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OF THE OF: GENRE, GENERATION, AND THE
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION[1]

Mapping

As an undergraduate in the 1990's with a penchant for excessively
punctuated "theory" classes (remember all those slashes and
parentheses? Write it this way and it says "under erasure"; cross out
some letters and it says "call your mother") I became an avid
practitioner of what one might colloquially designate "the of-trick."
It goes like this: when faced with a title or central phrase revolving
around the preposition "of," recall for your audience that the
genitive can be read both subjectively and objectively. Such double-
reading promises to "open out" interpretation, unconceal the
concealed, do justice to the polyvocal, and with any luck evoke an
audible "mmm." Heart *of* Darkness. Song *of* Myself. The Trespass *of*
the Sign—is it the sign that's trespassed, or is the sign *itself* a
trespass? Mmm. I make fun of it here, but every time I teach my
introductory course in philosophy of religion, I know I will
eventually pronounce with earnest slowness the title of Jacques
Derrida's *Gift of Death*. "Responsibility," I will at some point say, "is
the gift that *death gives*. It's death's *gift*—and it's the gift that death *is*.
The *gift*…of death."

It might therefore come as a surprise to find those of us who tend
toward the Continent suddenly truncating the proliferation of
perspectives, forgetting *aletheia*, and undermining overdetermination
as we insist that the name "philosophy *of* religion" be read
unilaterally, univocally, unidirectionally: "it's philosophy *about*
religion," we find ourselves saying on airplanes and ad hoc
committees; "not the philosophy that religion produces." We don't
belong to religion. We're not *of* religion. Not religion's, whether by
genre or generation.

A puzzling truncation, to be sure; but isn't it professionally
necessary? A dose, one might say, of strategic essentialism? For if we
were to concede the duplicity of the genitive, subjecting philosophy
to the religion it is in some sense *of*, we would succumb to the
oceanic waters of theology…and no one wants to get too close to
theology. Theologians, we keep hearing, are the reason religious
studies is still so undervalued as a discipline; hence the multifarious
efforts to get rid of them—whether by jettisoning the analytic from
the continental, jettisoning the continental *and* the analytic from the

pragmatic, divorcing the American Academy of Religion (AAR) from the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), or by just throwing out the whole subfield of philosophy of religion, crypto-theological as it is perennially said to be.[2]

Among religious studies scholars like Jonathan Z. Smith, Russell McCutcheon, William Arnal, and Willi Braun—whose writings constitute a significant portion of the discipline's "theory and method" canon—it is common to categorize theology as a "first-order" discourse and religious studies as a "second-order" discourse.[3] In his much-cited "Sacred Persistence," for example, Smith writes, "I have come to believe that a prime object of study for the historian of religion ought to be theological tradition."[4] Theology is the material that religious studies studies, the *interpretandum* rather than the *interpretans*; more precisely, theology is the "native" form of *interpretans* whose very operation becomes the *interpretandum* for the higher-level operation of religious studies. Hence the buttons circulated some years back by the nascent North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR), formed in part by its members' frustration with the persistently theological remnant of the AAR—circular provocations that featured phrases like, "Got Theory?" or "Too Concrete; Be More Abstract"; or notoriously, a bright yellow button with black serif font that asked any theological conference-goer who might read it, "Are you my data?"

One might justifiably think, then, that if we are looking to prop up what Martin Kavka has called "the ever-dying subfield of philosophy

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[2] Most notably, see Donald Weibe, *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). Although he does not frame the conflict quite so starkly, Timothy Knepper has similarly argued that, at least as it is currently configured, philosophy of religion is of no use to the academic study of religion because it "often looks more like a (certain) philosophical theology—not a religiously impartial examination of reason-giving in the many different religions of the world, but a religiously motivated apologetic" (Timothy David Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion: Terminus and Telos* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9. Most recently, one can find this critique leveled at a particularly (and self-consciously) theological segment of CPR in Justin Sands, "Passing through Customs: Merold Westphal, Richard Kearney, and the Methodological Boundaries between Philosophy of Religion and Theology," *Religions* 7, no. 83 (2016). For a rejoinder to the perennial charge of crypto-theology, see Tyler Roberts, *Encountering Religion: Responsibility and Criticism after Secularism*, Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 49-84.

[3] For the difference between first- and second-order concepts with respect to theology and religious studies, see William E. Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Sacred Is the Profane: The Political Nature of 'Religion'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35. Willi Braun maps this first- and second-order distinction onto the difference between *Religionswissenschaft* and *Glaubenslehre* in Willi Braun, "Religion," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 7.

[4] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 43. See one of many endorsements of this quotation in Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 16-17.

of religion,"[5] we ought at the very least to find a safe way to separate it from theology. We might insist upon such a separation even if it means disarming some of our deepest continental impulses: suspending, for example, our deconstructive suspicion of foundational binaries and categorical integrity; or repressing our psychoanalytic tendencies to interrogate the sort of excessive resistance that leads to such panicked distinctions in the first place. After all, if we didn't subdue such impulses, we might be tempted to ask what it is any of us is doing when we repeatedly insist, "this isn't theology; this has nothing to do with theology." We might risk hearing in the call, "are you my data?" the more primordial question religious studies keeps asking theology even as it runs from it, which is to say, "are you my dadda?"

If, however, we were to allow such deconstructive and psychoanalytic tendencies to work at the meta-disciplinary level, then we might question the integrity, motivations, and utility of the usual rifts the discipline insists on installing—in particular, between analytic and continental philosophies, the AAR and NAASR, or even philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. This is not to say that every subfield is equivalent to every other subfield—they are, in messy and often unreliable ways, distinguishable by their sources, methods, and style above all—nor is it to say that these words do not mean anything in differential relation to one another. It is simply to say, as Thomas Lewis has recently shown, that the lines often do not hold,[6] and that thanks to the stubborn interdetermination of the analytic and the continental on the one hand and the theological and the secu-logical on the other, there is little to be gained in championing one at the expense of the other.

That having been said, one has to make distinctions somewhere, and one does get the sense reading paper proposals and tables of contents that the body of work that calls itself "philosophy of religion" exists in rather dramatic tension with itself. Being trained in the systematic suspicion of twos, I hesitate even to name this tension. For the sake of having a way to evaluate it, however—and if philosophical training is good for anything, it is probably evaluation—I would like to borrow the distinction the "theory and method" thinkers tend to draw between first and second order reflection. For reasons that should become clear, however, I will suggest that this distinction does not map onto the distinction between theology and religious studies as these are practiced in the academy. Rather, the distinction between first and second-order reflection is internal to religious studies itself, and therefore to its manifold sub-fields, as well.

This distinction will look different from anthropological, sociological, historiographical, and exegetical vantage points. Within the terrain of philosophy of religion, however, what I am provisionally calling first-order reflection operates in relation to a purportedly objective, acontextual, and extra-cosmic *real*. First-order philosophers of

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[5] Martin Kavka, "What is Theological about Chaos? A Response to Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Worlds Without End*," Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 24, 2014.

[6] Thomas A. Lewis, *Why Philosophy Matters for the Study of Religion and Vice Versa* (New York: Oxford, 2015), 5-10.

religion will therefore ask, "does God exist? Are we immortal? Is Anselm's argument *correct*?" First-order reflection, in other words, endeavors to match truth-claims with what it holds to be the truth, understanding this truth to be discovered rather than created, necessary rather than contingent, and independently existent of the perspective that "discerns" it. First-order reflection makes, evaluates, and defends claims about what is; how we know that what is, in fact, is; and what we ought to do about it.

By contrast, second-order reflection within philosophy of religion seeks to understand and contextualize these first-order claims. Understanding objective and universalizing claims to be the product of situated perspectives, second-order reflection does not, therefore, ask, "does God exist." Rather, it asks, "what has this particular text or community meant by God; what is at stake in demonstrating 'his' existence; and how does he manage to stay so resolutely male?" Second-order reflection asks not, "are we immortal," but rather, "under what circumstances do different communities and textual traditions produce arguments for or against personal or collective immortality?" Similarly, second-order reflection reroutes the question from, "is Anselm's argument *correct*" toward something like, "how does the argument work and not work *on its own terms*? What are the historical conditions that enable its erasure of historical conditions? What does it want; and why; and where does it betray itself?"

In this sense, what I am clunkily designating "second-order reflection in the philosophy of religion" follows the critical turn Friedrich Nietzsche says he made at the age of thirteen as he tried to understand the origins of evil. In the doubly-genitival *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche recalls that as he approached adolescence, he "ceased to look for the origin of evil *behind* the world," so that rather than asking why God permitted evil things to happen in an otherwise good creation, he began to ask, "under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves possess*?"[7] These, of course, are the guiding questions of the *Genealogy* itself. By seeking immanent explanations for our moral categories, Nietzsche infamously turns the scholarly quest away from the effort to find some extra-cosmic locus of ethics or ontology, which is to say away from what is often called *truth*.[8] Rather than trying to discern the nature of things, Nietzsche aims to discern the mechanisms by which contingent, historical processes take on the appearance of "the nature of things." To be sure, these mechanisms and processes come to constitute a sort of "truth" of their own, but the object of Nietzsche's critique is truth understood as extra-cosmic, self-existent, and uncreated. Along this understanding of truth, the intellect does not create anything; it simply discovers that which is inexorably "out there."

Even today, Nietzsche's critique of truth is a contentious move. It prompts Lewis, for example, to reject this particular philosopher as ultimately unhelpful to the philosophy of religion; after all, Lewis

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[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), preface.3.
[8] Nietzche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* 3.24.

argues, Nietzsche's genealogical suspicion of truth stands in the way of scholarly endeavors *tout court*, enslaved as they unexceptionally are to the ascetic ideal and its single-minded pursuit of the singular truth.[9] As omni-critical as Nietzsche is, however, I would contend that his method does not leave scholarly endeavors in auto-immune devastation. It may indeed be the case that philosophers (and scientists and historians and, indeed, philologists) cannot escape the ascetic ideal, but we can use it against itself. Specifically, we can deploy all that frenetic energy and sleepless focus in service of the proliferation of perspectives, rather than the singularity of truth. Far from declaring the discipline to be doomed, then, Nietzsche suggests we redirect and multiply our energies:

> Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"….There is only a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be.[10]

Such immanent and multi-perspectival analysis embodies what I am trying to sketch as second-order analysis in philosophy of religion. It examines the continent emergence and differential appearance of that which presents itself as real, true, and natural, rather than examining "reality," "truth," or "nature" themselves. These latter formations, insofar as any given scholar finds them to be useful categories, would be the objects of first-order analysis.

It seems, then, that I have made a distinction—even one that could be accused of binarity—between first- and second-order analysis. In spite of all my instincts to demolish such concrescences, however, I find this one heuristically helpful, and will therefore proceed, not to erase the distinction, but simply to complicate it. The first of such simple complications is that, unlike the orthodox Smithians, I do not think that these first- and second-order operations can be mapped onto theology and religious studies, respectively. The mapping fails if only because the same bifurcation obtains within contemporary academic theology. For example, what I would call "first-order theologians" ask questions like, "who is God? What does God want from us, liturgically, politically, and socially? Can we call the Creator 'she' and still claim the inheritance of Abraham?" By contrast, second-order theologians ask questions like, "how have people *imagined* God, and why? How do concepts like power, sovereignty, creation, dominion, singularity and multiplicity function, and how might they function otherwise? What has the orthodox lineage had at stake in insisting upon a masculine, disembodied, and transcendent God, and what has it been covering over in the process? How have theological doctrines secured a genocidal and ecocidal capitalist world order, and what might practical-political alternatives look

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[9] "Nietzsche's genealogy ultimately poses profound challenges to the ascetic ideals that he shows are integral to any recognizable scholarly work….[and] ultimately threatens…the kinds of historical projects that have prompted this book" (Lewis, *Why Philosophy Matters*, 152.)
[10] Nietzsche, 3.12.

like?" In other words, "under what conditions did man [sic.] devise these value judgments…*and what value do they themselves possess*?"[11]

These "second-order" theologians—who include such thinkers as Catherine Keller, Laurel Schneider, Ellen Armour, Whitney Bauman, Mayra Rivera, An Youngtae, and Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey Robbins[12]—are not making absolute theological truth-claims; rather, they are analyzing the work that theological concepts have done, and trying to rethink them on aesthetic, ethical, and political grounds. Such reconstructive work means that this sort of theology is partially normative—and as such, it is likely to be seen as venturing too close to first-order analysis from the standpoint of the hard-line method-and-theory contingent. Recently, however, numerous scholars have begun to argue that scholarly rejections of normativity are delusional, insofar as any philosophical or even broadly analytical endeavor can be said to be normative.[13] As Kevin Schilbrack explains with respect to philosophy of religion in particular, "it is normative in that it seeks not only to understand but also to evaluate the reasons that can be given for holding certain religious beliefs true and for acting in certain religious ways."[14]

Perhaps counter-intuitively, then, such "normative" work often puts the philosopher of religion—along with the scholar I am calling the second-order theologian—at odds, rather than in line, with the practitioner in question. The latter might appeal to the order of the cosmos, the decrees of the gods, or the unanimity of the ancestors as justifications for a particular practice or teaching, whereas the former is charged with discovering the sociological, economic, political, gendered, and racialized interests behind such mystified justifications. In this particular sense, then, normative work is radically different from—and even disruptive of—the truth-claims with which it is commonly aligned. Far from threatening religious studies with purportedly uncritical, absolutist, "religious" thinking, such normative work brings the scholar of religion closer to disciplines like post- and de-colonial theory; feminist, queer, ecological, and critical race studies; and the history and philosophy

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[11] See note x, above.

[12] See Catherine Keller, *The Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Catherine Keller and Laurel Schneider, eds., *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Ellen Armour, *Signs and Wonders: Theology after Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Whitney Bauman, "*Creatio Ex Nihilo, Terra Nullius*, and the Erasure of Presence," in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); An Youngtae, *The Decolonial Abyss: Mysticism and Cosmopolitics from the Ruins* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey Robbins, *Religion, Politics, and the Earth: The New Materialism* (New York: Palgrave, 2012).

[13] In addition to Schilbrack, below, see Kathryn Lofton, "Do Not Tamper with the Clues: Notes on Goldman Sachs" in Kathryn Lofton, *Consuming Religion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming); and Lewis, *Why Philosophy Matters*, 8, 11, 45-6, 50.

[14] Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 177.

of science—disciplines whose ethical commitments on the one hand and thoroughgoing suspicion of essence, universality, and the sufficiency of reason on the other inform much of what I am calling philosophy of religion in its second-order variant.

The distinction between first and second-order operations is, of course, not limited to the academic study of religion, or even to the humanities writ-large. Much of what goes by the name of the natural sciences constitutes first-order reflection. Physics and neuroscience and biology for the most part tell us *what is*, while social scientists like Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and Isabelle Stengers show us how that "is" gets made.[15] Stengers calls our attention, for example, to the neutrino, which is said to have existed from the beginning of time, yet which was also "produced in our laboratories."[16] Specifically, she clarifies, it was produced in our laboratories *as* a particle that has existed from the beginning of time.[17] Far from reflecting the unmediated nature of things, then, the neutrino is a historical concrescence of an ongoing dance between the physics and metaphysics, measurement and interpretation, data and narrative that constitute "nature" as such. As Stengers explains it, the neutrino is created *as* a fundamental particle by means of "an enormous number of instruments, interpretations, and references to other particles...and inseparably, a tangle of human, social, technical, mathematical, institutional, and cultural histories."[18] Again, then, according to the distinction I am trying despite its messiness to make, the science that "discovers" the neutrino is a first-order discipline, whereas the science studies that reveals this discovery to be the entangled product of what Haraway calls "naturecultures"[19] is second-order.

One could pile on the disciplinary examples, but it would not be a stretch to say that this discursive distinction was initially and ironically the product of biblical studies, which under the influence of Spinoza in particular began in the early modern period to carve out the hermeneutic space between first- and second-order reflection. Rejecting the Mosaic authorship of the Torah, Spinoza insisted that scripture does not provide unmediated access to divine reality. Rather, he maintained, it crucial for any hermeneute to "consider on what occasion, at what time, and for whom [scriptural passages] were written," to remember that "we do not know into whose [editorial] hands all these books fell," and to realize that far from teaching us truth, scripture intends simply to teach "obedience," which for Spinoza means loving one's neighbor as oneself.[20] The

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[15] See, for example, Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010); Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics Ii* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. Femaleman_Meets_Oncomouse* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[16] Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, 20.

[17] Stengers, 20.

[18] Ibid., 20-21.

[19] Donna Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 12, 20.

[20] Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), 93-4, 99, 157-62.

miracles and wonders we find "recorded" in the Bible are therefore not testimonies to the reality of miracles and wonders; rather, they are the product of a priestly class looking to shock "the masses" into manageable social behavior. In this manner, Spinoza mobilized biblical studies as a perspectival discipline, setting it free from its adherence to "truth" a hundred years before Hume would do the same for philosophy, and two hundred years before Nietzsche would extend it to the natural sciences.[21]

(De)territorializing

Over the last decade or so, a growing number of philosophers of religion have charged (or conceded) that philosophy of religion is of very little use to religious studies.[22] Timothy Knepper has accused continental philosophy of religion in particular of having very little to do with "religion" at all, its usual "content" being little more than "the latest critical notion of some continental philosopher."[23] When it does venture into the terrain of religion, such scholars argue, continental philosophy deploys its complicated linguistic gymnastics in the desperate hopes of calling forth some unregenerately European and post-Christian god-after-the-death-of-God. In a recent article called "The Beginning, not the End: On Continental Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies," however, Bradley Onishi reminds us that the continental philosophy of religion is still a relatively young field, having arguably been born in 1984 with Mark Taylor's *Erring*, and that it has given rise to projects that differ wildly from the devoted recapitulations of smart French men—and the attendant post-theistic apologetics—to which it is so often reduced.[24] The question before us in these essays is not, therefore, what the discipline is, so much as what it might yet be. With such a vision in mind, I would like to indulge in a quick sketch of some provisional, incomplete, and revisable desiderata. Borrowing a strategy from our analytic colleagues, I will use shorthand for clarity's sake, and refer to the continental philosophy of religion by the intentionally medicalized—and *emergency* medicalized—acronym, CPR. What better for an ever-dying subfield than a little CPR.

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[21] Regarding Hume, I am thinking in particular of his understanding of causality as constant conjunction. Rather than reflecting the nature of things (first-order), Hume argued, causality is nothing more than a provisional encapsulation of our experience of the repeated sequencing of two objects or motions (second-order) (David Hume, ed. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Second ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993), 55.) And the Nietzsche passage I have in mind comes from the end of the third essay of the *Genealogy*, in which he calls science "*the latest and noblest form*" of the ascetic ideal (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 3.23.)

[22] See Nick Trakakis, *The End of Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 2, 115; Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*, 9; Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions*, xii; Lewis, *Why Philosophy Matters*, 5.

[23] Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*, 9.

[24] Bradley Onishi, "The Beginning, Not the End: On Continental Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/04/27/jaarel.lfw032.abstract(April 28, 2016): 6 of 31. See Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern a/Theology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

I would first of all submit that CPR—if there is to continue to be such a thing—should be *as far as possible* a second-order affair. Recognizing the extent to which second-order evaluations are conditioned by, dependent upon, and in danger of being unsettled by first-order operations, I would like nonetheless to suggest that CPR should at the very least *aim* neither to make nor to reject transcendent truth-claims. This is not, of course, to say that "there is no such thing as truth," a locution which itself would constitute an unintentional truth-claim. Rather, it is to say that insofar as CPR is involved with truth-claims at all (some projects might work instead with practices, stories, and manners that do not purport to deliver or express any sort of "truth" in the first place), it ought to provide contextual, perspectival analysis that neither affirms nor denies but instead *situates* them. By such "situation," I have in mind accounts that explain both authoritative and counter-authoritative cosmogonies, prescriptions, and doctrines in terms of history, politics, race, gender, coloniality, animality, and whatever other vector calls for thinking in any particular nodule of spacetime. In the process, we might furthermore dislocate truth-claims as the sole focus of philosophy of religion, attending, as Schilbrack entreats us to do, to "worship practices, sacrifices, spiritual disciplines, liturgies, rites of passage, contemplative exercises, and ceremonies"—not as the manifold expressions of some prior teaching, but rather "as themselves examples of thinking."[25] In short, then, the CPR I am imagining would be tireless, restless, finding no anchor in the true, the objective, or the real—except insofar as these values are locally produced and remade by interdetermined, discursive-material practices.

Second, the CPR I have in mind imagining would be rigorously bicameral. Rather than simply "applying" the insights of Žižek or Kristeva to allegedly self-evident "religious phenomena," this aspirational CPR would mobilize its training in both philosophy and religious studies to unsettle and improve the thinking of the other. It might, for example, theorize the depth and complexities of self-identified religious traditions in order to critique the often violent and insupportable ways some of its French and German heroes demonize Islam, Judaism, and paganism—or lionize Christianity and especially "post-Christianity"—and the ways these thinkers tend not to spend time on traditions that lie beyond the Abrahamic fray.[26]

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[25] Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions*, xii-xiii.

[26] On Julia Kristeva's demonization of Islam and celebration of a "secularized" Christianity, see Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "Review of *This Incredible Need to Believe*, by Julia Kristeva," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 4 (October, 2010). On the place of anti-Judaism and anti-semitism in the German philosophical tradition, see Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003). On the feminized demonization of paganism in Emmanuel Lévinas, see Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe*, Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 61-97.On the white supremacy, neo-colonialism, Islamophobia, and anti-Judaism of Žižek's post-Christian retrieval of Christianity, see Marika Rose, "The Christian Legacy Is Incomplete: For and against Žižek," *Modern Believing* 57, no. 3 (2016). On the lingering Christocentrism of Jean-Luc Nancy's "deconstruction of

From the other direction, CPR might mobilize its Foucault, Deleuze, and Butler to redescribe the categories of religious studies, which often amount to under-theorized notions of—to name a few—repetition, multiplicity, genealogy, individuality, and performance.[27]

Third, CPR as it continues to develop should acknowledge and unsettle what Knepper, Lewis, and Schilbrack all diagnose as its traditional myopia, rooted as it almost always is—along with its analytic sibling—in monotheistic, and particularly Christian, traditions.[28] Knepper has been the most straightforward advocate of diversifying this disciplinary terrain, arguing that philosophy of religion should "invetigat[e] religious reason-giving in as many of the religions of the world as possible"—indeed, "the religious reason-giving of *all* religions insofar as [it is] possible."[29] Although the spirit of this appeal is commendable, however, the problem is that it risks re-naturalizing the very model of "world religions" that Tomoko Masuzawa, Donald Lopez, Richard King, David Chidester, and others have revealed to be the product of colonial projections, distortions, and counter-movements.[30] These scholarly, governmental, and economic collaborations produced "the religions of the world" as numerous species of the genus "religion," which was carved out on specifically Christian terms. The result of this Christianized construction is that religion is typically thought to involve a core set of *beliefs* expressed through *rituals* prescribed in *sacred texts* given or inspired by a *historical founder* who is either the incarnation or prophet of *God*, *the gods*, or *ultimate reality*. "Debates" between and among these traditions are similarly conducted on Christian terrain, so that a comparative philosophy of religion might ask how different "religions" solve "the problem of evil" without understanding that "evil" is not a category for many religious cultures, and not a philosophical "problem"—however much of a practical concern it might be—for many others.

As Purushottama Bilimoria has summarized the matter, the problem with simply adding more "religions" to philosophy of religion's wheelhouse is that such an addition assumes from the outset that

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Christianity," see Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology*, Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 146-150. On the Abrahamic confinement of continental philosophy, see Andrew B. Irvine and Purushottama Bilimoria, "Introduction: The State of Philosophy of Religion and Postcoloniality," in *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew B. Irvine (New York: Springer, 2009).

[27] The volume that undertakes this work most seriously remains Mark C. Taylor, ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[28] See Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*, 10; Lewis, *Why Philosophy Matters*, 14-29; Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions*, xi.

[29] Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*, 6, 10; emphasis added.

[30] See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Donald S. Lopez, "Belief," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 1999); David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996).

"there are things in common and therefore comparable between two or more traditions or systems, and that these objects of comparison are of scholarly significance."[31] That every discretely named religion has something different to slot into a predetermined set of identical categories. Like Bilimoria, Richard King has cautioned that "comparative philosophy of religion" is always in danger of re-consolidating the model of world religions by "adapting" diverse teachings so that they become "correlates of Christianity."[32] He goes on to argue that, "for comparative approaches to the philosophy of religion to avoid this trap, practitioners must be prepared to engage with non-western wisdom traditions in a way that will change the very nature of what counts as philosophy to occur."[33] Insofar as we seek, therefore, to expand the sorts of stories that CPR tells and the sources it engages, we will first of all need to abandon the biaxial grid that lines up the "world religions" for easy cross-cultural comparison. We will need instead to attend to the specific political, academic, social, and economic forces that have given rise to the categories central to philosophy as well as religious studies, and to allow these categories to be reformulated, replaced, and even dismantled by nonwestern sources. In short, rather than "applying" the categories of philosophy to the multifarious phenomenon of religion, this aspirational CPR will allow itself to be formed analytically by the traditions of thought it engages.

Finally, even as it reconfigures the terrain of "philosophy," such CPR would reimagine the territory of "religion" its philosophy is *of*. Such work is already underway in those continentalizing projects that find ritual, myth-making, metaphysics, or divination in unexpected places—to find religion, as Taylor is fond of saying, "where it is least obvious."[34] Examples of such work include Taylor's own work on Las Vegas, capitalism, architecture, and on the then-surprisingly "religious" resonances of continental philosophy itself[35] (whose theological operations John Caputo, Richard Kearney, Merold Westphal, and Kevin Hart have continued to track and deploy.[36])

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[31] Purushottama Bilimoria, ""What Is the 'Subaltern' of the Philosophy of Religion?"," in *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew B. Irvine (New York: Springer, 2009), 10.

[32] Richard King, "Philosophy of Religion as Border Control: Globalization and the Decolonization of the 'Love of Wisdom' (*Philosophia*)," ibid., 46.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xiii, 3.

[35] See Mark C. Taylor, *Hiding*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Mark C. Taylor, *Confidence Games: Money and Markets in a World without Redemption*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[36] See John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Reilgion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997); John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998); Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University

One might also think in this regard of Kathryn Lofton's projects on Oprah Winfrey and Goldman-Sachs; William Robert's readings of Patti Smith's *Horses*; Karmen MacKendrick's work on on eroticism; Karen Bray's illumination of the sanctuarial and eschatological functions of social media; or Jeffrey Kosky's post-religious reading of modern art.[37] These studies demonstrate that CPR does not need to be talking about what calls itself religion in order to be talking about religion. Conversely, CPR does not even need to be talking about philosophy—continental or otherwise. CPR does not need explicitly to "apply" Freud or Heidegger or Nancy, or even to say their names, in order to read like they do—to listen out for silences, dismissals, and unintentional disclosures in order to find "religion" where it is most hidden, even most repudiated: on Wall Street, for example, or at the Large Hadron Collider, or among those neuroscientists who keep promising to deliver us a cortical Real.[38]

In his *Specters* of *Marx*, Derrida sketches our living with the western "heritage" as a process of deciding what it is we are willing and able to inherit. "One must filter, sift, criticize," he insists; "one must sort out the several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction."[39] As CPR continues to become itself, we will therefore need to ask, what do we want to receive from Kierkegaard, Marx, and Irigaray; what do we need to call out and undermine; where do we read them against themselves; and what should we simply leave behind? Straightforwardly said, it could be that we might need, in some sense—see, but straightforwardness is hard work—to kill the fathers. To kill them, to eat them, and with all the fastidiousness of the unconsciously religious, along with the consciousness of the fastidiously post-everything, to let them speak through us—selectively, critically, wide-awakely—as philosophy *of* religion. *Of religion* in all its strange, disavowed incarnations; and *of philosophy* as repetition—which is to say, as different than it was before.

Press, 2000); Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[37] Kathryn Lofton, *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Lofton, *Consuming Religion*; William Robert, "Religion on Horseback," in *Teaching Comparison: Pedagogical Perspectives as Comparative Theory in Religious Studies*, ed. Jennifer Rapp (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Karmen MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures*, Suny Series in Postmodern Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Jeffrey Kosky, *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity - Walter De Maria, Diller + Scofidio, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Karen Bray, "Material Laments: Things that Pray and Temples that Feel," Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, November 20, 2015.

[38] On the "religious" functioning of the cognitive science of religion, see John Modern, "Thinking About Cognitive Scientists Thinking About Religion," in *The Religion Machine* (forthcoming).

[39] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 16.