Sculpting-Scholarship: A Study on the Emergence of the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection

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I hereby declare that this thesis/dissertation has not been submitted

as an exercise for a degree at any other institution,

and that it is entirely my own work.

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Abstract

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By

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To date, the phenomena of Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection saw no extend scholarly examination. This dissertation sought to fill that lacuna. Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection represents a radical departure from description to prescription within Buddhist Studies. The study of religion and the practice of religion have long been separated by an impassible divide. This crosses over an intellectual boundary once believed sacrosanct by Buddhist Studies scholar and their religious studies counter parts. Buddhist Studies scholars, drawn to the study of academic study of Buddhism by their Buddhist faith, saw that their scholarship could be an extension of their Buddhist religiosity. Despite the comparatively late emergence of this phenomena, Buddhist Studies scholars of the past were not without theological passion towards their topics. I challenge the assumption that their lay a steep division between early Buddhologists, believed to be thoroughly detached from the object of their study. But a range of normative and theological interest in Buddhism can be seen present in their scholarship. Scholars from the nineteenth century brought a range of assumptions about the merits of studying the works of ancient worthies from their roots in the study of classical antiquity. Others of the same period saw the purpose of their scholarship as to

recover a unalloyed Buddhism from centuries of deleterious cultural accretions. Early 20th century scholars of Buddhism also evidence unmistakable theological interest in Buddhism as well. Moving onto the present I examine *Buddhist Theology* through the tools of Comparative theology, allowing for a range of evaluation germane to a large non-Buddhist audience the contributors sought to address with Buddhist solutions. I also examined the continuities and expansion in topics between *Buddhist Theology* and the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection. It is important this scholarship find expression in modern Buddhist life and practice if it is to accomplish the end of offering the solutions to contemporary society it sought out with. Finally, I noted the importance of this growing body of scholarship has for Buddhism in America and beyond, and the imperative that further work be done on the reception of this scholarship by communities of practicing Buddhists.

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This dissertation will examine the emergence of a Buddhist theological voice from within North American Buddhist Studies.[1] Now named Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection, I will explore the philosophical, theological, and academic development and implications of this new phenomena in Buddhist Studies.[2] Buddhist Studies scholars, or Buddhologists, like their religious studies colleagues, have styled themselves as disinterested, descriptive investigators, concerned primarily with historicizing Buddhist texts and institutions. To maintain the value-neutral quality of their research this required Buddhologists to avoid involvement with potential theological implications of their work. As nascent disciplines concentrating on a topic over which Christian theology[3] held almost complete dominance in the West since the 1st century CE, this assertion was critical to distinguish religious studies and Buddhist Studies from this distance parent.[4] While description remains the dominant methodological assumption

[1] Here I use the term "Buddhist Studies" not as membership in a unified discipline, which Cabezon (1995) and Freiberger (2007) have demonstrated is not a singular discipline as such but a methodological heterogeneous study. By Buddhist Studies I mean to include all researchers for whom Buddhist texts, history, ideas, institutions, and ethnography constitution a major research concern.

[2] Readers familiar with the Buddhist traditions may find the term Buddhist "Theology" shocking given the long standing scholarly and common assumption that Buddhism as a religion is notable for, not least of which, the denial of the centrality of deities, or revelation. Contributing scholars to *Buddhist Theology* offer range of answers but the most ready of which is José Cabezón's "What I here term 'Buddhist Theology" is functionally equivalent to much of what is termed Christian or Jewish or Islamic theology; which is to say that this type of discourse functions for Buddhists I a way similar to its counterparts in other religious contexts." *Buddhist Theology*: *Critical Reflections By Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*. Ed. Roger Jackson and John Makransky. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 26. Although this is a useful point of departure for defining what Buddhist theology is in its concern and activity, I intend to problematize this and other definitions offered in *Buddhist Theology* and offer my own more finely tuned definition.

[3] This can be safely said of Buddhist Studies as well, as the first Europeans to report on Buddhism were Catholic or Protestant missionaries. While these works are not considered examples of Buddhist Studies proper, they represent the degree to which even the topic of other religions was considered the provenance of Christian theology.

[4] Both Buddhist Studies and religious studies are strongly beholden to Christian theology for terminology and the primacy of texts in research. The history of Buddhist Studies has even seen the choice to privilege

throughout Buddhist Studies, the last forty years of Buddhist Studies scholarship has seen efforts on the part of scholars to offer their insights directly to the community of Buddhists in America. While Buddhist Studies has seen an explosion of interest in the topic of Buddhism in America, concern for the impact of Buddhist Studies scholarship itself, the role of contributions to popular practitioner periodicals, and the genesis of a theological discourse has seen no extended treatment.[5] The one notable exception is the work of Charles Prebish, who has noted this dynamic in the four chapter of his edited volume *Luminious Passage*, "The Silent Sangha." As the title suggest, Prebish seeks to illuminate the vast number of religiously Buddhist-Buddhist Studies scholars who choose to keep their religious commitments hidden from their peers for fear that this personal inclination will be believed to occlude their scholarship, and negate subsequent possibilities for tenure. In this chapter Prebish, who coined the term "scholar-practitioner" notes the growing preponderance of Buddhist-Buddhologists with the body of North American Buddhologists and suggests of the work of Buddhist-Buddhist Studies scholars "…is vital in the ongoing development of the American Buddhist tradition."[6] While Prebish notes that the religious background of current Buddhologists varies

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textual accounts over and above conflicting archaeological evidence in the works of earlier Buddhologists, see Gregory Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism" *History of Religions* vol. 31, no. 1 Aug. 1991. Much of the motivation for the study of religions other than Christianity by European and American scholars prior to the 20th century appears influenced, at least in one major part, by liberal Protestant theology, particularly the work of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834). In tension with the dominance of assumptions about religion inherited from the Enlightenment, Schleiermacher located religion in "intuition and feeling" which in accord with the Enlightenment universalized religion beyond Christian dogma, but in contest with it, placed the essence of religion in experience.

[5] By this, I do not intend to neglect those works which have address the such issues as religious commitment in the study of religion, and the possibility of normative comment on the topic of research but it is my purpose here to address these works and there conclusion as a the development of a historical trend rather than isolated efforts on the part of particular scholars. I will survey the more than forty-year development of this scholarship in subsequent chapters.

radically from their generally Christian forebears, and the growth of such questions as Buddhist religious commitment among scholars, almost no attention is given to the historical development in Buddhist scholarship relative to this change in the religiosity of Buddhologists is given. This is a critical chapter to the development of Buddhism in America is a vast lacuna I intend to begin to fill with this dissertation.[7]

[7] Charles Prebish, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 199.

1.2.Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection[8]

The efforts of the academy go well beyond writing for popular audiences; the emergence of BCCR represents interest in Buddhist Studies scholars to *sculpt* Buddhism as it develops in North America. BCCR is a theologically-oriented, intellectual child of Buddhist Studies, utilizing the same historical, text-critical, and social science methodologies as its parent discipline. BCCR differs by employing these methods to offer sound Buddhist normative, prescriptive, theological answers to intra-and-inter-Buddhist concerns and equally critical Buddhist answers to problems within greater society. BCCR represents, as such, a mighty step for the academy as it ventures to where social scientists and scholars of religion, Buddhism or otherwise, have long feared to trend. BCCR is a scholarly enterprise explicitly dedicated to theological answers for mediating the dynamic between a religion, this case Buddhism, and modernity. It also represents the role of academy in shaping and guiding the development of a religion, more than passively recording the contours of growth and change. Buddhist theologians seeking to intervene in this change for the better. As one Buddhist studies scholar has put it, "The role of the academy [sic] in bringing legitimacy, stability and longevity to Buddhist traditions cannot be overestimated."[9]

As a modern chapter of Buddhist thought, BCCR has only been practiced for a little more than a decade as a self-conscious discipline, though North American

[8] For the purposes of this dissertation, the intellectual operations that are represented by either the terms Buddhist theology or Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection are identical. The change in terminology from Buddhist theology to Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection took place when the first American Academy of Religion Conference took place in 2006, and a panel so named Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection occurred. Chronologically, we can speak of Buddhist theology as prior to 2006 and Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection after 2006.

[9] Roger Jackson and John Makransky, eds., *Buddhist Theology*: *Critical Reflections By Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 33.

antecedents go back for more than at least thirty years.[10] The formal beginning of BCCR can be said to be at the 1996 American Academy of Religion Annual Conference in a Buddhist studies panel called "Buddhist Theology," where Buddhist-Buddhist Studies scholars first offered papers which employed Buddhist Studies research methodologies to identify and offer answer to problems within a variety of Buddhist traditions, and to use Buddhist thought to critique modern culture and society.

The papers presented at the "Buddhist Theology" panel would be see further development, and publication in a volume by this same name *Buddhist Theology* in 2000.[11] In the same of year of the publication of *Buddhist Theology,* the online *Journal of Global Buddhism* began, creating a further venue for Buddhist Studies scholars to explore normative issues such as, but not limited to, ethics, gender, social class, and the ecology from a critical, academic Buddhist theological perspective. A ground swell of interest in part promoted by publication of *Buddhist Theology* would itself play a central role in the creation of a permanent panel in the Buddhism section of American Academy of Religion annual conferences, under the name of "Buddhist Critical-Constructive Studies" which began in 2006. Since the inception of this panel, papers have been offered every year continuing the exploration of these topics in a vetted, academic forum, where peer-review can take place. However, this discourse is far from established within the academy and

[10] While it is useful to demarcate the publication of *Buddhist Theology* as the formal point of departure for Buddhist Theology as such there are notable works strongly theological in character antecedent to the publication of this volume, examples are: Gross 1984, 1986, 1987, 1993, Anne Klein, and Robert Thurman, *Buddhist Theology,* 30. Others such as D.T. Suzuki can be considered, and has suggested that Buddhist theology exists in the work of T.W. Rhys David, "I wish to suggest that the main drive of Rhys David…is religious in nature." Oliver Freiberger. "The Disciplines of Buddhist Studies: Notes of Religious commitment as a boundary-marker."(*JIABS* V: 30 no. 1-2, 299-318), 305. A survey of North American Buddhist Studies scholarship for theological efforts will given in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.
[11] *Buddhist Theology*: *Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*, eds. Roger Jackson and John Makransky, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

faces significant resistance from long standing assumptions about the relationship between a researcher and his topic of inquiry. Max Weber, and his concerns for objectivity in social science research was a major source of influence, but also the heated tension between religious studies and theology.

The emergence of BCCR occurs against the backdrop of epistemological, theological, and political debates in both Buddhist Studies and the larger, adjacent discipline of religious studies. There is a great deal of consonance between the range of issues germane to religious studies and to Buddhist Studies. Buddhologists, religious studies scholars, and theologians continue to contend hotly over questions the proper relationship of the academy to the representation and exposition about religion. This debate covers what constitutes knowledge about religion, the primacy of emic and etic perspectives, in addition to more ancient conversations about the relationship of reason to revelation. Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that religious studies is predicated on a nascent theological commitment to the notion of "religion" as *sui generis* concept, and as such is therefore a variety of theology. To amend this scholars have suggested that the theologically-predicated religious studies should be replaced by Area Studies.[12] "Religion" as such found its genesis in the polemics of philosophers of the European Enlightenment, who employed "religion" to delimit what these philosophers characterized as the irrational superstitions of the Middle Ages. This was contrasted with philosophy and science, which were predicated on reason. Enlightenment thinkers concluded that religion could be tolerated by the limiting its domain of influence to the private confines of the conscience of an individual, removing it from public discussion

[12] Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

and effectively rendering it politically impotent. Religious studies scholars such as Russell McCutcheon argue that the category of religion is neither neutral, as is cased in the polemic assumptions of the Enlightenment, nor accurate, as religion functions well beyond the mind of an individual. Although this thread of critique represents the most radical of a wide range of positions engaged in intellectual melee regarded the salience of religious studies as a field, it more broadly represents a deep anxiety among religious studies scholars about the proximity of their work to theology. At the opposite of the scale are scholars such as Rita Gross and José Cabezón who argue that the descriptive work of scholars should be completed by normative and theological recommendations to answer questions in Buddhist communities. I will give thorough treatment to the complete range of opinions in later chapters.

One of the most pervasive and dominant undergirding the social sciences, and by extension, religious studies and Buddhist studies comes from Max Weber (1864-1920), a German philosopher, political economist, and founding father of sociology, along with Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. Weber admonished social scientists to avoid the inclusion of value-oriented judgments in their research rests on his assumptions about the proper relationship between social scientists and their research. The researcher ought to produce value-neutral research that allows politicians to proceed confidently in their decisions on domestic and foreign policy. The separation between a researcher and the object of research takes on heightened tension with that object is religion. Rita Gross contests this almost diametrically,

> …I would argue that, as humanist scholars who know a great deal about the alternatives to Western thought, which has gotten us into fairly urgent and distressing situations, we have responsibilities to use our knowledge to address those problems, rather than to leave troubling issues of social

> and environmental justice to those less knowledgeable, with less respect and good will for diverse and alternatives world-views.[13]

As I have noted already, the discipline of Buddhist studies has given no extend treatment or examination for history of this radical change in perception about the purpose of research among Buddhologists, or their impact on Buddhist practitioners via scholarship itself and in popular venues is absent from Buddhist studies scholars. It is this lacuna I intend to fill.

[13] *Buddhist Theology*: *Critical Reflections By Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*. Ed. Roger Jackson and John Makransky. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 55-6.

1.3.Theory and Method

The primary mode of this study will be historical and philosophical. The theory and method for this dissertation has two facets. After this introductory first chapter, in the second chapter I intend to review the extant scholarship in scholarly tracts to identify antecedents and trends in the direction of Buddhist theological discourse. In the second chapter, I will examine an array of Buddhist Studies scholarship since the beginning of this field with the works of Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852). This exploration with end with American Buddhist Studies scholarship prior to the publication of *Buddhist Theology* in 2000. My examination of this material will take a hitherto unutilized lens. What I intend to examine within works of such scholars as T. W. Rhys-David is the place, if any at all, of *theological* passion towards Buddhism within the scholarship. It is my contention that it is untoward to assume that the Buddhist tradition that rapt all of Asia for thousands of years should be unable to elicit similar interest from early European and latter American scholars of Buddhism, despite their particulars of their research methodologies.

In the third chapter I will employ a critique of *Buddhist Theology* from the vantage of Comparative Theology. This method is essential to fulfilling concerns of the contributors to *Buddhist Theology* to make the enterprise of Buddhist theology a discourse that can extend beyond the narrow confines of Buddhist theologians, scholars, and practitioners. In reading through *Buddhist Theology* it occurred to me what there are potential stumbling blocks that exist in the blind-spots of the capable contributors. Deeply ensconced in their respective areas of Buddhist research, the utility of noting how their positions come close to, or impinge upon, other forms of Buddhism, or religions, is neglected. I will discuss this in further detail in the third chapter.

On Terms: Descriptive, Normative, and Theological.

A critical point of departure for establishing a salient case for the inclusion of Buddhist theology in academy is to re-examine and more accurately delineated the domain of the connotations of terms critical to religious studies - . The terms which need this addition attention are “descriptive,” “normative,” and “theological.” Pragmatically, descriptive scholarship in intent up presenting a topic in an ideologically neutral, objective manner without an attending hermeneutical lens through which the data can be interpreted. As noted above, this was the general recommendation of Max Weber. Most Buddhist Studies research is descriptive in nature. Further, a some form of descriptive account is necessary from any variety to interpretation to proceed in a reliable fashion. This is to say that both normative and theological exegesis require descriptive work. Research that is normative is informed by a philosophical perspective that advances a case for how the data ought to be understood. This normativity can be informed by nearly any system of ethics or critique imaginable. Feminist scholarship is one such ubiquitous example of a normative variety of scholarship. Finally, theological scholarship proceeds assuming the basic truth claims of the religious tradition in question, and applies them as the mode evaluation on the data under examination. Because theological scholarship advances a persuasive case for how data ought to be understood via religious truth claims, theological scholarship can be understood as a subset normative scholarship. More will be said on this as I will exam the history of the emic-etic debate, as it is germane to the study of religion.

1.4.Literature Review

Because two chapters of this dissertation are dedicated to chronicling the development of Buddhist theological literature, here I will briefly note the major issues and assertions at work in the formative work, *Buddhist Theology*: *Critical Reflections By Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*. The issues left unaddressed by this work are a critical point of departure for the work I will undertake in this dissertation. While *Buddhist Theology* remains the rock from which this new theological discourse proceeds, there are important points left unaddressed, or inadequately attended to. First and foremost is fine-tuning the definition of Buddhist theology itself.

Rita Gross and José Cabezón seem contented with definitions for Buddhist theology that can be reduced to "What Christian theologians do but Buddhist." Christian theology is itself a complex phenomenon and it is not sufficient to merely claim that Buddhist theology is the Buddhist mirror of it. Christian theology is not a monolithic other against which Buddhist theology can be easily defined. I will problematize this comparison with an eye to giving Buddhist theology a more distinct intellectual identity. Although touched upon briefly, the question of the location of Buddhist theology within the Buddhist discourse has not been addressed at length. For example, who has the final word on matters Buddhist between the clergy and professoriate? This is further complicated by the fact that this two are often the same, as many religiously Buddhist-Buddhist Studies professors also hold ecclesiastical rank with the different varieties of Buddhism present in North America. Noting these will help to frame what I see as further points that need to be addressed to ground Buddhist theology firmly in its location in the

academy within Buddhist Studies, higher education in general, and for Buddhist practitioners.

As noted above, *Buddhist Theology* is a collection of paper presented at the 1996 American Academy of Religion conference in the Buddhism section within the "Buddhist theology" panel. These papers sought to establish what Buddhist theology is, its relationship with other discourses concerned with Buddhism, and to the academy. The book is divided into three parts. This is preceded by two editors' introductions seeking to locate Buddhist theology historically, which was result of the meeting between Buddhist thought and modernity. This is followed by five chapters that argue for Buddhist theology as a valid subfield of Buddhist Studies, and how it meets an unintended lacuna in meaning otherwise ignored in Buddhist Studies.

In this literature review, it is important to note a tangent to scholarly interest in theological within the study of religion and Buddhism. The tangent at work here is the presence of theological interest on the part of students drawn to religious studies and Buddhist Studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This forms a gentle correlation with the rising professorial interest. While this topic is not central to two articles I will note, their mention of this phenomena is noteworthy. The first article that notes this theological interest in the study of religion and Buddhism is Malcolm David Eckel's "The Ghost at the Table: On the Study of Buddhism and Study of Religion."[14] Eckel's article addresses the question of meaning and religiosity in the study of religion or Buddhism. Eckel notes that ""What attracts students to the study of religion is that they have questions about the meaning of their lives, want to know what it is to be human

[14] David Malcolm Eckel, "The Ghost at the Table: On the Study of Buddhism and Study of Religion," *JAAR* 64:4 (Winter, 1994).

and humane, and intuit that religion deals with such things."[15] This sentiment is echoed among graduate students within ranks of aspiring Buddhologists in Gomez' "Unspoken Paradigms: Meanderings through the Metaphors of a Field." Gomez notes,

> This paper is in part the fruit of attempts to engage graduate studies in some form of religions on "theory" –they were all interested in 'the application of these methodologies to the study of Buddhism,' … as a part of the study of a religion that was in fact an integral part of their own cultural religious belief systems. They were consistently baffled by what appeared to them as a pointless reductionism…that failed to speak to them.[16]

The place student passion for the theological within religious studies and Buddhist Studies falls outside domain of this dissertation, it appears reasonable to make a passing reference to it. If this trend remains, it stands to boded well for Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection in future authorship and readers.

[15] Eckel, "The Ghost at the Table," 1087.
[16] Luis Gomez, "Unspoken Paradigms: Meanderings through the Metaphors of a Field," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18:2 (Winter 1995), 184.

1.5.Chapter Outline

This dissertation has four chapters: this introduction, two chapters, and a conclusion.

Chapter One – This Introduction.

Chapter Two – Narrative and Discontinuities in the Antecedents to the Emergence of Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection.

In this second chapter, I will critically examine the prevailing narrative BCCR has acquired of its own beginnings. This history of BCCR find its own beginning in the already noted *Luminous Passage,* and finds further expansion and expression in two chapters within *Buddhist Theology.* This narrative describes the-then name "Buddhist theology" as the product of linear sequence of scholarship, migrating in an undisturbed manner from description to normative concerns and finally arriving at a Buddhist theological voice. This is characterized as starting stolid, descriptive efforts of nineteenth century European Buddhologists, faithfully carried through into the 20th century by later American counter parts until when feminist scholars use this normative perspective to "re-valorize" the Buddhist tradition, prior to a theological voice within Buddhist Studies scholars. While this appraisal appears sound at a distance, it falls apart under closer scrutiny. A good deal of theological passion and normative agenda can be seen in the works 19th and 20th century Buddhologists who are otherwise thought to have been exclusively objectivity, historicist, and descriptive. Figures such as Edward Conze, T.W. Rhy-David, and even Eugene Burnouf I will bring until scrutiny.

Improving upon Cabezon's observations about importance of feminist scholarship on Buddhism to Buddhist theology, I will demonstrate that a bridge can be located in the works of late 20th century feminist Buddhologists between normative

scholarship and a theological exegesis of Buddhist ideas. In particular I will examine Rita Gross' *Buddhism After Patriarchy,* Anne Klein's *Meeting the Bliss Queen*, and Miranda Shaw's *Passionate Enlightenment.* Finally, I will draw attention to three works left neglected by Prebish, Jackson, and Cabezon, as examples of theological writing by Buddhologists prior to the publication of *Buddhist Theology*. These *Zen at War, Prisoners of Shangri-La,* and *Pruning the Bodhi Tree.* The timespan this chapter will cover will begin with the advent of Buddhist Studies and end with the publication of *Buddhist Theology* in 2000.

Chapter Three – *Buddhist Theology* and the state of Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection.

This chapter will have two sections. The first section will be a summary and critique of the twenty chapters of *Buddhist Theology*. Each chapter will be summarized and then I will offer my critique. This first section will end with a global critique of *Buddhist Theology* as a whole. The second section of this chapter will focusing on the development of Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection in North American since the publication of *Buddhist Theology*. Buddhist theology has seen important development in the decades since the publication of *Buddhist Theology,* most notable is an annual panel at the national conferences of the American Academy of Religion Buddhism section "Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection" panel. In this second section, I will note thematic developments in this panel that have occurred beyond the topics addressed in *Buddhist Theology.* I will conclude with an overall analysis of the *Buddhist Theology* and Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection phenomena. An bibliography of papers that have gone on from the panel to publication will be located at the end of this dissertation.

Chapter Four - Conclusion

In the final, fourth chapter of this dissertation, I will perform two tasks. The first will be to review the presentation of the forgoing material, aimed as noting synthesis and tensions in the emergence of BCCR. This will include the normative and theological expressions noted in chapter two, the summary and critique of *Buddhist Theology,* and include the thematic developments in BCCR. The second task will be to note the viability of the future of BCCR. This will include noting the sociological and theological predicates that gave rise to this phenomena, and concluding as to whether or not these will remain to give continuous to BCCR. I will conclude by noting the location of important, yet unaddressed topics germane to BCCR.

2. Chapter Two: Narrative and Discontinuities in the Antecedents to the Emergence of Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will illuminate overlooked theological passion in Buddhist Studies history. This is necessary for locating Buddhist theology or BCCR in a proper historical relation to the study of Buddhism. Although *Buddhist Theology* (2000) gives a good deal of attention to general trends in the *longue durée* of Western, academic theological interest in Buddhism, the account overlooks critical antecedents to Buddhist theology.[17] It is this dearth that will be redressed in this chapter.

Buddhist theology appears to be the logical conclusion to increasing normative, theological, and soteriological inclinations visible within the works of Buddhist Studies scholars. Instances of normative interest appear throughout Western academic interest in Buddhism. Since the inception of the academic study Buddhism in the West, these normative impressions and interests have found a number of expressions in the academy. I believe that, in examining this antecedent material, theological motivations were present throughout Western encounters with Buddhism. The impression that Buddhist theology or as it has come to be known as, Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection represent an aberration in the history of the study of Buddhism is not entirely accurate. In fact, this recent development is more faithful to the currents of past than it appears in a more historically protracted examination.

The primary locations where normative concerns arise in the study of Buddhism include: 1) the role of classicism in the study of Buddhism; 2) Buddhism as a topic of

[17] *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Scholars.* eds. Roger Jackson and John Makransky (London: Curzon, 2000).

philosophical examination; 3) feminist critiques of Buddhism; 4) and theological critiques and explications of Buddhism itself. These categories are generally chronological, though not exclusively. The first of these, discussions in Buddhist Studies begins with Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852) and continues into the present. For Nineteenth century philologists like Burnouf, education began with a foundation in classicism, and it is this from which they in turn went onto compare Hellenic and Latin philosophers with Buddhists exegetes. The Twentieth-century saw efforts in Philosophy of Religion abound in engaging Buddhism, comparing nearly every form of Western philosophy with Buddhism. This emergent American Buddhist theology is not the first modern, theological effort made regarding Buddhism. Among those most noteworthy are the efforts of Japanese Buddhists of the Meiji era (1868-1912), who utilized Buddhist Studies as a methodological tool to defend their faith. Indeed, these Meiji era scholars could be regarded as the first Buddhist theologians. Also impressive are efforts by 20th century Chinese Buddhists like Yinshùn are important to note for the creation of a scholarly and theological modern Buddhist discourse. In addition, modern American Buddhist theologians yoke the work of their continental forefathers as a critical aid to the creation of their own intellectual efforts.

There has always been a prevailing theological thread running through Western interest in Buddhism. The Western mind was thrown wide open by the shock of the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, and the Protestant Reformation. The singularity of truth was now no longer plausibly located within the confines of one religious tradition. Though Protestant reformers may have insisted that they had corrected the theological missteps of the Catholic Church, the fragmented Protestant tradition was never able to

reassemble the trust that people once had in the Catholic Church. The monolithic hold that the Roman Catholic Church had on the Western mind had forever been breached, and impassioned Protestantism at its height could not close the exegetical Pandora's jar it had opened, playing an important role in propelling interest in religions beyond the Abrahamic traditions.[18]

Efforts to evaluate Buddhism from the lens of Western philosophy followed closely behind the influence of classicism on incipient Buddhist Studies. Buddhist normative discussions have found myriad expressions in the academy. One of the first was under the rubric of philosophy. The equation of Buddhism with philosophy occurred at the advent of the 19th century, when American and British enthusiasts sought to ennoble Buddhism and protect it from being included in the derided category of defeated superstitions collectively known as religion. However, this approach to the normative discussion surrounding Buddhism has a decidedly ethereal quality. In it, interlocutors reflect on Buddhist ideas and concepts with the ease of an armchair theorist. There is also little concern about the application of Buddhist ideas and nearly no discussion of Buddhist practice. This is, and remains, a peculiar form of reflection nether beholden to the soteriological veracity of Buddhist ideas, nor their implementation in the world. One cannot help but be reminded of the Buddha's own advice to avoid "thickets of views" when examining the phenomena of Buddhist philosophy.

The first efforts towards a Buddhist theology were those of feminists, who felt that the Buddhist tradition could be amended by insights of the feminist tradition. Following this was the rising tide of practicing in the ranks of American Buddhists, who

[18] The Greek for the Pandora's jar was mistranslated into Latin by Erasmus (1466-1536) as box in the 16th century.

took up theological critiques and evaluations of Buddhism (*Zen At War),* participated in Japanese Buddhist theology (*Pruning the Bodhi Tree*), or asserted the primacy of the professoriate in determining what is legitimately Buddhist (*Prisoners of Shangri-La).* These trends in scholarship extend began in the 1990s, extend through publication of *Buddhist Theology* in 2000 and into the present. From here, the progress of normative impulse towards Buddhism from within the academic study will be examined chronologically.

2.2. Early Scholars

The history of the study of Buddhism evidences a range of impulses and controversies, apparently perennial in nature. Translation of texts foreign in language, ideas, and time, opens up a host of challenges to a philologist, including but not limited to issues of accurate linguistic representation. History, philosophy, the variety of literature and contend with language, for consideration in the mind of Buddhist Studies scholars. But the primacy with which these concerns come to the fore in the product of translation efforts begs questions about the motives that inspired the Buddhologist in question to undertake a career involving years of arduous language study, and a lifestyle of poverty verging on monasticism. Among the range of motives for such a career, it would be strange if theological passion itself should be absent. It is my contention that, in fact, theological passion is present in myriad forms throughout the history of Buddhist Studies, and even in the figure of its founding father, Eugene Burnouf. I will endeavor to make a speculative case that, in fact, at least modicum of theological passion motivated him to work on translating Buddhist texts.

Very few topics generate emotional responses as does religion, and to this, Buddhism is no exception. Scholars themselves, though seeking to separate themselves from their topic as Weber has recommended, on occasion can find themselves vulnerable to their own unchecked religious commitments. These expressions of theological attachment are archetypal examples of much of what scholars of religious studies express apprehension about: That religious convictions come to overpower the methodological objectivity necessary to proceed with sound research. I will address this further in the subsequent chapter of this dissertation. For the present discussion, I note it as a point of

intellectual concern for both religious studies and Buddhist Studies scholars. This begins with two of the most iconic early Buddhist Studies scholars, Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852) and T.W. Rhys-David (1843-1922).

Attitudes and Ancestors

Eugene Burnouf

Eugene Burnouf requires little introduction among Buddhologists working on India or Tibet, but some introduction here is in order. Eugene was the son of a well-respected French classicist and quickly evidenced a gift for languages, mastering Greek and Latin at a tender age. He then added Pali and Avestan, the language of Zoroastrian scripture, to his repertoire of ancient languages. At the point when Brian Hodgeson's package of Nepalese Buddhist texts reached him, Burnouf had already established himself as a scholar of renown. Burnouf's students went on to impressive academic careers of their own, including Max Müller (1823-1900), regarded as the founder of Comparative Religion. Below, is a note from his diary about Müller's first meeting with Burnouf.

> Went to see Burnouf. Spiritual, amiable, thoroughly French. He received me in the most friendly way. Talked a great deal, and all said was valuable, not on ordinary topics but on special. I managed better in French than I expected. 'I am a Brahman, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, I hate the Jesuits.'--that sort of man. I am looking forward to his lectures.[19]

An astute reader will come with a ready caution towards such a source about Burnouf. One would be correct to avoid drawing direct inferences from this "blurb," written in a Spartan, staccato prose. Only a clumsy reader might conclude from the comment "I am a Brahman, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, I hate the Jesuits" that Müller believed Burnouf to have formally adopted all three of these faiths simultaneously. We can dispense with this sort of absurdity without the burden of further consideration. But

[19] Eugene Burnouf, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism,* trans. Katia Buffetrille and Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7.

with a more careful eye, we can see that this short note on Burnouf can suggest something of his relationship to Buddhism.

In Eric Sharpe's observation regarding motivation into the study of religions beyond one's own, he notes dissatisfaction with one's "inherited traditions."[20] This appears to exist in Müller's comment, identifying Burnouf as one who takes exception to the Jesuit order of the Roman Catholic Church. It may seem that there ought to be sufficient latitude between dislike for a particular monastic order of the Catholic Church, and complete disdain for Catholicism as a whole, but the Society of Jesus represented the vanguard of Catholic theology and was a powerful actor in Catholic proselytism throughout the world. At a minimum, such a characterization of Burnouf fits sufficiently into Sharpe's point on motivation into the study of comparative religion.

Further, to identify Burnouf as a Buddhist is to suggest more than distant scholarly esteem for the texts he spent a large portion of his life poring over and translating. His passionate, personal identification with Buddhist ideas is also strongly telling of his contact with the discipline of classicism, the study of literature, history, and art of Western Antiquity. This science was governed by an axiom by Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE – 50 CE), "to strike the divine coin anew." This denotes the preservation of the "classical," a word which in Latin connotes "peerless," but also that worthy of imitation in writing and emulation in thought and deed.

This classicist motivation can be seen in the appraisal by William Jones (1746-1794), who received an education in classics, of the newly discovered canon of Sanskrit literature, "The *Sanscrit* [sic] language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful

[20] Eric Sharpe. *Comparative Religion: A History.*(La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986), 2.

structure; more perfect that the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either." This apparently linguistic enthusiasm for Sanskrit is but a misimpression of a deeper sentiment, consonant in sentiment with the classicist program. Sir John Shore, the president of the Asiatick [sic] Society, the scholarly society created by William Jones in 1784, excavates Jones' perennial motivations, far exceeding the myopic, hyper-specialization that has come to characterize the enterprise of the humanities today:

> But the judgment of Sir William Jones was too discerning to consider language in any other light than as the key of science, and he would have despised the reputation of a mere linguist. Knowledge and truth, [sic.] were the object of all his studies, and his ambition was to be useful to mankind; with these views, he extended his researches to all languages, nations, and times.[21]

Some of this classicist sentiment can also be seen in Burnouf's own concerns:

> It is India, with its philosophy and myths, its literature and laws, that we study in its language. It is more than India, Gentleman, it is a page from the origins of the world, of the primitive history of the human spirit, that we shall try to decipher together….There is no philology without philosophy and history. The analysis of the operations of language is also a science of observation; and if it is not the very science of human spirit, it is at least one of the most astonishing faculties with whose aid the human spirit manifests itself.[22]

It would have been peculiar if Eugene Burnouf were not subject to a similar range of motivations in the study of his chosen subject, Buddhist texts. One of these motivations was inherited from his father's instruction in classicism. It is not the intention to establish here an exhaustive case for Burnouf's theological motivations, but merely to suggest that the antecedents of Buddhist Studies include a wide range of impulses, and

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[21] John Shore, *A Discourse Delivered at a Meeting of the Asiatick Society, in Calcutta* (London: W. Bulmer & Company, 1795), 7, https://books.google.com/books?id=IRPChJnegeQC&pg=PA7&lpg=PA7#v=onepage&q&f=false.
[22] Eugene Burnouf, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism,* trans. Katia Buffetrille and Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 6.

that the impulse to truth and the benefit of other is native to its origins. Burnouf's impassioned work on Indian Buddhism is followed by T. W. David on Pali Canon.

T. W. Rhys-David

T.W. Rhys-David (1843-1922) was renowned for establishing the Pali Text Society, dedicated to translating the Pali Canon into English, with his wife Caroline. Posted in Ceylon as a British civil servant, Rhys-David functioned as a magistrate where part of this duties was to adjudicate points of Buddhist ecclesiastical law concerning procedure from the *Vinaya*, and learned Pali to handle these cases. He also participated in the archaeological dig of the ancient city of Anuradhapura and married Caroline Augusta Foley, who became Pali scholar in her own right. T.W. Rhys-David was a critic of Theosophy, and following his post in Ceylon, he became Professor of Pali at University of London between (1882-1904). Eventually he assumed the Chair of Comparative Religion at University of Manchester in England in 1905.

Rhys-David's work is also a fruitful location to note the presence of theological bias in the work of a 19th century scholar of Buddhism. Oliver Friedmeyer notes the presence of value judgment on the part Rhys-David's in his own evaluation of Tantric Buddhism:

> Under the overpowering influence of these sickly imaginations the moral teachings of Gautama have been almost hid from view. The theories grew and flourished: each new step, each new hypothesis demanded another: until the whole sky was filled with forgeries of the brain, and the nobler and simpler lessons of the found of the religion were smothered beneath the bitter mass of metaphysical subtleties.
>
> As the stronger side of Gautama's teaching was neglected, the debasing belief in rites and ceremonies, and charms, and incantations, which have been a special object of his scorn, began to live again, and to grow vigorously, and spread like the Birana weed warmed by a tropical sun in the marsh and muddy soil. As in India the expulsion of Buddhism the degraded worship of Siva and his dusky bride had been incorporated into Brahmanism from the wild savage devil worship of the dark non-Aryan

> tribes: so as pure Buddhism died in the north, *the Tantra system*, a mixture of magic and witchcraft and Siva-worship, was incorporated into the corrupted Buddhism… The Tantra literature has also had its growth and its development and some unhappy scholar of the future age may have to trace its loathsome history. The nauseous taste replied even the self-sacrificing industry of Burnouf, when he found the later Tantra books to be as immoral as they were absurd.[23]

Friedberger contrasts Rhys-David's' comments with another 19th century scholar, Hendrik Kern, much more neutral in tone, to illuminate the degree of Rhys-David's own theological leanings:

> The development of Tantrism is a feature that Buddhism and Hinduism in their later phases have in common. The object to Hindu Tantrism is the acquisition of wealth, mundane enjoyments, rewards for moral actions deliverance, by worshiping Durga, the Sakti of Siva – Prajna in the terminology of the Mahayana – though means of spells, muttered prayers, Samadhi, offerings &c. Similarly, the Buddhist Tantras purpose to teach the adepts how by a supernatural way to acquire desired objects, either of a material nature, as the elixir of longevity, invulnerability, invisibility, alchemy; or of a more spiritual character, as the power of evoking a Buddha or a Bodhisattva to solve a drought, or the power of achieving in this life the union with some divinity.[24]

Rhys-David's account, when held in comparison to Kern's, strongly evidences biases that are difficult not to describe as theological in character. It should be noted here that Buddhist theologians would cause for both appreciate and critique in Rhys-David's work. While his translation of the Pali Canon remains an important point of departure for scholars of Theravāda Buddhism, his theological comments would have been best bracketed outside of a scholarly tract. These theological-inclined scholars will be joined by potent native Buddhist voices in the 20th Century.

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[23] Oliver Friedberger, "The Discipline of Buddhist Studies: Religious Commitment as a Boundary-Marker," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 30, no. 1-2 (2009): 305.
[24] Friedberger, 303.

2.3. 20th Century Scholars

D. T. Suzuki

Beyond examples of continental Buddhologists and philosophically-inclined philologists, Buddhist Studies scholarship in North America has seen no few examples of normative and theological concerns arising expressed tangentially within a putatively descriptive scholarly discourses. This tendency can be seen in the work of two of the most noteworthy scholars in the project of Buddhist Studies, D.T. Suzuki (1894-1966) and Edward Conze (1904-1979).

Perhaps the first example of (mis)meeting of descriptive and normative perspectives in scholarship on the topic of Buddhism in North America took place in the now-famous exchange between the Chinese historian Hu Shih and D.T. Suzuki. The discussion between these two non-Western scholars took place in an American journal, *Philosophy East and West*. The dialogue was an iconic intellectual exchange between a sober historian and an evangelical Buddhologist. This dispute took the form of a contribution by Hu challenging Suzuki's epistemological predicate to understanding the topic of Zen. Hu's "Chán (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method" which was followed by Suzuki's "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih" responding to Hu's challenge. These articles offer valuable insight into a range of recurrent dichotomies and methodological concerns germane to Buddhist Studies and Buddhist theology. I will proceed by summarizing and analyzing both articles, and then distill the theoretical issues that emerge.

The exchange between these two scholars revolves around contrasting attempts to delineate "Zen." The introduction to Hu Shih's article characterizes the dilemma:

> As friend and as a historian of Chinese thought, I have followed Suzuki's work with keen interest. But I have never concealed from him my disappointment in his method of approach. My greatest disappointment has been that, according to Suzuki and his disciples, Zen is illogical, irrational, and therefore, beyond our intellectual understanding.

In his book, *Living by Zen,* Suzuki tells us:

> If we are to judge Zen from our common-sense view of things, we shall find the ground sinking away under out feet. Our so-called rationalistic way of thinking has apparently no use in evaluating the truth or untruth of Zen. It is altogether beyond the ken of human understanding. All that we can therefore state about Zen is that its uniqueness lies in its irrationality or its passing beyond our logical comprehension.

Hu Shih responses in kind:

> It is this denial of the capability of the human intelligence to understand and evaluate Zen that I emphatically refuse to accept.[25]

Religious studies, Comparative Religion, or Buddhist Studies scholars could find little to fault in this Hu Shih sound historicism. However, in D.T. Suzuki's response, we see an unrecognizably theological counter, which will leave both scholars at an epistemological and methodological impasse.

> Hu Shih seems to be very much upset by my statement that Zen is irrational and beyond our intellectual comprehension, and he tries to show that Zen can be understood easily when it is placed in its historical setting. He thinks that when Zen is so placed, it is found that the Zen movement in the history of Chinese Buddhism was "only a part of a larger movement which may be correctly characterized as internal reformation or revolution in Buddhism. Let me see if he is right. My contention is twofold: (1) Zen is not explainable by mere intellectual analysis. As long as the intellect is concerned with words and ideas, it can never reach Zen. (2) Even when Zen is treated historically, Hu Shih's way of setting it in a historical frame is not correct, because he fails to understand what Zen is. I must strongly insist that Zen must first be comprehended as it is in itself, and then it is that one can proceed to the study of its historical objectifications as Hu Shih does.[26]

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[25] Huh Shih. "Chán (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method." *Philosophy East and West* 3, no. 1 (Apr., 1953): 3.
[26] D.T. Suzuki. "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih." *Philosophy East and West* 3, no. 1 (Apr., 1953): 26.

D.T. Suzuki, at least for American Buddhist scholars, can hardly hold a place of greater fame and infamy, as noted by T. Griffith Foulk:

> Many of today's academic specialists would frankly admit that they were first attracted to Buddhism by Suzuki's writings, and would credit Suzuki with sowing the seeds that eventually grew into today's field of East Asian Buddhist studies: it is no accident that the study of Zen now holds such a prominent place within that field.[27]

Perhaps no greater challenge could be laid at the feet of a historian than to claim history is beyond apprehension, and consequently construction. Hu's piece is a strident rebuke of Suzuki's assertion that reason is barren when it approaches Zen. Hu Shih wields reason and history deftly, demonstrating the power of history to call into question some of the most important predicates to the theological integrity of Chinese and Japanese lineages of Zen. His work also revealed that the seeming mysterious utterance of Chinese Chán masters could be understood as a historically-contingent rhetorical structure. Rather than inaccessible expressions of awakening, these are, in fact, succinctly constructed Buddhist pedagogy informed by then-contemporary impressions of Buddhism, and soteriological assumptions. However, these are not the most threatening historical revelations that Hu leveled at Suzuki.

Hu's article utilizes the-newly discovered Buddhist texts from Dunhuang that have had powerful bearing on the history of Chán. This equipped him with a range of materials from which to develop a historicized and convincing account of Chán. Among a number historical revelations certain to trouble the devoted Buddhist, Hu revealed that Huìnéng's position as the Sixth Patriarch of Chán was posthumously awarded among

[27] T. Griffth Foulk. "Issues in the Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies: An Extended Review of *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought.*" Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 16, no. 1 (1993): 113.

lauded Zen hierarchs by the grandstanding and financially potent Buddhist sermonizing of Shenhui.

Shenhui once appeared before Shénxiù's disciple Pǔjì , claiming that the transmission of one robe and begging bowl, properly symbolizing an orthodox transmission of lineage, was handed to a groundskeeper named Huìnéng, and the authority to teach in Hóngrěn (601-674 CE) stead rested with Huìnéng alone. As Huìnéng was now dead, this effectively left the transmission to Shenhui himself. Hu Shih demonstrated that the earliest extant record of a Chán lineage places Huìnéng as number eight among eleven other candidates. However, with the death of Pǔjì the last proponent of the older lineage scheme left the stage of history, and Shenhui prevailed. While this early victory gathered profound momentum for Shenhui as a teacher, his popularity was to draw the suspicions of the state, and he was exiled in (752/753-755/756 CE).[28] The imperial court would soon call upon Shenhui restore financial solvency to the imperial budget, as it struggled to shoulder increasing military expenditures.

Quelling the An Lushan rebellion would come at incredible cost to the imperial coffers, and Shenhui's exquisite Buddhist homiletics came to the service of funding war. Shenhui was emancipated from the religious and political periphery, and he found himself again in the middle of a nexus including both. Higher Buddhist ordination was regulated by Imperial court jurisprudence, licensure via the state and acquired through purchase. Shenhui's rhetorical aptitudes were put to the use of gathering fervor among the citizenry for monastic ordination, apparently without revealing to these bodhisattva aspirants that these monastic dues would go to underwrite the military efforts used to

[28] Hu Shih. "Chán (Zen) Buddhism in China", 8.

crush the political dissent of their countrymen. Shenhui's efforts would prove lucrative, and the ascendant Crown Prince would award Shenhui with Heze monastery and establish Huìnéng retroactively as the *sole* Sixth Patriarch.

Suffice it to say, the exchange between Hu Shih and Suzuki involved different epistemological assumptions, and presumptions soteriologically. As a historian, Hu Shih locates Zen Buddhism in Chinese history as a movement in Buddhist thought contingent on specific historical circumstances. The intellectual and political maneuvers of these exponents can be associated with the needs of the Chán sect of Buddhism to survive a religiously competitive "market" vying for the emperor's personal imprimatur and financial support. This could not stand in great contrast to Suzuki's assumptions about the early history of Zen Buddhism.

For Suzuki, Zen is not merely a rude religio-political work on the part of self-serving monks. Zen represents a historically expressed, trans-historical experience that cannot be exhaustively explained by attempts to historicize the movement. Whatever one may think of D.T. Suzuki's scholarship and theology, one cannot deny the role his work has played in inspiring scholars of East Asian Buddhism to their vocations, and the role his scholarship has played for these subsequent generations in stimulating scholarship.

Edward Conze

More recent is a scholar who is no less well known, Edward Conze (1904-1979). Conze's own inclinations towards Buddhism are evidenced in a number of such instances. One of the iconic and unexpected sources of theological passion in a Buddhologist comes from no one less than Edward Conze himself. Although Conze is often thought of the archetypical Buddhologist, intent upon the rigors of historicism alone, it appears that Conze himself had undertaken a regimen of training in Buddhist meditation, and this subject was once broached by one of his graduate students, as Prebish recounts:

> As a novice graduate student in the prestigious Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin in the fall of 1967, I heard my very first "in-group" story from the senior students; it was about the recent visit of Edward Conze, conclusively acknowledged as the world's foremost scholar of that complicated form of Mahayana literature known as *prajñāpāramitā*. The narrative, however, had nothing whatsoever to do with Professor Conze's great scholarly passion. Instead, it concerned a question playfully put to the rather blunt and outspoken scholar during a seminar session: "Dr. Conze, do *you* actually do meditate?" Conze's simple reply: "Yes." But the student pressed on: "Ever *get* anywhere?" The brusque response: "First trance state."[29]

This passing reference to the practice of meditation is not the limit of Conze's personal inclinations towards Buddhism in a theological sense. Here, in his own review of thirty years of Buddhist Studies Conze excoriates a colleague for producing translations uninformed by the "spirit."

> The reason is that our professor is a self-confessed "philologist" who puts words before sense and takes no living interest in what he translates. Buddhist thought has never aroused his curiosity, and the veil of haziness which he throws over it shows that he fails to appreciate how precise and unambiguous it is. These Sutras are spiritual documents, and the spirit alone can fathom them. An uncomprehending attention to the letter will easily turn the sublimest record of wisdom teaching into a string of lifeless absurdities. It is indeed difficult to see how a satisfactory

[29] Charles S. Prebish, *Luminous Passage: The Study and Practice of Buddhism in America.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 174.

> translation of a Mahayana Sutra can be expected from anyone but a devout and believing Mahayana Buddhist.[30]

Conze's footnote includes a comment on the famous debate between D.T. Suzuki and Hu Shih: "This tremendously interesting controversy was continued in *Philosophy East and West* up to 1956, with P. Ames and Arthur Waley joining in. It is very important for the whole problem of the relation between the historical and spiritual approach to the dharma." Lopez notes of Conze, "The scholars Perfection of Wisdom literature, Edward Conze, remained a Theosophist throughout his life, telling Mircea Eliade that he considered Madame Blavatsky the reincarnation to Tsong kha pa."

While Conze's earlier statements suggest a spiritual sympathy towards the Buddhist path, it appears that this sympathy has particular limits, as can be seen in Conze's work as it is critiqued in George Bond's article. Here Bond takes Conze to task on characterizations of Theravada and Zen Buddhism that appear very difficult to defend historically. These characterizations, grounded thinly in history, could be more accurately described as pejorative assessments of the Theravada tradition and the Pali canon as objects of philological and ethnographic examination. A good deal of Bond's article is taken up with rebutting Conze's problematic assessments. This is interspersed with a sustained case for the importance of the Pali Canon within Buddhist Studies after the abandonment of the project of its first champions in the Anglo-Germanic school of Buddhist Studies. However, this is not itself the present concern in examining this article.

The arguments given by Conze often appear so distended as to immediately suggest ulterior motives behind their articulations. Bond notes this but stops short of a

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[30] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Studies 1934-1972: Thirty-Years of Buddhist Studies and Further Buddhist Studies* (San Francisco: Wheelwright Press, n.d.), 18.

suggesting a motivation behind these odd assertions, stating: "Conze devotes the first part of his article to…a rather impassioned criticism of the Pali Canon. In his assessment of the "status of the Pali Canon…he bases his arguments on largely unsupported generalizations and unwarranted assumptions."[31] In the interest of preserving the tone of these cases, I have opted for direct citation in place of paraphrasing them:

> The ethical side of Buddhism to which Protestants would readily respond. Its prestige among Europeans owed something to the fact that it fitted in with their own mood, in being more rationalistic and moralistic than some other traditions and much less given to religious devotion, mythology, and magic.[32]

Bond admits that, in fact, this motivation did guide some British and German scholars to the study of the Pali Canon. One need not look further than the founders of the Pali Text Society, such as the previously noted T.W. Rhys-David, for scholars who looked to the Pali Canon in an effort to reconstruct the pith of the Buddha's teachings, free from the less-than-inspired accretions of the ages. However, Bond notes that this summation falls short of explaining why the Pali Canon called to Western scholars, and Conze's comment is little more than, "gratuitous psychological generalization," stating that "Conze demonstrates nothing by this generalization, except, possibility, his own attitude toward the Pali Canon and toward Protestants."

Aside from long standing continental frictions, I would contend that a potent motivation to include polemically against the Pali Canon by Edward Conze comes from his own commitment to Sanskrit literature. The Pali Canon long held the cherished position of a leading contender for representing the Buddha's teachings. Conze appears to

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[31] George D. Bond. "Theravada Buddhism and the Aims of Buddhist Studies." *Studies in the history of Buddhism:Papers presented at the International Conference on the History of Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.*(Delhi: B.R. Pub. Corp., 1980), 46.
[32] Bond, 46.

chafe from this, as it potentially casts his own later Sanskrit work in a diminished light. If the Buddhist hybrid-Sanskrit of the Mahayana Canon antedates the very latest dating for the Buddha's life, then Conze's work on Sanskrit Mahayana literature falsely claiming to be the word of the Buddha constitutes the excavation of literary dig sites already known to be bereft of actual Buddha ore. The historicity of the Pali Canon casts in a theological light that immediately forces these other canons to defend their own historicity. This is a task Mahayana writers have never finished throughout history.

This account is not intended it impugn the monumental contributions to Buddhist Studies made by Edward Conze, or the impressive lineages of his students. Rather it is demonstrates that the place of theological passion towards the object of Buddhism is commensurate with a rigorously constructed knowledge of it. This theological impulse within Buddhist Studies gains momentum with a particular religio-sociological shift within the American Buddhological community.

2.3. Sociology and Terminology

A call for a theological voice from within Buddhist Studies in a non-Buddhist country is certainly a strange phenomenon. Among putatively objective researchers, in a country largely unpeopled by Buddhists, why would this occur at all? *Buddhist Theology* gives a portion of this account, but more is contained in the extant scholarship that was left unexamined within *Buddhist Theology*. It is this dearth of treatment to this integral chapter of Buddhist Studies that I intend to address. To answer this question, in this section I will explore notes in Buddhist Studies scholarship that indicate predicates to Buddhist theology.

Broadly, scholarship reveals two sources of theological inspiration in Buddhist Studies in the United States, one foreign and one domestic. These two streams influenced Buddhist Studies in different ways, and to varying degrees. The source of foreign influence came with the immigration of a wide variety of Buddhist teachers to the United States. This coincided with the domestic phenomena social revolution, the social revolution of the 1960s. These acted as potent antecedents to the formation of scholars of Buddhism who came to the academy with personal experience and commitments to Buddhism. Charles Prebish notes: "Now, barely a quarter of a century later, it is rather commonplace for individuals teaching Buddhist Studies at universities throughout the world to be 'scholar-practitioners,' involved in the practice of training associated with various Buddhist traditions and sects."[33]

In his own survey of Buddhist Studies scholars' community, Prebish comments:

> Of the 106 respondents to a survey I did in 1995 (whose results will be reported below), *at least* 25 percent are openly Buddhist (although religious affiliation was *not* one of the items queried). It is my best

[33] Prebish, *Luminous Passage,* 180.

> estimate that *at least* another 25 percent remain silent about their Buddhist practice, for reasons that will become apparent.[34]

Foulk (1993) offers insight into the sociological predicate to this occurrence. However, his observation is limited to scholars for whom Buddhism in East Asia is the object of their academic preoccupation, as noted earlier:

> Many of today's academic specialists would frankly admit that they were first attracted to Buddhism by Suzuki's writings, and would credit Suzuki with sowing the seeds that eventually grew into today's field of East Asian Buddhist studies; it is no accident that the study of Zen now holds such a prominent place within that field.[35]

Unlike their 19th century counterparts, this generation of Buddhist Studies scholars has significant experience in the practice of Buddhism, and even membership within its ecclesiastical ranks:

> In the first place, it is a fact that quite a few (certainly not all) of the younger generation of scholars now active in academia have at one time or another, either in Asia or North America, participated in the life of Buddhist monastics and/or lay communities. Such intimate involvement tends to raise the level of intensity in the debate over belief and objectivity, although again there is a double standard at play. [36]

This trend appears true also in Tibetological studies, where many of the prominent scholars founding programs of study concerned with Tibetan Buddhism were themselves monks, such as Jeffrey Hopkins who created the Tibetan Studies program at the University of Virginia-Arlington, and Robert Thurman, at Columbia University. Both programs have produced subsequent generation, most notably of which are Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Arthur E. Link Distinguished University Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan

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[34] Prebish, *Luminous Passage,* 180.
[35] T. Griffith Foulk. "Issues in the Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies: An Extended Review of *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought,* ed. Peter N. Gregory" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,* 113.
[36] Foulk, 112.

Studies at the University of Michigan, and Anne Klein, Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University.

"Buddhist Theology"

Although elements of Buddhist theology are purported to be eternal, the emergence of the term, "Buddhist theology," comes from wide range historical and sociological contingencies. This emergence did not take place within *Buddhist Theology* alone. When did this term begin to be used? What is the history of its usage? How did it win out above other possible terms? What connotations do its advocates seek to convey? I will address these questions in this section of the chapter.

Buddhist theology has developed in part because the study of Buddhism in the West came from the opposite direction than it did in the East. The Buddhist theology in the United States started text-critical and then a theological venue arose. Though not uniform in nature, the study of Buddhism in the Buddhist east started first with the traditional exegesis and exposition of Buddhist clergy, and usually toward the 20th century, text-critical methods were available to apply to scripture. "Buddhist theology" is not a translation/transliteration of a word found in the Buddhist canon languages. The term "Buddhist theology" appears first in Griffith Foulk's writing (1993). He is alerted to the presence of normative passions in study of Buddhism:

> The solution I propose is simply to refer to Buddhist treatments of enlightenment (bodhi), enlightened beings (buddhas), the path to enlightenment (marga), and so on, as Buddhist theology — understanding theology broadly as the study of divine things or religious truth as it is carried on within a normative tradition**.** This will allow us to reserve the term Buddhology for the "objective" (non-normative) study of Buddhism, including the history and present state of its social organizations, practices, literature, and systems of philosophy and theology. The scholars now called Buddhologists are, for the most part, actually engaged in this latter

> kind of study. Most, I believe, would be willing to accept my definition of Buddhology as broadly descriptive of their own field of research.[37]

Foulk's recommendation appears intellectually sound at first glance, but faces immediate difficulties when the neologism of "Buddhology" is examined comparatively and by extant dictionary usage. Although Foulk prefers to reserve the non-confessional study of Buddhism for the term "Buddhology", it appears that "Buddhology" is defined as precisely the opposite according to Merriam-Webster online Buddhology: Theology of the Deified Buddha.[38]

As Buddhology is a neologism mirror of *Christology*, the study of the nature of Christ, abandoning Buddhology altogether appears preferable. By prevailing definition, Buddhology is theology, and the Buddhist Studies scholar asks us to adopt usage for the term in contradiction to its root. Buddhist Studies and Buddhist Theology would be better.

Rita Gross' landmark *Buddhism After Patriarchy* was also published in 1993, and comes much closer to suggesting the usage of "theology" seen in *Buddhist Theology.* This is particularly germane as Gross described her work as one of "revalorization" of a feminist exegetical effort to emancipate a religion from misogyny. Gross proceeds in a "theological" effort, grounding her critiques of misogynist elements of the Buddhist tradition from within the Buddhist tradition itself. Gross argues that those Buddhist institutions and doctrines that degrade the spiritual potential of women are in fact inconsonant with Buddhist soteriology:

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[37] "Issues in the Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies", 112-113.
[38]Merriamwester. "Buddhology."Accessed March 6, 2017. https://www.merriamwester.com/dictionary/Buddhology?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.

> In this task, I will use the tools of the history of religions and the values of feminism to look at Buddhism, working as a Buddhist "theologian," if that word can carry an extended connotation in this non-theistic case. In this work, I do not intend to function mainly as a reporter or commentator on the opinions and works of others, nor will I function only as a replica of my Buddhist teachers, mimicking what they have said. I will work as a Buddhist engaged in world-construction, using all of the tools at my disposal. This stance is unusual for Western writers on Buddhist topics, some of whom claim that scholarship and world-construction are incompatible with each other. As I argue extensively in the appendix on the history of religions, such an attitude is riddled with contradictions and is outdated. To engage in such world-constructive work is a privilege long given to scholars writing about Christianity, Judaism, or even feminism, but long denied to Buddhist scholars. It is time to break this taboo.[39]

Finally, "Buddhist theology" as a term describing a form of Buddhist Studies, is an American invention. It does not appear to have arrived in the vocabulary of American scholars of Buddhism from either European or Asian scholarship on Buddhism. However, its adoption by foreign Buddhist Studies scholars of Buddhist religious persuasion is possible.

In conclusion, Buddhist theology is a recent taxonomy of American origin. While nearly identical academic enterprises exist in Buddhist Studies as it is undertaken in predominantly Buddhist countries, the inception of this term is referent to this comparatively recent advent in the study of Buddhism in the United States. From here, I will proceed to examine one of the most important veins Buddhist theology, feminist critiques and "re-valorizations" of Buddhism.

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[39] Rita Gross. *Buddhist After Patriarchy*: *A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism.* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 13.

2.5. Buddhist-Feminists: The Mothers of Buddhist theology

Feminist writers made the first foray into a Buddhist theology. The undeniable importance of three authors stands out in need of examination in the course of this dissertation, the late Rita Gross (1943-2015), Anne Klein, and Miranda Shaw. These writers sought to use feminism to correct, or "revalorize" Buddhism of its misogynist accretions. Interestingly, all three of the writers mentioned below practiced within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Since that form is given to scholarly discourse, it comes as little surprise that Buddhists linguistically empowered were the first to redress unwanted, and discordant, elements of Buddhism. Rita Gross (1993) explains eloquently "revalorization":

> Recognizing that our record of the past is always a selection from the past, [and] that the past is always constructed when it is recounted, feminist historians ask the embarrassing question of how scholars choose "relevant" data. Recognizing that history is never neutral and objective, but always reinforces certain values and perspectives, the feminist historian seeks a past that is not only accurate, but usable.[40]

[40] *Buddhism After Patriarchy,* 20.

Buddhism After Patriarchy

Rita Gross' *Buddhism After Patriarchy* (1993), hereafter *BAP,* was a landmark work that could be called the first point of departure for Buddhist theology. As the title indicates, *BAP* has its objective the "re-valorization" of Buddhism. "Re-valorization" is a feminist intellectual effort to amend and replace elements of a religion, or other system of thought, which contain misogynistic elements. The preceding contention is that the elements of the Buddhist tradition that are misogynistic are, in fact, at odds with the prevailing egalitarianism of the Buddha's teachings. After offering initiated readers a survey of Buddhist history, Gross organizes the Buddhist teachings according to the Tibetan schema of three vehicles, hinayāna, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna, evaluating each for the presence of misogyny. This is followed by feminist conclusions regarding the Buddhist tradition and a methodological appendix wherein Gross discusses the ethical dimensions of scholarship. This argument will play a larger role in her contributions to *Buddhist Theology.*

Gross argues that this work for necessary as neither Buddhists, nor Buddhologists, would do a feminist evaluation of Buddhism. To accomplish this task, Gross adopts a trinity of methodological approaches: Comparative Religion, Buddhist Studies, and Buddhist Theology. Gross argues that her purpose is to both recover a workable history of Buddhism. Rita Gross describes herself in the work as a "Buddhist theologian." This is appears to be the first time this term is used in English literature, and by rights, made Rita Gross the first American Buddhist theologian. Gross emphasizes that all three methods were necessary to proceed with historical accuracy, and feminist insight.

The first point of examination is the Early Buddhist tradition. Gross finds no fault in this period of Buddhism, as the Arahant ideal is equally open to both men and women. Buddhahood is not, at this point in Buddhist history the dominant soteriological preoccupation. Through the period in question, the Arahant ideal, unquestionable open to both sexes, is. Gross notes that the story of nun's' ordination is quite late in the history of the Pali Canon. Further, the eight special rules appeared to have a detrimental support, according to teachers who were nuns, actually acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy in the final dissolution of the nuns' ordination. Further, while the Pali Canon contains some negative appraisals of women in general, Gross sees the *Therīgāthā* as ample redress to this impression, replete as it is with tales of feminine spiritual triumph.

The Mahayana tradition *in toto* follows in Gross' evaluation. Gross notes that the Mahayana tradition contains a number of important female Buddhas and bodhisattvas, such as Guanyin, Prajñāpāramitā, and Śrīmālādevī. Gross also notes that the place of sex change, particular in the case of the Nāga princess of the Lotus Sutra, was introduced to unsettle monastic conservatives set against the possibility of female Buddha. The concept of emptiness affords some advantage for the reception of women in the Buddhist tradition. It does not validate the feminine as such, but merely displaces inequality, by claiming women are equal by virtue of the insubstantiality of impeding feminine traits. However, while some potential for feminine awakening is present, there still exist substantial barriers. Within East Asian Buddhism, nuns often see their monastic vocation as an attempt to earn a male rebirth in a future lifetime, hopefully the lifetime immediately subsequent to the present one.

The Vajrayāna tradition is the third object of Gross' evaluation. While noting that Yeshe Tsogyal (777-817 CE) represents a figure that attained full Buddhahood without the aforementioned miraculous sex changing, the preeminence of this figure appears to translate to little advantage for the impression of women's spirituality. Women in Tibetan culture are generally thought of as physically and intellectually inferior, and their religious aspirations are often motivated by the concern for attaining a future male rebirth. This is further aggravated by the absence of full ordination for nuns in the Tibetan tradition. This is balanced by comments attributed to Padmsambhava, who claimed women have a variety of advantages in the practice of meditation.

The three-yāna evaluation is followed by a feminist conclusion regarding the Buddhist tradition. Unlike feminist appraisals of the Abrahamic traditions, Buddhism is spared the need to find feminine counterparts to an otherwise male God. Further, Buddhist morality is not gender specific, and is not the product of a Divine Command theory of ethics that would rendering it resistant to modification. Gross notes this as feminist who had formerly worked within Judaism as a religious tradition, saying these existed as substantial barriers to addressing misogyny.

Gross also argues that both Buddhism and feminism have the amelioration of stress as their point of departure, and each could benefit from the insights of the other. Each requires facing the source of the problem; one must go against the grain of common assumption. The Buddhist analysis of the human dilemma begins with the first of the Four Noble Truths. Feminism begins with insight into patriarchy, often invisible, so Feminism can help Buddhists note where misogyny remains a part of the tradition. In

turn, Buddhists, by way of their meditation training, can aid feminists in remaining calm and clear when facing gross examples of patriarchy and misogyny.

The concluding methodological appendices also contain Gross' theological innovations. She notes in her work in the history of religion, androcentrism dominates the scholarship, and has three particular problems associated with it. First, "man" and humanity become conflated. This in turn leads to maleness coming to act as place holder for all humanity, effectively masking the differences in experience between men and women. It also neglects the socialization process that differs between the sexes. She suggests an "androgynous methodology" which would include the perspectives and experiences of both sexes within a single piece of scholarship.

In the second appendix, Gross discusses the intersection between history of religions and theology. Gross explains that she describes herself as an "engaged historian of religion," and argues that the study of religion must go beyond the collection and arrangement of data about religion. It ought to include a reflective dimension, and have meaningful social implications. This proceeds naturally from Gross' stance as a feminist scholar, but this perception of scholarship will also be a prevailing theme in her contributions in *Buddhist Theology*. Gross concludes by noting that the topic of religion usually finds a methodological divide that rests upon disciplinary lines, the descriptive concerns of Comparative Religion, Buddhist Studies, and the prescriptive, normative impulse within theology. Rebutting the assumption of objective, Gross argues that *all* scholarship is motivated, echoing the conclusions of postmodern theorists who claim that all statements are, by definition, normative.

BAP represents the first work in American Buddhology to adopt a theological voice, while utilizing the historicism of Buddhist Studies, and the elastic utility of Comparative Religion. Gross' work steps beyond description by actively seeking to amend misogynist Buddhist errors via a feminist evaluation. However, the correctives suggested are *theological* in nature by virtue of the point of comparison from which they come. The historically grounded is evaluated by feminist insight but the change to proceed comes from a Buddhist theological perspective. What is wrong with misogyny is not erroneous by feminist appraisal alone; these events of misogyny are so because they are at odds with the core of Buddhism itself. *BAP* could be thought of as an example of "Buddhist theology" before *Buddhist Theology.*

Passionate Enlightenment

Miranda Shaw's work *Passionate Enlightenment* (1994) also is an effort to re-valorize the record of women Buddhism, in particular the Tantric tradition. Miranda Shaw's work seeks to correct scholarly consensus on Indian and Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. The scholarly consensus is that Tantra as a movement only appears to advocate for men's spiritual potential, but in actual practice, is merely another religious tradition which subordinates women's spiritual potential to that of men's. That is to say, the only role women played in Tantra was to act as an aid to the spiritual accomplishments of men.

By utilizing new hermeneutical principles in the reading of Tantric literature, Shaw asserts that Tantra is in fact guided by a core principle of an egalitarian view towards the spiritual potential of both genders. Shaw argues that the earlier scholarly consensus was arrived at by an *ad hoc* scholarly reading which negated the value of passages in Tantric literature that made a case for women's spiritual potential.

Part of Shaw's strategy was to assume that women were no passive agents acted upon by history, but were also actors that played a direct and indirect role in the creation of Tantric literature. The older reading was to understand women as merely passive recipients who were acted upon, and that texts only reflected the religious impressions of men. Like *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, *Passionate Enlightenment* is a feminist revalorization of Buddhism, though focused more narrowly on late Pala Dynasty (8^{th} – 12^{th} Century) Tantric scripture. Shaw believes that a number of fundamental misimpressions about Tantra and women's place within this movement are due to

androcentric assumptions, Christian theology, and notions of self-reflective Cartesian dualism.

Prevailing within the scholarship related to Indian Tantra is the assumption that this movement, like others preceding it, is essential misogynistic. Shaw argues this is a result selective reading of Tantric material, and *a priori* assumptions about Indian religion that make it impossible to conclude otherwise, no matter the volume of countervailing material. Precisely, she addresses the misimpressions that within Tantric practice that women were only passive participants, never the authors of Tantric works or commentaries, and only low-caste women participated in Tantric practice.

In contrast to these assumptions, Shaw utilizes both new translations, and new interpretations of primary and secondary Tantric sources, to demonstrate the error of each position. Tantra, Shaw argues, is an egalitarian movement, evidencing the full promise of Mahayana soteriology, across castes and even professions thought unqualified for Buddhists, such as weapon makers, or butchers. Shaw sees Tantra as particularly gynocentric, benefiting from the Hindu Śāktaḥ tradition. Reversing the idea that women were subservient, women played an important role as teachers, authors, and even gate-keepers for male aspirants to Tantric practice. While the pre-eminence of women of low caste remains, within the Tantric tradition, women were accorded comparably higher status than they would in other contemporaneous religious orders, notably when compared with Buddhist nuns who would have been enjoined by the eight special rules. Shaw also notes that the low caste status of particular female teachers was necessary to liberate higher-caste, male partners of their attachment to caste pride.

Shaw also addresses the perception that "magic" or supernormal powers are a superfluous element in Tantric practice. While Buddhist soteriology proper notes that the acquisition of these powers should not, on its own, be the impulse to Buddhist practice, these powers have played a Buddhist pedagogy role in all three movements in Buddhism—the Early Buddhist traditions, the Mahayana Buddhist traditions, and the Tantric Buddhist traditions. This is perhaps most notable feature of Tantric hagiography, where such abilities play a seminal role in establishing faith in the aspirant to the respective guru.

One widely-seen phenomenon in scholarship on Tantric art and imagery is the appending Jungian archetypal interpretation of this material. Shaw notes that this stands in marked contrast to Buddhist understandings of this imagery, and imposes upon this art a range of occidental assumptions about deity, self, dualism and symbolism which act to occlude and misdirect students of this art. Buddhist Tantric art requires a tantric reading, one that is free from androcentrism and occidental assumptions about self, sex, salvation, and symbolism.

Passionate Enlightenment concludes with three areas of observation about Shaw's study. Reiterating her first point, scholars working in the area of Tantric Buddhism should acknowledge that discussions about art remain dominated by occidental psychological assumptions, and these should be retired in place of better, non-androcentric Buddhological research on this art. This, in turn, would stand to redress other biases in understanding Tantric art, particularly longstanding, 19th-century Christian impressions of sex in art. From this can arise a sound, Buddhist appreciation of this art and imagery.

Shaw also notes that, beyond the study of Tantra, the universal, *a priori* proclamation about the place of women in Indian religion is an essentially non-academic proposition that is impossible to refute. No amount of particular instances can override a universal statement; this in fact can only be rebuttable by a counter-statement, also equally universal, and essentialist in nature. This claim is also contingent on another proposition with a good deal of academic inertia, that Indian religion is, *in toto*, the product of elite, male construction. Shaw concludes that both of these can be addressed by what could be thought of as a maneuver in Buddhist theology. These *a priori* assumptions would be characterized by Buddhist logic as instances of *svabhava*, examples of self-existing structures that Buddhist logicians regard as self-refuting propositions. Shaw recommends that Buddhologists adopt this as a methodological adjunct, to insure that essentialism is not present in either research hypotheses or conclusions.

Passionate Enlightenment, like *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, represents important work, with strong theological motivations. Like the preceding work, it is intended to be a corrective to prevailing Buddhological conclusions about Tantra. We now turn to Anne Klein's work.

Meeting the Great Bliss Queen

Anne Klein's work, like that of Gross and Shaw, is also a meeting of Buddhist thought and feminism, but it is not a re-valorization as such. In *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen* (1995), Klein sees Buddhist thought and practice, particularly the Sādhanā of Yeshe Tsogyal, as a remedy for the apparently intractable bifurcation in feminist thought and in the Christo-Cartesian notion of self. Buddhism can serve as a *modus operandi* for feminists, whose theoretical structures find limitation in their ability to mediate a dynamic, meaningful, but non-essential sense of self.

Klein explains that feminists are divided between two theoretical poles that limit the ability of feminists to articulate a sense of self that operable for concerns of identity and social transformation. The first camp are essentialists, who claim that feminine identity is established by physical gender, with corresponding fundamental character traits. While this grounds feminine identity, it does leave womanhood fixed. This came quickly under attack by postmodernists who claimed that the self was a social contingent. While this did allow for a durable sense of self, postmodern analysis also negated a salient notion of the feminine, forestalling the feminist project. Klein sees the Buddhist notion of self, as offering a viable solution, both in theory and in practice. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness can help feminists to see the limitations at work in both polarities of feminist thought.

Beyond feminism, Klein notes how Western and Tibetan notions of self differ at a number of fundamental levels. The singularity of the Cartesian self, and self as opposed to God in Christian caricature does not have a corollary in Tibetan culture or Buddhism. The Tibetan sense of self is polyvalent, admitting layers of indemnity that include a

myriad of prior rebirths. Isolated in one lifetime, and ontologically different than God, the Abrahamic sense of self is forever limited in time and space, and ultimately unable to transcend the boundaries it faces. These limitations are not a problem for the Tibetan sense of self, which does not stand in opposition to the remainder of the world ontologically. Further, the Tibetan sense of self is understood through Buddhist philosophy to be cognitively, ontologically, and evolutionarily non-dual with the heights of Buddhist attainment. There is no "Great Divide" in this sense of self, in contrast to its benighted, Abrahamic counterpart.

Anne Klein's work also represents an important effort utilize Buddhism as a theoretical and methodological answer to questions present in feminist thought and action. Klein, like Shaw and Gross, goes beyond description in theological prescription, by offering a Buddhist solution to a feminist dilemma. The work guides readers, both feminist and Buddhist, or both, through to a possible solution in the Buddhist notion of emptiness, allowing for a viable and yet malleable sense of self. The Buddhist sense of self is amenable to change, and to allowing for enough ontology to maintain salience for a sense of identity sufficient for social action. Feminists can proceed with a changing self, without the sense of the feminine undergoing total atomization under postmodern analysis.

The Great Bliss Queen herself represents a practice modality in which the three varieties of non-dualism noted by Klein find expression in a single cognitive activity. With mindfulness as a guiding basis towards emptiness, not the negation or reification of self, the Great Bliss Queen Sadhana is a meeting place where the transformative

possibility of the self can be actualized towards a greater end in universal compassion. This compassion can be cultivated incrementally, in harmony with our relative selves.

The three authors reviewed above represent the first Buddhological voices to make a foray into the terrain of Buddhist theology. Their works were contoured for feminist insight and corrective, but the answer arrived at in each work was not feminist alone. Gross; evaluation of Buddhism was to right Buddhism via Buddhism. Shaw's work also sought to free Buddhism from occlusion by occidental misimpression, and give a portrait of women in Tantra per the Buddhist understanding. Klein sought to add to the conversation about self in feminism by means of Buddhist insight. Feminism could be thought of as a diagnosis, but the cure in each case was a Buddhist normative answer.

It is also interesting to note that each of the authors finds her object of study in the Tibetan tradition. This logo-friendly form of Buddhism stands in contrast to the virtual logo-phobia that appears to inhabit much of the Japanese Zen tradition. It is little wonder, then, why the first voices in American Buddhist theology were scholars working from within the Tibetan tradition. This tendency will also extend beyond into the range of authors in *Buddhist Theology* and the topics addressed therein.

The range of Buddhist theological activity finds its beginning in feminism but it does not end here. In another array of three works, Buddhologists and Buddhists will contend for the ground of what constitutes proper Buddhism. I will turn now to examine them.

2.6. “Buddhist theology” before *Buddhist Theology*.

In addition to the work of these feminist Buddhist scholars, an equally fruitful location to examine the presence of theological tensions within the work of Buddhist Studies scholars is in American Buddhist Studies. Buddhologists and Buddhists who have also examined tensions in and around Buddhism include the authors of *Prisoners of Shangri-La, Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* and *Zen at War*. In the first, Donald Lopez evaluates misunderstandings that remain about, and make popular, Tibetan Buddhism. In the next work, Japanese priests and Buddhologists attack the grounds of Japanese Zen in critiquing *Hongaku Shiso,* dividing both scholars in the East and West on this topic central to soteriology in nearly all forms of Japanese Buddhism. In the last, Brian Victoria, Sōtō priest and scholar, excoriates his own Buddhist tradition, seeking the truth of Zen in wartime Japan. I will address each of these works and their place in “Buddhist theology” before the publication of *Buddhist Theology*.

Prisoners of Shangri-La

The nineteen-nineties saw the publication of a number of works germane to present concerns, though perhaps none are so potent as *Prisoners of Shangri-La* (1998). Donald Lopez’s work examines the creation, perpetuation, and resilience of seven prominent myths about Tibet. The examination of many of these myths, such as continued use of “Lamaism” for Tibetan Buddhism into the 20th Century, and the incorrigible mistranslation of mantra “Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ” as “Oh Hail Jewel in the Lotus!” garnered little reaction from scholars and scholar-practitioners in the multitude of reviews that followed publication, however, the locus of theological tensions came later in the work.

Prisoners of Shangri-La so stirred the academic community to offer no less than eleven reviews, a panel dedicated to the work at the American Academy of Religion, and even response from scholars and lay-Buddhists in *Tricycle* magazine. Readers interested in evaluating the historicity of Lopez's work should refer to the range of reviews in the bibliography of this dissertation. The concerns of the present work are confined to the theological issues surrounding the reception of this book. Before moving to examine the normative tensions between these three, a summary of the book is in order. After examining the points presented in this work, I will proceed to evaluate the aforementioned reviews with an eye to the theological underpinnings at work in assertions and claims. I will then distill these to arrive at whether or not some general patterns are at work in the normative and theological concerns forwarded by scholars, scholar-practitioners, and lay-Buddhists.

Prisoners of Shangri-La is divided into seven chapters, each addressing a particular myth. The topics addressed are: "The Name" treating the term "Lamaism;" "The Book" on the history and exegesis of English language translation of the *Bardo Thodol,* or the Tibetan Book of the Dead; "The Eye" about the works of the Cyril Hoskins (1910-1981), who wrote the bestselling book on Tibet while en-souled by Tuesday Labsong Rampa; "The Spell" about "Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ" as the misbegotten "Jewel-in-the-Lotus;" "The Art," a history of the peculiar, occident exegesis applied to Tibetan art; "The Field," an appraisal of the normative influence on formation of scholarly training in Tibetan Buddhist Studies; and finally, "The Prison" about the agendas for which Westerners and Tibetans continue to use these myths to promote and

maintain. Each chapter will receive a brief summary here, before I comment on the book's overall significance.

"The Name," the first chapter, addresses the term "Lamaism," its history, and application. The etymology of the term is pre-Buddhist, "La" meaning spirit, and "ma" meaning highest. This term became the Tibetan word chosen to represent the Sanskrit *guru*. Tibetan Buddhism itself was first understood through the lens of Catholic missionaries, who saw it as either the deteriorated remnants of the efforts of the mythical Prester John, or the product of Demonic Plagiarism. The latter was proposed by the 1st century Christian exegete Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) who claimed that similarities between the narrative of Jesus in New Testament, and the deities of the Mystery Religions present in the Roman Empire. Protestant missionaries grasped at the comparison between Roman Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism as proof of the dilapidated state this Buddhism had reached. 19th century Buddhologists and Comparative Religion scholars agree on this point, that Tibetan Buddhism represented a sad, final form of Buddhism, riddled by the sacerdotalism the Buddha railed against in his own teaching. "Lamaism" was the natural term to apply. Although debunked in the 19th century as an Occidental fabrication, "Lamaism" can still be see in usage in exhibits on Tibetan art, and even occasionally by Tibetan Buddhist teachers themselves.

The second chapter, named "The Book," discusses five English-language translations of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the non-Tibetan lens through which each has been viewed. The title "The Tibetan Book of the Dead" was coined by Walter Y. Evan-Wentz, whose translation (1956) saw five editions, and evidences Theosophy in his interpretation of rebirth in his commentary. Thirty years later, Timothy Leary's version

rendered the sequence of bardos as analogies to an LSD trip. Chogyam Trunpa's 1975 translation rendered the realms of rebirth as psychological states. Sogyal Rinpoche's 1994 *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* was more a compilation of perennialism than a comment on the *Bardo Thodol*. And finally, Robert Thurman's (1994)translation argues the text is a "scientific" account of the process of death. Lopez concludes the chapter by noting that this Tibetan mortuary text has been understood in the West by nearly every interpretative framework, except a Tibetan one.

"The Eye," the third chapter of *Prisoners of Shangri-La,* concerns the life of 20th century British working class man, Cyril Hoskins, who claims to have become Tuesday Labsong Rampa, when he became host to this Tibetan Lama. As "Rampa" Cyril Hoskin wrote three books about his experience as a lama in Tibet. The first, *The Third Eye,* remains the most popularly sold work on Tibet, remaining in print today. Wildly popular and translated to a myriad other languages, Tibetologists found the work fraudulent, to the extent of attempting to communicate with Rampa in Tibetan, which he claimed he did not understand. Hugh Richardson went so far as to read the book to a Tibetan lama, who said the work was a fabrication. Lopez notes that this work played an important part in inspiring many scholars to take up a career in Tibetology.

The fourth chapter addresses the history of (mis-)translation associated with Tibetan Buddhism's most ubiquitous mantra, *Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ*. Exacting translation of this mantra was a driving intellectual preoccupation for occidental visitors to Tibet, whether the Society of Jesus or British envoys attempting to gain access to the court of the Dalai Lama. This history revolves around a persistent misreading of the *Padme* in the locative rather than vocative case, rendering the center of the mantra "Jewel in the Lotus"

rather than the more appropriate approximation of "Jewel-Lotus." This history also contains scholarly attempts to right this error in case, but these were ultimately to little effect. The persistence of this grammatical problem extends well into the present, with a range of 20th and 21st century Buddhists and scholars continuing this misreading. Lopez notes how the voice of scholars appeared to be neglected in favor of more popular voices. He notes that this flawed reading even finds advancement by the Dalai Lama himself.

"The Art," the fifth chapter of Lopez's work, addresses the history of interpretation that has been applied to Tibetan Buddhist icons and images. Not unlike the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* treated in chapter two, Tibetan Buddhist art has been seen explanation of its content from a wide range of occidental lenses, but never a Tibetan one. The earliest scholars understood the wrathful images of deities as externalization of Tibetan anxiety about the harsh Tibetan environment. This was to be supplanted in time for Jungian understanding of the elements of Tibetan art. Deities were universally reduced to symbols, in contrast to their reception by Tibetans, who regarded them as external, ontological, substantive beings. Mandalas also saw a range of interpretations that bore no relationship to how these images actually utilized in Tibetan Buddhist liturgical practice. Lopez notes that scholars such as Robert Thurman have played a role in perpetuating these misunderstandings into the present.

Chapter six, "The Field," features Lopez's appraisal of the field of Tibetan Buddhist Studies in the United States. First he notes that, in contrast East Asian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism is a latecomer as a topic in American scholarly journals. Following this, Lopez notes how Tibetan models of education have impacted doctoral education at Columbia University and the University of Virginia, Arlington. This

connection can be seen from the monastic pasts of Robert Thurman and Jeffery Hopkins, prior to their graduate work leading to careers in the American professoriate. Lopez concludes by noting how this played a role in placing the Gelugpa exegesis as a prominent topic of academic inquiry.

The final chapter of *Prisoners of Shangri-La* addresses the continuity of these myths into the 20th century. These myths are not simply ancient detritus, unwittingly brought forward through time. In fact, these myths find application in maintaining religious agendas propagated by the very highest levels of Tibetan Buddhist clergy, and the members of the American professoriate itself. Lopez notes the then-current Shugden controversy within the Gelugpa order. The Nechung oracle had informed the Dalai Lama that one of the foremost protector deities of the Gelugpa order, was in fact a malignant being who should no longer be propitiated. Lopez claims that both the Dalai Lama and Robert Thurman, Jey Tsongkhapa Professor of Into-Tibetan Studies at Columbia University. Lopez argues that the Dalai Lama has become a proponent of "Buddhist modernism" itself a Buddhist reaction to 19th century Occidental critique. A prominent facet of this polemic is to reduce Buddhism to the virtue of compassion alone, which Lopez notes is a pronounced component of the Dalai Lama's presentation of Buddhism to European and American audiences. While this appears otherwise unalarming, Lopez notes that the promotion of the Kālachakra Tantra initiation contains truly malignant theological implications.

The Kālachakra Tantra, composed in the eleventh century, was at the very Buddhist presence in India for nearly millennia to come. Buddhism, besieged by Islamic invaders, created an eschatological drama that becomes that the contents of Kālachakra

Tantra. Central to the narrative of this apocalyptic scenario is a coalition between Hindu and Buddhist divinity, and drive out the offending Abrahamic forces. At the end of the battle, all beings on earth are converted to Buddhism and subsequently attain awakening, and abide in the heavenly kingdom of Shambhala. Those who undertake the initiation into the Kālachakra Tantra will emerge in a future life as warriors who will fight this final battle preceding the Buddhist deliverance of the world. The Dalai Lama was noted as saying that he would like to give the Kālachakra initiation at Beijing. Lopez notes that the militancy of this Buddhist text lends an uncomfortable edge to the Dalai Lama's comment; that Beijing is the capital of the most recent challenger to Buddhism in Tibet. Lopez argues that the Dalai Lama has reduced Tibet and her people to Tibetan Buddhism alone, and in so doing, his activities act to work against Tibetan efforts for independence. This leads to the conclusion that the Dalai Lama is in fact promoting the continued existence of Tibetan Buddhism over and above the survival and well-being of the Tibetan people.

Although now more than twenty years old, *Prisoners of Shangri-La* still represents a *tour de force* in examining the peculiar refraction through which Tibet, her people, and religious tradition have passed to the Occidental mind. All elements of Tibetan culture passed through a prism wrought of Roman Catholic inversion, demotion, and elevation via 19th century Buddhological assumptions about "Original" Buddhism and Theosophy. This served to produce a scintillating simulacrum, as much an Occidental daughter as an Oriental son, entertaining and detaining while misrepresenting and misinforming. These myths were constituted as much by the desires of seekers and dreamers as anything to do with Tibet proper. However, they remain today through active

propagation by both Tibetan clergy and members of the American intelligentsia. Lopez insists that to abandon these myths is duty both to truth, and to the efforts of the Tibetan people who continue to struggle.

As noted above, the publication of *Prisoners of Shangri-La* was met by a flurry of response from the academy, including eleven reviews and one panel at the American Academy of Religion. Lopez responded in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, largely to the reviews written by Geramno and Thurman, the latter receiving the majority of his rebuttal. Here I will briefly examine these reviews and draw out the normative points with theological implications central to these exchanges.

The overall apprehension of *Prisoners of Shangri-La* was positive insofar as it was drawn by the first six chapters. However, it was the seventh chapter, "The Prison," focusing on life and application of "Shangri-La" by Tibetans and Westerner enthusiasts that drew the most heated responses. Even the most laudatory review, written by Matthew Kapstein, notes: "[I wish] Lopez would have just written straight autobiography—exposing more of himself and of his own motivations—rather than maintaining, as happens here, the rhetorical posture of academic distance uneasily mingled with personal reminiscence." Other reviewers followed in noting what might be characterized as an extra-academic agenda at work in Lopez's piece.

> The book purports to treat the manner in which representations of Tibet have tended to group themselves into extremes—what Lopez calls a "play of opposites." That is, the project is ostensibly to explore some of the ways in which "Tibet" has functioned as a cipher within Euro-American discourse for either (a) an irredeemably demonic inverse of Western values, or (b) a redeeming, angelic source of healing for a West whose own values have become inverted. Lopez disavows any normative interest in discourse about Tibet, claiming that "the point is not to debunk ... our most cherished notions ... [in order] to more accurately depict what Tibet was or is 'really like'. . . [but rather] why these myths persist and how they

> continue to circulate unchallenged" (p. 9). Insofar as he maintains this approach, Lopez's analyses are fairly successful. Roughly as one progresses from beginning to end, however, this value-neutral project becomes a distant memory, and the quality of the work degenerates accordingly.[41]

One such review rebuked Lopez for the insinuation that "there is a Tibetan plot to unleash a Shambala-style blitzkrieg to save the world for Buddhism." Other authors took Lopez to task for negating Tibetan agency, relegating the Tibetan people to the "subaltern." However none of the reviews was as heated as the one penned by Robert Thurman, Jey Tsongkhapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Columbia University. Thurman's review fields a defense of the Tibetan people and their plight, going so far to argue that the title could be juxtaposed with *Prisoners of Zion* as a bald example of the grotesque nature of the range of Lopez' claims about Tibetan culpability the maintenance of these misreading of their culture.[42] Thurman presses the point further with the claim that Donald Lopez's work demonstrates that is a sympathizer with the Communist Chinese; the claim of the PRC that their efforts were motivated by the desire to liberate the Tibetan people from a theocracy of sacerdotal feudalism. Lopez' own response dismisses these claims with a damning counter accusation aimed at Professor Thurman, that the former had read nothing in the book than the dust cover summary, and inferred much more from the title.

Wedemeyer's own comments are particularly helpful in locating an imbalance in Lopez's scholarly impartiality:

> Of particular note is the equanimity with which he treats the various players in this drama—from Hoskin himself to Snellgrove and

[41] Christian K. Wedemeyer. "Review: *Prisoners of Shangri-La* by Donald S. Lopez, Jr." *History of Religions* 41, no. 2 (2001): 186.
[42] Robert Thurman. "Review: Critical Reflections on Donald S. Lopez Jr.'s Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69, no. 1 (2001): 191-201.

> Richardson—an equanimity unfortunately lacking elsewhere in the book…In particular, Lopez fails to maintain his detached, ironic-satiric mode of looking at discourse merely as discourse. Instead, he frequently falls ("ironically" enough) into a (romantic) "in fact" mode that betrays a normative intent…[43]

While the reviews of *Prisoners* went a long way to exposing some underlying normative agendas in the work, I feel these have been largely overlooked. Those that are important to the present study are those that have implications for the theology of Buddhism itself. *Prisoners* is an interesting example wherein the case for the imprimatur of the professoriate in matters of truth in Buddhism is strongly established. His "Nicene Creed" for emerging Tibetologists is particularly telling:

> Unlike Sariputra, the scholars accorded into Tibetology by Rampa must declare that what they learned in their academic study of Tibet was that he, the? person who called them to their careers, Tuesday Lobsong Rampa was a liar. [Or mentally ill?] In order to become professional scholars, they had to renounce any interest in that which served as the precondition for their eventual scholarly identity. It is, indeed, the very reading of Rampa that ultimately brings about the death of Rampa. Some might see this as a case of killing the father, but it might be more accurately described in the Freudian sense as a disavowal or denial (*Verleugnung*), a mode of defense in which the subject refuses to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception: in this case the scholarly fondly remembers Rampa for his "good effects," refusing to acknowledge that he represents everything that the scholars most loathe, that it was his fraud that brought them to their profession.[44]

While one can be sure that scholars would find little to object to in Lopez' call for scholars to renounce Rampa's work as a source of reliable history, Lopez' requirement that all interest in works inspiring aspiring Tibetologists is a farther reaching request. While Rampa's works can be dismissed by both Tibetologists and practitioners of

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[43] Wedemeyer, "Review," 187.
[44] Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 113.

Tibetan Buddhism, Lopez' request holds within it ontological and epistemological assumptions to which a practicing Buddhist may take exception.

> And because I had read a sufficient number of books, I was awarded a doctorate some years ago, and with the proper documents in my possession to prove my identity had been given the power to consecrate and condemn the products of others, and the power to initiate others into this knowledge. This power, the power to speak with both authority and as an authority that is, the power to bestow value, had been passed on to me by my teachers, who had turn received it from their teachers.[45]

This account of the transmission of sacerdotal, academic authority neglects a lynchpin element. A complete academic product, such as monograph or article, has its value instantiated not by scholarly pronouncement, *argumentum ad verecundiam,* but rather by a process of peer-review, whereby it is evaluated by a community of scholars. This aside, there are immediate limits to the scholar pronouncements. While doctoral training is sufficient for the best historical conjecture, a PhD does not necessarily confer soteriological knowledge, or theological insights. When scholars veer into this domain, they are theological participants, and any appeal to objectivity and historicism becomes seriously challenged. At this point, those who seek to describe are prescribing.

As mentioned above, the third chapter of this dissertation will be dedicated to the theoretical concerns surrounding descriptive, normative, and theological modes, but here it is sufficient to note that one particular voice about Buddhologists proffers the professoriate as a point of definitive authority on Buddhist matters. This is a relatively new voice to the conversation about Buddhism, throughout its long exegetical history. However, whatever its methods and epistemological advantages, the professorate is also curtailed by strong concerns for objectivity and historical grounding, which may incline

[45] Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-Lla,* 104-5.

against soteriological intellectual efforts. From here I will examine a work centered on the meeting of Buddhist Studies and Buddhist theology.

Pruning the Bodhi Tree

Invariably, Buddhist theological concerns find themselves within the American Buddhological discourse. This was the case with the publication of *Pruning the Bodhi* (1997), in which a range of Western Buddhologists sought to evaluate and respond to a trend in Japanese Buddhology, *hihan bukkyō*, or Critical Buddhism. Two prominent Japanese Buddhologists and Sōtō Zen Buddhist priests, Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, had made the alarming claim that *hongaku shiso*, the ontological basis for soteriology in Japanese Buddhism, was in fact not Buddhist, and thousands of years of Japanese Buddhists had been misled.

This "nature of original enlightenment" was an East Asian reoccurrence of the notion of *Ātman* so fiercely argued against by Buddhists of all stripes. This misstep first took place in Chinese yogācāra, when Paramārtha's (499-569 CE) translations prevailed over Xuanzang's (602-664 CE) more reliable efforts. This ontology has been at work in justifying discrimination against minorities in Japan, promoting nationalism, Japan-ism, and Japanese ethnocentrism. It also acted to suppress critical thought and exulting non-conceptuality as an intellectual panacea. The authors locate some of the moment for this ontology in Taoism as well as tendencies within the Buddhist yogācāra and *Tathāgatagarbha* thought. The answer to this crisis in Buddhist theology is located in the *Mahavagga* and the notions of an-atman and co-dependent origination. Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō claim that *true* Buddhism is criticism alone. Buddhist positions that conclude with answers regarding infallible natures, of the negation of language, are not properly Buddhist under this criterion. In addition to *hongaku shiso*, non-dualism in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and Taoism also run aground this critique. *Hongaku*

also plays a role in making Shinto ontologically absolute, and by extension, *Nihonjinron*, a theory arguing for the uniqueness and supremacy of the Japanese people. This critique extends to the Japanese notion of *Wa*, or harmony, which has been used to gloss over injustice in the name of cohesion. All of these forms of Monism are called *Ātmavāda*, and are viewed as covert entry of the Upanishadic thought into Buddhism.

The concern is that *hongaku* thought is at work in perpetuating discrimination and injustice, because it allows for no possibility for ethics establishing right and wrong. The critique was spurred on by use of notion of Buddha-nature discrimination against the *burakumin*, who were thought to possess an inferior form of Buddha-nature. Interest in this topic culminated in a panel at the 1993 American Academy of Religion conference entitled "Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyo)*: Issues and Responses to a New Methodological Movement." This matters outside of Japanese Buddhist studies because the debate over Critical Buddhism touches on a wide range of issues germane to the academic study of Buddhism: religious commitment, social activism, and methodology.

Sōtō Zen was prompted to action because of the "Machida Incident," in which Machida Muneo, president of the Buddhist Federation of Japan, and secretary general of Sōtō Zen, said there was no social discrimination in Japan. This inspired a fierce rebuttal from *Burakumin* groups, traditionally discriminated against by virtue of their ancestors' professions, often involving butchery or tanning. A secondary contextual point was the mid-1980s milieu when these papers were written - with Reagan in a second term as U.S. President, and inside Japan, some concerns about Japan-ism, and the return of totalitarianism and militarism. A number of visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers was understood to minimize military atrocities Japan committed against her

neighbors during WWII and to exacerbate foreign relations. Third, Japanese scholars of Buddhism often have the dual role of priest and professor. In the latter commitment, they often act as public intellectuals, and write works for public consumption.

Pruning the Bodhi Tree itself is divided into three sections. The first addresses the issues surrounding Critical Buddhism. It contains the work of the Japanese Critical Buddhists themselves, but also responses from Western authors. The second addresses the core concern of the controversy, whether or not original enlightenment is, or is not, properly Buddhist. The third part addresses social implications of this discussion.

For present purpose, it is not necessary to rehearse the arguments here, but it is important to note this *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* represents an effort in Buddhist theology. This is particularly notable in Sallie King's contribution where she comments with unmistakable theological commitment, "Buddha-nature is *Impeccably* Buddhist." King piece is a classical Buddhist exegesis of Paramārtha's translations of the *Buddha-Nature Treatise* to defend position that Tathāgatagarbha fits acceptably within the range of Buddhist orthodoxy. Responding to the central criticism of the Critical Buddhists, that Buddha-nature is incompatible with co-dependent origination, King addresses this first, leading with a citation from the *Buddha-Nature Treatise*:

> For example, what formerly is a seed subsequently produces a grain plant. The "former" and "subsequent" stages of this grain are neither one (the same) nor two (different), neither exist nor do not exist. If they were one (the same), then there would be no "former" and "subsequent." If they were different, then what was originally grain could subsequently be a bean. Therefore, they are neither the same nor different…
>
> Therefore we say that there being no own-nature is like the former and subsequent (stages of a) plant. It is neither one (i.e., eternally the same) nor different (i.e., discontinuous between former and subsequent stages) and (therefore) is able to functional broadly and variously.[46]

[46] *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism.* eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, 177.

King then offers an exegesis of this passage:

> Note that the argument conveyed in this passage is composed of concepts from pratītyasamutpāda thought. This dynamic type of argument in which the emphasis is upon causation: this being the case, that follows. Note that this is precisely because the world is conceived as dynamic, as a series of processes, rather than constructed of entities, that life as we? know it is possible: plants and processes?, not entities, that grow in an orderly fashion from seed to fruit; this is classic pratītyasamutpāda thought. It is in this context that the author is able is clarify his concept of Buddha-nature. Note well that the latter is not a static entity: just like the plant, it is neither the same nor different over time – because, like the plant, it is not an entity, but a process. Note that its functioning is made possible precisely by the fact that it is not an entity but a process functioning in an orderly fashion within the world of cause and effect. Finally, not that Buddha-nature being described in terms of its function. Thus far, there is no conflict between pratītyasamutpāda and Buddha-nature thought.[47]

King's offers a full defense of the notion that Buddha-nature is properly Buddhist. This is the point at which *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* represents, at least in part, a contribution to Buddhist theology in the United States. Beyond description, her assertion is normative, and properly theological by virtue of its grounding in scriptural exegesis. This is undertaken to defend a Buddhist doctrine, not merely to ground it historically, and/or describe its elements. In a very real sense, King is making a contribution to modern Buddhist discourse in the United States, and by gentle extension, Japan as well.

From here, I will examine what could be thought of as the most provocative work produced in the late 20th century, for both scholars and practitioners of Buddhism. Printed with a second edition with a new rebuttal to all the attention this work received by both academics in reviews and AAR panels, and practitioners responding via *Tricycle* Magazine, *Zen at War* recorded the rise of Japanese nationalism, and the role of Japanese Zen Buddhist clergy of the highest ecclesiastical levels, in contributing to a Buddhist

[47] *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* 177.

justification for the violence leveraged against China and Korea during the Second World War. This excoriating treatment was made more pointed as Brian Victoria, both a Sōtō Zen Buddhist priest, and a scholar of Japanese Buddhism, authored it.

Zen at War

To the horror and astonishment of many American Zen practitioners, many of their hallowed Zen ancestors had played a role in furnishing Imperial Japan with a Buddhist "Just War" theory. These teachers had been the source of Zen lineages for the most prominent American Zen teachers, such as Robert Aitken and Bernard Glassman. This work was produced no less than an ordained Sōtō priest and scholar Brian Victoria. The book provoked a range of heated responses from American Zen practitioners, and became a part of American Buddhist theological discourse.

Zen At War, hereafter *ZAW*, traces the growth of Buddhist ideological contributions to Japanese nationalism from the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912), when Buddhism was under attack from nativists—Christian educated, Japanese elite—and the growing body of Japanese scientists. The opponents of Buddhism made the case that Buddhism was a feudal, archaic tradition that had only acted to delay the emergence of Japan into modernity. Further, argued Shinto-nativists, it was unwelcome Chinese continental artifice, at odds with the Japanese spirit. Buddhism rose like a veritable phoenix from the flames of heresy to the glories of martyrdom. Yoking the momentum of the destructions of temples, Japanese Buddhists—Pure Land, Tendai, and Zen—had found a momentary unity in their plight, and proclaimed their loyalty to Japan and Her Chrysanthemum Throne.

Japanese Buddhists would continue in this line by supporting Japanese military expedition, and in particularly, chanting for victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). With the rise of military-political power in Japan, these Japanese Buddhists had

had the better part of fifty years to perfect their pro-state, pro-Emperor, and pro-war rhetoric.

However, while Buddhists had buttressed war efforts before, the rhetoric furnished by Japanese Zen rōshi during the Second World War (1939-1945) found a new level, an alarming fervor for war. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to review *ZAW* in detail, but I offer a number of the most important examples of this Buddhist war enthusiasm. These feature so prominently in *ZAW* since they are the writing of Yasutani Haku'un Rōshi (1885-1973), who acted as a primary Zen teacher for a wide range of prominent American Zen teachers, including Philip Kapleau Rōshi, author of *Three Pillars of Zen*, Robert Aitken Rōshi, and Bernard Glassman Rōshi.

> Yasutani on Japan: All the particulars (of the spirit of Japan) are taught by Japanese Buddhism. This includes the great way of "no-self" that consists of the fundamental duty of "extinguishing the self in order to serve the public (good)": the determination to transcend life and earth in order to reverently sacrifice oneself for one's sovereign; the belief in unlimited life as represented in the oath to die seven times over to repay (the debt of gratitude owed) one's country; reverently assisting in the holy enterprise of bringing the eight corners of the world under one roof: and the valiant and devoted power required for the construction of the Pure Land on this earth.
>
> Yasutani on reverence for the emperor: While it can be said that this is a feature of Japanese Buddhism as a whole, the great duty of reverence for the emperor is especially thorough-going in the Buddha Dharma of Zen Master Dōgen, pulsing through every nook and cranny…He was consumed by his reverence and concern for what he might do to ensure the welfare of this imperial land. If one thoroughly examines what Zen Master Dōgen accomplished during his lifetime, it is clear that he was determined to cultivate the foundation of people's spirit, causing them to awake to the true spirit of Japan.
>
> Yasutani on Jews: Everyone should act according to their position in society. Those who are in a superior position should take pity on those below, while those who are below should revere those who are above. Men should fulfill the way of men while women observer the way of women, making absolutely sure that there is not the slightest confusion

> between their respective roles. It is therefore necessary to thoroughly defeat the propaganda and strategy of the Jews. That is to say, we must clearly point of the fallacy of their evil ideas advocating freedom and quality, ideas that dominated the world up to the present-day.[48]

These citations beg the most uncomfortable question about Japanese Buddhism: If these were authored by one of the highest teachers in Japanese Zen, his own enlightenment vindicated by a lineages of other similarly trained Zen masters, is this a bankrupt concept of awakening? Could an enlightened teacher actually advocate racism, genocide, or holy war? And what consequences does this have for the students of this teacher? Are they similarly marked by these sentiments?

The most spirited, and perhaps bizarre, responses were by students of Yasutani Roshi. For example, Bernard Glassman offers his understanding of Zen Buddhist enlightenment in defense of Yasutani Roshi:

> So if your definition of enlightenment is that there is no anti-Semitism in the state of enlightenment. If your definition of enlightenment is that there's no nationalism, or militarism, or bigotry in the state of enlightenment, you better change your definition of enlightenment. For the state of enlightenment is *maha*, the circle with no inside and no outside, not even a circle, just the pulsating of the life everywhere.[49]

Bernard Glassman's statement describes a variety of enlightenment types, all apparently devoid of ethics. Glassman appears unaware that his description of awakening runs directly contrary to critiques of *hongaku shiso* written by Critical Buddhists in Japan. Victoria will address this in the 2006 Second Edition of *ZAW*.

Robert Aitken, another prominent American Zen teacher and student of Yasutani Roshi, generally applauds Victoria's work, helping Zen Buddhists to face the darkness in their heritage. However, Aitken rebukes Victoria for his anachronism, "Unlike the other

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[48] Brian Victoria, et al. "The Hardest Koan: Yasutani Roshi." *Tricycle* Fall 1999, 66.
[49] Bernard Glassman, et al. "The Hardest Koan: Yasutani Roshi." *Tricycle* Fall 1999, 74.

researchers, Victoria writes in a vacuum. He extracts the words and deeds of Japanese Buddhist leaders from their cultural and temporal context and judges from a present-day, progressive, Western point of view."[50]

Aitken's appeal to cultural relativism in defense of Yasutani's statements also bears little ethical and philosophical merit. It appears if Zen cannot offer an ethic beyond what the surrounding culture espouses in any given milieu, this appears to render it devoid of ethical value. Academic reviews were, by contrast, much more mild in their responses to Victoria. William Bodiford's review was generally laudatory of *ZAW*, concluding by arguing Zen can emerge even from these taints, "Regardless of the degree to which one sympathizes with the author's goals, one cannot help wondering if merely tainting the doctrine of Zen and sword with war guilt will be enough to discredit it."[51]

David Goodman's review is a deal more hopeful about a wide-ranging Buddhist reform that could come from the Japanese Buddhist establishment, "It is hard to be optimistic, but in an ideal world, this book would lead to a wide-ranging, constructive reassessment of Buddhist doctrine… it might lead to some exciting insights and help liberate…[the] frustrated Japanese religious imagination."[52]

Gerald Scott Iguchi, more critical, asserts that there too much causation between religion and history, though concludes oddly:

> Victoria's rehearsal of Buddhist history runs the risk of inducing readers to wholly seek explanations of the political behavior of religiously motivated historical actors through exegesis of foundational texts that themselves have been subject to innumerable and varied interpretations historically. Victoria's move is akin to reading the Qu'ran in order to understand the

[50] Robert Aitken et al. "The Hardest Koan: Yasutani Roshi." *Tricycle* Fall 1999, 67.
[51] William Bodiford. "Review: *Zen At War* by Brian Daizen Victoria." *Monumenta Nipponica* 53, no. 4 (1998): 575.
[52] David Goodman. "Reivew: *Zen At War* By Brian Daizen Victoria." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 153.

> September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, as opposed to attempting to comprehend the role of the much more immediate history of the Middle East in those tragic events. The danger of Victoria's interpretative strategy is that readers will neglect to see the normality of imperialist violence in the "healthy" development of the Japanese modern nation-state. [53]

Iguchi goes broad in accusing Victoria of attempting a religio-causal connection between Japanese military expansions in the first half of the 20th century. Victoria has been clear throughout his work that he sought to demonstrate the *collusion* between Buddhist rhetoricians and the military. Iguchi's final comment is surely wanting in ethical character, in its suggestion that the modern nation-state of Japan required a preceding imperialist phase.

The second edition of *ZAW* appeared in 2006, and contained an additional chapter. Here Victoria asks the question baldly via the title of the chapter "Was It Buddhism?". Victoria traces a 2500-year record of Buddhist ethics, and the place of these ethics as Buddhism becomes intertwined with supporting the state in East Asia. Victoria starts by noting that the Eightfold Path contains no qualifications or circumstances under which killing is permissible. The adoption of Buddhism by King Asoka for T.W Rhys-David is "the first step on the downward path of Buddhism, the first step on its expulsion from India." Victoria goes on to note a downward tendency for Buddhism towards state-protection. Perhaps the most damning turn was the Chinese innovation by Fa-kuo, identifying the Chinese emperor as a Buddha, allowing Buddhist monks to bow to him without religious infringement. This tendency to employ Buddhist monks in the capacity of shamanistic protectors of the state was established by the time of the introduction of

[53] Gerald Scott Iguchi. "Reviw: *Zen At War* By Brian Daizen Victoria." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 2 (2008): 735.

Buddhism to Japan. The Japanese furthered the identification of the emperor with the Buddha via the establishment of temples within which were installed the image of Mahāvairocana Buddha, the universal Buddha, emphasizing the Buddhist legitimation of the emperor's rule. Victoria regards this as anathema to Buddhist practice, "Nation-Protecting Buddhism (*Gokoku-Bukkyou)* represents the betrayal of the Buddha Dharma."[54] However, Buddhist ethics appeared to suffer more from Taoist accretions into Buddhist thought that emphasized "Spontaneity, originality, paradoxy [sic.], innate naturalness and the ineffability of the Truth." This transition away from an older, ethical rubric, towards momentariness weakened the ability of the Zen tradition to categorically declare actions good or evil, leaving the aforementioned Taoist aesthetic sentiments to fill the gap in evaluation. Victoria's final comment is potent:

> Thus, the question must be asked, even though it cannot be answered in this book– How is the Zen school to be restored and reconnected to its Buddhist roots? Until this question is satisfactorily answered *and acted upon*, Zen's claim to an authentic expression of the Buddha Dharma must remain in doubt.[55]

ZAW left an indelible mark on the American Zen community, and the perceptions of scholars about the impact of their research on practitioners. The reverberations of the work spanned almost a decade, demanding a new edition in 2006, which included a new chapter responding to both academic and practitioners critiques and rebuttals.

[54] Brian Daizen Victoria. *Zen At War,* 2nd edition. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 211
[55] Victoria. *Zen At War,* 231.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter sought to demonstrate that a normative and theological current of concern has appeared in the Western study of Buddhism throughout its history. Passion inherited from the study of Classical Antiquity found its way into the appreciation of Buddhist texts. Theology also motivated scholars to partisanship towards particular canons. Some of these scholars occupied the very heights of prestige among Occidental Buddhologists, and newer generations of scholars found their way to Buddhism by their contact with great teachers. While not readily apparent from the outset, little imagination is required to see that the advent of a work like *Buddhist Theology* was only a matter of time.

The contours of the journey contained multiple religious and professional identities, some overlapping, and others undefined. Burnouf's intent towards Buddhism appears to have had its roots in his love of Classical texts, and while not Buddhist, something more than librarian concern for cataloging materials animates his comments. Rhys-Davies is an altogether strident advocate of the Pali Canon, his biases apparent to modern scholars. Despite Prebish's observation about the non-Buddhist religious affiliations of the founding fathers of Buddhist Studies, this does not appear to have excluded the possibility of great emotional attachment to the object of their study.

European scholars too played their part. Edward Conze appears to have taken up Buddhist practice, and even suggested theology was necessary to good translation. However, his scholarly commitment to Indian Mahayana does not appear to have fueled a great deal of theological passion among his students. Propelled by the end of the Second World War, academic interest in Japan, her culture, language, and religions was fueled.

The Japanese themselves emerged on the world academic stage, seeking to make a name for themselves in the vanguard of Buddhist Studies the world over. D. T. Suzuki was a scholar of this time, informed strongly by the Kyoto School, and his works made a lasting impact on American understandings of Zen and Buddhism as a whole. As noted by Foulk, this influence fueled the career passions of a generation of silent Buddhist-Buddhologists. Here we find roots laid for new sets of research concerns within East Asian Buddhist studies, beyond description.

The Tibetan Diaspora was to have a similar effect on American Tibetology. The founding professors of prominent Tibetological programs at top research universities, such as Robert Thurman of Columbia University, and Jeffery Hopkins of the University of Virginia-Arlington, had both been trained by Tibetan monks and Rinpoches. In turn, some, though not all, of their students, often took up Buddhist practice. Perhaps more than their East Asian Studies counterparts, Buddhologists of Tibetan Buddhist religious persuasion would be the first to make a foray into Buddhist Theology.

These first efforts came from the founding mothers of American Buddhology, feminists who saw in Buddhism an opportunity to rid a religion of misogyny and Patriarchy. Rita Gross sought via Comparative Religion, Buddhist Studies, and Buddhist theology, to right the record of Buddhism, by demonstrating that the misogynist missteps in Buddhism were wholly inconsonant with the core of the Buddhist Dharma. Extending this project to a century's misapprehension of Indian and Tibetan Tantra, Miranda Shaw demonstrated amply that the agency of women was central to Tantra in India, refuting Christian and Cartesian occlusion of the Tantric tradition. While not identifying herself as a theologian, Shaw's concern carries much of the momentum of Gross's early work and

without too great a strain, fills the format of theological endeavor amenably. Finally, Anne Klein offers a Buddhist answer to foremost dilemmas of the feminist spectrum on the notions of self. Vacillating between concrete of essentialism and the atomism of postmodernism, Klein points to a Buddhist middle, with a dynamic sense of self, responsive but not confined. She notes the ontological non-duality with the Great Bliss Goddess, Yeshe Tsogyal, via emptiness; the improvement of the human self is limitless.

Beyond feminist critique and evaluation, scholars took aim at Buddhism for its perceived shortcomings. Donald Lopez examined the history of myths surrounding Occidental impressions of Tibetan culture, art, and religion. Lopez demonstrated how many of these myths were as much a product of Western projection than any apprehension of Tibet proper. He pressed the point powerfully that the professorate ought to have a place of primacy in determining "the wheat from the chaff" of what is and is not Buddhist. Lopez' explanation of his doctoral training strongly resembles a line of legitimation for the Tibetan Geshe degree, similarly demarcated by mastery of particular text and a subsequent testing of this mastery. His comments regarding the "renunciation" of knowledge from dubious sources—such as Tuesday Lobsong Rampa's work—strongly resembles a faith statement, verging on an epistemological-theological proposition.

The storm over Critical Buddhism broke on Western shores and drew into itself Western scholars. While most attempted to discuss the phenomena, others waded into the maelstrom to defend the besieged proposition of Buddha nature. While a matter of long-standing Buddhist debate, Western scholars made their lasting contributions to the history of this discussion. If unintentionally, this constitutes an endeavor into Buddhist Theology.

Finally, *Zen At War* perhaps drew the most attention of any of these works, exposing the wartime rhetoric of Japan's most esteemed Zen masters to a wide range American Zen teachers. This work received swift rebuke from these same American Zen teachers, who appeared to be equipped with very little to defend the egregious statements of their masters. Interest in this work produced a second edition in 2006, in which Victoria concludes that Zen was wanting as a repository of the Buddha Dharma.

The waves and surges of theological interest ranging across intellectual concerns were to find expression in the later published *Buddhist Theology*. However, this raises as many questions as it answers. Will Buddhist theology become a permanent part of religious studies, or Buddhist Studies? What directions will it take? What topics will it address? What dynamics will exist between it and Buddhist Studies? It is these questions I address in the subsequent chapter.

3. Chapter Three: Examining Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection

This chapter will focus on the inception and development of academic Buddhist theology discourse in the United States. Concretely, the beginning of this phenomenon can be located at the 1996 American Academy of Religion conference panel "Buddhist theology." This panel inspired some of the participants to author a work by the same name, *Buddhist Theology*, first published in 2000. The work inspired a now long-lived panel, Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection, at the Buddhism section of the American Academy of Religion conferences.

The pattern of this chapter will be as follows. First, I will examine *Buddhist Theology* in detail before moving onto the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel in the Buddhism section the American Academy of Religion conferences, now it its fourteenth year. This first task in this chapter will be to summarize the arguments advanced in *Buddhist Theology*, and to evaluate them through my own comparative theology critique. This evaluation of *Buddhist Theology* will include both critiques of each chapter, and overarching observations and critiques of the work as a whole. Following this, I will move onto to note the contents of Buddhist Critical-Constructive Studies panel and how the subject matter has developed beyond the earlier *Buddhist Theology*. I will also include bibliography of the publications that have resulted from the panels at the end of this dissertation. I will first noted my own comparative theology before going onto the summary and critique of *Buddhist Theology.*

3.1.*Buddhist Theology*/Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection requires Comparative theology

The imperative of Comparative Theology as critique

In this section I will explain the reasons why I chose Comparative theology as my mode of critique, and why I applied as I did. I should start by noting that the purpose of my critique is to help the project of BCCR succeed. BCCR has great potential to bring Buddhist ideas to public in a way that is both persuasive and academically sound. Without exaggeration, it can be said the human condition has need of Buddhist wisdom now in a way it never was before. While human to human suffering has always existed, we as a species are faced with the fact that our collective actions now have world-wide ecological consequences. These consequences threaten the very viability of the earth as able to support human life. The imperative of the success of BCCR in offering Buddhist solutions for responsible stewardship of the earth, and other problems facing the human condition, could not be greater. Again, my own critiques as aimed at aiding the success of the BCCR project. Now I will discuss the *two* aspects of BCCR.

From its inception of BCCR in *Buddhist Theology,* the central thesis of this project has been "[To] critical analyzing some aspect of Buddhist thought toward a new understanding in our time, or analyzing some aspect of contemporary thought from the critical perspective of Buddhism." We can see that two objectives are at place from the beginning of BCCR, as stated in *Buddhist Theology.* It can reasonable be surmised that these two objectives suggest at least two populations that would authors would seek to advance Buddhist ideas and solutions to. The first objective it appears as powerful implications for communities of practicing Buddhists. BCCR has the potential to help Buddhists to mediate modernity and postmodernity deftly, allowing the tradition to

maintain its continuity with the past while integrating that cardinal Buddhist insight, impermanence, to the end of adjusting it to new times. The second objective appears to have equally powerful, and even more far reaching implications for BCCR, as it is reasonable to assume the latter objective is aimed towards the larger population of non-Buddhists. However the array merits of BCCR scholarship notwithstanding, it is apparent there are unintended junctures within these works that could be problematic to their successful reception among the respective populations of Buddhists and non-Buddhists. A number of these junctures are apparently through the chapters that comprise *Buddhist Theology*. In an attempt to remedy these junctures, I selected Comparative theology as my *modus operandi.*

The possibility of the successful reception of BCCR to non-Buddhist populations requires a critical mediation for a population for whom Buddhist assumptions are not taken as axiomatic and, who would raise concerns not native to the Buddhist sphere. My critiques of the particular chapters of *Buddhist Theology* represent my anticipation of plausible objections on the part of non-Buddhist population that need to be addressed to allow a given piece of BCCR to have the greatest possible reception. This concern propelled my critique of Makransky's Trans-Historical Buddha in chapter six. While to Buddhists, this concept might appear without problems, non-Buddhists in the West likely from Abrahamic religious backgrounds, will likely see this ideas vulnerable to the same Theodicy problem that is so much a part of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theology. Similarly, I critique Wallace's "Dharmology" in chapter three with an eye to its reception beyond Buddhist populations, though not without concern to the implications the use of this term may bring upon Buddhists as well. All of the critiques I furnished for the

chapters of *Buddhist Theology* were motivated to the desire to these respective pieces succeed, and thus address plausible objections from Buddhist and non-Buddhists quarters that could present obstacles to a positive reception among either of these populations.

In this section, I will explain the rationale for the comparative theology critique I employ to evaluate *Buddhist Theology* via each chapter, and *in toto*. The state goal of this volume is: "…critically analyzing some aspect of Buddhist thought toward a new understanding in our time, or analyzing some aspect of contemporary thought from the critical perspective of Buddhism."[56] We can infer from this that Buddhist theology is intended for at least two audiences, for Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Buddhist theology can act as a powerful intellectual resource for Buddhists as they mediate modernity, postmodernity, and a new cultural milieu radically different than those from which Buddhism came. Cabezon himself echoes this,

"But in the West this form of theology has often been uncritical. With few exceptions, it has either recapitulated tradition Asian Buddhists views with little thought to analyzing their relevance or worth in their new historical and/or cultural milieu…"[57]

Buddhist theology also has the potential to play an equally important for the larger community of non-Buddhists. In this capacity, Buddhist theology can act as an avenue for academically grounded and peer-reviewed Buddhist solutions to contemporary social and global problem that are non-parochial presentation. It can be safely said that the United States is home to representatives of nearly all ethnicities, cultures, and religions that can be found among the human race. It is almost certain that this magnitude and scale of diversity has never been seen before in history. This lends to

[56] *Buddhist Theology,* ix.
[57] *Buddhist Theology,* 27.

unique economic, social, and environmental problems requiring answers and solutions. It is an unprecedented opportunity for Buddhists to make their ideas, solutions, and practiced known to the widest possible audience. This calls for Buddhists to exercise great *upāya* in their efforts to propose Buddhist solutions to problems in contemporary society. Academic Buddhist theology is particularly well positioned to propose these solutions from the vantage of the academy, and advance them with that imprimatur. However, to achieve this, Buddhist theology requires an intellectual bridge that can act as a form of *upāya* to introduce Buddhist theological solutions to Buddhist and non-Buddhist Americans. This intellectual bridge is comparative theology.

Comparative theology is an integral element of the theology of nearly all religious traditions. This is the dimension of theology that evaluates and response to other world-views, religious or otherwise, from within the framework of the religious tradition in question. In the West, comparative theology has been a component of Christian theology since the beginning of Christianity. Two of the most prominent forms these responses have taken are polemics and apologetics towards other religions, and even among Christian confessions. Early Christian theologians sought to advance a case for Christian orthodoxy and refute heresy. However, not all examples of comparative theology found among the world's religions are confrontational in nature.

Buddhism itself has a long history of comparative theology. For more than two millennia Buddhist exegetes have deftly navigating new religious landscapes to propound the Dhamma. The beginning of this theology within Buddhist thought can be found in the life and teachings of the Buddha himself. Examples of this can be seen as the Buddha attempted to teach his Dhamma to the clergy of other religions, namely Brahmin priests.

The Buddha uses knowledge of the Vedic rite to teach Brahmins his own teaching. The Pali Canon is replete with exchanges between the Buddha and the members of this highest caste.

Later Buddhist exegetes would engage dominant philosophies and religious traditions both in India and beyond. Comparative theology as practiced by Buddhists came to include *reduction ad absurdum* in the works of Madhyamika philosophers, as they debated Hindu thinkers on the logical cogency of an omnipotent creator god. Buddhist theologians in China sought more conciliatory means in their exchanges with Confucian scholars by demonstrating the Buddhist renunciation fulfilled Confucian filial piety to both family and state, in this present life and for lifetimes to come. Similar efforts have been made by Buddhists as they attempted to introduce their religion into North America. A critical component is, however, missing from both *Buddhist Theology* and subsequent Buddhist Critical Constructive reflection. To accomplish the task of successfully introducing Buddhist theology to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. José Cabezón suggests the need for a horizon beyond Buddhism for Buddhist theology,

> First is a commitment to a breadth of analysis: to the examination of all relevant sources…Finally, I take it that breadth of analysis implies engaging those portions of other religious traditions, and of the secular intellection tradition, that in some way illuminate (either by supporting *or* challenging) positions taken in the Buddhist sources.[58]

David Tracy notes the inexorable need for a comparative dimension to the theology of any religious tradition contending in and with modernity.

> The final conclusions for any tradition's self-understanding in a religious pluralistic world will be determined only by further, concrete comparative theological studies in and among all traditions…The central fact of religious pluralism, as well as the existence of religious studies (especially

[58] *Buddhist Theology*, 35.

> history of religions), has challenged all theologies in all traditions to become explicitly comparative in approach.[59]

We can now see that the project of comparative theology is a thread in the narrative religious assimilation. Full breadth of this history is commensurate with the history of Buddhism in the United States, and beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I will recommend are ways by which Buddhist theology can intellectual acculturate itself into the larger landscape of the discipline of theology The recommendations will make for Buddhist theologians is concerned with navigating "theology" as a *discipline* rather a matter of historical etymology. This requires some explanation.

It was very unusual to find that an attempt on the part of Buddhologists to forge a new Buddhist theology that almost completely neglected a system of thought that has born this name for nearly two thousand years.[60] An analogy that will serve here. What one finds in *Buddhist Theology* is as if one were to attempt to design a new model of car without any consideration given to the more than a century of automotive engineering. There are, however, an array of reasons why this may have been the case. Buddhism was for many the religious tradition that appeared to avoid many of the pitfalls of the history of religion in the West, replete at times with religiously justified warfare, and military conflicts arising from sectarianism.[61] Buddhism also was absent of the potentially unsettling idea of an Arbiter to human history. Contra to Christian theism, modern Buddhists coined the astonishing term "non-theism." For many of the contributors to *Buddhist Theology*, Christianity theology may have been synonymous with all the reasons they left this, or another Abrahamic religion, behind. However, if this is the case,

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[59] David Tracy. "Comparative Theology" *Encyclopedia of Religion,* 446-455
[60] The exception here is the single work of David Tracy cited in *Buddhist Theology.*

this to go too far in rejecting a potentially valuable intellectual resource for the construction of a Buddhist theology. The broad taxonomy of Christian theology contains a truly astonishing variety subdivisions. This is complexified by both denominational lines, e.g. Lutheran, Calvinist, Roman Catholic theologies, and topically, e.g. Moral, philosophical, mystical theologies. While it is apparent that many of the denominational designations are of little use to Buddhist theologians, philosophical and literary theological categories can be applicable to Buddhist intellectual concerns.

The first application of comparative theology that I recommend is the careful adoption of *some* subdivisions from Christian theology for Buddhist theology or Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection. By locating BCCR works under these categories, the potential audience for this work expands by beyond Buddhists. This will act to bring Buddhist positions under consideration by theologians from other religions traditions. This, I contend, extends directly from the general thesis of *Buddhist Theology*.

The second application of comparative theology is followed closely by the first application I recommend. In addition to locating their respective work under plausible subcategories, the authors themselves would be well served by locating themselves within the vast world of Buddhist sects. The Buddhist tradition outstrips its Abrahamic counterparts by boasting of three canons, contained in three different canon languages. Each canon itself is the progenitor of myriad sects, and is the object of voluminous commentarial traditions. One simply cannot say one writes “Buddhis theology” any more than one can claim to write “Christian theology” without respect to one’s own formation within Christianity. The danger of proceeding in the composition of Buddhist theology without some location with the tradition is to suggest that one’s work can speak for

Buddhism in all places and times. The contributors to both *Buddhist Theology* and the subsequent Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panels are esteemed, tenured faculty; one can readily dispense with the idea that any of these scholars who wrote their contributions intent on representing all of Buddhism. A*s* noted above, the plethora of Christian denominations, further subdivisions, and topical indicators allows for a finely tuned theological taxonomy allowing readers to locate with precision exactly what topic and from what perspective that author proceeds. The Buddhist tradition has an equally rich array of denominational, philosophical, and topical designations by which a piece of theology can be give provenance. For some authors, direct identification with a particular Buddhist sect would not pose a problem – three of the contributors to *Buddhist Theology* are Jōdo Shinshū clergy, Kenneth Tanaka, Mark Unno, and Taitetsu Unno. An example of a designation for a piece of Buddhist theology could be Gelugpa moral theology, or Drukpa Kagyu epistemological theology. However, for those authors for whom sectarian delimitation would appear to limit the honest breadth of their work, a looser association with one of the three Buddhist canons would suffice. In either the case of denominational affiliation, or a proximate canon, this would allow readers to locate the author relative to the Buddhist world of ideas.

The third application of comparative theology to Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection I will advance concerns awareness of the self-awareness of discipline within the American religious landscape. This requires some knowledge of the implications of vocabulary used within Buddhism as it is germane to other religious traditions. One such example that I address is the use by contributors to *Buddhist Theology* of the Sanskrit word "Dharma," particularly as it is used to form the neologism "Dharmalogy." While

this term appears to have a range of advantages for Buddhists seeking an alternative to *theology*, beyond Buddhist Studies scholars, theologians, and Buddhist practitioners, "Dharma" is equally rightfully the provenance of three other Indian religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Scholars and practitioners of these religious traditions may regard it as rude chauvinism that Buddhist theologians presume that "Dharmalogy" become exclusively the domain of Buddhist thought. I address this and other overlaps unanticipated by contributors via this third application of comparative theology.

3.2. *Buddhist Theology:* Preface and Editors Introductions

Buddhist Theology begins with a preface and two editors' introductions and is followed by three parts. Part One is titled "Buddhist Theology: What, Why, and How?" contains five chapters and discusses different rationale for the project of Buddhist theology, central to which is addressing most pointedly how a putatively non-theistic religion could have a theological discourse. Part Two "Exercises in Buddhism theology" contains eleven chapters, each an effort in Buddhist theology. The final third part "Critical Responses" in two chapters evaluating the preceding eighteen chapters.

Preface

The foundation of this new dimension of American Buddhist Studies is the work *Buddhist Theology* itself. Interestingly, its inception was not born within Buddhist Studies

venues, but rather at a national meeting of the American Academy of Religion. This is noteworthy, as the American Academy of Religions, the bastion of religious studies, is administratively co-terminus with the Society of Biblical Literature. Without too great a detour, this is a potent nexus for those questions foremost for humanities and social science research, and particularly for religion. The concern that stands most prominent for the topic of religion is the relationship of the researcher to the object of his research. Buddhist Theology was inspired by the "Buddhist Theology" panel at the American Academy of Religion national conference held in New Orleans on November 23-26, 1996. Well-received and with sizable attendance, the panel included presentations by John Makransky, Roger Jackson, Rita Gross, José Cabezón, John Dunne, and Anne

Klein. Contributors to the volume included both the members of this AAR panel and non-contributing consultants including Jeffery Hopkins and Charles Prebish.

The preface notes that "Their [the contributors] learning and experience cover a variety of Asian Buddhist cultures from the historical, to the philosophical, to the sociological." (ix) While the contributions include both historical and philosophical analysis, none of the contributors is trained in philosophy per se, and contributions regarding social science methodologies are glaringly absent.

The editor's note "Although we sought balance geographical areas of expertise, there remain lacunae (such as the lack of a Chinese Buddhism specialist) that should be filled in any future work." (x) However, there is more than this simple geographic imbalance which is problematic in this work. The work is overwhelmingly oriented towards Tibetan Buddhism, and more generally, heavily overshadowed by a thick veneer of Mahayana supercessionsim – a term coined by Jewish theologians to refer to the intellectual and theological condescension implicated by Christian exegetes, for whom the validity of Christian soteriology presupposes itself as a replacement of Judaism. The same project is at work in Mahayana scripture, which only supersedes it as it is compared with later Christian counterparts in their efforts, deriding the tradition from which it drew its inspiration with the invective of "hinayāna."

Finally, it can be asked to what extent Buddhist ecclesiastical authorities would accept the theological conclusions of these authors. All of the contributing authors hold a PhD concentrating on the topic of Buddhism, and many of these are tenured faculty in institutions of higher education. However, while these intellectual and career

accomplishments may hold great weight inside the academy, they may not translate to a concomitant degree of theological authority among the ranks of Buddhist clergy

In this section, I will examine the arguments advanced in *Buddhist Theology* in detail. *Buddhist Theology* represents the foundation stone of this new normative discourse; this work deserves concerted attention as this will aid in evaluating later theological efforts on the part of Buddhists Topics on the ontology of buddhas, postmodernism and the Buddhist Dharma, interfaith dialogue, how truth is understood within Buddhism, and human rights as construed within a Buddhist framework are examined. The third and final part of the book contains two critical responses to the foregoing articles. After summarizing each chapter, I will critique the main points of each from comparative theology which utilizes, religious studies, Buddhist Studies, and even structurally, Christian theology. Following this, I will offer a global critique of each part of Buddhist theology. A good deal of the discussions in the first part *of Buddhist Theology* suffer from an unintentional myopia on the part of authors, whose domains of scholastic work strongly narrow the latitudes of intellectual concerns. While the conclusions of many of the authors proceed rationally from within the confines of a regionally, linguistically, and denominationally delimited exercise in Buddhist Studies to *Buddhist Theology*, many of these points contain latitudinal errors which could be considered quite sophomoric from the broader perspective of religious studies. I will attempt to redress these via the comparative theology critique explained before. Let us now proceed to the examination of part one.

Editors' Introductions

I "*Buddhist Theology*: Its Historical Context"

Buddhist Theology begins with the two editors' introductions, by Roger Jackson and John Makransky. Jackson's introduction is segmented into three sections. In the first, he briefly traces the history of the term "theology" from its Hellenic origins and applications, though Christian usage in late antiquity and the Middle Ages (c. 500-1500) to its modern provenance as argued by University of Chicago theologian, David Tracy. This is followed by a conversation between Jackson and an imaginary "recalcitrant Buddhist" who objects on four points to the use of "theology" to describe this new discourse. Jackson concludes this contribution with a general history of theological activity in Buddhism across cultures and time, arriving with the transmission of Buddhism to the United States. In conclusion, Jackson notes the expanding domain of "Buddhist theology" including both academic and popular publications. Let's begin with examining his history of "theology."

Buddhists must confront the theistic tone, and how the term theology could be made to work for a tradition which identifies itself as non-theistic. Any discussion of the history of theology, from any tradition, must note the historical and linguistic origins of the term itself.. Theology comes from the Greek *theo,* meaning God or god, and *logy*, meaning the study of. It appears that earliest usage of "theology" is to be found in Plato's (428-348 BCE) Republic, where Plato uses it to refer to narratives of the gods. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) also utilizes this term, though to refer to mythological cosmogonies. Finally, Jackson leaps five hundred years to Panaetius of Rhodes (c. 2nd Century), who divided theology into three subdivisions, mythological, philosophical, and political.

While this is clearly not intended to be an exhaustive history of theology in classical antiquity, there appears to be a notable distinction between theology as it is employed by classical writers, and later Christian theologians. For at least the three writers noted by Jackson, the term refers to categories of literature, rather than the intellectual activity, and the subsequent results from this work. This important difference appears to have been overlooked in Jackson's summary of theology in antiquity. Despite drawing on the work of other scholars, Jackson's summary of the location and application of theology in the Middle Ages contains similar limitations.

Jackson appeals to the work of Yves Congar, who notes that it was only in the high
middle ages, with the foundation of universities containing faculty dedicated to theology, that
the term became standardized in usage. This, however, neglects early usage of this term by the
most noteworthy of early Christian theologians, such as Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who applied this term in the range of his works. While the first millennia of Christian history found diffuse application in the use of the term theology, it came to see an increasing refinement
of its application. By the 20th century, Paul Tillich (1886-1965) one of the most influential theologians of the his time, sought to inexorably reserve "theology" for application in Christian

intellectual efforts. The first sentence of Tillich's magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*, reads: "Theology is a function of the Christian church." For a Buddhist, this can evoke Christian
"triumphalism," in Tillich's effort to weld a term born of Hellenic antiquity to Christianity, for
all posterity. Buddhists need not defer to this, however, noting the tenacity with which Christians
have sought to possess the term, in proceeding to import it into Buddhism, and use it to represent their new form of discourse.

The first of these objections betrays a strange, American Zen tone. The fictional Buddhist claims that Buddhism is different than other religions by the fact that Buddhism eschews suppositions This, however, would require some axioms or presuppositions to proceed at all. Jackson counters by noting that for any one Buddhist text that contends to reject all suppositions (he names none), there are a large number that do (also specifying none).

The mock, obstinate Buddhist claims that the Buddhist tradition aims towards penultimate religious experience which is entirely beyond words. This renders the enterprise of Buddhist theology a vacuous distraction. Jackson concedes that while this is true of nirvana itself, the formulation of theory guiding religious practices toward this end certainly requires assumptions from which to proceed meaningfully. Buddhists, as in other religious traditions, have never asserted that the intellectual reflection that produces this is, in and of itself, sufficient to attain this religious goal. Jackson notes the ineffable

nature of the Godhead in the Christian Trinity to note the limits of language in another religions. The Buddhist's final counter-argument is lexical in nature.

The final object centers around the incompatibility between Buddhist terminology and theology. Buddhist thought, across its canon languages, has no equivalent to "theology." Jackson acknowledges this to be true in letter, but explains that in spirit, Buddhists perform intellectual activities akin to the expanded definition of theology describe by David Tracy. From here, Jackson moves to construct a history of pan-Buddhist theology, though largely Mahayana in nature.

Jackson gives an overview of Buddhist theology beginning with placing, anachronistically, ancient worthies under the category of Buddhist theology. These begin with the earliest strata that are invariably monks, working within the confines of large monastery complexes. Putatively pan-Buddhist in breadth, these names include exclusively Indian, Tibetan, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean monks from within the Mahayana tradition. No note is made of important Theravadin figures such as Buddhaghosa (circa 5th cen.), whose *Visuddhimaga* remains the prevailing summation of the Buddhist path within Southeast Asia. From this point in the pre-modern world, Jackson's account begins to a narrow in focus on encounters between Western figures and the Buddhist traditions. History moves forward over some five hundred years to early encounters with Western explorers, particularly Marco Polo, who noted Buddhists in the court of the Mongol Khan. Buddhism itself begins its journey to meeting modernity with the beginning of colonialism, particularly in the 19th century. Noteworthy Buddhists across East Asia, South. and Southeast Asia, met Catholic and Protestant missionaries of impressive rhetorical prowess, and notable theological aggression. Figures such as Taixu

(1890-1947) and Anagārika Dhammapāla (1864-1934), work to furnish the Buddhist tradition with countervailing rhetoric.

Most my critique of this introduction lays at the beginning with Jackson's particular treatment of "theology." While David Tracy's inclusive expansive definition includes nontheistic tradition, taking the lead from a Christian theology implies asking permission to use the term with Christian imprimatur. As Jackson noted, this is a Greek term, with its roots in usage by pillars of Hellenic philosophy prior to its comparatively late adoption by Christian exegetes. This is no need to seek an expansive, Christian definition to allow Buddhists to utilize this term.

I Contemporary Academic Buddhist Theology: Its Emergence and Rationale

Makransky's introductions seeks to locate the emergence of Buddhist theology in relationship to the broader field of religious studies. Though much shorter than Jackson's introduction, Makransky makes a number of points critical to the overall project and aims that *Buddhist Theology* sets out to accomplish. Here, I will summarize arguments and offer critiques.

The author begins by noting the methodological and epistemological distinctions that characterize religious studies, in contrast to theology.[62] The roots of religious studies harken back to the Enlightenment, which initiated a concern for a value-free approach to the object under examination. Modern religious studies invokes *epoche* in examining the variety of religious phenomena in the world.[63] The adoption of this mode of research

[62] A point I will make throughout the evaluation of *Buddhist Theology* is the astonishingly simplistic caricature of Christian theology used throughout it. This fiction appears to comprise the refracted anxieties of religious studies scholars, who use this nearly Orientalist foil to delineate the boundaries of their own discipline.
[63] See Smart 1982.

allows scholars, in theory, to mitigate occluding assumptions about their data brought in from their own religious and cultural biases. This stands in contrast, Markransky notes, to Christian theology, which assumes the Christian truth claim and makes a sustained intellectual effort to demonstrate the validity of that claim above those of other religious traditions. These constitute the hallmark separation between religious studies and Christian theology.

Makransky notes that the value-free intellectual domain created by religious studies, free from the polemic assumptions of Christian theology, allows for important conversations about the remainder of the world religions. Since the rise of Christianity in the late Roman Empire, Christian theology has held a suffocating hold on the study of religion. This has allowed many graduate students to reflect critically on their own traditions, where they may have otherwise had no venue to do so. However, this approach to the examination of religion has, ironically, a myriad of damning limitations *for* religion itself.

This freedom afforded to the exploration of religions other than Christianity also sharply curtails the questions that can be addressed and the answers that can be given. The Archimedean vantage of religious studies also forestalls many critical to the religious themselves. These areas of interest often can be best addressed by the precision of academy. Buddhism is one example of a tradition whose continued development could greatly benefit from the aid of the work of scholars of religion.

Makransky notes that need is particularly pressing as Buddhism finds a new chapter in the United States. Academic Buddhist Theology can help to preserve the integrity of the Buddhist tradition while it addresses critical differences between its

culture of origin and the culture(s) of the United States. Buddhist Studies in an applied capacity could allow Buddhist clergy to make sound determinations about what cultural allowances can be made within their respective traditions without sacrificing the theological soundness of their presentations of the Dharma. This is the case for which Makransky sees a pressing need for Buddhist theology in the academy itself.

Unlike Jackson's preceding introduction, Makransky's case for Buddhist theology contains little to which to take objection. The efforts of both scholars admirably promote a critically important intellectual endeavor for both Buddhist Studies and Buddhists themselves. Most of the shortcomings in the piece can be found in Makransky's knowledge of religious studies and its history. These I will address below.

Makransky starts out by noting that "The scientific study of religion is a phenomenon of the twentieth century." This is true, but the "scientific study of religion" is not synonymous with religious studies, and represents one subset of scholars who champion the social sciences. Neither is this synonymous with the "Science of Religion" used by Makransky, which is a phrase coined by Max Müller (1823-1900), whose approach to the study of religion was concerned with illuminating the primordial experience of the infinite at the core of every religious tradition. This early thesis of Müller's, couched in German Idealism, is far removed from religious studies as it is practiced today.

Furthermore, Christian theology is presented by Makransky in a monolithic form more emblematic of reservations religious studies scholars have about the work of theologians than is accurately representative of either the history of Christian theology, or its modern methods or works. More than normative, Christian theology contains highly

variegated subdivisions broaching many of the methodological concerns at work in religious studies as I have noted in my comparative theology critique.

3.3. *Buddhist Theology*: Part 1: What, Why, and How?

The inception of an entirely new intellectual discourse requires a good deal of difficult philosophical work to ground it before it can proceed meaningfully. As noted above, part 1 of *Buddhist Theology* is concerned with what constitutes the proper domain of intellectual activity, its rationale for existing within the academy, and methodological concerns. This part begins with José Ignacio Cabezón "Buddhist Theology in the Academy" addressing both the concerns germane to the usage of "theology" with reference to Buddhism, and why this discourse must be part of the American academy. This is followed by Rita Gross' "Buddhist Theology?" which makes a positive case for the adoption of "theology" and examines the way in which religious studies as a discipline contains its own variety of largely accepted normative propositions. B. Alan Wallace concludes differently than Gross on the matter of terminology, and evaluates the respective vantage points of the Buddhologist and Buddhist in his "Three Dimensions of Buddhist Studies." Vesna A. Wallace draws on elements of postmodern Biblical scholarship to suggest a dialogical approach to the exegesis of Buddhist scripture in her "The Methodological Relevance of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship to the Study of Buddhism." Part one concludes with Roger Corless' "Hermeneutics and Dharmology: Finding an American Buddhist Voice" addressing an unusual neologism in lieu of "theology" for this new discourse, and noting what he sees as essential points of ascent for Buddhist normative thought to proceed. In each case, I will summarize the main points each author advances, and then critique these points. Next, I will make an arcing critique of points across all articles.

Chapter One: Buddhist Theology in the Academy[64]

The first chapter in part one of *Buddhist Theology* is by Jose Ignacio Cabezon. In this chapter, Cabezon addresses whether or not this new movement in Buddhist Studies should be called Buddhist theology, if it has a place in the academy, and what, if any, the potential benefits for Buddhism it could have. In answering the first question, Cabezon answers in the affirmative, noting that the wide spread usage of "theology" in the Western academy will aid to help to make this project intelligible to non-Buddhist readership. This is bolstered by the connotation of theology as an intellectual endeavor located within a religious tradition and beholden to it. Cabezon notes Buddhist philosophy lacks this latter implication.

Cabezon argues that Buddhist theology stands to fill a lacuna in the modern discourse on Buddhism, not otherwise adequately addressed by three other forms on writing on Buddhism. The first of these is traditional Buddhist exegesis. This form has served Buddhism well in its ancient homes but appears to struggle with adapting to new cultures in modernity. The second variety is popular writing on Buddhism, such as that that is seen in publications like *Tricycle,* and *Shambhala Sun.* Writing for popular consumption like this may be led fades in current culture, and lack depth in substantiating research. The final form of writing is Buddhist Studies itself, that is disinterested in the theological needs of practicing Buddhists. Buddhist theology, Cabezon claims, is able to address the dauting challenges of modernity and postmodernity traditional Buddhist exegesis struggles with, contains the rigorous scholarly grounding lacking in popular

[64] Because I have address many points of this chapter in my comparative theology critique, here I am only noting those I have not already addressed.

Buddhist writing, and addresses the concerns of practicing Buddhist, usually not the object of Buddhist Studies. Cabezon concludes the academic nature of Buddhist theology will act to allow Buddhist theologians to mediate each of these shortcomings found in other Buddhist discourses.

Chapter Two: Buddhist Theology?

The second piece is by Rita Gross and titled "Buddhist Theology?' In this chapter, Gross addresses two questions. The first is whether or not this new intellectual enterprise of Buddhist theology is a valid topic of scholarly inquiry. The context of this question carries with it the assumption that, by "scholar," Gross does not mean academics working independent of an institution of higher education, but rather than the tenured professoriate, the majority of whom are employed at public universities. The second question, which Gross asserts is the more difficult of the two, is what to call this endeavor relative new to established Buddhology, Buddhist Studies, and traditional Buddhist exegesis and teaching.

Her work and responses are aimed at two audiences. The first are professional Buddhologists who believe that "Buddhist theology" is not an appropriate topic of research scholar of Buddhism, and to a lesser degree, Buddhists who may take exception to the academy inveighing upon their tradition. Gross notes the irony of Buddhists finding no place to discuss Buddhism in the Buddhism section at the American Academy of Religion conferences.

Gross answers an emphatic "yes" to the first of these two questions. Gross notes that religious studies itself is undergirded by 19th century normative assumptions about the study of religion, and these remain largely methodologically unchallenged as the field

proceeds. From an early stage in her career, as a Jewish feminist theologian, Gross noted that feminist scholars had uncovered androcentric assumptions within religious studies research methodology. Insofar as both of these continue to inform research in religious studies, Gross finds resistance to an explicitly normative discussion by scholars "bizarre." But her concern is *not* to challenge the goal of objectivity in religious studies and Buddhist Studies research.

Gross notes that her concern is to challenge the descriptive mode of research as the only valid approach to the study of religion, and Buddhism in particular. Buddhism, Gross points out, has been a potent force in world history. To deny questions of meaning or the import of Buddhism to the troubled present is to invite from the public its worst apprehensions about the academy. As she state, "It also justifiably earn us the evaluation that what we do is 'merely academic' in the worst sense of the term 'academic'—not mattering, making no difference whatsoever."[65] Rita Gross describes herself as a "Buddhist scholar-theologian" and her time as a scholar and practitioner has allowed her to see the ways in which Buddhist ideas could be used to answer problems in the modern world. Gross adds that there is a moral imperative for "humanistic" scholars to utilize their scholarship to the end of improving the human condition. This is particularly important in the area of undergraduate education at the conclusion of which students will go out in the world and their workplaces, informed or not about how to improve the human condition. Gross then moves onto the question of a title for this new approach to the study of Buddhism.

[65] *Buddhist Theology,* 56.

Gross notes her comfort with the term "theology," since the interest that drew her to the academic study of religion was a concern for ultimate reality. Her point of departure was comparative, as it then appeared to her that the study of theology of only one religion was "silly."[66]In line with Jackson, Gross notes that the term "theology" no longer denotes intellectual work regarding an anthropomorphic deity, and can be applied to Buddhist reflection without concern for this historically dominant assumption. In addition, theology has two advantages over competing options for theological Buddhist Studies. First, it is intelligible to Buddhists and scholars of Buddhism as indicative of theological work. Secondly, it helps readers of all varieties when the author locates themselves within the tradition. Gross notes that a theologian works within a tradition with an allegiance to that tradition, whereas a philosopher is generally a free agent, with no particular limitations set by whatever set of ideas they work with. For this reason, Gross finds "Buddhist philosophy" to be wholly oxymoronic. Buddhist theology, however, would not pose such potential conflict with Buddhists.

Theologians act to expand a religious tradition, and aid it in meeting the time and circumstances in which a religion tradition finds itself. While this will be undoubtedly welcomed by some, this could be a source of conflict for some Buddhist clergy who see their vocation as defined by preserving any and all elements of the Buddhist tradition against change. Gross herself had come into conflict with Buddhist teachers within the Tibetan tradition on a number of her concerns as a feminist scholar about perceptions and attitudes towards women perpetuated by the tradition. Through reason and patience, Gross notes that she was able to successfully make her case and persuade these teachers

[66] I am not sure if Gross intended to echo Max Müller own axiom on the study of religion, "To know one is to know none."

that her points were valid and did not represent a depreciation of the Buddhist tradition but a useful step towards it improvement. Gross also treats other terms that are potential terms for theological Buddhist Studies.

The author notes that while Buddhology has some appeal, this term is strongly aligned towards the work of philologists. Additionally, Buddhology implies a limited concern for the study of the person and Buddhahood of the Buddha that is not the primary focus of a constructive approach to the study of Buddhism. While Buddhist theology neither eschews philology, nor the study of the Buddha himself, these not are not defining characteristics of Buddhist theology. Gross then moves onto ask if the lexicon of Buddhism itself affords a name more advantageous than "Buddhist theology."

The strengths of theology are counterbalanced by its location as a term relative to the West. Gross suggests that "Dharmalogy" might be a reasonable alternative to Buddhist theology. However, "Dharmalogy" is immediately met with its own limitations as a neologism. Therefore, its utilization would require an explanation of what it implies in every instance of its usage. Gross notes that many terms now standard in the academy started as neologisms, and perhaps "Dharmalogy" could also come to arrive at a similar standardization. The author then addresses another option used within Buddhist circles.

One alternative used by practicing Buddhists, particularly in the West, is "Dharma-discourse." This term would immediately allow readers to know that what follows is normative Buddhist Studies, and that the author is himself or herself a Buddhist. This term does not distinguish the academic quality that constructive Buddhist Studies would have in contrast to traditional Buddhist teaching and exegesis, therefore limiting it to referring to discussions between Buddhists within a non-academic forum.

Gross concludes this discussion by asking something neglected by the other scholars: What should the *doer* of theological Buddhist Studies be called?

Gross notes that there is a need to distinguish between religiously Buddhist scholars of Buddhism and non-Buddhist scholars of Buddhism. This can be partially accomplished by using the terms "Buddhist scholar" to refer to the former and "Buddhist Studies scholar" to the latter. Gross concludes this very brief discussion by arguing that this question would be better answered by noting the author is a Buddhologist, and also a Buddhist, whose work is primarily Dharma-discourse. Here, Gross ends her article by affirming "Buddhist theology" as her choice as the best term for theological Buddhist Studies.

Professor Gross offers a number of welcome advantages over the work of her colleagues. Gross directly addresses the concern about objectivity in religious studies and Buddhist Studies research without discounting the merits of this methodology. She notes the continued place of 19th century tropes and androcentrism within the purview of research in these two fields. Gross also allows for consideration of alternatives from within Buddhism as possibilities that could be adopted as a name for constructive Buddhist Studies. However, her work also falls into some of the same traps as those of her colleagues' work with regard to her characterization as a discipline.

First, like Jackson, Gross fails to subdivide "theology." As noted before, the span of activities that take place under the heading of theology is comparable in diversity to the phenomenon of religion itself. This essentialization of theology as monolithic in nature appears to be a consistent assumption among authors accustomed to religious studies rhetoric about their normative counterparts. Additionally, this characterization of

theology also implies an absence of academic rigor to which theologians themselves could rightly take exception.

Once believed to be the "Queen of Sciences," theology was thought to be the highest intellectual endeavor in what was once Christendom. Embracing nearly every form of knowledge available in the Middle Ages, the breadth of learning and command of additional languages necessary, was minimally comparable to Buddhologists in the present. The title of "doctor" was first applied to these scholars, suggesting that their contributions were of the highest caliber. Today, theologians are required to have a sound grounding in the many thousands of years of thought within their respective traditions, and often a command of the canon languages used in their scripture. To regard theology or theologians as un-academic is to make an extremely sophomoric error about the history of religion in the West. Finally, despite her comparative perspective, the scope of the term "Dharma" is not adequately appreciated by Gross, particularly in considering the possibility of "Dharmalogy."

Gross fails to note that "dharma" is a Sanskrit term important to two religious traditions older than Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, and one younger, Sikhism. Therefore, Dharmalogy in no way indicates that what is undertaken is a study of Buddhist teachings. All three other religions of Indian origin could as easily use this term to refer to their own theological discourses. This lack of perspective seems unfortunately consistent among Gross' Buddhologist colleagues. Finally, Gross examines the conceivable difficulties involved in using the term "Buddhist theology" as a term for constructive studies.

Along with its benefits, “Buddhist theology” could be misconstrued by scholars and Buddhists who are not familiar with the methodological divide between theology and religious studies. This could be particularly pointed for scholars of Buddhism from Asia, where, for example, Buddhist theology could be received as a concerted study of the notion of gods or deities within Buddhist cosmology. This terminological consideration is left unaddressed by Gross and the other advocates for “Buddhist theology.” From here I will proceed onto Allan Wallace contribution.

Chapter Three: The Three Dimensions of Buddhist Studies

Wallace's chapter in line with the first part of *Buddhist Theology,* begins by addresses the question of terminology in two parts. The first evaluates the viability of the term "theology" to represent normative Buddhist Studies. The second addresses the identity of the author in relationship to the topic of Buddhism. Wallace's own interest in Buddhism is on the place of meditaive experience in Buddhism, utilizing both via practitioners' accounts and developments in the field of neuroscience in this research. This concern for Buddhology as it addresses experience lends a perspective on these questions not invoked by previous authors. The question of "theology" begins Wallace's chapter.

Wallace begins by noting that while theology does distinguish Buddhist theology from Buddhist Studies, there is resistance in quarter of Buddhist Studies to the use of this term to refer to their work. While most Buddhist worldviews do acknowledge a stratum of beings that can be described as gods, the early forms of Buddhism, represented partially in the Theravada tradition, do not assert the existence of a creator God. However, this is less true of the Mahayana and Vajrayāna traditions.

Wallace notes that in many ways the Mahayana Dharmakāya resembles the ontological characteristics of the Abrahamic notion of God. Both are thought eternal, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent. These correlations become great when a comparison is drawn between the notion of the Primordial Buddha, Samantabhadra, and the God of the Near Eastern religions. There are, however, important differences between these ideas of an absolute that need to be attended to. Here, Wallace moves from the ontological implications of "theology" to literary ones.

The Tibetan Buddhist canon contains a range of texts written on topics that fall clearly under categories other than theology. Wallace draws attention to works that suggest theses on what we might describe today as medicine and psychology. The author points out this strongly militates against using "Buddhist theology" to describe the Tibetan Buddhist canon. From here, Wallace moves to evaluate whether "religion" can adequately encompass the phenomenon of Buddhism.

Wallace employs the tetralemma, made famous of among scholars of Buddhism by the second century Mahayana exegete Nagarjuna (150-250). This format is: A and B, A and not B, not A and B, and not A and not B. Wallace's application identifies A as Buddhism and B as religion. The author uses Van Harvey's definition "…in deeming something as religious we ordinarily mean a perspective expressing a dominating interest in certain universal and elemental features of human existence as those features bear on the human desire for liberation and authentic existence." Most religious studies scholars are immediately skeptical about definitions of religion, but for the present I will suspend judgement. Here is Wallace's tetralemma: Buddhism and religion; Buddhism and not religion; religion and not Buddhism; and not Buddhism and not religion.

For Buddhism and religion, Wallace points to the Buddhist precept against taking life. This fulfills the criterion of something that can be categorized as both Buddhist and religious, as the author employs Van Harvey's definition of religion. However, it can be noted that a prohibition against taking life is also not exhaustively Buddhist nor indicative of religion, as secular humanism would claim this ethnical injunction as well.

Wallace points to the Tantras concerning medicine as an example of Buddhist writings that is Buddhist and not religious. This example seems strained, as it is believed

that the medicine Buddha, *Bhaiṣajyaguru*, is the source of texts on medicine. Wallace concedes this, but maintains they are not exhaustively religious.

The third element of Wallace's variant tetralemma is the domain of something that is religious but is not Buddhist. This is perhaps the easiest of the four domains to populate. As an example of something that is clearly religious but not Buddhis, Wallace mentions the prescriptions for animal sacrifice to God contained in the *Tanakh*, known otherwise by its Christian designation, the Old Testament. This can be said to be religious and not Buddhist without much resistance.

Finally, Wallace points to quantum mechanics as an example of something that can be described as neither Buddhist nor religious. This is appended by Wallace by noting that some modern physicists have noted the similarities between particular ontological conclusions made by Buddhists and the observations of modern physics. Wallace goes on to point out that 19th century sociologist Emile Durkheim also opined on the topic of the relationship between science and religion, noting that both strive for truth, and that while science is methodologically superior to religion, science itself may be the perfection of the religious impulse towards truth.[67] Leaving behind the tetralemma, Wallace moves on to discuss the limitations of "religion" relative to both Christianity and Buddhism.

As noted earlier, Wallace points to examples of elements in both Tibetan Buddhist tradition and medieval Christian theology that are not themselves religious. Tibetan Buddhism contains written works that strongly suggest medicine or psychology, and medieval Christian theology relies heavily on Plato and Aristotle in forming a cogent

[67] *Buddhist Theology*, 63.

Christian worldview. Wallace problematically concludes what while the Bible is a "religious treatise" the [Tibetan] Buddhist canon is cannot be exhaustively described in this way. Wallace then points out the limitations of Dharmalogy as a term for normative Buddhist Studies.

Although Dharmalogy has the benefit of utilizing terminology from within Buddhism, it too is too limited to adequately be representative of Buddhism. Not all that comes under the heading of Buddhism can be said to be the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. Furthermore, this term lacks concern for the other two jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha and the Sangha. Wallace concludes this discussion by moving on to examine the research under the headings of Buddhologist, Buddhist Theorist, Buddhist practitioner, and Buddhist.

The first perspective addressed is that of the Buddhologist. Wallace notes that the Buddhologist is concerned with the physical, external phenomena of Buddhism. This is strongly informed objectivism informed by scientific naturalism, itself the product of the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment. This limits the Buddhologist research methodology, forever excluding Buddhist realization from the domain of investigation. Wallace concludes by noting that Buddhism, like physics, needs to be practiced to be understood, and by virtue of this, the Buddhologist is severely truncated in his attempt to learn about Buddhism. The Buddhologist's normative counterpart, the Buddhist theorist, follows.

The Buddhist theorist seeks to utilize Buddhist ideas and the Buddhist worldview to evaluate the world. The Buddhist theorist, in contrast to Buddhologist, seeks to learn from Buddhism rather merely about Buddhism. Wallace notes that the objectivity sought

by the Buddhologist is not attainable by the Buddhist theorist who proceeds with the Buddhist worldview with his work.

Invoking the tetralemma again, Wallace notes that the Buddhist theorist can be also be parsed in four ways. The first is someone who is both a Buddhologist and a Buddhist theorist, who proceeds with the Buddhist worldview but has also received philological training. Next is the Buddhologist who is not a Buddhist theorist. This is simply a researcher who has no personal commitment to Buddhism. The third is a Buddhist theorist who is not a Buddhologist. This could include a range of modern authors who are Buddhist intellectuals but are not formal philologists. Finally, Wallace includes scholars who are neither personally Buddhist, or trained as Buddhologists. Wallace then proceeds to discuss the Buddhist practitioner.

The Buddhist practitioner is distinguished by his or her commitment to engaging in Buddhist contemplative exercises and attempting to gain the realizations that are promised by them. This could be either a Buddhologist, or a Buddhist theorist, or neither. The latter may not be if their involvement remains philosophical without recourse Buddhist practice itself. The access to experience means the Buddhist practitioner has the ability to ask questions about Buddhist experience, which the prior two intellectual undertakings cannot access. Wallace concludes by examining the category of the Buddhist relative to Buddhology and constructive studies research.

This final category addresses the degree to which one needs to be a Buddhist to be either a Buddhist practitioner or a Buddhist theorist. Wallace notes that among some interested in Buddhist ideas and practices, the adoption of Buddhism by individuals can be piecemeal. This does not appear to have precluded these individuals from benefiting

from Buddhist practice. Wallace notes the observation by both D.T. Suzuki and Thomas Merton (1915-1968 CE) that while Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 – c. 1328) was not a Mahayana Buddhist, his mysticism does strongly resemble sentiments within the Zen tradition. Wallace then moves from this observation to his concern for the centrality of practice among authorities worthy of note.

Wallace states that his own concern about an authority is the proximity of the individual to the object of their research. He notes that one is better served learning meditation from a Buddhist practitioner, and about physics from a physicist rather than a philosopher of science. Wallace concludes that both camps could learn from their brethren of a more distant perspective. Buddhism, Wallace claims, is best examined under an interdisciplinary perspective that should include the vantage of practitioners themselves.

Wallace's notable addition of Buddhist experience is a critical component for an endeavor in Buddhist theology. The Western Buddhist concern for the contemplative benefits of Buddhism are central to their desire to adopt the tradition, wholly or piecemeal. This was much less well emphasized earlier, by Jackson, Coreless, or Gross, but Wallace's work contains a good deal of similar errors.

Wallace's critique of the term theology evidences a very dated view of the provenance of this term. A good deal of theology concerns a variety of conceptions of God in the Abrahamic tradition, many of which are discussions about an anthropomorphic conception of deity. Paul Tillich, perhaps the most famous Christian theologian of the 20th century, described his own theological perspective as "post-theistic" and in search of a "God beyond the God of Theism." The barest acquaintance

with the contours of Christian theology will reveal an abundance of theological work concerned with topics other than the conception of a human-like God. Greater attention of the history of theology would also have lent itself well to his concern for the contents of Tibetan canon.

In a like manner, Wallace fails to note that theology as practice is a category under which an enormous number of intellectual concerns are addressed. Concern for ethics and the nature of the human mind are also topics addressed by theologians. Insofar as these are ultimately appendages to Christian soteriology, they can be considered forms of theology.

In a similar manner, it appears that soteriological concern is a central motivating factor in undertaking philosophical work concerning epistemology, and certainly matters of psychology, in Buddhist thought. As these are also done in connection with Buddhist aims towards awakening, they cannot be considered under the categories of psychology or ethics as the terms are understood in the modern academy. To do so is to consent to an anachronistic Buddhist modernism common among 19th century enthusiasts of Buddhism.

In addition, Wallace fails to locate *himself* in relation to the conversation on Buddhist theology. He proceeds from a Tibetan Buddhist vantage point, not a universal Buddhist one. Many of his observations are valid only from within the purview of this tradition. The claim that they are universal in nature might strike other Buddhists as supercessionist.

The tetralemma was a polemic device used to corner Indian philosophers into proceeding towards *reduction ad absurdum*. The tetralemma appears to rouse remarkably

little apprehension with Wallace, who as a proponent of the Tibetan tradition, would otherwise champion a suspicion of dualism of any form. While four-fold logic may have had its place in dialectics of medieval Indian thought, it is a poor rubric for making sociological distinctions, which Wallace quickly finds as each requires increasing qualification.

Wallace's reduction of "religion" to Van Harvey's definition is also astonishing. The field of religious studies has discussed the question of this term for over a century, but Wallace appears to have no acquaintance with this literature. This is made more problematic as the example he gives of something religious that is not Buddhist does not match with the definition of religion by Van Harvey. Perhaps most damning is the epistemological blindness he evidences in his treatment of Buddhist experience as it ought to be an object of Buddhological investigation.

The place of experience as the object of is a problematic one. Most directly, how does a third person evaluate it? The longstanding philosophical problem of Other Minds immediately presents itself to a researcher attempting to examine the experience of another person. Without direct access to the mind of that other person, one is left with accounts of the experience by the individual in question. Wallace neither addresses this basic concern, nor draws attention to neuroscience research in an attempt examine such experience.

Chapter Four: The Methodological Relevance of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship to Study of Buddhism

This section, by V.Wallace, like Gross, addresses the primacy the historical-critical methodology has within Buddhology. She too seeks to challenge the centrality of its place. But unlike Gross, V.Wallace addresses not only the limitations of the assumptions of objectivity while leaving implicit blind-spots of this method regarding an accurate understanding of Buddhist texts. She begins by noting a non-duality between subjectivity and objectivity.

V. Wallace notes that, however objective the facts may be, there is no way to avoid the subjective importance attributed to these facts. A research study has to assign relative weight to each element of data, and this represents an irreducible subjectivity within the process of research. By way of example, V.Wallace points to how the application of the historical-critical method can arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions, as in the work of Miranda Shaw (*Passionate Enlightenment)* who concludes that a certain body of Buddhist tantric text demonstrates the empowerment of women. The same body of literature indicates the opposite conclusion to Snellgrove, also applying the historical-critical method, hereafter HC. To address the limitations of the HC method, Wallace recommends that Buddhologists include data about how these texts were received by the masses of Buddhists, rather than the hypothetical audiences of highly educated monks or *tantrikas*. In addition, Wallace argues for transcending the hermeneutics of suspicion.

V. Wallace notes that the hermeneutics of suspicion, predicate to HC, seem to be the only approach to examining a Buddhist text. Theologians such as David Tracy at the University of Chicago argue that HC is appropriate for preliminary research, particularly

for addressing inconsistencies in a text. V. Wallace points out that this HC should be applied to the scholar's own assumptions in approaching the text.

Beyond this, she suggests that researchers replace the hermeneutics of suspicion with the hermeneutics of retrieval. This latter means of examination is embodied in the recovery of material from Buddhist texts that can be applied to problems in our current world, as exemplified in the work of Gomez, Thurman, and Gross towards concern for social justice and the ecology. This can be set next to another means of examining the meaning of a text, the history of interpretation, in which practicing Buddhists have engaged throughout history.

V. Wallace points to postmodern Biblical scholarship as another mode by which the meaning of a Buddhist text may be apprehended. Scholars engaged in postmodern Biblical scholarship note that meaning is not a substance which must be excavated from the text, but arises as a result of the dynamic between the subjectivity of the reader and the text. The first point of departure for a scholar is for that scholar to be wholly familiar with the range of their own presuppositions. Without such awareness, those presuppositions can act to occlude an interpretive act; the scholar's becoming isogetical rather than exegetical. V. Wallace points to the Critical Buddhist scholarship of Matsumoto Shirō, and his work on the *Tathātagarbha Sutra*. She notes that Sallie King's response illuminates the way in which this work can be understood, as not referring to substantialist positions. Wallace claims this indicates the absence of self-reflection on the part of Shirō, leading to research that confirms his own opinions. However, this too must be appended by another dynamic.

V. Wallace notes that texts exist in dialogue with living Buddhists. Without inclusion of the reception of a text by a succession of the Buddhist faithful, a Buddhologist's work remains limited to the purely hypothetical. The inclusion of this element in textual conversation is how meaning, sought by philologists and theologians, is arrived at. Meaning, noted by the same theologians, is a matter of a dialogue between religious tradition and the current community. It is not located in either religious tradition, which cannot speak for itself, or the current community that cannot sustain its identity without religious tradition. Rather, it is the words that emerge between these two poles where meaning resides. This is also the point of departure for the project under discussion in this work: normative Buddhist Studies.

It is the meaning, and apparent utility, of Buddhist ideas, that impels many of the authors of *Buddhist Theology* to undertake research intent upon the application of Buddhist ideas to the dilemmas of the current world. V. Wallace notes the work of Gross in feminist studies and B. Alan Wallace in Buddhism and cognitive science. In conclusion, Wallace notes that the inclusion of present interpretations of Buddhist texts can help to mitigate the hubris of the philologist's scholarly vantage.

V. Wallace's section offers the inclusion of a perspective into efforts necessary for a Buddhist theology. Buddhology, at its outset, included concern for hermeneutics beyond the philological alone (Burnouf). Although some philologists would go so far as to suggest that the text is a product confined in the concrete of a past time (Lopez), this would be contrary to the spirit of Buddhology echoed first by Burnouf.

V. Wallace points out that any attempt on the part of a Buddhologist to approach the text needs to be mediated by the researcher's own self-reflection on their own biases.

But the mainstay of V. Wallace's point rests with the necessity of the Buddhologist to be acquainted with the history of interpretation of the text, if the Buddhologist wants to arrive at the correct understanding of a text. This point that Wallace has made is fruitful and theological, but perhaps errs in failing to distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive research.

This distinction has its roots in the divide between "is" and "ought" was articulated by David Hume (1711-1776). This dichotomy finds expression in normative/prescriptive research in line with the "ought" side, and descriptive research, according to "is." In the social sciences, this distinction finds expression in the work of Max Weber (1864-1920), who discussed the place of "value-free" research. Generally, the study of religion can be roughly segmented into work that is normative, or theological, and descriptive in orientation--the religious studies, or Buddhology, side of the conversation. Beyond method, what each of these sides is looking for is very different. For the sake of simplicity, we can speak of Buddhology and Buddhist theology.

Each side is asking different questions. The Buddhologist seeks to rediscover the text and its relationship with the time it was believed to have been written in. These are questions of description. This is roughly analogous to the work of scientists who attempt to follow the data to whatever conclusion it leads. The Buddhist theologian shares these concerns while motivated by a desire to explicate Buddhist soteriology. This is not to suggest that a researcher who performs what can be reasonable described as descriptive research is uninterested in questions about the implications of their work, but this is secondary rather than primary. I will not move on to the final article in part one.

Chapter Five: Hermeneutics and Dharmology: Finding an American Buddhist Voice

Corless' work addresses four points concerning normative Buddhist Studies. He begins by briefly addressing the question of terminology before turning to establish three theological predicates necessary for all forms of normative Buddhist Studies, Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna. Following this, he notes how the Black Plague (1346-1353) played a pronounced role in propelling the West toward a materialism generally incompatible with the topics of theological Buddhist Studies. Corless concludes by noting the conflicts between normative concerns in the academy, and offers observations about beginning a normative approach to the study of Buddhism.

First, Corless dispenses with "theology" as a valid candidate for a term to label a normative Buddhist Studies. Corless sees the etymology roots of "theology" in Christian theism as presenting a barrier that cannot be overcome in its usage. As the term "Buddhology" is already claimed by philologists, Dharmology remains the most viable option for the new normative studies. Corless then comments on the nature of the Buddhist truth claim, and posits irreducible theological axioms necessary for a normative approach.

Corless notes that the tolerance for other religions associated with Buddhism should not be taken to indicate diffidence within the Buddhist truth claim. Buddhism, Corless notes, is a confident, missionary religion, and is sound in the certainty of its proclamation. He notes that anyone undertaking Dharmology will need to acknowledge three theological axioms to proceed in a properly Buddhist manner. The first concerns the Buddhas themselves.

All Buddhists assent, Corless claims, to the proposition that the Buddhas are omniscient. There are a few differences between the Theravada and Mahayana in regard to this omniscience is minor, a difference between as in the former potential, or already present in the latter. This, however, is not a problem for the scholar in question. This omniscience is a potential of all humans, an "anthropology," as Corless calls it. The omniscience of the Buddha leads to an important epistemological point in the teachings of the Buddha.

Corless follows his note on the knowledge of a Buddha with the implications of this for the human condition. The Buddha's teachings are eternal. They represent a permanent description of the human condition and means of emancipation from it. This leads to Corless' final axiom also leading from the Buddha's omniscience: perfectly accurate description of the operation of the universe.

Corless borrows Edward Conze's coinage "trichiliocosm" to describe the definite and incontrovertible description of the universe set forth by the Buddhas. The "tri" of chiliocosm refers to the three domains within which rebirth takes place in the Buddhist universe: the desire realms, the form realms, and the formless realms. Among a number of possibilities that he could have drawn from the certainty of the Buddha's declaration about the operation of the universe, is that consciousness is not an epiphenomenon: "A consequence of this position is that life and consciousness are not accidental epiphenomena, they are intrinsic to reality as it truly is." (98). Corless notes that, "what is meant by consciousness is, ultimately, Buddha-consciousness" (98), suggesting something more than a view of consciousness as proffered by neuroscience.

Consciousness, the three domains of the universe, rebirth, and karma, are all governed by Corless' final theological axiom, co-dependent origination.

Corless notes that the Buddhist universe rests on a principle of co-dependent origination, that rests between the positions of theism or atheism, and free will or determinism. Corless also notes that that this position, articulated at great length by the Mahayana exegete Nagarjuna, is "philosophically unassailable." This concludes Corless' discussion of Dharmological axioms, and he moves on to "Buddhology."

Corless' discussion of Buddhology is intended to illuminate the differences between the philological approach to the study of Buddhism and the theological position he has advanced.. The assumptions about what constitutes knowledge within Buddhology find their roots in the titanic theodicy imparted upon the Western mind by the Black Plague, "… a catastrophe incompatible with a God who was all-loving, all-knowing, all powerful, and accessible to the human mind."[68] This catastrophe led to a radical retreat to materialism that left the Western mind epistemologically empirical and ontologically materialist. Corless argues that this materialism predicate informed Buddhology's proscribing the proper domain of research concerns in philology. The "ruling ideology" of materialistic reductionism has become the faith of Buddhologists, and they its sacerdotal guardians, the tenured professorate, ready to dispense academic "excommunication" leading to the professorial "damnation," the denial of tenure. However, this materialism has seen withering critique from Freud, Marx, and Derrida.[69] Corless moves onto discussing the conflicts between Dharmalogy and Buddhology.

[68] *Buddhist Theology,* 99.
[69] *Buddhist Theology,* 99.

Corless notes that Buddhology itself could be improved by Buddhist practice. The author asserts that the absurdity of the belief among Buddhologists that Buddhist practice is unnecessary to the study of Buddhism is as strange a scholar of the Bible having no concern for the existence of God. Corless argues that this is because of the political power the materialistic worldview has had in displacing other ontologies in the academy. Corless believes Buddhist practice could bring insight to the study of Buddhism otherwise inaccessible through philology alone. Attempting to bridge the methodology gap between these two modes of Buddhist Studies, Corless explains his answer as "Dharmalogical Buddhology."

Corless' discussion starts by noting that American Buddhism has gone through a process similar to Chinese Buddhism with regard to translation. Just as early Chinese translators looked to Daoist terminology to approximate Buddhist ideas in Chinese, Buddhist terms have undergone approximation in Christian terminology, such as Zen "monks" etc. This, Corless notes, is not untoward, but is simply utilizing a facet of the English language not available within the Chinese language: adoption of foreign words into itself. English has the advantage of bringing Sanskrit, Japanese, and Chinese terms within itself without the need for the variety of neologisms such as Kumārajīva (344-413) had to construct to move beyond the process of meaning-matching, e.g. *ko-i.* between Sanskrit and Chinese. Corless argues convincingly this is a valid solution to many dilemmas in translating Buddhist terminology into English. The author also notes a few other important points that could help the emerging "Dharmological Buddhology."

Insofar as Dharmalogy should seek to unseat the monolithic materialism of Buddhology, it should simultaneously embrace a variety of modes in the study of

Buddhism beyond textual study. Furthermore, a Dharmalogical Buddhologist should understand that myths are modes of communicating perennial truths, rather than spurious fictions. And conversely, a Dharmalogist should integrate their own Buddhist practice an examination of the ontologies that the researcher uses in the course of his research. Finally, Corless makes a call to fellow Buddhist-Buddhologists to begin the work of Dharmalogy.

Corless starts by making a case for the adoption of "Dharmalogy" noted by Rita Gross in her earlier contribution. He points out that the etymology of "theology" precludes it from Buddhist usage. This is extremely simplistic, and fails to account for the range of religious reflection that occurs within the Abrahamic traditions not directly related to concerns about the existence or nature of God. This essentialism is a prevailing theme among Buddhologists who have no exposure to religious studies scholarship or more modern varieties of Christian theology. Theology need no longer be limited to discussions about an anthropomorphic God. That said, Dharmalogy has shortcomings of its own.

As I have noted in preceding critiques, the Sanskrit term "Dharma" is employed by three other Indian religions, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It is possible that the clergy and laity of these traditions might regard the creation of this neologism as a gesture of religious chauvinism on the part of Western, convert Buddhists, since Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs have an equal claim to this ancient Sanskrit noun. While this term is problematic, the themes placed under its heading have an array of equally ready difficulties.

Corless' "Dharmalogy" has four theological predicates: Buddhas are omniscient, the Buddha-dharma is true for all time, the trichiliocosm is how reality works, and this operates according to co-dependent origination. While each is a sound point of departure for normative Buddhist Studies, each demonstrates the limitations in Corless' understanding of religion and Buddhism. I will address each in order.

While initially there appears to be little to disagree with in Corless' statement that "All traditions of Buddhism teach that, when a living being or conscious being (*sattva*) becomes a Buddha, the entity has access to all knowledge," it does not follow from this that all forms of Buddhism regard Buddhahood itself as the primary soteriological goal. Though it is often unacknowledged even by scholars of Theravada Buddhism, a minority of Theravadins do aspire to the *bodhisatta* path intent upon accomplishing Buddhahood after a very nearly interminable number of rebirths. It is inappropriate, however, to lump the complex tradition of Theravada next to the Mahayana as a variety of Buddhism that is preoccupied with the attainment of Buddhahood and its constituent attributes.[70] Corless' claim of the purported omniscience of Buddhas links to his next point about the nature of their teachings. Following the epistemological domain of a Buddha's mind is the caliber of what a Buddha can produce pedagogically, namely, that a Buddha's teachings are eternal.

For scholars and practitioners of Buddhism who are accustomed to the force with which Buddhist teachings assert impermanence, Corless' assertion of the theological axiom, "The Buddhadharma is the Eternal Truth" causes him to founder into the error of eternalism. The Buddha himself, Buddhist exegetes, and contemplatives have

[70] Contra Corless, the earliest strata of Buddhist literature do not suggest that a Buddha is omniscient. See MN 71 Tevijiavacchagotta.

unanimously affirmed the transient nature of reality. This extends even to the very teachings of the Buddha himself, indicated in part by the belief in preceding and subsequent Buddhas necessary to renew the presence of the Dharma in the world. While Corless does not explicitly make this point (though culpable for it), by "eternal" it appears he means universal and reliable, as the laws of physics appear to be.

> "If the Buddhas are omniscient, it follows that what they teach, the Buddha-dharma, is true in the same universal way as, for instance, it is claimed the laws of physics are true. One may believe or not believe in the tents of some religion or other, but one cannot gainsay gravity."[71]

Certainly Buddhists of all stripes will advance the claim that the Dharma represents an accurate and reliable description of the operation of the universe. However, in contrast to the laws of physics that can be tested by independent observation, and are predicate to technological developments, there is no way one can test for the existence of karma, rebirth, or alternative realms. Although Buddhist meditative traditions claim that karma, the process of rebirth, and their respective destinations are plainly visible to a sufficiently advanced meditation practitioner, this still is an anecdotal account without the possibility of independent observation. These would themselves be easier to ascertain than locating a Buddha, or attempting to establish a battery of tests to apply to this patient and willing omniscient being. Aside from the "unfalsifiable" character of Buddhist cosmological assertions, the confidence with which Buddhists make a case for the veracity of their tradition is not unique to Buddhism.

Corless attempts to distance Buddhism from other world religions by likening Buddhism to science. This is itself a dated Buddhist rhetorical tactic but also fails to account the confidence with which the proponents of other world religions would claim

[71] *Buddhist Theology*, 97.

the same level of certainty about the truth claims of their respective traditions. A Buddhist theologian advancing claims such as Corless' would have little more to appeal to than his medieval Christian counterpart, who would also claim that the that theology of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), as instantiated in reason and Divine Revelation, also represented the true portrait of cosmology and human soteriology.

The treatment of "religion" is also unusual. Given the primacy that etymology held for Corless in dismissing "theology," it is ironic that Corless' concern for etymology does not extend to "religion," which has seen vast scrutiny over the past century, particularly by scholars within the discipline of religious studies. Although a conclusive definition of "religion" remains hotly debated, there is reasonable agreement on the etymological roots of this term. A few possibilities are derive from the Latin "to repeat" or "choose again." Given the wealth of connotations associated with this term, the simplicity of this etymology stands in remarkable contrast. Per Corless, etymological essentialism Buddhism can be categorized as a religion.

Finally, Corless' comment that anyone who rejects the truth espoused by the Buddhas is "simply stupid" stands in remarkable contrast to Buddhist soteriology as a whole. All Buddhists agree that the sentient beings that undergo rebirth do so because of ignorance of either the Four Noble Truths (Theravada), or the empty nature of reality (Mahayana). Without the illumination of the Buddha's teachings, these transmigrating minds are almost entirely uninformed about the actual operation of the universe. Indeed, the first two insights the Buddha experienced as he meditated under the Bodhi tree were about the reality of karma and rebirth. These truths are only readily apparent to the most advanced contemplatives, accessible to adepts in other religious tradition. The third of the

Buddha's insights, the possibility of cessation to suffering, was unique to the meditation accomplishment of a Buddha alone. Essentially, this points to the impossibility of an ordinary person, without access to the Buddha's teaching, gaining direct perception of these foundations of the Buddhist worldview.

Indeed, one characterization of the Buddha's teaching from within the Theravada tradition is the Pali term "ehipassiko," generally translated as "come and see," indicating that the truth of the Buddha is not ascertained by assent to the propositions of the teachings. The Mahayana tradition, from which Corless heralds, champions the *bodhicitta*, the mind of the bodhisattva intent upon awakening, which carries as one of its connotations limitless compassion. A component of this compassion is knowledge of the *avidyā*, or ignorance that occludes sentient beings from seeing the plight of their state. To describe a sentient being as stupid for knowledge nearly impossible for them to gain, or ascertain, is very a peculiar action from the vantage of Buddhist soteriology. This declaration represents one difficulty for a non-Buddhist as they approach Buddhist teaching; verification of the truth claims of Buddhism remain another. As noted earlier, given that rebirth and karma requires nearly the apex of meditation accomplishment to apprehend, this effectively renders two elements of the Buddhist worldview unamenable to scientific verification. *Sans* external, empirical verification, Corless' three Buddhist axioms are no more accessible or apparent to a non-Buddhist than is the existence of God. Corless then goes on to address the rise of materialism as they acted epistemological and ontological predicates to Buddhology as it came to be practiced in the academy.

Corless' history can be critiqued on a number of points, but as it was not his purpose to give an extended account of this development, I will note only a few. While the Black Plague certainly presented a potent theodicy for the Catholic Church, this did not halt Catholic practice and observance. Rather than the problem of evil that confronted Catholic theologians, it was rather the challenge of empirical observation that rose with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment that was more the source of the critique of Catholic theology. This was aimed those elements of Catholic theology that were beholden to the physics and cosmology of Aristotle via the work of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Indeed, the primacy of Medieval Scholastic reasoning was *not* abandoned for empiricism by virtue of the Black Plague. The change was wrought in part by nascent sciences introduced during the end of the Middle Ages, colonialism propelled by the desire to circumvent the Ottoman Empire in search of routes to India, and mercantilism challenging the relatively static medieval social order. However, even the observations of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) did not arrest Catholic thought and theology.[72] The contours of "Religion" and "Philosophy" were sculpted during this period, diminishing the former to private convictions about the supernatural. Despite the Black Plague, Christian theology remained, and remains, a powerful force in Western intellectualism.

Corless' narrative about the rise of a theological-neglectful Buddhology could be better located in the development of both religious studies and Buddhology. Religious studies was long hard-pressed to distinguish itself from well-established Christian theology in the academy, and no small part of the strategy employed was to promote

[72] Newly minted Protestant historians were quick to coin the period prior to their emergence the "Middle Ages" and deride the older church to which they remain largely indebted for central points of Christian theology, e.g. Trinity, Grace, Original Sin, etc. This lament for the Middle Ages was joined by confident sons of the Enlightenment, who cast a similarly dim view on the innumerable Protestant traditions as well.

itself as "objective" in contrast to the subjectivity and partisanship believed to overshadow and rule theology.[73] Initially as an appendage to the training of Christian ministers, religious studies developed out of the need for education on other world religions. This was commensurate with the adoption of historical-critical textual analysis that came to be a core methodology for the then-emergent discipline. Buddhist Studies, in the "Trinity" characterized by Edward Conze, the Anglo-German, Franco-Belgian, and the I schools, share this methodological concern in their respective evaluations of Buddhist texts. Simply put, these disciplines sought to do something *other* than theological work, and in this, cannot rightly be faulted for neglecting what they never set out to do.

Corless' raises a wide range of concerns germane to a confession of Buddhism including important issues of methodology. necessary assumptions, and the predicates to the materialistic epistemology central to Buddhology. However, he and his colleagues have neglected a critical point regarding the institutional viability of an academic Buddhist theology: The challenges presented by confessional mode of teaching about religion at public institutions of higher education. Few topics in American education have drawn such a range of intensely held opinions as this. Though the majority of the debate has concerned primary and secondary education, it is in the discipline of religious studies that it has been sustained regarding higher education.

Simply put, the issue revolves around public funds used to pay for teaching or preaching religion at all levels of education. The First Amendment to the Constitution of

[73] Fellow Religious studies scholars may object to my emphasis to Christian theology to the exclusion of Jewish theology. However, historically Christian seminarians and Divinity schools are the point of departure for Religious studies as a discipline.

the United States, regarding the relationship of religion to the state indicates that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The First Amendment is understood to prohibit the Federal Government from funding explicitly religious institutions of higher education. As Buddhist theology is an expressly religious discourse, this would become a perhaps unsurpassable barrier for its practice in state-funded institutions. The final section of Corless', piece entitled "An American Buddhist Voice" offers a number of insightful conclusions to his piece.

Corless notes that Buddhology could benefit from the inherent advantages of modern English. While second century Chinese made recourse to Daoist vocabulary to approximate concepts of Buddhism, modern English continues to adopt Buddhist terms *in toto*. Corless argues that Buddhologists, and the American public, can abandon the practice of borrowing terminology from Christianity to represent Buddhist terms. Admittedly, this would take some time, but this is plausible, and allows Buddhism to retain the nuances that differentiate it from proximate Christian ideas. The final two insights regard methodology for future Buddhologists.

Buddhology must admit into itself a range of methodology, and into this, Buddhist practice itself has a place. Corless claims that without this addition, Buddhology will remain critically blind to the "essence" of Buddhist thought. While it stands to reason this would accord Buddhology a more sympathetic tone to scholarship, it does not follow that this will necessarily produce better Buddhology proper. As I noted above, Buddhology and Buddhist theology have different concerns propelling each discipline. We may invoke the late Stephen Jay Gould's (1941-2002) Non-Overlapping Magisteria

(NOMA) here, with some qualification. NOMA was proposed by Gould as way to reconcile science and religion, each of which concern themselves with the world, but ply it with different concerns and questions. Science seeks to uncover *how* the universe operates. Religion, by contrast, inclines towards *why* the universe is and what this means for humanity.

Relative to the present discussion, Buddhology and Buddhist theology are reasonably analogous to science and religion. Buddhology approaches the details of Buddhism history in a manner similar to how the natural sciences evaluate the natural universe. Buddhist theology, like religion, is more strongly oriented towards questions of meaning and application of Buddhist teachings. Each discipline has sufficiently large undertakings without becoming overborne with the questions best addressed in another discipline. I will now move onto a global critique of this part of *Buddhist Theology.*

Perhaps the single most important point of departure for a critique of this first section of *Buddhist Theology* is to examine the contours of exactly what these authors mean by "theology." A peculiar range of assumptions that acts to inform the otherwise "empty" category of theology the authors are seeking to create. The authors as Buddhist Studies scholars appear to have inherited a range of caricatures about theology that also haunts religious studies. Religious studies in particular, has worked hard to distinguish itself from Christian theology as a mode used to study religion.[74] This involved working in a direction opposite from it was believed Christian theology did.

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[74] A point worth noting is that there simply is no discipline of theology irrespective of a tradition. Gershom Scholem observation about mysticism applies here to theology as well: "The point I should like to make is this—that there is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on." (*The Jewish Experience,* "Chapter 11 General Characteristics of Jewish Mysticism", 222, ed. Judah Goldin, New Haven, Yale UP.1976)

Most notable among these caricatures is the idea that theology *in toto* is a single monolithic undertaking. Christian theology finds within it nearly every philosophical and methodological subdivision imaginable. The first point of differentiation is between the three largest denominations of Christianity: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.[75] Beyond this, particular themes are germane to each tradition to the exclusion of the others. The topic of Papal Infallibility is native to the Roman Catholic tradition alone. Monastic theology is an important point of concern for Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy though less so for the Protestant traditions.

Despite the range of reasons grounding the establishment of "Dharmology" as a viable term, and as a discipline adjacent to Buddhist Studies itself, there are a number of problems this category would create beyond the arena of scholars of Buddhism. Religious studies as a broad discipline includes within itself nearly all academic efforts for which religion is the primary object of study. Adopting this point of view, it can be seen that the Sanskrit "Dharma" plays important role in other religions native to South Asia. Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism also employ this term to denote teachings and religious ideas within themselves.

While the "Dharma" leans toward a discrete range of meanings for scholars and practitioners of Buddhism, outside of this limited domain, both scholars and practitioners of the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh traditions might take exception to Buddhists appropriating this term for their intellectual efforts. Furthermore, "Dharmology" may be unintelligible

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The point of departure for the inception of Religious studies was a not a nondescript notion of "theology" but the particulars Christian theology, itself a diverse intellectual phenomenon. As noted in Makransky's editor's introduction to *Buddhist Theology*, exegetes from within Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism remain undecided about the adoption of this term into their religious discourses (19n1).

[75] The category of Protestantism is itself highly differentiated, containing nearly all of the remaining thirty-four thousand denominations of Christianity. The Coptic Church of Egypt is an important exception to this.

when translated into other languages. Within the contrast between religious studies, Buddhist Studies, and a normative discourse, this term is reasonably discrete. But when rendered into Japanese, readers may be at a loss to understand what exactly is under examination in a work labeled under this title. While "Dharmology" has a range of advantages for scholars and practitioners in North America, the term would likely lend to confusion beyond that domain.

The most important critique of the Buddhist "theology" is the essentialism present in approaching this term. While scholars of religion are aware of the problems in defining "religion" to the point that some have suggested that "religion" is a wholly inviable intellectual category, this problematization is not applied to theology. The discussion of the term by noting the work done by religious studies scholars on polysemic quality of "religion." I will now move to examine exercises in Buddhist theology proper.

3.4. *Buddhist Theology:* Part II: Exercises in Buddhist Theology

Chapter Six: Historical Consciousness as an Offering to the Trans-Historical Buddha

Makransky begins this section on articulations of Buddhist theology by addressing one of the largest disjunctions between Mahayana Buddhism and Buddhology. The efforts of more than a century of Buddhology have concluded unanimously that the Mahayana Sutras could not have been spoken by the Buddha, as the texts themselves claim and Mahayana Buddhists faithfully adhere to. Although this is not esoteric knowledge, and is known by Mahayana Buddhist clergy and teachers, both of these groups, who act as voices of authority, continue to teach to the contrary. It appears that Mahayana Buddhist clergy are not sure how to integrate this information into their tradition in a way that allows Mahayana Buddhism to maintain its cogency.

The methodologies of Buddhology and research concerns of Buddhologists do not include a theological aperture that could act to inform religious people on how to receive this information in a way that is not destructive to their faith. It is here, Makransky claims, that Buddhist theology is suited to this task. Makransky's work makes a case that the Buddhological truth that the Mahayana Sutras were not taught can be integrated by Mahayana Buddhists in a way that enhances, not diminishes, their appreciation of their religious tradition. In fact, the very historicism of Buddhology can reveal a trans-historical element at work in the Mahayana tradition, according to Makransky.

Makransky explains that the assertion that the Buddha taught the Mahayana Sutras was a time-bound "literary device" necessary to facilitating the reception of these new texts by a conservative Buddhist community. While this was useful in the beginning of the Mahayana, it has acted to contract and contort the true breadth of skillful means

contained within the Mahayana canon. Mahayana exegetes in Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan wrestled the sutras into taxonomies that lessened the true benefit of these texts. This was done as Mahayana Buddhist theologians believed the entirety of the Mahayana canon was extolled by historical Gautama Buddha in his lifetime. Makransky claims both these schema and the dated notion that Gautama Buddha himself taught the Mahayana Sutras can be dispensed with and replaced with a fresh appreciation of the skillful means contained within the canon, and a theology of these texts that is more to the heart of the Mahayana conception of the Buddha.

Makransky notes that not all of the sutras in any Buddhist canon are taught by the Buddha himself. Examples of this exist in the Pali Canon, and in the Mahayana one need look no further than the ubiquitous Heart Sutra to see this. In the latter example, the whole of the sutras is taught by Avalokiteśvara in response to a question posed by Śāriputra. The Buddha only speaks after the discourse, and only to affirm the validity of the teaching. The Buddha acts only to certify the teaching here. While this device can be seen in both earlier Buddhist canons and the Mahayana Sutras, the ability of figures other than Buddha to extol teachings worthy of inclusion in the canon goes further than this.

Makransky notes that within *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, disciples who have attained the "wisdom of enlightenment" can speak with authority equal to that of the Buddha himself. This finds further expression in the notion of a universal Buddha, in Vairocana Buddha in the *Avataṃsaka Sutra*, the Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, and the notion of the Trikāya and the Dharmakāya, all generally accepted throughout the Mahayana tradition. This allows Mahayana Buddhists to gracefully let go of both the erroneous idea that the sutras in their canon were taught by the Buddha, and the crippling

schema proceeding from this notion, which can occlude the textured and nuanced activity of this "Trans-historical Buddha" hereafter THB, in the formation of Mahayana in India, and the rest of Mahayana countries. Makransky offers three points by which modern Mahayana Buddhists can proceed to appreciate their tradition, now properly historicized.

The first point is that *with* proper historicism, we can see that each text was the product of a particular time and place, and that these were the efforts of living Buddhists seeking the Mahayana ideal relative to their lives and time. We no longer need to hold to the idea that all Mahayana Sutras came directly from the Buddha's mouth, existing outside of time and space, removed from the truth of a richer and more human dynamic in history. For his second point, Makransky moves from the past to the present.

As the author notes, Mahayana revelation via skillful means is not limited to the distant past. This revelation continues into the present, and these new advents in the tradition deserve our attention and consideration. Meetings between these great traditions can furnish new insight into the established traditions, and offer new avenues of interpretation and practice. This means new orderings of teachings hitherto not considered by ancient worthies. Makransky points to the Four Noble Truths as a possible heuristic to evaluate the efficacy of these teachings as a means to reduce suffering, and therefore their orthodoxy as properly Buddhist. Historicism also informs Makransky's final point.

The introduction of historicism into the interpretation of Mahayana text also leads to the notion that no schema is final. All are contextual, and have relative merits and drawbacks, even those conceived in the present. This need not be a cause for dismay, but

can be understood as the true breadth of Mahayana revelation, that continues through time without end.

Makransky's efforts to right the historicism of Mahayana Buddhism are certainly laudatory. The best efforts of past Buddhist worthies become properly located as limits of scholarship germane to their time and place. However, with new research methodology, even these structures and schemas must bow to the Buddhist axiom of impermanence and, via skillful means, change to reflect an improved pedagogy. It is not hard to imagine that co-contributors to *Buddhist Theology* would be comfortable and indeed eager to see Makransky apply historical consciousness to improve the ahistorical taxonomies that continue to prevail as a means of organizing the vast corpus of the Mahayana. However, its merits in the Western academy may gain little purchase in the face of classically trained Buddhist clergy across the Mahayana countries and cultures. Makransky's critique amounts to nothing less than an abrogation of centuries of intellectual work from the finest Buddhist minds in history. Makransky could expect considerable pushback from Tibetan *geshes*, who may appeal to millennia of soteriological efficacy of Buddhist teaching and practice guided by these inspired taxonomy. History is not without examples of responses by practicing Buddhists to extra-ecclesial efforts to correct their respective canons, or traditions of interpretations thereof.

The first such reaction by a Buddhist community to Buddhological historicism comes from 19th century Japanese Buddhists. Meiji-era Japanese Buddhists were politically oppressed by an emergent, post-Shogunal government replete with factions intent on modernizing Japan and generally hostile to Buddhism, among them Shinto nationalists, highly-placed Japanese converts to Christianity, and champions of science.

Each of these groups developed polemics that claimed Buddhism was a foreign contaminant (Shinto nationalists), Christianity was the proper religion of the developed countries (Japanese converts), and Buddhism represented moribund relics of the past Shogunal era, intellectually at odds with the modern scientific worldview. Though each attacked Buddhism from different angles, the conclusion of each strategy was the same: Buddhism should be abandoned by the Japanese, and its influence eradicated from Japan completely. Buddhists realized they needed to meet this rhetoric on its own terms, and went about rebutting it through a few different means, one of which was via European philology.

For example, Nanjō Bun'yū (1849-1927) was sent to study with Max Müller in the hopes of lending greater historicity to the Mahayana traditions in Japan. His work with Max Müller (1823-1900) did not, however, garner the hoped-for results. Max Müller was himself a partisan of Early Buddhist traditions and largely concluded this was accurately represented in the Theravada tradition of Southeast Asia. It was clear to Müller, as it was to other early philologists, that the Mahayana scripture clearly antedated the historical Buddha. Eugene Burnouf was somewhat more generous in his appraisal of the Mahayana canon relative to the apparent historicity of Pali canon, describing the former as complex sutras, and the latter as simple sutras. However, this information was not initially well received by embattled Japanese Buddhists. Nanjō Bun'yū, for instance, was accused of acting as an agent of *Māra* by angered Japanese Buddhists priests. This would be tempered in time as Japanese universities would come to play a seminal role in the development of Buddhology.

Japanese Buddhists of the 19th century are not alone in their pronounced negative reactions or alarming conclusions regarding Buddhology for practicing Buddhists. In more recent history, 20th-century mainland Chinese Buddhists made similar claims of the late Yìnshùn (1906-2005), an eminent scholar and monk, who sought to apply Buddhology historicism to create a modern *panchiao*, replacing the hallowed counterparts proof of the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi (538-597). Yìnshùn was similarly claimed to be crazed, and inhabited by *Māra* for this claim.[76]

Makranskyis invocation of a "Trans-historical Buddha" hereafter THB, is by no means new to the Mahayana tradition. The idea of a perennial agency of the awakened mind has seen many forms throughout the history of Northern Buddhism. The *Trikāya* contains as its source the Dharmakāya believed to be the permanent source of all Buddhas, itself without beginning or end. The Dharmakāya is understood to be the Lotus Sutra's Eternal Buddha by the Tendai school. The Shingon tradition points to *Mahāvairocana* Buddha, who is, according to Kūkai (774-835), the voice of the Dharmakāya. Tibetan Buddhism is also replete with examples of a personified, ultimate Buda in the forms of Vajradhāra and Samantabhadra. Corless' THB is consonant with the earlier notions of a primordial Buddha. While this appears to resolve the conflict between Buddhology and the claims contained within the Mahayana sutras to have been spoken by Gautama Buddha, Makransky has begun down the equally complex road of theism, and the wide array of philosophical, theological, and soteriological challenges that come with it. While there is a cogency that Makransky 's THB efforts in "re-valorizing" previously diminished skillful means, Makransky's answer forces Buddhists to contend

[76] William Chu. "A Buddha-Shaped Hole: Yìnshùn's 印順 (1906-2005) Critical Buddhology and the Theological Crisis in Modern Chinese Buddhism." (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2006), 2.

with the classic theological problems of omniscience, teleology, and theodicy, as Makransky notes "Skillful means in such texts, as the infinite self-communication of undivided and unlimited enlightened awareness is as vast as a mystery as the Judeo-Christian God."[77] Some explanation is in order about how the trans-historical Buddha as an answer arrives at these problems which have sent Christian and Islamic theologians to work for thousands of years. This begins with a discussion of the similarities and difference between deity as it is conceived of in the Abrahamic traditions, and Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha.

It may be helpful to begin by noting how Makransky's conception of the THB differs from the God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The most critical difference between the Trans-historical Buddha and deity in the Abrahamic religions is on the issue the origin of the universe. All three religions of the Near East agree that the one God created the universe, both its material and spiritual dimensions. Christian theology describes this creation as *ex nihilo*, that is, from nothing. The universe, once created, is maintained by God's assent to its continued existence; it does not have a self-sustaining ontology, unlike the Indian Sāṃkhya philosophy where both spirit (*purusa*) and material (*prakṛti)* are co-eternal. The Trans-historical Buddha has some complexity in comparison on these points.

The first distinction that is relatively easy to make between God and the THB is that the latter is not understood by Mahayana Buddhists to have created the universe. Between the three branches of Buddhism--Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna--

[77] *Buddhist Theology,* 118.

samsara is believed to be "beginning-less," and is not believed to have a single end. Individual sentient beings are understood to exit the cycle of rebirth at their awakening.

Deity in the Abrahamic religions--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam--is generally conceived as having four characteristics that are both ontological and epistemological in character: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence.[78] God is believed to always have had these qualities, and that they exist simultaneously in his being. These qualities create a potent foundation from which the vast undertaking of theology has arisen. Each of these qualities not only concerns the ontology and nature of the deity proper, but also has important ramifications for how the rest of the universe is understood to operate, not least of which are its only known intelligent, mortal life, human beings. Between the existence of God and man, one is immediately confronted by the implications of God's omniscience for the agency of human beings. In its simplest form, the problem is how human beings can have free will, if a deity exists that already knows all possible contingencies. This appears to exclude the possibility of a genuine ability on the part of human beings to make meaningful decisions in their lives. No small amount of ink has been spilt on this theological problem by the finest minds of antiquity, the medieval, and the modern eras. I will address other prominent issues in theology as well.

The THB is also described as omniscient, or *sarvajnana* in Sanskrit.[79] However, according to general Buddhist cosmology, this omniscience is not understood to conflict

[78] I will, for the moment, leave aside the Christian notion of the Trinity as distinct from the conventional monotheism of both Judaism and Islam.
[79] As Makransky identifies his formation as located in Tibetan Buddhism, I have appealed to the *Uttaratantra* believed to have been communicated to Asaṅga by no less than Maitreya Buddha himself. This text claims that the *Tathāgata-garbha* has three qualities: Infinite compassion, infinite wisdom, and infinite power to liberate sentient beings.

with the capacity of sentient beings to exercise their free will. Indeed, a critical predicate to Buddhist cosmology is the latitude of intention that acts as predicate determinative of karmic recompense to come for each living being. Free will is necessary to choose between actions that result in either *akusala* or *kusala*, either unwholesome or wholesome. These inform the future rebirths, be they joyful or sorrowful.[80] Some intellectuals, professional and amateur, who style themselves as Buddhist "philosophers" have posed this question and answer it with varying degrees of rigor. Aside from this very recent conversation, there appears to be relative silence on apparent conflict between the THB's omniscience and the free will necessary for the operation of karma in the Buddhist worldview.

The Omniscience of God possesses other philosophically challenging dilemmas beyond the issue of man's free will; the teleology of actions of God Himself. Teleology is the study of the final goal of any action or thing. Aristotle proposed four varieties of teleology; it is the fourth variety that concerns the ultimate destination or purpose either action taken, or anything that exists. Because of His Omniscience, theologians in the Abrahamic traditions assert that everything in all of existence, visible or invisible, has an final destiny willed by God. This becomes particularly difficult for theologians to address because this god is understood to be motivated by infinite concern. Theologians from these religions have to contend the difficulty of explaining why evil and suffering exists in a world produced by a perfect, all-loving god who is also all knowing. This concern for

[80] The question of a Buddha's omniscience and the free will of sentient beings, the issue of the relationship between actions and their karmic fruits, has been widely debated by Buddhist throughout history. The particulars of these debates vary regarding the connection between choices and resulting fruit, however, Buddhists are in general agreement that actions can be understood as harmful or harmless in nature. It this general agreement I appeal to here, not the particulars of a system describing the karmic results.

omniscience and the intentions and actions that proceed from it leads quickly to the most disquieting of theological dilemmas, that of the problem of evil, or theodicy.[81] It is in this most difficult of theological topics that the Abrahamic God and the THB overlap in intellectual problematics.

The problem of evil is perhaps the most personal of theological problems for the faithful in the Abrahamic traditions. While most religious people live their lives without much anxiety surrounding the salience of free will against the backdrop of omniscience, the problem of evil intrudes into the lives of individuals with the experience of evil, injustice, or suffering inevitably. Deity in the religions of the Near East is believed to be all-good, omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent. If this is the case, for what reason would God create, or allow, evil in his creation? This is brought to a particularly bitter point for the religiously observant, who believe that God intervenes to prevent or advert disaster on their behalf. I want to note a few of the prominent answers that Christian theologians have offered over the last two millennia to the problem of suffering to note where this intersects for the THB.

The answers for the theodicy problem within Christianity draw on both scripture and reason to surmount this dilemma. While Christian theology continues to contend with theodicy, producing new formulations to address the problem of suffering, there are four classical answers from which many of the modern cases find their root. These four answers to theodicy are: The Talion answer, the Test answer, the Free Will answer, and

[81] Etymologically considered, theodicy (*theos dike*) signifies the justification of God. The term was introduced into philosophy by Leibniz, who, in 1710, published a work entitled: "Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal". Kempf, Constantine. "Theodicy." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 20 Jun. 2018 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14569a.htm>.

the Eschatological answer. Each answer seeks to explain how the existence of evil in the world is consonant with the existence of an omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent conception of deity. In discussing each of these, I will note where each has bearing on Makransky's THB.

The first theodicy answer is the Talion answer. It posits that the existence of suffering the world is the necessary result of God maintaining justice in the world. Suffering is the result of actions taken on the part of human beings that are offensive to the deity, and the deity responding with either personal suffering, or wide-scale nature disasters. Both Jewish and Christian theologians look to the earliest books of the Tanakh, or Old Testament in Christian lexicon, for examples of the Talion answer in scripture. The Talion theodicy answer is what Jewish and Christian theologians use to explain the origin of death and all suffering contingent on mortality. Prominent examples from the earliest books of the Jewish and Christian canon include the narrative of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the curse of Cain after killing Abel, and the Great Flood, where the prophet Noah is commanded to create a large ship, or ark, to preserve life on earth from the divinely-forewarned, impending deluge. All are examples of suffering visited on the human race by God as a result of behavior offensive to Him.

By extension, the Talion answer would explain the presence of suffering in the world as a result of human actions displeasing to the deity. As in many religious narratives, order is restored after the deity visits retribution on the offending parties. Continuing with the examples given above, Cain is able to parley with God for a less severe penalty, and the flood ends with a promise on the part of God that the world would

not be destroyed by water again; the instantiation of this promise is marked by the appearance of a rainbow.

The Talion answer is clearly a theodicy answer that does not apply to the THB. Buddhist soteriology does not ascribe weal or woe to the activities of the Buddha. It is a considerable theological question as to whether or not the THB could alter the activity of karma for an individual sentient being.

Following the Talion answer is the Test answer. Here the "test" is religious fidelity to the deity through a range of trials. The foremost example comes from the Book of Job in the Bible. This tract is named after the protagonist, Job, who is portrayed as religious *par excellence*. His intensive devotion to God had won him an abundance of livestock, a vast estate, and a myriad of sons and daughters to carry his name on through the ages to come. Job's punctilious religiosity was such that he would offer unrequired sacrifices daily to avert retribution invited by offenses he was unaware that may have been committed by his children. This is established before the divine-demonic exchange takes place from which Job's woes will come.

The source of Job's suffering comes from a conversation held between God and Satan. Satan appears in the angelic court and is questioned by God as to what he had seen roaming through the world. God asks if Satan had noticed Job, renowned for his indefatigable piety. Satan retorts by claiming that Job's faith is contingent on the myriad material blessings that God had bestowed on Job, and if withdrawn, Job would "curse" God. Satan asks that God allow him to destroy Job's estate, and kill his children. God gives Satan permission with the caveat that Job himself be left alive.

The Book of Job is a lengthy tract largely occupied with Job's conversations with his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who come to console Job in the face of his tremendous losses. Job is, however, aware that he did not act in any manner profane enough to provoke God to retribution. It appears that the Book of Job is a literary structure within which the limits of the Talion theodicy answer are exposed. Each subsequent friend attempts to persuade Job that there must have been some pious failing on his part, but in response to each of his friends, Job pleads his innocence. The Book of Job concludes with Job asking God why he found himself visited with so much misfortune. God responds by explaining that his actions as creator are beyond contestation or questioning. To this, Job acquiesces and undertakes penance for this offense. God gives Job replacements for the wife, children, and estate he lost.

As with the Talion theodicy answer, the Test theodicy answer is not one that applies to the Trans-historical Buddha. Buddhist soteriology understands suffering to be the result of an action performed with attachment informed by passion, aggression, or ignorance. The relative quality of intention from which the motivation to perform the actions proceeds plays a large role in determining the relative happiness or suffering to come in the present life, a subsequent lifetime, or in a rebirth beyond that. Furthermore, the Trans-historical Buddha as a Buddha would not inflict harm on a sentient being.

The third theodicy answer is the Free will answer. This states that God does not interfere with human moral agency to allow for a domain of meaningful ethical choices and actions. If God were to do so, advocates of this answer claim, this would negate the basis from which God can judge individuals to determine their final afterlife destinations. The possibility of evil must remain in the world to allow for a complete spectrum of

moral choices humans can act upon.[82] This answer too is not relevant for the Trans-Historical Buddha. Human agency is located safely cemented in the mechanisms of karma and rebirth. These are understood to be immutable laws of the universe that even a Buddha cannot negate.

The final theodicy answer offered by Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologians is the Eschatological answer. The Greek "eschaton" means "last," making "eschatological" "the study of last things." Eschatology is itself a category under the greater umbrella of theology, usually finding itself intimately connected with soteriology. The thrust of this answer is that deity will make a final appearance to judge mankind in time and space before bringing the faithful, or favorably judged, into eternity.

Theologians usually understand this to be the end of time and space as it is now known. This event is ushered in by a Messianic figure, who either announces the final judgment (Islam), or plays a role in the event (Judaism), or acts as God himself in the event (Christianity). The details of how this occurs vary between the Abrahamic traditions, and within them as well; the latter a matter of the differing scriptural exegesis of traditions, sects, and denominations within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, prevailing themes include a final battle between those aligned with the deity and those against him, concluding in victory for God against the forces of Satan. The close of the eschatological scenario comes after a final judgment upon the entire human race, the close of history, the permanent repose of the favored in paradise, and the damned in hell.

[82] It is generally understood that this theodicy answer is fails to account for *natural* evil, such as that which results from catastrophes like earthquakes or hurricanes. These events fall outside the domain of human agency, and cannot be averted by human action.

The primary shortcoming of the eschatological answer to the theodicy problem is the delay. Why, if God has designs to resolve the suffering of all humans, has he not acted? Theologians in each of Abrahamic faiths have offered an array of answers to this question, but none that answers the question entirely. Buddhism also has one variety of the Eschatological theodicy answer. This proceeds from the annunciation by Gotama of the advent of a future Buddha by the name Mettaya. While this future Buddha is the topic of very little in the early Buddhist canons, Mettaya goes on to have a more glorious career as Sanskrit Maitreya. It is in the Mahayana tradition, and subsequent Vajrayāna tradition, that Maitreya receives full treatment as a messianic figure, heralding in a golden age of the Dharma, the glory of which resounds throughout the cosmos. It is the figure of Maitreya and Buddhist eschatology that will now be addressed.

Buddhism has elements of the Eschatological answer, however, a number of important differences apply. The Abrahamic religions generally subscribe to the proposition that time is finite, with a discrete beginning and end. This is in contrast to Buddhist cosmology, which claims that the universe is a never-ending process of creation and dissolution, without a final conclusion to the process of samsara. As noted above Buddhist cosmology does, however, posit the coming of a future Buddha. This Maitreya will re-introduce the Dharma to the world when the dispensation of Gautama Buddha has disappeared from history.

The advent of Maitreya Buddha into this world is connected with the emergence of Kobo Daishi from his vajra-samadhi, and according to legend, remains within his physical body at this summit of meditation until Maitreya Buddha begins his dispensation. Shingon Buddhists believe that that the remains of those interred at Okuno-

in on Mount Kōya will find themselves in the presence of the future Buddha, allowing them to benefit from all height of Maitreya's dispensation and quick accomplishment of Buddhahood themselves.

Some Tibetan Buddhist clergy surmise that Maitreya's teaching will have no internal divides, as the Gautama Buddha's teachings are classified within the Tibetan lineages into Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna vehicles. These Tibetans claim that arrival of Maitreya will take place in a more refined movement in the unfolding of the universe. Humankind will be of a wholly superior order, longer lived, and more virtuous. This more virtuous time will allow Maitreya to weave the Buddhist teachings together into a seamless whole, without the need for the former subdivisions, contingent on the abilities of his hearers. I will now move onto how the Trans-historical Buddha relates to each of these theodicy answers, and to what degree it may be relevant to each.

The four theodicy answers examined above are contingent upon the Abrahamic conceptions of God, man, and the economy of salvation. While the Abrahamic God resembles Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha in a number of important ways, the universe within which the latter operates could not be more different than the one the former created. God bears a much greater cosmic burden than does the Trans-historical Buddha relative to the existence of the universe, man, and the presence of ethics in the universe.

While it falls to God to exact justice in this life and the next, this task is not one carried out by the Trans-historical Buddha. Pleasure and pain occur in the Buddhist universe not as divine reflex, but rather through the maturation of particular karmic fruits created by the inhabitants of samsara. This leaves the Trans-historical Buddha "off the

hook," so to speak, with regard to suffering in the Buddhist universe. Furthermore, with the notable exception of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, the attainment of nirvana, or Buddhahood, is largely a matter of the personal efforts of the aspirant. Sentient beings undergoing rebirth can make as large or as little effort as they like towards emancipation from samsara; this is a matter of their own predilections.

In contrast to self-accomplished salvation in the Buddhist universe, the Abrahamic God is responsible for placing the faithful and the faithless in their respective final destinations. By extension, eschatology plays a much smaller role in the Buddhist universe and soteriology than it does in the theology of these Near-Eastern religions. While the advent of a new Buddha is a monumental event in Buddhist cosmology, neither conclusion of the cosmos nor the salvation of the entire human race is commensurate with it. Proximity to a living Buddha is an unmatched opportunity to attain nirvana, but the grit required of an ascetical lifestyle, and the mental fortitude to engage in a truly heroic devotion to meditation, remain general prerequisites. Thus, the Trans-historical Buddha appears to avoid much of the theodicy problem that confronts the God of the Tanakh, the Bible, and the Qur'an. Before addressing theodicy in the Trans-historical Buddha, it necessary to note how Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha differs from the standard Mahayana conception of the *Trikāya*, and its soteriological activity.

Germane to the Mahayana, and Vajrayāna which is located under it, is the notion of the *Trikāya*. The *Trikāya* is a theological ontology of the person of the Buddha. According to this schema, Gautama Buddha was in fact only an earthly manifestation, the *nirmanakaya*, of the eternal Dharmakāya. In the Mahayana conception of the Buddha, historical Buddha was only an emanation of this eternal principle; this is explicitly noted

in some of the most prominent Mahayana Sutras, such as the Lotus Sutra and the Avataṃsaka Sutra. The deathless Dharmakāya and the mortal *Nirmanakāya* are joined by the *Sambhogakāya*, a heavenly manifestation that teaches those who have reached the heights of the bodhisattva path, and are abiding in realms superior to the human realm. With this note aside, within the classical conception of the *Trikāya*, the nirmanakaya is responsible for the majority of the Buddhist teachings in the world.[83] The concept of the Dharmakāya appears to have undergone a process of personification through time. This change resembles a change that took place with regard to the notion of Brahman in the Upanishads, later texts within this body of writing admitting to a personal dimension of the Brahman, otherwise thought of as diffuse potential. In a like manner, the Dharmakāya appears to be more diffuse in earlier Mahayana literature, such as *Prajñāpāramitā*, and later takes on a personality in both the Avatamsaka Sutra, as Vairocana Buddha, and the Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra. Added to these are other personifications in Vajrayāna Tantras, such as Mahāvairocana Buddha, Samantabhadra, and Vajradhara. These "bodies" of the Buddha are responsible for nearly all Buddhist scripture now extant, though Buddhists may argue that other scripture, such as the *Platform Sutra,* have found their inspiration from them more indirectly.

As Makransky characterizes the Trans-historical Buddha, it appears to be largely in accord with the classical Mahayana *Trikāya,* with the exception that the Trans-historical Buddha, informed by historical consciousness afforded through Buddhology, is not directly the source of the Mahayana and Vajrayāna scriptures.[84] To reiterate,

[83] Vajrayāna Buddhists in Tibet and the Shingon sect in Japan, claim that their teachings come directly from the Dharmakāya itself, and are limited to the deterioration that other Buddhist teachings are believed to undergo through the passage of time.

Makransky claims that it was expedient to aid their reception that the Mahayana writers claimed that the Buddha had actually taught the contents that later became these sutras. This is not as unproblematic as Makransky claims; it has serious consequences to the Trans-historical Buddha in both theodicy and Buddhist soteriology, which I will address later. For the moment, however, this is a more direct dilemma than faces Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha; this comes from an unanticipated location of the *Trikāya* inspiration and activity.

Mahayana and Vajrayāna Buddhists believe they have received scripture from the *Trikāya* than the deposit for early Buddhist canons. All three schools of Buddhism--Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna--contain not only vast bodies of sutras, but alongside this, an even larger body of exegetical writings. Each respective school regards these commentaries as the products of accomplished Buddhists adepts, some of whom are believed to have arrived at awakening itself.

However, it is these very same masters, whose own awakening has made them privy to the Dharmakāya itself, who constructed the same scriptural taxonomies that Makransky attacks. These taxonomies are the products of illuminated minds and create a coherent picture of the deluge of Mahayana scripture. The most erudite and spiritual accomplished Buddhist masters in East Asia and Central Asia are responsible for the creation of these taxonomies. Furthermore, perhaps yet more damning to Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha, are the accounts of various Buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing to these masters throughout history to aid them in the construction of these same scriptural taxonomies. This leads to the uncomfortable conclusion that the Trans-historical Buddha either directly aided these masters in composing very scriptural

taxonomies that Makransky would like to liberate Mahayana sutras from. Let me further elucidate on this point.

It appears that while the THB is active throughout history, it cannot extricate itself from history. Makransky's THB is intimately interwoven with the creation and inspiration of Buddhist scripture and exegesis. This activity appears to have been both explicit and implicit. Accounts of the activity of Buddhas and bodhisattvas have been recorded by Buddhists, some of the most notable examples of which come from the Tibetan tradition. The Indian Buddhist pandit and missionary Asaṅga is believed to have received the *Five Dharmas of Maitreya* from Maitreya Bodhisattva, residing in *Tuṣita* heaven until his own advent on earth.[85] As explained in *Buddhist Theology*:

> Skillful means in such texts, as infinite self-communication of undivided and unlimited enlightened awareness, is as vast a mystery as the Judeo-Christian. If we take it seriously from both within historical consciousness and within the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, it is a vast mystery though which authentic Mahayana experience has been made possible across diverse cultures through so many centuries. And it is precisely because accomplished members of diverse Buddhist communities throughout history have been the primary source of skillful means that skillful means have been so skillful: enabling the trans-historical Buddha, wisdom embodied in accomplished Sangha of new places and times, to speak again and again, always with fresh intimate voices – to speak directly from and to the hearts of Central Asians, Indian, Chinese, Koreans, Tibetans, Japanese, Vietnamese – to speak to each in precise ways that uniquely invoke a wisdom and love beyond self-clinging in each culture and time.[86]

It is odd to note that the accomplished masters Makransky mentions, inspired by the THB put pen to paper and created the very taxonomies that Makransky finds wanting. These

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[85]" Critical scholarship cannot assume, as is true of all major Tibetan traditions of exegesis, either that the five great works attributed to Maitreya (the *Five Maitreya Dharmas*) are indeed by that or any other single author or whether an author by that name ever existed as a historical person at all. Admittedly the Tibetan tradition does not claim he was a historical person of this world, since he is represented as dwelling in the realm of Tusita. This means that the actual penmanship of these treatises is attributed to Asanga, which again cannot be accepted uncritically." (*The Buddha Within*, 325).

[86] *Buddhist Theology*, 119.

scriptural strata are exactly the efforts of myriad Buddhist masters to organize the Buddhist teachings in a manner that allowed for systematic study and reflection. Buddhist worthies such as Zhìyǐ (538-597), Kūkai (774-835), and Jinul (1158-1210) are masters who, inspired indirectly by the Trans-historical Buddha, produced these scriptural orderings that aided the propagation and education of Buddhists in the pre-modern world. This extends as well to the original authors of the Mahayana texts; these masters were also, according to Makransky's understanding of the Trans-historical Buddha's activity, also acting under its inspiration in falsifying the origins of the Mahayana Sutras.

It is here that I locate a theodicy problem for Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha. The Trans-historical Buddha is responsible for the erroneous presentation of the Mahayana Sutras, and the erroneous systems of organization that followed. It is here that the Trans-historical Buddha cannot transcend history, and the aggression that followed between Buddhist exegetes, including violence, is laid at the feet of this expression of Buddhist theism.[87]

Even more to the point regarding the Dharmakāya as inspiration for Buddhist scriptural taxonomy is the lore surrounding Tsongkhapa's aid from Manjushri in the composition of his *Essence of Eloquence.* While few Tibetan Buddhist exegetes could match his academic acumen, equally few could match his mystical visions. Tsongkhapa, it is recorded, is believed to have been able to communicate with the bodhisattva Manjushri though a medium, and later on in his life, directly as well.

[87] Those not familiar with Buddhist history are often astonished to find that Buddhism was not without the sectarian violence often associated with more explicitly theistic religious traditions. The near destruction of the Nichiren sect by the militarily potent Tendai sect in medieval Japan, and the persecution of the Jonang tradition in Tibet are ready examples of such theological motivated, Buddhist violence.

The instances of celestial aid offered by bodhisattvas and Buddhas occupying immaculate strata of time and space to earthly worthies are too numerous to list here. It can be safely said that this was not uncommon of ancient Buddhist adepts, and pre-figured as a critical component of Buddhist hagiographic traditions across time, culture, and sectarian memberships. Whether or not these events *actually* occurred, or this is merely a literary device, is immaterial. In either case, it essentially means that Makransky's construction of the Trans-historical Buddha is at odds with the classical Dharmakāya and its putative activities though history. The Trans-historical Buddha is, according to Makransky, the source of all skillful means throughout history, even the problematic taxonomies that Makransky seeks to deconstruct with historical consciousness. To draw on a Vajrayāna proverb, "poison as medicine," Makransky's offering of historical consciousness to the Trans-historical Buddha attempts is a purgative that kills the patient. Damning, and whether Trans-historical Buddha or Dharmakāya, both are shown to be purveyors of clumsy skillful means that were highly divisive within Buddhism as a whole. This is the first example of theodicy present in the THB. This is, however, less of theodicy than of the Trans-historical Buddha. The Trans-historical Buddha is at odds with the historical Buddha himself.

Beyond the shortcomings in the long range of Mahayana and Vajrayāna internal organization, sense of which was only made by the extended efforts of human exegetes, is the relationship between the Trans-historical Buddha and the historical Buddha. Extant early Buddhist canons are noticeably absent from the mention of the expectation of subsequent revelations. If Makransky's THB is an accurate account of how Buddhist soteriological history has proceeded, it is strange that historical Buddha, putatively

speaking on behalf of this eternal principle, would have saved not a small amount of division and ill will between Buddhists of posterity by making note of it. It would also have obviated the need for the Trans-historical Buddha, a source of insurmountable moral truth, to resort to the Mahayana "literary device" which is essentially a lie.

It could be argued that the use of a lie to the ends of aiding sentient beings towards awaking is a lie that is well said. One could appeal to the Parable of the Burning House within the Lotus Sutra, noting the Buddha used a gentle deception to pursue his children to leave the damned house. However, this was revealed by the Buddha as a skillful means. The assertion that the Buddha taught the Mahayana Sutras was taken in good faith by nearly all pre-modern Buddhist scholars and adepts as historically true. Contrary to Makransky's claims, that the authors of the Mahayana Sutras *did* intended that these texts be accepted by Buddhists as a literal record of the Buddha's own homilies. This is not a skillful means as the Buddha is characterized as using in the Lotus Sutras. This is fraud, and religious malice. It appears that after centuries of ridicule by Mahayana Buddhists towards their Early Buddhist counterparts, these conservatives have been proven right by historical consciousness.

Further, we cannot say that the Trans-historical Buddha gives both good skillful means and poor ones. If one asserts the Trans-historical Buddha as omniscient, it then becomes responsible for everything that follows its actions. One cannot invoke human error to excuse the shortcomings of the work of Buddhist exegetes if that work saw the aid of the Trans-historical Buddha. It also stands to reason to ask, if the history of Buddhism is overseen by a timeless Buddha, why then not create a great synthetic structure from the beginning, and expedite human emancipation by liberating Buddhists

from the weighty efforts to reconcile the apparent contradictions in the Mahayana canon? Furthermore, some of the interpretations of Buddhist texts have had disastrous consequences for Buddhists themselves. Medieval Japan saw the notion of *gotra* from the Yogācāra sutra used to marginalize the *Burakumin*, a discrimination from which they could not find freedom even in death, extending even into the present.

Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha is a deft, modern variation on the classical Mahayana conception of *Trikāya*. The refraction of Buddhology has "enlightened" contemporary Buddhists to the once-necessary but now defunct assertion that the Mahayana Sutras came directly from this historical Buddha. This frees Buddhists from the deleterious effects of pre-modern scriptural taxonomies based on this outdated assumption, allowing modern practitioners to appreciate anew the true scope of skillful means throughout Buddhist history, and across the span of Buddhist cultures. It appears Buddhology has liberated Buddhists from the shortcomings of the well-intended but erroneous efforts of Buddhist worthies of the past.

However, the Trans-historical Buddha represents the introduction of theism into Buddhism, and with it, perennial theological problems such as theodicy become further intellectual work for Buddhists. This stems from the inexorable tie between the Trans-historical Buddha, and Buddhist exegetical history, even after exoneration from the claim that the historical Buddha spoke the Mahayana Sutras. Stories from Buddhist scholars and adepts across cultures evidence the inspiration drawn from Buddhas and bodhisattvas in their intellectual efforts. More damning still is the fact that those Buddhist worthies who wrote the Mahayana Sutras promoted them by means of a lie. As Makransky has

noted, regional skillful means is the product of the inspiration of the Trans-historical Buddha. This places that lie at the feet of the Trans-historical Buddha.

Makransky's Trans-historical Buddha is not inviable, but it behooves Buddhist theologians to be more circumspect about Buddhist history when considering a theological claim of this magnitude. As noted earlier in this dissertation, this is one example in which both comparative theology could have served to aid the formulation of propositions in Buddhist theology.

Chapter Seven: Truth in Buddhist Theology

Cabezón's second contribution addresses the epistemology of Buddhism. While there has been no dearth of academic discussion on Buddhism and epistemology among scholars throughout the duration of Buddhist Studies, Cabezón's concern is different than these. The efforts of former scholars remained within the domain academic discourse, seeking to make a sustained case that one form of epistemology or another most accurately corresponded to Buddhism. Cabezón notes that as a Buddhist theologian, his work extends beyond Buddhist Studies proper to other fields of study who may take Buddhist theology into consideration.

Cabezón's notes that this is an *emic* intellectual concern for Buddhist theologians, and in view of *Buddhist Theology*, it is incumbent upon such theologians to make their thoughts intelligible to other fields of academic inquiry. A central part of this is situating Buddhism relative to established epistemology. Drawing on Roger Jackson's *Is Enlightenment Possible?* Cabezón examines three prominent epistemologies: Correspondence Theory, Coherence Theory, and Pragmatic Theory, and discusses the merits and weaknesses of each relative to Tibetan Buddhism.

Cabezón first examines relativism in relationship to religion and to Buddhism in particular, and begins by noting that there is no example of a religion that operates with relativism as its form of epistemology. Relativism, as such, negates the possibility of universal claims necessary for religious propositions of truth. Cabezón also points of the historical continuity of a religious tradition that would be unsustainable within the confines of relativism.

He goes one to explain that co-dependent origination though sometimes translated as relative origination is not relativity in a general but that this idiom is simply a matter of poor translation. Further skillful means, though relative in a sense, is also not understood as a general theory of epistemological relativity within Buddhism but is soteriological tool.

After dispensing with relativism as a viable epistemology for Buddhism, Cabezón examines Jackson's contention, vis a vis *Is Enlightenment Possible?*, that Correspondence is the theory of knowledge that best represents Buddhism. Correspondence, as an epistemological theory, is the supposition that validity of language, and its truth, proceeds from a reliable relationship between language and the reality it is used to describe. This presupposes an external world consistent enough to allow for language to remain accurate as a means of describing it. It is here that Cabezón finds fault with Jackson's assertion that correspondence is the best option for describing a Buddhist notion of epistemology, particularly on the finer points of the relationship between language and reality. Cabezón notes that this has been critical point of discussion for Buddhists, particularly Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholastics. Cabezón proceeds to critique Correspondence as appropriate to describing Buddhist epistemology on the following three points.

First, Cabezón notes that no less than the whole of Madhyamikans have long examined the viability of language and its relationship to an external reality. Madhyamikans regard both externality itself, and language being an accurate description of it, as highly suspect notions. A ready example that Madhyamikans would appeal to is that different inhabitants of the Buddhist universe may perceive the same object, such as

water, as a different substance. Perhaps only humans, and animals, perceive what they claim to be water as water. However, the same substance may appear to be highly desirable ambrosia to a deva; as grotesque, bodily pus to a *preta* or hungry ghost; and finally, as molten lead to a denizen of a hell realm. This, Cabezón notes, brings correspondence into serious question as an option to representative the epistemology of Buddhism. Cabezón goes onto draw Dharmakīrti (c. 6th cen.), as explored by a contemporary philosopher Georges Dreyfus into this critique.

Foremost among Indian Buddhist exegetes concerned with epistemology of language, Dharmakīrti is one figure noted for his suspicions of an external world critical to the correspondence theory of knowledge. Looking to Dreyfus' work on Dharmakīrti, Cabezón notes that Dharmakīrti is not committed to a theory of correspondence. Moving on from Dharmakīrti, Cabezón appeals to the perhaps even more mighty Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) in his critique.

One point Jackson makes in attempting to ground an external world from which correspondence can abide as a theory of knowledge for Buddhism, is the idea that the truth exists whether or not explicated by a Buddha. For truth to exist, it is supposed that it is exists in relationship to something which can be said to be true. This, however, is a misunderstanding of this idea, Cabezón claims. Drawing on Tsongkhapa, Cabezón notes that the final truth of reality exists in the minds of beings undergoing rebirth. The truth is readily accessible but not contingent on an external world for its existence. From here, Cabezón briefly comments on coherentism, or coherence theory.

Coherence Theory is a theory of knowledge that proceeds from the assumption that a proposition is true to the degree to which it is coherent with an existing body of

justified beliefs. This, too, could appear to be a good candidate to represent Buddhism with a theory of knowledge from modern, Western philosophy. However, this is quickly shattered by the apparent contradictions with any one Buddhist canon, either early Buddhist, Chinese, or Tibetan. The need for extensive exegetical work undertaken by Buddhist scholastics throughout history is conclusive evidence against coherence theory. Leaving these two theories, Cabezón moves on to examine Pragmatic Theory as a fitting analogy for the epistemological assumptions undergirding Buddhism.

Pragmatism as an epistemological theory can be understood in its most basic form as the assumption that the validity of a proposition exists in relationship to the utility of belief in that proposition. Cabezón notes that it is important to clarify that while this strongly suggests Buddhist motivations for propositions, Buddhists are not, as such, interested in a *general* theory of pragmatism. For Buddhists, concerns that can be described as pragmatic are simultaneously soteriological.

The impulse to assert a proposition by Buddhists exists within the Buddhist framework and worldview, and that proposition, either believed, or acted upon, is valid in the degree to which it moves a person toward awakening. Even experiences of an extraordinary nature, only insofar as they act as predicate to progress toward awakening, have utility from a Buddhist soteriological perspective. While this theological imperative can be thought as a very specific variety of pragmatism, this is something very different from what thinkers such as William James (1842-1910) or Richard Rorty (1931-2007) had in mind in their respective articulations of pragmatism; these philosophers advanced pragmaticism without a concern for a notion of salvation. Cabezón concludes that from the array of epistemologies available, that a Buddhist pragmatism, motivated by a

concern for philosophy in the service of soteriology, is a viable option from which a Buddhist theologian can proceed.

Cabezón begins an outline of Buddhist pragmatism by noting that pragmatic theory in general is often vulnerable to the same critiques as relativism. That is, an idea that is pragmatic and efficacious in one context could prove to be the opposite when the same idea is applied in a radically different context. This leaves pragmatism with no general theory of knowledge. Cabezón notes that some philosophers and even Christian theologians inclined towards pragmatic theory attempt to avoid this pitfall by appealing to themes that are valid across times and cultures. Cabezón sees this a useful point of departure for formulating a Buddhist theory of pragmatism.

With his formation located in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Cabezón appeals to the Mahayana cardinal virtues of wisdom and compassion as rubrics against which one could propose a universal, pragmatic claim. He goes on to note that Tibetan Buddhist literature is replete with texts concerned with examining the relative merit of actions, as they are measured against either compassion or wisdom. Cabezón concludes with a few closing observations about Buddhist pragmatism.

While Buddhist pragmatism is a promising avenue for explaining the epistemology of Buddhism, there loom important questions that pragmatism is not oriented to answer. For instance: What happens to the metaphysical claims of Buddhist truth? How does one ascertain the truth of these assertions? This, Cabezón notes, is work for another essay.

It is not difficult for the reader to perceive from the early on that Cabezón champions pragmatism above the options of correspondence or coherence theory.

Furthermore, perhaps though his representation of Jackson's argument, it is not difficult to become persuaded by Cabezón's conclusion favoring Buddhist pragmatism. A dominant philosophical backdrop in the United States, American readers can have an immediate resonance with a Buddhist variant of pragmatism. However, the merits of pragmatism notwithstanding, a comment made by Cabezón in the course of his essay strongly suggests that a yet more contemporary, and equally ubiquitous though unstated, philosophical commitment is at work in this essay: Postmodernism. Therefore, I will examine here the weighty implications for Cabezón's pragmatism for the salience of the Buddhist truth claim when informed by postmodernism: Cabezón leaves without explain why he finds the undergirding Buddhist doctrines unconvincing. Neither does he explain how Buddhism could remain valid without them. This appears to be symptomatic of adopting postmodernism as a tacit prediate:

> There are of course many Buddhist theologians who will be content to espouse and defend the traditional metaphysical beliefs of Buddhism – karma, rebirth, the theory of enlightenment – from a correspondence perspective, maintaining that these are doctrines that actually mirror real states of affairs in the world. While feeling a certain respect and even nostalgia for this perspective, I find myself unable to subscribe to it as a mode of theological expression. Instead, I find myself in the position of being metaphysically alienated, unconvinced of the metaphysical (*lege* correspondence version of the) truth of a good deal of Buddhist doctrine, while still profoundly convinced of the validity of the Buddhist tradition as a whole. For alienated Buddhist theologians like myself – skeptics who find problematic the espousal of the metaphysical truth of Buddhist doctrines like karma and rebirth – pragmatism offers a method of finding truth in the tradition, even in those portions of tradition which would otherwise be unacceptable. Herein lies the pragmatic value, and hence validity (the truth) of pragmatism for the Buddhist theologian.[88]

Perhaps no single, modern movement in thought has gripped the academy so firmly as postmodernism. The case for this philosophy without philosophy, movement of

[88] *Buddhist Theology,* 149.

no movement, was advanced by an array of celebrity intellectuals, with Foucault (1926-1984), Derrida (1930-2004), and Baudrillard (1929-2007) as key members of this new evangelion. Postmodernism proposes the contingent nature of all human ideals. Rebutting the Enlightenment claim of universal notions of mankind, virtue, freedom, and so on, postmodernists argue that these suppositions are culturally and linguistically contingent propositions.

The absence of metaphysics holds enormous implications for Buddhist thought. Buddhist ethics, for example, would be rendered nothing more than a variety of secular ethic, garbed in Buddhist verbiage. While some have suggested that Buddhist ethics can remain viable in the absence of a metaphysical such as karma, the advocates of this position would have to concede that no small amount of the force of Buddhist ethics is lost. Beyond karma, the greatest harm that comes to Buddhist concepts for the lack of metaphysics is awakening itself. Instead of acting as a state from which all suffering is permanently absent, without metaphysics, awakening is reduced to a peak experience, negating with the individual at death. This loss of skeletal structure from Buddhism is left unaddressed by Cabezón. From here I will go on to examine David Loy's contribution.

Chapter Eight: The Lack of Self: A Western Buddhist Psychology

David Loy's contribution seeks to demonstrate the utility of the Buddhist notion of *anatman* in both the spheres of psychology and Buddhist Studies proper. The essay is divided into three parts. The first problematizes the current dialogue between psychology and Buddhism. Following this, Loy discusses no-self as a modern observation seen in the works of many scholars and intellectuals as they reflect on the modern/postmodern condition. Loy concludes his work with a critique of Buddhist Studies proper, with particular note to the putative assumption of objectivity.

Loy then moves through past and present psychology to demonstrate the place of no-self as a key and final point to what this discipline has sought to answer. He begins by noting that Norman O. Brown re-examination Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex, the urge to sexually consummate with one's mother that is repressed for fear of the violent reprisal of one's father, to the Oedipus *project,* is better understood as a frenetic impulse as a reaction to the reality of death. Loy sees the Oedipus project as pointing to no-self; what was once thought forbidden (sexual urges) is in fact an equally biological reaction to the ontological reality of the prospect of non-existence. Loy describe this angst as the feeling of lack, and the activities of modern society as means to allay that painful feeling. Freud's notion of guilt can also be understood this way, claims Loy. The compounding sense of imprisonment in guilt is actually the same impossible drive on the part of the mind to come to terms with not only its death at one point, but even moment to moment, so the self is a project that requires relentless energy, and never becomes self-maintaining.

Loy completes his piece with an observation about the non-locality germane to no-self and to the project of Buddhist Studies itself. The author notes that the presumption of objectivity in current Buddhist Studies really replicates the power dynamics present in the first generation of Buddhist Studies scholars, working within a colonial framework. This has a number of facets that sets it apart from other provenances of colonial scholarship. Loy employs the term "reverse-Orientalism" to contrast with the Western construction of the notion of Buddhism. Reverse-Orientalism that constructed "Buddhism" was motivated by the search for an alterity desired by the West differs from Orientalism that constructed the Western caricature of Islam and proceeding from contempt and revulsion for Islam.

Loy has argued persuasively that existential angst noted by both European and American philosophers and psychologists can be seen as a product of the very personal predicament of every human being, whose sense of self is a struggle to avoid the reality that durable identity does not exist within a human. The Mahayana-Nagarjunaian equation of samsara and nirvana reveals both that the answer is precisely the location of the problem. This anxiety, as Loy notes, has been assuaged by the theological narrative advanced by Catholic Church, though this narrative was ruptured with the advent of the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the Enlightenment.

However, it is these last two points that the author makes where my comparative theology critique is necessary; here from the vantage of other forms of Buddhism, the Early Buddhist tradition.. It is Loy's last point that is victim to secularization theory, itself scrutinized throughout the duration of the theory prevalence in the academy, beginning with its inception by Max Weber (1864-1920).

While it is a longstanding, quixotic Mahayana-ism, the Nagarjuna-ian equation of nirvana and samsara, from the vantage of an Early Buddhist point of view, offers a prosaic observation with the danger of seriously denuding nirvana of any soteriological value. The terse dyads from which this statement comes, the *Mulamadhyamakikarika*, have been the point of intense debate for Mahayana Buddhist exegetes throughout history. We need not detain ourselves here by noting the array of reactions this statement has created in the oceanic body of Mahayana scriptural exegesis. Suffice it to say, no small amount of intellectual contortion has taken place to reconcile this statement with Buddhist thought, Mahayana or that of the Early Buddhist traditions.

What is illuminated by this statement is that nirvana is accessible here, and that nirvana is not a state of existence like the strata of samsara. Understood within a Buddhist framework, this is an orthodox restatement of standard Buddhist assumptions about nirvana. However, when this statement is de-historicized, it appears to lend credence to exactly what Loy wants to avoid in the exchange between Buddhism and psychology; this is, that enlightenment becomes nothing more than an absence of anxiety. However, without contextualization, Loy has arrived at just this error.

From the vantage of religious studies, the assumption that religion is defunct because of the end of the Middle Ages, requires serious consideration. The thinkers and movements noted by Loy represent, not unlike the domain of concern for Buddhologists, a highly rarified segment of society. While it may have been the case for the likes of Voltaire (1694-1778) and Kant (1724-1804) that the narrative of God and man germane to the Catholic Church was negated, it appears that for vast majority of Europeans during this time, life proceeded much the same way it had for centuries. It is important that we

contextualize the sociology of grand thinkers. Certainly neither Martin Luther's critiques of the Catholic Church, nor Friedrich Nietzsche's claim that God is dead, spelled the end of religion in the West. Religion in its metaphysical life appears viable into the foreseeable future. From here I move onto address Mark Unno's contribution.

Chapter Nine: Critical Synergy: The Context of Inquiry and the Project of Buddhist Thought

Mark Unno's chapter engages Buddhist theological concerns at a comparative and pluralistic level. The core of his article is the thought of two seminal Japanese Buddhist figures as they can be apply to a pluralistic and postmodern religious landscape. First, Unno discusses the current state of religious studies and theology in the West as a predicate to engage with the thought of Myōe (1173-1232) and Dōgen Zenji (1200-1253). Unno prefers the term "Buddhist thought" to "Buddhist theology," noting that "Buddhist theology" potentially carries with it connotations germane to Christianity alone and not Buddhism. He does, however, concede that "Buddhist theology" is useful in framing the intellectual trajectory of the present volume.[89]

Unno notes that religious studies can be understood as occupying the fourth stage of Sumner Twiss' four stages of modern theology. The last of these is where religious studies resides, is the "Postmodern Hermeneutical" stage, which admits the existence of myriad religious truth claims and the need on the part of theologians to write navigating plurality and postmodernity.[90] This strongly suggests to theologians that the claims of their religious traditions are socio-historically contingent, placing their own tradition as one voice among others.[91]

This raises problems for theologians working within any religion, and no less for the Buddhist theologian, who intends to explain the merits of the Buddhist tradition for

[89] *Buddhist Theology,* 173.
[90] *Buddhist Theology,* 175.
[91] I would like to introduce a distinction between the epistemological claims of postmodernism and the cultural reality of pluralism. The former contends that all elements of human culture are merely historically contingent creations, implying that epistemological and ontological cases these creations make to represent universal truth are false. Plurality, on the other hand, is only the awareness of competing truth claims. There appears to be some confusion between these two points in Unno's piece.

answering universal human concerns. Unno moves to the examination of three Christian [Catholic] theologians as they wrestle with pluralism and postmodernity. This is followed by an examination of how each of these positions can be utilized by Buddhist theologians.

The first theologian is Alasdair McIntyre, who sees virtue and ethics as the point of universal conversation between different religions. McIntyre's understands the effect of pluralism and postmodernity on religion as one of the loss of ethical structure. With the advance of modernity, religious tradition, which acted as a basis upon which to live an ethical life, has given way to a cacophony of thought, leaving an ethical vacuum for human society.

McIntyre contends this leaves moderns in a second Dark Age, at which time the retainers of religious order should leave mainstream society to found enclaves where their worldview and ethics can be maintained until the turbulent, modern social order calms sufficiently to be amenable to reintroduction of the religious tradition. Unno notes that while this strategy may be successful in aiding the survival of religious tradition, it doesn't offer anything to those theologians who still hold hope in the promise of inter-religious dialogue and the state of society. McIntyre's "monastic" option is followed by Charles Taylor's work, centered on the construction of the self as it relates to the conception of highest good.

Charles Taylor's theological response to pluralism and postmodernism is located in a theology of self. Taylor argues the self is a construct integrally informed by the concept of a highest good. The dialectic between self and the highest good results in ethics and moral behavior. Taylor believes that examining this dialectic as it exists in

different cultures allows for a type of postmodern dialogue to exist. However, Taylor would insist on the existence of this dialectic, and particularly the notion of a highest good. A yet more flexible responsive position exists in the work of Jeffery Stout.

Occupying the place of great comfort and concession to postmodernity, Jeffery Stout sees world-ethics as a *bricolage*, composed of elements from different times and cultures. Each of these is validated by the record of its usage and results in history. For Stout, ethics is *a posteriori* rather than *a priori*, as many ethicists would insists. Stout's faith in history and human trial and error is not naïve, however. He is aware that the process is not linear, and may have significate backward steps. After outlining McIntyre, Taylor, and Stout, Unno speculates on how each of these would be applied in the instance of Buddhism.

Beginning with McIntyre, Unno surmises that for a Buddhist theologian, this would be a call to return to vigorous monasticism, informed by the Vinaya, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold path. While noting the merits of this position, Unno admits that this position is limited to biding its time until the world is a better place for Buddhism. It considering Taylor, Unno notes the East Asian phenomenon of *bājiào*, as scriptural and hermeneutical structures. Unno states that Taylor's theo-pscychological theory of self, in which the pinnacle of the highest good can be occupied by different conceptions, resembles the phenomenon of *bājiào*, within which exist a myriad conceptions of the highest of the Buddha's teachings.

Finally, Unno compares Stout's ethical *bricolage* with the Mahayana notion of *upaya* or skillful means. Stout's ethical *bricolage* is informed by a correspondence between virtue and utility; virtues are tested in the ground of history itself. This can be

thought akin to the pedagogical *upaya*, where the criterion of effective teaching is the liberation of any particular inhabitant of samsara. Unno sees Stout's proposition as offering the most promise for Buddhist theologians working in the postmodern milieu, though each has its merits. From here, the author moves on to explore how the ideas of Dōgen Zenji and Myōe can be utilized by Buddhist theologians as they confront religious plurality.

First, Unno explains he will draw on Dōgen's most famous work, the *Shobogenzo,* as a location to see how Dōgen's own Buddhist theology can respond to a confluence of competing truth claims. Dōgen's does not, as such, adopt the classical distinction Mahayana epistemology of two truths, relative and absolute truth,. The two truths notion is a heuristic intended to explain the disparity between reality as it appears, and the ontological truth underlying it. While the world appears to be occupied real objects, in fact, all of these apparent phenomenon have no durable essence within them, rendering them objects of co-dependent origination, a nexus of ephemeral causes. Without a durable essence, everything that otherwise appears real and permanent is in fact empty of those characteristics. However, the former is in fact illusory and the latter the actual truth of things. Nevertheless, in spite of the emptiness of all things, sentient beings find themselves amidst real and potent experiences, and putative reliable objects. Dōgen's work takes this distinction in another direction.

Dōgen discusses a dialectic between these two strata relative to human cognition. In cognition, these two aspects are the discursive intellect and the non-dual. In an awakened person, the perception of emptiness allows even non-Buddhist ideas to be understood as a mode of skillful means, allowing Buddhist theologians great latitude of

truth in claims of other religious traditions. Looking to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, Unno notes that the figure of Vimalakīrti himself notes that heretical views are themselves true Buddhist teachings. This also allows Buddhists to create a common intellectual ground from which both Buddhists and the representatives of other religious traditions can understand their respective traditions as characterized by emptiness.[92] Moving on from Dōgen, Unno addresses Myōe.

Myōe addresses the reality of competing claims to Buddhist truth in a straightforward manner. Consonant with Chinese Buddhist ecumenism, Myōe sees no problem in seeking out teachers from Buddhist traditions other than one's own, if the resources of one's tradition are not able to address a given concern in Buddhist practice. He writes at length against Honen's own position of the need for the nembutsu alone. Myōe himself belonged to the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism that heralded much earlier than the development of staunch Buddhist sectarianism which began to emerge in the Kamakura period and was legally instantiated by the Tokugawa Shogunate. It is probably that this played a role in Myōe's attitude towards other forms of Buddhism in Japan.

Unno notes that his work was not intended to establish a robust Buddhist theology, but to rather discuss the framework within which a new theology would take place. Unno finds himself most sympathetic with Stout's *bricolage* as it is consonant with the Buddhist notion of *upaya*, or skillful means. Unno notes that his article will have served its purpose if it acts to stimulate conversation on this topic. Unno finishes his

[92] This presents a range of interesting comparative points between the Buddhist notion of emptiness, and Christian theological ideas such as *apophatic* theology, where God can only be described *via negative*, and the Christological notion of *kenosis*, or the self-emptying of Christ of His Divinity in the advent of the Incarnation.

piece Myōe and Dōgen as medieval Japanese Buddhists worthies whose paradigms both offer potential theological tools for Buddhist theologians as they exchange intellectually with representatives of different religions. Dōgen's dialectic between the relative discursive mind and the absolute of duality allows for the perception that other views, even those understood to be heretical, can be seen through the lens of emptiness as a mode of truth. Myōe 's approach, on the other hand, is less theological and more straightforwardly ecumenical. Guided by the Mahayana principle of skillful means, Myōe sees no sectarian infidelity in drawing on the teachings of other Buddhist traditions as an aid the process towards awakening. Both appear to be ready for application beyond a Buddhist context to the modern plurality of worldviews, religious and otherwise. However, both have limitations that must be addressed before they can be utilized plausibly in inter-religious dialogue.

Dōgen's own position, the dialectic notwithstanding, is very standard Mahayana Buddhist position, grounded in the epistemological, ontological, and soteriological assumptions of a Mahayana Buddhist worldview. While emptiness is assumed as predicate for Mahayana Buddhism and this presents no problem in *intra-Buddhist* conversation, this may be the first stumbling block in *inter-religious* dialogue. The Abrahamic tradition in particular makes a number of confident, ontologically positive claims that stand in marked contrast to the Buddhist notion of co-dependent origination. Unno does not address how Dōgen might respond to non-Buddhists or to earlier Japanese Buddhist exegetes, such as Kūkai who constructed a comparative stratification containing the religions of his day and other forms of Buddhism. According to Kūkai, non-Buddhist views are seen as containing a modicum of truth but are understood not as co-equals in

emptiness, but rather well-meaning though misled attempts to arrive at truth. Unno and other Buddhist theologians need to drive to the root of Buddhist thought to discover more comprehensive answers for use in inter-religious dialogue.

Myōe ’s apparent ecumenism generously extends to schools beyond his own Shingon sect, but makes no headway towards non-Buddhist traditions. To be fair, the Kamakura period during which Myōe lived was bereft of religious traditions other than Buddhism and Shinto. At three hundred years before the arrival of Christianity in Japan, and the beginning of a set of theological challenges from a non-Buddhist tradition. Unno may have been better serve looking to later Buddhist theologians, who wrote after the advent of Christianity examples of dialogue and discussion between Buddhism and another religious traditions. I now examine B. Allan Wallace work on contemplative knowledge and religious belief.

Chapter Ten: The Dialectic Between Religious Belief and Contemplative Knowledge an Tibetan Buddhism

In this essay, Wallace refutes a number of observations regarding Buddhism in general made by East Asian Buddhist Studies scholar Paul Griffith and Religious studies scholar Steven Katz. Katz contends that mystical experiences are entirely prescribed by the religious symbolism of the tradition within which they take place. This contention appears to readily accord with records of mystical experiences recorded by adepts throughout history – Buddhists see visions of Buddhas, while Christian mystics claim to have visits from Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and so forth. Following closely on this observation in a more intellectual vein, Griffith claims that Buddhist contemplative practice is merely "repeated meditations upon standard items of Buddhist doctrine…until these are completely internalized by practitioners and their cognitive and perceptual habit-patterns operate only in terms of them."[93] To these and a number of other claims by Katz and Griffith, Wallace responds that these characterizations are only accurate of Buddhist traditions in their most deteriorated forms.[94]

Wallace begins by arguing that mystical insight can be understood to be accurate in forms of Buddhism wherein a living tradition of meditation training has not been lost. While Buddhist scripture forms an important framework within which an adept seeks for insight, the fine details of how to navigate the vast terrain of contemplative experience comes from the oral instructions of living masters. Wallace notes that among the Tibetan lineages, the Gelugpa tradition is the most vulnerable to Katz's and Griffith's critiques. Strongly oriented towards scholastic training, Gelugpa monastic training can fall into the

[93] *Buddhist Theology*, 202.
[94] *Buddhist Theology*, 202.

trap of slavery to the letter of Buddhist scripture, if this training is not appended by the living instruction in meditation that is also within the Gelugpa tradition.[95] Wallace then moves to a more forceful refutation of Katz's and Griffith's characterizations of mystical experience and Buddhist meditation by looking to the older Nyingma tradition.

Wallace notes that while the Gelugpa thesis on Buddhist training, beginning with a solid intellectual foundation in Mahayana-Vajrayāna Buddhist soteriology prior to the practice of meditation, is one approach to the pursuit of awakening, other lineages of Tibetan Buddhism utilize the opposite approach. The inversion of the Gelugpa method can be seen in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions, which allow adepts to establish the proper view of emptiness though exploration from within meditation practice itself.

Wallace also draws attention to continuing revelation within Tibetan Buddhism via *terma* texts that are discovered either in the form of buried, written scriptures, or more frequently, as they appear in the minds of particular Buddhist masters known as *tertons*. Tertons are believed to be able to access Buddhist teachings implanted into the mind streams of his twenty-five disciples by Padmasambhava, the foremost Tantric adept of Tibetan Buddhism. This body of disciples is believed to have committed themselves to continued rebirth in Tibet to teach the Dharma, and seeds planted by the Lotus Born emerge in a timely fashion as new texts to re-inspire Buddhist practice. Within these texts, strongly associated with lines of meditation adepts, myriad, legitimate Buddhist meditation experiences are noted and commented upon. The range of such experiences includes very unexpected realities that extend the *a priori* assertions by both Katz and

[95] Although Wallace doesn't note it, this trend to conservative scholasticism as a bulwark for the Dharma can be seen in the Thai Buddhist tradition. The opinion that living realization of the highest Buddhist attainments has passed was part of what prompted the figure of Ajahn Muni and the development of the subsequent *kammathana* tradition.

Griffith that mysticism should be dictated by religious symbolism, and Buddhist meditation as nothing more than finely tuned self-indoctrination.

Addressing these initial claims, Wallace then moves to confront two further assertions, one advanced by Katz and another by Griffith. Wallace rebuts Griffith's argument that Buddhist meditation has as its aim the cessation of all mental activity, rendering the mind without any experience whatsoever. Wallace notes that Tibetan Buddhists understand quiescence to be complementary with the accomplishment of insight.[96] Katz' second contention is then addressed by Wallace.

Katz claims that popular assumptions about Eastern religious traditions being widely inclusivist in nature is the product of "non-mystics of recent vintage for their own purposes."[97] Wallace points to writings of *Karma chags med* who argued that the realization of myriad Buddhist truths is identical to that of non-Buddhist, Indian traditions that discuss the realization of the Atman. Wallace notes that this is rare in Tibetan Buddhism, but clearly not limited to a contemporary sentiment.

The final point Wallace addresses comes from Katz, specifically, Katz's claim that unconditioned experiences are impossible for the human mind. Wallace begins by noting that the majority of experiences recorded by Buddhist adepts are in fact conditioned states of mind, and a consistent record exists of meditators who claim to have accomplished this state. Wallace notes that the inability of language to accommodate this insight does not mean it does not exist. He points to the test of the

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[96] It is interesting to note that Wallace seems to neglect the fact that this proposition about Buddhist meditation by Griffith is mutually exclusively of Griffith's former point. How can one self-indoctrinate Buddhist dogmas, as Griffith claimed earlier, with a mind that is stultified? Further, given the ubiquitous nature of the Buddhist notion of the connection between quiescence and insight throughout Buddhist meditation traditions, Griffith's conclusion that Buddhist meditation is theoretically oriented to create of mind without experience is astonishing.

[97] *Buddhist Theology,* 208.

tradition itself: Katz cannot claim this is not possible until he attempts to do so and finds it to be otherwise.

Wallace concludes by again noting that both of scholars whose points he addresses have made points that do describe some facets of the Buddhist tradition. However, these only in the case of Buddhism when its practice has undergone significant deterioration. It would be easy to imagine that many Buddhists would agree with Wallace's rebuttals to the range of the different points raised by Katz and those raised by Griffith regarding Buddhist practice. Many of these are easily answered by Wallace by virtue of his command of the Tibetan tradition proceeding from his position as a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism. Katz's proposition that mystical experience is dictated by religious symbolism, as a categorical statement, is immediately vulnerable to easy refutation by furnishing one counter-example. Griffith's points about meditation acting as a mode of extreme self-indoctrination, and how Buddhist meditation (simultaneously?) has as its aim the accomplishment of a mind without movement or cognitive operation, are both are also easily dismissed through acquaintance with a wider range of Buddhist texts from within the Tibetan tradition as Wallace has, leaving aside the contradiction between these two observations about Buddhist meditation. However, the point that Wallace seeks to address that is a good deal more complex and controversial is Katz' proposition that ineffable experiences are impossible for the human mind. What I will respond to is less a concern for the philosophical cogency of Wallace's response than a call for attention to the wide range of theological and soteriological opinions on this question.

Wallace's claim that Buddhist meditation is not contingent on the religious assumptions of Buddhism is difficult to justify. Wallace appeals to the ineffable goal at

the apex of Buddhist meditation accomplishment as proof that Buddhist meditation is not conditioned by the religious symbols of Buddhism. While this can be easily seen if what is meant by Buddhist *a priori* assumptions is the content of Buddhist iconography, it is much less the case if we include Buddhist soteriology as falling under the umbrella of Katz' understanding of *a priori* assumptions.

The specific form of Buddhist meditation that Wallace refers to is *Mahamudra*, usually understood to be the final practice within the curriculum of Kagyu Vajrayāna, and a complement in many ways to *Dzogchen*, the highest point of meditation theory and practice in the older Nyingma lineage. While *Mahamudra* is understood to be means by which the ineffable can be experienced, the theory and method of *Mahamudra* proper *are* informed by Tibetan Buddhist soteriology, and therefore, Buddhist theology. Wallace might rejoin by conceding this point, but it would be far more difficult to explain away the fact that the very notion of ineffability is predicate to the claim of its experience via Mahamudra meditation.

Chapter Eleven: In Search of a Postmodern Middle

Jackson sets out to discover a new iteration of the classical Buddhist Middle Way informed by the insights of postmodernism. Postmodernity contains a range of assertions that universal claims to truth are historical, contingent contrivances. The classical Tibetan Buddhist worldview, replete with cosmological architecture explaining the weal and woe of all life, in this world and beyond, is subject to postmodern critique. Jackson discusses his own intellectual journey toward an answer that allows one to remain Buddhist while also remaining consistent with postmodernity.

Jackson begins by discussing his becoming interested in Buddhism via popular authors such as D.T. Suzuki before deciding to study Buddhism with living teachers. He then moved to India to study with Gelugpa masters. From them Jackson learned the details of the classical Mahayana worldview, including the operation of karma and rebirth, the bodhisattva's path, and the goal of the Buddha. However, despite the guidance of these two *geshe*, a range of doubts began to form in Jackson's mind regarding this earlier "medieval" worldview, confident of the foundationalism of its metaphysics.

Jackson was directed by both masters to study Dharmakīrti's *Pramanavarttika*. It was claimed by Jackson's teachers that this work would put his intellectual concerns to rest. This advice would propel Jackson on to his next step in the study of Buddhism – to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he would examine Dharmakīrti's work under the lens of Buddhist Studies.

Jackson would conclude his study of Buddhism at UW-Madison by producing a mammoth, 1020-page dissertation examining Dharmakīrti's works through Gelugpa

commentaries, Jackson concluded that Dharmakīrti's arguments themselves rested on unprovable axioms of Buddhist thought, such as the purity of the essence of mind, that readers would be required to accept without proof. This left Jackson unable to accept the classical Tibetan Buddhist world-view, and to move onto consider the implications of postmodernity for this worldview.

In time, Jackson found that while his metaphysical certainty about Buddhism had waned, Buddhist aesthetic, myth, and lore still stirred him. He still felt enraptured by the story of the Buddha's life, even if he no longer believed in the metaphysical claims that proceed from this myth. It is here, in an aesthetic Buddhism, that Jackson found his postmodern middle way between the traditional Buddhist worldview and the epistemological nihilism of postmodernism.

It is hard to miss the intellectual honesty that permeates Jackson's work. The self-disclosure of his own autobiography leaves the reader with the impression that the author made all efforts to understand Tibetan Buddhism as well as any mortal might. From a "nightstand Buddhist," Jackson made his way to India to study with Tibetan masters confirmed in their erudition. After this, Jackson proceeded to continue examining Buddhist thought, producing a dissertation of prodigious size in an effort to ascertain its truth. However, he found the *a priori* epistemological assumptions suspending classical Tibetan Buddhist thought to be suspect. After rigorous scrutiny, Jackson found himself contending for Buddhism against the then-and-now prevailing current of postmodernism. His conclusion appears quite reasonable, and he readily admits its limitations.

Jackson's aesthetic Buddhism certainly is an intriguing approach to religious belief. It offers a middle ground from which both ardent postmodernists and

traditionalists can discuss and share admiration for the Buddhist tradition, while still differing on important points of epistemology. I will refrain from adding to what I have written earlier on the serious implications of postmodernism (see my comments on Cabezon's earlier piece), but only add that Jackson's characterization of traditionalists' assent to Buddhist metaphysics may be too simplistic. Others, such as Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, have argued that ideas such as rebirth are best understood as a "working hypothesis" prior to their direct realization.

Chapter Twelve: Impermanence, Nowness, and Non-Judgment: A Personal Approach to Understanding Finitude in Buddhist Perspective

Preceded by an almost relentless theoretical concern within Buddhist Theology, Rita Gross' is a heartfelt piece of what Christian theologians would call personal theology. Gross' writing reflects the depth of her experience with impermanence. She begins by noting that Buddhism stands out among world religions, many others of which regard impermanence to be a defect to be corrected at some later date. Gross speaks movingly about how she experienced impermanence through the loss of two romantic partners. This is followed by her estimations of how the denial of the fact of impermanence acts as a cause of vast, unnecessary suffering, and a mass waste of resources in an effort to evade this truth.

Gross' piece is illuminating as it advances the power behind the distinction between a rote familiarity with the Buddhist trope of impermanence, and the warmth behind the living appreciation of this teaching. The power of this case is made acute by the fact that she had already been hired as a professor teaching Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire when she made these observations. This is a particularly potent confession on her part as it establishes the separation between exacting academic training in history and philology, and the realization of Buddhist truths. At the same time, however, this is an equally well-worn distinction in Buddhist thought. This is exemplified by her comment that the experience of losing two romantic partners confirmed more appreciation of impermanence than the "thousands of hours of meditation" she had performed.

Finally, Gross notes the eteneralism present in other world religions. She claims this acts to inform perspectives that the human enterprise ought to thwart impermanence.

This, Gross argues, in contrast to the Buddhist view, that a proper relationship with impermanence can make human life joyful. While Gross characterization of the eternalism is accurate *qua* Buddhist thought, this is an inaccurate understanding of how the Abrahamic religions or classical Hellenic philosophy saw the relationship between eternity and the ephemeral.

In this response to Gross' article, I will critique both her isolation of impermanence within Buddhist teachings, and her mischaracterization of Greek philosophy and Christian theology. Gross' piece certainly is a potent case of the power of the teaching of impermanence in Buddhist practice. Her immediate experience of impermanence within the context of the loss of more than one loved one certainly shows the ability of this teaching to aid in the reduction of suffering in the midst of one's life. To be sure, there are probably no examples that could better illustrate the liberate power of this element of Buddhist teaching.

However, in spite of the merits of this teaching, it is not the only component of the Buddhist path that leads to reduction to suffering. While Gross made mention of "thousands of hours of meditation," what is striking is the absence of concern for ethics in her discussion. Even the most rudimentary familiarity with the Eightfold Path demonstrates the importance of ethics within the whole of one's life with the Eightfold Path, particularly Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. With this hole in Gross' presentation of impermanence, her approach strongly resembles what Thanissaro Bhikkhu characterizes as "Buddhist Romanticism." One prevailing theme in Buddhist Romanticism is the utilization of Buddhist teachings to valorize the nature of the world, rather than to emancipate one from attachment to it.

Gross' feminist characterization of Greek thought and Christian theology as predicate to an attempt to deny the reality of change in the world is also askew. For the part of Greek philosophy, one need not delve into the most obscure of Greek philosophers to find an appreciation for change in Hellenic thought. Heraclitus is known, perhaps beyond anything else attributed to him, for the phrase "One cannot step in the same river twice." Indeed, Greek philosophy was keenly aware of change, and like Buddhist thought, understood the suffering that came with it. From Pythagoras (570-495) to Plato (428-348), Greek philosophers asserted the possibility of emancipation from the disappointed inevitable in a life characterized by attachment to an ephemeral world. Not unlike the appeal the Buddha makes to a deathless element, the Greeks also sought a *true* answer from the pain associated with this passing world.

Inasmuch as Christian theology drew on Greek philosophy as a tool to explain the workings of their universe, Christian theology is as much Jewish and Greek. Drawing on both strains of thought, Christian theology concludes that the person of Jesus Christ is simultaneously and indivisibly deity and human, an impossible combination of both the changing and the changeless. This is understood to be an ontological template for the human person, in Roman Catholic theology as the *hypostatic* union, implying a union in the human beings between the soul and body. In this, it is hard to see how Gross draws the conclusion that Christian theology seeks to negate impermanence, as the Christian notion of the Incarnation contains both the changing and the changeless. Further, Christian eschatology argues for a world to come where the pain of change is gone. But this is clearly distinguished from this world. Neither the Greeks nor later Christians made

a case for making *this* world. From here, I will examine McClintock's evaluation of emptiness and gendered bodies.

Chapter Eleven: Gendered Bodies of Illusion: Finding a Somatic Method in the Ontic Madness of Emptiness

Within the range of Buddhist schools and their attending system of theories, one finds an array of protests to immutability of any kind, including ontology in any form. The Buddhist universe is not only characterized by impermanence but the absence of any fundamental nature, changing or otherwise. However, this presents particular difficulties for feminist thinkers who wish to utilize Buddhist thought in a feminist capacity, or who wish to "re-valorize" Buddhism to purge it of patriarchal accretions. Working within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Sara McClintock examines this intellectual hurdle from a number of different Buddhist perspectives.

McClintock notes that Buddhist discussions about conventional reality, the everyday world, are couched in terms of Skillful Means. Buddhist thought on the whole is soteriological in orientation, intent upon the liberation of all forms of life with a mind. This means Buddhist thinkers are usually loath to go on at length about topics not useful for aiding subjects of samsara to find release from this process. Buddhists, therefore, may emphasize different conceptions of reality as it is useful to aiding the living in attaining freedom.

However, the notion of emptiness is primary in Mahayana Buddhist discourse about ontology. Under the lens of emptiness, all distinctions are found to be mere contrivances of the mind, as it is under the unwitting sway of ignorance and the three poisons. This leaves womanhood itself with little ontology with which to be considered. Additionally, it appears a prevailing trend to bifurcate the human person into mind and body also exists in the Buddhist tradition. Before moving on specific Buddhist schools, the author addresses why body-mind dualism is problematic for feminist discussions.

McClintock notes three reasons that the body-mind dualism of Buddhism must be resolved to make progress towards addressing feminist issues. The first is simply that our experience is not so divided into these categories. The bifurcation simply does not accord with experience itself. The second is that this dualism can act to dismiss women's unique issues. These could be understood to be products of the mind alone, neglecting the body and its role in both suffering and the possibility of liberation. The final reason proceeds from an ancient patriarchal impression present in current Euro-American culture that men are defined by the mind, reason, and transcendence, leaving the opposite of each of these to women: namely, body, emotion, and immanence.

McClintock notes that while Yogācāra is often characterized as an Idealist school, with matter understood as a form of mind, this may allow for a Middle Way to be applied within it to allow for sufficient ontological ground for a fruitful discussion of women, womanhood, and feminist theory. From here, McClintock moves to examining the *Abhidharma* tradition in an attempt to find a Buddhist ontology that would lend itself well to the aforementioned discussions, and one that will resolve the difficulty of the bifurcated person.

Although there are a number of *Abhidharma*, McClintock does not distinguish among them in the beginning of her discussion. This early Buddhist system appears to be promising as it starts with the classical five *skandhas*, one of which, *rupa-skandha,* can be construed as the body, or matter. However, this *skandha* is, in fact, not required for all forms of rebirth. There are also particular forms of formless meditation absorption, also described as *arupa-dhatu*, where only the mind exists. This is perhaps an extreme exception to *abhidharma* ontology of a sentient being, but nevertheless, neither

reconciles mind-body dualism, nor allows for a durable ontology of matter. Leaving the limitations of *Abhidharma*, McClintock moves on to manifold Tantra.

Tantra also appears to have more promise than the earlier *Abdhidharma* tradition in overcoming mind-body dualism. As McClintock observes, the notion of the *Trikāya* plays an important role in Tantric practice. This is in addition to an elaborate system of energy channels and chakras that lend greater importance to the body in the role of accomplishing awakening. However, both the *Trikāya* and the energy channels are also understood to be empty and mind-made. McClintock concludes by noting that the Buddhist tradition speaks with many voices on this topic, although she does not settle on any one of them.

The primacy of ontology is a truly ancient trait in the philosophy of the West. Beginning with the Pre-Socratic philosophers like Thales (624-548) and Anaximander (610-546), through the 20th century in the work of Heidegger (1889-1976), the question of the nature of reality has come to the fore. The thrust was motivated by supposition that once the nature of reality is ascertained, a reliable point of departure can be established for all other forms of inquiry. It appears that despite her Buddhist convictions, this primacy of this philosophical conviction is at work in McClintock's writing. And oddly, this occidental attachment seems to preclude her from utilizing more appropriate resources in the Buddhist tradition to address such topics as karma and co-dependent origination. These concepts are better suited to the purpose of addressing the desire to change behaviors and attitudes germane to feminism.

While there is no shortage of discussions about ontology within the Buddhist tradition, Buddhist thought agrees that this is inseparable from the notion of co-dependent

origination. Co-dependent origination is fueled by karma, itself informed by attitudes in inclinations. It is here that we find within Buddhist thought the location of the objections raised by feminists of patriarchy in all human societies. This is, thankfully, not an issue of ontology which would be by definition impossible to change. Patriarchy would be by Buddhist estimations a form of ignorance that can be corrected for. This would be where Buddhist feminist thought could fine tune Buddhist contemplative methods to the task of liberating all genders from patriarchy. Buddhist soteriology is rich in contemplative sciences for amending the errors of the mind.

In conclusion, I would add that McClintock looked too far for a robust womanhood within the Buddhist universe. Briefly, Buddhists would maintain all of reality as it is known to the physical science is the provenance of "form" or "conventional truth." This is a surprisingly hardy, if *ultimately* empty reality. It is perhaps something of a philosophical overstatement on the part of Buddhists to regard this world as empty in a puerile way.

Chapter Fourteen: On Essences, Goals and Social Justice: An Exercise in Buddhist Theology

John Dunne's contribution sets out to be an exercise in Buddhist theology toward addressing issues of social justice. This is not lost in the article but delayed as Dunne came to realize that for a conversation about social justice to proceed fruitfully, one must first establish what Buddhist theology itself is. Dunne will return to social justice after discussing Buddhist theology, and other predicate concerns. Without this framework in place, any effort of social justice theorizing with itself will be hindered by a lack of metatheoretical clarity. This metatheory is as drawn from a three-way dynamic.

Dunne points out three elements which act in dialogue with one another that are predicates to the establishment of Buddhist theology. These three are: Metatheory itself, praxis, and principles. The order of Buddhist thought itself involves each of these. Theory itself exists in dialogue with a set of principles and with execution in praxis. The question Dunne notes from this is: From what direction should one start? Should one start from the theory and establish principles and then praxis for a Buddhist theology relevant to social justice, or the inverse? The question is close to classical concerns in epistemology. Aristotle (384-322) argued in his *Metaphysics* for First Principles, epistemological axioms from which knowledge proceeds. Dunne notes this problematization without resolving it. Leaving this question Dunne moves to address the place of "theos" in Buddhist theology briefly, and the plausibility of this term.

Dunne notes that while the very term Buddhist theology could act to provoke a combination of incredulity and astonishment in readers, this need not be the case.[98]

[98] "Buddhist theology is the self-conscious attempt to present reasoned arguments from within the tradition on issues of importance to Buddhists in order to correct, critique, clarify, or expand upon the tradition." (276).

Buddhism, he argues, has a number of concepts that might readily act as the idea "theos." Beyond this, for some Buddhists, the notion of "Theology Proper," namely concern for the existence and operation of God, is irrelevant. Dunne notes that this is the lesser of two pressing issues for the aspiring Buddhist theologian. The latter is the question of what constitutes "tradition" for the Buddhist theologian. Dunne then moves on to a Tibetan attempt to define tradition.

Dunne points out the difficulties in attempting a Buddhist definition of tradition. Tibetan exegetes encountered nearly insurmountable problems when drawing a boundary around early Buddhist schools such as the Vaatsiiputriiyas, who were noted for advancing the heretical position that an inexpressible personhood (*pudgala*) exists neither as separate nor as identical with the five skandhas. This assertion stood in contradiction to a prevailing scheme of four principles by which one could establish whether or not a given position is Buddhist orthodoxy.[99] While by this doxology the Vaatsiiputriiyas can easily be dismissed as non-Buddhist, this cannot be done by virtue of the fact that the Vaatsiiputriiyas took refuge in the Three Jewels.[100] Dunne concludes that there would be innumerable examples of such contradictions if one sought to create a universal definition of tradition in Buddhism. Dunne then moves to examine two modes by which to proceed to creating such a definition.

These two modes are essentialism and teleology. Dunne sees the former as largely stipulated, and informed by agendas in the particulars of stipulated boundaries to orthodoxy. The latter, teleology, is a mode of definition with a goal. The constituent

[99] 1. All things are impermanent. 2. All contaminated things are or produce suffering. 3. All things are devoid of any ultimately real Self. 4. Nirvana is peace. (277).
[100] It seems that an answer overlooked by the Gelugpa Changkya Rolpe Dorge (1717-1786) that Dunne notes would simply be to describe the Vaatsiiputriiyas as heretical rather than non-Buddhist.

elements predicate to any term would be provisional definitions aiding in guiding whomever to a previously established intellectual "destination." Dunne notes that the teleological motivation in definition has its own unstated essentialism.

Dunne then examines the viability of essentialism as a predicate to a Buddhist theological theory of social justice. Drawing on the critiques of essentialism from Dharmakīrti, Dunne illuminates the absurdity of asserting a reliable essence of personhood within the expression "person." Rather than a readily identifiable essence contained within persons by which they are understood to be accurately described, persons are defined by that which is not a person. From here, Dunne notes that *telos* again is more fitting for a predicate to a Buddhist theological social justice theory. However, applying Dharmakīrti insights to the objects of social justice such as race or gender is not unproblematic.

Dunne points out that the negation of essence as a logically consistent concept might lead to the same conclusion about race, gender, or economic inequalities. The author concludes that both social justice and Buddhist theology argue for a teleological vision of theory.

With its Madhyamikan concern for the insolvency of ideas, there is considerable consonance between this chapter by Dunne and the preceding chapter on gender in Buddhist ontology by Sara McClintock. Both also find their way to the primacy of ontology, and the array of succinct Buddhist critiques thereof. As a result, much of this author's critique on that chapter applies to this one as well. Both Dunne and McClintock engage in an exercise of using Buddhist thought to deconstruct ideas, when this only

proves to forestall their intellectual projects altogether. If Buddhist thought is a collection of methods to alleviate suffering, perhaps not all of them are suited any one task equally.

As I noted in my critique of McClintock, Dunne's work runs into the same problem of negating the very concepts necessary to create a viable Buddhist theology of social justice. Also as mentioned before, relative truth described by karma and co-dependent origination is, for its emptiness, an astonishingly robust cosmos. Dunne would have been better served by examining Buddhist methods for cultivating wholesome states of mind, and insight into the undesirability of racial prejudices. This would be a specific method of addressing racism via Buddhist contemplative means, without subsuming the issue into the morass and panacea of emptiness. From here, I will examine Sallie King Buddhist theology on human rights.

Chapter Fifteen: Human Rights in Contemporary Engaged Buddhism

Sallie B. King's contribution concerns the possibility and place of human rights in Buddhism in general. King notes that while notion of human rights is an appropriate domain of Buddhist concern and examination, there are a number of philosophical predicates contained in human rights, as they have arisen from the inspiration from Western philosophy and the Abrahamic religious traditions that are inconsonant with Buddhist thought. King begins by locating her own theological commitments in the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition, drawing from both the Theravada Buddhism of Southeast Asia, and the Mahayana Buddhism from its premodern introduction from China. Further, she identifies the precise location of her theological formation as within the teachings of the modern Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. After illuminating these, she proposes her own solution, and finally notes how human rights are addressed by Engaged Buddhist thinkers and movements in the present and in the past.

The first disparity between an occidental characterization of human rights and the general tone of Buddhist thought is the adversarial quality and declaration of these rights. Although King does not specify an example, she maintains that human rights as they are constructed and advanced are particularly antagonistic "me vs. you, me vs. them, me vs. the state, me vs. the world!"[101] This stands in contrast to the "the basic reality of life is our mutual interdependence, our pervasive interconnectedness."[102] This leads to a connected contention – that Buddhism, according to King, does not acknowledge a unique position for human beings over the other forms of life on earth, from which a

[101] *Buddhist Theology*, 295.
[102] *Buddhist Theology*, 295.Although King does not use it, Thich Nhat Hanh has coined the term "inter-being" for this phenomenon of mutual interdependence between all forms of life, and even between life and the universe itself.

human right to life can be asserted over animal life. This is followed by a larger gap between Western thought and religion and Buddhism; the existence of an individual at all.

King notes that a yet more fundamental discrepancy between occidental human rights and a Buddhist conception of them rests in the existence of the individual. Both Western philosophy proceeding from its Hellenistic origins, and the Abrahamic religions rooted in Hebrew monotheism, contain a sovereign conception of the human person, usually containing an immortal soul.[103] This could not stand in greater contrast the Buddhist *anatman*, wherein no element of the human person is self-existing, but rather exists in relationship the society and the world as a whole, "…as Thich Nhat Hanh characteristically puts it, *anatman* means that the 'self" is constructed of non-self-parts."[104]

This leads to an imperative on the part of human beings to consider other forms of life with which they live interdependently, and the environment. Therefore, humans cannot promote an ethic or set of rights that advances their own apparent gain over and against either other forms of life, or to the detriment of the natural world. Buddhists would note that any short-term gain for the human race would include long-term disadvantage. As King notes, this Buddhist mutuality is present in that centerpiece of Buddhist ethics, the Five Precepts.

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[103] While both Greek philosophy and Christian theology claim that humans possess an immortal soul, there are important differences between them. Greek philosophy, beginning with Pythagoras, maintained that the human soul was permanent by nature. Augustine of Hippo, the foremost Latin theologian, contended that human souls are immortal only by God's continued assent that they be so. According to Augustine, only God is permanent by nature.

[104] *Buddhist Theology*, 297.

King notes the Five Precepts contain concern for both self and other. Each of the precepts protects not only the individual adopting them, but also those adjacent to that individual, from like harm. This is intended to be an aid to overcoming suffering, and acts a catalyst to the fulfillment of human potential, or the capacity of all human beings to transcend all suffering in the attainment of Buddhahood. This is the fixture from which a Buddhist concern for human rights would be oriented, and how society should be informed to maximize this possibility for all individuals. Furthermore, the "Good" of Buddhism, or the goal towards which Buddhist practitioners strive, involves the elimination of suffering for both humans other forms of life on earth.

King's article is informative, and notes a number of important junctures that need to be addressed in the development of a Buddhist notion of human rights, and how this has been articulated in Western philosophy. Buddhist thought, as King suggests, contains a prevailing concern for harmony, in contrast to human rights as they are advanced in Occidental philosophy, over against society. In response, there are two particular points raised by King that I will address in this critique. First, I want to offer a solution to the apparent Buddhist discomfort with speaking of individuals because of *anatman*. Second, running against the prevailing strain of popular assumptions about Buddhism, I will argue that the idea that all forms of life are equal is contrary the Buddha's own position on this issue.

Perhaps the most important idea for any discussion of human rights is the individual. For both King and Dunne, a notable intellectual stumbling block is personhood in Buddhist thought because of the Buddha's declaration of *anatman*. While there is no space here to note the breadth of all Buddhist discussion on this point of

doctrine, one prevailing understanding contains two components. The first is that what is experienced to be an enduring self is in fact the coordinate operation of the five skandhas. The second component is that beyond these five skandha, there exists no self.[105]

Both Buddhists and Buddhologists have often held that what is referred as "self" in the *anatman* is the *atman* as articulated in the Upanishads.[106] This is a permanent core to human personhood that migrates between bodies in the process of reincarnation. It is this self that, it is believed, the Buddha asserted does not exist. However, the writings of many modern Buddhist teachers have come to claim that the Buddha's *anatman* also addresses a relative sense of *ego*, drawn from psychology. This leaves Buddhists in a difficult position when discussing the human person in general.

There is, however, a solution that can be found in the Pali Canon that one can utilize to speak robustly of individuals without inviting critique from Buddhist orthodoxy; this is the *Pudgala*. This is certain to alarm Buddhist practitioners and scholars alike, who are familiar with this term as it became keystone term for the arch-heretical *Pudgalavadins*. However, *pudgala* as it used in the Pali Canon proper predates the later school, and can find application in the canon that is consonant with mainstream Buddhist thought, without the peculiar intellectual machinations of the *Pudgalavadins.* The difference between how *pudgala* is used in the Pali Canon and the contortion it underwent by the *Pudgalavadins* is fairly simple to explain. I will begin with the more complicated version from the Indian Buddhist school.

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[105] While the first component of no-self is consonant with the Buddha's own pronouncements, the latter is at odds with it.

[106] Thanisarro Bhikkhu, the American *Kamathana* monk, abbot of the Wat Metta and prolific Buddhist author, has written on the topic of no-self, suggesting that *anatman* be understood as a soteriological strategy rather an ontological declaration about the existence of a soul.

As it is used by the *Pudgalavadins,* the *pudgala* is an entity neither identical nor separate from the five skandhas. This entity exists between lifetimes, and acts in part to be the object of karmic activities from one lifetime to the next. This assertion immediately drew charges from all quarters of Buddhist orthodoxy that the *Pudgalavadins* were attempting to create a Buddhist *atman*. Leaving aside the complicated details of the history of Buddhist thought, it is sufficient for the present discussion to note that the *Pudgalavadins* gained permanent infamy in the annals of Buddhist history as heretics of the first order.[107] However, to allow the missteps of this school to render *pudgala* obsolete from Buddhist thought is overreaching in an orthodox Buddhist critique of the *Pudgalavadins*. Further, to arrest this term as it is used in the Pali Canon proper is to impugn the speech of the Buddha himself who used this term without apparent concern, or without a range of hovering qualifications. We can reclaim the *pudgala* and use this term without concern for the errors of the past.

I will now address my main point in this piece: the apparent equality of all life according to King's understanding of the Buddhist worldview. Briefly, without a general moratorium on eating meat, owning animals, or killing from the Buddha, it cannot be maintained that animal life is regarded as important as human life. It is perhaps the fault of Mahayana exegetes to overstate the case that all sentient beings contain a Buddha-nature capable of arriving at full Buddhahood. Commensurate with this claim is the Mahayana tradition, which contains myriad schema that explicate the requirements for

[107] While the *Pudgalavadins* are chided for intimation of *atman* in their construction of the *pudgala*, perhaps some credit should be given to them for attempting to find a solution to the daunting question of who or what receives karmic effects if there is no enduring personality that survives between the death of one body and subsequent rebirth. Later Mahayana thinkers would assert the *Alayavijnana* in answer to this question.

ethical and meditation accomplishments, more often than not requiring eons effort in both of these arenas. Outside of human life, there is little to no possibility of making progress toward awakening. The Mahayana tradition case for this is very nearly as a strong as the proclamation that all sentient life contains the Buddha-nature.

Chapter Sixteen: Pluralism And Dialogue: A Contemplation on the Dialogue of Relationship

Simmer-Brown offers a piece on religious dialogue from the vantage of Buddhist thought. This includes examining inclusivity and exclusivity through a Buddhist lens. As she is located in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Simmer-Brown draws on the classic Madhyamikan fourfold negation to as a taxonomy to evaluate inter-religious dialogue. She utilizes two examples of dialogue from the Japanese Zen tradition in the form of a classical *mondō* and the Tibetan hagiographic account of the Kagyu lineage patriarch Nāropā (1016-1100) in his encounter with the other worldly *Dakini*. Simmer-Brown sees in these accounts tools that Buddhists offer to interreligious dialogue between any two religious traditions.

In addressing the notions of exclusivity and inclusivity, she looks to East Asian exegetical work on the Lotus Sutra, noting the conclusion of the *ekayana*, essentially that all former differences between strands of the Buddha's teachings are merely pedagogical innovations for particular audiences, though they all lead to the goal of Buddhahood itself. Although this suggests perennialism, Simmer-Brown does note that some traditions of Buddhism do maintain exclusivist stances, particularly the Nichiren tradition.[108]

From here, the author moves to explain the utility of the fourfold negation, A, not A, A not B, neither A nor B. She proposes the following variation for her purposes: "Alternative One: The Partner's Stance And My Own Are The Same," "Alternative Two: The Partner's Stance and My Own Are Different," "Alternative Three: The Partner's Stance and My Own Are the Same in Some Ways and Different in Others," and

[108]Simmer-Brown fails to note that her examples of Buddhist inclusivity and exclusivity come from East Asian schools of Buddhism that both champion the Lotus Sutra.

"Alternative Four: The Partner's Stance and My Own Are Neither the Same Nor Different."

Regarding the first category, Alternative One, Simmer-Brown explains that when "I have found myself in extended conversations with [the other]…and have been shocked and delighted in a moment to find no distinguishable boundary between our views."[109] The author does not elaborate on what she means by "views" but we may reasonably infer this concerns assumptions relevant to contemplative practice. She does note that this similarity in views can occur even while significant differences in liturgical practice and theology exist.

In the category of "Alternative Two: The Partner's Stance And My Own Are Different" are placed religious encounters in interreligious dialogue where there is little or no common ground in practice, experience, or theology. Simmer-Brown points to the notion of the "Other" advanced by Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), though she notes that no encounter between to two human beings can be described as truly a dynamic with the utterly Other.[110] This encounter, though without immediate consonance is amiable.

The third category, "Alternative Three: The Partner's Stance and My Own Are the Same in Some Ways and Different in Others," Simmer-Brown explains, is where most dialogues exist.[111] This contains a modicum of similarity with notable differences between religions. She notes that this situation can give rise to ambivalence as a result of the presence of both the familiar and the alien.

The final category, "The Partner's Stance and My Own Are Neither the Same Nor

[109] *Buddhist Theology*, 315.
[110] *Buddhist Theology*, 318.
[111] Ibid.

Different" is merely one of indifference between two potential partners in inter-religious dialogue. Here, both sides are disinterested in the prospect of conversation. From here, Simmer-Brown moves onto two Buddhist narratives that illustrate how sameness and otherness operate.

The first of these two examples comes the Rinzai Zen Buddhist sect in Japan. A centerpiece of training Zen clergy within this tradition is contemplation of quizzical dialogues between Buddhist worthies of the past. These discussions are ostensibly a repartee exemplifying the accomplishment of the realization of non-duality by one, or both parties. This results in a discussion that defies normal, rational expectations. Repeated reflection on these dialogues, called *mondō* in Japanese, provoke a similar insight into non-duality on the part of the contemplative. It is to one such *mondō* that Simmer-Brown looks to examine sameness and otherness.

The *mondo* the author uses is brief, and purportedly took place between two Zen (Chan) masters of the ninth century in China. The *mondō* is quite short, containing nothing more than an exchange of names. The first master is Kyōzan, and the latter is Sanshō. Each figure also has a given name, usually only used by those close to them personally; Kyōzan's was Ejaku, Sanshoo's Enen. The exchange is as follows:

> Kyōzan asked Sanshō, "What is your name?"
> Sanshō said, "Ejaku!"
> Kyōzan said, "Ejaku is my name!"
> Sansho said, "My name is Enen!"
> Kyōzan laughed heartily.

Simmer-Brown interprets this exchange to an example of how otherness is transcended in Zen Buddhism. The entire dialogue is staged, as both in fact know the other's name. The *mondō* is intended to allow each to allow the other the opportunity to

assess their respective levels of non-dual insight. Simmer-Brown claims this is an example of each master overcoming otherness, and a source of inspiration for Buddhists to note the application emptiness between two people.

Another example provided by Simmer-Brown is the hagiographic account of a Nāropā, an Indian Buddhist pundit who became the second lineage holder in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. In Nāropā's story, he is led to realization by a *Dakini* in the guise of an old woman. Not unlike the exchange between the Chinese masters, the *Dakini* acts as a doorway to the realization of emptiness through a series of unlikely encounters with Nāropā. The resulting realization of emptiness by Nāropā is also addressed.

Simmer-Brown offers a fruitful discussion on Buddhist approaches to encounters with other religions. The author shows how Buddhist thought can offer ways philosophical (Madhyamika), existential (Zen Mondō), and devotional (Naropa's hagiography), and means to encounter the other in emptiness. However, what is absent is an example of contact between a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist. All of Simmer-Brown's examples are encounters between Buddhists, and Buddhists of the same tradition.

Chapter Seventeen: From Buddhology to Buddhist Theology: An Orientation to Sinhala Buddhism

Deegalle's piece represents the single Theravada voice in the entirety of the *Buddhist Theology*. Her contribution concerns Vidyacakravarti's *Butsarana*, a vernacular medieval Sinhala Theravada devotional tract centered on devotion to the Three Jewels. She addresses the historical context and linguistic characteristics of the *Butsarana* before noting how it adds to the discussion of Buddhist Theology.

The *Butsarana* represents a point of departure for those familiar with Theravada as a highly intellectual religious tradition. In contrast to the general negative characterization of desire (*kama*) found in Tipitaka, the *Butsarana* extolls the merits of *kama* in the form of devotion to the Three Jewels. This *Buddhabhakti* is explained by Vidyacakravarti as a potent means to accomplish both rebirth in heavenly realms and even nibbana itself. Deegalle notes that this is nearly contemporary with the advent of devotion to Buddhism in Kamakura-era Japan.

Vidyacakravarti was a Sinhala Buddhist writer who composed during the late medieval period in response to the introduction to Vishnavite, Shivite, and Mahayana Buddhist devotion from the continent. To appeal to village Buddhists, Vidyacakravarti integrated a good deal of material from the *Jakatas*. With the addition of this material, Deegalle notes that the *Butsarana* acts as bridge between the Pali Canon and popular Sinhala Buddhism.

Deegalle concludes with the observation that the *Butsarana* can be used as a point of departure for aspiring Buddhist theologians for developing Buddhist theology categories and taxonomy. Deegalle has given us an example of devotion theology. This is

in contrast to the prevailing philosophical theology in *Buddhist Theology*. Now moving on to the critique.

The task of critiquing this article and its contents is challenged largely by one factor: the absence of shortcomings in this piece. Deegalle's contribution contains good structure, organization, and flow. All points within are clearly explained, without clouds of morose postmodern caveats floating nearby.

The *Butsarana* is a refreshing insight into living Sinhalese Buddhism, a welcome departure from the rationalistic caricatures of Theravada Buddhism fabricated and advanced by unctuous British enthusiasts. The only real critique I can offer to Deegalle's work is that does not appear to have been written primarily as a piece of Buddhist theology. The comments about this at the beginning and the end of this article suggest that they were included after the fact to allow Deegalle's work to be included in this volume.

Chapter Eighteen: Concern for Others in Pure Land Soteriological and Ethical Considerations: The Case of *Jogyo daihi*

Though the soteriological is coequal with wisdom, the paramount importance of compassion is the virtue by which the Mahayana tradition seeks to distinguish itself from earlier Buddhist traditions. Mahayana Buddhists, throughout history and from different traditions of scriptural taxonomy and exegesis, seek to cultivate a sense of universal concern for "all sentient beings." However, many of the forms of Mahayana Buddhism lay the responsibility for accomplishing bodhisattva virtue at the feet of the practitioner. The opposite is true of the Pure Land tradition, which maintains that this virtue is bestowed on the individual through the grace of Amida Buddha. Tanaka explores the location of concern for others within the tradition of Jōdo Shinshū exegetes.

Beyond comparison with other forms of Mahayana Buddhism, Tanaka seeks to answer claims by religious studies scholars that the failure of Buddhism to take hold in the United States was due to its pessimism and passivity. Added to this is the claim from within Christian theological circles that Pure Land Buddhism in Japan has not answered the question of the relationship between faith and history. Tanaka notes these observations are not without merit, and that his tradition had indeed fostered them. However, noting the development of Buddhist Studies scholarship and its role in historicizing the claims to authenticity or originality advanced by the received religious traditions of the present, he proceeds with the aim of rebutting the idea that these characterization of Pure Land Buddhism are exhaustive. Tanaka examines the exegetical history of *Jogyo Daihi* as a means to this end.

Jogyo Daihi (hereafter JD) is often translated from Japanese into English as "continuously practicing compassion." The core of this idea can be found in the

Tannisho, written by Shinran's disciple Yuen to address misunderstandings and heretical ideas that had arisen in among Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists soon after the death of Shinran. Yuen defines JD as continuous recitation of the *nembutsu* or invocation of the name of Amida Buddha. The soteriological formula here is that by practicing nembutsu, one ensures oneself of rebirth in the Pure Land and the immediate accomplishment of Buddhahood, according to Shinran. From the vantage of a Buddha, one would be free to manifest in samsara to aid sentient beings without fear of harm from samsara. The orthodoxy of Yuen's pronouncement did not silence later generations from re-evaluating this as the only form of practicing JD.

One such debate took place within Jōdo Shinshū between competing scholars. A wider interpretation of JD was advanced that explained JD could be seen and expressed through actions of body, speech, and mind. This was countered by conservative clerics who claimed the effects of nembutsu manifest only as serenity of mind. This soteriological divide was settled by the Tokugawa Shogunate, which decided in favor of the conservative position ecclesiastical position.

Other Jōdo Shinshū clergy also added to the discussion about the range of effects of JD, and how much of this was to benefit the individual Buddhist, and those beyond him. Zonkaku noted that encouraging others to perform nembutsu was one such expression of concern for others. Gizan expanded on this position by adding that Dharma talks given from a husband to a wife and their children also constitutes an expression of JD.[112]

[112] Presumably, a wife could also give a Dharma talk to her husband and children.

A soteriological divide exists within Jodo theology regarding JD. Gizan and Zonkaku champion the individual practitioner, who exhibits JD as a result of the transformative influence of the grace of Amida. This is in contrast to the "Dharmic virtue" position that places emphasis on the role of Amida's grace is primary in the expression of virtue via an individual. In this more theocentric model of human virtue, the individual Buddhist is merely a mortal vessel through which the magnimanity of Amida pours. This strongly deemphasizes the agency of the Pure Land Buddhist, to show the primacy of Amida in JD. Tanaka notes Jinrei, a final Jōdo Shinshū clergyman, who extolled "realize *shinjin* and to guide others to *shinjin*" with *shinjin* being the feeling of assurance of one's own future rebirth in *Sukavati*. Tanaka then introduces another approach to the discussion of JD and concern for others in the Pure Land tradition, the vantage *Ho'ongyoo*, or the gratitude that arises towards Amida through *shinjin*.JD can be understood as a dimension of *Hon'ongyo* (hereafter HG) according to Tanaka. Different schools of doctrine within Jōdo Shinshū have associated particular religious activities that flow from HG, or are performed as a support for nembutsu. These include light incense, and the dedication of merit, among other tradition elements of Japanese Buddhist liturgical religiosity. The 20th century scholar Daien Fugen also includes the erecting of temples and the lighting of lanterns as expressions of HG. Fugen also notes that Shinran himself admonished his followers not to disparage the teachings of other Buddhist traditions, and to obey the civil authorities. Tanaka concludes from both preceding discussions that Jōdo Shinshū contains a concern for others that extends beyond nembutsu recitation alone, and that can act as a doctrinal basis for Jōdo Shinshū activity in the world.

The final topic that Tanaka addresses is the JD's potential usefulness for modern ethics. Tanaka notes that Kantian ethics, and the socio-economic models of social justice, both are absent of a spiritual dimension that appears to have made Buddhist models of social justice successful, such as Thich Naht Hanh's Engaged Buddhism. JD, from the Jōdo Shinshū perspective, could act to add a virtue ethics component to Western models of social justice, and a much needed component of interior work. JD, according to Tanaka, also allows for sober reflection on the limitations of human intention, and the complexity of efforts in social justice.

Tanaka's piece illuminates a pronounced lacuna in scholarship – the question of compassion in the Pure Land tradition. Though extolled at length across the Mahayana tradition, other such traditions strongly emphasis the role of exertion in meditation to accomplish this virtue. This leaves the question of how compassion is "cultivated" in Pure Land Buddhism with its emphasis on Other Power. Tanaka's work answers this question soundly.

However, in contrast to other forms of Buddhism, be they Mahayana, Theravada, or Vajrayāna, a thesis for social actions beyond the activities of proselyting appears entirely absent from Tanaka's account of concern for others in the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. The array of Pure Land theologians, exegetes, and clergy discussed by Tanaka make no mention of concern for others beyond attempting to persuade them adopt Pure Land Buddhism. With the weighty concern for Other Power, any human efforts to better the human condition are merely the Three Poisons operating under the guise of virtue. Pure Land theology appears to contend with similar philosophical difficulties to the theology

of Martin Luther, who contended similarity regarding the operation of grace and the possibility of human virtue.[113]

[113] Both Lutheran theology and Pure Land theology also met critiques of antinomianism for their claims about grace and the fallenness of the human condition from older, more established traditions of Buddhism and Christianity.

3.5. Critical Responses

Chapter Nineteen: Measuring the Immeasurable: Reflections on Unreasonable Reasoning

Luis Gomez' contribution represents the first of two global reflections on the foregoing chapters, constituting the third and final chapter of *Buddhist Theology*. Gomez' reflection includes brief comments on each of the preceding articles, and a number of personal caveats. These propositions are constituent of the assumptions he uses to evaluate each article. It will be these that I will analyze in the course of this essay. To begin this critique, I want to draw attention to two of Gomez' points to exam:

> First, I believe the words "Buddhist" and "Buddhism" are ambiguous, and I believe they should stay that way for historical reasons (the two terms are always applied to a vast array of diverging phenomena and people, and with many polemical aims) for normative reasons (no human being should have the authority to decide how one should use any set of traditional beliefs or to rule on who should make a personal claim of allegiance to any part of that set of beliefs).Second, I therefore do not hesitate to say I am Buddhist in the sense that I find many, and diverse, aspects of Buddhist traditions (practices, ideas, and metaphors) inspiring and meaningful…"[114]

There is little to disagree with in Gomez' first note on "Buddhist" and "Buddhism." Both are umbrella terms under which fit uncomfortably an array of individuals and religious phenomena. These seem rather commonsensical, and perhaps not worth stating. But more precisely, Gomez is responding to an unstated premise of this work *in toto*: The attempt for pan-Buddhist theology, and a pan-Buddhist definition of Buddhist theology. While Gomez' first set of propositions accords well with modern and postmodern academic assumptions about religion and religious practice, they stand in odd relation to how Buddhism has been practiced throughout history.

[114] *Buddhist Theology,* 367.

Buddhism has an array of its own initiation rites and prescriptions for practice that require particular personal commitments on the part of practitioners. It is hard to see how, without any particular theological point of departure via living traditions of Buddhism, Gomez' notion of a Buddhist is a very ethereal, postmodern conception. Gomez' final claim in the first proposition could be cited for cultural insensitivity relative to cultural appropriation.

There are reasonable examples to show that no "human being should have the authority to decide how one should use any set of traditional beliefs or to rule on who make a personal claim of allegiance to any part of that set of beliefs." It would not be hard to imagine that devout Jews might take exception to someone adopting Judaism as a matter of personal style. What may be nothing more than an aesthetic choice on the part of one individual, is a matter of the misappropriation of ideas and practiced indicative of ultimate meaning to another individual. This follows closely on the second observation, in which Gomez claims Buddhist identity without noting a form a Buddhism. And it follows farther on the total nature of *Buddhist Theology* – the prevailing notion that one can produce Buddhist theology devoid of relationship to the exegetical tradition that is more than 2000 years old. I will address this point further in the conclusion to this chapter. Thirdly, Gomez claims that "much of Buddhism (and religious practice) generally is not about truth, conviction, or authority, but about ways of imagining and rehearsing those aspects of life that are precisely not amenable to rational analysis."[115]

Gomez' third observation is a reasonable and germane that can be applied to any religious tradition. Religious art, literature, and rites are surely suited to this observation.

[115] *Buddhist Theology*, 368.

However, to claim that they operate free from assumptions about convictions of truth proceeding from some form of authority is more difficult to maintain. While it unlikely the case most practicing Roman Catholics are familiar with the final points of sacramental theology that inform the ritual architecture of the mass, it would be reasonable to expect that most attendants understand that the mass is the proscribe rite of the Church, and that it can only be celebrated by priests. Similarly, we could expect Japanese Buddhists, while not familiar the soteriological assumptions within Shingon thought that inform the practice of a *goma*, these same Buddhist nevertheless understand that the performance of a *goma* is proper Buddhist rite, and auspicious.

> Fourth, I regard as most relevant to a Buddhist theological reflection those teachings of the tradition that have to do with self-deception… Therefore, I look at "systems with suspicion – as organs that let us know in order not to know….
> Fifth, and last, my reverence for the Buddhist tradition leads not only to an ethics of agreement and disagreement, but also an ethics of acceptance that makes me consider desirable and good the capacity to restrain our impulse to turn disagreement into sectarian bias or into condemnation or disparagement.[116]

Gomez' fourth observation expresses the full measure of what I find wanting in the entirety of *Buddhist Theology*: This postmodern contempt of tradition and the intellectual inheritance from it. The hermeneutics of suspicion is itself a corrective to suffocation that proceeds from modernity and the Hegelian master narratives that arose from it. However, this suspicion can become a cataract of its own, nihilating all the utility that can be drawn from the weighty efforts of past worthies. I will address this further in the total conclusion to this chapter.

> First, I am not sure I understand how an adjective denoting a religious ideology or a religious group affects any noun representing some form of rational, public discourse. Terms like "Buddhist psychology" or "Christian

[116] *Buddhist Theology*, 369.

> ecology" continue to baffle me (fortunately, we remain intelligent enough to avoid terms like "Christian chemistry" or "Buddhist astrophysics"). Of course, "Christian theology" or "Buddhist theology" pass, though not easily. I still wonder: is the relationship between the two terms in each of these phrases different from that obtaining in phrases such as "Buddhist psychology" or "Christian cosmology"? Which brings me to a second criticism of several essays in the book. Several contributions protest too much trying to separate themselves from Christian theology. I would think that a greater commonality Christian theological discourse would suggest that the discipline of theology, Christian or Buddhist, provides us with some of the necessary tools to go beyond apologetics into the terrain of dialogue and rational, truly public discourse.[117]

Gomez' second set of observations belies some confusion about theology as it is practiced relative to new disciplines, informed by departmental boundaries of the modern university. Unlike the social or natural sciences, theology is *not* a universal domain of public discourse. In fact, the adjective Christian is far more the important part of "Christian theology" than theology itself. Paul Tillich famously stated in his introduction to his magnum opus *Systematic Theology* that "Theology is a function of the Christian Church." While this may strike some as Christian chauvinism, it is in fact a succinct accounting for the location of the word in Western thought, and the Abrahamic religions. Authors throughout *Buddhist Theology* struggled to delineate truly universal criterion for theology. This difficulty is brought on by the fact that there is no such discourse. David Tracy's expanded the use of theology to describe normative discourses within religions other than Christianity, but without insisting that this indicated a *pan-religious* discipline. Following Gerhow Sholomo, observation regarding mysticism, it follows easily that there is no theology across religions. "There is no mysticism as such, there is only mysticism

[117] *Buddhist Theology,* 369-370.

of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on."[118] Luis Gomez continues,

> Second, I am also concerned with another, equally complex question. Is theology today at all possible? In fact, I have many times wondered whether it has ever been possible, or even desirable. But here I will focus on the contemporary question. What is the purpose and "sense" of theological reflection at the end of the twentieth century?[119]

Theology is far more than possible: There is nothing without it. The vacuous plans of modernity birthed its own Cain of post-modernity, leaving naught for meaning, and zest in human life. Is it possible? Is it possible to live without it? These questions are left unaddressed by Gomez.

Chapter Twenty: Constructive Buddhist Theology: A Responses

This final chapter is the second of two global reflections on the foregoing chapters. It is separated into three sections, four including the introductions, and within each, Unno gives comments and questions he sees as unanswered by the preceding eighteen articles. His overall appraisal of this first project in Buddhist Theology is positive. Unno begins by noting that in contrast to Christianity, Buddhism has largely yet to confront modernity. This is further compounded by additional challenges faced by Buddhists as Buddhism grows in the United States, in a culture very different from those Buddhism has moved through previously.

In the introduction, Unno draws on a distinction between two forms of authenticity noted by David Slawson in his conference presentation about Japanese gardens. Slawson's piece notes the manner in which traditional Japanese gardens have changed throughout history. His presentation examines history through these

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[118] *The Jewish Mystical Experience*, 222.
[119] *Buddhist Theology,* 370.

authenticities, and how the tradition of Japanese gardens can continue outside of Japan in the United States. Slawson, in examining the history of Japanese gardens, introduces a distinction between two forms of authenticity he believes is at work.

The first form of authenticity is a slavish devotion to tradition, seeking to replicate the past without concern to a change in era, culture, and regional sensibilities. The latter accommodates local materials and the aesthetic needs of the people garden. It is this latter form of authenticity that Unno argues Buddhist Theology ought to emulate. Unno explains that his own theological formation is within the Pure Land and Hua-yen traditions. He draws on these theological commitments, in addition to the two authenticities, from which to address the forgoing articles on Buddhist theology.

Unno's first section begins by noting the constructed nature of religious worldviews, drawing on the sociological work of Peter Berger to illuminate the "audacity" predicate to construction of a religious worldview. Unno stops short of concluding that such construction and subsequent academic deconstruction denudes religion of a divine element, or meaningful and transformative human experiences, by noting Berger's later work. Unno draws attention to the integral element of practice to appreciate Buddhism – noting how Buddhist ideas are more than merely historical constructions, but are matters of soteriological importance.

Proceeding from this, in the second section, Unno points to the centrality of orthopraxis in the enterprise of translating Buddhist texts. The author notes Tu-shun's work on the Avatamsaka Sutra concern with how the world-view of this Buddhist text can be experienced by aspiring Buddhists. East Asian Buddhism is replete with such examples, Unno notes, and goes on to point out the development of *nembutsu* in his own

Pure Land tradition. This practice is an integral part of the history of the translation of Buddhist scripture, informing its development its execution throughout Buddhist history.

The third section is comprised of Unno's comments on an array of the preceding articles, and therefore difficult to summarize. Among the points made by Unno, he notes that the place of self-interest had not been addressed by authors who wrote on issues of Buddhist ethics and human rights. Unno concludes by advances his own concern about how Hua-yen as an ontology can be employed in a normative way to advance ecological concerns, and those for human rights.

Unno piece brings a tone to *Buddhist Theology* as a whole that has been otherwise absent: The warmth of faith. Unno notes, like previous authors, the daunting challenges of modernity, but with a silent trust suggests that he does not perceive them as insurmountable. Perhaps the strength of tradition, extending from behind from which Unno draws a sense of the perennial. His tradition of Buddhism has survived the tumult of nearly a millennia of Japanese history. The assurance of living tradition, that has survived the test of time, is absent from the work of other authors.

Informed by Buddhism as living tradition, inherited from past generations, rather than a set of isolated ideas, Unno notes the importance of Buddhist practice propelling Buddhist translation. This observation *praxis* for propelling the development of Buddhist theology sets Unno apart from the other contributors to this work, who largely theorize with little concern for a living application for their conclusions. Unno is also conscious of community in the production of theology in this work. Unno's work accords with much of my own conclusions with his concern for tradition, practice, and a lived faith. To avoid

unnecessary redundancy, I will unpack the implications of traditions, praxis, and faith in the global critique.

Accompanying each chapter, I have included a critique specific to that chapter. However, there are themes germane to the work as a whole that I want to address as well. This last section of this chapter will serve this purpose.

3.6.The Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel

The publication of *Buddhist Theology* in 2000, inspired as it was by the 1996 AAR panel by the same name, was followed by an unexpected silence of scholarship that explicitly identified itself as Buddhist theology. This six year period was not an extinction but something of a *bardo* through which Buddhist theology passed. Faithful to the mechanics of karma Buddhist theology found rebirth as "Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection." In this final section, I will make some observation about the continuity and discontinuity in topics between *Buddhist Theology* and the subsequent Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel under the American Academy of Religion conference Buddhism section. There are important connections between the *Buddhist Theology* and the BCCR conference, where topics and themes addressed former find greater expansion and expression in the latter. But equally important are discontinuities that have fruitfully bloomed into new subjects matters. We will note these here.

Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection, hereafter BCCR, has become a profound venue for normative discussions on subjects normally limited to concerns of description in prevailing Buddhist Studies. The first panel occurred in 2006 and is now in its fourteen year, and more than eighteen units have been held in this time. Panel topics are truly astonishing in its range. The Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel has been crossed listed with: Buddhist Philosophy Group, Comparative Religious Ethics Group, Animals and Religion Group, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Group, Mysticism Group, Religion and Ecology Group, Moral Injury and Recovery in Religion, Society, and Culture Group, Yogācāra Studies Unit, and Buddhism in the West Unit.

From these panels, 118 panel papers were presented. This is too large to examine in this project. A shorter overview is required. However, the allow interested scholars, clergy, and laity access to the breadth of the material presented at this panel, I have included a bibliography that includes each of the papers, and where possible, the subsequent form of publication the paper became.[120] The panel that are forms of continuity between *Buddhist Theology* and the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel. *Buddhist Theology* acted as a fertile from that established illuminated topics in Buddhist thought in modernity requiring scholarly attention into the foreseeable future. Such theological concerns as feminist Buddhist insights, Buddhist inter-faith efforts, and the connection between Buddhist Studies scholarship and the living practice of Buddhism. The Buddhist world-view has potent implications for environmentalists, and Buddhist chaplaincy scholarship is a growing topic of interest as the United States continues to improve in both ethnic and religious diversity. Contributors to *Buddhist Theology* continue to be a presence in the BCCR panel. Rita Gross, John Makransky, and Anne Klein presented papers.[121]

The authorship between both the founding work was exclusively professors of Buddhist Studies, philologists with little exception. The BCCR panel continues to boast a majority of authors as members of the professorate with the welcome addition of Buddhist clergy and laity. Topically, feminism as a theoretical approach remains a strong

[120] The bibliography is complete to the best of my ability. In many cases, the panel listing contained no information about individual papers beyond their title and author. I requested information from each presented about the what form, if any, their paper took after the panel. In some cases, individual authors responded to my e-mails explaining the author did not seek to have the paper published for myriad reasons. Finally, after repeated e-mails a number of authors neglected my requests for information altogether.
[121] Rita M. Gross, "Religious Diversity: Finding the Real Questions." (2015), John Makransky, "The Emergence of Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection as a Resource for Buddhist Communities and for the Contemporary World.", Anne Klein, "Seeing Mind, Being Body: Contemplative Practice and Buddhist Epistemology.", (2008.

component of the BCCR panel papers, as well as ethics, and ontology. Beyond *Buddhist Theology*, the BCCR panel finds new academic venues of enquire, notably Gender Studies, that address Buddhism as it stands in relationship to phenomenon of transgenderism, Buddhist Chaplaincy, Social Justice, Interreligious dialogue, Buddhist epistemology, Buddhism and Race, Buddhism and the West, and the Academy and Buddhism.[122] BCCR also admits a welcome flourish of Asian and Asian-American Buddhist voices, and Buddhist presenters from other underrepresented groups. The traditions of Buddhism addressed has also expanded to include understudied Buddhist traditions such as those of Vietnam, Burma, and Cambodia.

BCCR has also inspired higher education to craft degree programs concerned in part with the utility of Buddhist Studies for practicing Buddhists. The particular avenue from within BCCR that exerts this influence is Buddhist Chaplaincy, under which Buddhist pastoral theology is also included. The University of the West in Rosemead, California is home to a one such doctoral degree program. The Doctor of Buddhist Ministry is described by the university as:

> …an advanced professional degree culminating in a dissertation project. The program applies a Buddhist perspective to ministerial issues facing practitioners in the contemporary world. Students gain a deeper understanding and commitment to the Dharma (Buddhist teaching), while refining their ministerial application. Students develop research, writing, and communication skills to the level necessary to participate in

[122] Notable from her contributions to BCCR presentations in advancing research in sexual power relationships and the place of race in Buddhism a Ann Gleig, associate professor of religious studies at the University of Central Florida with 'Buddhism in America After Ferguson': Privilege, Diversity and Inclusion in American Convert Buddhism" (2015) "From Sweeping Zen to Open Buddhism: Sex Scandals, Social Media, and Transparency in Western Buddhism" (2018). and Hsiao Lu professor of religious studies at the University of Detroit-Mercy for her contributions of "Queering Avalokitesvara: From the Thirty-Three Forms in the Lotus Sutra to Minority Identities in Today's World." (2012) and "The Buddha Speaks with but One Voice, and Each Sentient Being Understands in Accordance with His/Her Type": A Buddhadharma- Inspired Pedagogy" (2014).

> professional academic discourse and practice-oriented domains of religion and service.[123]

The important as well are questions that remain unexamined by preceding years of scholarship. Noticeably absent from the papers presented at the BCCR panel are any addressing the growing topic of secular Buddhism. Secular Buddhism follows an established trend of de-mythologization established by the liberal Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). This finds a more specific Buddhist origin in the works of Stephen Batchelor, who authored the *Buddhist Atheist*, wherein Batchelor explains his migration from the baroque, theistic, non-theism of Gelugpa Tibetan Buddhism, through Korean Son, to his final "theological" Buddhist location with an allegiance to the Pali Canon. Batchelor's approach to reading the Pali Canon the strongly resembles hermeneutical strategy Thomas Jefferson applied to his revised New Testament; this was essential to remove miraculous accounts, regarding them as apocryphal superstitions accretion into the Gospel accounts. This approach reading the Pali Canon has caught on with a small segment of the American Buddhist population, who describe themselves as "Secular Buddhists." This topic remains a lacuna among the topics presented on in the BCCR panel. Among them is the reception of BCCR scholarship among communities of practicing Buddhists. How do communities of Buddhists receive the revelations of the academy, bearing the imprimatur of the professoriate? Does this challenge the place of clergy in guiding Buddhist monasteries, temples, or associations? This ends this third chapter of this dissertation. This will be followed by the four chapter, the conclusion,

[123] The University of the West. "Doctor of Buddhist Ministry" Accessed: August 17, 2020. http://www.uwest.edu/academics/graduate-programs/buddhist-chaplaincy/doctor-of-buddhist-ministry/

where I will summarize the forgoing chapters, and offer my own reflection on the future of BCCR.

4. Chapter Four: Conclusion

4.1. Summary

In this final chapter, I will review the forgoing two chapters in a summary, and offer some final reflections on issues unaddressed in BCCR. This project began by challenging the linear narrative of the development of theological interest within Buddhist Studies by Roger Jackson in his editors' introduction, and José Cabezón in "Buddhist theology in the Academy." Jackson claimed that theological interest in Buddhism among Buddhist Studies scholars was a phenomena that only emerged in the late 20th century, casting earlier generations of Buddhologists as entirely neutral in their own interest in Buddhism. Cabezon's account is complexifies this narrative by noting the theological efforts of feminist scholars in the 1990s. Both of these explanation over look an array of examples to the contrary that can be found even in the beginnings of Buddhology.

We can find a good deal of evidence in the writings of the founding father of Buddhology, Eugene Burnouf, that he esteemed Buddhism greatly. This esteem was not limited to Buddhism as an intriguing historical phenomena, but contained active admiration for the viability of Buddhism as a religious tradition, and even went so far as describe himself as a Buddhist. T.W. Rhys David theological passion for Buddhism was far more pointed than that of the earlier Burnouf, and wrote in a polemic manner. An enthusiast for the Pali Canon, Rhys David wrote extolling the elegance of the Theravada tradition, and despairingly of the later Mahayana and Tantric Buddhist traditions.

The 20th century also contained theological passion from unexpected figures. Edward Conze, famous for his translation of Sanskrit Buddhist texts, also voiced

theological convictions toward the Mahayana tradition. Conze apparently theological allegiance toward the Mahayana played a role in writing disparagingly of the earlier Buddhist tradition. He is also noted to have accomplish the first Dhyana state by his own estimations. Much more visibly theological, D.T Suzuki advanced himself as a scholar of Zen Buddhism but in retrospect it is readily apparent he was entirely partisan to Japanese Zen Buddhism. Suzuki was overlooked by both Jackson and Cabezon. The next stage of theological interest comes from feminist scholars of Buddhism.

The true antecedent to BCCR are the works of feminist scholars in the late 20th century. It is in the works of Miranda Shaw, Rita Gross, and Ann Klein where an emerging theological voice begins to be heard. All three of these authors use the term "theology" in their respective works to describe their one of the goals of their research. Scholars will adopt this voice in a less explicit but equally recognizable manner addressing other Buddhist topics.

Beyond the domain of feminism, scholars of Buddhism begin to take a direct interest in the theological issues in Buddhism. Brian Victoria's *Zen at War* presents an indicting case against the Sōtō Zen sect in Japan for the role played by wartime priests and roshis in producing pro-war Buddhist rhetoric: Victoria is himself a Sōtō Zen priest. In *Pruning the Bodhi*, scholars like Sally King come to a spirited, theological defense of the Buddha-nature. These defenses are not concerned with the historical fact of Buddha-nature but rather whether or it is properly Buddhist – this is a question of orthodoxy, squarely a theological concern, not one for either Buddhist Studies, or religious studies. It would be wrong to characterize Donald S. Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La* theological outright. However, the finely tuned selection of topics addressed in this work has

inescapable implications for American Tibetan Buddhist enthusiasts. This work has by virtue of its potent critiques included itself, perhaps against the intentions of the author to do so, in the theological conversation for practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. I also noted this rather later inception of a theological voice appears to have coincided the maturation of academic careers. These works acted as a rising tide of interest in writing theological among scholars of Buddhism. This was followed by *Buddhist Theology*.

In the third chapter I examined *Buddhist Theology* and the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection. The first portion of this chapter was concerned with a summary and critique of the chapters of *Buddhist Theology.* Cabezon's recommendations for that Buddhist theology contain a "breadth of analysis" as it engages "other religious traditions, and the secular intellectual tradition" strongly suggested a comparative intellectual enterprise. Cabezon's observation are strengthened by David Tracy's forceful declaration that all modern theology *is* comparative. From this, I concluded that comparative theology was what was absent from *Buddhist Theology*, and itself would be a fruitful mode of critique.

Via comparative theology, I critique the chapters of *Buddhist Theology* from beyond Buddhism alone. This was necessary if BCCR authors want to achieve their intended goal of helping Buddhism mediate modernity and postmodernity, and offering Buddhist solutions to the contemporary world. One such solution I advanced to aid BCCR, both in *Buddhist Theology*, and the BCCR panel, is for the authors to declare their theological formation. As I noted, this need note be a strict location within a branch of Buddhism, such as Sōtō Zen Buddhism, though it could be. This formation could be a more general allegiance to a canon. This would avoid the myriad pit falls that could from

claiming one to be merely Buddhist, and one's work Buddhist theology, writ large. I also noted the problems with theistic constructions for Buddhists positing similar metaphysics in their own theologies; most prominently, the problem of theodicy. I also noted the difficulties involved with the term "Dharmology" as the word dharma is used by other religious traditions of India. Concluding my examination of *Buddhist Theology,* I noted the continuity and discontinuities between the topics addressed in *Buddhist Theology*, and the Buddhist Critical Constructive Reflection panel.

4.2. Final Reflections and Considerations

Among the lacuna we find in BCCR is the reception of this scholarship by Buddhist clergy and laity. If it is the intention of scholars contributing to BCCR to be resource for Buddhists, the question remains as to how effective BCCR has proven to be in this regard. If BCCR is to achieve its goals, it must find expression beyond the academy in Buddhism as it develops. There are other considerations the dynamic between BCCR scholars and the Buddhists they hope to offer solutions and insight to.

One such consideration is the impact of a new, authoritative voice as it defines and interprets Buddhist texts, ideas, and institutions. This is particularly important for more conservative groups within the wider sangha of American Buddhism. The professoriate represents a powerful new interlocutor on the topic of Buddhism, equipped with an array of historical, philological, and even archaeological methods to analyze Buddhism. If we adopted Donald Lopez's reasoning regarding the beginning of Buddhist Studies with the publication of Eugene Burnouf's *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* in 1844, then Buddhist Studies is about 180 years old. Of this nearly two centuries, it is in last twenty that Buddhist Studies scholars have sought to write in a directly theological manner with equal direct implications for practicing Buddhists.

This role has been almost exclusively played by Buddhist clergy. The task of interpreting Buddhist scripture cogently to allow Buddhists to continue to practice the Buddhadharma has rested with the Third Jewel since during the life of the Buddha himself. Producing voluminous and canonical commentarial literature, the Sangha has acted in the roll of preserving, maintaining, and even innovating into the Buddhist tradition as new times and cultures required. And it is to the clergy that the laity has

looked for both orthodoxy and orthopraxy in living an authentic Buddhist life. The recent entry the professoriate into this arena of inquiry historically reserved for Buddhist religious must be navigated deftly and with some sensitivity.

The past contains confrontations between the claims of scholars impinging upon the orthodoxy of a Buddhist idea, and hostile reactions from Buddhists both lay and clergy. William Chu succinctly illuminates one such encounter between Chinese Buddhists:

> Yuanming 圓明 (?-1949-?; who restored his pre-ordained name Yang Hongfei 楊鴻飛 after returning from Japan) provoked the ire of many traditional Buddhists for his "sacrilegious" claims. He said, according to modern findings, the Chinese "have been fooled by [their patriarchal] predecessors," having been misled into believing the truthfulness and historicity of all Chinese sutras and their teachings, which in reality were "conflated and polluted by legends, myths…lies…sophistry." Much of the traditional Chinese Buddhist wisdom, according to Yuanming, "directly contradicts" what "modern scientific knowledge" has revealed about Buddhist history. Outraged, prominent Chinese Buddhist leaders organized boycott of Yuanming, branding him an "apostate," "a progeny of Mara," and "a freakish lunatic."[124]

There are a number of potential locations of friction between professors and Buddhist clergy. The first and most obvious is the issue of sacerdotal investiture. Although this could be potentially mediated by reason, Buddhists may reject challenging conclusions raised by scholars on the grounds that these individuals are not traditional interpreters, members of ordination lineages that are believed to extend back to the Buddha himself. Additionally, an integral element to perception of the identity of Buddhist clergy is that they are experienced practitioners of Buddhist meditation, contemplation, and rites themselves. As in the case of the authorship of Buddhist

[124] William Chu. "A Buddha-Shaped Hole: Yìnshùn's 印順 (1906-2005) Critical Buddhology and the Theological Crisis in Modern Chinese Buddhism." (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2006), 15.

scriptural exegesis, the majority of Buddhist adepts are likewise Buddhist clergy in one form or another. While this may be less than accurate in the case of every Buddhist monk, nun, priest, or lama, the laity generally associate if not mastery then at least competence exponents of traditional Buddhist means of cultivating an interior life with their clergy. Although the laity are not excluded from the ranks of Buddhist worthies, their presence there appears to be a matter of rare exceptions rather than a general rule. This is particularly important as a wide spectrum of Buddhist traditions advance a thesis that the truths of the Dharma must be seen though meditation, and cannot be ascertained through study alone. Buddhists may claim that the absence of sufficient command of their contemplative arts may render their written conclusions suspect. These are not, however, insurmountable barriers to BCCR scholars seeking to engage fruitfully with the laity and clergy. There are some approaches scholars could employ to assuage these Buddhist concerns.

One that is relatively simple is that some BCCR scholars are Buddhist clergy. This is particular the case within the Japanese Buddhist traditions. This would lend such scholars the imprimatur of the Buddhist Sangha to the scholarship and presentations. Additionally, most of the BCCR scholars at a minimum identify as Buddhists, some with not insignificant experience in Buddhist contemplative arts. Many play a large role in teaching Buddhism within the religious tradition in addition to their careers as Buddhologists.

Beyond issues of authority, issues of method could be sources of misunderstanding between BCCR scholars and non-scholar Buddhists. Scholar used to locating Buddhist phenomena squarely within boundaries of time and space, language

and culture, may run into resistance from traditional Buddhists who regard the elements of the Buddhist tradition as informed by eternal truth. Indeed, one could characterize the efforts of scholars to find the truth of things in time, and the aspirations of religious practice to arrive at timeless-truth. Without caution and sensitivity, Buddhist may take exception to historicist claims that reduce long held Buddhist truths to mere historically contingent conjecture. William Chu aptly notes this:

> Because Buddhism, like any other religion, styles itself as a purveyor of certain truth-claims, so the tenability of its claims in the face of modern historical understanding is a real issue for many Buddhist theologians and lay practitioners alike. "Apocryphal" may be a value-free label for many scholars, but it is value-laden for scholar-practitioners.[125]

Adding to Professor Chu's observation, prior to its new connotations via scholars of religion, "apocryphal" has a very pointed history as it was used in Christian polemics. Beginning with the Protestant Reformation, this term was employed by reformers such as Martin Luther to describe books from the Old Testament long received by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches as canon, as specious. The term has a long history of continued use in this vein in beyond the bounds of Christian theology in the English language. This, of course, need not be the case. But it a potential pit fall to be aware of that it should be avoided.

Buddhology employs a related through separate theoretical perspective more daring in both its first principles and the conclusions it advances: This is postmodernism. Although much newer in vintage, postmodernism is akin to "religion" or "culture" in

[125] William Chu. "A Buddha-Shaped Hole: Yìnshùn's 印順 (1906-2005) Critical Buddhology and the Theological Crisis in Modern Chinese Buddhism." (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2006), 13-14.

regard to how difficult these two older terms are to define. While this is the case, one can observe a number of prevailing themes within postmodernism; here I will note those germane to the present discussion. Postmodernism has as a powerful philosophical antecedent the thought of Karl Marx. Postmodernists inherit the Conflict Theory of sociology; this is the theory that human history is defined by a series of struggles between dominant and subordinate groups of people. While violence played a role in maintaining the supremacy for numerically smaller ruling class over the larger group of laborers, control was essentially sustained by myths fabricated by the ruling class that claim subordination of the laborers is the natural state of affairs. Religion is one such narrative used by elites to justify their essentially unjust ascendance of the rest of humanity. From Marx, postmodern thinkers inherit the notion that universal narratives are not only historically contingent, but are inimical in inception, construction, and application. These universal narratives are complex and complying, though appearing to be intent up well-being, are actually modes of control used by elites to managed the disadvantage masses of which they rule. It is therefore the task of scholars who employ postmodernism as a theoretical paradigm for their scholarship to "deconstruct" historical objects to demonstrate the myriad power dynamics within historical phenomena, exposing them as methods of oppression. While postmodern assumptions and conclusions are common place for Buddhologists, and indeed more widely among nearly all the humanities and social sciences, they could prove to be more startling for unacquainted Buddhists than historicism. Notes the limits of postmodern analysis relative to the practical needs of Buddhists.

> Since the 1980s, such modernist reforms have come under postmodern criticism, mostly from American scholars who specialize in later forms of

> Buddhism. These criticisms aim to dislodge the modernist consensus, arguing that we have no real way of knowing what the Buddha taught, or the provenance of the Pali and other texts. A variety of specific arguments attempt to refute key claims of the modernists, such as the idea that the Buddha's teaching was essentially rational. These arguments have been repeatedly criticized by experts in the field. The postmodern approach has yet to produce constructive results comparable to those of modernism.[126]

If BCCR scholars believe scholarship informed by postmodern assumptions and analysis could be of benefit to practicing Buddhist, it would be sound advice to proceed with sensitivity when explaining the potentially challenging conclusions of their research. It is not my intention to paint a black and white picture, contrasting Buddhologists as separated by a "Great Divide" from Buddhist clergy and laity. Indeed, the modern world has seen a good deal of exchange and overlap between the academy and the monastery. What I seek to advance here is a concern for those longstanding modes by which Buddhists vet comment that claims to speak authoritatively about the Buddha and his teachings.

[126] SuttaCentral, Accessed August 19, 2020. https://suttacentral.net/discourses.

4.3. Concluding Remarks

Stages through which the study of Buddhism has passed set the stage for an wide range of new inquiry germane to the breadth of the humanities. Traversing the divide between objective research and theology, BCCR is set to be the ground for fruitful examinations of the role of the academy in Buddhism, and society at large. The growth of the BCCR panel is its fourteen years acts to uncover very wide interest in questions of meaning and improving the human condition among the community of Buddhist Studies scholars. For BCCR to truly succeed, this scholarship must find expression outside of academic conferences and the academy and result in actionable theses within living Buddhist communities, and beyond. It is the hope of this researcher that this comes to pass.

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2006

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