

Comparison and Domination:  
Towards a Genealogical Hermeneutics in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion

Marcel Parent

A Thesis  
In the Department  
of  
Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Religion) at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

November 2011

© Marcel Parent 2011

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**

**School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Marcel Parent

Entitled: Comparison and Domination: Towards a Genealogical Hermeneutics in  
Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Religion)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to  
originality and quality.

Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____	Chair
Dr. D. Dagenais	
_____	External Examiner
Dr. Morny Joy	
_____	External to Program
Dr. Christine Jamieson	
_____	Examiner
Dr. Marc Lalonde	
_____	Examiner
Dr. Leslie Orr	
_____	Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Michael Oppenheim	

Approved by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_ 2011

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Faculty

## **ABSTRACT**

Comparison and Domination: Towards a Genealogical Hermeneutics in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion

Marcel Parent, Ph.D.

Concordia University, 2011

This dissertation argues for a genealogical hermeneutics that can account for the challenge of feminist and postcolonial insights on the interest-laden nature of knowledge production when applied to Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion. Genealogical hermeneutics integrates Michel Foucault's genealogy and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics and contributes to new scholarship that explores a complementary approach between the two thinkers. In the process, it elaborates on the hermeneutic structure of comparison. It traces the history of Comparative Philosophy and finds that contemporary comparison retains elements or features from problematic discourses of the nineteenth-century. Exploring some contemporary issues facing Comparative Philosophy and Religion (for example, the problem of multiculturalism, the indeterminacy of the categories of religion and philosophy, and Eurocentrism in comparison) reveals the necessity of taking feminism and postcolonialism seriously as resources for understanding how comparative knowledge is connected to power relations. It addresses the issue of the complicity of knowledge and power in comparison by connecting genealogical hermeneutics to social justice and intersectionality—and in the process opens a space for new ways of comparing. It concludes by providing possibilities for new directions for Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion.

## Acknowledgments

There are many people I would like to acknowledge and without whom this project would not have been possible. First, I would like to acknowledge the depth of support and compassion given to me by my supervisor Michael Oppenheim, whose patience and good cheer kept me going. Leslie Orr's firm and gentle advisement as a committee member and as the Graduate Program Director was a constant encouragement and her feedback on the dissertation has been of inestimable value. Marc Lalonde's helpful suggestions, though challenging, were instrumental in helping me realize the full potential of the dissertation. I would also like to thank Tina Montandon for alternatively cracking the whip or lending a sympathetic ear when either was needed. I would like to generally thank the department of Religion at Concordia for this opportunity and supportive environment that made this work possible, and specifically Munit Merid for being the perfect expression of all that is positive in the department.

I would also like to thank my family and friends. My parents, Laury & Carmen and Marlene, and my sister Camille have given me more support than any son or brother deserves. I would not have made it without you. To my friends: thank you for choosing me. I want to thank all of you for your support, love and patience. Specifically, I want to thank Richard for his always challenging ideas and help in the final stages of the project. Mohini for her love and support and whose discussions about the practical application of theory undoubtedly shape the best in this work. Naomi for being my rock and making me who I am today. Philippa for being the level-headed, steady port in the storm of my life. I want to especially thank Angela, my nushi, for everything.

Finally, I want to thank my daughter, Dharma, who is my sole reason for being and to whom my life, including this work, is dedicated.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – Issues in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion. ....	7
Section 1: Comparative Philosophy from the Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries .....	9
Section 2: Issues in Contemporary Comparison .....	27
Section 3: Contemporary Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion.....	42
Chapter Two: The Challenge of Feminism and Postcolonialism.....	53
Section 1: Foucault’s Perspective on Power/Knowledge.....	53
Section 2: Said and Foucault.....	62
Section 3: Postcolonial Criticism.....	66
Section 4: Feminism and Foucault.....	81
Section 5: Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Foucault .....	90
Section 6: Social Justice and Intersectionality .....	96
Section 7: The Ethics of Knowledge Production and Comparison.....	100
Chapter 3: Towards a Genealogical Hermeneutics.....	111
Section 1: Gadamer’s Hermeneutics.....	113
Section 2: Morny Joy and Richard King on Hermeneutics.....	119
Section 3: Integrating Genealogy and Hermeneutics.....	124
Section 4: The Hermeneutic Structure of Comparison .....	136
Conclusion .....	157
Bibliography .....	169

## List of Figures

The hermeneutic structure of comparison, fig. 1 .....	143
The hermeneutic structure of comparison, fig. 2 .....	144

## **Introduction**

My first sojourn into a serious study of comparative philosophy was the initial meeting with my MA supervisor, Richard Hayes, an eminent Buddhist scholar, who was also well-versed in the Pragmatic tradition of American philosophy. In this meeting, I outlined my desire to compare twentieth-century European thought with medieval Indian Buddhist thought, in particular the famous thinkers Jacques Derrida and Nagarjuna. When he inquired why I would like to do so, I responded that it was because I saw some fundamental similarity between the two in regards to their projects—both often described with the label deconstruction. Hayes then responded, and this has become a fundamental motivator for my intellectual inquiry, “so what?” Two thinkers, separated from one another by context, language, discourse, historical continuity, assumptions, interests, teleology, among other things, may have similarities and dissimilarities. Why should we care? Why do comparative philosophy?

These questions have guided my approach to looking at comparative philosophy and religion. The fields of Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion compare thinkers, doctrines, and cultures across the boundaries of time and place. Exploring the question “so what” has led me to examine a whole range of underlying methodological and theoretical assumptions, insights, problems and possibilities. In this process I have had to engage with a number of issues, problems, and concerns that have alternatively led me to formulate some new opportunities for comparative philosophy, to construct a hermeneutic inquiry about the process of comparison, and produce a political-ethical stance regarding the comparative enterprise. The aim of this thesis is to introduce the concerns of feminism and postcolonialism to Comparative Philosophy. In Comparative Religion, a discussion about the relevance of feminism and postcolonialism to the field has only begun recently. This work is a contribution to that discussion.

The feminist and postcolonialist concerns that I address challenge the presuppositions of scholarship. They argue that scholarship needs to address the particular ways that knowledge is produced that accounts for the lived experience of marginalization faced by women and non-Westerners. Feminism and postcolonialism often point to the structural inequalities propagated by institutions and ways of speaking, including scholarship. They call for scholars to address how the production of scholarly knowledge is implicated in structural inequalities. This thesis takes up the call of feminism and postcolonialism in the fields of Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion.

In order to understand the relevance of the challenges and insights that feminism and postcolonialism bring to bear on scholarship, I explore their relationship to Michel Foucault's work, especially his project of genealogy. Foucault's concept of genealogy speaks to the relationship of power with knowledge and I explore how a substantial number of feminists and postcolonial authors are influenced by Foucault. I do this in order to develop a methodology that incorporates Foucault's insights on power and knowledge and apply it to scholarly acts of comparison. The paper also explores the work of Hans-George Gadamer and his philosophical hermeneutics. His hermeneutic project can be a valuable resource for understanding the interpretive act of comparison.

Until recently, scholarship has not explored the possibilities of integrating Foucault's work with Gadamer's work. This thesis is a contribution to the recent attempt to find complementary uses for Foucault's genealogy and Gadamer's hermeneutics. I integrate the two into what I call genealogical hermeneutics in order to fill the gaps that each thinker's perspective has when taken alone. Integrating the two approaches provides a more comprehensive way of addressing the concerns of feminism and postcolonialism in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion.



In doing so, Genealogical hermeneutics creates a space for me to directly address ethical and political concerns and I use genealogical hermeneutics to directly advocate for a social justice approach to comparison.

However, this project is only an example of the possibilities for future comparison. It aims to open a space for future possibilities within Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion based on the model of genealogical hermeneutics. This work is only the beginning of a project to move Comparative Religion and Comparative Philosophy in new directions opened up by a critical examination of their assumptions and ethico-political stake in knowledge production.

In Chapter One I use Foucault's notion of discourse to examine the history of Comparative Philosophy from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. I do this to show that certain problematic connections between scholarly productions of knowledge in the nineteenth-century influence the field today. I examine some of the issues of contemporary comparison and analyze some contemporary comparative thought to show how there is a lack of engagement with the problem of how power and knowledge interact within Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion.

I begin Chapter One examining Foucault's notion of discourse to provide a basis for understanding how power and knowledge intersect through the concept of discourse. I examine the discourse of Orientalism (centered on statements about the Orient) that contributes to the structural inequalities identified by postcolonial thinkers. I show how this discourse affects Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion and it has transformed from the nineteenth century to today. I examine how contemporary Orientalism, while related to past forms of Orientalism, is more nuanced. This examination begins to identify problems that arise from a lack of engagement with the relationship between power and knowledge and shows a need for scholars to address how structural inequalities engendered by power and knowledge affect comparison.

I explore further some of the issues that contemporary comparative philosophy needs to address to account for postcolonial concerns. I examine issues relating to the concept of culture, the postcolonial predicament, ethnocentrism, and the problem of categories like ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ in order to show the necessity and benefit of engaging with our scholarly presuppositions and the need for care in the way comparison relates to these issues.

The final section of Chapter One looks at some contemporary scholarship in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion. For Comparative Philosophy, I look at works by Bernard Faure and Alasdair MacIntyre to show that genealogical hermeneutics could address some of the lack I find in their positions on Comparative Philosophy. Morny Joy and Richard King call for feminist and postcolonial perspectives being taken seriously by Comparative Religion. I add my voice to theirs in showing the importance of feminist and postcolonial concerns and benefit of addressing these concerns from a hermeneutic perspective.

Chapter Two explores the issues raised by feminism and postcolonialism and place them in dialogue with Foucault’s genealogy. I do this to show how feminism and postcolonialism are influenced by Foucault, but also to lay the groundwork for the genealogical hermeneutics I construct in Chapter Three. The first section of the chapter elaborates on Foucault’s ideas to give a better idea of how postcolonialism and feminism are shaped by his ideas.

In the second section I examine the work of Edward Said in relation to Michel Foucault. I start with Edward Said in my analysis of postcolonialism precisely because of his importance for bringing Foucauldian understandings to postcolonialism. In the third section I explore some of the concerns of postcolonialism that I think are important for comparative projects. I begin by looking at critiques of Said’s work and then show how the discipline of postcolonialism has moved beyond Said’s notion of Orientalism. I think it important to show the effect of Foucault on postcolonialism, but also to show how postcolonialism has moved to some different concerns. My aim is to show how genealogical hermeneutics can accommodate all of these concerns.

In the fourth section I examine feminism in relation to Foucault, and show how, while there are debates within feminism about the usefulness of Foucault, his work remains an important resource within feminism. I explore in more depth Ladelle McWhorter's use of Foucault for her queer theory, feminist stance on structural inequality. I find her work to be one of the most useful accounts of how Foucault can be used to resist structural inequality.

In the final sections of Chapter Two I examine how feminist and postcolonial analyses that have some relation to Foucault's genealogy are taken up within a social justice framework. I explore how social justice is now using the concept of intersectionality to examine structural inequalities. Intersectionality has become the most recent iteration of Foucauldian influenced analysis and I explore it show how it develops a social justice ethic. My aim is to posit a social justice ethic as a response to the concerns of feminism and postcolonialism (among other perspectives about structural inequalities). On the one hand, I aim to advocate for an explicit answer to the challenge of all knowledge being related to ethico-political interests. On the other hand, in Chapter Three I am interested in constructing a genealogical hermeneutics that can accommodate social justice as a response to structural inequality.

In Chapter Three I develop my understanding of genealogical hermeneutics as a response to the many issues raised above. I begin with an examination of Gadamer's hermeneutics. I then analyze how Paul Healy and Stuart Dalton take complementary approaches to Foucault and Gadamer. I situate my own understanding of how Foucault and Gadamer can complement each other in relation to Healy and Dalton and contribute to current conversations by arguing for the viability of this integrative approach. I develop my own understanding of how genealogy and hermeneutics are complementary as a genealogical hermeneutics. My goal is to show that Foucault's work provides material support for Gadamer's notion of tradition, and to show that Gadamer's understanding of interpretation can help ground Foucault's critique of subjectivity.

Using genealogical hermeneutics I explicate an example of what the hermeneutic structure of comparison might look like in order to provide more clarity to the various ways that genealogical hermeneutics can address issues of comparison. I end Chapter Three with a discussion of the potential value of genealogical hermeneutics for comparison and its ability to integrate the insights of intersectionality, social justice, feminism, and postcolonialism into an interpretive lens useful for scholars of comparison.

I conclude the dissertation arguing that genealogical hermeneutics shows us the need for an explicit examination of how comparison is always an ethical and political kind of knowledge. In response, I argue for a social justice ethic in comparison that shifts scholarly comparison towards liberative ends and an active engagement with the task of minimizing the harm that can arise in scholarly productions of knowledge. This shift can also open new opportunities for different kinds of comparison that show the unique potential of comparative work in the ethical reinvigoration of its relevance.

## Chapter 1 – Issues in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion.

Comparative philosophy is the practice of bringing two authors or traditions from historically distinct contexts and examining them for some aim. The various aims of comparative enterprises are not necessarily explicit or mutually exclusive. At times the aim is to show similarities or differences; at other times the aim is a heuristic in order to elucidate the thought of either by comparing the two; sometimes the aim is transformative: one author is compared to another in order to solve perceived deficiencies, or perhaps to bolster the thought of one author with that of another; in the past, more than today, we also see numerous traditions or authors compared to give a general scope of human thought. This list is by no means exhaustive. Nonetheless a key feature of comparative philosophy is the comparison across perceived cultural boundaries, and, in the contemporary practice of comparative philosophy, almost invariably one of the thinkers or traditions in this comparison is Western and the other “Eastern”.

This general picture of comparison can be seen throughout history in a number of cultural contexts. In *India and Europe* (1990), Wilhelm Halbfass traces the origins of comparative philosophy in the West to the Greeks. The Greeks make mention of a number of ideas of non-Greek origin. The medieval Christians and Muslims have a wealth of comparative work. The Chinese integrating Indian ideas in the first millennium CE could easily be considered a kind of comparative enterprise. In general, comparison is a common endeavor, globally and historically.

However, Comparative Philosophy as an academic field of inquiry<sup>1</sup> has a much more constrained history. Its roots lie in the opening up of the world to Europe through colonization and the consequential interaction between European and non-European thought. Along with

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis, I should distinguish the self-identified academic field of Comparative Philosophy with capitalization in relation to the general practice of comparative philosophy un-capitalized. I do this in order to distinguish between a self-identified field of academic inquiry with a specific history and a more general sense of the term which relates to practices that can be considered comparative and philosophical.

missionary accounts, travelogues, military dispatches, adventure novels and other various kinds of written or oral interaction, the colonial period gave rise to new academic undertakings. Numerous disciplines came into being from these global interactions, irrevocably changing the make-up of scholarship. Significant among these changes was that within the academy during the nineteenth-century European philosophy became one discipline among others, as opposed to the underlying perspective of the university.

The import of the dissemination of non-European thought into Europe should not be understated. This had a major impact on European philosophers. Notable examples include Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* (1821) which attempted to systematize and bring together 'world philosophy' within the ordered structure of his understanding of the movement of Absolute Spirit (*Geist*) through history. Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) is self-avowedly heavily indebted to Indian thought. Nietzsche, who was influenced by Schopenhauer, had read many translations of Asian works (Morrison 1997, 52). The German Romanticists looked to India, the French to China, South-East Asia and the Middle East, and the British cast their gaze nearly everywhere and were indelibly affected by what they saw. In the late twentieth-century, colonialism ended but many of the connections made in this period remained. Authoritative voices, both European (or North American) and non-European, trained in European thought and Indian or Chinese thought, came together with increasing frequency to dialogue and deliberate. It was through these meetings that the field of Comparative Philosophy was born.

Wilhelm Halbfass (1990) notes that the term "comparative philosophy" itself was not used by Europeans until 1923 by Maison-Oursel (420). In the English language, however, the first usage of the term was by an Indian author, B Seal, in 1899 (423). Halbfass maintains that the use of the term by Seal was in the context of an apology for Indian civilization and thought, linked to his program to equalize all philosophy (in his case Chinese, Indian and European) in an attempt to legitimize Indian philosophy, as he conceived it, as equal to or as important as

European philosophy. This impulse was part of a broader movement in India to legitimize India over and against Europe (which figures such as Vivekananda also engaged in), while at the same time being indebted to European positivism and its attempt to construct the human sciences based on the model of the natural sciences. Thus we see that the use of the term ‘comparative’ has often been in relation to agendas of valuation—that is, political agendas. The task of this first chapter is to elaborate on the history of those agendas to the present.

What I think is interesting about this history of comparative philosophy is how its roots lie in the nineteenth-century and how this history still affects Comparative Philosophy today.<sup>2</sup> In the first part of this chapter I will examine some of the features of comparative thought in the nineteenth-century, trace the development of the field in more detail, and provide an examination of some of the ways the field has been shaped by its history. The aim is to show how a self-critical analysis of this history can help to understand some of the challenges the field faces today, but also provide some thoughts about the possible future of Comparative Philosophy.

### Section 1: Comparative Philosophy from the Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries

The nineteenth-century shows such a wide-ranging exchange between Western and non-Western thought that it would be a nearly impossible task to consider all of the thinkers who have explored comparative philosophy. On the other hand, I think it important to highlight some trends of nineteenth-century comparative philosophy, in order to show how some of these ways of thinking continue, often transformed, in the contemporary field of Comparative Philosophy. As such, it will be worthwhile to look at a small sample of influential thinkers who may be representative of the kinds of themes which I wish to draw attention.

---

<sup>2</sup> I would like to note from the outset that this examination of Comparative Philosophy is primarily focused on Western perspectives (even if it includes many perspectives that straddle this divide). The next step in this analysis of Comparative Philosophy would be to examine non-Western perspectives on comparison, examining thinkers such as P. T. Raju and Bimal Krishna Matilal.

In this section, I will be examining, far too briefly, some of the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). Both thinkers have had a profound impact on contemporary thought and both thinkers elaborated on Asian thought and history. Hegel and Marx exhibit in their writing perspectives that, on the one hand, betray an overt or implicit paradigmatic pattern of discourse that conceptualizes and, in many ways, constructs “the Orient.” On the other hand, the reason I want to examine these thinkers is that these discourses about the Orient continue to frame the way we come to terms with Asia today, and thus how we replicate a certain kind of discourse about the East. We can draw a clear historical continuity between the problematic biases of nineteenth century thinkers and some of the ways we retain those biases today, however much they are transformed.

The guiding perspective with which I will analyze Marx and Hegel is heavily indebted to Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse. Michel Foucault posits a specific notion of discourse to point to the systemic and regulatory forms of knowledge that penetrate the ways that we think about the world around us. These discourses are dependent on cultural and historical contingency. They reflect the bounds of thought of a particular time period and exhibit regularities. Furthermore, they reflect and shape how people think and speak (and thus act) about a subject.

Michel Foucault’s work goes through a number of transformations from his early work in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), through the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *The Order of Things* (1966), culminating with his *History of Sexuality* (1976) and his various posthumously published lectures. His understanding of discourse and its regularities, though not formalized as it is in his later works, is present in his first volume, *Madness and Civilization*.

Foucault’s most elaborate discussion of discourse can be found in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In it he describes how a discourse is a regularity of forms of speaking about the subject under discussion. Discourses are “statements different in form, and dispersed in time,



form[ing] a group if they refer to one and the same object” (Foucault 1972, 32). The example, for our present circumstances would be statements about the Orient. Moreover, Foucault describes discourse as a “group of relations between statements: their form and type of connection” where an analysis of discourse describes their “interconnexion [sic] and account[s] for the unitary forms under which they are presented: the identity and persistence of themes” (33-35). Discourses are statements, through time, about a certain subject that exhibit some sort of thematic consistency and interconnection. Discourses span various forms of writing and speech, from legal to literary and everything in between.

One common element that runs through Foucault’s notion of discourse is that it is the regularity and repetition of certain ways of thinking that produces a discourse. In many ways these discourses create a bounded order to the ways that we can imagine talking about and thinking about a subject. As history moves forward, these regularities develop, change and transform, though the structure of these regularities often carry on through the transformation. We can see, for example, in *Madness and Civilization* this understanding of discourse: “Leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished, or almost, from memory; these structures remained. Often, in these same places, the formulas of exclusion would be repeated, strangely similar two or three centuries later” (Foucault 1988, 7).

Identifying discursive regularities is important because of the concrete and material strategies they exhibit. People act in specific way exhorted by the discourse in question, and statements within discourses are particular strategic acts of enunciation put into a play of power relations. These strategies and the discourses themselves change over time in order to meet the needs of the relations of power that they are entwined with.

In his later work, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*, Foucault notes more explicitly the regulatory nature of discourse is what produces truth and that it is intimately related to power. He

states that the guiding question about the nineteenth-century discourse about sexuality (though this formula could be applied to almost any kind of discourse) is:

In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of extortion of truth, appearing historically and in specific places... what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations? ... How were these power relations linked to one another according to the logic of a great strategy... ?  
(Foucault 1978, 97)

One thing to note about Foucault's insistence on locating local power relations for understanding how a discourse is used and formed is that he is explicitly speaking only of a Western historical context. To use this methodology in examining discourse about the Orient, I believe we have to take account of the global nature of the discourse on the Orient, or the East. The term 'Orient' is a European invention to describe a vast array of regions, cultures and peoples whose only commonality within the term is their subjection to Europe's colonial imagination. With this in mind, discourse about the Orient, while fruitfully examined from the standpoint of "local power relations" is perhaps even more suited to examining "the logic of a great strategy" than other discourses.

Using Foucault's notion of discourse to understand the use of the term Orient allows us to see regularities that can speak to a broader strategy aligned with colonial aspirations and Western self-identity. My goal in this chapter is to show how nineteenth-century thought, during the height of European colonialism, developed a certain truth about the Orient (the non-West), and to show how this discourse, though transformed, still influences our understanding of Asia today.

I wish to provide some basic themes of this discourse, some of its larger strategies, and show how Hegel and Marx both reflect and contribute to these themes. This analysis is necessarily general because my primary focus is on contemporary expressions of these patterns.

The analysis of Marx and Hegel's contribution to discourse about the Orient is to put in relief as a warning how these discourses, however transformed, still affect us today. However, my analysis of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1821) and some of Marx's writings also contributes, in some small part, to the growing body of work attempting to understand nineteenth-century discourse about the Orient.

The first strategy to highlight in this discourse about the Orient, a discourse that is today called 'Orientalism,' is a certain structural binary between the East and the West, the Orient and the Occident. Hegel's work is fundamentally structured on this East/West binary. There are four sections of his *Philosophy of History* I will be examining: The Oriental World, the Greek World, the Roman World, and the German World. Of the latter three, it is obvious they are part of the Self for Hegel, they have a similarity that sets them apart from the Orient. The first sentence of The Greek World shows this quite clearly: "Among the Greeks we feel ourselves immediately at home" (Hegel 1987, 259).

Under the sign of the Orient is subsumed various regions of Asia and Africa (China, India, Persia, Judea, Egypt, etc.), cobbled together as if there is some fundamental similarity essential to the Orient. At the very foundations of Hegel's analysis he is already asserting a discursive truth that there exists some fundamental difference that marks the Self as West and the Other as East, and that the two are qualitatively different.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> To be clear, one must take into account Hegel's historical context. As Halbfass points out, Hegel was aware of some of the most recent scholarship on Asia. Hegel traces history not from chronology but from ideological positioning. He starts his examination with China due to his perception of China as being the least representative of his idea of the movement of history towards freedom—China symbolizes the epitome of the Oriental despot. From our perspective today of a less ideological and more chronological view of history, Hegel's view seems quite historically inaccurate. But, we must take into account that the scholars that inform his view of Asia and his own understanding are concerned with the myth of origins. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the focus of history was towards some original starting point. While this myth of origins later became focused on the ideal roots of European civilization, for example tracing it in India and the Indo-European hypothesis, for Hegel and the scholars who informed his understanding the myth of origins was closely aligned with the myth of progress. Under the guiding myth of progress the ideal starting point was the most primitive of historical moments. He states: "The history of the world travels from east to west" and also "The first political form therefore which we observe in history is despotism, the second democracy and aristocracy, the third monarchy" (203). At the time of his writing, the

In the discourse of the Orient, each pole of the East and West binary have associated essential characteristics that Hegel takes up. In Foucauldian terms, what we see here is a larger strategy at work that associates essential characteristics to both the Orient and to the Occident. Within the discourse this becomes a major theme, linking the Orient to a mystical, savage and spiritual Other and the West to a rational, civilized and materialistic Self. Part of the purpose of the construction of the Orient, as a term and a discourse, is that the heterogeneity of Asia is ignored for a particular effect: the self-definition of the West. The West in the discourse of the Orient is the main target of this semiological binary; the Orient is constructed, imagined and filled up in order to present a foil for the West's own self-definition.

In introducing his stages of history, Hegel says of the first stage, the Oriental stage, that, "Unreflected consciousness" and "spiritual existence" form its basis (203). Here we see the productive Othering of the East as irrational (unreflected) and spiritual. Hegel continues, "The glory of Oriental conception is the one individual as that substantial being to which all belongs, so that no other individual has a separate existence" (204). The East is communal, the West is individualistic.

The West is superior because it expresses the ideal manifested in history, while the East is "for the most part, really *unhistorical*, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin" (204; emphasis in original). The East is an unchanging artifact of the past because it cannot express the ideal through practice. It is unreflected, and thus not a synthesis of the ideal and practice. The Orient as unchanging and timeless: "without undergoing any change in themselves"; "This history is... really *unhistorical*" (204). He invokes the unchanging, passive, ahistorical Orient: "China and India lie, as it were, still outside the world's history, as the mere presupposition of elements whose combination must be waited for to constitute their vital

---

chronological history of Asia was mostly conjecture. This lack of data allowed for various kinds of interpretations of the origins of philosophical thinking.

progress” (209) in order to posit the vital, historical agency—one might even say destiny—of the West.

Situating Hegel in his context, these stereotypical understandings of the Orient are common for his time. Rather than dismissing or ignoring Hegel’s observations as an artifact of the past we can instead understand that his relationship to nineteenth-century discourse about the Orient can speak to us about the ways in which he is both informed by the discourse in which he operates, but can also be seen to contribute to it.

Because of the work of those influenced by Foucault’s work, who apply his understanding of discourse and power to this notion of the Orient, today we might think of these tropes as archaic and misguided. And yet, the lesson here is that we need not be complacent in evaluating ourselves. In what ways do we essentialize East and West today? If we have overcome much of the presuppositional European superiority<sup>4</sup> that Hegel expresses, are there ways that we continue to structurally reify the divide between East and West? These questions as they bear on Comparative Philosophy will be examined in later sections.

Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* is explicitly organized in a hierarchy of progress toward Absolute Spirit. He begins with China, moves through India, the Middle East, Greece, Rome, and finally culminating with Europe, “*the last stage in history*” (362; emphasis in original). While Germany may not have yet reached the end of history as Absolute Spirit, its thought is ideally superior to—that is, it has progressed further towards Absolute Spirit than—English and French thought (though the French had put it into practice, while in Germany it remained an ideal) (362-368). Underlying this endpoint is an attempt, in the nineteenth-century, for many Germans to construct a German identity in contradistinction to the more powerful and influential English and French, who materially, economically, and politically saw themselves, and were seen as, more advanced than a fragmented Germany.

---

<sup>4</sup> Or, like Schopenhauer, fantasize about Eastern superiority using the same binary, characteristics and discourse.

Marx too engages with this aspect of German self-definition in more complex ways. Both thinkers, however, show here their use of the Orient to construct a particular German identity. The Orient is a starting point in the world's progress towards freedom, yet to be fully realized in France and England, but in *potentia* retained in German thought, to come to fruition at some point in the future. For Hegel, "the history of the world is nothing but the development of the idea of freedom" (368). The Orient in this world history is a primitive beginning, passively remaining fixed in this undeveloped stage while Europe is the still active, and more advanced struggle for freedom.

Hegel's specifically European notions of progress and European notions of freedom as *telos* become universal paradigms of all human history. But these notions are particular to Europe, and as such civilizations with different *telos* could never compete with Europe on its own terms. To put it in Wittgensteinian terms, non-European conceptual frameworks are playing a different game entirely. With colonial power backing up their understanding, European thinkers were able to conceive of their understanding as universal without much substantial challenge until the mid-twentieth century. This European myth of the universal subject was essentially grounded in European superiority over the Orient and thus also contributed to its own self-understanding as essentially superior. As Wilhelm Halbfass explains:

Hegel's scheme of the history of philosophy is primarily designed to deal with the history of European thought from Thales to Kant and Hegel himself. However, this is not just one line of development among others. Hegel's conception of "Weltgeist" ("world spirit"), and the corresponding unity of the world-historical process, leaves no room for the assumption of other, independent or parallel streams of historical development. Where in this scheme does Asia, and India in particular have its place? According to Hegel, the Orient is essentially beginning, introduction, preparation. The way of the "Weltgeist" leads from the East to the West. (Halbfass 1990, 88)

This brings to light the second broader strategy connected with discourse about the Orient. The strategic move is when Europeans generalize from their own parochial experience universal truths about human nature, and as a consequence find non-Europeans wanting. Non-Europeans are found to inadequately reflect these universals of human nature and are thus seen as some order less than Europeans. Tied to this is the idea that one can historically rank or evaluate a kind of progress towards greater and greater civilization, of which Europeans are the pinnacle. This is known as a stagist understanding of history (Chakrabarty 2000, 9). Examining the theme of European universalism and stagist notions of history can tell us quite a bit about how Europeans understood where their own interests and priorities lay within the order of progress. It can also show us how the use of science and philosophy, what we might call academic discourse today, helped to valorize, authorize, promote and concretize as truth European domination.

Marx too generally worked within the parameters of a stagist perspective, and indeed, as many have remarked, Marx was heavily indebted to Hegel. For Marx, human progress was fundamentally economically based. All human cultural activity was super-structure or epiphenomenon of underlying economic relations. He argued that the movement of history was fundamentally materialist, and religion, ideology, culture etc. took their particular characteristics from the underlying economic considerations that shaped them. For Marx, this movement of economic relations through history was the story of human progress: it was not towards Absolute Spirit that humanity moved towards, it was towards socialism. Both Marx and Hegel conceived of humanity progressing towards freedom. For Hegel, freedom was the practical instantiation of the ideal of freedom through human activity. For Marx, freedom was fundamentally an economic freedom, equality through non-alienating economic relations.

Marx's historical materialism understood this progress to go through stages of greater and greater advancement. He says: "The various stages of development in the division of labour just so many forms of ownership; i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the

relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour” (Marx 1983, 165). He explains these in ascending order of development: Tribal, Communal or State ownership, Feudal, Capitalist, and finally Socialist. Within this system of thought the Orient, whatever its particular place within the system, remains inflexibly stuck and static throughout time because of some essential characteristic of the Orient—that is, until the Occident arrives. Marx highlights this in elucidating ways in *The British Rule in India* (1853): “There have been in Asia, *from immemorial times*, but three developments of government...”, “the Hindu, on the one hand leaving, *like all Oriental peoples*, to the central government the care of the great public works...”, “we must not forget that these idyllic villages... had always been the foundation of *Oriental despotism...*” (Marx 1983, 331-335; emphasis mine). We see here the regulatory discourse about the Orient repeated by Marx: the ahistorizing (“from immemorial times”), the homogenizing (“like all Oriental peoples”), the stereotyping (“Oriental Despotism”) of the Orient that are some of the strategic practices of the discourse.

Another way this discourse about the Orient can be seen in Marx’s work is his analysis of different historical forms of economic production. In Marx’s *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* (1857-58), for example, he argues that the Asiatic form of relations is an all-embracing communal unity, where “the individual is propertyless, or property,” where “the despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all” (Marx 1965, 69). Taking up the stereotype of the Oriental despot, that within the discourse of the Orient is a foil to the more praiseworthy Enlightenment tendencies of the West, Marx argues that “Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property” (69).

Marx identifies three kinds of primitive developments: Asiatic, Ancient and Germanic. Here we can see the structure of his ideas is cognate with Hegel’s division of history into Oriental, Roman and Greek, and Germanic. Marx distinguishes the Ancient and Germanic routes



of economic development as dynamic and dialectical as opposed to the Asiatic route which is non-dialectical and static (Sahay 2007, Par. 10; Marx 1975, 88-97).

For Marx, development within these Occidental societies include capitalism, private ownership and feudalism (Marx 1965, 144-145). This does not just reveal the presupposition that the Orient is the opposite of the West, that it is static and ahistorical, or somehow historically undeveloped. Underlying all of this is the assumption of a particular Asian essence that is the reason for this perceived lack. In Marx's case, it is the communalism of Asia, the lack of individualism that is an essentially Oriental quality that prevents the development of the economic forms found in the West.

There has been some scholarly discussion of Marx's involvement with the discourse about the Orient. In his *In Theory* (1992) Aijaz Ahmad defends Marx's understanding of the Orient (221-242). While Ahmad points out Marx's stereotypical views of the Orient, as unchanging, vegetative, and ahistorical, Ahmad tends to downplay this as Marx's "inherited world-view" (224). He defends Marx by talking about Marx's valorization of Asia: "can mankind fill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia" (qtd. in Ahmad, 225)? For Ahmad, Marx's relatively progressive and liberative claims towards Asia, where, for example, Marx praised the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (226-229), shows less of an internalization of discourse about the Orient and rather a logical extrapolation from Marx's theoretical presuppositions (230). Much of Ahmad's analysis is colored by a concern for a Marxist perspective (which he supports) in contrast to a Nietzschean or post-modern perspective. Ahmad's conclusion is that it was not Marx's contribution to the discourse on the Orient that is problematic, rather the most glaring problem in his writings about the Orient was the lack of evidence about India that actually would have contradicted his materialist stance (240-241).

In some ways, I agree with Ahmad. Heavily focused on his historical materialist perspective in his many discussions of India, Marx, for the most part, analyses India by focusing

on very specific economic and political relations. These writings are less often broad sweeping statements than highly particular and historically differentiated examinations of the economic relations that relate to the events of his contemporary writing. Nonetheless, Marx was only able to access the scholarship of his day, which was problematically inaccurate.

Guarang R. Sahay disagrees with Aijaz Ahmad's conclusion about Marx. In Sahay's analysis of Marx, colonialism, for all its brutalities, was the only thing that could take Asia out of its ahistorical static past and into a modern history:

Since Marx states that the success of a socialist revolution leading to the emergence of a socialist social formation is dependent on the prior universalization of the capitalist mode of production, he, like many other Orientalists, endorses colonialism as a historically necessary method for bringing about capitalism in the Orient. (Sahay 2007, Par. 9)

While Ahmad defends Marx's characterization of the Orient as some sort of romanticist carry-over, Sahay argues that the progressive bent that Ahmad teases out of Marx remains a justification for colonialism, regardless of Marx's progressive trajectory.

From the Foucauldian perspective of analyzing discursive regimes, I argue that Marx remains a contributor and is deeply implicated in the discourse that constructs the Orient. Marx takes up various themes about the Orient that can also be seen in Hegel and are a reflection of the nineteenth century conception of the Orient. Marx interprets the Orient as characterized by communalism and Oriental despotism, as static, as ahistorical, and as homogenous. As much as I am sympathetic to Aijaz Ahmad's attempt to reclaim Marx, and regardless of Marx's progressive stance on Asia, he is deeply implicated in the discourse about the Orient.

More importantly for the goal of this analysis, the comparison that Marx makes of global society is predicated on a Eurocentric bias that constructs the Orient as lesser than, based on a systemic set of characterizations of which his writings and Hegel's writings are but examples.

Implicit, and at times explicit, Marx and Hegel reflect the presuppositions of European superiority that pervade nineteenth-century discourse about the Orient.

Hegel and Marx tended to project an essential nature on the Orient. They tended to assume a fundamental likeness and lack of dynamism to the Orient as a whole. That is, each of these regions and peoples were all fundamentally Eastern and thus were constructed as foils for the West's own self-construction.

The critique of this kind of discourse about the Orient can come in many forms. For example, there are Marxist, nationalist, and so-called post-modern critiques. The most influential, however, is a structural critique that analyzes the discourse on the "Orient". Since Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the name for this kind of discourse about the East is Orientalism.

Hegel and Marx were two of the most influential nineteenth century thinkers, who have had an enormous impact on contemporary thought. My examination of them provides that kind of sufficient evidence that an analysis of discourse necessitates. They are but case studies to elucidate a broad structural paradigm about the Orient that shaped the manner in which people thought, wrote, spoke about and acted in regards to Asia.

While there are many interrelated strategies that I have not touched upon in my analysis, I have given some of the more relevant elements of the discourse as they pertain to some of the concerns I will raise regarding Comparative Philosophy today. These include the reification of the binary between East and West; the essentialization of the East; a view of the East as static, timeless, and ahistorical; the myth of the universal European subject; a picture of the East as static and the West as dynamic alongside a stagist notion of history. These strategies are deployed to facilitate the West's self-identity; they are used in relation to and supporting a colonial project of European domination.

This general historical picture of the attitudes towards the Orient from the nineteenth-century provides a backdrop for my analysis of the twentieth century roots of Comparative

Philosophy. Comparative Philosophy as a field does not stand on its own until after the Second World War, though the main agents in its institutionalization begin this process somewhat before the war. Taking the nineteenth-century discourse about the Orient as a guide, I will turn my analysis to the pre-history of the discipline and elaborate on the ways in which comparative philosophy shapes itself in relation to the nineteenth-century. In some ways it transcends or transforms nineteenth century discourse about the Orient, and yet in others it deviates very little.

Outlining the scholarly field of Comparative Philosophy necessitates distinguishing it from the general practice of comparing philosophies. Distinguishing Comparative Philosophy as an academic field is not quite as clear cut as demarcating self-identified academic disciplines with their own institutional structures (i.e. university departments). Comparative Philosophy is not an institutionally ratified discipline in the same way that is the case of Anthropology, Philosophy, or Religious Studies. It is a field contributed to by a loose connection of individual academics from various disciplines with no popular narrative or Great Founders like Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) for Anthropology or René Descartes (1696-1650) for Philosophy. Nonetheless, in an academic setting this field does have a history, an institutional framework (however limited and frayed at the edges), and, I argue, a beginning. In this section I will trace this history of the field and show where we find Comparative Philosophy as an academic enterprise today.

The field's beginnings can be traced to a group of thinkers, led by Charles A. Moore.<sup>5</sup> What began as a series of conferences on comparing East and West philosophy spun out into a journal, an academic society (the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, or SACP), a monograph series and a whole department of the University of Hawaii dedicated to this endeavor. The journal and conferences changed considerably from their outset. Some of the problems of the early period of the conferences led to questions about the process of comparison. Ultimately it

---

<sup>5</sup> Roger T. Ames in his introduction to *The Aesthetic Turn: Reading Eliot Deutsch on Comparative Philosophy* has given credit to both Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan. Timm and Buchanan have only talked about Charles A. Moore as the origin of this vision.

was these questions that provoked more and extended responses by those engaged with the process and led to the creation of the journal *Philosophy East and West* (PEW) to continue the dialogue. From these early beginnings of conferences and the creation of *Philosophy East and West* the dialogue has spun out to its present areas of domain.

The first conference was in 1939 (Philosophy East-West), and there were subsequent conferences in 1949 (An Attempt at World Philosophical Synthesis), 1959 (East-West Philosophy from a Practical Perspective), 1964 (The Status of the Individual in East and West), 1969 (Alienation of Man), 1989 (Culture and Modernity), and 1995 (Justice and Democracy). The journal was first published in April 1951 based in large part on the success of the conferences. The Society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy (which is now the sponsor of *Philosophy East and West*) was created in 1967. Both the society and the journal have as their subject fields Asian philosophy and Comparative Philosophy.

The history of the journal, the conferences and the field are intertwined. The conferences began as an expression of Moore's interest in comparing Eastern and Western philosophy. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan were also the founders of the department of philosophy at the University of Hawaii. The University of Hawaii press publishes both the journal PEW and the monograph series organized by the SACP. The editors of the journal have all been faculty in the department of Philosophy at Hawaii. Jeffrey Timm (1991) and James Buchanan (1996) have discussed this history of Comparative Philosophy in more detail, as has Julia Ching (1984) who notes that the journals *PEW*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* and the *Journal of the History of Ideas* are connected to cross-cultural dialogues (481). In my Master's thesis *Is Comparative Philosophy Postmodern?* (Parent 2003), I explored the history of Comparative Philosophy in detail. I found that aside from PEW, the journal most associated with Comparative Philosophy was the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. What I found was that while the work of Comparative Philosophy could

be found scattered among a handful of academic journals and other sources, *Philosophy East and West* was the primary locus for the field.

Today, we can expand out from this central location of the field to other scholarly networks. Not only the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* but also the *Journal of Indian philosophy* and *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* are important resources. Various journals with a more theological orientation are also relevant to the field, for example, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*. The SACP has an annual monograph series, which has published twenty-one volumes. Apart from these publications there are a number of other important works, including Robert Magliola's *Derrida on the Mend* (1986), and David Loy's *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (1998). A new internet journal, *Comparative Philosophy*, has recently been created by the San Jose State University Center for Comparative Philosophy (est. 2007), but has not yet published any articles. Columbia University has begun a seminar called The Columbia Society for Comparative Philosophy headed by Mark Siderits, who is also on the editorial board of PEW. The members of the Religious Studies department of the University of Calgary have also started a program unit in the within the American Academy of Religion called the Comparative Philosophy and Religion Seminar. As we can see, Comparative Philosophy is a field that is expanding quite quickly, and yet is bounded institutionally within the structures of academic networks.

Given the increasing relevance and interest in Comparative Philosophy, I believe the field needs to work towards examining its own assumptions and develop a trajectory of methodological inquiries that can account for some of the issues I have raised in the previous sections. If we look at, for example, The Columbia Society for Comparative Philosophy's mission statement on their webpage, there is a call towards self-examination, but in some ways the absence of engagement with the issues that call us towards self-examination:

In history, works of comparative philosophy have sometimes exhibited more about the unconscious assumptions of the explicators than they have about the views they sought to explicate. We acknowledge this fact and its demand for humility. Yet we side with Wilhelm Halbfass who poignantly said, “The dialogic situation is still open.” (Colombia Society for Comparative Philosophy 2009)

As we can see, the mission statement reflects on the issues that I have raised already in my brief examination of earlier comparative philosophers. Namely, one of the structures of power/knowledge that implicates us in Orientalism is the construction and imagining of the Other in certain ways that reflect our own interest in self-identity, rather than the identity of the Other on its own terms. The mission statement above, while reflecting this insight, quotes Wilhelm Halbfass in a way that suggests with the use of the term ‘yet’ that examining our unconscious assumptions is not as important as having an “open” dialogic situation. The two may not be mutually exclusive, but there seems to be a lack in field attempting to address unconscious assumptions.

The present work argues for the necessity of examining those unconscious assumptions and provides resources for establishing a way of accounting for them. It also argues that the examination of these problems can be an extremely fruitful resource in developing new ways of thinking about where this open dialogic situation can go.

One of the primary underlying assumptions of cross-cultural academic fields that is most forcefully challenged by a postcolonial critique is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism, in this context, as we have seen, is a long-held bias that privileges the perspectives of European epistemes (we could very well include North America here) in the construction of knowledge. With Hegel and Marx, this played out, for example, with their assumption that a parochial European experience could be universalized to all humanity as well as a stagist view of history that necessarily

culminated with Europe. Of course, this understanding pushes other perspectives to the margins, but it has more concrete political and strategic consequences as well.

Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan were the brainchilds of the budding scholarly field as a self-identified discipline. It is to the early years of this process I wish to turn my attention. A number of themes in this formational period of Comparative Philosophy can be traced in some way back to nineteenth-century Orientalist understandings. However, in an analysis of Moore's work, there is a shift in the kind of discourse about the East that while attempting to be inclusive of the Orient, transforms the essentialisms of early discourse about the Orient into something more nuanced.

The attempt to create a synthesis of East and West shows, on some level, an overt position of equality between the two. The nineteenth-century stagist relegation of the Orient to a static past wherein it is locked, and thus devalued in comparison to the Occident, is transformed in the 1960s by Moore into an attempt to valorize both as equal partners in attempting to create a world philosophy.

His project, however, is compromised by the attitudes of his day and by his own limitations, which retain a number of problematic discursive structures inherited from the nineteenth-century. Moore's goal is to create a synthesis of East and West.<sup>6</sup> This very goal of synthesis implies a binary structure of East and West, which continues to reify a kind of homogenization of "The Orient" as "East."

But at the same time, Moore did attempt to distinguish between the regional differences of the East, as his books show: *The Indian Mind* (1967), *The Japanese Mind* (1967), and *The Chinese Mind* (1967). This shows an attempt to move beyond the homogenizing nineteenth-century tropes of the Orient. Structurally, however, these books were intended for a Western

---

<sup>6</sup> James Buchanan notes that, "Charles Moore believed that such a synthesis was not only possible but of vital importance in order to foster international understanding between the East and the West" (Buchanan, 1996: 312).



English-speaking audience and retained many Orientalism themes. Implicit in the understanding conveyed by these titles is an essentialism that identifies all Japanese or Indian thinkers as possessing some inherent quality that makes them Japanese or Indian. It does so in a way that homogenizes them. The logic of the time came to an analysis of these Asian thinkers with the categories well-established by nineteenth century Orientalist thought and thus needed to fit these Japanese, Chinese, or Indian thinkers within a set of predetermined notions about these conceptual collective categories. An aspect of this predetermination is the very fact that we can even think about a common Japanese way of being, a 'Japanese Mind.'

In the early stages of Comparative Philosophy, what I have focused on are three inter-related themes of more structurally discursive elements within the field: European universalization; homogenization and essentialism; and the binary of West/East so fundamental to Orientalism. These elements are historically related to nineteenth century Orientalism and provide a small picture of the development of Comparative Philosophy and Orientalism. This analysis is necessary to understand my attempt to draw out particular ways of doing Comparative Philosophy today that can resist, avoid, transcend, or at least take into account this history. In some structured ways, contemporary Comparative Philosophy still retains these themes, in some ways it attempts to resist them. But it is necessary to acknowledge these historical relations so that we do not naively assume we are disconnected from them—to do so risks continuing to reify Orientalism implicitly or unconsciously.

## Section 2: Issues in Contemporary Comparison

The discourse of cultural difference is important and meaningful, especially in light of the historical manner in which both the content of cultural difference and the assumptions underlying the concept are the site of forms of domination but also forms of resistance to this domination.

Identity construction in a contemporary context is one site of this conflict, and its history is related to Orientalism. One particular strategy of Orientalism is to essentialize certain identities of people and discipline them accordingly. Resistance to this essentialization often takes the form of identity politics. Whether it is to reverse the hierarchy of categories relating to these essentializations (for example, some kinds of Hindu anti-colonial responses) or to reject or provide alternative counter-identities to these essentialisms, these responses still work on the field of identity and discourse. In a comparative project, sensitivity to cultural difference and the identity politics inherent to any notion of culture helps to insure against the violence of appropriation, ahistoricism, or decontextualization.

Nonetheless, a discourse of cultural pluralism that is often the foundation of cross-cultural comparison betrays an attitude that accepts cultures as distinct meaningful entities on their own terms—as separate entities in and of themselves. This is both factually and methodologically (not to mention politically) problematic. Any close look at cultural transformation throughout history shows that cultural transformations are often precipitated by what we might call cultural exchange. Indeed, the positing of boundaries between cultures may be more of a conceptual conceit as opposed to a factual representation of culture.

The issue of the meaning of ‘culture’ has been a concern for many disciplines, from anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Wax 1993) to cultural studies (Steedman 1993) to the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer 1969). Many of the issues raised in these discussions directly impact comparative work. As an example, I want to focus on one new conception of culture that comes out of cultural studies: polyculturality.

Some recent work in cultural studies (Prashad 1999, 2003) and activism (Kelley 1999; Podor, 2003) questions the standpoint of multiculturalism by asking the questions: Where do we determine the boundaries of a cultural entity? Who authorizes or justifies this boundary

construction and for what purpose? Related to these questions is a concern regarding the policing of cultural boundaries, or the attempt to reify and contain some cultural ideal as “pure” and to protect it from pollution. Clearly these are political concerns that are only further complicated by multiculturalism: a conceptual framework that at root assumes a pluralistic view of culture while simultaneously reifying some sense of boundary between cultures or some essential character to these varied cultures.

Fundamentally, however, culture is fluid, mediated by humans, and is continually produced through complex interactions among individuals, their contexts, their various communities, their history, discourses that shape their desires, their desire to shape those discourses, broader institutions that sometimes take on a life of their own and the reflection in these elements of political and personal constraints and possibilities. Identifying culture is something far more complex than multiculturalism can explain.

The histories of diasporic groups in North America or Europe are a good example of this complexity. What is the cultural status of “Indian culture” expressed within South Asian communities in North America where it differs from “Indian culture” in India itself? Or, as a historical example, is the Greco-Bactrian culture of North-West India during the Śaka period, with its various and complex cultural influences “multicultural?” Does this multicultural way of examining culture also assume an uncritical adoption of the concept of culture?

That we think in these terms today does not mean that this is how people in the past have thought about their identities. What does cultural authenticity mean throughout history? From a Foucauldian perspective, the terms ‘culture’ and ‘multiculturalism’ are not neutral, but are put into play within a context wherein these terms are politically active and cannot be removed from the question of who uses these terms and categories and for what purposes. Having these as open

questions for the analysis of Comparative Philosophy in the twentieth-century helps to foreground some of the questions I raise about the field.

In “Ethnophilosophy, Comparative Philosophy, and Pragmatism” Thornston Botz-Bornstein focuses on this elaboration of culture and identity. Botz-Bornstein says: “The space between culture and its others, which is also the space between me and the culture I observe, makes of the cultural sphere a dreamlike phenomena as such” (2006, 166). This struck a chord with me in relation to a particular cultural studies category called polyculturality, a recently developed concept in cultural studies (Prasad 1999, 2001, 2003). This concept signals a shift away from certain ways of thinking about culture, most typified by the term ‘multiculturalism’.

Fundamental to this shift is a recognition of the problems inherent in conceptualizing cultures as distinct and potentially essentialized entities. The development of cultures through history is never isolated. Cultures develop in connection to other cultures with which they share relationships—economic, ideological, geographic, military, etc. What we call ‘cultures’ change over time, for various reasons, and it would be inappropriate to assume methodologically that historical continuity necessitates a corresponding level of sameness over time. While this may be the case, it would be best not to assume this before one even begins one’s examination. Privileging culturally essentialistic analyses may overdetermine the continuity we see within culture.

Multiculturalism understands cultural pluralism in a manner that covers over the power relations that actively work to oppress people. As Robin Kelley remarks, multiculturalism “often implies that cultures are fixed, discrete entities that exist side by side—a kind of zoological approach to culture. Such a view of multiculturalism not only obscures power relations, but often reifies race and gender differences” (Kelley 1999, 2). Furthermore, according to Vijay Prashad, multiculturalism actively destabilizes anti-racist activism:

*Multiculturalism, in my estimation, emerged as the liberal doctrine designed to undercut the radicalism of anti-racism.* Instead of anti-racism, we are fed a diet of cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity. The history of oppression and the fact of exploitation are shunted aside in favour of a celebration of difference and of the experiences of individuals who can narrate their ethnicity for the consumption of others. (Prashad 1999, 189; emphasis in original)

A more polycultural approach to the notion of culture can address the power relations inherent in how we understand culture and also more accurately describe cultural transformation. Polycultural understands that the boundaries of culture are fluid, porous and under constant transformation. It reflects on the complexity of culture and the strategies that are used in the notion of culture and its relation to power. Polyculturalism directly “uncouples the notions of origins and authenticity from that of culture,” demands for the acknowledgement of the complexity of cultural communities and “for an obliteration of hierarchy” (Prashad 2003, 53-54).

By assuming a multicultural space we are discounting the change that cultures undergo, often from “outside” influences, and we are, perhaps, covering over subtle lines of transcultural influence by focusing on the categories of similarity and difference. A polycultural approach examines the historically contingent manner in which “cultures” change, both through internal and external pressures. In terms of personal or group identity, polyculturalism understands cultural distinctions to be fluid and dynamic. “Even though people form what appear to be relatively discrete groups (South Asians, African Americans, Latino Americans), most of us live with the knowledge that the boundaries of our communities are fairly porous...” (Prashad 1999, 197).

In terms of how this affects comparative method, it complicates our understanding of the development of ideas. We must be careful to locate historically and contextually particular

thinkers, movements, and their ideas in order not to do violence to the work by ignoring the complexity of the context to which it refers. On the other hand, it can make our method more nuanced to take care to note that cultural change may not happen in a vacuum arbitrarily, but rather because of material causes that are related to how various people take up culture—whether it be that found “at home” or that found “abroad”. A polycultural approach is attentive to the power relations that impact cross-cultural knowledge production. In this light, much of the comparative work and other academic work from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarding non-European contexts is influenced by a number of different discursive interests. Shopenhauer’s work, for example, is in part a romanticized searching for something outside of the European tradition (Pollock: 1993).

Conversely, these are not wholly Western or European issues. In the encounter with the West, we find colonized discourses partake heavily of colonial discourses and knowledge structures. Colonial structures still affect how non-Europeans conceptualize their universe. Before decolonization, we see thinkers like Rammohan Roy, Vivikenanda, and even Gandhi, taking up Orientalist or colonial forms of knowledge as a response to colonization or globalization. Nonetheless, as Halbfass points out, there remains a fundamental inequality that pervades thinking about these issues: “the presence of European ideas in Indian thought is far more pervasive than the presence of Indian ideas in the West...” (1990, 433). He argues that in the modern world East and West meet in a “westernized world”.

By this, I take him to mean not solely that globalization is equal to westernization, a theme we see often raised in contemporary analysis of globalization. More importantly, what I think he is pointing to here is the fundamental shifts of thought in colonized and decolonized locales engendered by the taking up of European epistemes of knowledge production and conceptual organization.

As Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (1993) point out, colonials often readily accepted these characterizations and reframed them as sites for anti-colonial, nationalist, or even, in the case of Japan, their own colonial endeavors. With postcolonialism, these essentializations, structures and institutions taken up by colonials remain, naturalized. This is what Breckenridge and van der Veer call the Postcolonial predicament: “decolonization does not entail immediate escape from colonial discourse [which]... defines both the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized” (2).

Fundamental to the practice of comparative philosophy have been various interests, political and otherwise. Often these interests have been to the benefit, directly or indirectly, of Western material or categorical supremacy and self-identity. While we will complicate this picture in Chapter 2, it does not change the deep structural inequalities that comparative methods contributed to in the past. Dealing with the issues of power/knowledge<sup>7</sup> cross-culturally necessitates confronting these historical and structural histories.

The question of ethnocentrism in philosophy and Comparative Philosophy is a question fundamental to the very term philosophy itself. As popularly noted, the term is based on the Greek, and means “love of wisdom”. Undoubtedly, the European tradition of philosophy is heavily influenced by the ancient Greeks. Modern philosophy, often located as beginning with Rene Descartes in the narratives of its history, continually reaches back to the Greeks (and to a lesser extent the Romans) for inspiration.

We should note however, that the construction of a continual tradition from the Greeks to the Europeans that need not necessarily be taken as inevitable. It is a particular choice for modern

---

<sup>7</sup> Power/Knowledge refers to Foucault’s insight that discourse and knowledge are always imbedded in concrete power relations.

philosophy to identify its roots with the Greeks and to look back to the Greeks as if it is a *natural* choice. This choice is neither natural nor necessary, though it is historical and traditional.

There have been a number of arguments throughout modern philosophy that philosophy is a solely Western enterprise and what we call philosophy in non-European contexts is something other than philosophy. This issue has a fundamental effect on comparative philosophy. As Daya Krishna notes, “Comparative Philosophy has been bogged down from the very beginning with the question of whether there is anything that can be called ‘philosophy’ outside the Western tradition” (Krishna 1986, 60). If tracing our heritage to the Greeks is a conscious choice to construct a tradition, a logical outcome of this is: 1) that philosophy is actively choosing to exclude non-European thought when it makes statements declaring the parochial nature of philosophy along a continuum from Greek thought to modern Western thought; 2) that we could choose to construct the meaning and place of philosophy in different ways than we do now; and 3) there is a heterogeneity of voices disseminating their view of philosophy and each of these is a particular entry into the matrix of political discourse of and about philosophy .

The first point shows us the ethico-political nature of the discussion of the “nature” of philosophy. The second opens up the possibilities to rethink our responsibilities regarding how we discipline the category ‘philosophy’ and the consequences therein. The third alerts us to the broader discursive or structural ways that the sum of all this talk of ‘philosophy’ affects how we think about the issue.

Recently, a dialogue between Caroline Defoort and Rein Raud that began at the Eighth East-West Philosopher’s Conference and continued within the pages of *Philosophy East and West* examined this very issue in relation to Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy. Defoort attempts to show how not only is there a bias privileging Western thought in philosophy but furthermore that this bias goes so far as to not consider Chinese thought philosophy at all. She



argues that the various positions fall into two camps, those that assert that Chinese Philosophy is not philosophy, and those that assert that it is. She explains,

The position that denies the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy is primarily, though not exclusively, implicit and Western. The strongest arguments are of both a historical and a theoretical nature. The historical argumentation departs from the irrefutable fact that philosophy is a well-defined discipline that came into existence in Greece and has expanded throughout the West, just as the masters (*zhuzi*) are considered a product of Chinese culture. (2001, 396)

The historical argument is that philosophy is a Western, European discourse with roots tracing back to the Greeks, while the thought of the Chinese masters has a separate history and thus is not philosophy per se.

She further states, though, that this historical argument is bolstered by a theoretical position that insists that we identify philosophy through a set of criteria that the Chinese tradition cannot meet. Philosophy “must give the appearance of systematicity, reflection, and rationality; it must differ from science and religion; and it must be divisible into various subdisciplines such as metaphysics, logic, and epistemology” (396). She continues, “A great deal of the teachings of the old Chinese masters from the so-called Golden Age of Chinese philosophy (the fifth to third centuries B .C.) rarely meet these demands” (396). In a later response to Raud, she makes this point much more explicitly: “various eminent European philosophers, such as Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and, more recently, Jacques Derrida on his visit to Shanghai in 2001, have proclaimed that ancient Chinese thought is not really philosophy” (2006, 626).

Against this view, Defoort argues the position that Chinese philosophy is ‘philosophy’ on the basis of the idea that philosophy is a Western term that can be used to approximate a certain

kind of thought; “masters” from any cultural context are identified by this much less specific sense of the term (397).

Both Raud and Defoort hold sensibilities that envision that Chinese ‘philosophy’ should have parity with European philosophy, at least in symbolic value, if not practically. Defoort points out that the main reason for the devaluation of the thought of the Chinese masters in contemporary philosophy is its absence to a large degree in Western philosophical discourse. Raud points out that implementing the inclusion of Indian, Chinese, Islamic and Japanese philosophy in the profession of Philosophy would most likely destabilize it to its own demise (2006, 621). For Raud, the amount of institutional and epistemological restructuring needed to incorporate non-European thought into philosophy is impossible, and this provides a pragmatic reason to maintain the distinction that philosophy is Western.

Significantly, Defoort points out that the roots of the etymology of the term philosophy has been contested since the earliest Greek records of the term, and it was often defined in a more political manner in order to distinguish what a particular Greek considered “true philosophy” over and against his contemporaries (2006, 631). The mobilization of the term philosophy is a political act to order discourse about philosophy to meet one’s own interests. Historically, debating the bounds of the term philosophy is philosophizing. With humour, she says, “The fact that Chinese colleagues have joined this debate may be the best indication of its (contemporary) philosophical nature, despite continuous disagreements with and disinterest on the part of the Western side” (631). For Defoort, the very fact that Chinese colleagues are actively engaging in this debate shows how philosophical they are being.

Rather than continuing the debate regarding whether Chinese thought in particular is philosophy, I think it more appropriate to expand the concerns to all non-European ‘philosophies’ in general. And as such, I think some meaningful and interesting points can be taken from the discussion of Defoort and Raud. The most significant is that the chauvinism of philosophy as a

European construct and a particularly European institution is not just a matter of etymology or semantics. While undoubtedly the semantic complexities of the term ‘philosophy’ plays a part and is an important aspect of understanding some of the issues regarding what it is we are comparing when we do Comparative Philosophy, focusing solely on the conceptual content of the label ‘philosophy’ covers over the underlying structures of power and knowledge that shape how these debates develop. As Defoort points out, from the very inception of the category ‘philosophy,’ it has been a politically charged term whose usage and definition has often been strategic—used to exclude, to include, to discipline thought—in short, as a discursive tool to influence political and social realities throughout history.

The debate about ‘Chinese philosophy’ is a concern over the legitimate place of Chinese thought on the world stage. We can abstract this point to Indian philosophy and other non-European thought as well. The corollary to the concern over the legitimacy of non-European thought within, or as philosophy, is to reverse the terms of this concern. Why do we not question the legitimacy of Western thought as philosophy? Aside from the obvious response that philosophy is necessarily Western because that is where the term is internally consistent (e.g. the terms for philosophy in Japanese and Chinese are late nineteenth-century inventions) we need to wonder why the term philosophy is umbrella term for all world thought.

Within non-European traditions and within pre-Enlightenment European understandings the conceptual taxonomies to locate what we might refer to as *intellectual traditions* did not have the same distinctions they do today. Post-Enlightenment, we distinguish between philosophy, religion, politics, etc. as separate domains of knowledge. But in pre-Enlightenment and non-European understandings, the distinctions categorizing intellectual traditions were not along those lines.

Outside of the European tradition, we do have general classificatory schemes for delineating traditions of thought (however much these traditions might also include politics,

religion and other elements that have been distinguished from post-Enlightenment ‘philosophy’). In Chinese understandings, what we now call Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, were divided into these same three traditions, but they came under the purview of the term *san jiao* (Zhou 2003). *San* means three, while *Jiao* relates, most generally, to the relationships of various lineages in a tradition. So, Pure Land, Ch’an, and other Buddhist schools of thought, who traditionally traced their lineage through masters back to the Buddha all fell within the Buddhist *jiao*.

In the Indian tradition, we could similarly examine two terms, *dharma* and *darśana*, for our understanding of traditions in the subcontinent. While *darśana* might be more amenable to our contemporary understandings of philosophy, it too may still be suspect insofar as within almost all *darśana* there is a significant soteriological component.

The question I want to pose here is why are we determining if Indian or Chinese thought is philosophy, and not why Western thought has *jiao* or whether and which kinds of Western thought could be fit within the system of *darśanas*? The answer is that historical power structures of knowledge production have produced the situation wherein non-European thought must be related back to a Western episteme. That is, colonial history foregrounds how knowledge is mediated and the postcolonial situation is such that we are still continuing to be influenced by colonial structures of knowledge. In order to not replicate these in the study of comparative philosophy, we should be attuned to the kinds of discursive, taxonomical, and power/knowledge structures that reproduce the privileging of European epistemes. Otherwise, we are not doing “world philosophy” but rather imposing the European ideal of “world philosophy”.

Another set of inquiries into this problem can be found in the text *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (1988) edited by Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch. In this volume it is Ninian Smart who tackles the question raised above—namely, why not see if European thought fits with *darśana* or *jiao*? He argues for conceptualizing

philosophies as worldviews or *darśanas*. For Smart, this would help do away with the various distinctions which, for many, needlessly complicate understanding—for example, the distinction between philosophy and religion (Smart 1988, 175-177).

While there might be much to approve of regarding this approach, I would tend to take a similar position to Raud that it seems impractical as a useful strategy that the top-heavy institution of the academy would change a number of disciplines into a broader discipline of ‘worldview studies’, or *darśanavidyā*. Furthermore, Richard King points out that the tendency of introductions to Indian Philosophy which focus on *darśanas* may cause heuristic problems itself. He says, “Such an approach tends to represent Indian philosophical ideas as well-established dogmas rather than as theories contested in inter-scholastic debates” (1999, xiv). These debates themselves are integral for understanding the changes that occur in Indian Philosophy over time. In Daya Krishna’s *Indian Philosophy* (1991) he questions the general understanding of *darśanas* as well: “[*Darśanas*] are treated as something finished and final. No distinction, therefore, is ever made between the thought of an individual thinker and the thought of a school” (14).<sup>8</sup>

Another problem we would have using *darśana* as an overarching category is that it does not solve the issue of the interest-laden discursive use of taxonomy. The discourse of *darśanas* is just as contested as that of philosophy. In India, the first doxography that summarized the various *darśanas* was composed by a Jain, Haribhadra, in his *Saddarśanasamuccaya*. Indeed, the title itself is misleading: the *Saddarśanasamuccaya* (Summary of Six Darśanas) actually describes seven schools of thought. The content of what consisted of the “six *darśanas*”, a standard trope in Indian history, in the works of subsequent doxographical accounts changed throughout time and in relation to the particular author’s concerns at the time. Later works excluded Jains, Buddhists and Carvakas (Materialists) from these doxographies. It is these accounts that the later Hindu

---

<sup>8</sup> But it is clear, for example, that the work of the Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti would not be what it is without the critical analysis of the Nyayas to whom he responds in his updating of his predecessor, Dignaga (and the equivalent in the Nyaya school updating of Gotama by Uddyotakara in response to Dignaga) (see, for example, King 1999: 60).

pundits refer to when they talk of *nāstika* (unorthodox) and *āstika* (orthodox) schools, in order to exclude the *nāstika* (Buddhist, Jains, Carvakas) from discussion. To complicate the interpretive and political quagmire even more, even these terms *nāstika* and *āstika* are contested throughout Indian history. They have meant variously the dis/belief in the authority of the Vedas, the dis/belief in rebirth and karma, or more rarely the dis/belief in the existence of God or Brahman. So however much we might think that a remedy to the Eurocentric discourse about ‘philosophy’ could be to focus on other culturally specific models, as Smart suggests, this does not solve the problem of the applicability of the categories themselves.

However, one of the developments of post-Enlightenment European thought is that philosophy as a category is distinguished from religion—influenced by the distinction between faith and reason. Implicit in contemporary understandings of philosophy is that its borders are policed in ways that do not account for the same kinds of knowledges that are produced in non-European contexts.

For example, the often proffered question of whether Buddhism is a philosophy or a religion can only make sense in a context where there is a meaningful and important distinction between the two categories. Buddhists themselves, historically and in their cultural contexts, do not make this distinction. The question betrays a certain way of thinking about philosophy or religion that assumes understandings not “natural” to the Buddhist tradition. Whether “Buddhism is a philosophy or religion” says more about the needs, concerns, desires of the questioner than it does about the object of the question. If our goal is to understand Buddhism on its own terms, might we then have to interrogate what we mean by philosophy or religion and the implications of the histories of these terms, not just in a Western context? The nature of the postcolonial internalization of colonial epistemes includes the internalization of the categories of philosophy and religion. Accounting for this in modern non-Western thought is an important part of contextualizing their thought, just as much as it is necessary to account for the absence of these

categories in pre-modern thought in order to attempt to better understand the epistemic framework within which these pre-modern thinkers found themselves.

If the use of ‘philosophy’ is historically parochial, and, to use contemporary parlance, does violence to a tradition, might we attempt to use another term? Or, if we determine that we should keep the term philosophy, perhaps it might be better used with the qualification that we need to understand it is a stand-in for speaking about *darśana* or *jiao* in other respective cultural contexts—and even that what we choose to talk about in non-European traditions under the label of philosophy is an attempt to do our part in constructing the category and tradition of “philosophy” itself. Isn’t this what some are pointing to as the death of philosophy? Do we include ritual technology in philosophy, for example the considerations of practice found in Tantric practice or in Yogacara Buddhist texts? Do we include discourses of liberation that undergird Indian concerns?

The interpretive stance we use to understand “philosophy” cross-culturally is wrapped up in the discursive regime of Orientalism, and we need to account for that to do justice to the material. For example, examining Indian philosophy has often been beset by the Orientalist stereotype that the East is spiritual and mystical, and has denied its logical discourse equivalent status to Aristotelian-based European logic. Many have attempted to redress this bias by focusing heavily on Indian logic (see, e.g., Bimal Matilal 1985). Still others say that even taking into account the Orientalist stereotype, we should not overstate the logical side of Indian thought, covering over what may be a significant soteriological aspect to the tradition.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> As King (1999) points out, “[i]t is clear that western accounts have placed far too much emphasis upon the supposedly soteriological basis of Indian thought. Nevertheless, attempts to distinguish Indian thought... tends to secularise Indian thought and thus ‘domesticate’ it in terms of dominant western presuppositions about the nature of ‘philosophy’ and the types of questions that it asks. To exclude the so-called ‘spiritual’ aspects of Indian thought from the category of ‘philosophy’ is to project the Enlightenment dichotomy between philosophy and religion onto material where such a polarity does not exist” (28-29).

With all of this discourse shaping the interpretation of Indian thought, how do we attempt to understand the Indian tradition on its own terms? In fact, does asking the question “Is Indian philosophy mystical or logical?” already pre-determine one’s interpretive position and take it at a step removed from the Indian tradition itself (much like the question of whether Buddhism is a philosophy or a religion)? Did the tradition use the categories “mystical” or “logical” in the binary way that it is and has been used in a European context? If not, then why should we use those categories? What is the benefit? If we find those categories useful, might it be the case that we should use them only after we have understood the tradition in the different and multiple taxonomical ways it describes itself? Furthermore, why should European taxonomical categories be the guiding framework of analysis? It seems that at least one insight that can be taken from Smart’s analysis is that always referring to the content of non-European philosophy using European categories is just another form of political imposition. Using these European categories ignores the political history that shapes European epistemic dominance. Do we want to uncritically continue to think in ways that have been shown to contribute to a whole systematic, discursive regime of domination? If our choice is between using European or non-European categories to understand all ‘philosophy,’ why shouldn’t we be looking for the *darśanas* of the West? Or the *jiao*’s of the West? What these questions show us are the many hermeneutical hurdles that need to be addressed in order to do cross-cultural comparison.

### Section 3: Contemporary Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion

One of the historical elements that Wilhelm Halbfass notes in his survey of the use of the term “comparative philosophy” is that the use of the term “comparative religion” predates it by a few centuries (1990, 429). This latter term was first coined by missionaries and provided a platform for their attempts to engage with indigenous colonized populations in order to show the superiority of their various Christian messages. It was not until the influence of positivism on



philosophy proper that the term “comparative” in its various contexts became divorced from this missionizing agenda (429).

While the two categories of comparative philosophy and comparative religion have distinct histories, we might ask how distinct their methodologies are. Given that the discussion above regarding of Buddhism as philosophy or religion shows how either term is put into a play of discourses and signifiers that shapes the material practices of the tradition it may be more appropriate to treat the terms comparative philosophy and comparative religion as interchangeable. This suggestion comes from a methodological perspective that is concerned with the productive use of these terms and their distinction. Whether one is using the term ‘religion’ or ‘philosophy,’ there is a structural similarity in the manner in which these terms are disseminated and the political consequences that result.

Just as we have seen the term philosophy has a contested history of usage, often based on the interests of the particular commentator, so too is the term religion contested. It is a standard trope in the discipline of Religious Studies that any definition of the term religion is highly problematic. An oft-conceded understanding within the discipline is that there is no real agreement among scholars about a definition of the term, which has led to a kind of ad hoc manner of usage. Each scholar, in some way, puts forth their own provisional definition of the term in order to analyze their object. It seems the discipline is moving towards being less interested in concrete categorical definitions than the insights that can be gained from manipulating or playing with the concept of religion itself (Saler, 1993).

Comparative religion, too, is encountering a methodological shift, which, in many ways, is beset with many of the issues raised above regarding Comparative Philosophy. Nonetheless, some work is being done to address these issues in the fields of Comparative Religion and Religious Studies.

In two articles, “Philosophy and Religion” (2004) and “Beyond a God’s-Eye View” (2000), Morny Joy analyzes the current state of the fields Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies. She comes to the conclusion, in both cases, that what is missing is a more self-critical analysis in each field of its presuppositions and she calls for a willingness to self-critically examine these presuppositions. In “Beyond a God’s-Eye View” she challenges the field of Religious Studies to interrogate its own history and complicity with continuing forms of domination that are seriously challenged by feminist and postcolonial approaches. In “Philosophy and Religion” Joy notes these critiques and suggests that Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical approach can help to overcome the limitations of religious studies and the philosophy of religion. A (phenomenological) hermeneutic framework is quite useful to self-critically account for the historical contexts that produce interpretive acts. So, Joy finds the challenges of postcolonial and feminist critiques about the parochial methods and history of Religious Studies met in a hermeneutics that can account for different interpretations and sources of authority while mediating between the equally problematic poles of a “postmodern” relativism and a “modernist” universalism:

I believe such a mediatory approach could lead to a more creative exchange that acknowledges diversification and difference and that provides grounds for critical evaluation without capitulating either to subjectivism or to an abstract philosophical standard with universal presumptions. (Joy 2004, 209)

Richard King, in *Orientalism and Religion* (1999a), expresses a similar position to Joy. He argues for an approach to religious studies that is more attentive to the problems of postcolonialism and the history of Orientalism. He too focuses on hermeneutics as providing a framework within which Religious Studies may attempt to reform its own methods. However, in contrast to Joy, King’s hermeneutical influence is Hans-Georg Gadamer.

What attitude should one take to one's historical situation, and the dynamics of knowledge and power that inform one's position and the position of one's object? Rey Chow, as explicated by Joy, is at the forefront of third-world feminist attitudes towards one's own place and one's relationship to the construction of knowledge—she takes into account Foucault's observations that the diffuse nature of power is relational. In contemporary structures or institutions of ordering, domination, governmentality and discipline, every subject is implicated in the systems of power relations that structure modernity. Thus Chow's observation that "their very own use of the victimhood of women and Third World cultures is both symptomatic of and inevitably complicitous with the First world" (Joy 2000, 127). While everyone is complicit in a certain way with contemporary structures, the key insight is the hermeneutic interrogation of the manner that one is complicit and the strategies through which one's complicity effects certain ends.

This is, at root, the insight that I think is missing from most comparative exercises. Feminist and postcolonial/third world awareness is necessary for reinvigorating the disciplines of Religious Studies, Comparative Religion, and Comparative Philosophy. However, we cannot just play the dull old binary of oppressor/oppressed, privileged/victimized and their attendant psychological and moral roles. Rather, we need to assess the particularities of difference in all political situations and what resources one can use towards one's goals. Playing the victim, as Chow implies, feeds into that binary that allows for privilege in the first place.

In Comparative Philosophy the movement of postcolonial and feminist critiques has not yet substantially entered the field. Their insights about the explicit interrogation of one's interests, context and resources and the subsequent use of that to explore the interests, context and resources of one's object of study has only begun to be articulated. This is perhaps the influence

of so-called postmodern influence in the field. Feminism and postcolonialism are the first step, and hermeneutics may be next.

What if we re-examine the question of the term ‘philosophy’ in light of these concerns with context and interpretation? The issue of the term “philosophy” being used solely for Western philosophy, inherited from the Greeks, has been argued to be an issue of categorization. As Jonathan Z. Smith points out, categorization is a fundamental character of human understanding (Smith 1982). The concern about the tradition within which a thinker resides is an important one. The questions that an author hopes to address in their thinking are not separate from the tradition that determines these questions. The cultural/hermeneutic inheritance that informs thinkers is an important element of a thinker’s work. So, in this light, the question of which tradition one works within is an important one. Nonetheless, we cannot disregard the possibility of inter-tradition dialogue, not only because it has seemed to be a historical fact (relating back to the concept of polycultural analysis), but also because declaring incommensurable boundaries between traditions denies opportunities for dynamism and change within a tradition. As I have argued above, declaring that ‘philosophy’ is Western is the attempt to discipline the category of philosophy.

While Morny Joy and Richard King explicitly call for feminist and postcolonial analyses, Comparative Philosophy is presently focused on the question of what it means to compare. I will examine two authors, Alasdair MacIntyre and Bernard Faure, who examine what it means to do comparative philosophy.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in “Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues,” argues that the presuppositional framework of systems of thought are incommensurable (1991). He focuses on the traditions of Confucianism and Aristotelianism and their notion of first principles. He argues that what counts as first principles, for each tradition, are so different as to be unable to ever meet on common ground—

they are incommensurable. He attempts to construct a way in which we can still have cross-tradition communication beyond this gap. He argues that for this communication to happen, each tradition needs to create a history of the other from its own presuppositional framework. Then each tradition would assess where there may have been failures in the other tradition based on an assessment of the criteria of success rooted in the presuppositions of the analyzing tradition. This process would provide a site for inter-traditional dialogue, where each can attempt to provide answers from their own tradition where they feel there is a lack of progress in the other.

MacIntyre's discussion of incommensurability makes essentialist assumptions about culture and amplifies them. The idea that cultures are incommensurable is an assumption that presupposes its own conclusions. It assumes that there are such things as distinct cultures or traditions, it assumes a particular idea of culture (not accounting, for example for various cultures or sub-cultures within a particular region that identify themselves as different from one another), and it assumes a kind of boundary between these delineated cultures. We have seen with the notion of multiculturalism the problem with this kind of essentialization.

What polyculturality shows us is that the blending of cultural frames already happens to a large degree. The historical evidence for this, when one starts looking from this perspective, is almost overwhelming. If we just take the example of Buddhism moving from South Asia to East Asia or South-East Asia, we can see that there were significant hurdles to the translation and the acceptance of Buddhism in China. Nonetheless, this exchange did happen over centuries, and affected China in multiple ways. If traditions are incommensurable, how can we explain Buddhist-Shinto syncretism in Japan? If MacIntyre is recommending a method for comparison, I question the value of a method that essentializes traditions so thoroughly.

Another problem I see in the notion of incommensurability, or even the notion of fixed boundaries between traditions, is that it does not account for the differential power relations of

those traditions and of those who are doing the comparison. If Aristotelians have more resources within structural discourses and institutions, then they would be able to have their examination of the problems of Confucianism become a priority. The confrontational structure of MacIntyre's position could then become a tool for more powerful discourses to oppress or marginalize other discourses.

Jacques Derrida quotes de Montaigne in his article "Signs, Structure, and Play": "There are no facts, only interpretations of interpretations" (1978). There is some truth to this, and indeed, MacIntyre's analysis echoes this sentiment. He argues that we have interpretive traditions, and the comparison of them is also an act of interpretation. His major point is that his meta-level interpretive stance is as historically contingent as any other, and this is why, necessarily, any comparison is incommensurable with others—because it is always biased and parochial (MacIntyre, 1991: 106). While MacIntyre sees this as a weakness, I would argue that it is the unavoidable state of affairs and the only way that we can go about the act of understanding. Furthermore, all interpretive traditions are dynamic precisely because of this fact. Given the early stage that Comparative Philosophy is in, I think there is great opportunity for new interpretive models to be ventured that will give us innovative and interesting approaches to knowledge, instead of essentializing and providing potentially combative stances from which to start. I find that MacIntyre's approach not only fails to account for how power can affect comparison, but also that it gives up far too quickly on the benefit of context and interpretation.

Bernard Faure's *Double Exposure* (2004) takes an interpretive direction that assumes that all interpretation and comparison is parochial and value-laden. His analysis is a genealogy of sorts. He uncovers the history of Orientalism in the study of Buddhism and attempts to provide a general historical and context sensitive narrative for Buddhism and Western philosophy. In this way he attempts to create some new questions with which we can interrogate either tradition.

Faure's text tends towards generalizations to open new avenues of interpretation. *Double Exposure* is a text that moves back and forth, asking questions but not coming to any definite conclusion—which may be part of Faure's interpretive strategy. He takes up an analysis of the notion of two truths (ultimate and conventional) in Buddhism to interrogate Western philosophy, and uses Western rationality to question Buddhism. His effort is an attempt to blur boundaries and create insight. His project seems to be a practical application of the postmodern critique of meta-narratives in favour of opening up dialogue.

However, I don't think we need to throw out narratives entirely just because they can be problematic—the same can be said of narratives that we can say for categories: we cannot function without them.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, what is important is that we are clear about what these narratives and categories give us, and to what degree they encourage or resist forms of domination. In this light, *Double Exposure* can be seen to resist the totalizing structure of narrative. On the other hand, it may actually participate in the problem of the complicity of power and knowledge. Faure's method relies heavily on the reader to trust the direction that the author is taking, and to trust that it will do justice to the material. Given this, I would prefer an analysis more explicit about the context-sensitivity of the subjects being compared.

Macintyre and Faure are quite aware of some of the problems with hegemonic discourses and practices. However, what is needed is more self-critical and explicit engagement that interrogates what an analysis can bring to the problem of reproducing forms of domination in comparison. What is needed is not some way to transcend parochial interpretive narratives, but rather to keep modifying narrative traditions to take up new challenges. Whatever the gaps in the works of the authors above, they remain important because they highlight some of the issues we need to face to construct a more methodologically sound comparative project.

---

<sup>10</sup> Even the idea of not having a narrative remains, in many ways, a narrative.

With both thinkers we can identify a gap that the authors hope to address. For Macintyre, the gap is between worldviews and this gap is incommensurable. In my view, however, one must reframe the problem that Macintyre posits (incommensurability) by understanding that cultural context is polycultural. To hypothesize a gap between cultural axiologies is to assume that there is some epistemological boundary that cannot be crossed. From the position of polyculturality, cultures are always in some sort of commensurable dialogue. What becomes important then is not the search for a standpoint from first principles, as Macintyre alludes to, but rather a contextual analysis that attempts to understand how culture is mediated within networks.

In some ways, the gap that Faure is addressing is the space left by the critique of meta-narratives, and thus he seems to come from the other end of the philosophical spectrum as Macintyre. And yet, the lack of a substantial narrative is a symptom of a toothless postmodernism. A guiding narrative for comparative enterprises allows the reader or interpreter of one's work the ability to see more clearly one's interests. Indeed, I find the gap that Faure leaves in his book to be a potential site of unexplored assumptions under a method that bracket's the author's own stake in the comparative project. My aim in the present work is to elaborate a method that addresses the need for comparativists to engage with, challenge and rethink their own interests in the comparative project with practical strategies to avoid the pitfalls that narratives bring to analysis. That is, a self-critical awareness of one's situatedness with the awareness of the structural elements that affect one's work and position is more effective at addressing the ethical problems of narratives than just avoiding narratives altogether.

What my analysis of these thinkers reveals is the importance of more substantial analysis of comparative methodology in contemporary scholarship. The gaps we see in Macintyre and Faure's work is indicative of the contemporary practice of Comparative Philosophy. As I have shown, categories (religion/philosophy; *jiao*, *darśana*) are already implicated in presuppositions



and interests that shape the kinds of conclusions at which we arrive. As well, the history of many of these categories and the structures of knowledge and power (specifically colonial power) are implicated in their usage. Discursive structures that are connected with power relations (such as Orientalism and colonialism) influence the effects of the use of categories and the presuppositions brought to bear in the comparative project. An analysis of comparative methodology must take into account the connection between power and knowledge and its effects on comparative work.

Categories are part of the methodological complex that shape our ethico-political situatedness. As the discussion by Defoort and Raud above showed, categories are not value-neutral, but rather highly influenced by the discursive situation in which they reside and are disseminated within. Implicit in categories are the presuppositions that make the categories possible tools of analysis in the first place. To get a more thorough understanding of the categories we use, we have to understand them within the histories of the various contexts in which they are deployed and how they relate to those contexts. The question of whether particular categories should be used is in some ways subordinate to the questions of how and why they are used and the effects of their usage. It is from that standpoint that categories can be more effectively evaluated—by any criteria.

The presuppositions one brings to bear in one's comparative analysis predetermine the possibilities of where this analysis can go. In some ways, we cannot avoid the context that produces our presuppositions—this is a fundamental and necessary aspect of methodology. How one conceptualizes the questions being asked, the problems to be encountered, or the nature of the object of study prefigures the possibilities that one takes up to answer the questions one asks or one's conclusions about the nature of the object of study. In theoretical short-hand, the questions that one asks already have imbedded in them the answers one will find.

The first important task of methodology is determining the presuppositions and effects of the questions that one is asking. The second important task of methodology is to engage with the

question: by what criteria do we evaluate the appropriateness of a particular methodology? It is towards these questions that political, ethical, discursive, and scientific methods become the primary focus. Where my work situates itself in relation to these questions and the method of comparison is in an elaboration of feminist and postcolonial analyses that significantly affect how we look at these two fundamental tasks. While there might be a desire, given the myth of “objective scholarship,” to attempt to find a value-neutral perspective that is appropriate to methodology, as Joy has pointed out, the work of feminist and postcolonial thought shows that the belief in a value-free perspective (or “God’s eye view”) in actuality has its own value-laden interest and baggage.

In some ways the insight that all analyses are interest-laden is an important starting point for engaging in the evaluation of methodological presuppositions. If we start from the perspective that all knowledge is interest-laden, we can bring to light more clearly what is at stake with each perspective and see the potential consequences. We are also better able to see in our own work our self-interests and the effect of our own contexts and positions within these contexts.

In the following chapter I will examine recent work in feminism and postcolonialism on how we can come to terms with contextualization and the connection between power and knowledge. By delving deeper into the problem of Orientalism and discourse as it relates to comparison, I will provide an ethical standpoint that can be used as a guide in evaluating problematic discourses and an author’s response to their own presuppositions.

## Chapter Two: The Challenge of Feminism and Postcolonialism

Much of the previous chapter examined the various ways that situated and parochial forms of knowing influence our very ability to create academic discourse. That is, I raised a number of issues that seem to challenge the very way we can come to understand any subject matter. Furthermore, implicitly or explicitly, a number of challenging questions about cross-cultural or comparative discourse raised the spectre of power and domination shaping the way we construct knowledge.

### Section 1: Foucault's Perspective on Power/Knowledge

While a number of thinkers have examined the connection between knowledge and power to my mind Foucault's understandings have been some of the most influential on late-twentieth and twenty-first century attempts to understand the connection by focusing on some of the most salient parts of Foucault's work in relation to the perspective of cross-cultural comparison. I will take up those particular aspects of Foucault that have been heavily influential on postcolonial and feminist thought. Foucault's insights into power and its relation to the construction of knowledge opens up a challenge that necessitates a fundamental shift in how we, as scholars, must think methodologically and theoretically about our place within and as agents of the production of knowledge.

The history of postcolonial and feminist (as well as queer-) theory has a history that can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Both theoretical perspectives, however, have been transformed by Foucault. Edward Said's *Orientalism* understanding of power/knowledge was explicitly reliant on Foucault's. Much feminist theory has taken up some version of Foucauldian

discourse theory. In particular, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1999) applied Foucauldian and deconstructive understandings to the question of gender. This is not to say that thinkers from both postcolonial and feminist perspectives are not critical of Foucault, or do not have other influences; nor is it to say that either theoretical perspective merely apes Foucault's thought. Nonetheless, given the impact of Foucault on feminist and postcolonial theory, in particular the theorists that I will be examining in this work, and the kinds of arguments I will be making, I think it necessary to provide some analysis of Foucault in order to show how certain feminist and postcolonial analyses either take up or deviate from his work. Furthermore, Foucault's perspective can have (and has had) a significantly fruitful dialogue with hermeneutic thinkers.

For Foucault, power is relational, embedded in daily exchanges of force in language, personal and institutional interaction, systems of knowledge, institutional structures and even how we relate to ourselves. Foucault and his commentators note that this is contrary to the more common view of power as something possessed and used. This latter understanding of power Foucault calls 'juridical', which is regarded as a negative force—a force that prohibits and represses. Foucault argues that this conception of power as a negative force—one that says 'no'—cannot, as an analytic of power, describe adequately how people accept power. That is, if power is basically a 'top-down' phenomenon that provides injunctions, people would not accept it for ordering their lives. He says:

In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power; one identifies power within a law which says no; power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition. Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? (Foucault 1984, 61)

Also, such a notion of power does not reflect the diffuse and positive way that power creates, produces and orders our lives. How are we “brought to obey” the various institutions, structures, governments, and interactions that surround us in our daily lives? To answer this question, Foucault reconceptualised power as something diffuse and relational, imbedded in historical processes, not as something held and used, but something that orders relations in subtle, continuous and affective ways. In Foucault’s understanding of power, power is much more than an injunctive force: it is productive. He continues:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (61)

In earlier texts like *Discipline and Punish* (1975) Foucault attempts to elaborate on how new techniques of power helped to create institutional structures like the prison, the education system, the police, the army, and to a degree, the acceptance of the state itself and all its bureaucratic apparatus. He analyses the production of these institutions historically; he traces the conditions that made it possible for these new elaborations of power to produce a genealogy of material effects on the populace. In tracing this history Foucault develops an understanding of discourse as the dissemination and production of ways of knowing that provides the arena in which discourse could be thought to order the world in certain ways (i.e. the development of those institutional aspects of the state above).

In developing his understanding of discourse Foucault mentions in an interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino (Foucault 1980, 51-75) that he had to mediate between the two main forms of methodological analysis at the time: phenomenology (and what

some call phenomenological hermeneutics, i.e. the work of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer) and structuralism (typified by Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Noam Chomsky). He found both approaches unsatisfactory for attempting to arrive at an understanding of power. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's authoritative text on Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1982), has as its central organizing theme an analysis of how Foucault attempts to mediate and go beyond these two movements. They summarize Foucault's relationship with structuralism and hermeneutics (both of which they conceive as being responses to phenomenology):

He has sought to avoid the structuralist analysis which eliminates notions of meaning altogether and substitutes a formal model of human behaviour as rule-governed transformations of meaningless elements; to avoid the phenomenological project of tracing all meaning back to the meaning-giving activity of an autonomous, transcendental subject; and finally to avoid the attempt of [phenomenological hermeneutics] to read off the implicit meaning of social practices, as well as the hermeneutics unearthing of a different and deeper meaning of which social actors are dimly aware. (xxiii-xxiv)

For Foucault, both structuralism and hermeneutics limit the manner in which one can conceive of the project of understanding the relationality of power. In hermeneutics he saw the reliance on asserting an essential subject for analysis as the limiting factor, whereas structuralism does not account for the specificities of history in more local ways that can account for how power manifests: "While the structuralist claims to find cross-cultural, ahistorical, abstract laws defining the total space of possible permutations of meaningless elements, the archaeologist [the name given to the practitioner of the methodology espoused by *The Archaeology of Knowledge*] only claims to be able to find the local, changing rules which at a given period in a particular discursive formation define what counts as an identical meaningful statement" (Dreyfus and

Rabinow 1982, 55). This focus on the local manifestation of knowledge and power is related to Foucault's self-reflective application of his insights on power to his own project.

It is precisely at the intersection of how the subject is conditioned by various ways of knowing and how that conditioning is put into the play of relations (between people and between people and institutions) that Foucault's notion of discourse attains its explanatory power. In other words, as Rabinow states in his introduction to *The Foucault Reader*, Foucault "refus[es] to separate off knowledge from power" (1984, 7). For Foucault, the complex, inter-relational, diffuse nature of power is never separate from the ordering of knowledge. As Rabinow points out, "His strategy has been to focus his work, both political and intellectual, on what he sees as the greatest threat—that strange, somewhat unlikely, mixing of the social science and social practices that developed around subjectivity" (7). In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault provides a systematic understanding of this connection between the knowledge produced in certain domains, like social science, and its relation with practice. He wanted to trace how the discourse of, for example, psychiatry or medicine were instrumental in the development of material institutions and the self-understandings people adopted that allowed them to be ministered by psychiatry or medical professionals.

For this task, Foucault developed an analysis of the mechanisms that connect discourse and power. A discursive regime is the rules and limits by which discursive formations operate. Discursive formations are the patterned relationships and transformations that the elements within a discursive regime, namely statements (*énoncé*), exhibit. This analysis of discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is Foucault's attempt to understand the "types of serious speech acts [*énoncé* ], the regularities exhibited by their relations with other speech acts of the same and other types... and in the gradual and sometimes sudden but always regular transformations such discursive formations undergo" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, 49).

An analysis of discourse attempts to understand the domain and effect of a particular discursive regime on the construction of particular subjects. It examines how discursive formations are influenced by and how they influence the relations between subjects and between subjects and their relationship to structures and institutions. Simply put, discourse is the patterned way that certain kinds of statements, in relation to each other, productively shape activity and thought. Foucault says in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, “whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say that we are dealing with a discursive formation” (1972: 38).

One of Foucault’s most sustained discussions of discourse is in his “The Discourse on Language”, a talk given in 1970 at the Collège du France. The main topic of this speech is discourse itself. He articulates a number of principles and regulatory patterns in discourse in the West. As an example, he argues that Western discourse operates in a series of exclusions between truth and falsity. We can note the transformation of how truth is delimited throughout history—for example the shift of attitudes towards reason and madness articulated in *Madness and Civilization*.

More fundamentally, Foucault provides a broader idea of what discourse and genealogy are in this talk. Regarding discourse, he says that, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality” (Foucault 1972b, 216). That is, discourse is regulated through heterogeneous processes, connected to power structures, in order to cope with, deal with, and channel acceptable ways of producing truth. Genealogy is compared to criticism. Where criticism analyzes the “processes of rarefaction, consolidation and unification in discourse”, genealogy concerns the “effective formation of discourse” (233). Criticism calls out the



instances of control at play within discourse, genealogy concerns itself with how these instances are formed and their productive effect.

Tracing the transformation of Foucault's thought throughout his life, there is a general consensus that he set aside the archaeological model, which focused quite heavily on discourse, for the genealogical model, which focused more on the historical trajectory of the interaction between knowledge and power. Nonetheless, even in his later works Foucault retained the use of the term discourse and its relative importance for understanding the phenomenon under consideration. In *The History of Sexuality* he makes many references to the relationship between discourse and power in relation to his analysis of the history of Western sexuality. Avoiding a juridical notion of power Foucault proposes that we must ask different questions that highlight the productive nature of power. We must ask how local power relations produce truth itself (1978, 97).

The shift here is to not only question the legal, state or dominating forms of power that shape the truth about sex. Rather, it is to focus on the various local relationships that create networks of power, how those make possible the kinds of discourses that developed, and how those discourses affected the power relations at play. Indeed, discourse is not just a power-play of words, but the active construction of truth; truth, for Foucault, is the end product of discursive regimes. He says further, "If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power has established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it" (98). Knowledge and power are intimately linked in the production of institutions (i.e. the prison, the asylum), social relations (sexuality, the family), and internal worlds (the self as it is conceived in different time periods). Discourse is the site of analysis to understand this connection: "indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined

together” (100). That discourse is the site where power and knowledge meet is one of the most important insights I take from Foucault.

As an example, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examined how the roots of modern subjectivity can be found in the governmental model of the prison. Its techniques of surveillance, built into the architecture, practices and discourse of the prison creates a certain kind of governmentality that subjects become disciplined to internalize. “A corpus of knowledge, techniques, ‘scientific’ discourses is formed and becomes entangled with the practice of the power to punish” (Foucault, 1977: 23). Foucault’s argument is that through the model of the prison, techniques to discipline bodies and subjectivity were created and disseminated throughout most modern institutions (schools, hospitals, administrative buildings) for the newly created nation-states to regulate themselves (215-219).<sup>11</sup>

*Discipline and Punish* thus examined how many of the fundamental characteristics of these interrelated mechanisms and their institutional deployments developed in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. While it would be a whole other book and research project to explore the interrelation of the European penal system, its effect on institutional configuration, its relation to the self-surveillance of sexuality and finally its impact on colonialism and the discourse of Orientalism, much of Chapter 2 will be spent connecting some of these historical links in the network of power relations.

A major element of Foucault’s genealogical perspective can be found in *Discipline and Punish*. This text and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* can be read as an attempt to highlight the major institutional and discursive forces that shape subjectivity. *The History of*

---

<sup>11</sup> Within *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that the deployment of the discourse about sexuality was another element of the creation of the modern subject. The tools of surveillance used to discipline bodies was also used to discipline sexuality, a major effect of which was to reproduce the bourgeois middle-class necessary for the stability of capitalist nation-states (Foucault 1978, 114, 126-127, 139-150).

Sexuality examines the discursive forces that shape the subject in relation to the new bourgeois family structure produced from the study of sexuality, the sociology of the state, and the necessity of a bourgeois subjectivity for the development of the nation-state. *Discipline and Punish* explores the institutional forms of modernity and how most institutional structures (even architecturally) of the modern nation-state follow the model of the prison. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault points out that subjects are disciplined by these institutions into modern subjects who at work, school, or leisure can internalize the forces of organization and surveillance that form the bedrock of modernity. *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* and *Discipline and Punish* provide a comprehensive picture of many of the forces that shape the modern subject, whether through discursive means, the external or internal forces of surveillance, or the direct disciplining of bodies.

The picture that develops from this genealogy of the modern subject looks as follows. The nineteenth century saw the birth of the nation-state with its reliance on the bourgeois subject being constructed within a capitalist system through systems of surveillance, the disciplining of bodies, and the construction of the truths of modernity. The sciences of sociology (used to construct and understand the new subjectivity of the citizen) and sexology (to not only construct a new middle class but also to insert lines of penetration into subjectivity) and science in general (a Eurocentric but dominant episteme that has the benefit of privileging Western discourse) contribute to naturalize this new modern subject and produce subjectivity in ways that conform to the needs of capital and the shifting force relations of globalization. Modern institutions take the form of the prison in ways that discipline subjectivity in certain ways and help the internalization of manifold discourses within subjects themselves. While there is resistance within these connected relations of force against hierarchical forms of power, the systematic way that these diverse interrelated networks of force interact often domesticate resistance within them.

The goal of Foucault's analysis is to construct an idea of how discourse, governmentality and the disciplining of bodies inter-relate to construct subjectivity. This analysis has an ethical goal in that, once we can see how our subjectivity is constructed by discourse and discipline, we can imagine new subjectivities and invent strategies to disseminate new discourses and new disciplines that produce different subjects. The hope is for these new subjectivities and their relation to power structures to be more egalitarian and less oppressive than the subjectivities we are presently invested with.

While Foucault speaks of many kinds of discourses (psychiatry, about sexuality, about perversion, about madness, illness, criminality, etc.), later feminist and postcolonial thinkers have more broad discourses in mind. For postcolonial theory, Orientalism is a discourse; for feminism, patriarchy. What they focus on is the notion of a discursive regime and the regulatory aspect of discursive formations. In the following I will examine the kinds of critiques made by Edward Said and postcolonialism in dialogue with Foucault, and following that will do the same with feminist critiques.

## Section 2: Said and Foucault

I would like to examine Edward Said's understanding of Orientalism as a discourse. In order to show how Foucault's ideas transform how we think about power and our ethical responsibility as knowledge producers. By identifying the discourse of Orientalism in relation to colonial power relations Said is challenging the way that knowledge about the Orient is connected with power. Like Foucault, he wants to connect contemporary discourse within a historical development.

Said conceives of three inter-related meanings for the term Orientalism. First, Orientalism is an academic discipline: "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the

Orient... is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism” (Said 1978, 2). Second, is a “more general meaning for Orientalism” (2): it is a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (2). In this regard, Said is getting closer to the notion of discourse that he wants to elaborate. It is the sum of all the ways that people have reified the distinction between the ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’; it is the production of this distinction through the statements that collectively imagine the Orient as such.

Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny and so on. (2-3)

Third, in his analysis of Orientalism, Said more properly takes up the Foucauldian insight that knowledge and power are intimately connected. In a well-known passage, which is the one most commenters take as Said’s central point in his analysis of Orientalism, Said accounts for this third meaning of the term Orientalism:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (3)

Said here is connecting, in a loose manner, the way knowledge about the Orient is produced by power and serves power. Making statements, authorizing views, describing and

teaching it—all knowledge-production activities—are connected to settling, ruling, dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. What Said is arguing is that one cannot understand the processes that shape knowledge of the Orient without taking into account the agendas that that knowledge serves. It is in the very next sentence after the quote above that Said references Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* and their notion of discourse in order to "identify Orientalism" (3). He states, "my contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient..." (3). Although Said is inspired by Foucault's notion of discourse, some critics of Said argue that he misappropriates this notion. Therefore, it is important to examine in more detail how Said uses the term 'discourse' in *Orientalism*.

Said's positing of Orientalism as a discourse may be one of his most important contributions to postcolonial theory. As we have seen above, Said calls Orientalism an "enormously systematic discipline" that allows European culture to manage and even produce the Orient. Said goes even further: "so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism" (3). Said does not want to say that this is a total domination of all thought and action about the Orient, but nonetheless that Orientalism affects *in some way* all thought and action about the Orient. For Said, Orientalism shapes all knowledge production about the Orient and this is where his second definition of Orientalism becomes important. Said argues that part of the reason that the discourse of Orientalism is so pervasive is because the key element that anchors the discourse is the distinction between Orient and Occident, East and West. That is, Orientalism is fundamental to any distinction between the two pairs of the binary East/West (2). That there are whole disciplines of scholarship (the first definition) dedicated to Orientalism compounds the problem further.

Orientalism as a discourse has the particular quality of being a collective imagining. Here we have another tension in Said's analysis. The focus of Orientalism is an attempt to analyze the constructed and imagined Orient. He wants to distinguish between a "real" Orient and the "imagined" Orient of Orientalism.

There were—and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously far greater than anything that could be said about them in the West. About that fact this study of Orientalism has very little to contribute, except to acknowledge it tacitly. But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient. (5)

Like Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of imagined communities, Said here is making the claim that the Orient is an imagined construct. And it is this imagined Orient that Said is taking as his object of analysis, not any "real" Orient. In this way, Said's focus is on the production of the Orient as a category associated with a network of representations and stereotypes. He provides a picture of how this network sustains itself and its connection with political and colonial interests. Fundamental to Said's analysis is a deep mistrust of the distinction between what he calls 'political' and 'pure' knowledge. Highly sceptical of the goal of a neutral, non-political knowledge, Said instead argues that one cannot be divorced from one's circumstances in life. As humans, we are necessarily motivated by interests and affected by the world around us. The conceit of a 'pure' knowledge can actually serve to obscure the many ways that life circumstances can affect us in political ways.

For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. (Said, 1978: 11)

This claim is connected to the insight that during the British Raj, for example, no English person in or speaking about India could avoid being fundamentally implicated in the circumstances of how they could be in India or have knowledge of the Orient. It is precisely because of the fact of British colonial power that the British were dealing with and speaking about the Orient. For Said, this means that an American speaking about the Middle East-as-Orient must necessarily be doing so precisely connected to American interests in the region. Said's call is to start connecting the dots between the "big facts" of broad systemic discourse and imperial power and the "minute" instances of action that both reify and reflect Orientalism.

### Section 3: Postcolonial Criticism

There have been a number of arguments against Said's position, and there is not the space to examine them all in detail here.<sup>12</sup> My goal is to provide a more general account of the kinds of critiques made of Said's work in order to provide a picture of the kinds of problems Said's work poses and how these problems have been addressed by scholars. I will first give a general idea of the earlier critiques of Said's work, and then talk specifically about the critiques of Aijaz Ahmad and Richard King, two scholars who generally support Said's critique of Orientalism but who also provide some of the most salient critical engagements with him.

---

<sup>12</sup> Varisco 2007 provides an excellent summary of these critiques.



The general tenor of the critique of Said follows a few patterns. One kind of response is to attack Said for presenting a polemical work.<sup>13</sup> I do not think it useful to examine this kind of response to Said, as not only does he concede that *Orientalism* is polemical, this kind of argument, in many ways, misses the point that Said was making about the interconnection between how the political dimension of human subjectivity necessarily affects one's work. In a way, the polemical nature of *Orientalism* is part of its point.

Another response to Said is to defend a certain kind of “good” Orientalist from Said’s critique of the discipline. The most referenced critic who adopts this approach is David Kopf (1980). He argues that there were “good” Orientalists who defended the Orient from anti-Oriental Westerners. The problem with this kind of response to Said’s critique of Orientalism is that it fails to appreciate the kinds of analysis engendered by an understanding of discourse. Regardless of the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ intentions of Orientalists, all are working within a discursive framework that sets the agenda for how the ‘Orient’ is discussed. The categories of Orientalism (e.g. the binary between East/West, the spirituality of the East versus the materialism of the West, the attendant essentialisms, the concept of the oriental despot, etc.) that are disseminated within an Orientalist discourse are still only reified by the “good” Orientalists. Whatever seemingly good results are attained by pro-Oriental Orientalists—or indigenous nationalists—reify the discourse that drew sharp distinctions between the Orient and Occident, and further contributed to the systemic knowledges that continued to enable certain kinds of oppressions or facilitated certain kinds of colonial (or neo-colonial) ways of “dealing with” the Orient. In his response to Kopf, Richard King argues that “[D]espite Kopf’s protestations to the contrary, the Orientalists were also acting in complicity with European imperial aspirations even if their rhetoric was less confrontational, aggressive and condescending” (King, 1999: 88). Further, in his critique of Said,

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, Bernard Lewis 1982.

Kopf, “fails to appreciate the implications of scholarly knowledge within a wider field of power relations that cannot be reduced to the level of individual intentions” (89).

The main inadequacy of the “good Orientalist” critique of Said is a failure to understand the kind of systemic discourse that Said is criticizing. As such, there is a disconnect between a response like that of Kopf and Said’s critique of Orientalism. Kopf’s critique of Said does not do anything to dispel Said’s analysis of the connection between broad discursive regimes and individual works, motives, policy, and activities. Admittedly, discourse analysis in general is often charged with being unable to make this connection explicit, but a significant amount of work since the late 1980s has shown significant progress in mapping these connections in specific domains of study.

Another author who takes up a similar argument is Edmund Burke III in his “Orientalism and World History: Representing Middle Eastern Nationalism and Islamism in the Twentieth Century” (1998). In this article, Burke attempts to argue against the status quo of Middle-Eastern scholars in their inadequate understanding of the rise of a certain kind of political Islam—what he calls Islamism or fundamentalism—but also to argue that Said’s perspective is also inadequate. He raises a similar point to Kopf, about the existence of ‘good’ Orientalists, when he says, “[I]t is important to note that some Orientalists opposed imperialism or wrote favourably about Islamic culture and society; that some Middle Eastern nationalists were themselves inspired by Western Orientalist writings; and that nationalist and Muslim theological positions have their own biases and assumptions” (1998: 490). While Burke makes some interesting and valuable insights about the use of the categories of modernity and tradition in this paper, he falls into the problem of failing to see how ‘good’ Orientalists can often be part of the problem of Orientalism as a discourse.

Another common critique of Said's critique of Orientalism is that Said essentially reproduces the kinds of asymmetries that he critiques the Orientalists for affecting; Said is accused of denying the agency of the 'Orientals' in his analysis. Richard King points out that "critics of Said's work have suggested that he places too much emphasis on the passivity of the native, and that he does not really discuss, nor even allow for, the ways in which indigenous peoples of the East have used, manipulated and constructed their own positive responses to colonialism using Orientalist conceptions" (86). King then provides examples of what is termed the postcolonial predicament, where once colonized locals take up colonial structures (in this case Orientalism) for their own anti-colonial purposes. This is a very salient point, and many scholars have made significant inroads in both accounting for the postcolonial predicament, but also in uncovering sites of indigenous agency, complicity and resistance to colonial structures of domination and knowledge. This kind of work is important for examining the ways that the broad structures of discourse and the activity of individual actors are interconnected.

In defense of Said's *Orientalism*, however, as the watershed text for introducing discourse into the problem of postcolonialism, it may not be necessary for Said to have engaged with native agency. His text is an attempt to uncover (or model) a systematic discourse that, in very broad strokes, is applied to the East by the West. In an analysis of the discourse itself, which according to Said's analysis elides the native, any examination of the native would be superfluous—at least at the introductory stage of applying an analysis of Orientalism as a discourse. We have seen how Said claims that *Orientalism* is a study of the way the West has constructed the Orient in its own imagination, however imperfectly Said stays on this path. If the native only figures in the imagination of the Orientalist in stereotypical ways, recourse to examining 'real' natives provides an antidote to how those stereotypes are false or true, but may not significantly contribute to how Orientalism hangs together as a self-referential discourse. That being said, later postcolonial authors have done an excellent job complicating this broad picture:

for example, Homi Bhabha's analysis of hybridity challenges the univocality and dominance of colonial structures, while Richard King's analysis shows how the imagined Orient served to mirror the West's own self-construction and desire.

Richard King has benefitted from twenty years of postcolonial analysis since the publication of Said's text and his work shows an excellent insight into the multifarious issues that influence our understanding of the Orient, India in particular. Two of his works, *Orientalism and Religion* (1999a) and "Orientalism and the Modern Myth of 'Hinduism,'" (1999c) are nuanced accounts of the way that Orientalism deeply affects the categories we use in attempting to understand religion in general and Hinduism in particular. In both works, King shows how the category of Hinduism itself is a kind of colonial construct, an innovation of the nineteenth century, that is then internalized by indigenous populations. The construction of Hinduism is itself produced by the complicity of colonial Orientalists and indigenous (often Brahmanical) elites.

King, as he elaborates his own perspective on Orientalism, analyses both Said and a number of works dependent on Said's perspective for their scholarly perspectives. One of these is Ronald Inden's *Imagining India* (1990). King takes a significant number of insights from Inden's work, including the critique of scholarly objectivity that uses an analysis of systemic inter-relations between knowledge, power and discourse. He says of Said and Foucault, "it would seem that it is impossible for any narrative or discourse to be free from some form of ideological conditioning" (King 1999a, 94).

King separates his viewpoint from Inden's on one point in particular that I want to draw out for more analysis. He says,

Inden, however, often overstates his case. I do not accept that all explanations of Indian thought and behaviour imply the irrationality of Indians. Explanations are necessary because Indian culture is different from Western culture in many respects; rejecting Orientalist projections of an 'Other' will not smooth out these differences. Providing an insightful account of Indian thought for a Western reader, while it may involve some distortion of the material under consideration, is necessary for this reason and not because Europeans are superior or more rational than Indians. (91)

To understand some of the context of the debates around Orientalism, I think it would be helpful to unpack King's critique of Inden. The first point noteworthy from this passage is the category, "for the Western reader". One of the most powerful points of Said and one that he held onto in his later works was that the most important step in resisting Orientalism is to abandon and resist the binary of East/West or Orient/Occident. So, *prima facie*, we see King here reifying this binary and thus subtly continuing to promote the binary as a meaningful analytical category. There is more to read from this, however.

What the homogenizing of "the Western reader" does is assume that there is a single "way" that Westerners are. That is, whatever explanation is "necessary" is aimed at a (Western) audience that will respond better to some explanations over others. From a certain perspective, this essentializes Westerners. The sentence following the quote above reads, "Equally, reductionist accounts can be, and are increasingly being, applied to Western history and culture itself" (91). The foundation for reductionism is an attitude that attempts to simplify and organize the complex into the more simple. This can be deeply problematic when significant elements of the complexity of a situation are elided or ignored, or, even worse, when reductionist accounts become stereotyping. What seems missing from King's point here is the self-reflexivity

to see how his characterization of the "Western reader" actually contradicts his own critique of homogenization of the West.

There is a more fundamental problem here, however. The problem with the binary of East/West is that in every usage of these terms or categories, we are in reality making these terms meaningful and making the East/West divide meaningful. So, in this case, whatever explanation is needed for a "Western" audience is precisely an explanation that constructs the West in a certain homogenizing way, and because of the play of the relationship between East/West in the semiological space of discourse, also constructs an East, even if it is located more particularly as India. India becomes the 'stand-in' for the East, in this case and we are back to the process of Othering that Said and others are so critical of.

Another problematic aspect of King's approach is his statement that India and the West are different. My response goes back to the founding critical question of comparison that I mention in the introduction, "So what?" One might respond that the French and British or Canada and the United States are "different in many respects". With this in mind, why then is it necessary to construct a "Western reader" in the particular case of India? Indeed, what are the interests behind the interests in knowing about India? And here we are back to the complicity of power, knowledge and interests. Knowledge is not independent from the interests that shape the desire for knowledge and the kinds of knowledges desired. Furthermore, highlighting which differences are more meaningful or noteworthy is an interpretive choice that reflects more on the interpreter than the subject matter. So, in choosing what to mark as different or noteworthy, one is actually actively constructing the object. In the case of King, and perhaps all cases where one is tailoring knowledge to a particular audience, it is also the active construction of that audience. King is constructing the West at the same time as he is constructing the East/India in his work.

To be fair, this is a small paragraph in an otherwise excellent analysis that does well to take care towards the issues I am raising above. On the other hand, we can question just how much this particular point influences the rest of his analysis. What I think is important to take from this analysis of King is that Orientalism is quite easily reified, even when attempting to critique it. I think it important to interpret Said's critique of Orientalism as part of a project of identifying a certain local instance of the mechanism of power in discourse. Fundamental to this mechanism is always, implicitly or explicitly, a reference back to the binary East/West. As for King's hermeneutic understanding of Orientalism, it is summed up nicely:

Nevertheless, the general tenor of the arguments furnished by Foucault, Said and Gadamer, despite their many differences, does seem to imply that the very act of interpretation by Western Orientalists when approaching the Orient inevitably involves an appropriation and 'colonialization' of the material under consideration. (King, 1999: 95)

If the subject matter of one's examination is the Orient, one is inevitably contributing to Orientalism.

In my opinion, the most forceful critique of Said is found in Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992), and in his earlier article "Between Orientalism and Historicism: Anthropological Knowledge of India" (1991). Ahmad criticizes Said in one of the more common ways that I mention above. Ahmad criticizes Said for eliding the agency of the Other whom Orientalism oppresses. He says, "what is remarkable is that with the exception of Said's own voice, the only voices we encounter in the book are precisely those of the very Western canonicity which, Said complains, has always silenced the Other" (Ahmad 1992, 172). Ahmad, goes further with this critique than others: "Who is silencing whom, who is refusing to permit a historicized encounter between the voice of the so-called 'Orientalist' and the many voices that 'Orientalism' is said so

utterly to suppress, is a question that is very hard to determine as we read this book” (172-3). Pulling this sentence apart, we see that first Ahmad accuses Said of silencing the Other. To a degree, Ahmad has a point. Said only examines Western canonical authors and their imaginings of the Orient. There is very little recognition of the voices of the colonized here. In order to understand the structural interconnectedness of Orientalism, one need not examine indigenous voices, because Orientalism is not concerned about the Other on its own terms, but rather the Other as a foil for the self.

It follows from this that Ahmad’s second thread in his statement is a case of shooting the messenger. Ahmad critiques Said for not allowing the encounter in history between the Orientalist and the Other to come forth. Again, we can respond to Ahmad that the scope of the delimiting of Orientalism need not speak of this in detail, nor does an analytic of the domain of Orientalism and its structural generalities necessitate a comprehensive engagement with the historical encounters that engender the localized, specific ways that Orientalism plays out.<sup>14</sup>

Ahmad makes some excellent points however when he examines the discursive place of the critique of Orientalism itself. One well-established theoretical move in attempting to understand the connection between power and knowledge in a discursive field is to account for who benefits from a particular discourse. Whether from a Marxist or Nietzschean (Foucauldian) lens, examining who, how, and in what ways a particular discourse shapes the lives of people can tell us something about the dynamics of power that it mobilizes and helps us evaluate the use knowledge is put to.

In the case of the critique of Orientalism, Ahmad makes an interesting observation that,

---

<sup>14</sup> In some ways my defence of Said here goes against Foucault’s understanding of how to analyze discourse. For Foucault, it is in the local instantiations of discourse and its use that we can see how power and knowledge interact. Said’s project in *Orientalism*, however, is to gain a general view of the content of Orientalism.



The perspectives inaugurated in *Orientalism* served, in the social self-consciousness and professional assertion of the middle-class immigrant and the ‘ethnic’ intellectual, roughly the same function as the theoretical category of ‘Third World Literature’... to be the narrative of authenticity, the counter-canon of truth, good faith, liberation itself. (197)

The critique of Orientalism became a discourse that could signify authenticity for specific effects.

What the upwardly mobile professionals in this new immigration needed were narratives of oppression that would get them preferential treatment, reserved jobs, higher salaries in the social position they already occupied: namely, as middle-class professionals, mostly male. ... For such purposes, *Orientalism* was the perfect narrative. (196)

It is worthy to note that a major theme of Ahmad’s *In Theory* is to reassert the importance of Marxist analysis over and against the popularity of postmodern or post-structural analysis and their dismissals of Marxism. In this light, his Marxist analysis of the class effects of the narrative or discursive effects of the critique of Orientalism is damning. If the only effects of the identification and critique of Orientalism is to make an already privileged non-Western middle-class more privileged within the West, then *Orientalism* has failed to help the Other it claims to advocate on behalf of.

Ahmad’s critique is salient from both a Marxist class-consciousness critique and a Foucauldian critique that is concerned about the productive use and effect of knowledge. In some ways, we can say that a Foucauldian critique is consequentialist. The consequences of how a discourse is used may be more important than the deontological basis for determining what is the “good” production of knowledge.

While I do not wish to rebut Ahmad's critique, and I find it valuable to continually keep it in mind regarding postcolonial criticism, I would respond that postcolonial theory and concerns of power, knowledge and discourse have been a boon to activists on the ground in practical application. In informal discussions with activists and social workers, I have been informed that the kinds of critiques of Orientalism that abound in postcolonial thought have been indispensable in framing and formulating projects to improve the lived experience of those suffering from systemic oppression. Indeed, much of the work in the social care industry is increasingly could be characterized as becoming attuned to fighting systemic oppressions, including discursive oppression.

Ahmad makes some other quite solid critical points about Said. For example, Ahmad quite rightly points out that Said's disorganized methodological underpinnings vacillate between a Foucauldian or Gramscian systemic analysis and a High Humanism<sup>15</sup> that are fundamentally at odds. As Ahmad points out, "it is not for nothing that [Foucault] never constructed the history of any discourse on the basis of master-texts" (167).<sup>16</sup> In some ways, *Orientalism* reflected Said's own academic training in literary theory and as Ahmad shows quite clearly, this leads to a problematic construction of discourse within the text.

*Orientalism* is never quite clear in its elaboration of how it attempts to understand discourse. Ahmad gives us two selections of the text that make this abundantly clear: "As this book has tried to show, Islam *has* been fundamentally misrepresented in the past..." is contrasted with the passage "My whole point about this whole system is not that it is a *misrepresentation* of

---

<sup>15</sup> By High Humanism Ahmad means a set of texts within the Canon of European languages that are not only deemed literary but express a kind of humanistic ideal. Ahmad uses the adjective "Auerbachian" here to describe the Canonical works examined by Erich Auerbach, "the conventional form of a continuous European literary textuality, all the way back to Ancient Greece" (Ahmad: 166).

<sup>16</sup> While Foucault does use figures like Freud and Nietzsche in his texts (For example, he does mention Freud in his *History of Sexuality* and uses Nietzsche's work extensively), Ahmad is pointing to Foucault's use of a variety of texts (legal, administrative, literary, medical, judicial, political and so on) in order to show the breadth of a discourse. Said, uses only one form of text, the literary Canon, for his analysis.

some Oriental essence...” (193). By the juxtaposition of these two quotes we see the theme that is repeated within the text: the text is never quite sure where it stands on the issue of how to interpret discourses. Luckily, however, many later works within postcolonial theory rectify this problem in *Orientalism* in their own work. And it is in this light that I find the excessive focus on tearing apart the minutiae of *Orientalism* to be misguided. Its impact is undeniable and those who are inspired by the work do not repeat the many flaws of the text. In some ways, this focus on Said’s work is perhaps another case of the “myth of Origins” wherein if Said’s work is shown to be problematic, then the whole edifice of the discursive critique of Orientalism will fall apart. This allows the critic of postcolonial analysis to not have to engage with the discipline and ignore the ways that it might influence their own assumptions and prejudices.

That aside, the final critique of Ahmad that I examine will allow us some perspective regarding Orientalism as a discipline. Ahmad points out that Said’s cataloguing of Orientalism goes back all the way to the Greeks. Here, Said’s tension between High Humanism and Foucauldian perspectives asserts itself again. On the one hand, akin to his training in canonical literature, Said analyses the whole Western canon for traces of Orientalism. On the other hand, Said claims to take the late eighteenth century as his starting point for the discourse of Orientalism. Ahmad is right to point out that this is not only a radical departure from the kind of genealogical analysis that Foucault does, but that it takes as real the re-imagining of the ancient world by the moderns.<sup>17</sup> However, I think Said is on to something with the identification of the eighteenth century as a good starting point for Orientalism as we experience it still today. The kinds of power structures engendered by colonialism were not independent from a whole set of discursive tropes in the construction of Europe: the nation/state, the bourgeoisie, the structures of capitalism, the foundations of global networks of power, and the dissemination of the primacy of

---

<sup>17</sup> As I have shown in Chapter One, the construction of the West as a lineage tracing back to the Greeks is a continually reproduced imagining of the West. Ahmad too holds this position.

the Western episteme, to name a just a few, were all inter-related and mutually constructed parts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century reconfiguring of the West and its relationship with the Other. It may have been the case that some Orientalists sought inspiration from the ancients, and repeated some of their ways of knowing the Orient, but the fundamental manner that the binary between Orient and Occident was aligned to the structures of power, discourse and knowledge were a novelty of the last two and half centuries. Said may want it both ways, in regards to highlighting Orientalism's connection with nineteenth century colonialism but also wanting to somehow connect it with some essential characteristic of the West. I think his mistake is in not accounting enough for how the West is just as much of a construction as the East, and exploring that insight in a way that better accounts for the material conditions for the discourse of Orientalism.

In all, Ahmad's critiques are interesting but unconvincing when they argue that a discursive analysis of Orientalism is flawed. Said's own conception of Orientalism may indeed be flawed, but Ahmad backs away from the implications of taking a genealogical approach to the binary between the Orient and Occident and its connection to colonialism and, today, the contemporary global structures that still favour the West. An analysis of the discourse of Orientalism has become a major part of postcolonial analysis

Postcolonialism has moved beyond Said in many ways. Many have moved beyond talking about Orientalism and its general structures, but focus more on the issues of identity and globalization, themes of resistance that work in more localized ways than a general account of discourse. Many postcolonial thinkers have connections to South Asia, and the Subaltern Studies group which examines the role of the subaltern as a category and the realities of what has been called the postcolonial predicament (see Young 2001, 349-359).

Uma Narayan's work, *Dislocating Cultures* (1997), explores the many political uses of the concept of culture and their effects on subjectivity, especially in regards to third-world women. She points out, for example, that the notion of culture was a colonial product that remains with us as a relic in the postcolonial predicament. She says,

The picture of 'cultural differences' between 'Western Culture' and the cultures of various Third-World colonies that was constructed in colonial times, and that persists in contemporary postcolonial incarnations, was never a simple *descriptive* project of describing 'cultural differences.' It was inevitably implicated in the political and discursive struggles that mark the colonial encounter... (15, emphasis original)

The discussion of the connection between knowledge and power has moved from broad discourses like Orientalism to more localized and specific forms of power relations. There has been a shift from Foucault's focus on one major discourse (madness, sexuality, prison, etc.) to an elaboration on particular issues of contestation in the interstices and strategies of power, identity and knowledge.

Narayan, for example, in "Contesting Cultures," examines the issues of nationalist accusations of Westernizing towards third-world feminists in order to delegitimize them under the sign of what it means to be an authentic Indian women. In another essay, "Restoring History and Politics to 'Third-World Traditions,'" Narayan examines the use of the concept of *sati* in contemporary representations as replications of colonial understandings in order to show how there are other ways of representing third-world traditions that "present a very different picture of what these 'traditions' are" (43).

Though not explicitly mentioned, at times Narayan describes the regularities of Orientalism to explain the processes that shape the strategies she is highlighting. For example, in relation to *sati*, Narayan argues that Western feminist conceptions of *sati* may be limited by the contextual understandings they come from. She argues, “[C]olonial history is the terrain where the project of ‘Western’ culture’s self-definition became a project heavily dependent upon its ‘difference’ from its Others, both internal and external” (80).

Much of post-*Orientalism* postcolonialism is focused on uncovering the postcolonial predicament and strategies of postcolonial subjects to resist their own complicity in the remnants of colonialism. Narayan does this at the level of representation, identity and the strategic use of concepts. Other postcolonial thinkers, such as Ashis Nandy and Homi Bhabha, engage with the internalized remnants of colonization for the postcolonized.

In an analysis of this phenomenon in India, Ashis Nandy’s *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) explores the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized and postcolonial subject. He argues that the colonization is most powerfully a product of the mind, and decolonization is the process of resisting internalized colonial structures of thought. He says:

This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds. (1983: xi)

In terms of the complexities of the remnants of colonialism and the new forms of subtle colonialism or imperialism that come out of postcolonization what we see is that these structures of colonialism are in institutions like the university, government or legal systems, and in

discourses like ‘culture’, ‘authenticity’ or ‘tradition’, but that they are also internalized in postcolonial psyches.

Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) takes up these insights about the colonized mind and argues that this internalization of colonial consciousness is a site of mimicry, irony and subversion. His analysis too involves the process of a decolonization of the mind. That is the internalized projection of the colonial image of the Oriental is a farce where the postcolonial subject can use this internalized image as a site of play to resist, mock and ironically destabilize the remnants of the postcolonial predicament on the subject.

#### Section 4: Feminism and Foucault

There has been much controversy within feminism about Foucault. For some, Foucault is a figure who embodies a kind of patriarchal ignorance of the issues facing women, or he represents a threat with a seductive theory that leads to political nihilism. For others, he offers an insightful theoretical understanding to the socio-political realities faced by women, or a more comprehensive picture of the kind of social constructivism first popularized by sociologists like Peter Berger.

Much of the work done in the 1990s by feminists who are sympathetic to Foucault involved an attempt to legitimize Foucault and defend him from the critiques of other feminists on the way to showing how useful his understanding of power is to fight systems of domination that affect women. These debates have cooled down in the last ten years, but there has been an interesting intersection between queer theory and feminism on the value of Foucault's work for understanding the kinds of issues that intersect these two analytical perspectives. I am quite

sympathetic to feminist's defence of Foucault and refer the reader to these feminist authors. One of the better 'state of the field' defences is Ladelle McWhorter's *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (1999). McWhorter is a well known feminist author but her analysis shines when she combines her feminist and queer theory analysis. While I do not wish to rehash her exploration of the critique of Foucault and her defence here, I find *Bodies and Pleasures* to be an excellent example of the impact of Foucault on feminism and will use this text as central to my analysis of how feminism has been affected by Foucault. Before I do that, I will explore some of the history of feminists' analysis of Foucault.

Much of the work of recent feminist examinations of Foucault has focused on his later work, *The History of Sexuality* some hearkening back to *Discipline and Punish*, as well as his later lectures.<sup>18</sup> As Aurelia Armstrong summarizes,

Although many feminist theorists remain critical of Foucault's questioning of the categories of the subject and agency on the grounds that such questioning undermines the emancipatory aims of feminism, others have argued that in his late work he develops a more robust account of subjectivity and resistance which, while not without its problems from a feminist perspective, nevertheless has a lot to offer a feminist politics. (Armstrong 2005, Par. 1)

I would like to focus my analysis on Foucault's conception of power, discourse and genealogy from feminist perspectives.

Foucault's genealogical analysis attempts to explore history without recourse to an autonomous subject.<sup>19</sup> In many ways, this helps to combat the presumption of the neutral Euro-

---

<sup>18</sup> Taylor and Vintges 2004; see in particular McLaren 2004, 226

<sup>19</sup> As Foucault says: One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history that can account for the



centric subject. But, from a perspective of feminist critiques of essentialist gender constructions, Foucault's method is often used as a reference. As Armstrong says, "[r]ather than assuming that the movement of history can be explained by the intentions and aims of individual actors, genealogy investigates the complex and shifting network of relations between power, knowledge and the body which produce historically specific forms of subjectivity" (Par. 2).

In regards to feminist philosophy, Foucault's method undermines the basis of western philosophy. Susan J Heckman argues that Foucault's questioning of the "will to truth" that undergirds the western philosophical canon has been of particular interest to feminists: "[w]omen, who have been excluded from the canon since its inception, have found common cause with Foucault in his challenge of the canon" (Heckman 1996, 1). She continues, arguing that while "feminists have used Foucault's methods to engage in gender analysis... Foucault's work has raised profound questions about the validity of a feminist politics" (2). In particular, she comments that Foucault's decentering of the stable subject elides the ability for women to assert a privileged epistemology from the standpoint of "women": "[h]ow, they ask, can we seek the liberation of "woman" if, on Foucault's account, no such entity exists?" (2). In response, Hekman argues that Foucault's analysis shows us rather that this 'modernist' conception of the subject is actually inadequate to understand the situation of subjects in the contemporary world, that there is no longer a universal standard of knowledge about the subject that we can rely on, and finally, that the way power and knowledge interact cannot be understood by past methods indebted to a naïve methodological view of the knowing subject.

It is this connection between power, knowledge and the 'female' subject that I want to focus on. Here I agree with Armstrong that, "[a]n analysis of power relations is central to the

---

constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness through the course of history. (Foucault 1980, 117)

feminist project of understanding the nature and causes of women's subordination" (2005, 5). The crux of Foucault's analysis is not only that subjects are heavily influenced by the historical genealogies that construct subjectivities, but that we have constructed what it means to be a subject in the first place. He traces the forces, interests, and discourses that provide the horizon for subject-construction as well as the networks of power that shape these forces. In doing so, Foucault challenges us to rethink the notions of power. As we saw earlier, Foucault wants to argue against the top-down view of power that is quite common. To add some more perspective to this understanding, Jana Sawicki (1996) explains how Foucault makes a distinction between domination and power.

Whereas "domination" refers to a situation in which the subject is unable to overturn or reverse the domination relation—a situation where resistance is impossible—"power" refers to relations that are flexible, mutable fluid and even reversible. (170)

Domination is the case where the normally fluid and negotiated relations of power that tend to be a give and take have become metastasized and solidified. Groups or individuals who are being dominated within power relationships, according to Foucauldian understandings of power, are those that have found the networks of possibility highly constrained. In this light, Foucault is concerned with how we construct our own subjectivity as an important site for increasing possibility. His later work analyzes how to understand the contemporary forces that help to shape subjectivity. He also examines how we use the discourses around us to shape ourselves, and to provide new ways of thinking about subjectivity that we can use to strategically affect those forces that want us to construct ourselves in certain ways, or, as Sawicki puts it, "a politics that partly involves attention to forms of self-constitution and narrativization of marginal subjects that resist the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic medico-scientific discourses" (1996, 176).

What this means for feminists is that Foucault provides an interesting and robust perspective on power that allows people new strategies for combating, resisting and interacting with power structures to fight for gendered justice. Foucauldian analysis challenges the liberal ground of identity that has been such an important element of resistance and subjectivity. On the other hand, it shifts how we think about power in such a way as to allow for a widening of the possibility of action and recreating ourselves as more mobile points of activity within a field of power networks.

The eight-page introduction to *Bodies and Pleasures* (1999) by Ladelle McWhorter covers a wealth of insightful and interesting concerns, but I would like to focus on one point she makes that relates to my analysis of Said in the last section. I mentioned the consequentialist bent in a Foucauldian analysis in the last section as it pertained to what effect the discourse of colonial discourse analysis (to use Ahmad's terminology) has on those who take it up as a form of analysis. McWhorter uses this analysis of the productive effect of a discourse to frame her own goals for the book—in her case, the object of study is the impact of Foucault's work (the last five books especially) on the political life of individuals, with her own example as a central 'text' to be read. In other words, she is attempting to locate how Foucault is used: "I am not so interested, then, in what his works have to say, although what they have to say is crucial to my study; instead I am most interested in what they tend to do" (McWhorter 1999, xvii). She adds, "instead of asking what kinds of political stands Foucault takes and whether he is justified in taking them, I'm interested in asking what kind of political effects Foucault's texts have" (xix).

This shift in analysis from an examination of the content of Foucault's work to an examination of the effect of his work is one that I think is quite radical, and may be one of the more important elements of Foucault's works. Like other May '68 French thinkers, Foucault adopts this shift that moves us toward looking at the place of an author in relation to their context.

This shift radically transforms the questions one asks and shapes the way knowledge is conceived. When one starts asking how people read a text, interpret it, and its place within a discursive field, it opens up the horizon of possibility of the person taking up this kind of study. What I have argued briefly in the last section is that this kind of analysis is also done by Marxists, and I would add that hermeneutes take this up as well. In this light, I would agree with Paul Riceour when he connects Marx, Freud and Nietzsche together as the 'masters of suspicion' that there is a deep similarity between the kinds of analysis engendered by these thinkers. I will examine this in much more detail in Chapter 3.

*Bodies and Pleasures*, as I mentioned above, is a feminist text, but it is also a queer theory text. McWhorter's strength is her ability to show how the broader structures of the knowledge of sexuality had impinged on her own life: for example, her ten years of institutionalized surveillance under the construction of her subjectivity as a 'homosexual'. Of course, this analysis matches up quite handily with the construction of subjectivity as gendered or as a cultural other (Oriental). Much interesting work has been done in explicating and using Foucault's notion of power to better understand the broader knowledges that are mobilized in constructing and policing gender. This is the same for sexuality. McWhorter, in an interesting analysis of common understandings of knowledge, argues that the standard picture of knowledge is such that acquiring knowledge or truth will help to liberate us. But her own experience as a queer woman has shown the opposite play out in much of her life. Using Foucault's scepticism of 'knowledge as truth' she reverses this understanding. She says, "knowledge is the first step towards discrimination. What we're always told, of course, is that knowledge is the first step toward health, happiness, and freedom, because the opposite of knowledge is repression" (13). On the contrary, she argues, "unless you are straight-straight-straight, if you're honest about your sexuality, liberation is not what follows; lockup is. The truth does not make deviants free" (13).

And, a natural question to then ask is: what is a deviant? And here, again, Foucault is useful with his genealogical analysis of history. Deviancy as a category and the content therein is historically contingent and determined by a range of factors many of which are political, in the Foucauldian sense of a whole network of discourses, networks of relationships, institutions and the interplay of these forces through history.<sup>20</sup> McWhorter summarizes Foucault:

Once various administrative projects began to coalesce into larger social projects and movements, certain broad strategies for gathering information and maintaining and even extending control began to repeat themselves. Thus there arose vast networks of interrelated mechanisms of power. Foucault sets out to show how these mechanisms of power operated in the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, and what these operations indicate about the purposes at work in their deployment. (1999, 19-20)

The feminist and queer theory point that I want to draw out from McWhorter's analysis is that the techniques of mechanisms of power were not aimed toward a repression of truth, but rather a two-fold operation. First, these techniques were deployed to productively proliferate knowledge into new domains. Second, these techniques served to integrate into people's conception of subjectivity an internalization of surveillance and domination.

To elaborate on the first operation, the expansion of sexology served the purpose of proliferating our understanding of the variety of human sexuality. And, as Foucault shows, this is the actual construction of sexuality. As many have pointed out, for example, our categories of 'hetero-' and 'homo-' sexuality were only introduced into our lexicon in 1892 (see e.g.: Halperin 1990,15; McWhorter 1999, 37). The deviancies produced by this explosive proliferation of sexual

---

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the concept of deviancy, Foucault's collected lectures on the subject are published in a volume entitled *Abnormal* (2003). Quite a bit of *The History of Sexuality* also explores this in less explicit ways.

encoding, on the one hand, expanded what we 'know' about sexuality, but, on the other hand, also closed off other possibilities of knowing.

The second operation, when put in play with the first, allowed for a whole structure of external norms and internal judgements to become deployed in domains that lay previously untouched. As Ladelle McWhorter points out, "The most obvious result of this incorporation of perversions was not the control or eradication of them but the extension of power throughout the populations that harbored them" (1999, 23).

This is quite easy to see with queer subjectivities insofar as there is extensive documentation into the effect of this extension of power into the lives of queer-identified people (whether they identify as such themselves or are identified by others). But this kind of self-surveillance and self-policing is also a hallmark of a feminist analysis of the discourse about gender. In many cases, much of the daily strains and oppressions that women face as identified by feminists often are internalized pressures. A standard example would be the 'double-bind' that many women face between being a perfect housewife/mother and a career women. Much of the pressure here is deployed into the internal world of women's lives. To point out another related example, the 'oriental' diaspora often has to account for the tension between the 'model minority' stereotype and the Euro-American understanding of self-expression.

The pattern that develops from McWhorter's analysis of Foucault is one that shows how knowledge, both institutional and discursive, shapes subjectivity and is always already imbedded in a play of power relations. That is, all knowledge is corrupt, so to speak—knowledge itself is never independent of these networks of power relations. Indeed, as I will show in Chapter 3, this is something that Foucault has in common with hermeneutics. For example, this seems to match up quite nicely with Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of prejudice. To quote McWhorter on how she

understands this interplay in her own life, she talks about how the Victorian concern for onanism opened up a whole set of deployments that, though altered, remain with us today.

The solitary pleasures of childhood—whatever they might have been—were now objects of medico-scientific study subject to careful regulation according to theories and norms constructed by people most of those children would never even meet. And those lines of penetration would remain in place long after childhood ended and even long after masturbation was no longer considered an abnormality or vice. The systematic regulation of childhood is a fixture of our own day, and now its uses far exceed any purposes for which it may have originally been set up. We've all been subjected to and shaped by it, while officials still maintain that their only interest is in the welfare of children and the future of the nation. When I was a child, many of those same "lines of penetration" and the mechanisms built to maintain and exploit them were used to monitor drug use, prevent teenage pregnancy (out of wedlock, that is), and, of course, track down little queers. It was in great part this vast surveillance system, rooted in the war on masturbation, that made my life very miserable through adolescence. (21-2)

We can never be independent of these networks of power and knowledge because we grow up imbedded in them, we form all of our knowledges in relation to them, indeed, our very subjectivity is shaped within, by, and in relation to these networks. Furthermore, these are not top-down power structures dominating us. Rather, we take them up ourselves, are complicit in them, and mediate the world through, by, and against these structures. This is the challenge and opportunity that Foucault's genealogical analysis brings to feminism, postcolonialism and queer theory.

There are two things to take from this analysis of feminism, postcolonialism and queer theory in relation to comparative philosophy and religion. The first is that comparative knowledge

is like any other knowledge. In Chapter One, I gave a brief account of the genealogy of comparison as we know it today. All of the interrelations of power and knowledge that frame feminist and postcolonial concerns affect "comparative" knowledge. The second is that the kinds of answers that are constructed to respond to the problematic of power/knowledge can equally benefit comparative work. The answers that are given in feminist and postcolonial literature are ethical answers.

For feminist and postcolonial thinkers who are indebted to Foucault, the analysis of discursive and structural regimes is in order to develop strategies to counteract the dominating forms of knowledge (and their place in institutions and power relations) that marginalize and harm people. Feminist analysis argues that the discursive regime of patriarchy tends towards the oppression of women (and men) based on gender. Postcolonial analysis argues that Orientalism and neo-colonialism structurally oppress people of colour, and the non-Western other. Their aim, in taking up the analysis of discourse, structures and the intersection of power/knowledge is an ethical aim. My argument is that unless comparative work takes the analysis of feminism and postcolonialism seriously, it risks contributing to the marginalization and domination of women and non-Westerners.<sup>21</sup>

#### Section 5: Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Foucault

How do we ethically respond to the problem of the interrelation of power and knowledge? That is, if knowledge is never independent from networks of power relations, is it possible to have un-tainted, or neutral knowledge? And if not, how do we even gauge what is ethical anymore?

---

<sup>21</sup> We can also see, by corollary how this is also the case for other kinds of systemic oppressions: heteronormativity, class, racism, and so on.



What we have seen already is that knowledge is always already a function of historical processes that are related to institutions, discursive structures, context-dependent networks of power and interests. Generally speaking, how we know is a function of the particularities of time and place. In the last section, we explored Foucault in relation to postcolonialism, feminism, and queer theory. One key insight taken from Foucault is that it is appropriate to question from where we get our epistemological presuppositions. That is, the notion of an autonomous, willing, rational subject is a function of a genealogical context. It is a historical contingency. But so too is the idea that knowledge and epistemic concerns are contingent.

In that sense, we can be left with the question: If, at this time and place, we have two models of epistemic understanding (rationality and genealogy), how do we choose between the two? Or, from another vantage point, it is to ask: what is to be gained from the shift in thinking about subjectivity as autonomous rationality towards genealogical contingency?

What we have seen in postcolonial, feminist and queer theorists is the argument that the presupposition of autonomous rationality, the hallmark of Enlightenment thought, purports to equalize all subjects. In practice, however, it can exclude or actively oppress or marginalize people. For example, in feminist literature, the category of the neutral has been analyzed to be a white, male default—women who do not approach this standard are deemed irrational and deficient (Bordo 1990; Lloyd 1984). This same logic applies to Orientalism and the non-Western subject (Inden 1986). The so-called neutrality of objective knowledge does negatively impact marginalized groups. The assumption that “neutral” and “objective” knowledge is actually neutral cannot be taken as a given. It cannot also be taken as given that “objective knowledge” is as objective as assumed.<sup>22</sup> Everyone is embedded in a context and is a product of their time. Thus, those who assume their “objectivity” are never such. They are gendered, raced, classed, oriented

---

<sup>22</sup> From a Foucauldian standpoint, this is assumed. It is feminist and postcolonial analysis that shows the ethical import of so-called objectivity.

subjects within a context that constrains their epistemological assumptions within certain allowable discourses.

In an ironic reversal, genealogy epistemically equalizes subjects in a more robust and practical manner than does the assumption of autonomous rational subjectivity. Genealogy treats every subject as a product of their context, while autonomous rational subjectivity assumes a limited standard of ideal subjectivity that negatively impacts those not fortunate enough to be privileged with the ideal subjectivity.

This leaves us still with the question of ethical import. If ethical knowledge cannot be mediated except through the institutions, structures and contexts that produce subjects and subjectivity, is there such a thing as ethics? Here we can return to the challenge of feminism, postcolonialism and queer theory and ask what are the productive, real effects on people of the institutions, structures and contexts that help to shape us? Or, rather, is it to argue that we gauge the ethicality of knowledge by its practical effects? Regardless of the way a knowledge is produced, or its underlying assumptions, what effect does a certain knowledge have on people?

This is an important question for discourse theory that can actually help to bypass the question of the consequences of abandoning the quest for objectivity. It changes the focus of one's scholarly inquiry from a naive focus on neutrality towards a view that attempts to understand the motivations and effects of knowledge production. Furthermore, this shift is highly productive and constructive. It opens up avenues of inquiry and insight that can bring to light contextual factors that bear upon both one's object of study and the act of scholarship itself. As we have seen with postcolonial thinkers and our discussion of Marx and Hegel in Chapter 1 scholarship can be mobilized for a variety of purposes. Thinking about the aims of one's scholarship—that is, the consequences of the particular kinds of knowledge one is producing—

can be a considerably constructive process. To what end do we want our scholarship to move towards?

It is somewhat unfortunate that the term 'postmodernism' has become an atrophied and stereotyped term since its heyday in the 80s and 90s. It seems that the nebulosity of the term and the subject matter it is meant to encompass has become a kind of cypher where the use of the term says more about the person mobilizing the term than a category of analytical rigour. The term is often a catch-all for various figures who, on closer examination, have quite substantial differences (Jencks, 1987: 9). I am in some sympathy with those who desire to substitute terms like 'late capitalism' or 'late modernism' for postmodernism.

While 'postmodernism' is often derided as nihilistic and relativistic, when we look at other figures who are typically considered postmodern, such as Foucault and Jacques Derrida, the 'post-' of postmodern seems somewhat overstated. Both of these thinkers challenge previous understandings of and attempt to transcend well-established ways of thinking, and yet both thinkers do so for ethical reasons. In my reading of Derrida, deconstruction is the implicit liberative potential of texts not as totalizing or essentializing emanations of meaning, but rather as iterative sites for continued, changing meaning production. In *Acts of Religion*, for example, he says of an essay by Walter Benjamin that it "lends itself to an exercise in deconstructive reading", and that "This deconstruction does not apply itself to such a text, however. It never applies itself to anything from the outside. It is in some way the operation or rather the very experience that this text, it seems to be, first does itself, by itself, on itself" (Derrida 2002, 264). But he also says, "Deconstruction is justice" (2002, 243). Thus, no one can pin down absolute meaning in texts and thus there is always potential to liberate meaning in texts from dominating interpretations of them. The consequence of this is that dominating interpretations can be reinterpreted for more just results.

For Foucault, the shift to a genealogical approach allows the subject to transcend the contextual condition that helps to construct it by creating a new subjectivity. He says:

[C]riticism... will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (Foucault, 1984: 46)

Put bluntly, by seeing the genealogy that produces subjects, subjects themselves can liberate themselves from these processes and construct new, less oppressed, more liberated subjectivities. This shift towards thinking of liberation in meaning-dependent settings is part and parcel of my current reading of postcolonialism and feminism.

The ethical *telos* for postcolonial thinkers is for the end of a hierarchical ordering of global structures, liberating non-Western subjects from neo-colonialism, but also from the postcolonial predicament. Thus, their scholarship aims to show the effects and interests of those discourses and practices that continue to structure the way that the Western and non-Western play out—with the ethical consideration of constructing strategies to resist the way these hierarchies play out. In many ways, feminist understandings are similarly inclined towards strategies for resisting gendered structures of domination. In both cases, the *telos* is liberative, explicit, and constructive while at the same time being decidedly non-neutral and interest laden. The strength of these perspectives is that they can account quite handily for their interests. The neutral, it is often argued, is in fact often hiding a deeper agenda.

Morny Joy takes this problem of objective or neutral knowledge to heart but offers a hermeneutical solution as opposed to a genealogical one. She notes, in her exploration of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspective, that:

As [Ricoeur's] work progresses from just the interpretation of texts, what becomes important is a person's own self-understanding, and the depth of his/her own awareness of the problematic nature of any claims to knowing, especially those asserting that an absolute or objective truth has been attained. (2004, 190)

Joy has taken to heart the challenge of feminists and postcolonial thinkers that knowledge is context and interest dependent. In response, she argues that one must shift to a self-reflexive method that can account for how the epistemic is inevitably implicated in subjectivity. She relates this to a popular trope of Ricoeur about the "masters of suspicion" and how this inspires his own "hermeneutics of suspicion":

Here he referred to Nietzsche, Marx and Freud as the "masters of suspicion." By this term Ricoeur wished to indicate that these thinkers alerted us to the possibility that we may not be fully in control, because of external or unconscious influences, of what we say or do and that we harbour prejudices. Such a position would thus put into question most claims to the attainment of universal truth. (191)

It is the challenge of the marginalized and oppressed, those who have been most negatively affected by unacknowledged interests and presuppositions, that can be a wakeup call to reflect on our unexamined prejudices. Those in privileged positions within the hierarchies of discursive and political structures are often in a position of not having to confront their own complicity in these structures. I will speak of this in more detail in relation to the concept of intersectionality, but one thing to note is that Joy is embracing the challenge to privileged

positionality that feminism and postcolonialism enact. She places this challenge of feminism and postcolonialism (I would add queer theory to this list, among other discourses) within the critical standpoint of the hermeneutics of suspicion.

Joy argues that hermeneutics of suspicion is a critical position that challenges us to examine those external and unconscious elements which shape us and the prejudices we carry (often because of those elements) (2004, 191). When described this way, this characterization is insightful. For example, feminism, although not monolithic, often names the systemic discourse within which gender is policed and women (and men) are oppressed patriarchy. Patriarchy is both an external and unconscious (or internalized) discursive and political system that often shapes the presuppositions we carry. Enough feminist ink has been spent explaining the various ways that this plays out such that I need not belabour the point. So too, with postcolonial theory, we can speak of the naming of forces like Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism, racism, and even neo-colonialism in the same way. That feminism and postcolonialism are part of a robust hermeneutics of suspicion seems reasonable.

#### Section 6: Social Justice and Intersectionality

Recent thought on the issues of patriarchy and Orientalism and other discourses that name systemic oppression have begun to investigate the way that these systemic oppressions inter-relate in people's lives. Intersectionality attempts to analyze these various systemic oppressions in interaction—instead of taking each in isolation. Each individual has a unique context of place of birth, parentage (biological, guardians, or other), race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion and so forth. All of these positionalities entail a place within the hierarchies of systemic networks of power relations. To treat each in isolation provides some analytical insight, but misses how these hierarchies interact in the lived experience of daily life, and thus

isolating these discourses, while providing a rigorously more manageable site for analysis, will miss a significant aspect of how people live, act or think based on their place within the networks of power relations. Intersectional analysis is useful for showing the relative privilege or oppression people face within their position in hierarchical oppression. Patricia Hill Collins explains intersectionality in the following way:

Building on a tradition from Black Women's Studies, intersectionality has attracted substantial scholarly attention in the 1990s. As opposed to examining gender, race, class, and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another, or, in the words of Black British sociologist Stuart Hall, how they "articulate" with one another. Current scholarship deploying intersectional analyses suggests that certain ideas and practices surface repeatedly across multiple systems of oppression and serve as focal points or privileged social locations for these intersecting systems. (Collins 2000, 157)

One of the insights behind the move towards intersectional analyses was the recurrent problem in feminist scholarship and activism that assumed all women's issues were similar. The underlying problem was that feminists could homogenize women's experiences of patriarchy within certain domains that tended to be dictated by the privileged position white, middle-class, straight women had within the movement. Indeed this problem became so intensified that some black women and women of color, significantly, distanced themselves from a feminism within which they did not feel represented, or even respected. Simply put, feminism at large would often not take (or hear) the concerns and issues of women of color as seriously as the concerns of those of privileged positionality in other hierarchies (white, middle-class straight women):

Originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality was intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the

cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued that theorists need to take both gender and race on board and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences. (Davis, 2008: 68)

Since the 1990s, the concept of intersectionality has expanded to include a substantial number of vertices for intersection beyond the classic "race, class, gender" analyses the concept was most applied to. We now have analyses that take into account sexual hierarchies, disability, age, regional or global positionalities, religion, fat-phobia, to name a few. While this presents a very complex and undoubtedly unwieldy number of intersections for a broadly comprehensive account of systemic hierarchies or networks of power relations, it need not be the case that intersectionality need be a highly-structured Laplacian account of all oppressions and privileges. Indeed, such an attempt might be foolhardy given not only that these networks are always shifting and evolving in relation to each other, but also because we can only, in a finite world, interact and analyze in particular situations, in particular ways, within particular positions. To do otherwise is to tread within the prejudice that Morny Joy called the "God's Eye View". Furthermore, as Kathy Davis argues, this is a strength of intersectionality:

While intersectionality may not fit the sociological common sense concerning 'good theory' as coherent, comprehensive, and sound, it does provide an instance of good feminist theory... . Intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated. It compels us to grapple with this complexity in our scholarship. ... [I]t stimulates our creativity in looking for new and often unorthodox ways of doing feminist analysis. ... [I]t encourages each feminist scholar to engage critically with her own assumptions in the interests of reflexive, critical, and accountable feminist inquiry. (Davis, 2008: 78-79)



Critical to the insights of both intersectional analyses and the various particular forms of analysis we can isolate (race, class, gender et al.) is the ethical standpoint that accepts 1) structural and systemic hierarchies, and 2) insights towards strategically countering these hierarchies for the end of oppression. For many, and I would include myself here, the ethical standpoint so named is called social justice, or social justice theory. Of course, like any classificatory schema or identity standpoint, we cannot say that all social justice theorizing is homogeneous, just like we cannot say that feminism, for example, is monolithic; but in general, we can speak about social justice broadly—where part of the practice of it is the hashing out of difference within that identity or ethical standpoint.

If we accept the insights of the critique of neutral, objective knowledge we then have to account for the particular locations, interests and aims of each producer of knowledge. We also have to accept that every act of knowledge is then coloured by the positionality, interests and aims of its producer. We finally have to accept that the ethical trajectory of the individual who produces knowledge is influenced by their position within hierarchies and networks of power relations, whether they ascribe to the position of objectivity or not. From the view of objectivity, it would seem like every act of knowledge production is necessarily haunted by the spectre of subjective perspectives. Stereotypically, this subjective encroachment is seen as a weakness. However, it becomes a strength of knowledge production, once it is granted that every act of knowledge production is an ethical act itself. From this perspective we can actively and self-reflexively analyze our own position within hierarchies of systemic power and discourse, be self-reflexive about our own ethical aims and interests, and be attentive to the consequences of our knowledge production.

## Section 7: The Ethics of Knowledge Production and Comparison

Taking the insights about the connection between knowledge and power seriously in the context of comparison (in this case, comparative philosophy or comparative religion) means reflecting on the ethical ramifications of our knowledge production in act of comparison. It entails reflecting on the structures of discourse and power that shape the daily lives of the people we are comparing, or those who are affected by our knowledge production. In the case of comparative philosophy, the object has been the comparison of ‘philosophy’ ‘East’ and ‘West’. Ostensibly, comparative philosophy could be the comparison of any two philosophical discourses removed in cultural location, but in practice it is almost always East and West that are compared.

Fundamental to the critique of Orientalism as a systemic hierarchical discourse is the ontological/epistemological reification of the West versus the rest—on the binary between Occident and Orient, East and West. Thus we see the very foundation of comparative philosophy is already implicated deeply in the structures of Orientalism.

Furthermore, Comparative Philosophy is concerned with the comparison of elite forms of knowledge: the philosophers and great thinkers of various historical epochs, who were undoubtedly privileged enough to be mostly literate, mostly male, mostly cultural elites within their respective societies. Thus, from an intersectional concern for knowledge production, their thought reflects the elite, male, often highly-privileged standpoints of their respective time and place. The insights and lived experience of those not in the position of privilege to be able to read or write these texts are not reflected in these texts. These texts reaffirm cultural and material privilege. Furthermore, the comparison of these texts within a mostly “Western” field by culturally privileged elites further compounds the kinds of problematic elite navel-gazing that postcolonialism and feminism directly confront.

My aim in bringing up these issues is not to throw out the discipline as thoroughly corrupted. Rather, I think it important to take the same perspective as we do towards the presupposition of objective knowledge. It would be far more beneficial to retain the often insightful knowledge produced by these thinkers and by those doing the comparison. However, in the same way, we must be attentive to the self-reflexive necessity of accounting for the ethical and political considerations that are always embedded in knowledge production. That is, we need to ask, perhaps from an intersectional perspective, how do discourses like patriarchy, Orientalism, racism, classism, and so forth, influence our own knowledge production, the 'object' of study, and how our knowledge production affects those discourses and the hierarchical systems and networks of power relations that maintain oppression. To not engage with this self-reflection is to commit the same error as the God's Eye View: we will continue to reify whatever unconscious or systemic forms of knowledge production that we implicitly value. Would it not be far better to attain some agency in promoting ethical stances, rather than letting them work through us? Thus, accounting for our own positionality in coming to the act of comparison, we need to account for not only the context of those we are comparing and how it shapes their work, our own context and how it shapes us, but also the effects of our work on our context.

An example of this, and perhaps something valuable for comparativists to examine is that feminist scholars have been attentive to accounting for their subjectivity since the 1980s, where a large part of feminist literature included a methodological autobiography locating their own place and position, and then explicitly engaging with this and how it shapes the work at hand. This, at the very least, could be something very helpful for Comparative Philosophy.

Comparative religion, coming out of the discipline of Religious Studies, has the added complication of a history within the discipline of invoking the Insider/Outsider distinction. Comparative philosophy has not necessarily engaged whole-heartedly in this distinction--and my

general feeling is that this is due to the methodological bent of the field wherein it is often just looking at the texts of thinkers and only engaging with the context of the thinkers presented in a cursory manner. And yet, I think the insider/outsider distinction is an important distinction that needs to be addressed in light of the issues I've elucidated so far. The main thrust of the distinction, put generally, is that there is an epistemological distance between the insider of a religious tradition and the outsider. The insider has a privileged position with regard to 'living' the tradition, while the (most often scholarly) outsider has a privileged position of critical distance. Most positively put, both epistemological positions can contribute to the sum of knowledge in understanding a tradition.

And yet, if we take the position seriously that all knowledge is implicated in power, both of these privileged sites of epistemic location are conceptually problematic. Whether one is an insider or an outsider, one is embedded in a context that shapes their aims, interests, the kinds of knowledges and methods brought to bear on the subject and even the possibilities for how, where and in what way that knowledge is disseminated. So, while it might often be conceived that the insider has a privileged perspective in regards to the lived experience of their own tradition, this perspective elides all the complicated political concerns involved in identifying with a tradition. Simple questions can be asked about the category of the 'insider' that problematize the category's usefulness. If we were to speak of, say, a Hindu insider, we might ask: Which Hinduism? Are they Vaishnava, Śaiva, Śakta, or something else entirely? How much of their own discourse is shaped by the neo-Vedanta presuppositions that are brought to bear on the identity of 'Hindu'? What socio-political location is this insider? Are they an educated, elite, male Brahman? Are they a rural, illiterate, female Śūdra? How much does this location affect their understanding of Hinduism? Are they speaking for all Hindus? How much of the discourse of the privatization of religion is invoked in this understanding? Which insider has the authority to speak for Hinduism? Further, if we accept multiple voices within Hinduism, which voices should we privilege in our

account? What about the voices in history (and those left out of history, of which we have only traces)? Who is the audience, and what kind of Hinduism are they looking for?

We could ask very appositionally related questions about the outsider as well. Where is the outsider located? What are their aims, interests, methods? What has shaped their view and perspective on Hinduism? What authority do they have speaking about Hinduism? Whose voices are they privileging in their conception of Hinduism, and why?

Taken in this way, the categories of insider and outsider are naive locations that in many ways structurally ape the Self/Other binary of Orientalism. The Other is the insider if the Self is the scholar. The Other is the scholar, if the Self is the religious practitioner. And yet, within religious studies, we have people who are both scholars and practitioners. Do we conceive of their subjectivity as necessarily divided between these conceptual poles? Which pole weighs more in attempting to understand their contextual presuppositions?

From an intersectional perspective, the categories of insider and outsider are more important as identity categories of the knowledge-producer's self-construction. When understanding the positionality of an individual from class, race, gender, etc. analyses, whether or not one is an insider or outsider provides more interesting contextual data when that individual is conceived of as an insider or outsider, by themselves or others--eliding the question of whether they "really" are one or the other as naive. Indeed, a Foucauldian perspective is useful here. The question: 'To what productive use are the categories of insider/outsider made to play in discourse and the construction of subjectivity?' may provide more understanding than attempting to locate the 'truth on the ground', as it were. Furthermore, from a perspective of locating knowledge within power relations we can provide a more comprehensive--even if more open-ended, incomplete, and complicated--modelling of the data than one that necessarily elides certain kinds of data for a consistent narrative of insider or outsider.

Of course, to understand how the categories of insider and outsider are conceptually meaningful, one would have to attempt a genealogy of the contextual and meaningful ways that these terms have historically been brought into discourse, used, how their usage has changed over time, etc. In fact, this would be similar to a gender analyst documenting the structures of gender related to their subject matter that affect both themselves and the object of study. So, within feminism, a thorough analysis of patriarchy, and its effect on gender is always an ongoing process. With the insider/outsider distinction, one would be well served to approach self-reflection in the same manner.

For Comparative Philosophy, this insight could be quite useful when applied to the institutional structures that make comparative philosophy not only possible, but how the context of Comparative Philosophy in history (along with discourses, like Orientalism) affect contemporary Comparative Philosophy.

In Chapter One I gave a somewhat damning account of European universalism and its effects on discourse. I would like to complicate that narrative to a certain degree. The academic context within which we see the field of Comparative Philosophy is somewhat more bounded than Comparative Religion, which more often includes the contributions of those not within a scholarly context. Nonetheless, we see a heavy influence on these modes of knowledge production come from the academy.

It is well-known that the university structure itself was founded in eleventh to thirteenth centuries in Western Europe. This structure took a dramatic shift in structure in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries as the influence of the Enlightenment (or *Lumiere* and *Aufklarung* in French and German, respectively). This shift transformed universities into the structure we know today with various faculties, disciplines, departments, and fields of study that are continuing the transformation of these boundaries. That knowledge has been separated into analytically distinct

disciplines of knowledge-production, with clear (at least to many academics) boundaries, is intimately connected with the structure of the university. The discourse and the institution work together in promoting this particular mode of knowledge production.

But, the story does not end there. As the university was recreating itself into a discipline-analytic institution, European powers were continuing their history of global colonization. In fact, the very existence of certain disciplines is directly tied to colonialism. For example, anthropology has always been implicated in the power structures that allowed for the study of the cultural "Other". In many ways, its historical existence is predicated on the colonial power that allowed Europeans to be in these "Other" regions and disseminate a powerful discourse of knowledge production and representation. Regardless of how one conceives it, it is quite clear that the relationship between Europe and its various "Others" was structurally imbalanced. From this, various disciplines, like anthropology, religious studies, and sexology, to a lesser or greater degree, could only be constructed on the premise of an Other to be compared to the Self.

What further complicates matters is the insight of postcolonial thinkers about the postcolonial condition I spoke of earlier. That is, after independence from direct colonial control, the once-colonized often maintained the structures of their colonial past—in institutions, structures, ways of thinking, and even naturalizing colonial ideas as traditionally their own. One such example of this is the global reach of the university structure. Universities in Asia are products of a colonial past that is deeply implicated in colonial presuppositions and epistemic ordering. Thus, universities world-wide, and as a consequence, academic knowledge worldwide, all follow similar European-based ways of knowing and constructing knowledge.

This has many implications. First, it deeply complicates the Self/Other ordering of knowledge between East and West if educated elites world-wide are being educated within the same episteme. The Self/Other divide here between cultural others intersects with class (or

gender, etc.): In what ways are elites similar across cultures, and in what ways does class then make a meaningful difference if elites are becoming more homogenized from education? Second, the premise of a discipline like Comparative Philosophy becomes more contextually fleshed out. How much are, for example, the contemporary scholarly elites in South Asia implicated in postcolonial epistemes that reproduce Orientalist and colonial ways of knowledge production about their own traditions? Third, the very objects we study were in part constructions of the colonial powers (political, popular and academic) in league with colonized elites who had their own interests in shaping the representation of themselves or their traditions and history as objects, in certain ways. Fourth, how much does this academic episteme, grounded in the history of colonialism, influence scholarly thought today, both in Europe and globally? This last question is well-trodden ground in feminist circles particularly in regards to how gendered histories and concepts of knowledge influence how we produce knowledge (see for example, Weigman, 2002; Gordon 1993; Babcock 1993). Finally, what is our stake, as academics, in reproducing these Orientalist, patriarchal, postcolonial issues in the knowledge we produce?

For Comparative Philosophy, as it is practiced today, I think a bit of self-reflection on the disciplinary boundaries or lines it inhabits could be quite useful in providing robust and interesting new ground for the discipline to explore.

For example, the question of the hermeneutic context of comparative philosophy can develop interesting new ways of doing comparative philosophy. If we take the example of the history of the academy that I have outlined above, I think it can provide interesting background for the discipline of philosophy itself—and thus Comparative Philosophy. Philosophy has undergone many changes in the twentieth-century; it has shifted from the queen of the university to a professionalized academic discipline with its own bounded discourse. Heidegger had already seen this process in his *What is Called Thinking?* (1954):



In the West, thought about thinking has flourished, as “logic.” Logic has gathered special knowledge concerning a special kind of thinking. This knowledge concerning logic has been made scientifically fruitful only quite recently, in a special science that calls itself “logistics.” It is the most specialized of all specialized sciences. In many places, above all in the Anglo-Saxon countries, logistics is today considered the only possible form of strict philosophy, because its results and procedures yield an assured profit for the construction of the technological universe. In America and elsewhere, logistics as the only proper philosophy of the future is thus beginning today to seize power over the spirit. (Heidegger 1976, 21)

This has been useful, in so far as it has let the discipline focus on quite particular issues instead of spreading itself thin. It also has the effect, however, of constraining the possibilities of the discipline. If we look back to the discussion in Chapter One about the place of Chinese philosophy in the discipline, we can see the effect of the professionalization of philosophy: the ‘love of knowledge’ has solidified into a Eurocentric discourse with detailed limits of thought.

That Comparative Philosophy was born within and alongside this process, undoubtedly affects the manner in which Comparative Philosophy is done. While it is not my place to get into this discussion here, I think it is interesting to think how engaging this question can provide useful and interesting directions for comparative philosophy. At the very least, it will provide more context for those doing comparative philosophy and help comparativists to understand better their own positionality in the work they produce.

Another interesting hermeneutic avenue of discussion might be looking at Foucault’s essay, “What is an Author?” (1970) This examination by Foucault explores how the very concept of the author has a history and is in many ways a recent invention of Europe. If we take this into account, it may help us look differently at the way that authorship is conceived of in comparative

philosophy and religion. How does attempting to understand how medieval Indian understandings about what we call “authorship” relate to our own understandings of the kind of work we do when we compare? Why does comparative philosophy privilege this focus on the “author” in comparing, for example, “Kant and Nagarjuna?”

These examples are provided to show some possible productive trajectories that Comparative Philosophy can benefit from a self-reflexive examination of its place and context.

Having examined some of the issues that postcolonial and feminist thought has brought to scholarship, and having applied them to Comparative Philosophy, it seems appropriate to do some kind of an accounting of the benefits and hindrances of doing Comparative Philosophy in an academic setting.

One of the things I have noticed with the field is that many scholars of Comparative Philosophy have quite specialized knowledge about one of the objects of comparison, but are often dabblers in the other object.<sup>23</sup> This point is not a direct criticism of these Comparative Philosophers, as much as it is a reflection on the demands of time for an academic to become a specialist of two quite different fields. For example, in the comparative work between medieval Indian thought and twentieth century European thought, one would need five or six languages: English, French, German, Sanskrit, and a vernacular South Asian language, most likely Hindi. Italian, Bengali, various Prakrits (like Pali or Maghadi), Latin and Greek would help as well. This is a daunting task. On the other hand, in the collegial setting of academia (at its best), with some effort, the task is not quite so insurmountable. Indeed, in some ways, one only needs to be able to have enough comfort with a discipline to be able to evaluate what positions within the discipline are the most accepted and the ability to utilize the fine work of secondary sources in order to

---

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Ami Scharfstein examines this issue in *Philosophy East/Philosophy West* (1978), and responses to reviewers of that volume, e.g. Scharfstein, 1981.

come to a, perhaps, sufficient understanding of the issue. Indeed, this actually shows us a positive aspect of working in academia: highly articulate and comprehensive specialist understanding of particular subjects. While anyone, really, can do comparative philosophy, within an academic setting, one has the benefit of access to the accumulated knowledge of scholars. Just picking up a European philosopher out of context may not be as useful as taking advantage of the work done to situate that thinker, and develop some understanding of that thinker within a tradition. Armchair philosophy, or coffee-shop philosophy, while invigorating, in my experience often just rehashes ideas long surpassed in the history of thought.

Another benefit of an academic setting is access to critical works: for example, the very feminists and postcolonial thinkers I've been exploring in this chapter. Often, the academy is at the forefront of critical engagement. And yet, like any institution, there are well-entrenched positions and ways of knowledge-production that can be counter-productive. In some ways, the fact that it is only within the last ten years that feminist and postcolonial critiques are coming to comparative disciplines shows a level of institutional insularity that is problematic. Anthropology and Cultural Studies have been examining these issues since the 1970s. What is certain is that more research on this is necessary. Indeed, as Heidegger pointed out, the very institutionalization of certain kinds of thinking, and here I apply his point to philosophy, can be problematic. We could probably add more material constraints to this insight as well: the necessity of funding within the University, work-loads, academic politics and trends, the corporatization of the University, publish and perish, etc. All of these material realities undoubtedly affect the human beings who are doing the work of Comparative Philosophy. It might be an interesting project to attempt to examine in what ways these material conditions shape thought.

The aim of the present endeavour, then, is to take from this awareness an interest in the ethic and political consequences of our scholarly productions and become more self-aware, in the

disciplines of comparative religion and Comparative Philosophy, through an analysis of their history and discursive relation to power/knowledge, of the ethical aims of scholarship. In light of the ethical and political positioning of scholars, I argue that scholars should attend to this and explicitly explore their ethical and political context and the attendant aims and effects that those engender in the comparative enterprise.

All of this considered, I think it safe to say that there is much research and possibility in exploring the issues I've raised so far. In the final chapter, I want to explore hermeneutics as an important resource for coming to terms with the multifarious issues I have raised. Both Richard King and Morny Joy have argued that hermeneutics is particularly useful in a self-reflexive, cross-cultural discipline. I will explore these claims, and hermeneutics in Chapter Three. I argue that a hermeneutics tempered by Foucault, and by intersectionality, will be indispensable for Comparative Philosophy to encounter itself as a historically situated, contingent discourse. Furthermore, I will provide a hermeneutic model especially focused on Comparative Philosophy that can simplify many of the complex hermeneutical issues that one deals with in Comparative Philosophy or comparative religion.

### **Chapter 3: Towards a Genealogical Hermeneutics**

In our discussions in the previous chapters some key issues were raised. Chapter One examined the history of the approach of Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion and brought to light some of the contemporary issues that demand the attention of cross-cultural comparative scholars. I highlighted these issues as a need to be concerned about positionality, context and the relationship between power and knowledge in scholarly productions of comparative knowledge.

The insights of postcolonial and feminist thinkers, in Chapter Two, brought forth an important response and challenge to Comparative Philosophy and religion regarding how the situatedness of oneself in discourse has ethico-political consequences. I posited that intersectionality and social justice (from feminist, postcolonial, or queer-theory positions) could provide a more self-aware aim toward which comparison could work. This was argued with the insight that all knowledge production has attendant aims, interests and effects, and scholarship is always caught up in and related to these interests and effects. I argued that scholars should explicitly articulate their ethico-political aims and the desired effects of their work; I made a general call for a social justice ethic as one appropriate way to respond to this demand for ethical and political clarity in scholarly work.

Chapter Three will examine hermeneutics in relationship to Foucault, feminism and postcolonialism and argue for and develop a hermeneutic approach that integrates all of these standpoints, while working toward a social justice ethic. I will explore the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and place his understanding of hermeneutics in dialogue with Michel Foucault's genealogy. I will show how this genealogical hermeneutics, as I call it, addresses postcolonial and feminist concerns about discourse, knowledge and power. Finally, I will also show how this hermeneutics can be put in service of social justice perspectives.

In coming to terms with feminist and postcolonial thought in their own work both Morny Joy and Richard King argue that hermeneutics was a singularly useful perspective for understanding how to interpret texts and context. I also think hermeneutics is a valuable resource in understanding feminist and postcolonial concerns. However, given the amount of time spent elucidating Foucauldian forms of analysis, this chapter will also take seriously Foucault's disavowal of hermeneutics even as it attempts to find some common ground between the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur and a Foucauldian genealogy.

What I will argue is that one can take insights from both hermeneutics and genealogy and elaborate a kind of "genealogical hermeneutics" that can be attentive to key features of the interpretive process that pervades all of our activity (this is the insight of Heidegger and Gadamer to universalize hermeneutics) while also being attentive to the historical processes, discursive regimes, and elaborate structures that shape the interpreting subject. The benefit of adopting this approach is opening up a space that can speak to the interpretive activity of Comparative Philosophy *by subjects*, while remaining attentive to the insight that the subjects who do Comparative Philosophy are overwhelmingly products of their own genealogical situatedness. In many ways, what I will be doing is providing an interpretation of intersectionality that can account for the social justice analyses of subjectivity that I have briefly intimated in earlier chapters.

Following from this I will elaborate a structural analysis of the act of doing Comparative Philosophy. There are many sites of interpretive activity and contextual import in the act of comparison. I will provide a general structure of these sites, but not with the aim of "pinning down" the appropriate kinds of comparative activities and critical sites of analysis. Rather, my aim is heuristic. By elaborating a general structure I hope to open up a space for dialogue about the kinds of interpretive and contextual issues that comparative philosophers should attend to in order to account for the call to self-reflexivity engendered by postcolonial, feminist, and even

queer theory critiques. Fundamentally, I believe that this kind of critical self-engagement of the activity of comparison will be a positive opening up of comparative discourse to new ways of conceiving its work and role.

### Section 1: Gadamer's Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek term *hermeneuō*, which translates as 'to interpret' or 'to translate'. The term in the Western tradition is often traced back to Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias*, which was later titled in Latin, *De Interpretatione*.

Hermeneutics, as the term is used today in the academy, tends to refer to either textual hermeneutics, which comes out of a tradition of biblical scholarship and interpretation, or philosophical hermeneutics, which is the universalization of interpretation as the ground of all forms of understanding.<sup>24</sup> I am going to focus my attention on the latter, philosophical hermeneutics.

Most commentators argue that the philosophical hermeneutics began with two thinkers: Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). As Alan D. Schrift summarizes, "[a]lthough the term 'hermeneutics' as an approach to textual interpretation has a history which dates back to Aristotle... the modern use of the term can be traced more directly back to the work of two nineteenth-century thinkers: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey" (Schrift 1990, 2; see also: Schmidt 2006, 6-7). Both Schleiermacher and Dilthey take the initial steps in moving towards a general hermeneutics that can apply to any text: "prior to Schleiermacher, the task of textual interpretation was thought to require different interpretive methods depending on the type of text to be interpreted" (Schrift 1990, 2). Schleiermacher's goal was to unite all of the various kinds of textual hermeneutics (legal, biblical and philological) into

---

<sup>24</sup> See Schmidt 2006, 2.

one universal textual hermeneutic (Schmidt 2006, 10). Dilthey's goal was to provide a methodology for the human sciences that could provide the same amount of rigour as the natural sciences (29). His work was instrumental for later hermeneutic thinkers.

I want to focus my attention, however, on Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, two of the major twentieth-century thinkers who develop philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960) and *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1976) will form the basis of my exposition of his thought, while for Ricoeur I will be looking primarily at his *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* (1991).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) is considered the thinker who develops the conceptual foundation for philosophical hermeneutics. Lawrence K. Schmidt notes that, "the philosophical meaning of hermeneutics today is primarily determined by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method*" (2), while Robert Dostal remarks that it was Gadamer who made hermeneutics "a name commonplace in intellectual circles worldwide" (Dostal 2002, 1).

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer develops an argument for the universality of interpretation in all acts of knowing, not just texts. His argument begins with an analysis of the fundamental place of interpretation in art and aesthetics and shows how the same kind of interpretation is involved in the human sciences, and life itself. He argues that interpretation is universal in all forms of understanding.

Gadamer's understanding of interpretation builds on Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) *Being and Time* (1953). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls interpretation, "the development of understanding" (Heidegger 1996, 139). He says further, "In interpretation understanding does not become something different, but rather itself" (1996, 139). The significance of this is that interpretation is embedded in every act of experiencing (as Dasein, or being-in-the-world). Heidegger gives the example of seeing the world around us—a door, a table, a car, and so on—as



already an act of interpretation. He says, “Any simple prepredicative seeing of what is at hand is in itself already understanding and interpretive” (1996, 140).

For Heidegger, this shows us that any act of understanding works within the existential situation where the one doing the understanding, in the act of understanding, already has some for-knowledge of the object under consideration. The relevance of this understanding for the one doing the understanding is interpretation. He says,

Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a significance over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of the world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation. (1996, 140)

For Heidegger, any act of understanding or interpretation is necessarily<sup>25</sup> already anticipating the outcome of that interpretation or understanding.

Heidegger notes that scientific knowledge should not already determine in advance what it is attempting to find. On the other hand, he contrasts this with interpretation, which can only work with what is already known and build from this. Here, Heidegger sees a tension. If understanding is anticipating what it is to understand, then understanding is in contradiction with science:

But if interpretation always already has to operate within what is understood and nurture itself from this, how should it then produce scientific results without going in a circle, especially when the presupposed understanding still operates in the common knowledge of human being and world? But according to the most elementary rules of logic, the *circle* is a *circulus vitiosus* [vicious circle]. (143, emphasis in original)

Heidegger argues that this circle is not vicious, but positive. In the circle lies the basis of understanding because of the anticipatory nature of Dasein.

---

<sup>25</sup> He says, “*Meaning, structured by fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception, is the upon which of the project in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something*” (142; emphasis in original).

Gadamer builds on this understanding of the circle in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer says that Heidegger's understanding of the circle is, "a description of the way interpretive understanding is achieved" (Gadamer 1975, 269). Furthermore, Heidegger's insight into the interpretive circle is a fundamental insight into the nature of being: "The point of Heidegger's hermeneutical reflection is not so much to prove that there is a circle as to show that this circle possesses an ontologically positive significance" (1975, 269).

This circle that Heidegger and Gadamer are referring to has been widely considered the 'hermeneutic circle' and originally in hermeneutics was a circular understanding of the relationship between the whole and the part. Jean Grondin explains the earlier roots of the hermeneutic circle:

Through authors such as Melanchthon, it passed from rhetoric to hermeneutics where it originally had a purely phenomenological meaning. It was used to describe the to-and-fro motion of any attempt at understanding, from the parts to the whole and from the whole back to the parts. (Grondin 2002, 47)

The whole and the part could be things like a word and its sentence, a chapter and its book, a book and an oeuvre. However, Gadamer and Heidegger imbue the circle with an ontological significance. The nature of understanding to continually project meaning signifies an ontological reality fundamental to human knowing (Gadamer 1975, 269). Gadamer calls this projective element of the hermeneutic circle 'fore-meaning.'

Gadamer then explains the process of this fore-meaning regarding the hermeneutic circle. Understanding is a "constant task" of anticipation and revision of whether our fore-meaning does or does not match—or "is not borne out"—by the thing itself (1975, 270). For Gadamer, meaning is not arbitrary. It depends on this relationship between subject and object, between fore-meaning and the thing itself, between the whole and the part. It requires an openness to the necessity of revision and re-examination. As Paul Healy remarks, "the requirement of openness enjoins us,

actively and vigorously, to test the cogency of our prejudgments in as many varied forums as possible, with a view to modifying our initial positions if our prejudgments are shown to be wanting” (Healy 2007, 152).

The whole meaning that is in relation to the part is non-arbitrary insofar as it is grounded in tradition. The continual circle between whole and part involves continual reassessment of how the part affects the whole and vice versa. These parts and thus the whole are given to us *historically*. So, the whole meaning that we relate to a part is historically dependent. It is dependent on the tradition of interpretations that we, collectively, relate to in our understandings. Our fore-meaning is affected by tradition.

Gadamer uses the term prejudice to speak to the fore-having that tradition brings to interpretation. He says, “The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust” (1975, 272). Gadamer does not mean prejudice in the negative sense that it has come to mean since the Enlightenment. Rather, Gadamer says that prejudice can be either positive or negative (1975, 273).

In relation to the hermeneutic circle, Gadamer reframes the circle as the “interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter” (1975, 293). Our fore-meaning that we bring to understanding is not something special to us as individuals, it is “not an act of subjectivity” (293). Rather, fore-meaning is the relationship between ourselves and tradition. This relationship is a mutual exchange: “Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition: rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves” (293).

For Gadamer it is the task of the interpreter to actively engage in and evaluate tradition and thus the interpreter’s own prejudices. Gadamer introduces the concept of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußstein*. This concept has been translated as ‘consciousness that is

effected by history,<sup>26</sup> ‘consciousness of being affected by history’<sup>27</sup> and even ‘historically effected consciousness’.<sup>28</sup> In the Forward to his second edition to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer says that there is an ambiguity to the concept of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußstein*: “The ambiguity is that it is used to mean at once the consciousness effected in the course of history and determined by history, and the very consciousness of being thus effected and determined” (1975, xxx).

A hermeneutic consciousness is a consciousness that is *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußstein*, and also a consciousness that one’s fore-meaning is produced in the mediation of tradition and interpretation. Thus, for Gadamer, philosophical hermeneutics is the continual act of testing one’s prejudices. Thus he can say that “[t]he real power of hermeneutic consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable” (Gadamer 1976, 13).

Key to Gadamer’s understanding of interpretation is the notion of the ‘fusion of horizons’. Building from Edmund G. A. Husserl’s (1859-1938) notion of horizon, Gadamer posits it as a descriptive way to explain the consciousness of experience: “[t]he flow of experience has the character of a universal horizon consciousness, and only from it is the discrete experience given as experience at all” (Gadamer 1975, 237). The mediation of tradition and self in fore-meaning when one is interpreting the world around them through experience is a horizon of knowing. The notion of horizon speaks to the limit of one’s world (in the sense of being-in-the-world) but also to the openness one has in the interpretive process. Gadamer remarks that, “everything that is given as existent is given in terms of a world and hence brings the world horizon with it” (1975, 238). Horizons move with the self, and their limits bring into view new things to which one can move towards or away from.

---

<sup>26</sup> David E Linge 1976, xvii

<sup>27</sup> Gadamer 1975, 300

<sup>28</sup> Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Gadamer 1975, xxx)

Horizons are both temporal and epistemological. Temporally, experience as a horizon is a melding of past and future in the consciousness of experience. Gadamer says, “[e]very experience has implicit horizons of before and after and finally fuses with the continuum of the experiences present in the before and after to form a unified flow of experience” (1975, 237). But this is not just a horizon of experience in the moment. It is a horizon of historical past and concrete future. Epistemologically, the horizon is the limit of one’s interpretive boundary, the limit of the self-tradition complex that grounds interpretation. Interpretation is the act of openness that is learning to, “look beyond what is close at hand” (1975, 304).

The fusion of horizons is the process of understanding the horizon of past and present, and the horizon of self and other (whether the other is a text or a person). In dialogue the fusion of horizons is the fusion of these, as well as the horizon of other’s understanding. Thus Gadamer posits a dialogical ethic of communication. As Georgia Warnke argues, Gadamer’s fusion of horizons in communication is both partial and situated because horizons are finite and historical (Warnke 1987, 107, see also Pappas and Cowling 2003, 204). The ethic of communication requires a reciprocity and openness at the fusion of horizons (Freudenberger 2003, 263-4).

Gadamer’s conclusion is to outline the consequences of his understanding of hermeneutics: his affirmation that “the province of hermeneutics is universal and especially that language is the form which understanding takes” (1975, xxxi). For Gadamer, language is the medium through which understanding operates.

## Section 2: Morny Joy and Richard King on Hermeneutics

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, two contemporary scholars who are leading a turn towards a feminist and postcolonial critique in the field of religious studies are Richard King and Morny Joy. Both scholars identify hermeneutics as the approach they suggest is the most helpful

to incorporate a new critical self-reflection of the field using, respectively, Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Here I will examine more carefully Joy and King's analysis of hermeneutics.

Both authors use hermeneutics as a resource to critique the notion of 'objectivity' and to highlight the importance of examining one's context. Richard King invokes Gadamer's understanding of prejudice in his critique of objectivity within the human sciences:

The Enlightenment ideal of objective knowledge involved the notion of eradicating all subjective prejudgements in favour of a 'neutral' and 'objective' approach, detached from emotional, affective and personal biases, through the skilful use of the faculty of reason and a sound methodology. Gadamer argues that such a conception of knowledge is itself prejudicial in so far as it is the historically conditioned result of sociocultural factors relating to the rise of Enlightenment thought. ... Thus, understanding is conditioned by the past (our 'tradition') as well as by our own present circumstances and agendas (our prejudices). The particularity of our situation makes any notion of an objective and value-free interpretation inherently problematic. (King 2000, 73)

This problematizing of objective knowledge leads King to argue that all knowledge is implicated in interests and historical and cultural situatedness. He argues that this is, however, a strength rather than a descent into nihilistic relativism. Further, he argues that rather than hiding our biases and prejudices, we need to bring them to the fore and engage self-critically with them. His specific hermeneutic suggestion is to engage in two-fold process that is an "immersion in the contextual complexity and richness of the phenomenon under consideration", but to also "incorporate a self-reflexive examination of the cultural context and prejudices of the interpreter" (2000, 80).

Morny Joy argues in a similar vein that a hermeneutic perspective can help take into account the shifts in approach that have affected other fields in regards to the complicated

relationship between power, knowledge and privilege. She says that, “[i]n religious studies, contextual sensitivity to the basic phenomena of race, gender, and class, as well as to ethnic, indigenous, and non-Christian identities, needs to be incorporated into any act of knowing (Joy 2004, 198). We have examined many of these concerns in Chapter Two in some theoretical detail. Joy posits hermeneutics as one way of coming to terms with the necessity to rethink how we approach our scholarly studies. For Joy, whose work and research has been focused on the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, his approach is readily available as a perspective that can meet the needs of religious studies (and by extension comparative religion and philosophy). However, Joy is careful not to argue that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is the only possible way of dealing with the many issues of cross-cultural work. She states:

While I would not presume that this model of Ricoeur will provide *the* solution to the problems I have described in philosophy of religion and phenomenology of religions, I do believe that phenomenological hermeneutics, with the further inclusion of a hermeneutics of suspicion, which is also developed by Ricoeur, is suggestive of one alternative approach that has as yet not been widely used or examined as a philosophical theory or method in the field of religious studies. (2004, 204; emphasis in original)

For Joy, the benefit of a hermeneutics of suspicion is the ability of the hermeneutician to account for the contextual interests that shape how we come to understand the world around us and create knowledge within this horizon. She prefers Ricoeur’s hermeneutics because “he is only too aware of the possibility of personal illusions and cultural distortions that can color all interpretations” (2004, 207). She is explicitly wary of Gadamer’s approach because Gadamer’s emphasis on tradition may too readily allow for the simple legitimation of tradition and prejudice without enough critical engagement.

Jurgen Habermas is the most well-known critic of Gadamer, and Joy brings to attention the debates between Habermas and Gadamer. Habermas was critical of Gadamer's emphasis on tradition. For Robert Piercey the debate fundamentally "concerns the philosophical status of tradition" (Piercey 2004, 260). Habermas' approach takes up the mantle of the Enlightenment and the sceptical attitude towards tradition that Gadamer himself argues is a 'prejudice' of Enlightenment thought (Gadamer 1975, 273-278). For Habermas, scepticism of tradition and the ability to reject the claims of tradition if found ideological or hegemonic is essential to any ethic of freedom (Piercey 261-2). For Habermas, Gadamer's hermeneutics is dangerous in privileging tradition to the extent that it does (Piercey 261-2). Gadamer's response was that the faith in reason and the associated objectivity of knowledge that Habermas takes up from the Enlightenment was suspect. Jack Mendelson summarizes the debate as such:

[I]n *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* [Habermas] raised a number of powerful objections to Gadamer's theory, the general theme of which was that Gadamer had absolutized hermeneutic understanding at the expense of critique. Gadamer's counterarguments, on the other hand, reflected the doubts he had about objectifying knowledge in general, which were now applied to critical theory in particular. His overall purpose was not to deny the validity of critical reflection but to locate it within hermeneutics, and thereby to defend hermeneutics' claim to universality. (Mendelson 1979, 57)

The debate showed fundamental differences between the thinkers in regards to how they conceptualized the role of reason and tradition. Put simply, Habermas' conception of reason is fundamentally emancipatory, and thus could be wielded by subjects against tradition. Gadamer, on the other hand, thought reason was the product of tradition.

Joy notes Ricouer's response to this debate:



On the one hand, [Ricoeur] was quite concerned that Gadamer... had not given sufficient attention to the fact that any encounter is a critical one. On the other, he was also concerned that Habermas' critique of ideology has its own regulative ideal, which could itself become ideology. (208)

In *From Text to Action* (1991) Ricoeur directly addresses the debate between Gadamer's hermeneutics and Habermas's critique of ideology. While he does not want to fuse the two into a "super-system" (Ricoeur 1991, 294) he does argue that they are somewhat indispensable to each other (306-7). In regards to Habermas' critique of Gadamer's notion of tradition, Ricoeur argues that Gadamer's hermeneutics already has this critical element (306-7). In terms of Gadamer, I would reinterpret Ricoeur as arguing that the fusion of horizons necessitates an openness that turns a critical eye to tradition through the continual re-evaluation of for-meaning. Ricoeur remarks about the critical element of hermeneutics that,

Thus, the critique of ideology can be assumed by a concept of self-understanding that organically implies a critique of the illusions of the subject. ... The critique of false consciousness can thus become an integral part of hermeneutics... . (Ricoeur 1991, 301)

Joy characterizes Ricoeur's approach as a self-reflexive critique of various kinds of false consciousness that one internalizes from enculturation. As Ricoeur remarks in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981): "Before any critical distance, we belong to a history, to a class, to a nation, to a culture, to one or several traditions. In accepting this belonging which preceded and supports us, we accept the very first role of ideology" (243). Another form of false consciousness is the pretension of the scholar, including an imperialistic and narcissistic attitude towards knowledge, the need for control, and the presumption of objectivity. Joy concludes that a hermeneutics that takes up the "exercises of suspicion carried out by Freud, Marx and Nietzsche"

(Joy 2004, 208) can indicate the kinds of false consciousness<sup>29</sup> present in our presumptions of knowledge, as well as supporting a critical reading of texts (and I would add that it supports a critical reading of culture and knowledge production in general) that engages with the “cultural biases that do not acknowledge the distortions, exclusions, and impositions involved” in their production (208).

The remedy that hermeneutics brings to this is an awareness of the cultural and historical nature of all knowledge production and its parochial character. This implicates the scholar in a way that sheds the illusion of a neutral universal ‘truth’ of which the scholar has sole access. Rather, the scholar is a figure within history, within a context and a culture, shaped by their surroundings, carrying interests—consciously or unconsciously—in such a manner as to radically re-determine the goals of scholarship. Hermeneutics opens up our self-reflection in order to show how we interpret the world around us and thus creates a space for us to self-reflexively take stock of ways in which our context, prejudice, and presuppositions shape our own work. The call here, by Joy and King, is to look hard into the scholarly mirror. To my mind, the most glaring spots we need to examine are those issues raised by feminists and postcolonial thinkers. The next section is an attempt to integrate the insights of hermeneutics and Foucauldian genealogy in order to provide a perspective that can address the challenges that postcolonialism and feminism bring to scholarship.

### Section 3: Integrating Genealogy and Hermeneutics

---

<sup>29</sup> For Ricoeur, false consciousness means the internalized, unconscious ideologies that support social hierarchies and domination that are uncritically accepted as truth. Joy describes it as relating to “the illusions of the self” (2004: 208).

Much of Chapter Two involved a discussion of the impact of Foucault on feminism, postcolonialism, queer theory and how a Foucauldian approach relates to the various issues of power and knowledge that frame the act of comparison. Foucault, however, was ambivalent about both hermeneutics and structuralism. In this section, my aim is to examine the ways in which Foucault's thought and hermeneutics can be placed in dialogue. I examine Foucault's critique of hermeneutics in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and the seeming divide between hermeneutics and genealogy. I explore how some scholars are attempting to bring hermeneutics and genealogy together. Finally, I will argue that there is a substantial amount of common ground between hermeneutics and genealogy. I posit that there is enough common ground to build what I call a genealogical hermeneutics—a hermeneutical stance that integrates the insights of Foucault.

Foucault is suspicious of the attempt for hermeneutics to find a deeper or hidden meaning through interpretation. He is not interested in interrogating the meaning of statements (*énoncé*), but rather what it means that things are said in the way they have been said and for what use they have been said. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault says:

The analysis of statements, then, is a historical analysis, but one that avoids all interpretation: it does not question things as to what they are hiding, what they were 'really' saying, in spite of themselves, the unspoken element that they contain, the proliferation of thoughts, images, or fantasies that inhabit them; but in the contrary, it questions them as to their mode of existence, to have left traces, and perhaps to remain there, awaiting the moment when they might be of use once more; what it means to them to have appeared when and where they did—they and no others. ... for what one is concerned with is the fact of language (*langage*). (Foucault 1972, 109)

Foucault, it seems, is not interested in the hermeneutic concern for making texts' meanings intelligible or understood in terms of what truths lie within them. Nor, does it seem that

he is interested in the project of Heidegger and Gadamer to understand the ontological significance of language through interpretation. Rather, he is interested in the relationship of statements to each other in a field of operation. He is concerned with how statements are used and their modalities and transformations (107). He is interested in how statements relate to form a regulative discourse that connects with their productive use in power-relations.

Rabinow and Dreyfus argue that Foucault remains neutral to the truth of serious speech acts and the transcendental justification for these truth claims (Rabinow and Dreyfus 1983, 50). They say, “[Foucault’s] decontextualization which does away with the horizon of intelligibility and meaning dear to hermeneutics leaves only a logical space for the possible permutations of types of statements” (51).

In this sense, Foucault’s task is quite different than the task of philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer’s hermeneutics is a task to understand the fundamental, existential, and universal manner in which subjects understand the world. It is an existential analysis of the subject that concludes that human understanding is a process of interpretation. For Foucault, he is attempting to make clear the discursive regularities that shape human subjectivity.

I find the attitude that Foucault has towards hermeneutics in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to be softened in his “What is Enlightenment?” (1984). Foucault tasks himself with retrieving what he sees as valuable in the Enlightenment project. While Foucault is still critical of any attempt to rehabilitate “man” as a guiding principle, he nonetheless affirms the Enlightenment’s “critical interrogation of our present and on ourselves” (Foucault 1984, 49-50).

In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” Foucault analyzes Nietzsche’s criticisms of the concept and practice of history, and Nietzsche’s understanding of genealogy. Foucault reverses Nietzsche’s criticisms of history. Nietzsche’s critique of history is fundamentally to support the

“affirmative and creative powers of life” (Foucault 1982, 97). In this light, Foucault understands genealogy to be more robust than that given by Nietzsche. For Foucault, genealogy reverses those creative aspects of history that Nietzsche adopted in his genealogy: the veneration of monuments becomes parody, the respect for ancient continuities becomes systemic dissociation, and the critique of injustices of the past by those of the present becomes the destruction of people who maintain knowledge (97). For Foucault, genealogy, which “rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies” (77), requires patience, a knowledge of details, a “vast accumulation of source material” (76). It rejects a “monotonous finality” or a totalizing view of history, instead searching the most unpromising of places, those where “we tend to feel is without history” (76). Genealogy is concerned with the disjunctions, the differences, the patterns and contradictions of history. Genealogy concerns itself with formation and transformation, and “opposes itself to search for ‘origins’” (77).

Foucault’s late work culminates with his Lectures at the Collège de France, published under the title *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2001). He uses the title “the Hermeneutics of the Self” to describe the lecture course, which involved his historical analysis of the techniques of the self employed throughout different historical eras. Though Foucault does not engage with hermeneutics in this text, he does give some idea of what he means by hermeneutics of the subject in the course summary. He says that a hermeneutics of the subject is not “a matter of discovering a truth in the subject or of making the soul the place where truth dwells through an essential kingship or original law; nor is it a matter of making the soul the object of a true discourse” (501). Instead, a hermeneutics of the subject “is a question of arming the subject with a truth that he did not know and that did not dwell within him; it involves turning this learned and memorized truth that is progressively put into practice into a quasi-subject that reigns supreme within us” (501).

This speaks to Foucault's project of interrogating the processes of subject-formation to allow for the practice of creating new subjectivities. The hermeneutics of the subject is the understanding of how this practice works within subjects. Through 'learning and memorized truth' one can cultivate new subject-positions by internalizing a new truth that acts as a 'quasi-subject' within oneself. The 'hermeneutic' part of the hermeneutics of the subject is the active reinterpretation of the process of subject-formation. Here as well, I see some possibility in a dialogue between Gadamer and Foucault.

Foucault's archaeology and genealogy in his earlier works attempted to methodologically elide the self, but his later work in *The Care of the Self* and his later lectures at the Collège de France attempted to bring some awareness to a consciousness of the form of the self. His *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, for example, examined in what ways the Greeks talked about the self and what vision of the self they most concerned themselves with. In this material we can see a more robust understanding of the self that Foucault's earlier work methodologically minimizes in order for him to analyze the forces that shape subjectivity. It is in this later Foucault that we can see some more fruitful understandings of the formation of the Self that can be related to Gadamer's understandings of the subject who interprets. Foucault's analysis in these later works uncovers the various ways that Greeks themselves were self-consciously concerned with producing their own subjectivity. That Foucault calls his lectures the *Hermeneutics of the Subject* is fitting in that, in hermeneutic terms, it is through the interpretation of their being-in-the-world that these Greeks speak to the care of the self.

There is a fundamental difference between Foucault and hermeneutics about ontology. A hermeneutic perspective attempts to look for the ontological truth of being. For Heidegger and Gadamer, this shows itself as an examination of the ontological nature of the interpreting subject. For Foucault, on the other hand, ontology is a dubious truth. The interpreting subject is a product

of a genealogical process, and the truth found in the ontology of interpretation is a contingent truth. Like other truths, however, this truth is no less effective as truth—and therein lies some value in joining genealogy and hermeneutics. Whether one understands the ontology of the interpretive subject as a historically conditioned truth or a convenient fiction, I argue for the productive value of asserting an ontological significance to the interpreting subject.

While there seems to be a large gulf between the projects of Foucault and hermeneutics, some scholars are attempting to bridge this distance between genealogy and hermeneutics. Paul Healy and Stuart Dalton (see also Hoy and McCarthy 1994, and Hans-Herbert Kogler, 1999) attempt to place into dialogue Habermas, Gadamer and Foucault.

Paul Healy is concerned with “delineat[ing] the constitutive features of a dialogically-oriented conception of rationality and critical inquiry capable of meeting postfoundationalist needs” (Healy 2007, 134). To do so, he places Habermas, Gadamer and Foucault in a constructive dialogue, instead of as opposed figures in the history of thought: “In the process, it reinforces the advantages of the reading these theorists as complementary rather than as oppositional, as has typically been the case” (134).

Healy begins his analysis by looking at the merits of Habermas’ understanding of rationality in a postfoundationalist era. Postfoundationalism is marked by a loss of faith in the certainties of the subject-object divide, the representational theory of knowledge, the ideal of a universal method, and a conviction that “human reason can completely free itself of bias, prejudice, and tradition” (135). He begins his analysis with Habermas’ attempt to tackle these postfoundationalist issues, but finds Habermas’ account insufficient. In response he takes up Gadamer’s criticism of Habermas from “Reflections on My Philosophic Journey” in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Gadamer says that philosophical hermeneutics can provide a corrective for Habermas’ “highly abstract concept of coercion-free discourse which totally loses sight of the real conditions of human praxis” (Gadamer 1997, 32).

For Healy, Gadamer's corrective to Habermas is not enough to account for the needs of a postfoundationalist era: "it remains the case that our postfoundationalist situation poses still other challenges, most notably those of transgressing entrenched presuppositions and of accommodating the encounter with radical diversity and difference which Gadamer's relatively traditionalist approach is not especially well equipped to handle" (Healy, 152). In response, Healy argues that Foucault's "problematizing, transgressive conception of inquiry and the light he sheds on the pluralistic, decentered, and contested character of contemporary forums of intersubjectivity" (153) can address the lack in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in relation to Healy's postfoundationalist concerns.

He concludes his complementary analysis by arguing that Foucault's contribution is the continual problematizing of a need for valorizing the truth-value of claims, and any ideal of judgement that is posited as necessary for critical inquiry. On the other hand, Gadamer's contribution is providing an evaluative standard by which plural truth-claims and the valorization of difference can be mediated so that subjects are able "to determine which of the multiple knowledge claims emanating from diverse sites are worth learning from and which are not, and hence an indispensable feature needed to underwrite a process of transformative learning of the sort valorised by Foucault himself" (Healy, 157). For Healy, the transformative ethos of Foucault's work, namely the opening of the possibilities of new subjectivities and privileging of difference, requires some way to have a "principled procedure" to determine which way to go forward in dialogue and transformation (158). Healy is taking seriously Foucault's response to why he does not engage in polemics: "I insist on ... difference as something essential: a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other" (Foucault 1984, 381).

I find Healy's project relevant to my own. Healy's insists that we should rethink the hard lines that separate these thinkers and instead use the advantages of approaching them as



complementary. I agree with Healy that, while we should be attentive to the differences between these thinkers, much can be gained by integrating the valuable insights of these thinkers—for this present work, by exploring the complementariness of Gadamer and Foucault.

For Stuart Dalton's analysis of Foucault and Habermas, he finds that Habermas "never really confronts the 'fundamental' issue that distinguishes Foucault's thinking from his own" (7). According to Dalton, Habermas' criticisms of Foucault in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) are instructive for what they miss in Foucault's work. The fundamental issue that Dalton argues distinguishes the two thinkers is the nature of truth and the nature of reason (Dalton 7). He finds Habermas misguided in his assumption that, "Foucault must necessarily share his understanding of what truth and rationality are like; he refuses to acknowledge that there may be at work in Foucault's critical project an understanding of truth and reason that is radically different" (7). Dalton posits that Habermas' understanding of truth and reason are univocal. One is either "in truth or error" (7). One is either for or against the Enlightenment. Indeed, Foucault's response to the insistence to know where he stood on truth and the question of the Enlightenment amounted to "intellectual blackmail" (Foucault 1984, 45).

Dalton argues that "Foucault's understanding of truth and reason is, in fact, far more intricate and nuanced than Habermas has allowed. Foucault does not propose a simple reversal of truth and power; rather, he calls into question the very possibility of all such 'simple' realities, relationships, and reversals" (Dalton: 7). From my own understanding of Foucault, I agree with Dalton. Foucault is interested not in whether something is true or false, but the processes by which truth is created. Truth is always "inhabited by relations of power" (8) and thus it is never a question of the simple falsity or veracity of truth claims that is of concern for Foucault. Rather it is the mechanisms by which we create truth that Foucault is interrogating.

Dalton concludes by valorizing Foucault's project as more conducive to the liberative aim of the Enlightenment than Habermas. He argues that the overall goal of Foucault's critical

project is ‘absolutely unequivocal’: “it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible to the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1984, 45). Here Dalton is pointing to the transformative nature of Foucault’s work as the attempt to open up the possibilities of subjectivity by understanding how subjectivity is shaped by its historicity, and the active attempt to create new forms of subjectivity. Dalton points out that, in Foucault’s “What is Enlightenment?”, freedom is a practice, and the attitude of the Enlightenment is a critical project towards testing the limits of history that should be retrieved and retained: “I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historic-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings” (Foucault 1984, 47).

Dalton’s analysis gives us an example of the possible connections between Foucault and Gadamer through the Enlightenment. Both Gadamer and Foucault focused on the importance of history and our consciousness of history’s ability to affect our subjectivity. Both thinkers want us to interrogate the connection between our historical era and subjectivity, and this is where I will begin my examination of the merit of integrating the two thinkers into a genealogical hermeneutics.

Stuart Dalton’s analysis of Foucault and Habermas brings to light Foucault’s positive evaluation of the Enlightenment as a critical project to interrogate and test the limits of subjectivity given to us by our historicity. For Foucault, connected to this project is the work we do on ourselves as free beings to realize new subjectivities. Gadamer, too, is concerned with our historicity and *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußstein*, historically effected consciousness. This consciousness has two related movements that, I argue, are particular sites of entry into a complementary analysis of Foucault and Gadamer.

First, historically effected consciousness is effected by history. That is, history effects the way we interpret the world around us. Our context shapes us, and the interpretations we take up

within it. If we replace the term 'interpretation' in the previous sentence with 'subjectivities', this could easily be speaking to Foucault's hermeneutics of the subject. Secondly, historically effected consciousness is an awareness that history does affect us. This is what I think Gadamer means when he says that tradition only exists in so far as we choose to keep recreating it by interacting with it. Tradition is precisely our relationship with our history and what we actively choose to engage with. This is similar to Foucault's understanding that statements enunciated by subjects contribute to discursive regimes which in turn influence the kinds of statements subjects make.

In terms of the hermeneutics of the subject elaborated by Foucault, Gadamer's concept of tradition relates to the kinds of technologies of the self that are historically given to us. Foucault's analysis of the production of subjectivity through discourse, power-relations, and technologies of the subject can serve to fill in the ambiguities of Gadamer's notion of tradition. That is, in genealogical hermeneutics, the content of tradition is far more robust when understood as including discursive regimes, technologies of the self and a genealogy of the subject.

In Gadamer's understanding, the mediation of tradition and interpretation is the content of fore-meaning—the anticipatory nature of understanding. What genealogy bring to our understanding here is the material conditions that tradition consists of: the disciplinary activity of discourse and institutions on the subject. But it also helps us to understand how interpretations come to us as well. The same regulatory discourses that shape tradition also bound the possible interpretations that we take up. Interpretation is intimately connected with tradition—so much so that how we interpret is also a product of regulatory discourses and institutional disciplining. The critical task of fore-meaning as a continual re-evaluation of tradition and self is well-served with the related task of a critical engagement with discourse, disciplinary practices, and their relation to institutions and how subjectivity itself is formed in relationship to these.

I agree with Dalton that Foucault can complicate and make more robust the understanding of tradition as being related to power in a complex way. I would also agree with

Healy that rather than dialogue and interpretation being a necessarily fruitful fusion of horizons, it is often punctuated by power-relations, and even the field of dialogue where these horizons meet is related in complex ways to power. We only need to think of the power imbalance of anthropologist and informant to imagine the potential complications that power brings to any interpretative horizon.

For Healy, hermeneutics can contribute to a Foucauldian approach by providing a guiding directive that can provide a focus the transformation of the self that Foucault advocates. I would go further than Healy and say that Gadamer's notion of fore-meaning can provide some stability once a new subjectivity is being practiced by the self. The ethic of Foucault's project of elaborating on the technologies that construct the self calls for us to interrogate techniques of subject-forming in order to produce new subjectivities. Gadamer's triad of tradition, interpretation and fore-meaning provide a powerful resource that allows newly formed subjects to continue the testing of new subjectivities—these new traditions of the self—within the stability afforded by the notion of tradition. A tradition of practice provides a stable site for further experimentation, re-evaluation or repetition. To name new subjectivities as part of tradition can also help to legitimate them. If the anticipatory nature of fore-meaning is the play of tradition and interpretation, then traditions of subject-formation, new or old, are inevitably part of one's fore-meaning. Found in the fusion of the horizons of self and tradition are the experiments of new possibilities of the self, encouraged by Foucault.

The temporal aspect of Gadamer's fusion of horizons can help us understand which direction we can go with our new technologies of the self. The fusion of horizons is, among other things, the fusion of the past and future. The past, including tradition, when in dialogue with the horizon of possibility, the future, allows us a guide for experimentation. Understanding the genealogy of the past and how it shapes the present gives us a horizon to look forward to for

future possibilities of the self. Understanding where we have been allows us to see more practical, context-dependent strategies for the experimentation with new subjectivities.

It is at this moment of the fusion of horizons that advocating for social justice has its most potential. Feminist and postcolonial analysis shows us, in quite material ways, that our tradition, our past, is replete with discursive and structural elements that shape our subjectivity in negative ways. Where the horizon of the past meets the horizon of the future is the ground for possible responses to tradition. It is only in the dialogue with the past that our future becomes intelligible. For those who face marginalization and oppression because of the relation of power/knowledge, it is precisely the fore-meaning of interpretation that provides the impetus and resources to transform the future. Simply put, if the past and present is characterized by Orientalism, racism or misogyny, then it is at the meeting of the horizons of past and future that possibilities for justice and liberation can be conceived.

These possibilities can become part of the content of prejudice. Prejudice can be a liberative, critical engagement with tradition that attempts to rectify injustice. Where I see genealogical hermeneutics remain a hermeneutics is precisely in affirming the value of the idea of the universality of interpretation. As much value as there is to Foucault's call for questioning subjectivity in general and creating new subjects, if we understand this process as an interpretive one we can conceive of strategic prejudices to use in interpretation. Genealogical hermeneutics retains Foucault's insight that subjectivities, and even the interpretations that produce subjectivities, are produced discourses and power relations. And yet it also retains the key insight that all subjects are interpreting subjects. The task of genealogical hermeneutics is to understand how the interplay of subjectivity and interpretation relate in order to create interpretations and subjectivities that are more effectively liberating.

#### Section 4: The Hermeneutic Structure of Comparison

In many ways, the act of comparison in scholarship begins with individual authors and their hermeneutic responsibility. If we are talking about individual scholars who are comparing within the burgeoning fields of comparative religion and Comparative Philosophy, it is quite clear that the knowledge production of the academic profession today is shaped through individual acts of authorship. This section will be a preliminary examination of the hermeneutic structures of the scholarly act of comparison and can provide a guide for subjects to interrogate the meeting of self and tradition, past and future.

In understanding the structural elements of comparison it is important to recognize that the agency of scholars is an important part of understanding how comparative knowledge is produced. The site of ethical agency of the scholar is their engagement with the relationship between themselves and their interaction with the discursive structures at play. With genealogical hermeneutics, the interpretive site for this interaction is in fore-meaning. The possibilities for interpretive prejudice are at the horizon of self and tradition. That is, the ethical decisions of the scholar are precisely effective when the knowledge they produce interacts with their audience and the discursive structures they are intertwined with. Thus, it is in the work(s) of the author and related to its productive effects that ethico-political evaluations can be made.

If we elaborate on this hermeneutically, one of the insights we have seen is that problematic discourses can slip into our work when we are not careful to interrogate ourselves self-reflexively (what Ricoeur calls *false-consciousness*). In terms of the hermeneutic structure of comparison, it is the responsibility of scholars to interrogate their own implication in discursive structures to fully comprehend how their own assumptions, presuppositions, interests and prejudice influences their work. Every work is an example of interest-laden knowledge

construction. The consequence of this is the responsibility of the author to be more explicit about what exactly scholars are attempting to achieve with their work. This must be reflected in the structure of the hermeneutics of comparison.

The relevance of comparative work is bolstered not only when it asks itself why compare these specific things, but also by the necessity of elaborating on the potential or intended effects of knowledge production. That is, a naïve comparison is already implicated in discursive structures of tradition, but a nuanced comparison can also engage explicitly and productively with this in framing what fore-meaning or presuppositions (prejudice) it brings to bear in the work of comparison.

For genealogical hermeneutics, the interpreting subject is a highly produced locus of various discursive, institutional, and structural processes. That is, the very idea of subjectivity itself and what it means to be an author is a product of historical, institutional and discursive understandings. Any structure of the hermeneutics of comparison necessitates some engagement with the question: what kind of academic subject is doing comparison?

To fully realize a genealogical hermeneutics, we also have to account for Foucault's insight that traditions of discursive regimes and institutional structures are not homogeneous. There are many discourses in competition, conflict and cooperation that form tradition. The universal structure of comparison points to the daily process of mediating the multitude of interpretative frameworks already available to us. In the structure of comparison we need to account for the fact that authors who compare are in dialogue with a variety of tradition(s). What Foucauldian analyses contributes to genealogical hermeneutics is a detailed genealogy of how these interpretations developed in history, how they shape our subjectivity and a better understanding of the process that individuals engage in when interacting with their own tradition(s).

A more concrete effect of the genealogical aspect of genealogical hermeneutics is the potential relation of the author to intersectional analysis. How have all the privileges and oppressions that we encounter in our embodied subjectivity as gendered, raced, sexual, classed etc. subjects shape the work we produce? How do the relations of force produce us as subjects that are implicated in sexism, Orientalism, racism, homophobia, classism and so forth? The result for the self-reflective individual scholar is to interrogate their place in these relationalities and gauge, as well as they can, how these relationalities shape their own subjectivity and work. This is thus a two-fold process of self-critical analysis. On the one hand, the scholar would interrogate how discourses, institutions, cultural norms, and so forth shape the scholar's perspective—thus evaluating which of these a scholar should embrace and which the scholar should attempt to transcend or overcome.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the scholar should reverse this movement and ask how their work then shapes or potentially affects these discursive and institutional structures.

As an example, if we single out how Orientalism shapes our subjectivity, what we see is that regardless of our particular intersectional location (regional, racial, class etc. positionality) everyone is thrown<sup>31</sup> into concrete and material conditions of tradition where Orientalism shapes subjectivity. For example, how Orientalism influences discourse and subjects is different in India versus North America. The broad structures of Orientalism that shape subjectivity are only realized in local power relations that shape individual scholars in different ways. If we narrow our analysis and explicate the particular ways that Orientalism shapes Indian subjects as opposed to North American subjects, what becomes clearer is the relationship between the broader structures of Orientalist discourse and the ways that it influences how individuals take up these

---

<sup>30</sup> Or in some cases, which structures are neither embraced nor transcended, but still negotiated: for example, granting and publishing agencies.

<sup>31</sup> This is a Heideggerian term. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger elaborates on how being-in-the-world, Dasein, is thrown into a world filled with interpretations. For Heidegger, one of the points he is making with this insight is there are many interpretive frameworks that we are thrown into and acculturated within. In Gadamer's *Truth and Method* his understanding of tradition includes this insight (251-3).



discourses in their concrete situatedness. The connection between the discourse and one's concrete situatedness is the horizon of self and tradition in genealogical hermeneutics. Every subject is thrown into a highly specific context where their world is shaped in concrete and particular ways. In North America, for example, Asian identity plays out in such a way that many people must encounter and engage with the discourse about being a "model minority". Shaping this discourse specific to diasporic contexts is an Orientalism that plays out differently in Asia itself. For those in Asia, Orientalism helps shape subjectivity through what we have called the postcolonial predicament. A structure of the hermeneutics of comparison must account for this specificity of difference in tradition(s) based on different regional histories.

Taking all of these insights into account in determining the kinds of hermeneutic concerns that are relevant to comparative endeavours provides us with a general picture of a hermeneutic comparative analytic.<sup>32</sup> I have constructed a structure to this analytic, as expressed in the following figure 1. I posit that there are four levels of note for hermeneutic analysis of comparison: the objects of comparison, the comparison, the author and the work/product of comparison. To make my analytic more clear, I will relate my generalizations to a particular hypothetical example: a comparison of Nagarjuna and Kant. I am elaborating on the structure of the hermeneutics of comparison in order to 1) show more clearly the kinds of interpretive processes that are fundamental to comparison and thus 2) show how a genealogical hermeneutics can elucidate the benefits and importance of feminist and postcolonial insights in comparative philosophy and religion.

The act of comparison is itself historically situated. We have seen in the history of comparative philosophy that nineteenth century comparison was directly related to the interests of colonialism (or anti-colonialism). Contemporary comparison can be analyzed the same way: what

---

<sup>32</sup> By analytic, I mean the guiding structure to a related collection of analyses.

has the notion of comparison and its practice itself come to mean? In genealogical hermeneutics, I take seriously Gadamer's insight (taken from Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>33</sup>) that the relevance of what one chooses to interpret is based firmly on the concerns of the present. For an analytic of comparison, this means that we should be attuned to the analysis of why we compare and what productive effect results from comparison. In this light, a preliminary to the four levels of this hermeneutic structure of comparison is an analysis of what comparison means in the present. However, staying true to a genealogical hermeneutic position allows this question to remain open. Openness to new subjectivities, new interpretations, new traditions, necessitates openness to the meaning or function of comparison. Regardless, in an analytic of comparison, that the above is an important site of hermeneutic inquiry is clear.

The first level of the analytic is the objects of comparison. This level is comprised of those traditions or thinkers that are being compared by the author. In the case of our particular example, this would be the thought of Nagarjuna and Kant. From a hermeneutic perspective, the thought of either thinker is not something that can be pinned down to a universally accepted interpretation. The earlier hermeneutic position<sup>34</sup> of reconstructing the author's intent is fraught with problems. Rather, interpretation is dependent on a number of factors: the context of both author and interpreter being the most significant. In terms of our particular analysis, an author's interpretation of Nagarjuna, for example, is quite dependent on the tradition within which the author finds herself or himself—received ideas in the tradition about Nagarjuna. For a scholarly author, the tradition of academic interpretation is one that influences the author's interpretation—i.e. that the author's agency is engaged by taking up his or her own understanding from a world of already established interpretations. The author will necessarily construct his or her own particular interpretation, but only within a world of multiple interpretations that are already given. At this

---

<sup>33</sup> Gadamer 1975, 303-4.

<sup>34</sup> This was Schleiermacher's position. See Schmidt 2006, 7.

first stage of the analytic, one thing we necessarily conclude is that the author is already actively interpreting the subject matter in how they interpret the objects of comparison and what subjects they choose for comparison. Attendant to this is all of the subject-forming influences, discursive structures and institutional frameworks that influence the author's interpretation. Indeed, these factors shape every level of the analytic.

The second level of the analytic is the comparison. The author's understanding of what it means to compare shapes the author's interpretation of the objects of comparison. At this level, the context of the author helps to shape why the author thinks these objects are worthy of comparison, what directions the comparisons should take, what subject-matter and use the comparison is being done towards, and what makes possible the notion of comparison itself.<sup>35</sup> So, like the last level, we must understand that the subject-forming influences that shape the author are at play here. Also, this level of the analytic understands that the author is operating interpretively and thus still engaged in the process of interaction as being-in-the-world and all the contextual complexity that entails.

The third level of the analytic focuses on the author. Who is this person and how was this person able to arrive at this spot in history and engage this topic in the way that he or she did? What historical, discursive, institutional, structural, personal, intersectional processes and experiences shape the author?

The fourth level examines the work of the author. How is the author's work received? How does it affect discourse? How does the author being the author (analysed in the third level of

---

<sup>35</sup> For example, is comparison only textual analysis of the relics of elite males through history? What constrains the boundaries by which we determine what subjects are available to comparison? A feminist comparison might want to look at other resources than texts to elaborate on the positions of women, precisely to counter-act the hegemony of male voices in history. A postcolonial analysis might argue that a comparison that remains a comparison of East and West is a relic of colonialism and attempt to reframe the way one does comparison.

the analytic) influence the work? What is the context in which the work is received and what are the many possible ways that the work can be interpreted?

On the other hand, there is another way of structuring the process that singles out the author as an interpretive locus and highlights the universality of interpretation in comparison. In figure 2, we see that the author is the source of interpretation for levels one two and four of the analytic above. The objects of comparison are understood by the author only through and as interpretation. The comparison itself and the work, too, are fundamentally interpretive products. But the author is a product of, and active agent in, the world of the interpretation in which he or she resides. The consequence of this displayed in the figure is that subject forming processes inform the author, those processes work through the author to inform her or his interpretation at levels one , two and four, and then the results of those interpretations are fed from level four back into the world of interpretation informing those influenced by the author's work.

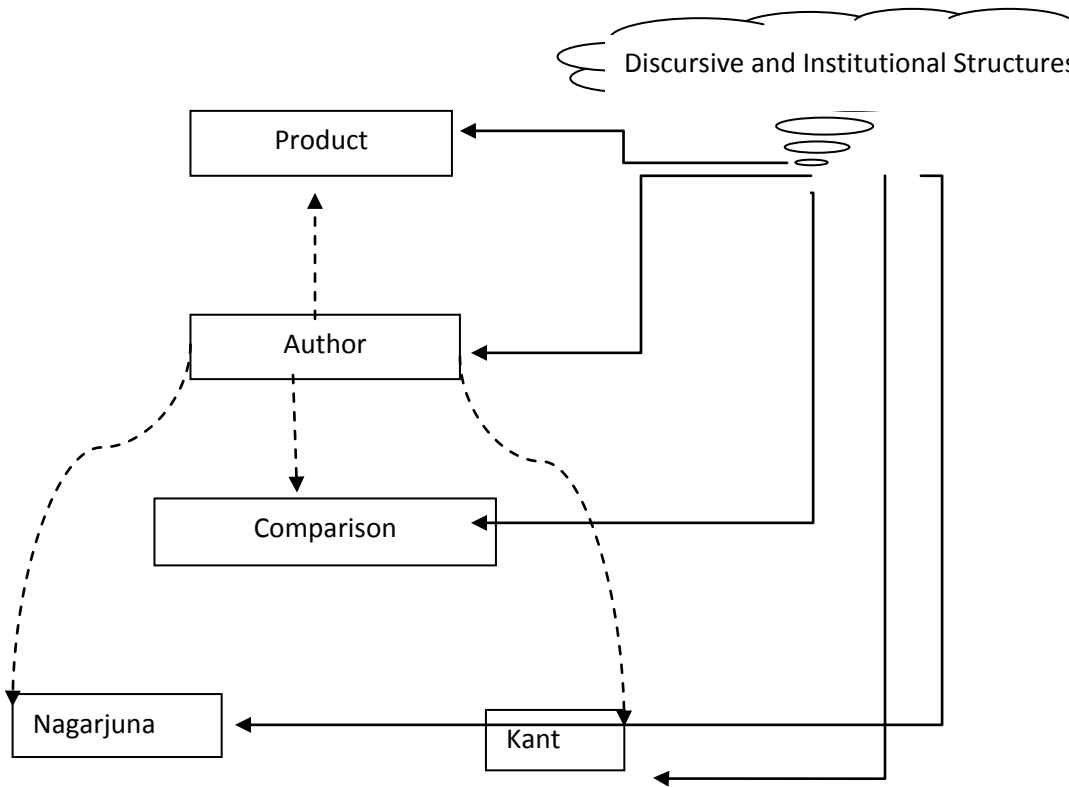
Figure 1:

Level 4:

Level 3:

Level 2:

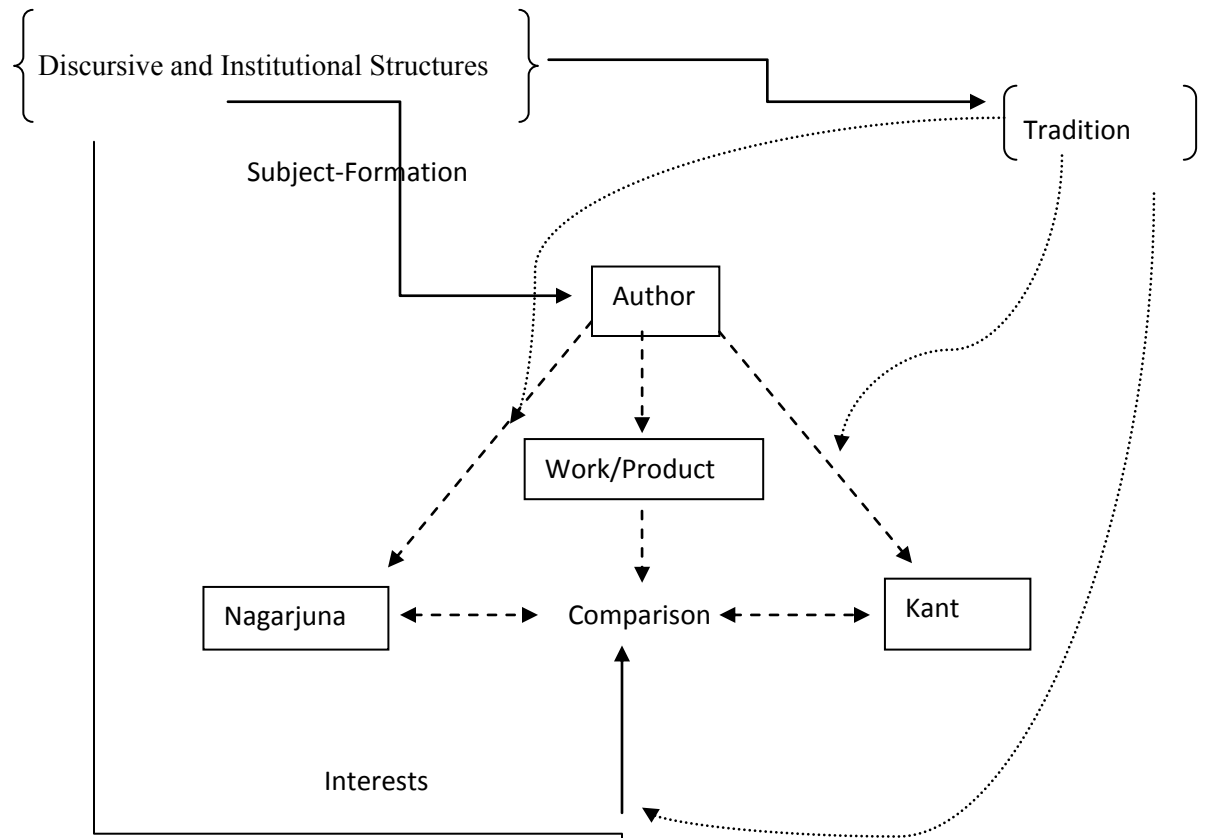
Level 1:



Author's interpretation: ----->

The interpretive effects of discursive and institutional structures (including the traditions of interpreting Nagarjuna and Kant): ----->

Figure 2:



Movement of authorial interpretation: ----->

Discursive and Institutional Structures: ----->

Traditions of Interpretation: .....>

## Genealogical Hermeneutics and Comparison

The insights that help to shape my understanding of the hermeneutic structure of comparison are that there are certain processes that consistently affect the act of comparison at all levels of interpretation. The first is that no part of the work of comparison is given to us as anything but interpretation. The second is that these interpretations are heavily shaped by material and concrete subject-forming processes. The third insight is that one must necessarily engage with how the processes and analyses that one uses to understand a subject also shape oneself.

For much of contemporary theory, it is this third insight that has become a central issue and I think what may be fundamental to the “post-“s (postmodernism, postcolonialism, third-wave feminism, queer theory). If we trace this understanding genealogically, at the very least we can form a lineage from Nietzsche through Heidegger to later hermeneuticians and the May ‘68<sup>36</sup> thinkers like Foucault and Derrida. It is an insight that speaks to how we are always implicated in understanding the world because we are part of it. Thus analysis must necessarily be self-reflexive. It thus becomes necessary to apply the kinds of analyses I have brought to comparison to the present work itself.

In my attempt to find a complementary approach between hermeneutics and Foucauldian understandings, the insightful reader may note that my own interpretation here is a product of as well as implicated in the same kinds of processes and critical engagements that it is elucidating. That is, any attempt to interpret hermeneutics and Foucault is itself a context-dependent work, subject to the vagaries of prejudice, presupposition, culture and interpretation that hermeneutics and genealogy make us aware of. It is also implicated in force-relations and the complicity

---

<sup>36</sup> See Luc Ferry and Alain Renault’s *French Philosophy of the Sixties* (1990) for a summary of the kinds of thinkers and thought that the phrase ‘May 68’ refers to. They refer to it as, “a constellation of works which are in chronological proximity to May or, even more precisely, to works whose authors acknowledged, usually explicitly, a kinship of inspiration with the movement” (xvii-xviii). They name Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, Gilles Deleuze, Paul Ricouer, Emmanuel Levinas, and Raymond Aron (ibid.) among the many who could fit this group.

between power/knowledge and is necessarily *doing something political*. Thus, part of the goal of this dissertation is to open a space for feminist and postcolonial analyses in comparison and directly, politically, advocate for women and people of color.

One response to the kinds of self-reflexivity that I am advocating here is to throw up one's hands and let the chips fall where they may. That is, one can respond to the idea that all knowledge-production is context-dependent and implicated in power relations by acknowledging it, and continuing on—because, well, whatever one produces is implicated regardless of what one does, so what does it matter? I find this response inadequate. The challenge posed by self-reflective criticism is a challenge towards transformation. To ignore that challenge is to avoid being self-critical at all. It further, from a Foucauldian perspective, allows all of the force-relations at play in shaping subjectivity free reign in one's interpretations and allows problematic structures of power relationality far more possible entries into one's work. Genealogical hermeneutics is precisely the insight that the meeting of tradition and self is fraught with the challenges of power and knowledge—and that identifying how this affects one's subjectivity and interpretations is an ethical activity of self-transformation.

Another approach to self-reflexivity is to attempt to account for every single element of one's interpretation as possible. It calls for an inventory of one's biases, interests, and context. This herculean task seems quite unwieldy to me. Not only would a complete inventory of biases become counter-productive to saying much beyond biography (given the wide and heterogeneous scope of all the forces shaping us), but how do we account for biases that may be unconscious (including in ourselves)? We are inevitably unable to see all the ways we are products of our time and location.

On the other hand, a critical self-reflection necessitates some engagement with our context, prejudice, and presuppositions. As unwieldy as it is to account for all instances of these, I



think it necessary to be explicit about some of our encounters with the historical biases that shape our tradition(s). The first question in response to this perspective is “which element of critical self-reflection should take my attention in this work”? The answer to this question is also implicated in power-relations, context and presuppositions. What makes us choose to focus on one particular issue as important for examination (which necessarily excludes others) is a site for interrogation within genealogical hermeneutics. My own approach has been to examine feminist and postcolonial insights and read them into the ways that the fields of Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion could look self-reflexively at their own contexts, prejudices, and presuppositions. We have also seen why I argue for a social justice approach at the end of Chapter Two.

There are further implications. In every act of writing or knowledge-production there are already implicit approaches imbedded in these acts. It is the self-reflexive nature of interpretation (as the fusion of self-tradition) within genealogical hermeneutics that allows us the agency to engage with the kinds of processes that shape subjectivity and the interpretations available to subjects. Once we acknowledge this and begin to account for this in our work, the analysis of our own interpretations necessarily transforms those interpretations themselves and becomes the ground for a new tradition of interpretation.

I would like to turn to the first the insight that all comparison is interpretive. Aside from the various hermeneutic positions we have explored that argue that interpretation is universal, cross-cultural comparison is more amenable to this kind of analysis insofar as culture itself is a category disseminated within scholarship, and yet intertwined with issues of power and knowledge.

In Chapter One I raised the issue of how the concept of multiculturalism leads to the essentialization of culture allows for the policing of the Other through the category of culture. I

argued for the notion of polyculturality to address the failings of the concept of multiculturalism. From the perspective of genealogical hermeneutics, the attention to material effects of the notion of polyculturality shows us how the discourse of culture shapes subjectivity into cultural lines. Polyculturality, from a genealogical hermeneutic perspective, can be site for a new subjectivity that plays with the hybridity of cultural identity. Genealogical hermeneutics can also, however, ground new identities and subjectivities that arise from polyculturality within an interpretive lens that retains the tradition out of which these new identities spring, and yet allows for a new tradition of polycultural identity to guide the fore-meaning of interpretation. In terms of Comparative Philosophy or comparative religion, a polycultural interpretation defies the essentialism of cultural with in those fields, while still allowing for an interpretive stance that is open to the possibilities of new ways of thinking about the subject matter of comparison.

To be self-reflective about one's interpretations of thinkers, disciplines, and subject matter involves more than a cursory examination of one's views or context. It almost necessarily involves a commitment to a research project that unearths one's prejudices, biases, the historical trajectory and situation that shapes and surrounds oneself—and even an examination of the very categories that ground one's knowledge. To not commit to such a research project is allow these “external forces” to enter into one's work in often subtle and insidious ways.

For scholars, we see this play out, for example, in the categories of religion, philosophy, culture, and even the notion of comparison itself. In Chapter One I showed how fundamental the issue of categories is to comparison, and we've seen how polyculturality can be productively used within a genealogical hermeneutics to address some of the issues of the categorization of culture. If we do comparison without being attendant to the problems of categories, we remain ignorant of issues like those brought up regarding the terms philosophy and religion, and the consequences of that could include being ignorant of the political use of these categories (as the conversation

between Defoort and Raud elucidates). As scholars, we have the ability to produce knowledge using these categories and how we use them contributes to the tradition of their usage.

Genealogical hermeneutics is a call to understand the ethico-political consequences of our work and to be in a dialogue with those consequences within one's interpretations.

For genealogical hermeneutics, the very basis of agency can be found only in dialogue with these "external forces" that shape our hermeneutical horizon. It is only by examining and understanding how colonialism, Orientalism, patriarchy, class, heteronormativity and all the other discursive, structural and historical forces shape us that we can mediate them and gain back a more solid agency within these forces.

By advocating a genealogical hermeneutic where we understand the world and tradition(s) into which we are thrown I argue that we gain a perspective that allows for increasing possibilities of strategic agency in what we can take up as our own from that which is given to us. This Foucauldian spin on hermeneutics takes seriously Foucault's goal of opening up the possibilities of subjectivity. We can only do this when we have an understanding of how our subjectivity is shaped, and how we can interact with the forces that shape our subjectivity. In short, agency cannot be gained by adopting a view that the subject is an autonomous, wilful, rational, subject. Agency is gained through understanding that the subject is quite vulnerable to a hubris that looks like agency but is actually the historical forces of Enlightened modernity constructing so-called "rational, autonomous" subjects for certain aims. Agency, rather, is attained when the subject is understood as developed and constructed within a horizon of contested, complex, and competing discourses and structures. It is only through understanding what shapes our subjectivity that we can resist, reify, transform, or transcend the forces shaping us. Agency is the art of interpretation in everyday life.

So the first step in being self-reflexive about one's work, is to be self-reflexive about one's subjectivity, one's positionality, and to lay claim to an interpretive stance that explicitly traces the lines of reification and resistance towards one's context. This is a challenging critical process that involves research into many of the issues I spoke about in Chapters One and Two: of modernity, capitalism, colonialism, intersectionality, and socio-cultural location. The fundamental question to ask is: "What interpretive lenses are available to me and what interpretive stance will I take up, and what other possible interpretive stances can I take?"

This self-reflexivity can also be applied to the tension in genealogical hermeneutics between the emptying of the subject in order to allow a space for the possibilities of subjectivity in genealogy and the stability of hermeneutics as a mediation of self and tradition. On the one hand, an important and fundamental possibility for comparative work is a continual re-examination of the self in relation with the material at hand. However, we should be careful to avoid a neurotic version of this that has no sense of self for individuals to stand from. To give an idea of the kinds of issues that this entails I'd like to come back to Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.

In reference to postmodernism and the discussion of modernity by figures like Habermas, Foucault, Lyotard and Lefort, Bhabha understands the discussion to reflect a particular idea of modern subjectivity as a constant reconstruction or reinvention of the subject for liberative ends. Bhabha questions whether,

[T]his synchronous constancy of reconstruction and reinvention of the subject does not assume a cultural temporality that may not be universalist in its epistemological moment of judgement, but may, indeed, be ethnocentric in its construction of cultural "difference". (Bhabha 1994, 344)

That is, he argues that it is not necessarily the case that the persistent “splitting” of the subject is a space of freedom. It does not account for the “political situations of unfreedom” (344) where the subject is split, doubled, or reconstructing itself. Rather, it is the “discursive and historical temporality that interrupts the enunciative ‘present’ in which the self-inventions of modernity take place” (344). The context-dependent realities of the subject, taken as “synchronous,” taken as some sort of identity that can be “reworked as a framework for cultural otherness *within* the general dialectic of doubling that postmodernism proposes” (345) allows the subject access to the resources available within tradition without having to discard the potential of the transformation of subjectivity. The potential for genealogical hermeneutics as liberative is precisely in this play between the reconstruction of the self and the connection to temporal subjective historicity. I leave as an open question which of these takes priority in particular situations.

One of the goals of this thesis has been to take the critical positions of feminism and postcolonialism and apply them positively to comparison in such a way as to open up new possibilities of comparative work. Can we do comparison differently? What assumptions need to be examined within the fields of comparison? By asking these questions, we open up whole new lines of questioning, interrogation and knowledge. With this in mind, the rest of this work will examine new possibilities opened up by genealogical hermeneutics to comparative philosophy from a social justice perspective.

From a social justice perspective, one cannot understand one’s social location without understanding the positionality of others. Intersectionality engenders a position that brings into focus the relative privilege and oppressions we face based on our various locations. The first step for this in social justice is hearing the voices of those who have a quite different intersectional positionality than ones-self and being attentive to the varying ways that relative oppression and

privilege shape their lived experience. But we can also use this to understand ourselves in our contemporariness by looking at those in different time-periods and cultures and apply a similar reflective lens. If our subjectivity is shaped by colonialism, modernity and capitalism, what does the subjectivity of an 8<sup>th</sup> century South Asian look like? What forces are shaping the subjectivity of someone in that time and place? If we compare our subject formation processes with theirs, what interesting lines of inquiry can this reveal to us?

When we start looking at the strategies of resistance and reification we use when we take up interpretations to interact with the forces that shape our subjectivity, another possible line of inquiry becomes clear. Did people in different times and places use different strategies? What effects did those have? What influence did their religion/philosophy have on these strategies? Furthermore, we can also analyze the interpretations that they took up and analyze how these interpretations affected them.

When we examine the hermeneutic structure of comparative philosophy from the standpoint of social justice, the questions asked at each of the four levels of the analytic take an ethical edge. The practical effect of this is an explicit engagement of an author's intended impact on a particular field of discourse. That is, an author's fore-meaning, from a social justice perspective, is gauging how their own relative privilege/oppression is implicated in the work they produce and how it affects (or hopes to affect) the relative privilege/oppression of those affected by their work.

Genealogical hermeneutics from a social justice perspective is also strategic. It asks: given the goals of social justice, what are the most strategic interpretations to meet these goals? For comparative philosophy, it would involve asking the questions: which comparisons are most effective and which notion of comparison facilitates these goals?

When talking about Comparative Philosophy, for example, because the field is explicitly comparing East and West, it necessarily must always engage the issues of Orientalism. How does one's work reify or resist the discourse of Orientalism? What effect does one's work have on the tropes of Orientalism? For example, how does one's comparison relate to the notion of Eurocentrism? How does it engage with this trope?

The positionality of one's place and ability to do comparative philosophy is also an important element—what place in the structures and relations of power allow one to create this knowledge in the first place? There are class, racial, regional and gender concerns that are important to address. Generally speaking, the ability to produce knowledge comes from a position of privilege. For scholars, this is especially important to answer. The academy is undoubtedly a place of privilege to speak from. To what effect is this privilege being used? Does one's work from a place of privilege challenge the structures of oppression? Does comparison use privilege to open up a space for more marginalized voices? Or does it reify a status quo?

These challenging insights, I argue, can have a positive effect on the disciplines of comparison. By engaging explicitly with the ethical and political consequences of our work and the relations it interacts with we can rethink the value of our work. These insights give us a new way to answer the question: why compare? One answer I am suggesting here is that we can compare in order to provide interesting new directions for answering our contemporary ethical and political concerns. The strength of genealogical hermeneutics is that it allows a space for social justice to question its own construction of how it conceives privilege/oppression as subject-forming and perhaps explore new forms of interpretation that meet the emancipatory aims of social justice more effectively. Comparative work can look for new strategies, or even new models of subjectivity, that can meet social justice goals in a different way.

Genealogical hermeneutics, when applied to social justice becomes a kind of re-evaluation of values that attempts to alleviate systemic oppressions faced by those marginalized by other value systems. When we attempt to consider what value-system or ethic should be approached in regards to the social justice interpretation of comparison, we are confronted with a circularity: by what value system do we evaluate value systems? Obviously, attempting to construct a value system to evaluate value systems necessitates a value system already in place for this evaluation. And yet, hermeneutically, we can see that the questioning of value-systems is never *tabula rasa*. There is no neutral, value-free space for us to occupy in order to “objectively” evaluate value systems. Every value-system is already a factor of historical context, intersectional experience, and situatedness.

The social-justice ethic here is basically a value system that places all voices at an equal epistemic level. That is, it calls for all voices to have a space in discourse and not just those of the socio-economically or politically privileged. At root is a concern for the lived experiences of the marginalized, an ethic that focuses on mitigating oppression and de-mystifying privilege. Its focus is improving the quality of life for all, starting with those whose quality of life is often most constrained by hardship. The insights of feminism show us that women face significant challenges within the structural hierarchies of gender, and we can take these insights seriously towards producing comparison that helps to combat patriarchy. Postcolonialism helps us understand how Orientalism, racism and (neo-)colonialism affect us and it can guide us in shaping comparison in ways that do not support these marginalizing discourses and institutions. Intersectionality and social justice provide an interesting conception of subjectivity that can be useful for comparative scholars to imagine new ways of doing comparison that have a positive effect on those marginalized by various forms of systemic oppression.



One may ask, quite seriously I believe, why one should advocate this ethic? The answer is precisely in the lived experience of the marginalized who face far more intersectionally relevant challenges in succeeding in living what might be called “full-lives”, regardless of value-system. That is, regardless of the value system one chooses to advocate, social justice argues that the under-privileged do not have equal opportunity to succeed in whichever value system is conceived. The ability to even have the freedom of possibility to re-evaluate one’s values is highly constrained when one is faced with heavy, daily socio-economic marginalization. For example, if one’s daily life is focused primarily on feeding oneself and one’s family and struggling to make economic ends meet, then the ability of one to get one’s voice heard is highly constrained.

The relevance of this for comparative work is that comparison is already a project imbedded in a wide variety of discourses. I mentioned Orientalism previously, but any cross-cultural analysis must take note of global systems of power, cultural specificities and intersectional differences therein, as well as one’s own global situatedness and thus relative privilege/oppression. To understand a philosophy or religion is to understand its context and place it in distinction with one’s own context. It is to understand its effects, its *raison d’etre*, its relevance. Comparison is the attempt to make something distant relevant for the contemporary. It is the precisely at the questioning of the relevance of comparison that its ethics is revealed. Relevance necessitates a value-system that can evaluate whether something merits the attention necessary for relevancy. As such, without examining the methodological ethics of comparison, its relevance is only mediated by the uncritical play of force relations. The greatest potential of comparison is in the ethical reconsideration of its relevance.

That being said, I by no means wish to argue that comparison should always be from a social justice approach. While this is the approach that I privilege, and I think for good reason,

there may be other equally viable approaches. My focus on social justice is in many ways the display of my own agency in resisting the discourses and institutions that shape me. Being in a position of relative privilege, my aim is to resist, as well as I can, the further marginalization or oppression of people whose lives might be potentially negatively affected by my work.

For the purposes of this work, I am arguing that the focus on a genealogical hermeneutic perspective can open up new challenges and expand the possibilities and relevance of comparative work. By taking up a genealogical hermeneutic perspective, like the one I've argued here, comparative philosophy and religion opens itself up to new ways of thinking about comparison and its place in the history of ideas. New avenues of research are possible and a more ethically robust comparative method can make it more relevant for contemporary concerns. Furthermore, the hermeneutic focus on naming one's prejudices and aims will allow comparative philosophy to have a more self-reflexive stake in its own direction. All of these possibilities, I argue, can only help comparative philosophy and comparative religion expand their scope and thus attain a more prominent position as an effective discourse within knowledge production.

## **Conclusion: Comparison, Domination and Social Justice**

The key contribution of this thesis to the field of Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion argues that these fields have yet to substantially address many of the feminist and postcolonial concerns regarding the ethics and politics of knowledge production in comparison. I developed a genealogical hermeneutics that integrates the work of Michel Foucault and Hans-Georg Gadamer, arguing for the necessity of addressing ethico-political concerns in comparative work from a social justice ethic.

One of the goals of this thesis has been to take the critical positions of feminism and post-colonialism regarding the complicity of power and knowledge and apply this critical gaze to comparison in such a way as to open up new possibilities of comparative work. Can we do comparison differently? What assumptions need to be examined within the fields of comparison? By asking these questions, we open up whole new lines of questioning, interrogation and knowledge.

In answering these questions about Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion, I developed a genealogical hermeneutics that built upon the critiques that feminism and postcolonialism bring to knowledge production. The aims of feminism, postcolonialism and queer theory generally work toward liberation and the resistance to domination. The genealogical hermeneutics that I advocated argued for a social justice ethic to respond to the liberative goals of feminism and postcolonialism. I argued that comparative work is necessarily interest-laden and the adoption of a social justice based genealogical hermeneutics provides an opportunity to shift comparison in new directions that explicitly work towards resisting oppression and marginalization.

One of the themes of this dissertation has been a call for self-reflexive analysis and for engaging with our presuppositions. This call highlights the concern about the reasons to do comparison in the first place: that is, why compare? Fundamental to genealogical hermeneutics is an openness that allows for a variety of answers to this question. There will always be some kind of resultant effect of one's comparison (however great or small an effect this is) and this dissertation argues for the need to elaborate some agency in the trajectory of the productive effects of one's work. Though genealogical hermeneutics can remain open to what this trajectory may be, I argue that comparison is uniquely placed to meet social justice goals.

When we examine the hermeneutic structure of comparative philosophy from the standpoint of social justice, the act of comparison can provide analyses that allow us to rethink how we do comparison. I argued that as scholars, a self-reflexive analysis should entail that we understand our own position within the structures of global knowledge production and the effects of our work on the marginalized and oppressed and use our relatively privileged position as scholars to produce knowledge that positively affects the marginalized and oppressed.

The general structure of argumentation I use to arrive at this position is separated into three chapters. Chapter One examined the history of Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion, analyzing some important issues in these fields to reveal the necessity of engaging with the ethico-political nature of knowledge production. Chapter Two explored the critical positions of feminism and postcolonialism towards the complicity of power and knowledge, leading to an elaboration of intersectionality and social justice. Chapter Three introduced genealogical hermeneutics, grounded in a social justice perspective that allows for a perspective on comparison that takes builds upon the insights of feminism and post-colonialism.

Chapter One examined the nineteenth century comparative work of Hegel and Marx through the lens of a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, connecting problematic discourses about the Orient in the nineteenth century to its more nuanced twentieth century manifestations in Comparative Philosophy. I explored some important contemporary issues in Comparative Philosophy and comparative religion—such as the problems with multiculturalism, the postcolonial predicament, and the consequences of the parochial and problematic distinction between religion and philosophy applied cross-culturally—to reveal the necessity for these fields to examine their presuppositions and assumptions. My analysis of contemporary comparative scholarship showed a need for a much more sustained interrogation of the connection between power and knowledge and feminist and postcolonial insights about power/knowledge.

Using Foucault's notion of discourse most explicitly stated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* I explored the history of comparative philosophy and religion, elaborating on those trends of thought and historical patterns that still inform us today. I examined Marx and Hegel to show how the nineteenth century discourse on the Orient exhibited a Eurocentrism and European universalism that was connected to the project of European colonialism. The beginnings of the field of Comparative Philosophy as seen in the works of Charles Moore reflect how Orientalist discourses, while more nuanced, shaped the beginnings of the field.

I argued that when we look at some of the issues that arise in contemporary comparison we still see the influence of Orientalism and colonialism on scholarship and the necessity of challenging these presuppositions. The notion of multiculturalism retains a problematic understanding that essentializes culture, polices identity and under the auspices of cultural pluralism is a barrier to anti-racist activism. My analysis of the postcolonial predicament revealed that even after colonization the structures of colonization remain internalized in the former colonies, shaping global knowledge. The debates between Defoort and Raud about the Western or

global nature of philosophy, the discussion regarding the distinction between religion and philosophy, and a comparison of the Chinese notion of *jiao* or the Indian notion of *darśana* in relation to religion/philosophy highlighted the necessity for comparison to examine its presuppositional categories and the Eurocentric assumptions underlying them. I argued that challenging these categories can put in fresh relief our interests in maintaining these categories.

I looked at a selection of scholars analyzing contemporary comparison and found that there is a lack of scholarship engaging in a sustained manner the issue of the complicity of power and knowledge. In Comparative Philosophy Bernard Faure and Alastair MacIntyre both lack methodological perspectives that can address the problems of power/knowledge. In Religious Studies, we see Morny Joy and Richard King being singular voices within that discipline in their attempt to convey a hermeneutic that can account for feminist and postcolonial concerns. I ended Chapter One expressing a need for comparison to tackle its presuppositions and learn from the challenges of feminism and postcolonialism that I detailed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two explored in detail the relationship between power and knowledge by examining feminism and postcolonialism through a Foucauldian lens. The ethico-political issues raised led me to examine the concept of intersectionality and to advocate a social justice ethic. I began Chapter Two by explaining in detail Foucault's thought in order to show his influence on feminism and postcolonialism (and thus the necessity for using his work in Chapter Three). I examined postcolonialism predominantly through an engagement with Edward Said and his critics, but gave some ideas of how contemporary postcolonial analysis has moved beyond his work. Feminism's relationship to Foucault is contested, but I showed how a significant number of feminists are influenced by Foucault. The issues raised by feminism, postcolonialism and Foucault led me to respond by adopting a social justice ethic and exploring the concept of intersectionality.

In fields that engage in cross-cultural material there has been a concerted effort to engage with the intersection of power and knowledge, especially postcolonial and feminist thought. In the fields that take the challenge seriously, a shift towards exploring the positionality of scholars and their subject matter has productively and innovatively expanded those field's concerns. This is a necessary ethico-political exercise in any cross-cultural production of knowledge, but also a positive and productive step towards scholarly innovation.

The bulk of Chapter Two focuses on the intersection of power and knowledge. This led me to engage quite heavily with the work of Michel Foucault. While other thinkers have approached the subject matter, I found Foucault's account to be unavoidable due not only to its robust applicability, but also due to his extensive influence on postcolonial and feminist thought. I showed how feminism and postcolonialism owe a heavy debt to Michel Foucault, and then use this as a basis to explore the critiques that both bring to contemporary scholarship. I reviewed a selection of feminist and postcolonial authors noting and engaging with their critiques of knowledge production and taking up certain insights they have regarding the complicity of power relations in the production of knowledge. I concluded with a call for integrating these insights into a social justice ethic that takes into account a scholar's own positionality and the positionality of their object of study in relation to the effects of one's scholarly productions of knowledge.

In my examination of major touchstone thinkers and noteworthy scholars of both feminism and postcolonialism, I argued that many important thinkers in these fields were indebted to Foucault. Thinkers like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Judith Butler explicitly acknowledge the influence of Foucault on their work. I found it appropriate to retain a thread of Foucauldian analysis in Chapter Two, to what I think are productive ends.

My examination of postcolonialism was heavily focused on Edward Said and his critics. Said was the first to elaborate through a Foucauldian methodology (and name) the discourse of Orientalism, and an examination of many of his critics helps see more clearly how to understand postcolonial knowledge and power. I examine Richard King's somewhat sympathetic and Ahmad's Marxist perspective towards Said, elaborating on a number of issues in the complicity of power and knowledge. For example, when I confronted with Ahmad's critique of Said we are led to the methodological insight: "What productive effects do postcolonial analyses have?" For Ahmad, the productive effects of postcolonial analysis are critiqued, quite successfully, from the perspective of class. Ahmad's critique of postcolonial perspectives argues that, whatever else these perspectives may do, they allow third-world subjects an entrance into the first-world as academics. For Ahmad, postcolonial analysis becomes a strategy of global class mobility.

In response I argued that postcolonial analysis does much more than this—can also help us understand why structures of colonial imagination become internalized in postcolonial settings. The internalization of colonial epistemes and structures by the colonized is known as the postcolonial predicament. This has become the focus of much postcolonial analysis in the last twenty years and I examined how Uma Narayan and Homi Bhabha tackle this subject in different ways.

Feminist analyses influenced by Foucault explore how discursive strategies of gender inequality follow a similar pattern of internalization and subtlety. I explained how feminists use Foucault to critique the gender essentialism that is evoked within the discourse of patriarchy and how they use a Foucauldian analytic of power to strategize ways of resisting gendered forms of oppression within the discourse of patriarchy.

One example of the feminist use of Foucault is the attempt to explore history without recourse to an autonomous subject. I showed how feminists examined the lives of men and



women to show how discourse about gender shapes how men and women (and others) have internalized these discourses. Feminists aim is to provide strategies to combat these discourses and the power relations that reify them. Chapter Two explored how Ladelle McWhorter's analysis of Foucault's notion of self-surveillance, power and internalization could helpfully be applied to comparative work.

From this analysis, I reiterated at the end of Chapter Two that comparative knowledge, like all knowledge, is directly connected to power relations and thus must address this connection directly and engage with its own location within power relations. I examined the usefulness of an intersectional approach for bringing feminism, postcolonialism, queer theory, and an analysis of class together and argued for the connection between social justice and intersectionality.

Chapter Three pulls the first two chapters together into a methodological stance that can accommodate and integrate these insights. I developed a methodology combining genealogy and hermeneutics and examine the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer in an attempt to integrate his methodological insights with Foucault. I took up some of the major themes of hermeneutics, such as the universality of interpretation, the notion of the fusion of horizons and the concept of 'for-meaning'. I examined scholars who have attempted to join the work of Foucault and Gadamer, and added my voice to the work of integrating genealogy and hermeneutics. I then adopted a social justice perspective in my final discussion in order to integrate these hermeneutic insights more completely with intersectional theory. I conclude by arguing for a integrative, intersectional methodology I call genealogical hermeneutics.

What becomes clear is that self-reflexive analysis necessitates an active and thorough engagement with one's presuppositions and positionality. It is with this understanding in mind that I argue in Chapter Three for a hermeneutic approach to scholarly self-reflexivity. It is my contention that hermeneutics gives us a strong methodological perspective to engage in the often

difficult process of self-analysis. it is a general hermeneutics that can shift with changing circumstances of analysis and allows for a flexibility to incorporate the insights of a social justice ethic, feminist, postcolonial, intersectional and Foucauldian perspectives. In this way, what I called a genealogical hermeneutics can forcefully engage with the interpretive structures within which we operate while at the same time retaining the fluidity to advocate for multiple strategies of resistance to discourses that may continue to marginalize those who least benefit from global force relations.

Given this, Chapter Three argued for some general hermeneutic approaches. The guiding hermeneutic insight that makes this project *hermeneutic* is the general awareness that knowledge is a function of interpretation. I argued in this chapter that there is no “truth” of “what Kant said” other than our collective interpretation that something is indeed “what Kant said”. The corollary of this is that these collective interpretations are something that are already in the traditions that we are thrown into. Gadamer frames this thrownness as tradition. I discussed how complementing Gadamer’s understanding of *tradition* with Foucauldian genealogy can reflect the contested and multiple interpretive narratives that individuals mediate on a daily basis. However, I also spent some time in the chapter exploring how Gadamer’s notion of tradition is useful for showing how within a context of multiple interpretive possibilities, reframing tradition can be a valuable resource for grounding certain interpretations and make them our own, providing a stability to interpretation that genealogy lacks.

Chapter Three elaborated the concept of genealogical hermeneutics with the notion of tradition being supplemented with the material analysis of discursive regimes and disciplinary institutional structures provided by genealogy. In this light, I argued that genealogical hermeneutics can also accommodate intersectional analyses of postcolonial, feminist and queer theory perspectives. We find ourselves in particular configurations of power relations and

particular, but multiple, forms of patriarchy, classism, racism, colonial discourse, and heteronormativity, and we mediate the various forces that shape our subjectivity in different ways. Chapter Three argued for genealogical hermeneutics as a method that shows how experimenting with new interpretations to make new traditions within our localized experiences allows us to understand how we already exhibit agency within powerful discourses but also allows us to see how we could strategically take up these interpretations differently, allowing for the possibility of more liberative kinds of everyday or scholarly interpretations.

It is the responsibility of scholars to understand how our daily, intersectional experiences shape our scholarship, and this thesis rounds out Chapter Three with some of the possibilities for the scholarship of comparison if we take up a genealogical hermeneutics. I argued that genealogical hermeneutics provides us with new tools and perspectives with which we can engage in comparison. Genealogical hermeneutics provides a perspective that highlights how the comparative work we produce is already always in dialogue with networks of force relations and gives us some idea of the kinds of discursive ‘truths’ that we encourage in our work. Finally, in Chapter Three I argued that genealogical hermeneutics highlights the ethical and political ramifications of our work and provides a perspective by which we can strategically gain some agency over the impact our work can have on broader discourse with an awareness of how our own interpretations are informed by the various discourses into which we are thrown.

The possibilities provided by a shift in methodological awareness towards a genealogical hermeneutic understandings include an awareness of the motivations and effects of knowledge production and thus a change in how we create knowledge comparatively. This awareness opens up new lines of inquiry into the context-dependent factors that shape what, how and why we produce knowledge and gives us an idea of what its effects might be. This can significantly

broaden our range of comparative inquiry, by inviting us to understand comparison in a different way.

On the one hand it can bring to light factors that affect the object of study and the act of scholarship itself, and on the other hand it can refocus our attentions within the subject matter of comparison towards historically mediated contextual analyses. This shift can help us better understand what effects a particular thinker or tradition has on history, while also providing more material for our comparative efforts. So, for example, instead of comparing the ahistorical ideas of particular thinkers of religious doctrines, we might instead compare the social effects of these ideas on the cultural milieu they inhabited and compare that. This could provide a more robust analysis of the strategic use of ideas or doctrines in history and their potential application today.

That we do comparison at all is a product of concerns and interests of a particular time and place. We shape comparison for our own purposes. Keeping this in mind can offer a whole new range of motivations and trajectories for comparative work that brings to light new purposes for which we can do comparison.

This thesis gives us a new way to answer the question: why compare? The hermeneutic focus on naming one's prejudices and aims will allow comparative philosophy to have a more self-reflexive stake in its own direction. By taking up a genealogical hermeneutic perspective comparative philosophy and religion opens itself up to new ways of thinking about comparison and its place in the history of ideas.

The positionality of a scholar's location in the structures and relations of power are what allow the scholar to create comparative knowledge in the first place. When we turn our genealogical hermeneutic gaze inwards we arrive at a different conception of comparison's place in power/knowledge and thus our comparative project(s) are transformed. Our situatedness within

our own institutional and intersectional context is basis and starting point for our comparative work.

My dissertation shows what comparison may look like when we begin to interrogate what makes us choose the objects of comparison that we examine and the reasons we compare those objects—as opposed to others. Using a genealogical hermeneutic approach reveals what presuppositions underlie our comparative projects and what happens to comparison when we shift our prejudices. When comparison follows the hermeneutical structure of comparison argued in Chapter Three and explicitly engages in finding new ways of comparing that engage social justice perspectives the potential of comparison is revealed.

We need not look at comparison as necessarily between two thinkers, or two traditions, and their doctrinal or philosophical insights. Instead, I argued that we can compare the interpretive strategies that have been used within discursive and institutional structures cross-culturally to resist forms of domination at different times and places. We can compare those strategies as potential strategies for use today. Comparative work, then, is not only an important task in the creation of liberative strategic knowledge but is uniquely situated as the only way to produce this kind of knowledge.

This comparative work can use its scholarly privilege to open up a space for more marginalized voices, for the disenfranchised, towards equality, or to challenge the status quo. I have argued that this task is an important part of comparison because every act of comparison is already working towards an ethico-political end. The focus on a genealogical hermeneutics does not necessarily lead to a similar response for each comparative thinker—but it does necessitate some kind of response. It opens up new challenges through the necessity of a response and expands the possibilities of relevance for comparative work. The genealogical and hermeneutic focus on identifying one's prejudices and aims allows Comparative Philosophy and comparative

religion to have a more self-reflexive stake in its own direction and thus attain a more prominent position as an effective discourse within the strategies of knowledge production that work towards ethical goals.

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. 1969. Trans. John Cumming. New York: Seabury Press, 1975. Print.
- Ahmad, Aijaz. "Between Orientalism and Historicism: Anthropological Knowledge of India." *Studies in History* 7 (1991): 135-163. *SAGE*. Web. 6 Nov. 2011.
- , *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992. Print.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.
- Armstrong, Aurelia. "Foucault and Feminism." *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. (2005): n. pag. Web. July, 2010.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Babcock, Barbera A. "Feminisms/Pretexts: Fragments, Questions, and Reflections." *Anthropological Quarterly* 66.2 (1993): 59-66. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Oct. 2011.
- Bhabha, Homi K.. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge Press, 1994. Print.
- Bien, Josph. "Ricoeur as Social Philosopher." *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995. 287-305. Print.
- Bordo, Susan. *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990. Print.

- Borup, Jorn. "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism: Buddhism, Religious Studies and Interrelated Networks." *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, Volume 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches*. Eds. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi R. Wayne. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2004. 451-487. Print.
- Botz-Bornstein, Thorsten. "Ethnophilosophy, Comparative Philosophy, Pragmatism: Toward a Philosophy of Ethnoscapes." *Philosophy East and West* 56.1 (2006): 153-171. Print.
- Brown, Richard Harvey. "Cultural Representation and Ideological Domination" *Social Forces* 71.3 (1993): 657-676. *JSTOR*. Web. Sept. 2011.
- Buchanan, James. "Report on the Seventh East-West Philosophers' Conference. 'Justice and Democracy: A Philosophical Exploration.'" *Philosophy East and West* 46:3 (1996): 309-336. Print.
- Burke, Edmund, III. "Orientalism and World History: Representing Middle Eastern Nationalism and Islamism in the Twentieth Century" *Theory and Society* 27 (1998): 489-507. Web. March 2011.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Breckenridge, Carol A. And Peter van der Veer. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. Print.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton U Press, 2000. Print.



- Ching, Julia. "Adventures in Cross-Cultural Sensibilities: Some Recent Studies of Chinese and Comparative Philosophy." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45.3 (1984): 476-482. Web. 2002.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1986. Print.
- Code, Lorraine, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003. Print.
- Collins, Patricia Hall. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*. Eds. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. 156-176. Print.
- The Columbia Society for Comparative Philosophy. Mission. Columbia University. 2009. Web. 6 Nov. 2011 < <http://www.cbs.columbia.edu/cscp/mission.html>>
- Dalton, Stuart. "Beyond Intellectual Blackmail: Foucault and Habermas on Reason, Truth, and Enlightenment" *E-Logos* (2008): 1-16. Web. Sept. 2011. <<http://e-logos.vse.cz/>>
- Davis, Kathy. Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful. *Feminist Theory* 9.1 (2008): 67-85. *SAGE*. Web. April 2009.
- Defoort, Carine. "Is 'Chinese Philosophy' a Proper Name? A Response to Rein Raud." *Philosophy East and West* 56.4 (2006): 625-660. Web. Summer 2009.
- , "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit Debate." *Philosophy East and West* 51.3 (2001): 393-413. Web. Summer 2009.

- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Religion*. Ed. Gil Anidjar. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- , *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1978. Print.
- , "Signs, Structures, and Play." *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1978. Print.
- Dostal, Robert J, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Second Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968. Print.
- , *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963. Print.
- Faure, Bernard. *Double Exposure: Cutting Across Buddhist and Western Discourses*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Stanford: Stanford U Press, 2000. Print.
- Ferry, Luc and Alain Renault. *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism*. Trans. Mary H. S. Cattani. Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 1990. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*. Eds. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni. English series Ed. Arnold I. Davidson. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Picador, 2003. Print.
- , *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 1969. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock, 1972. Print.

- , *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972b.
- , *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1977. Print.
- , *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Rabinow, Paul. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Print.
- , *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*. Ed. Frédéric Gros. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. Print.
- , *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. (1976) Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1978. Print.
- , *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. 1961. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1988. Print.
- , *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. 1966. London: Routledge Classics, 2002. Print.
- , *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980. Print.
- , "The Subject and Power" *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982): 777-795. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Oct. 2011.
- , "What is an Author?" 1970. *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*. Eds. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller. Albany: SUNY Press, 1987. 124-42. Print.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Foucault's Body-Language: A Post-Humanist Political Rhetoric?" *Salmagundi* 61 (1983): 55-70. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2011.

- , "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative.'" *Ethics* 96.1 (1985): 165-184. JSTOR Web. 20 Oct. 2011.
- Freudenberger, Silja. "The Hermeneutic Conversation as Epistemological Model." Trans. Melanie Richter-Bernberg. *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Ed. Lorraine Cole. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State U Press, 2003. 259-284. Print.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. Print.
- , *Truth and Method*. 1960. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum, 1975. Print.
- Goldberg, David Theo and Quayson, Ato, eds. *Relocating Postcolonialism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. Print.
- Gordon, Deborah A. "The Unhappy Relationship of Feminism and Postmodernism in Anthropology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 66.3 (1993): 109-117. JSTOR. Web. 15 Oct 2011.
- Grondin, Jean. "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding." *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Robert J. Dostal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 36-51. Print.
- Gyan, Prakesh. "Orientalism Now" *History and Theory* 34.3 (1995): 199-212. JSTOR. Web. 15 Oct. 2011.
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Boston: MIT Press, 1987. Print.

- Hahn, Lewis Edwin, Ed. *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Chicago: Open Court, 1995. Print.
- Halbfass, Wilhelm. *India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990. Print.
- Halperin, David. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Healy, Paul. "Rationality, Dialogue, and Critical Inquiry: Towards a Viable Postfoundationalist Stance." *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*. 3.1 (2007): 134-158. Web. Sept. 2011.
- Heckman, Susan J., ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park, Pennsylvania: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. Print.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Philosophy of History*. 1821. Ed. William Benton. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1987. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. 1953. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996. Print.
- , *What is Called Thinking?* 1954. Trans. Glenn Grey. Harper-Perennial, 1976. Print.
- Hoffman, Susan-Judith, ed. "Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics and Feminist Projects." *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Ed. Lorraine, Code. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003. 81-107. Print.
- Hoy, David Couzens and Thomas McCarthy. *Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994. Print.
- Idhe, Don. "Paul Ricoeur's Place in the Hermeneutic Tradition." *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995. 59-70. Print.

Inden, Ronald. *Imagining India*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990. Print.

---, "Orientalist Constructions of India." *Modern Asian Studies* 20:3 (1986): 401-446. *JSTOR*.  
Web. Nov. 2010.

Jackson, Roger R. "Matching Concepts: Deconstructive and Foundationalist Tendencies in  
Buddhist Thought" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 57.3 (1989): 561-589.  
*JSTOR*. Web. 5 Feb. 2008.

Jencks, Charles. *What is Postmodernism?* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

Joy, Morny M. "Beyond a God's Eyeview: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Religion."  
*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 12 (2000): 110-140. Web.

---, *Paul Ricoeur and Narrative: Context and Contestation*. Calgary: U of Calgary Press, 1997.  
Print.

---, "Philosophy and Religion." *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, Volume 1: Regional,  
Critical, and Historical Approaches*. Eds. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi R.  
Wayne. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2004. 185-217. Print.

---, "Postcolonial Reflections: Challenges for Religious Studies" *Method and Theory in the Study  
of Religion* 13 (2001): 117-195. Web.

Kelley, Robin D. G. "Polycultural Me: What are you? Is Not a Simple Question." *Utne Reader*.  
Sept.-Oct. 1999. 1-3. Web. Oct. 2011.

King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East.'* New  
York: Routledge, 1999a. Print.

- , *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999b. Print.
- . "Orientalism and the Modern Myth of Hinduism." *Numen* 46.2 (1999c): 146-185. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Sept. 2007.
- Krishna, Daya. "Comparative Philosophy: What it is and Ought to Be." *Diogenes* 34.58 (1986): 58-69. *SAGE*. Web. 10 Oct. 2007.
- , *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. Delhi: Oxford U Press, 1991. Print.
- Kogler, Hans Herbert. *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*. Trans. Paul Henderson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. Print.
- Kopf, David. "Hermeneutics versus History." Rev. of *Orientalism*, by Edward Said. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39.3 (1980): 495-506. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Oct 2011.
- Larson, Gerald James and Eliot Deutsch. *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.
- Lewis Bernard. "The Question of Orientalism." *The New York Review of Books* 24 June 1982. Web. 6 Nov. 2011.
- Lewis, Reina and Mills, Sara. *Feminist and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003. Print.
- Linge, David E. Editor's Introduction. *Truth and Method*. By Hans-Georg Gadamer. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum, 1975. xi-lviii. Print.
- Lloyd, Genevieve. *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.

- Lorenzen, David N. "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 41.4 (1999): 630-659. Print.
- Loy, David. *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*. New York: Humanity Books, 1998. Print.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucians and Aristotelians About the Virtues." Eliot Deutsch ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991. 104-22. Print.
- Magliola, Robert. *Derrida on the Mend*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue U Press, 1986. Print.
- Marx, Karl. *Early Writings*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. London: Penguin, 1975. Print.
- , *The Portable Karl Marx*. Ed. Eugene Kamenka. New York: Penguin, 1983. Print.
- , *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. (1857-58) Ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm. Trans. Jack Cohen. New York: International Publishers, 1965. Print.
- Matilal, Bimal Krishna. *Logic, Language and Reality: Indian Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985. Print.
- McLaren, Margaret A. "Foucault and Feminism: Power, Resistance, Freedom." *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Eds. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vingtes. Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 2004. 214-234. Print.
- McWhorter, Ladelle. *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999. Print.



- Mendelson, Jack. "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate." *New German Critique* 18 (1979): 44-73.  
*JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct 2011.
- Mishra, Vijay and Bob Hodge. "What Was Postcolonialism?" *New Literary History* 36 (2005)  
375-402. Print.
- Moore, Charles. *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: U  
of Hawaii Press, 1967. Print.
- , and Aldyth V. Morris, eds. *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*.  
Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967. Print.
- , and Aldyth V. Morris, eds. *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and  
Culture*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii Press, 1967. Print.
- Morrison, Robert C. *Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities*. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford:  
Oxford U Press, 1983. Print.
- Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. New  
York: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Palmer, Richard E. "On the Transcendability of Hermeneutics (A Response to Dreyfus)."  
*Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, eds. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica. Amherst:  
University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. Print.
- Parent, Marcel. "Is Comparative Philosophy Postmodern?" MA thesis. McGill University, 2003.  
Print.

- Pappas, Robin and William Cowling. "Toward a Critical Hermeneutics." *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Ed. Lorraine, Code. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003. 203-227. Print.
- Piercey, Robert. "Ricoeur's Account of Tradition and the Gadamer: Habermas Debate." *Human Studies* 27:3 (2004): 259-280. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct 2011.
- Podur, Justin. "Revolutionizing Culture Part One." *Znet*. 15 July 2003. Web. Oct. 2011.
- Pollock, Sheldon. "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj." *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*. Eds. Carol Apparadurai Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. Print.
- Prasad, Vijay. "Bruce Lee and the Anti-Imperialism of Kung Fu: A Polycultural Adventure." *Positions* 11.1 (2003): 51-90. Web. Sept. 2006.
- , *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001. Print.
- Rabinow, Paul, ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Print.
- Raud, Rein. "Philosophies versus Philosophy: In Defense of a Flexible Definition." *Philosophy East and West* 56.4 (2006): 618-625. Web. Summer 2009.
- , "Traditions and Tendencies: A Reply to Carine Defoort." *Philosophy East and West* 56.4 (2006): 661-664. Print. Web. Summer 2009.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991. Print.

- , *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1981. Print.
- Ruparell, Tinu. "Locating Comparative Philosophy." Internal Paper at University of Calgary.  
Print.
- Sahay, Gaurang R. "Marxism and the Orient: A Reading of Marx." *Borderlands* 6.1 (2007). n.  
pag. Web. Nov 2010.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.
- Saler, Benson. *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and  
Unbounded Categories*. Leiden: Brill, 1993. Print.
- Sangster, Joan. *Through Feminist's Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History*. Edmonton:  
Athabaska University Press, 2011. Print.
- Sawicki, Jana. "Feminism, Foucault, and 'Subjects' of Power and Freedom." *Feminist  
Interpretations of Foucault*. Ed. Susan J. Heckman. University Park, Pennsylvania: U of  
Pennsylvania Press, 1996. 159-178. Print.
- Scharfstein, Ben-Ami. *Philosophy East/Philosophy West*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978. Print.
- , "Reply to L. A. Barth's Review of 'Philosophy East/Philosophy West in Philosophy East and  
West.'" *Philosophy East and West* 31:3 (1981): 391-392. *JSTOR*. Web. Oct. 2011.
- Schmidt, Lawrence K. *Understanding Hermeneutics*. Stocksfield: Acumen, 2006. Print.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. 2 vols. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New  
York: Dover, 1966. Print.

- Schrift, Alan D. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*. New York: Routledge Press, 1990. Print.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Trans. Michael Eldred. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.
- , "Eurotaoism" Trans. Michael Eldred. In *Cultural Politics and Political Culture. in Europe*. Ed. J. Peter Burgess. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 1997. 277-290.
- , *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*. Trans. Jamie Owen Daniel. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. Print.
- Smart, Ninian. "The Analogy of Meaning and the Tasks of Comparative Philosophy." *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Eds. Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988. 174-183. Print.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1982. Print.
- Steedman, Carolyn. "Culture, Cultural Studies and the Historians." *Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. London: Routledge, 1993. 46-56. Print.
- Taylor, Diana and Karen Vintges, eds. *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004. Print.
- Timm, Jeffrey R. "Report on the Sixth East-West Philosophers' Conference 'Culture and Modernity: The Authority of the Past.'" *Philosophy East and West* 41.4 (1991): 457-476. Print.

- Varisco, Daniel Martin. *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007. Print.
- Warnke, Georgia. "Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics." *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Robert J. Dostal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 79-101. Print.
- Wax, Murray L. "How Culture Misdirects Multiculturalism." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 24.2 (1993): 99-115. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Oct 2011.
- Wickham, Gary. "Foucault and Gadamer: Like Apples and Oranges Passing in the Night." 76 *Chi.-Kent L. Rev.* 913 (2000-2001): 913-943. *HeinOnline*. Web. 19 Oct 2011.
- Wiegman, Robyn. "Academic Feminism Against Itself." *NWSA Journal* 14.2 (2002): 18-37. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Oct. 2011.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. Print.
- Zhou, Jinghao. *Remaking China's Public Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003. Print.