the Chinese Yogācāra thinker Kuiji, his pupil Huizhao, the two Chinese Mādhyamika philosophers Sengzhao and Jizang, the Huayan master Fazang, and the Hindu grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari. Here, the descriptive vocabulary demonstrates the borders that separate the different thinkers beyond the fact that they are different thinkers, such as Indian/Chinese as two different Buddhisms and Yogācāra/Mādhyamika/Huayan as different Buddhisms cutting through the Indian/Chinese border, while the Hindu grammarian-philosopher is presented as a distinct point of reference outside the Buddhist borders. The vocabulary of master-pupil indicates further the strong sense of philosophical *traditions* that conventionally inform such discussions. This is the constellation of different philosophical traditions that Ho fuses to resolve the paradox by way of introducing “indication” as a mode of expression.

Laurie L. Patton practices comparative philosophy crossing boundaries both of cultures as well as time-periods, using the most contemporary “philosophy of instruments” (Daniel Rothbart) to interpret the hymns to weapons one finds in one of the most ancient mystical poems—the *Rg Veda*—in the history of human literature. “The Bowstring is Like a Woman Humming: The Vedic Hymn to the Weapons and the Transformative Properties of Tools” straddles in a most creative way two newer branches of philosophy, namely the philosophy of literature and the emerging field of philosophy of technology. The question might sound rather specific, but it is straightforward: What kind of practice is the blessing of weapons and what might it say about culture? If one expands one’s vision from weapons to tools, “from spears to computer algorithms” (Patton’s example), the question loses some of its specificity and the general philosophical implications become manifest. Tools, far from being “mere” instruments, so Patton argues (with Rothbart), may constitutively change our understanding of our own agency and help develop our capacity to act in the world. Patton’s chapter, in this regard not unlike Tilleman’s, also simultaneously deploys and fuses the methods of philology and philosophy, while keeping an ear for the poetic qualities of language.

The practice of reading culturally “other” texts may share deeper problems with the universal human practice of reading other’s feelings. Without presupposing the thick metaphysical claim that people are texts, Arindam Chakrabarti raises the question “How Do We Read Others’ Feelings? Strawson and Zhuangzi Speak to Dharmakīrti, Ratnakīrti and Abhinavagupta.” We humans cannot live without forming criss-crossing groups of “we” which require us to know or at least act as if we know what



another conscious being is feeling. Yet, philosophers in European, Indian, and Chinese traditions have been skeptical about the very possibility of knowing other minds. Using insights from Zhuangzi's brief but exemplary disputation with Hui Shi on his alleged knowledge of the happiness of the fish swimming in a river, and the debate between two Buddhist epistemologists, Dharmakīrti and Ratnakīrti, who prove and disprove the existence of other mind-streams, Chakrabarti makes these Asian engagements with the problem of other minds speak to the contemporary question of how we read others' minds. Apart from the complex and deep ideas of Abhinavagupta, an eleventh-century philosopher of the Kashmir Shaiva Recognition school, the arguments proffered by the late-twentieth-century Oxford philosopher P. F. Strawson and his student, the Indian philosopher R. C. Gandhi on the close connection between our self-awareness and our capacity to address and access other persons are deployed to suggest a theory of direct perceptual empathy that underlies the very possibility of dialogue.

In his "The Geography of Perception: Japanese Philosophy in the External World," Masato Ishida delves into the depths of an enactive realist theory of perception. Japanese philosophy in Ishida's text is articulated on the one hand directly through the voices of Dōgen and the twentieth-century philosophers Watsuji Tetsurō, Nishida Kitarō, and Ōmori Shōzō. On the other hand, in a formidable series of pertinent mini-comparisons with positions held by "Western" philosophers—some comparisons brought up by Ishida himself, others invoked by the Japanese philosophers—the articulation becomes further refined and increasingly appropriated. The mini-comparisons run the gamut of Western philosophy, stretching across Hume, Fichte, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, but also including classical American philosophy, French phenomenology, contemporary analytic philosophy, and even ecological psychology. In one paragraph, Ishida (like Chakrabarti) even finds pleasure and incitement in the Zhuangzi-Huizi exchange about the happiness of fish. That the impressiveness of this scope of philosophical positions and traditions does not slide into superficial mishmash is ensured by the pertinence of each mini-comparison at a clearly defined juncture of a no-less clearly structured argument. Beyond all comparison and juxtaposition of Japanese and Western philosophers, Ishida advances an argument that is neither a Japanese argument nor an argument set against Western philosophy, but an argument about (or rather a philosophy of) visual perception that proves to be embodied in a complex geography of another kind, namely that any perceptual system that responds to visual properties is at least potentially an *eye*.

When in doubt about the truth of a judgment, report or belief, common people get a second opinion, or check whether many experts agree with it or not. Yet, Socrates laughed at the idea that truth should be determined by majority opinion, when in the *Theaetetus* someone suggested that whether currently we are dreaming or awake could be decided by intersubjective corroboration. Of course Plato disliked democracy, and perhaps in case of dream-reality distinction, the majority principle has little epistemic value, but in many, especially normative and political matters, the authority of the opinion of a large number of people cannot be ignored especially in contemporary democratic societies. In his chapter "Authority: Of German Rhinos and Chinese Tigers," Ralph Weber raises the question "What is authority?" from three nonnormative angles, that is, the logic of authority (Bocheński), its phenomenology (Kojève), and its

conceptual history (Eschenburg). These accounts are then expanded and complicated by way of two anecdotes. The first anecdote is an early encounter between Wittgenstein and Russell, which is read in the context of Miranda Fricker's recent discussion on epistemic injustice in order to reflect on epistemic authority in ethical and political terms. The second anecdote is reported in the early Chinese classic *Han Feizi* and helps bring into focus a sort of authority which turns on number and which plays—so Weber argues—a fundamental role in understanding what is normatively at stake when theorizing democracy. Weber's chapter offers a fusion between two styles or methods of doing philosophy, conceptual analysis, and anecdotal or narrative phenomenology, between several branches of philosophy, namely epistemology, logic, ethics and political philosophy, and between some few elements taken from Chinese philosophy and a huge junk of modern European philosophy. Zooming in on the latter would of course bring to light quite another fusion, as German, French, and English philosophical traditions are made to speak to the question of authority generally and to the discourse in contemporary political philosophy specifically, something all too readily subsumed under that pernicious label "European."

Weber's chapter works as a bridge between the broadly epistemological part of our anthology to the broadly political and final part, which consists of two chapters by Sari Nusseibeh and Sor-hoon Tan. Reviewing different approaches to the definition of justice, Nusseibeh argues in his "To Justice with Love" in favor of viewing the natural human instinct of love (for the other) as constituting not only the cornerstone of a community factually, but also of the arrangement of a best human order normatively. Nusseibeh's fusion relates the famous concept of *asabiyyah* (compassion or affection) extracted from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* with the liberal-communitarian debate and particularly with John Rawls's theory of justice. Here, hence, we witness no encompassing reference to the Arabian or Islamic philosophical tradition, but to a careful and well-dissected concept, which is then woven into modern (distributive and social) justice theory with its dominant focus on rationality. Pitting love against modern justice theory is not to contest a minor detail in the Rawlsian account; it means to put the entire project on a new footing. But Nusseibeh still works with and through Rawls when he finally comes to propose an approach based on two principles, an *overlapping* principle delineating individuals' wants, and a (reformulated) *difference* principle delineating limits of wants. The upshot of this approach is equality as a primary individual want, rather than a secondary function between different individuals' wants: "the 'primariness' of the equality want is finally interpreted in terms of the love instinct." Finally, compared with all other chapters, Nusseibeh's is probably offering the most concentrated attempt at a fusion between philosophical thought, pressing contemporary political problems and a just system of world order. It is hence no surprise that in his text there is hardly any talk of cultures, but the focus is consequentially set on societies.

The last chapter is written by Sor-hoon Tan. Her "Justice and Social Change" takes yet a different route than all the other chapters. It begins with a discussion of contemporary efforts at reconstructing an account of Confucian justice culminating in a comparison between Mencian and Confucian positions, on the one, and Aristotle, on the other side, as found in the contemporary research literature. What is the point of such comparison? That is the starting and perhaps startling question, to which

Tan adds some interesting second-level thoughts on the purpose of comparative philosophy. Still, in her discussion of justice and social change, she of course also engages in manifold comparisons and her chapter comes to fuse Mencius and Harry Frankfurt (“Mencius would certainly agree with Harry Frankfurt that . . .”), Confucian meritocracy (to each according to his ability?) with the phrase “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” (nowadays most remembered for Karl Marx), but also Aristotle and Marx on the link between justice and law, and so on. Tan (not unlike Nusseibeh) aims at the reconstruction or development of a philosophy that could impact contemporary societies and their problems. She does so from a decidedly pragmatic/pragmatist standpoint—as well as from a decidedly Confucian standpoint. For this matter, Tan’s chapter is unique in this collection. Although fusion philosophy is far from claiming some neutral ground or a view from nowhere, it is adamant about that the resulting philosophical argument should be standing on its own, that is, be the argument of the fusion philosopher. Tan reminds us that that fusion philosopher might still be motivated by a self-understanding of belonging to a tradition, even if and no less if positions from within that tradition are woven into the philosophical argument. Is such an argument still the fusion philosopher’s argument or rather the tradition’s perspective on a given problem? Does the goal of developing one’s tradition (by offering, in Tan’s case, a needs-based Confucian conception of justice) square with the goals of fusion philosophy and its insistence on an argument that can stand on its own? It probably depends on what is meant by “standing on its own.” The worry of fusion philosophy is that an argument from authority might be camouflaged as a philosophical argument. But “standing on its own” might of course also mean and presuppose a self-conscious and self-critical awareness of one’s hermeneutical standpoint, one’s position in time and place, and even (but perhaps not necessarily) one’s belonging to an identifiable tradition.

Recommending fusion philosophy goes hand in hand with an understanding of texts as eclectic attempts directed at forming philosophical arguments that can stand independently of the sources they draw on. Looking at the results of fusion philosophy from the perspective of how the fusions have been conducted brings up a set of (self-) critical questions. Are the fusions well done? What frictions and tensions have been ignored or leveled out for the sake of fusion? Could these same frictions and tensions be further exploited to add more depth and sophistication to the philosophical argument? One might also reflect on fusion philosophy from the perspective of what has been fused with what. Fusion seems to imply the tearing down of borders, but the philosophical gain comes from initially assuming the validity of these borders. If a text elegantly fuses Aristotelian-Thomistic scholastic philosophy and the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, there seems to be posited at some level a claim that Aristotelian Thomism and Nishida Kitarō form or are part of two different philosophical traditions, that “philosophical traditions” is a useful *tertium comparationis*, that a border runs between the *comparanda* (while the eventual fusion posits the further claim that they speak about the same subject matter that the fusion philosopher is interested in and hence cannot be so different as to be incommensurable or even incomparable). From this point of view, a focus on the fusions undertaken in a text might also serve to highlight assumptions about pre-fused entities and the set of conventionally or

methodologically established borders separating philosophical traditions. How persuasive are these borders and the pre-fused entities, both as juxtaposed against each other as well as each internally? What if Nishida Kitarō has studied scholastic philosophy and here and there might have come to form his own views against the views he found in Aristotelian Thomism? Would that sort of entanglement crucially undermine the effort at fusion philosophy and the borders that it (artificially) erects and eventually overcomes? Or would it inversely rather corroborate the possibility of fusion and add further credibility to the approach?

### Concluding hopes and warnings: Futures of fusion thinking

In his major work *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Jay Garfield goes beyond comparison.<sup>36</sup> Whether it was predominantly a history of knowledge-looting, or of conversion in the name of civilization or of systematic erasure of non-European intellectual traditions by means of deletion and distortion of indigenous cultural memories, the history of colonialism and its dream of Europeanization of the globe, has changed the global research-imperative in the Humanities. Under and immediately after colonialism, comparison has been done, somewhat anthropologically, merely for the sake of understanding other cultures or for the sake of finding “fascinating” resemblances and disanalogies. Jay Garfield’s comments in this context especially merit our attention. Garfield himself has had, as it were, three successive intellectual careers: first as a Sellarsian analytical philosopher of mind, language, and knowledge, then as a diligent English translator from Tibetan Buddhist philosophical texts, and finally as a comparative philosopher of confessedly Madhyamika persuasion. In one of his chapters, he traces the development of Western idealism, from Berkeley, through Kant, to Schopenhauer, but through the Cittamātrā lens of Vasubandhu, a Yogacara Buddhist subjective idealist from the fifth century. At the end of this Sanskrit/Buddhist critique of modern Western idealisms, he expresses the hope that this has been an example of comparative philosophy “done right.”<sup>37</sup> This “rightness” is what we allude to when we talk about global research imperative. What makes it “right” *philosophically* is not the scholarly accuracy of the history of ideas or the “scientific historical” correctness in discovering who said what first, or who influenced whom across the cultures, but “the motivation, the intended next step”—where one wants to go with the comparison.<sup>38</sup> A philosophical comparison is right-minded if it is aimed at doing good philosophy, ideally, better philosophy than could be done in either of the compared traditions when they are secluded from the other. This telos of cross-cultural history of ideas becomes clear in his following remarks:

Philosophy is, however, a live enterprise, both in the West and in the East, and if cross-cultural philosophy is to mean anything and to contribute anything to philosophical progress, it must do so with a view toward ideas and their development. . . . The task is to provide a common horizon that can be a background for genuine collaboration and conversation in a joint philosophical venture.

The possibilities for such a venture are enormous. The enlargement of the world's scholarly community and the range of texts and resources, on which it can draw portends a greater philosophical depth and rate of progress. But the condition of the possibility of such progress and of such a future is the establishment of genuine collegiality and conversation, as opposed to contact and the interrogation of informants. And the condition of the possibility of conversation is taking seriously the standpoint and hermeneutic method of one's interlocutor as well as his or her ideas themselves, and taking seriously one's own tradition not as a lens to view another's but also as specimen under one's colleagues' lens at particular moments in the dialectic. . . . But the danger of abuse is not an argument against careful use. I have urged here that such careful use is not only possible, but desirable. In part this is true because of the essential role of comparative philosophy as a rung in a ladder to be discarded by our descendants, whose interlocution it may some day be seen to have enabled.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, there are risks. Even if concealed or vicarious cultural supremacist undertones are avoided, there is the risk of an insatiably encyclopedic (Borges-like) erudition for ever postponing creative, original, or committed thinking. There is also the risk of culture-hopping with no interest in finding a correct and coherent answer to the deepest philosophical questions. Then there is the risk that one would get abetted into in a back-lash of nativist revivalism or intellectual identity-politics after encountering enduring non-reaction of the Western academic establishment which may dig its purist (insular) heel in response to the increasing popularity of fusion philosophy.

## Notes

- 1 "Weil der Mensch das verbindende Wesen ist, das immer trennen muß und ohne zu trennen nicht verbinden kann—darum müssen wir das bloße indifferente Dasein zweier Ufer erst geistig als eine Getrenntheit auffassen, um sie durch eine Brücke zu verbinden. Und ebenso ist der Mensch das Grenzwesen, das keine Grenze hat." See Georg Simmel, "Brücke und Tür" (1909), translated in: David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds), *Simmel on Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 174.
- 2 Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), p. 17.
- 3 Bhoja, *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa of Bhojaraja* (1–25, 26–36 Prakasa; Vol. I & II), ed. Rewa Prasad Dwivedi, New Delhi: IGNC and Varanasi: Kalidasa Sansthan, 2007.
- 4 Bhoja, *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa of Bhojaraja*, Vol II, p. 1202.
- 5 Archie Bahm, *Comparative Philosophy: Western, Indian and Chinese Philosophies Compared*, revised edition (Albuquerque: World Books, 1995), p. 25.
- 6 See, for some examples: *Society for Asian & Comparative Philosophy* (est. 1967: <http://www.sacpweb.org/>), *Wiener Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Philosophie* (WiGiP, est. 1994: <http://www.wigip.org>), *Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Philosophie* (GiP, est. 1992: <http://www.int-gip.de>), *Académie du Midi* (est. 1988: <http://www.uni-trier.de/index.php?id=32709&L=2>), *International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy* (ISCWP, est. 2002: <http://www.iscwp.org>), *The Columbia*

- Society for Comparative Philosophy* (CSCP, est. 2006: <http://www.cbs.columbia.edu/cscp/>), *Simplegadi: rivista di filosofia interculturale* (est. 1996, ceased its activities in 2009).
- 7 The most successful in terms of output has been the one on *Chinese Philosophy and Culture* (and its explicit component of work in comparative East-West philosophy) at State University of New York Press. Among German-speaking publishing houses, Verlag Karl Alber and its series *Welten der Philosophie* has gained much prominence since its inception in 2009.
  - 8 The most prestigious journals in the field are *Philosophy East and West* (est. 1951), *polylog: Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren* (est. 1998), *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* (est. 2001), *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* (est. 2009), *Comparative Philosophy* (est. 2010), and *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies* (est. 2014). Journals with an area of focus but featuring many articles on comparative philosophy are *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (est. 1970), *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (est. 1973), *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East* (est. 1991), and *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* (est. 2006). Articles on comparative philosophy are, of course, also occasionally found in general journals of philosophy, such as *International Philosophical Quarterly* (est. 1961) or *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (est. 1976).
  - 9 Ronnie Littlejohn, "Comparative Philosophy," <http://www.iep.utm.edu/comparat/> (accessed December 27, 2014).
  - 10 Robert E. Allinson, "The Myth of Comparative Philosophy or the Comparative Philosophy Malgré Lui," in *Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytical Philosophical Traditions*, ed. Bo Mou (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), pp. 269–92; Dunhua Zhao (ed.), *Dialogue of Philosophies, Religions and Civilizations in the Era of Globalization* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007).
  - 11 Littlejohn, "Comparative Philosophy."
  - 12 David Wong, "Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/> (accessed December 27, 2014).
  - 13 P. T. Raju, *Introduction to Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), p. vii.
  - 14 K. Tanaka, "Davidson and Chinese Conceptual Scheme," in *Davidson's Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement*, ed. Bo Mou (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 55.
  - 15 See also T. Itzutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Stephen C. Angle, "The Minimal Definition and Methodology of Comparative Philosophy: A Report from a Conference," *Comparative Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2010), pp. 106–10; Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Geeta Ramana and James Maffie, "Introducing Confluence: A Thematic Essay," *Confluence* 1, no. 1 (2014), pp. 7–63.
  - 16 Tanaka, "Davidson and Chinese Conceptual Scheme", p. 55.
  - 17 William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, ed. William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 4.
  - 18 Allinson, "The Myth of Comparative Philosophy", p. 270.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 281. A similar sort of wrangling between admitting that all philosophy is comparative and carving out a realm for comparative philosophy as intercultural philosophy is visible in Raimundo Panikkar's meta-discussion of "comparative

- philosophy”: Raimundo Panikkar, “What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?,” in *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, ed. Gerry J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 116–36. See also: Ralph Weber, “Raimon Panikkar, and What ‘Philosophy’ is Comparative Philosophy Comparing,” *Cirpit Review*, no. 4 (2013), pp. 167–76.
- 20 J. F. Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism. A Critical Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Madras: University of Madras, 1961), p. 16.
  - 21 See Ralph Weber, “Comparative Philosophy and the Tertium: Comparing What with What, and in What Regard?,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (2014), pp. 151–71; Ralph Weber, “How to Compare?”—On the Methodological State of Comparative Philosophy,” *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 7 (2013), pp. 593–603.
  - 22 Charles Taylor writes: “There is a set of problems about comparison. These invariably arise for any group of people engaged in understanding a culture or religion which is not theirs. How does the home culture obtrude? Can we neutralize it altogether, and ought we to try? Or are we always engaged in some implicit, if not explicit, comparison when we try to understand another culture? If so, where do we get the language in which this can be non-distortively carried out? If it is just our home language, then the enterprise looks vitiated by ethnocentrism from the start.” See Charles Taylor, “Comparison, History, Truth,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 146–47.
  - 23 Bina Gupta and J. N. Mohanty, “General Introduction,” in *Philosophical Questions: East and West* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p. xii.
  - 24 Merle Johnson (ed.), *More Maxims of Mark*, privately published in November 1927. See: Mark Twain, *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches and Essays*, vol. 2, 1891–1910, edited by Louis J. Budd (New York: Library of America, 1992), p. 942.
  - 25 Alisdair MacIntyre, “Books in Review,” *Political Theory* 11, no. 4 (1983), p. 623.
  - 26 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), p. xv.
  - 27 Rorty, certainly not shy to use provocation whenever it served his purposes, later came to state some “hunches” that seem to contradict his earlier views: “My hunch is that our sense of where to connect up Indian and Western texts will change dramatically when and if people who have read quite a few of both begin to write books which are not clearly identifiable as belonging to any particular genre, and are not clearly identifiable as either Western or Eastern. . . . My hunch is that the best vehicle for such imaginative flights will be texts which are neither comparisons and contrasts between previously-delimited domains within traditions, nor comparisons between traditions as a whole, but works of brilliant bricolage.” Richard Rorty, “Letter 4: Richard Rorty to Anindita Balslev,” in *Cultural Otherness: A Correspondence with Richard Rorty*, 2nd edn., ed. Anindita Balslev (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 68–69. We would, of course, add that Rorty simply was ignorant of those people who were already writing the sort of “brilliant bricolages” he was expecting in the future.
  - 28 For a recent account amply showcasing the difficulty of coming up with a rough-and-ready notion of analytic philosophy, see Hans-Johann Glock, *What is Analytic Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
  - 29 We have responded to each of these arguments separately in some detail elsewhere, see Arindam Chakrabarti, “Rationality in Indian Thought,” in *A Companion to World Philosophies*, ed. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), pp. 259–78.

- 30 Stephen Phillips, "Counter Matilal's Bias: The Philosophically Respectable in Indian Spiritual Thought," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (1996), pp. 173–84.
- 31 Paul Bernier, "Dignāga on Reflexive Consciousness," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 1 (2015), pp. 125–56. The same issue has three other explicit engagements with the problems of comparing Chinese and European philosophies.
- 32 Abhinavagupta (*Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarsinī* 1/5/19).
- 33 John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 56–57.
- 34 See Amber Carpenter and Jonardon Ganeri, "Can You Seek the Answer to this Question?," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 4 (2010), pp. 571–94.
- 35 Steve Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 349.
- 36 Jay L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 37 Garfield, *Empty Words*, p. 168.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., pp. 168–69.

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