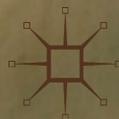


Comparative Theology Among Multiple Modernities

Cultivating Phenomenological Imagination

Paul S. Chung



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Paul S. Chung
Lutheran School of Theology
at Chicago, Chicago
IL USA

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FOREWORD

Although religious diversity in some form is an ancient phenomenon, sustained Christian reflection on its meaning and implications is, relatively speaking, a fairly recent enterprise. This of course is not to say that Christian theology has totally missed careful theological assessment of what it means to live in a world in which more than one faith allegiance is voicing its claims; just think of some leading Christian theologians' take on Islam and its challenge soon after the rise of the youngest Abrahamic faith. What I mean is this: for much too long a time, Christian theology had—or believed it had—the luxury to do its work without much or any consideration of other faiths' teachings and insights.

The situation has changed drastically during the second half of the last century. A flood of literature seeking to map out the location of the Christian Church and theology in the midst of a rapidly pluralizing world of living faiths has emerged. Often known under the somewhat elusive term “Christian theology of religions,” a highly productive and insightful body of reflection on the theological meaning of religions and the conditions and promises of a multi-faith world has come to light. As fruitful and necessary as that enterprise turned out to be, its liabilities are also obvious and well known. For me, among the most pressing limitations of such general and abstract thinking of religious diversity is just that: its *general and abstract nature*. You can only say so much on

world-embracing topics such as these: What is the relationship among three Abrahamic faiths? What are the similarities and differences between Abrahamic and Asiatic religions? And so forth.

To that lacuna speaks the second-generation approach among Christian theologians seeking a proper response to religious plurality, usually named “Christian comparative theology.” Gleaning from religious studies—an allegedly “neutral” analysis and investigation of specific features, beliefs, and rites of living faiths—as well as from the resources of Christian theology, including the theology of religions, this more recent paradigm seeks to tackle specific and limited “doctrinal” issues between two or more faiths. Similarly to Christian theology of religions, but differently from religious studies, Christian comparative theology is “confessional” by nature; the term confessional here does not mean some kind of dogmatic posture but rather a hospitable and inviting comparison of notes with the religious Other with full acknowledgment that the scholar approaches the task from the perspective of a specific religious commitment.

Why am I rehearsing this well-known and quite introductory recent history concerning Christian theology’s take on other living faiths? The reason is simply to help locate Paul Chung’s *Comparative Theology among Multiple Modernities: Cultivating Phenomenological Imagination*. So, what is this fine essay’s place in the matrix of emerging and developing theological reflection on religious diversity?

Without doubt, Paul’s fine and creative work represents the best of the Christian theology of religions tradition. Moreover, it does so in a way that goes beyond what most counterparts in the field are doing. He puts the theology of Karl Barth—one of the most widely used twentieth-century theologians (who himself, regretfully, was only very thinly aware of the urgency of religious diversity)—and his interlocutors in a critical dialogue on several fronts. First, the philosophical–theological dialogue is extended to some of the brightest Christian comparative theologians working under the able leadership of the Jesuit Francis X. Clooney and others. Second, among the diverse philosophically driven resources, phenomenological approaches to religion and worldviews are introduced as well as a perceptive analysis of and critique of “multiple modernities.” Third—and here we are moving to the center of Christian comparative theology—Dr. Chung astonishingly is also able to bring to the dialogical and explorative task some key Buddhist and Confucian insights and

teachings relevant to the Christian doctrine. In this respect, he continues a long-term personal trajectory in the area of comparative Christian–Buddhist and Christian–Confucian studies.

So here we have this rich and inviting theological table set for the readers. I imagine that both experts in world religions, familiar with Christian theology and philosophy, and theologians with some acquaintance with religions can equally well be guided and challenged with this bold proposal. As any constructive work worth its salt, this ambitious monograph hardly settles these big issues, nor does it wish to. What it does is to help interested fellow thinkers to appreciate new connections between ideas usually not brought together, to consider fresh perspectives on the questions of religious diversity, and—simply put—to be fed by “solid” theological–philosophical–religious nutrition!

Palm Springs, CA, USA
Lenten Season of 2017

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

PREFACE

Comparative Theology among Multiple Modernities marks a different stage of my intellectual journey. Rather than taking on epistemological rupture, it can be understood as a mature stage of deepening my theological reasoning and comparative study of religions in a phenomenological frame of reference, as involved in the sociological study of religion. In my earlier book *Martin Luther and Buddhism* (2002), I dedicated the work to Helmut Gollwitzer, who is the theological father for my intellectual journey. An association of Gollwitzer, one of the most important Barth scholars, with a comparative study of religion, seems out of joint at face value, but I am much indebted to his theological thinking and critical social theory in my study of Karl Barth and religious discourse. In a move from *Martin Luther and Buddhism* toward the present project of comparative theology, I endeavor to phenomenologically renew and develop Barthian theology of the word of God. A notion of solidarity and blamage effect, which is developed in the sociological study of religion, is much indebted to Gollwitzer's heuristic reconstruction of historical, materialist inquiry of religion and society.

Through phenomenological construal of religion and culture, I have come to position myself to elaborate comparative theology with emphasis on a religious, prophetic ethic, and immanent critique for solidarity and emancipation. My reading together of Barth and Levinas is inspired

by F.W. Marquardt, a successor of Helmut Gollwitzer and the exponent of theological audacity in the prophetic tradition of Karl Barth.

Furthermore, this study wants to make a contribution to the correlation of comparative theology with postcolonial theory, in which a critical, emancipatory theory is undertaken in the problematization of an Orientalist mode of representation in an archeological analysis of the interplay of knowledge systems with power relations.

My commitment to critical theory and sociology of religion, especially, Weber, Geertz, and Foucault, is articulated and developed in this volume for multiple modernities imbued with the postcolonial notion of trans-modernity. A critical model of comparative theology attempts to develop a regime of religious value rationality, especially for a religious inspired prophetic ethic in the study of religions.

Comparative theology in the context of multiple modernities champions a hope of life and restorative justice vitiated under the hegemony of the racially injustice society of late capitalism. Shared with Benjamin's remembrance of the innocent victim, this book attempts to elaborate the critical, emancipatory horizon of religious discourse and comparative theology in contrast to the blamage effect, as obviously seen in religious fanaticism and violence in our midst. Along with Max Horkheimer and Karl Barth, the existence of a theologian in the experience of despair and hopelessness is still characterized as a longing for the new meaning of life, as driven in a desire for the completely Other, that is, in a phenomenological, theological search of *totaliter aliter*.

I am in gratitude with Prof. Craig L. Nesson who has helped me greatly to cut through moments of depression and frustration. I give my gratitude to Prof. Andreas Pangritz at the University of Bonn who provides substantial comments on the chapter on Barth, Levinas, and comparative theology. Professors Francis X. Clooney, S.J., and Prof. George Hunsinger must be thanked for their valuable exchange of Barth's relational theology and the comparative theology. My gratitude extends to Peter Watters, who has done the meticulous editorial work and improved on limitations of my study through substantial critique and comments. I appreciate that Philip Getz, editor at Palgrave Macmillan, has accepted this writing project for publication.

Hercules, CA, USA
Easter 2017

Paul S. Chung

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Introduction: Comparative Theologies and Multiple Modernities

A sociological study of comparative religion is by and large an expression used to refer to the study of religious rationality and ethics. Any general view or theory of religious ethos and rationality must take into account the similarities and dissimilarities between specific religious ethical traditions, and hence it is dependent on comparative inquiry. By correlating interreligious dialogue (practical engagement) with comparative, religious scholarship (theoretical foundation and elaboration), comparative theory bestows further theoretical method and clarification for ethical praxis in the sociological study of religion. Comparative theology is much needed in this context with respect to interreligious dialogue as a prophetic mission and the sociological study of religion.

To what extent does comparative theology effectively relate to the postcolonial discourse of God's mission as prophetic dialogue? If comparative theology is located in dialogue with the other religion, interreligious learning is appropriate in shaping a notion of Christian mission anew in this comparative context. America has become the most religiously diverse country in the world and becomes the background and context for doing theology comparatively in regard to the conflict of culture, as well as a "marbling of civilization and peoples."¹ The responsibility of the church finds its import in doing theology comparatively.

In what follows, it is necessary to discuss Christian identity in religious diversities and postcolonial discourse of God's mission with respect to the comparative study of religion. I proceed to deal with the comparative study in the context of multiple modernities and interreligious learning,

examining “analogical” comparative theology (Tracy) and “commentarial” comparative theology (Clooney).²

Tracy and Clooney are primarily chosen as dialogue partners for the study of comparative theology because their respective theoretical approach (analogical or commentarial) stands in affinity with my phenomenological, hermeneutical inquiry of critical comparative theology in the sociological study of religion. To begin with, I take postcolonial discourse of God’s mission and comparative study as the point of departure.

POSTCOLONIAL GOD’S MISSION AND COMPARATIVE STUDY

We observe that the theological discourse of God’s mission takes on a postcolonial character and reorientation in the aftermath of colonial dominion and Orientalism. In the colonial era, civilizing mission was practiced as the imposition of the Western missionary agenda and value upon indigenous cultures and peoples. The cultural other is assumed as *tabula rasa* and its uniqueness and value as being the cultural other are violated under the colonial system of dominion. The mission deployed economic, political, religious, and intellectual alliances between the colonizer and the colonized for the service of the former.³ Comparative study of religions in this context has been much chided for its apologetic strategy and the dominating attempt to tailor other cultural, religious traditions for satisfying the interest of Christian religion in representation of other religions.

Against this trend, today, a discourse of God’s mission in the postcolonial context and World Christianity reinforces a project of emancipation from colonizing the mind and provincializing European cultural hegemony. It also entails an indigenous attempt at expressing the biblical narrative and its message in the angle of inculturation. This perspective undergirds a heuristic concept of God’s mission in the project of translation, by relocating the discourse of God’s mission in the comparative study of religion and promoting solidarity with those on the margins; this postcolonial project entails emancipation from Western dominion and Orientalism toward transcending the limitation and the malaise of modernity.

I assume that missional theology is not merely informed by systematic theology or confessional theology, but rather brings its unique experience of people of other cultures back to the theoretical presupposition and belief system of academic theology. Missional theology is of comparative, constructive character because of its dialogue, learning, and involvement in the lifeworld of people of other cultures. Mission as

constructive theology holds its specific domain of local hermeneutics, as it concerns cultural practices and their symbolic meaning.⁴

If one can agree with Clifford Geertz that “culture is public, because meaning is,”⁵ a theological discourse of God’s mission needs to be discussed in the cultural realm, and it should incorporate the themes and method of comparative theology into its constructive frame of reference. Comparative theology helps missional theology better understand people of other cultures and embody the narrative of the biblical message in different religious contexts, with cultural sensitivity and respect. Comparative theology holds a distinctive vantage point in the study of religion, as conversed with the sociology of religion and the commentarial reading practice of religious texts, both in the home tradition and the other tradition. This comparative strategy facilitates systematic theology to adopt a constructive move, while reinforcing missional theology to be more faithful to the gospel of God’s mission in engagement with people of other cultures and religions in the reconciled world.

As Clooney notices, comparative theology has a long history of missionary reflection of non-Christian religions in Western Jesuit scholars in India and China. Although in a moderate critique of older comparative theology, Clooney’s comparative theology holds missional relevance since the missional task is undertaken in the literal and figurative inscription of the world into the faith community, founded upon the Word of God. This effort of evangelization cannot be decoupled from comparative theology.⁶ Given this, interreligious dialogue as prophetic mission becomes an indispensable part for undergirding comparative theology in a more viable and practical manner.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF RELIGION AND MULTIPLE MODERNITIES

A dialogue with people of other religions and cultures is inevitable to transcend the conflict, violence, and scapegoating of the other ensuing in the aftermath of colonialism. The comparative study of religion is undertaken in ways of envisioning non-violence and social justice for our own civilization. In Robert Bellah’s study of religion in the Axial Age, we see that the prophetic vision (Isaiah 65: 17–19, 21–22, 26) is elucidated in connection with Confucianism.⁷ His study marks an important achievement in featuring the reality of multiple modernities in the comparative study of religion in the context of axial ages. It refers to the civilizations

emerged in ancient Israel, in ancient Greek, in Christian settings, partially in Zoroastrian Iran, in China's early imperial period, in Hindu and Buddhist South and Southeast Asia, and in the Muslim world.⁸

A notion of multiple modernities contends that the classical view on modernity is not applicable to all modernizing societies. The European model is only one path to modernity, not the authentic one replacing and representing other non-Western ways. This refers to the notion of "multiple modernities."⁹ Modernity is more complicated, diverse, and even culture-specific. Insofar as every "modern" society goes through its own "modernity," the end result is very diverse and culture-specific, making the Western term "modernity," as such, insipid and inadequate.

As a rule, modernity characterizes socio-structural innovations and historical change in terms of functional differentiation occurring in the realms of economics, politics, and legal systems as well as communities and social systems; it had begun in Old Europe and throughout history. Its process of modernization refers to an evolutionary direction and scale reaching to modern and cultural-societal innovation. A global world system has emerged from evolutionary universals in which the Western model of modernity, along with its expansion, would prevail all over the world.

Against this classical theory of modernity and modernization, however, the notion of multiple modernities calls into question such basic assumptions of the success of Western modernization, in which social structure has been shifted from medieval European civilization, politics, and economics to the modern society, especially after the French revolution. In fact, the notion of multiple modernities entails a multi-dimensional, theoretical description of structural evolution since global modernity is not derived from the West as a single pattern. A study of multiple modernities reveals a difficulty to accept the Western model of modernity as the homogenizing and hegemonic concept for the non-West to follow and emulate.¹⁰

What is crucial in the study of multiple modernities is to analyze the relationship between cultural agency (creativity) and social structure in the socio-structural evolution, while vetting interweaved components of communication, interaction, and creativity. Social change is progressed by the interweaving complexity between the cultural and social structural dimensions in a concrete context and situation. The conflict and potentialities of social change and reconstruction differ and remain indeterminate to open spaces, or the degree of the particular development within societies

and civilizations.¹¹ This perspective entails a critique of the classical theory of modernity and modernization which does not describe a plurality of societal structures. Structural change continuously modifies belief systems and their implementation in a process of translation and social interaction. There are many modernities.¹²

Accordingly, axial civilizations and modernity can be re-systematized for multiple axial civilizations and multiple modernities. In distinction from pre-axial civilizations, the ancient Israelite prophets and priests, Greek philosophers, the Hindu Brahmins, and Chinese literati and their precursors assumed the role of autonomous intellectuals in social structural evolution, disseminating their religious visions. Axial civilizations are arenas for analysis in the relationship between cultural, religious civilizational vision and institutional formation in dealing with the interweaving of cultural dimensions with socio-structural construction.¹³

The various forms of modernities were established in the early twentieth century through imperialism and colonialism in Asia, Middle Eastern countries, and finally Africa. In the dynamics of a continual diversification of multiple modernities, it is hard to accept the Western-centric assumption of the “end of history” or the “clash of civilizations,”¹⁴ that holds a Eurocentric standpoint. In contrast, as Eisenstadt writes, “multiple interpretations of modernity” ... attempts at “‘de-Westernization,’ depriving the West of its monopoly on modernity.”¹⁵

As a matter of fact, “modernity does not dissolve traditions, but rather that they serve as resources for modernity’s perpetual constitution and reconstitution.” Thus, “various cultures, when they are undergoing modernization, develop distinctive reaction patterns, conceptions of the good, and institutions. Whereas the first form of modernity emerged in Europe, the North and Latin American experiences are not fragments of the Old World, but rather the crystallization of a new civilization.”¹⁶

Multiple modernities, in contrast to the general end of modernity, emerge when non-Western people engage their own hybrid modernity. Modernity is an incomplete project and takes shape in multiple manners at every national or cultural site in terms of creative adaption and appropriation in their own terms and fashions.¹⁷

Furthermore, Charles Taylor argues that modernity is irresistible because “modernity is like a wave, flowing over and engulfing one traditional culture after another.” “A successful transition involves a people finding resources in their traditional culture to take on the new practices. In this sense modernity is not a single wave. It would be better to speak

of alternative modernities ... What they are looking for is a creative adaptation, drawing on the cultural resources of their tradition ... [which] by definition has to be different from culture to culture.”¹⁸

At this juncture, I use multiple modernities as exchangeable with alternative modernities, but the former would be more relevant to the postcolonial character in its deconstructive endeavor as regard to the Western hegemonic form of modernity; it can be seen as an attempt to rethink and renew modernity from the standpoint of and on behalf of the margins.¹⁹ This perspective seeks to break through a pathology of an acultural form of Western modernity, in which Weber unilaterally analyzes modernization in the process of the disenchantment of the world and results in colonization and the iron cage of late modernity.

Thus, alternative modernities in Taylor’s account refer to cultural theory of modernity juxtaposed with acultural modernity. For him, even though modernity may have started in the West, all cultures converge into the form one after another. Substantially, the same changes are comprehended partly in the loss of traditional beliefs which are undermined in the increasing of rationality.²⁰

The project of multiple or alternative modernities may pave the way to religiously inspired ethics of solidarity in the global project of solidarity and emancipation in terms of the many stories and voices of resistance, innocent victims, and hope; it is undertaken on behalf of trans-modernity breaking through the pathology of societal modernization captive to the reification of late capitalism.

A critical comparative theology sought after in this context entails a comparative, socio-historical study of religion and society, while challenging an Oriental representational interpretation of non-Western religions and their religious texts. A religious tradition, and also every human life, is more complex than one root metaphor: “Many metaphors are necessary and actually exist in a moral lexicon, while none alone exhausts the meaning of life and its worth.”²¹ This comparative religious perspective improves on the inadequacy and poverty of individualist ethics, which is caused by the modern banishment of religious sources from moral thinking.

A project of multiple modernities is an important social critical background for giving an impetus to comparative theology, in which the sociological study of religion offers critical inquiry, conceptual clarity, and framework. It helps the participants of interreligious dialogue to deepen and enhance their practical effectiveness and public relevance. In an

approach to comparative theology, sociological inquiry can be enriched in the hermeneutical-dialogical approach, which uses intercultural moral theorizing and praxis involving the quest for the cross-cultural understanding and the fusion of diverse moral and religious horizons.²²

More than that, a narrative approach to the comparative study of religion undertakes comparative storytelling and spirituality. Ethical insights occur and are communicated within religious traditions through story and ritual. For example, Gandhi's ethical views were shaped not only by his own Hinduism but by Tolstoy's writings on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and King's ethical views were deeply shaped by Gandhi's insights into the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita. Narrative approach advocates passing over into the religions and cultures of others in order to finally come back with new insight into one's own. Gandhi is a great example of narrative, comparative religious ethics.²³ Narrative approach is convinced of the position in which "one may drink out of the same great rivers with others, but one need not use the same cup."²⁴ Nonetheless, a sociological comparatist complements: "It is not necessary to be Caesar in order to understand Caesar."²⁵

"ANALOGICAL" COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

In the philosophical, theological context, David Tracy presents an important approach to the comparative study of religion. His theology is undertaken in ways of correlating theology with philosophical reflection. His method is taken in a mutually revisionist way of the beliefs, values, and faith of an authentic secularity, while at the same time advancing a revisionist understanding of an authentic Christianity.²⁶ For the study of religion, Tracy advances hermeneutical inquiry into religious and moral reasoning in diverse religious contexts. Analogical language and negative dialectic can serve as the principal candidates in service to comparative theology and interreligious study. Comparative theology in this regard can be characterized as a philosophical, theological reflection upon meanings, which are present in common to human experience, religion, and language.

He is aware that the sociological inquiry of religion (Weber-Durkheim-Geertz) is quite different from phenomenological, experiential inquiry (Schleiermacher-Otto-Tillich). In the present pluralist situation, there is no need to attempt a single all-encompassing definition of religion.²⁷ Tracy seeks to present a limit-language or a

limit-experience in dealing with religious language, experience, and dimension. Religion implies a perspective which expresses a dominating interest in features of human existence, as articulated in the human desire for liberation and authentic existence. Such features can be analyzed as both expressive of certain limits to our ordinary experience and disclosing of certain fundamental structures of our existence beyond that ordinary experience (limit of or ground to our ordinary ways).²⁸

Tracy maintains fidelity to both the intensity of negative dialectics and the similarities-indifference and order in all reality. His correlational method is framed in a revised and critical sense, undertaking theology as a mutually critical dialogue in correlation between the Christian message and other religious cultural experiences and practices. In a critical criterion correlating Christian symbols with other religious symbols, it describes a phenomenology of the religious dimension, which is present in everyday experience and language.²⁹

Tracy demonstrates that the final or ultimate horizon is precisely a religious one in light of the radical mystery of divinity as the source of limit-question and experience. In his account, hermeneutical theory has merit in taking the historical context and the lifeworld of religious texts with full seriousness. We are all affected and shaped by the effects of history, the influence of that tradition, and religious texts in our language. Being faithful to the tradition would not be feasible in an attitude of merely repeating its *tradita*. Rather, it demands a critical attitude in engaging and investigating its tradition and history.³⁰ His comparative theology allows for a historical-critical method in the reconstruction of the basic texts of one's religious self-understanding.³¹

In the reinterpretation of religious symbols, comparative theology faces a reality of religious pluralism and is in need of addressing religious pluralism on theological grounds through the use of hermeneutics of retrieval, suspicion, and critique. Comparative theology is undertaken as a theological discipline within the history of religions.

For Tracy, the ultimate incomprehensibility of divine reality provides the focal meaning for developing analogical comparative theology. Concerning the dialectics between "limit-to" language and "limit-of" language, he argues that any religion in a position of power demonstrates that religious movements are open and vulnerable to corruption. It is significant to take the ethical charges seriously in the critique of the obscurantisms, exclusivism, and moral fanaticism in the history of religion. Analogical comparative theology summons a paradigm shift from

self-centeredness to liberating reality-centeredness, upholding ethical-political criteria in a pluralistic attitude.

However, in analogical imagination, his comparative theology tends to fall into radical relativism in his excessive emphasis upon the negative dialectic in view of the incomprehensibility of divine reality. The linguistic horizon of analogy is assimilated into negative dialectical language (*via negationis*). Analogies are produced by theologians involved in the dialectical relationship of participation and critique. Tracy's hermeneutics has not managed to elaborate the linguistic horizon of analogy in the expression of divine mystery in which truth is expressed in language. But he elevates the negative dialectic to control a language of analogy for emphasizing *dissimilarity* in relativizing all religious truth claims.³²

“COMMENTARIAL” COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY AND *HOMO LECTOR*

Similarly, but in his own distinguished manner, Francis Clooney proposes comparative theology which entails an aspect of “faith seeking understanding.” It is undertaken as a procedure in the normative, constructive, and revisionist framework for the benefit of all religious believers. The confessional stance in distinction from the study of religion does not take its point of departure from a religiously neutral standpoint. But it takes an interest in the methods of comparison and the findings and results, which are based on the non-theological study of religion.³³

The interreligious learning facilitates the gaining, for the comparatist, of fresh theological insights for the home tradition,³⁴ such that it is a theology of interreligious learning in an in-depth study of the particularities of other religious traditions. Comparative theology seeks after learning across religious borders, in which the truth of the home tradition is disclosed in the light of the faith of other traditions.³⁵ This perspective characterizes Clooney's comparative theology as constructive theology that occurs after the comparative hermeneutic inquiry and result.

Given this, “faith seeking understanding” implies a comparative epistemology in the understanding of other religious traditions, in which divine mystery is present. Such epistemology clarifies and illuminates the faith of the home tradition. In a nutshell, understanding seeks faith for being open and humble to the divine reality in the otherness of the other.

For a proposal of comparative theology, comparison begins with the commentarial study of other religions, meticulously in reading and

understanding their sacred texts, which are combined with personal conversations with the practitioners of the religious traditions. Exposing the identity of the comparatist to the other, even invulnerability to its truth claim and transformative power, the comparatist comes back to the home tradition.

Comparative theology is a project of reading together (*collectio*) by intending a rethinking and rereading of every theological agenda, text, and belief system; it learns from and understands another tradition on its own terms, and it inscribes other religious texts within the home tradition.³⁶ Critical correlations are taken in recognition of similarity, while not ignoring difference. Both similarity and difference are significant factors for comparative theology to respect the alterity of the other and recognize its transformative power.³⁷

Paul Griffiths' notion of religious reading remains an undercurrent for Clooney's exegetical work. Religious reading establishes certain relations between readers and texts (at once attitudinal, cognitive, and moral), which imply an ontology, an epistemology, and an ethics. This distinctive set of relations between religious readers and their work is the first constituent in that "the work read is understood as a stable and vastly rich resources," "a treasure-house, an ocean, a mine."³⁸ The second constituent with equal importance is that the "capacity for retrieving the riches of the work by an act of reading;" it qualifies the reader as *homo lector* to substitute *homo sapiens* without loss, but with considerable gain.³⁹

Accordingly, Clooney establishes his position in terms of a *homo lector* that requires self-effacement before the text, patience, perseverance, and imagination. It is not a value-neutral position, but a humble practice seeking to reveal productive ways of thinking and changing the readers. As the reader is drawn into the world of text, even in engagement with the text of another religious tradition, this attitude remains crucial in face of the implications of the truth claims of religions.⁴⁰ Commentarial comparative theology in our religiously diverse context endeavors to hold value in mutual learning and keep in balance diversity and tradition, as well as openness and truth, bringing correlation between the home tradition and others; thus, the meaning of the home tradition is not decided without recourse to the others.⁴¹

This commentarial theology is a text-based discipline with a constructive character, first undertaken in the phenomenological suspension of crossing over to the sacred text of the other tradition and then coming

back to the home tradition, as deeply challenged by the encounter and learning of multiple religious and theological traditions. This comparative theology, which is allied with the inclusive position, does not abandon the starting point in faith and Christ and it reads the Advaita text, in ways that the Advaita text and its multiple literary riches and theological possibilities are all included in the position of Christian theological resources. It does not confuse the Advaita text with the Bible, for the Bible remains the privileged text, being formative of the inclusivist comparatist. This perspective entails a major revision of the theology of religions allied with the pluralist position: one religion is not accepted as the best of religions and salvation is mediated equally through many religions.⁴²

However, the Christian comparatist under the efficacy of the Christian tradition is operative in the study of other religious texts. Thus, *collectio* in juxtaposition with the non-Christian texts implies the creation of a new significance for the non-Christian texts and also a distortion of their original meanings. A recovery of new meanings can be undertaken for the Bible and the theological system.⁴³ A comparative reading of the *Summa Theologiae* after Vedanta must not create any changes in the Catholic doctrine, nor require the abandonment of its particular doctrines in any literal or constitutive sense. Even a revisionist interpretation of the particular doctrine cannot be expected because the comparatist reading “depends on the perdurance of what is said, read, taught, written in a tradition.”⁴⁴

Comparative theology in commentarial exegesis and inclusive position remains faithful to the traditional teaching of Catholic theology, while implying an enhancement and a distortion of the non-Christian texts for the Catholic theological system. If Christocentric soteriology is incommensurable with Advaita’s teaching of Brahman salvation, it is left for the practice of reading and rereading the text and patient deferral. But “change occurs through a traversal of the path of reading, teaching and doctrine, and not in a timeless conceptualization,”⁴⁵ in this practice of ongoing reading in light of the other traditions and its texts compared and juxtaposed.

However, although the incommensurability remains between the compared two traditions, would not it be more significant to hermeneutically retrieve the unproblematized discourse in the text toward the recognition of other faiths, rather than remaining incommensurable and incomparable? For instance, if Aquinas insists that our intellect knows God from creatures, in order to understand God, the intellect forms conceptions proportional to the perfections flowing from God to creatures. These

perfections “pre-exist in God, whereas in creatures they are received, divided and multiplied.”⁴⁶ If so, would not it be worth for a Catholic comparatist to contextualize and reinterpret this multiple abundance and manifestation of divine blessings in the other in a phenomenological-sociological context?

In my judgment, *collectio* does not exhaust the rich abundance of the textual world into the critical consciousness and position of the Christian comparatist, but includes a source of knowledge, solidarity, and emancipation within its own texts and commentarial traditions. We read the tradition in a critical-constructive manner in order to rewrite the present history by problematizing the present since history and tradition are culturally transmitted and socially constructed in language, religion, and everyday forms of life. In interacting with the compared tradition, a recovery of new meaning and change may occur in the process of hermeneutical conversation and fusion of horizons. This recovery of a new meaning and self-renewal should come into play as the locus of immanent critique, as it regards the tradition’s set of belief systems by debunking its interplay with material interests and power relations, in the historical course of religious development.

A NEW COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY AND MULTIPLE MODERNITIES

As previously examined, comparative theology in the project of Tracy (analogical) and Clooney (commentarial) is an important achievement in the area of constructive theology and theology of interreligious dialogue. Along with their achievements, I am more concerned with conceptualizing a critical comparative theology in the phenomenological study of religion, in which hermeneutical theory and sociological inquiry are explored and can be served for this purpose. For me, comparative theology is located within a systematic, constructive arena, yet entails its specific domain in the study of religions in history and society, as involved in the project of multiple modernities, imbued with practical intent to undergirding trans-modernity in the postcolonial context.

The social dimension of religion, its economic rationality, and its moral contribution are elucidated along with the practice of reading together and commentarial works. Faith in God in revelation, say, the Word of God, seeks understanding of its mysterious presence in other sacred texts, as we are involved in explicating religious, cultural

formation, economic ethos, and ethical contributions. In this critical fashion of comparative theology, I am concerned with developing the project of multiple modernities in terms of prophetic religious ethics for the global theory of emancipation, and in the problematization of the Western representational mode of Asian religious texts; in it the immanent critique seeks to transcend the malaise and vulnerability of modernity.

For the study of comparative theology and multiple modernities, a phenomenological inquiry scrutinizes the extent to which the *homo lector*, under historical effectiveness, is connected with the *homo socius* and *ethicus*; this dialectical inquiry can be undertaken in engagement with understanding ensembles of cultural texts through problematization, immanent critique, and recovery of meaning. Theological phenomenology further shapes and characterizes *homo socius* by *homo ethicus*, existing under of the illeity of divine *totaliter aliter*.

ORGANIZATION OF THEMES AND NEW ORIENTATION

For an organizational theme in each chapter and new orientation of comparative theology among multiple modernities, I make this chapter into a study of religion and society in terms of phenomenological inquiry. I shall ground and unfold a theoretical rationale for the necessity of phenomenological inquiry for the comparative study of religion and its practical relevance. Theological construal of phenomenology can be undertaken in scrutinizing the extent to which Barth and Levinas would be relevant to the phenomenology of culture in Clifford Geertz, Paul Ricoeur, and Michel Foucault. Then, we shall critically examine Tillich and Troeltsch in relevance for comparative theology, in terms of phenomenological inquiry and ontological hermeneutics.

For comparative theology and multiple modernities, Chap. 2 begins an interreligious reflection of the comparative theology of justification, in regard to Luther's teaching of grace of justification and Shinran's in Pure Land Buddhism. A comparative theology of justification makes an attempt to read together faith and grace in interreligious learning, and revive the socially engaged dimension of Luther and Shinran for religiously inspired ethics of solidarity and universal grace. A comparative theology of justification finds its critical and constructive import in self-examination, mutual respect, and solidarity in affinity, yet without

undermining incommensurability between Reformation theology and Pure Land teaching. In this phenomenological, sociological procedure, a comparative theology of justification is proposed as a theology of inter-religious solidarity in examination and renewal of Luther's theology.

Chapter 3 is a study of Barth's theological ideas of *totaliter aliter*, God's mission, and the postcolonial in the context of World Christianity. If comparative theology is defined in faith epistemology, it is significant to elucidate the phenomenology of God's mission and its religious discourse in church and world, to mediate its understanding of the church's mission (first naiveté) in connection with other theological foci. Then, we shall elaborate its religious discourse in a broader dimension in recognition of cultural diversity and religious pluralism, which is more relevant to the dialogue with the postcolonial voice in World Christianity. From Chaps. 4 to 7, I endeavor to critically reread Barth's relational theology by elaborating his "speech-act" theology through word and in otherness, in terms of analogical relationality, its irregular mode of thought, and analysis of his comparative study of religion. In this research, I seek to reinterpret his major theological insights into recognition of others, culture and religion, along with his prophetic political awareness on behalf of undergirding critical comparative theology and postcolonial trans-modernity.

For this task, Chap. 4 is a study of Barth's relational theology in terms of a critical exegesis and renewal of Trinitarian election and *analogia relationis*. It concerns Eberhard Jüngel's divine ontology ("God's being in becoming") by critically examining his critique of Helmut Gollwitzer's social critical theology of "God Is" as transforming reality. This critical exegesis, drawing upon Barth's social category of "God Is" and *analogia relationis*, cuts through limitations of Jüngel's divine ontology underlying the subsequent project of the revisionist actualist ontology. A critical exegesis of Barth for social critical theology remains crucial in elaborating Barth as the exponent of relational theology for our development of comparative theology.

Chapter 5 is a philosophical, theological elucidation of Barth and Levinas in their respective critique of Martin Heidegger. In this exposition, we would be in a better position to provide a theological, phenomenological rationale with the sociological study of comparative religions. A theological phenomenology is grounded in the theology of the Word of God, in the Barthian sense. But it is undertaken with clarification,

critical exegesis, and renewal of his theology by way of phenomenological, archeological construal in reference to sociology and hermeneutical inquiry.

Chapter 6 is a study of Barth's theological audacity and dialectical theory of religion in respect to comparative theology, in which the analogical mode of thought (Anselm) and role of Ludwig Feuerbach are explicated in Barth's understanding of revelation and religion. I seek to develop Barth's analogical mode of thought in light of analogical relationality in critical exegesis of his complicated theology of the speech-act in *analogia relationis*, in critical view of the Catholic teaching of *analogia entis*.

Based on the outcome and clarification, Chap. 7 is a study of Barth's contribution to comparative theology and multiple modernities. I attempt to dissect Barth's comparative study of Pure Land Buddhism; then, I proceed to critically examine Paul Knitter's critique of Barth and Clooney's comparative theology. A "speech-act" comparative theology can be reconstructed in evaluating Barth's position in the analysis of the sociological debate of multiple modernities. Our engagement with Barth is to reinterpret his "speech-act" theology as the main source for undergirding further development of comparative theology in a phenomenological, sociological framework.

Chapter 8 explicates Ernst Troeltsch's contribution to the comparative study of religion in a critical, constructive manner. A phenomenological critique is undertaken against his limitations rooted in his historical, critical method. His weakness should be renewed and revised in hermeneutical reflection of fusion of horizons (Hans G. Gadamer), with respect to multiple modernities. I shall deal with the phenomenological significance of the transcendence of the Kingdom of God (*totaliter aliter*) in Troeltsch's historicism in the comparative study of religion. Finally, I shall make Clooney's commentarial theology more relevant to the historical dimension of comparative theology in Troeltsch's sense, toward a critical comparative theology.

Chapter 9 deals with a sociological inquiry of comparative theology in an analysis of elective affinity between the Protestant ethic and Buddhist rationality in Weber's comparative study of religions. Critically exploring Weber's inquiry, I shall retrieve Buddhist ideas of economic justice, as well as Luther's, and develop the notion of immanent critique. This approach develops a framing of comparative theology for encountering

Buddhist phenomenological sociology in elaborating a notion of multiple horizons and a project of emancipation from modern cultural limitations and setbacks.

Chapter 10 is concerned with problematizing the Buddhist text of *Bodhicaryavatara* (The Way of the Bodhisattva) in connection with the Buddhist principle of dependent origination, in which a Christian critical, constructive commentarial work should come into critical focus. A phenomenological inquiry calls into question religious ideas and social problems in terms of suspension and critical analysis of the blamage effect, unearthing elective affinity of the bodhicitta idea via the *Heart Sutra* in the Imperial Japanese context. This critical inquiry facilitates our project for developing the phenomenology of intertextuality and the comparative study of Buddhist compassion, as well as the Christian symbol of *theologia crucis* for mutual illumination and solidarity.

Chapter 11 is a study of Confucian morals, its phenomenology of saying in otherness, and multiple modernities, in which the Confucian contribution to democracy, social justice, and moral practice will be elucidated. Particularly, Mencius' position is taken care of in comparison with Weber's charismatic role. Examining Confucianism as public religion, a study of basic features of Confucian ideas and ethics shall be explicated in dealing with the Confucian contribution to a reality of multiple modernities and civil society. Finally, a special elaboration of Mencius' ethics of rectification is to be explicated in a phenomenological approach to *vox Dei* as *vox Populi*, as the source of ethics of solidarity in connection with its influential effect in Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming's development in the Neo-Confucian context. This study takes on the significance of a postcolonial theory of religion in an East Asian context.

The epilogue is not merely a summary of what has been discussed for phenomenology and critical comparative theology, but further articulates a postcolonial dimension of the comparative study of religion, in critical analysis of governmentality and mimicry. This epilogue includes prayerful exchange and interreligious elucidation in the comparative study of *theologia crucis* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) and the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion for the ethic of solidarity. Textual reading and commentaries (*homo lector*) in the context of critical comparative theology turn into *homo ethicus* in solidarity with the other.

NOTES

1. Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 4.
2. In addition to Tracy and Clooney, there are important scholars in the field of the comparative study of Christianity and Confucianism. For instance, Robert Neville and John Berthrong must be mentioned. Robert C. Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (New York: SUNY, 2000). John H. Berthrong, *Concerning Creativity: A Comparison of Chu His, Whitehead, and Neville* (Albany: SUNY, 1998).
3. Brain M. Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 209–210.
4. Paul S. Chung, *Reclaiming Mission as Constructive Theology: Missional Church and World Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012).
5. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), 12.
6. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1993), 202; Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 24–40.
7. Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 587, 476, 576.
8. The term axial age goes back to Karl Jaspers. *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953). See Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (New York: SUNY, 1986).
9. Dominic Sachsenmaier, Jens Riedel, and Shmuel N Eisenstadt, *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and other Interpretations* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 4.
10. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," in *Daedalus* (Winter 2000), 2. http://www.havenscenter.org/files/Eisenstadt2000_MultipleModernities.pdf.
11. Eisenstadt, "Action, Resources, Structure, and Meaning," in S. N. Eisenstadt, *Power, Trust, and Meaning: Essays in Sociological Theory and Analysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 363.

12. Gerhard Preyer, "The Perspective of Multiple Modernities. On Shmuel Eisenstadt's Sociology," 27–28. https://www.academia.edu/6966427/The_Perspective_of_Multiple_Modernities_On_Shmuel_Eisenstadt_s_Sociology.
13. *Ibid.*, 34–35.
14. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," in *Daedalus*, 23.
15. *Ibid.*, 24.
16. Sachsenmaier et al. *Reflections on Multiple Modernities*, 10.
17. Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip P. Gaonkar (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001), 21.
18. Charles Taylor, "The Theories of Modernity," in *ibid.*, 182–183.
19. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4. See further, Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183.
20. Taylor, "The Theories of Modernity," in *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Gaonkar, 191.
21. William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 214.
22. *Explorations in Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue*, eds. Summer B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), 1.
23. Darrel J. Fasching and Dell Dechant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
24. Bruce Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 255.
25. Max Weber, "The Nature of Social Action," in *Weber Selections in Translation*, ed. W.G. Runciman, trans. Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 8.
26. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 33.
27. *Ibid.*, 92–93.
28. *Ibid.*, 93.
29. *Ibid.*, 46.
30. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 100.
31. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 49.
32. Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 410, 425–426.
33. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, ed. Francis X. Clooney (New York: T. and T. Clark, 2010), xiii.
34. *Ibid.*, 10.
35. *Ibid.*, 15–6.

36. Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta*, 7.
37. *The New Comparative Theology*, ed. Clooney, xv.
38. Clooney, S. J. *The Truth, the Way, the Life: Christian Commentary on the Three Holy Mantras of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Hindu* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 9.
39. *Ibid.*, 9; see Paul Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41–42.
40. Clooney, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 9–10.
41. Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 8.
42. Clooney., *Theology after Vedanta*, 195. 194.
43. *Ibid.*, 194.
44. *Ibid.*, 189.
45. *Ibid.*, 188.
46. *Ibid.*, 184.