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IS MASHUP THE RIGHT METAPHOR?

The aim of this paper is to suggest that *mashup music* might not be the best metaphor for conceptualizing philosophy of religion—at least not if philosophy of religion is thought of as employing a diverse array of philosophical tools to understand and evaluate a diverse array of religious ideas and arguments. It's not that I think there is just one concept of, and therefore only one metaphor for, the practice of philosophy of religion. But I do believe that what contemporary philosophy of religion suffers from most is inattention to the religions of the world, after that, fixation with the analytic and continental modes of inquiry (the latter of which seems at least partly responsible for the former). If we are, then, to metaphorize philosophy of religion in a manner that is productive for thinking its diversity of contents and methods of inquiry—as I think this issue aims to do—then we should employ metaphors that convey diversity regarding the object about which it speaks and also concerning the method used to do so.¹ The *mashup* metaphor, arguably, does not convey either.

On the one hand, insofar as the *mashup* musician typically blends together *two* prerecorded songs, the *mashup* metaphor suggests that there are just two methodological modalities for the philosophical inquiry of religion—the analytic and the continental. On the other hand, insofar as the *mashup* metaphor lacks a third term in addition to the musician and the music, the *mashup* metaphor suggests that the modes of inquiry constitute the objects of inquiry—that the philosopher of religion does not philosophize *about religion* but about philosophers and philosophies of religion. In short: the *mashup* metaphor symbolically structures philosophy of religion in a way that leaves out the religions of the world and reduces philosophy of religion's modes of inquiry to two. In this paper I will first elaborate these two limitations of the *mashup* metaphor, then explore a crucial mode of inquiry that the *mashup* metaphor neglects, and finally propose a metaphor that is more productive for thinking philosophy of religion's diversity of objects and methods of inquiry, the metaphor of the *tool*, which comes in a variety of forms and gets used on a variety of materials. The important issue here, obviously, is not the *mashup* metaphor *per se* but the ways in which we think and talk about what philosophy of religion is and does.

The first issue with the *mashup* metaphor is the most important: it lacks a component that stands for *religion*, rather than just the *philosophers* considering it and the *philosophies* with which they consider it. As I understand the metaphor, it possesses only two parts: the *mashup* musician stands for the philosopher of religion, and the music that the *mashup* musician mashes up signifies the two dominant modalities of philosophy of religion, the analytic and the continental. Perhaps one could protest that the music itself represents the religions, whereas

¹ Need I even mention how productive metaphor is for thought? See Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

the musician's instruments symbolize the philosopher of religion's methods. But this is not in keeping with the spirit of the metaphor proposed by this issue and, moreover, loses its emphasis on "overcoming" the analytic/continental divide via philosophical pluralism.² Thus there seems to be no place in this metaphor for the religions of the world—not as the direct objects of inquiry in philosophy of religion, anyway.

Well, so what? Does the philosopher of religion really need the religions of the world to do philosophy of religion? Why can't philosophy of religion consist simply of a mixing together of analytic and continental philosophers and philosophies of religion? Far be it for me to say that there isn't a place for this kind of philosophy of religion. Moreover, I do think that it has the potential of producing some useful theoretical frameworks and methodological tools for the study of religious ideas and reasons. (Witness the innovative collection of essays in the present issue!) But at the same time, I worry that it continues to keep philosophers of religion one step removed from the phenomena that they ought to prioritize—religious traditions, texts, and thinkers. And this means, in turn, that philosophers of religion will continue to be more likely to work with idealized abstractions of religion that don't fit the actual phenomena of religion, abstractions that most likely privilege modern and western conceptions of religion and might even only fit the scholar's own personal preferences and experiences of religion. In sum: Not only is a very narrow subset of religion taken as object of inquiry; this narrow subset affords few opportunities for hypothesis correction.

This appreciation of the diversity of religious phenomena itself was the first desideratum of philosophy of religion from my recent (2013) book *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*. In particular, there I argued that philosophy of religion's object of inquiry should be religiously diverse—not the religious reason-giving operative internal to some single religion or type of religion but the religious reason-giving of all religions insofar as it is possible to account for such plurality.³ Here, I'd like to respond to three difficulties with this desideratum that occur to me within the present context. First, no clear line can be drawn between the reason-giving of the "historical religions" and the reason-giving of contemporary philosophers of religion. This is true: contemporary philosophers of religion often engage in religiously committed acts of reason-giving, and the acts of religious reason-giving from "historical religions" were once just those of contemporary philosophy of religion (broadly construed). Still, the permeability of this line isn't damaging to the general claim that a more diverse set of religious reason-giving needs to be considered by philosophers of religion. The point is not to rule out modern-western forms of religious reason-giving; it is to supplement them with all the other many kinds of religious ideas and practices.

The remaining difficulties focus on each side of this line (between "historical" and contemporary acts of religious reason-giving): on the one hand, contemporary philosophy of religion sometimes engages in the practice of

² Note that reworking the metaphor in this way (i.e., such that the mashed-up music stands for the religions of the world) would also require that the musician's mixing console include some pretty sophisticated instruments for comparative religion. More on this below.

³ Timothy Knepper, *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion: Terminus and Teleos* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

religious reason-giving (rather than its study); on the other hand, “historical” texts, thinkers, and traditions were once just acts of philosophizing about religion. In each case it would be convenient if we could draw a second line, one between philosophy of religion as an impartial investigation of a diverse variety of religious ideas and reasons, and philosophical theology as the giving of ideas and reasons on behalf of some religious tradition. Philosophy of religion would then become the investigation of philosophical theologies, where such theologies could be constituted by “historical” or contemporary data (just so long as that data were culturally-religiously diverse). Of course, this line is also permeable: not only is it not always clear when religious reason-giving is on behalf of some religious tradition, but all philosophy of religion is ideologically interested in some way and to some degree. Moreover, there is a kind of reflexivity to the philosophy of religion by which the investigation of religious reason-giving later becomes data in future investigations of religious reason-giving. So although I do believe theological impartiality is a virtue toward which philosophers of religion ought to strive, I also think it is crucial to have a diversity of confessions, or at least expertise, represented among the inquiring community. (This was the second desideratum of *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*: diversity among the community of inquiry.) Once again, the point is not to rule out certain objects of inquiry or subjects that inquire but to widen the diversity of both. And this means that philosophers of religion need to be doing more than “mashing up” analytic and continental philosophies of religion, for neither is very diverse in either respect. Accordingly, I say: philosophers should be less concerned with philosophers and philosophies and turn (back) to the religions themselves!

The second problem with the *mashup* metaphor is that it privileges just two modes of inquiry, the analytic and the continental. Of course it need not: although uncommon, the *mashup* musician potentially can mix together more than two songs; and even if the *mashup* philosopher of religion actually does mix together only two modes of inquiry, these need not be the analytic and continental. Still, the analytic and continental are currently the dominant modes of inquiry in philosophy of religion. And it is on an engagement/mashup of these two modes that the call for this issue explicitly focuses.⁴

At first blush this does not seem so bad: between analytic and continental philosophy of religion a wide array of methods and topics are covered. Continental philosophy of religion in particular includes methods that critically explore the content and structure of experience (phenomenology), the interpretive frameworks of texts and their readers (hermeneutics), and the oppressive ideologies of race, class, and sex as well as resistances thereto (post-colonialism, feminism). Alternatively, analytic philosophy of religion continues to excel at the staples of traditional philosophical inquiry: concept analysis and argument evaluation. But there are methods beyond these that are worth seriously considering and integrating into philosophy of religion. Moreover, the

⁴ The call that was distributed does ask for work that recognizes “the importance of philosophical and dialogical pluralism,” engages in “constructive work that draws on a variety of resources,” and draws on “varied traditions of philosophy of religion.” But it then follows this up by clarifying that “mashup philosophy of religion does not attempt to overcome the analytic/continental divide by deciding in the favor of analytic philosophy or continental philosophy. Rather, the task is to engage in productive question-driven philosophy of religion without losing the distinctive contributions offered by the different approaches.” The call then exemplifies mashup philosophy of religion with a list that exclusively focuses on analytic/continental mashups.

theories that tacitly ground the traditional methods operative in analytic and continental philosophy are sometimes questionable when employed in the philosophy of religion.

Of course it is impossible to itemize, once and for all, the entirety of methods that can and will be used by a field of inquiry that changes over time, a field of inquiry that is only ever what people regard it as. Still, I believe that a quick survey of the current state of philosophy of religion reveals at least one glaring omission: comparison. If philosophy of religion is to enter the “global age” and take seriously a cultural diversity of religious ideas and arguments, it will need to employ methods that enable not only inter-cultural translation but also the identification of important and interesting cross-cultural similarities and differences among the forms of religious ideas and arguments. In other words, it will need to employ comparison. Currently, philosophy of religion lacks such a comparative dimension, at least one that is critically reflective about the categories and methods of comparison themselves. This omission is so crucial that I will devote my third and final concern with the *mashup* metaphor to it. Here, I turn instead to some other neglected “methods” in contemporary philosophy of religion: method and theory in the study of religion, the social and natural sciences, and pragmatism.

Work occurring in “method and theory” isn’t itself a method as much as a set of critical discourses on the variety of ways in which humans theorize and study religion. Interestingly, the field of method and theory in the study of religion often looks more like philosophy of religion than the philosophy of religion itself, raising questions about topics such as the stability of the category of religion (given both its colonial entanglements and variety of cultural forms), the nature and role of comparative religion, and the viability of reductive explanations of religion. All are important conversations for the philosophy of religion also to be having.⁵ The social and natural sciences also, of course, do not offer a single method for the study of religion. Rather, they include a variety of methods for studying religion as well as some of the more notable, if not also successful, explanations of religion (not to mention plenty of valuable insights and tools for the study of religion to boot). It is often the social and natural sciences that are appealed to when it comes time to explain the cross-cultural patterns produced by comparative religion; they too are therefore integral to a global-comparative philosophy of religion. Finally, pragmatism offers, in the very least, a general principle for studying religious reason-giving that is mindful about what religious ideas and arguments *do*—to what ends they are given, by whom, against whom, and what effects they actually achieve in the history of humankind. Such a principle is important to any philosophy of religion that seeks to understand how religious ideas and arguments function in the world. But it is also important to any philosophy of religion that seeks to evaluate religious ideas and arguments through a hypothetic-corrective method that attends to their actual effects (among other things).

⁵ The call for this collection included one such topic of conversation; it was, however, given a continental inspiration: “Drawing on continentally inspired work in ‘theories of religion’ (e.g., Russell McCutcheon, Timothy Fitzgerald, etc.) as a productive way of considering debates about religious phenomena.”

Regarding the questionable theories that tacitly ground the methods of both analytic philosophy of religion and continental philosophy of religion, I chiefly have in mind *theism* in the case of the former and *continental philosophy* in the case of the latter. The general assumption for most of the analytic philosophy of religion that I've read seems to be that the philosophical construct of theism functions as a lowest-common denominator for the so-called "theistic" religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and "theistic Hinduism" (and perhaps also Sikhism and Baha'i, though I never see these religions explicitly mentioned). I don't recall ever having seen this assumption demonstrated. I suspect it couldn't be. Attending to the variety of religious traditions would instead produce an obstreperous plurality of theisms. But the point that I want to make here is that time spent clarifying the ahistorical construct of "theism" is time spent away from the messy diversity of theistic expressions in the world, that it produces little knowledge about the ways in which ultimate realities have been understood theistically, the reasons given for such understandings, the modifications and abandonments of such reasons, and so forth. And the same holds true for the variety of ahistorical opponents ("atheism," "non-theism," "naturalism," "monism," etc.) that get constructed as evaluative opponents of theism.⁶

In the case of continental philosophy of religion the questionable theory (that grounds method) is quite a bit more subtle and not nearly so pervasive. Still, for some continental philosophers of religion the assumption is that the very essence of religion can be discovered in the philosophical insights of some continental philosopher, perhaps also that this essence is useful in offering its own "religion after religion." As in the case of analytic philosophy of religion, this claim is rarely made with reference to a diversity of religious traditions. And so, once again, what we get is ahistorical abstractions grounded in exclusions of difference.

Isn't this too what I am doing? Am I not also excluding differences? Aren't there plenty of variations and exceptions among analytic and continental philosophy of religion? Yes, yes, and yes. I certainly don't mean to say that all analytic or continental philosophy of religion fit the characterizations above. But some does.⁷ And insofar as some does, there is danger in thinking that the mashup of analytic and continental philosophy of religion will solve the problems in philosophy of religion that have at their root the exclusion of religious-cultural difference. What might be required from philosophy of religion is neither to "overcome" the analytic/continental divide nor to "mash up" analytic and continental music but rather to "just walk away" from traditional ways of doing philosophy of religion that put first ahistorical constructions of theism or the work of continental philosophers. Again I say: (back) to the religions!

My third and final concern with the mashup metaphor elaborates a point I just made, hopefully in a manner that is ultimately more constructive than critical: the absence of comparison in a mashup between analytic and continental philosophy. I am not sure to what extent the mashup metaphor itself suggests a

⁶ These categories *could* serve useful roles in inquiry if they served as fruitful guides to reality; but when they become divorced from religious realities, they become fruitless arguments about ungrounded constructs.

⁷ See chapters 1-3 of my *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion*.

comparative dimension. On the one hand, the image of mashing things together doesn't connote careful, considerate reflection on the similarities and differences of those things; on the other hand, it would seem that the mashup musician must take account of how the rhythm, chord structure, melody, and style of two different songs fit together. In the case of this journal issue, one could point out that a comparative method must be presupposed—for how is one to combine analytic and continental methods and theories unless one knows how they are comparable and therefore combinable? But nowhere is attention drawn to that fact. Moreover, it's one thing to compare modern-western methods and theories in the philosophy of religion and quite another thing to compare religious ideas and arguments from very different places and times. And if there's no place for the teeming multitude of disparate religious ideas and arguments under the mashup metaphor, then there's no place for their comparison as well. This is a significant omission, especially given that all philosophy of religion is implicitly and ultimately comparative philosophy of religion. Or so I will now argue.

All philosophy of religion is *implicitly* comparative. I'm certainly not the first person to claim that all inquiry has an implicit comparative aspect to it. But I know of no other attempts to articulate this claim semiotically via the token-type distinction. Every token is an implicit comparison in that it assumes both similarity to other tokens of the same type and difference to the tokens of other types.⁸ The token *a* is similar to all other *a*'s and different from *b*'s and *c*'s and *d*'s. For example, when a philosopher of religion calls something a *ritual*, she implicitly says that it is like other things that are called *rituals* and unlike things that are called *myths* or *doctrines* or *polities*.⁹ It is in this sense that all philosophy of religion is implicitly comparative.

Far more important, obviously, is the claim that all philosophy of religion is *ultimately* comparative. Here are three arguments in support of this claim. First, all philosophy of religion is ultimately about religion in general or at least about religion beyond some particular. If philosophy of religion is to be about religion beyond some particular, it must compare between particulars to say how they are similar to and different from one another. Second, all philosophy of religion is ultimately evaluative in nature, raising questions of truth and value about religious reasons and ideas. If philosophy of religion is to raise such questions, it must do so with standards of evaluation and comparative classes for evaluation. Third, any philosophy of religion that is plural in its object of inquiry, global in its scope, or dialogical in its method is ultimately comparative: philosophies of religion that are plural in object of inquiry explicitly categorize multiple sets of religious phenomena under common categories, thereby comparing them; philosophies of religion that are global in scope do the same, moreover with culturally disparate religious phenomena; and philosophies of religion that are dialogical in method effect conversation between different sets of religious phenomena, thereby employing a comparative method.¹⁰

⁸ Of course every token also assumes difference to other tokens of the same type since it is not itself these other tokens.

⁹ Or, if you prefer to use the discourse of categories and phenomena: all inquiry is *implicitly* comparative insofar as it subsumes its objects of inquiry under organizational categories, thereby implicitly comparing them to the other phenomena that fall under that category and contrasting them to the phenomena that fall under other categories

¹⁰ It is surprising to me that philosophers of religion who advocate the philosophy of religions, global philosophy of religion, dialogical philosophy of religion, etc. sometimes denigrate the

Let me go a bit further: not only is it the case that all philosophy of religion *is* implicitly and ultimately comparative; all philosophy of religion also *should be* formally comparative. By *comparative*, I mean that philosophy of religion should compare between two or more sets of religious phenomena—texts, thinkers, traditions, etc.—by identifying and explaining their interesting and important similarities and differences. And by *formally* comparative, I have in mind a comparative method that critically and explicitly attends to the categories that it uses in comparison, the translation of comparative phenomena into these categories, and the comparison of this translated phenomena by means of these categories. Why should philosophy of religion be comparative?—because it already implicitly and ultimately is, because comparison is the only way that philosophy of religion will produce knowledge about religious ideas and arguments beyond the particular. Why should philosophy of religion be formally comparative?—because it enables philosophers of religion to critically attend to the biases involved in the categories they employ, their translations of religious ideas and arguments into these categories, and their use of these categories to find and explain the similarities and differences between religious ideas and arguments with respect to some category.

Formal comparison therefore provides the best opportunity for rethinking the philosophy of religion—far better, I believe, than mashing up analytic and continental philosophy of religion. Critically attending to the category of *theism*, for example, affords philosophers of religion the opportunity to ask not only how the data that are being translated into this category do and do not fit this category but also how this category differs from other categories that supposedly pick out different religious phenomena. Perhaps in this process philosophers of religion learn that both *theism* and its “rival” categories generalize over too many important differences to be of much use, that they do not produce any real knowledge about religion “on the ground” around the world, that they are really more about the inquirer’s religious predispositions than the inquired’s cultural-historical manifestations, that they serve only to perpetuate intractable debates between the different religious predispositions of different inquirers, and so forth. Perhaps philosophes of religion find that other categories are better suited for productive, data-driven, data-responsive, and data-diverse inquiry. Perhaps philosophes of religion discover that their leading categories are in fact considerably ethnocentric, that they grossly disfigure, tacitly demean, or outright ignore the religious reasons and ideas of non-western and pre-modern cultures. Whatever the case, philosophers of religion will have begun a process that puts them (back) in touch with the cultural-historical diversity of human acts and utterances that philosophy of religion was supposed to be explaining and evaluating in the first place: religious reasons and ideas.

An even quicker way to rethink the philosophy of religion is simply to adopt new categories for inquiry, categories that are better represented among the diverse religious traditions of the world, categories that do not favor modern-western expressions of religion. In *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion* I proposed one such way of rethinking the philosophy of religion: adopting best candidates

activity of comparison and disavow the label *comparative philosophy of religion*. All such philosophies of religions, to me, are obvious species of comparative philosophy of religion.

for human universals.¹¹ An intriguing second option involves drawing on non-western religious-philosophical categories of inquiry. But what currently interests me most is a comparison of the key philosophical topics of inquiry in the religions of the world – a project that would first ask philosophically inclined, area specialists of a diverse array of religious traditions to identify the core categories of philosophical-theological inquiry in their traditions, then have comparativist philosophers of religion locate possible points of overlap. There are some obvious pitfalls here: such categories would need to be translated into a common language with minimal loss of meaning, such categories couldn't be assumed univocal and unchanging within their native traditions, and such categories would need to be scrutinized for their implicit biases. Still, I think the payoff might be worth the risk. In the very least, this project would further critical awareness of the *differences* between the core philosophical topics in the religions of the world, if not the absence of such topics altogether.

Comparative philosophy of religion is, of course, not without its critics and its own problems. In *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion* I responded to three: comparison rates and ranks its objects of inquiry; comparison distorts its objects of inquiry; comparison is too subjective a process to yield objective knowledge. Here, I'd like to respond to an additional concern that seems particularly germane in this context: comparison is too difficult. First, though, I'll briefly revisit my responses to the original three concerns in order to situate the additional one.

There is an obvious way in which the first concern is false: the comparative process itself merely identifies similarities and differences between two or more phenomena; it does not itself evaluate these similarities and differences. Perhaps one could say that all comparison implicitly rates or ranks insofar as the inquirer always has some agenda and the categories of investigation always possess some bias. But if this is true, it is true for *all* inquiry. And to the extent that it true, it can be combatted with a method that subjects the biases of both inquirers and their categories to critical scrutiny and correction. The comparative method – at least the one that I endorse – does just this.¹² Categories of comparison are examined for their useful neutrality not only beforehand but also as the comparative data are being translated into them.¹³ Comparative conclusions are tested afterwards,

¹¹ My example of human universals came from William Paden's essay "Universals Revisited: Human Behaviors and Cultural Variations" (*Numen* 48 [2001]: 276-289). I found his conceptual behaviors and self-modification behaviors most germane. The former include "creating linguistic objects that have no visible existence, and acting toward them as though they were real and efficacious," "classifying and mapping the universe, including time and space," "worldmaking," and "attributing significance (including causation) to events and objects whether mental or physical," whereas the latter include "experimenting with alternative forms of consciousness, trance, disassociation," "disciplining the mind and body and forming constraining regimens of behavior in order to effect certain results and kinds of fitness; using ideas to guide behavior and sort out behavioral options," "reflecting on perceived errors of thought and behavior," and "reinventing selfhood" (280).

¹² I am influenced most by Robert Neville's efforts in the "Comparative Religious Ideas Project." See, for example, pages 14-16 of Neville and Wesley Wildman's essay "On Comparing Religious Ideas" in the CRIP volume on *The Human Condition* (ed. Robert Neville (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 1-20).

¹³ Important here is Neville's Peircean notion of "vagueness," a characteristic that applies to categories that are able to register the different and possibly contradictory items that fall under them. See especially note 6 on page 209 of Neville and Wildman's essay "On Comparing Religious

then corrected and retested ad infinitum. Moreover, the community of comparative inquiry is (ideally) composed of a diverse set of subjectivities, the agendas of which are bracketed as much as possible. Do these processes remove all bias from comparative investigation? Of course not. But they do help to tame it. They therefore constitute a response not only to the objection that comparison always rates and ranks but also to the objections that comparison distorts its objects of inquiry and lacks objectivity in method.

As is perhaps clear, this method is rigorous. Moreover, it requires cultural-linguistic proficiencies in its different objects of inquiry. Is it, then, too difficult? In some cases, yes. I myself was intending to contribute to this volume a comparative evaluation of the discourses of ineffability in a sixth-century Christian Neoplatonist corpus (*Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite*), second-century Indian Buddhist sutra (*Vimalakīrti Sutra*), and fourth-century BCE Chinese Daoist text (*Zhuangzi*). But despite my expertise with the Dionysian corpus and familiarity with the *Vimalakīrti* and *Zhuangzi*, this project proved a bit too big for my current competencies. I do believe that I'll be able to return to it before long. Meanwhile, though, my comparative projects take the form of collaborations. In particular, three years ago my colleagues and I began The Comparison Project at Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa), a public program in comparative philosophy of religion. The program first invites scholars of different religious traditions to explore a common topic and set of problematics in their traditions of study, then invites comparative philosophers of religion to offer both explanatory comparisons of this data and philosophical evaluations of this topic in comparative perspective. Granted, the project is still young and it has not been without some significant obstacles. Still, it could provide the sort of wide-ranging insight on topics of philosophical importance in the religions of the world that is currently missing in analytic and continental philosophy of religion. It could enable us to philosophize about religion beyond just ahistorical theism or continental philosophy. It is therefore well worth the effort. And through collaboration, this effort can be shared. In fact, collaboration not only makes comparison much less difficult; it also makes it much less subjective.

The mashup metaphor would seem to neglect this crucial role of comparison. Moreover, it appears to symbolize the philosophy of religion in a manner that takes philosophical methods and theories, rather than religious traditions and texts, as its primary object of inquiry. In the case of this journal issue, these theories and methods ostensibly come only from analytic and continental philosophy of religion. Is there a metaphor that better conveys a wider diversity of philosophical-religious content and method? I myself favor the *tool* metaphor. Philosophers of religion should employ a variety of methodological *tools* from a variety of scholarly disciplines to study a variety of religious expressions.

As I found myself thinking about the tool metaphor as a means of symbolically structuring the philosophy of religion, I remembered Ludwig Wittgenstein's use of it in the *Philosophical Investigations* to combat the view that all words signify in the same way:

Ideas" in *Ultimate Realities* (ed. Robert Neville (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 187-210).

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws.—The functions of words are as diverse as the function of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.)

Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their *application* is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy!¹⁴

Imagine someone's saying: "All tools serve to modify something. Thus a hammer modifies the position of a nail, a saw the shape of a board, and so on."—And what is modified by a rule, a glue-pot, and nails?—"Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box."—Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?—¹⁵

At first I only found such passages supportive of philosophies of religion that use a variety of philosophical tools to study a variety of religious expressions. And indeed they are. But the more I read and reflected on these passages, the more I found them critical of attempts to reduce the philosophy of religion to just one thing—my "thing" included. There should be a place for philosophies of religion that take a religious diversity of ideas and arguments as their primary object of inquiry. But there should also be a place for philosophies of religion that "mashup" analytic and continental modes of inquiry in an effort to open up new theoretical and methodological vistas. I'm glad to be part of a group of scholars in this issue that are doing just this.

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¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), §11.

¹⁵ Ibid., §14.