

Introduction



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Religion and Practical Reason: New Essays in the Comparative Philosophy of Religions is the third and culminating collection of essays generated by a series of nine international conferences on the comparative philosophy of religions. Held from 1986 to 1992, these conferences were sponsored by the Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and were largely funded by a grant from the Booth-Ferris Foundation. When it became clear that a ninth conference was needed, supplementary support was made available by the Divinity School.

Like this third volume of collected essays, the first two were both edited by David Tracy and myself and were published in the SUNY *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series*. Like the first two collections, this one contains both programmatic essays that focus on broad ranging proposals for re-envisioning a discipline of comparative philosophy of religions and a number of case studies that focus on the interpretation of particular religio-historical data from comparatively oriented philosophical perspectives.¹

Since the nine conferences were attended by a relatively stable group of thirty scholars (approximately half from the University of Chicago, and half from other universities in the United

States, Canada, and Europe), a certain trajectory of development can be traced. Discussions at the earliest conferences generated a set of essays on the topic of *Myth and Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 1990) that accomplished at least two purposes. These essays demonstrated the value of rethinking positions that presume or seek to defend any kind of simplistic or overly hierarchical dichotomy between myth and philosophy, both in the academy and in the religio-philosophical traditions being studied. These same essays also pointed to the need to focus much more specific attention on the ways in which both myth and philosophy are related to practice.

In the middle phase of the project, the group moved on to a set of discussions that produced a second volume of essays entitled *Discourse and Practice* (SUNY Press, 1992). Here, once again, two closely related results were achieved. The collection served to demonstrate the interpretive power of approaches which examine the philosophical discourse of the academy and the philosophical discourse of religious traditions as different but related modes of practice. In addition, the collection provided a background against which the group was able to identify "practical reason" as a term that could provide a creative locus around which the study of such practice-oriented approaches to the comparative philosophy of religions could be further pursued and enriched.

As Sally Gressens suggests in her summary report of the discussions that occurred during the last of the nine conferences:

"practical reason" is not a certain "something"—not, say, Aristotelian practical versus theoretical reason—which has attracted our attention. Rather, "practical reason" (or "practical theory") is a motto of sorts. It signals our interest in a realm where those details of contingent human life that we include in "practice" actually *meet* the sorts of disciplined thinking we mean by "theory," where excellence in one is linked to excellence in, or an understanding of, the other.²

Among the chapters in the present volume (all of which are revised versions of papers presented at one of the final conferences), the two that I have included in Part 1, "Self-Under-

standing and Issues of Practice” are, at first glance, a very unlikely pair. However, I have chosen to place Franklin Gamwell’s “A Foreword to Comparative Philosophy of Religion” and Steven Collins’ “What Are Buddhists *Doing* When They Deny the Self?” together at the beginning of the collection for two different but complimentary reasons. The first is that each represents one of two major poles of interest that have structured the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions* project since its inception—namely, a more formalist and normatively oriented pole on the one hand, and a more historically and descriptively oriented pole on the other. The second reason is that, despite this very basic tension between the two chapters, they share a number of common themes.

Gamwell’s chapter is a bold attempt—by the person who originally suggested and secured funding for the Chicago project—to lay out a philosophically sophisticated “general understanding” of the kind of activities in which those involved in comparative philosophy of religion should be engaged. In order to achieve this purpose he sets forth a set of closely interlocking definitions of religion, of philosophy, and of comparative philosophy of religion.

For Gamwell, religion is a form of culture that structures a specific kind of primary human activity; philosophy is a human intellectual activity that is characterized by critical reflection; and comparative philosophy of religion is a form of interreligious dialogue that has become critical reflection. In his discussion Gamwell defends the claim that there is a single *comprehensive* question with which all of them deal. This question goes as follows: “What is the valid comprehensive self-understanding, or what is human authenticity as such?”

Though Gamwell does not use the term *practical reason*, he makes it clear that from his perspective the central tasks of religion, philosophy, and comparative philosophy of religion are all essentially practical or pragmatic. According to his argument, the answer to the “comprehensive question” (the way in which human purposes and authenticity are understood) functions, in each philosophical or religious instance, as the norm in

terms of which all forms of religious and moral practice are valorized or condemned.

Collins' chapter, in contrast to Gamwell's, is a study of a particular religious tradition (Theravāda Buddhism). And Collins, in his discussion, differentiates much more sharply than Gamwell between the philosophically informed but essentially historical and interpretive task of the academic investigator and the essentially philosophical, religious, and moral concerns of the tradition being studied. But despite these differences, Collins focuses his attention on themes that directly parallel the themes that Gamwell has identified as basic for comparative philosophy of religion. These include: (1) claims for universality, (2) understandings of selfhood, and (3) the relationship between notions of selfhood and modes of religious and ethical practice.

Although Collins is concerned to highlight the fact that the Buddhists' claims for the universality of their message—concerning what Gamwell would call “the valid comprehensive self-understanding”—are historically located and culturally conditioned, he respects these claims and discusses them with great sophistication. He directs his primary attention to a particular Buddhist discourse about selfhood (which, in the final analysis, denies the self as any kind of substantive or permanent entity) which the Theravādins claim has universal validity despite the fact that they recognize certain contexts in which its employment is inappropriate. His contention is that this no-self notion of selfhood is the key element in the kind of “secondary theory” that Theravādins identify with the ultimate level of truth.

In the final section of his chapter Collins argues that, for Theravādins, the recognition of this notion of the universal validity of the no-self notion of selfhood provides the definitive norm for the kind of behavior that both leads to and manifests the ultimate goal of enlightenment. According to Collins, this religio-moral process is a mode of self-cultivation “that might be summarized as a certain kind of textual meditative introspection, occurring within a specific, ‘performed’ social and behavioral environment.”

Part 2 of this volume, entitled “Types of Reasoning and Issues of Practice,” contains essays by Paul Walker and Charles Hallisey that explore the philosophical and religious significance of the distinction between two modes of reasoning and truth in the thought of two philosophers, one a Muslim who lived in the tenth century C.E., and one a Theravāda Buddhist who lived in the twelfth century C.E. Although the distinctions that are made in the two instances are by no means identical, the two modes of reason that are discussed by Walker in “Al-Farabi on Religion and Practical Reason” and the two modes that are discussed by Hallisey in his “In Defense of Rather Fragile and Local Achievement: Reflections on the Work of Gurulugomi” have a great deal in common.

Walker highlights the tension in al-Farabi’s philosophy between philosophy as represented primarily by Aristotle and religion as represented primarily by Islam. Walker shows how al-Farabi both expressed and mediated this tension through a fundamental distinction and correlation between what he called “theoretical reason” and what he called “practical reason.” For al-Farabi philosophy is a “science of certainty” that works with an essentially metalinguistic and metacultural type of theoretical reason that seeks, through logically structured demonstrations, to gain knowledge of realities that are unchanging. Religions, on the other hand, are brought into being through the actions of founders and lawgivers. According to al-Farabi these founders and lawgivers are masters of practical reason who use the power of imagery, poetry, and persuasive rhetoric to embed the eternal and universal truths concerning reality in the thought and life of a particular historical community. What is perhaps most fascinating about Walker’s essay is his account of the ways in which al-Farabi affirms the necessity of nurturing both philosophy (with its characteristic use of theoretical reason) and religion (with its characteristic use of practical reason), and, further, the ways in which al-Farabi portrays the interactions between them.

Charles Hallisey’s chapter “In Defence of Rather Fragile and Local Achievement: Reflections on the Work of Gurulugomi”

is one of the richest and most complex in the entire collection. In the course of this fascinating chapter Hallisey presents important Buddhist philosophical material from a source that has previously been ignored, even by Buddhologists. At the same time, in the process of introducing and exploring the Gurulugomi material he brings to the foreground three general issues that are of central importance for comparative philosophers of religions.

The first of these issues concerns the coexistence and interrelationships of dual or multiple types of rationality. Hallisey suggests that it is important, but not sufficient, to recognize the existence and the character of the dual or multiple modes of rationality that are operative within a particular culture or a particular philosophical perspective. He contends that it is crucial to move on to explore the multiple ways in which, within the culture or philosophical perspective in question, particular types of reasoning and associated notions of truth are correlated and contrasted.

With this approach in mind, he turns his attention to the Theravāda tradition in general and to the work of Gurulugomi in particular. He takes note of the existence of a clear distinction between an "ultimate truth" associated with an analytic type of reasoning and a "conventional truth" associated with more emotive and mundane uses of language and argument. But he then proceeds to spell out a variety of ways, some of them quite surprising for those who have a stereotyped view of Theravāda "orthodoxy," in which the two types of reasoning and truth were, in fact, correlated and contrasted.

The second general issue that Hallisey raises is more directly focused on the relationship between theory and practice. Here he draws a distinction between two very different "models" that can be used to illumine this relationship: "One treats theory outside of practice as an action guide, while the other includes theory within practice as a constitutive part of a process of character-formation and moral education." Hallisey demonstrates that Gurulugomi portrays and uses both conventional theory *and* ultimate, Abhidhammic theory in ways that are congruent with the second model rather than the first. What is

more, he argues that Gurulugomi's way of valuing and utilizing both types of truth and associated modes of reasoning in accord with their distinctive pedagogical efficacy is one from which modern virtue theorists could learn a great deal.

The third general issue that Hallisey raises is perhaps the most important, since it concerns not just an element *within* the comparative philosophy of religions, but the basic character of the enterprise itself. At the outset of this portion of his essay, Hallisey highlights what he takes to be the two most prominent options that have been proposed by contemporary scholars for characterizing the activity that should constitute the discipline. The first (as explicitly exemplified in Gamwell's chapter discussed above) identifies the primary activity as "critical reflection on the claims made by or about religions." The second (as explicitly exemplified in Bantly's chapter discussed below) identifies the primary activity as one that "uses the resources of a religious tradition that is not the author's 'own' to address issues of his or her own milieu."

Drawing on insights from Gurulugomi and from Buddhaghosa—a famous Theravāda predecessor of Gurulugomi who characterized one important mode of philosophy as "study as of a treasurer"—Hallisey proposes the element of "preservation" as an aspect which constitutes an indispensable component in any comparative philosophical activity that in our present situation can be justified, either intellectually or morally. More specifically, he turns to an approach set forth by several contemporary philosophers—including Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Rorty—in which philosophy is conceptualized and justified as a continuation of inherited conversations rather than as a quest for objective truth. But Hallisey suggests that we must take a further step, that we must think in terms of a past that is much more inclusive and much more expansive than the purely western past that previous proponents of this viewpoint have had in mind. As he puts it,

the most novel aspect of the collective project of any comparative philosophy, including the comparative philosophy of religions, will be to create contexts in which we can learn how to "continue conversations" that are not "our own" (or

at least not yet our own) in the light of the invented traditions within which we habitually do philosophy today.

Part 3, "Practical Reason and the Flow of Time," which is by far the longest section in the collection, contains three chapters: one by a philosopher who is an intellectual historian (Aziz Al-Azmeh), one by a historian of religions (Laurie Patton), and one by an anthropologist (Fitz John Porter Poole). Yet all three chapters focus on an issue that is central to a comparative philosophy of religions that takes empirical studies of religious traditions seriously into account. This issue is the character of the strategies of practical reasoning used by the adherents of various religious traditions (or particular strands of those traditions) to confront the reality of temporality and historicity. It is an issue that involves the mechanisms that are used to assure continuity, and, in some cases, those that are employed to achieve the creative management of change.

Aziz Al-Azmeh, in the intriguing title that he has chosen for his chapter ("Chronophagous Discourse: A Study of Clerico-Legal Appropriation of the World in an Islamic Tradition"), signals the basic thesis that he sets forth and defends. According to Al-Azmeh, the tradition of legal discourse that emerged in Islam in the tenth century C.E. and culminated in the fourteenth-century C.E. writings of Shāṭibī is a "chronophagous discourse"—that is, a discourse in and through which temporality and all of the everyday activities (both devotional and secular) that are embedded within it are "eaten" or "consumed."

Al-Azmeh begins his chapter with a discussion of the notion of salvation history that developed in the great monotheistic traditions that originated in the Middle East and indicates that his discussion of legal theory is designed to highlight a particular consequence generated by the monotheistic universalism espoused there. In addition, he highlights the fact that his study of the anatomy of traditionalist argumentation, taken in conjunction with accompanying comparisons with scholasticism, is intended to provide elements of a general theory of dogmatic discourse.

In the main body of his chapter, Al-Azmeh brilliantly demonstrates how—in the particular tradition on which he has chosen to focus—the broad range of temporally contingent, everyday activities is robbed of its reality through clerically administered modes of genealogically structured practical reasoning. More specifically, he shows how in this system the clerico-legal elite is able to use various modes of intricate hermeneutical reasoning to “subsume” or “consume” these temporally contingent, everyday activities and occurrences into a set of supposedly eternal archetypes embedded in the canon. According to Al-Azmeh’s interpretation of Shāṭībī, these supposedly eternal archetypes are promulgated in a Koranicly legitimated myth of origins that is—or at least is intended to be—absolutely totalizing in its scope.

Laurie Patton, in the chapter that follows (“Dis-solving a Debate: Toward a Practical Theory of Myth, with a Case Study in Vedic Mythology”), pursues an important issue that Al-Azmeh’s discussion brings vividly to the fore.³ Is it necessary, she asks, to identify myth as an exclusively universalizing, totalizing phenomena as some recent theorists of myth seem—at least to their more historicizing opponents—to suggest? Or is it possible to develop a theory of myth which takes this universalizing, totalizing tendency into account but recognizes that myth can draw upon the realities of material experience in such a way that it challenges the drive to hegemony and domination?

In order to “dis-solve” the debate between the philosophers, who tend to theorize about the universalizing aspects of myth, and the historians, who tend to reduce myth to the dimensions of difference and materiality, Patton proposes a “practical theory of myth based upon a practice of reading.” Using distinctions developed by Lee Yearley in *Mencius and Aquinas* (SUNY Press, 1990), she identifies practical theory as a mode of evaluative and regulatory theory that is situated between the kind of secondary theory that tends toward totalizing explanations and the kind of primary theory that is correlated with matters that are directly related to the material exigencies of everyday life. She then turns to a critical examination of the

work of Walter Benjamin as a resource that enables her to specify more clearly how it is that myth is able to function at this practical level *both* as a totalizing instrument of repression *and* as a liberating illumination of the significance of the particular and the profane. She concludes her study with an incisive “reading” of several successive stages of the Vedic and later Hindu myth of the drought. In this “reading” she focuses her attention on specific points in the process of retelling where elements of repression can be discerned and on other specific points in the process where elements of liberation are brought to the fore.

The third chapter in this section is Fitz John Porter Poole’s “The Reason of Myth and the Rationality of History: The Logic of the Mythic in Bimin-Kuskusmin ‘Modes of Thought.’”⁴ Poole explores how the leading elders (and particularly one pre-eminent elder named Trumeng) in a nonliterate tribe in the mountains of Papua New Guinea utilized creative processes of practical reason to maintain cultural meaning and balance in the midst of unprecedented historical events and rapid social change.

Poole reports that according to some native informants there was a time before “the great destruction” (a reference to a series of disastrous historical events that occurred in the 1940s) when a relatively coherent complex of mythic narratives provided an established secondary theory that enabled the tribal elders to subsume or to render meaningless contingent historical events and to maintain traditional patterns of ritual and social practice. Beginning with “the great destruction,” the elders found that the secondary theory constituted by the traditional mythology was no longer adequate and that changes in secondary theory and in the traditional modes of practical reasoning were needed in order to maintain both a genuine continuity with past traditions and a meaningful engagement with changing historical conditions. In his narrative, Poole provides an extremely rich and compelling account of the process through which Trumeng and his colleagues incorporated elements of skepticism and a “logos” orientation at the level of secondary theory. In so doing Poole highlights the ways in which, through the creative use of

practical reason, they were able to provide meaningful interpretations of unprecedented historical events and to initiate and legitimate significant changes in basic patterns of ritual and social practice.

Part 4, "Practical Reason and the Negotiation of Difference," pairs two essays that focus on the problems and possibilities involved in negotiating conflicts or gaps in understanding between groups who hold world views that are often presumed to be "incommensurable." Although the conflicts or gaps considered in the two essays by Jeffrey Stout and Francisca Cho Bantly are quite different in kind, the arguments that are made by each author identify creative possibilities for practical wisdom (Stout's term) and practical reason (Bantly's term) in situations which, in the view of some, have been or can be resolved only through an exercise of raw power or intellectual imperialism.

Stout, in his chapter "The Rhetoric of Revolution," begins his discussion with a careful review of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and Jon P. Gunnemann's *The Moral Meaning of Revolution*. In his review, Stout focuses attention on the notion (suggested by some of Kuhn's statements in regard to science, and explicitly affirmed by Gunnemann in the political sphere) that revolutionaries and their opponents are operating out of frameworks of principle and value so radically incommensurable that there are no agreed upon rules of discourse and that, as a result, rational communication and persuasion are impossible. But Stout is not satisfied with this kind of conclusion and suggests that a more accurate and satisfying position can be forged by picking up and greatly extending those of Kuhn's comments which point toward a broader view of rationality. He argues in favor of moving much further in the direction of an Aristotelian notion that "practical wisdom has the capacity to make reasonable choices in matters that cannot be determined simply by consulting agreed upon rules." This, he contends, lays a basis for the view that rhetoric and persuasion can, in fact, play a creative role in the resolution of revolutionary conflict.

With this position established, Stout goes on to develop his notion of practical wisdom as a virtue (*phronesis* or *prudentia*) and to indicate how, like other virtues, it must be cultivated as a skill. He spells out ways in which the efficacious application of practical reason involves the employment of a very wide range of rhetorical techniques that deserve to be carefully studied and evaluated by ethicists and historians of ethics. He concludes that the proper cultivation and use of these rhetorical techniques offers a viable hope for meaningful communication between revolutionaries and their opponents. It does this by providing a creative alternative to the kind of devastatingly divisive and destructive "Manichean rhetorical cycle" that intense revolutionary conflicts tend to generate and perpetuate.

Francisca Cho Bantly, in her chapter entitled "The Fear of *Qing*: Confucian and Buddhist Discourses on Desire," is concerned with very similar issues of commensurability and communication across the gap between different frameworks of principle, conception, and value.⁵ But here the issues arise in the context of the recent western academic concern with "the Other" or "Otherness," and with the problems and possibilities of understanding, interpreting, and engaging in conversation with the representatives of cultures (either past or present) that are not our own. From Bantly's perspective the extended soul-searching in the academy over issues of Otherness has "tended to vitiate rather than charter the praxis of comparative scholars." Her paper is an effort to move beyond the obstacles that this soul-searching has generated by proposing an appropriately self-reflexive approach to comparative studies.

Bantly's basic thesis is that comparative study can itself "formulate action guides for modern scholars and even illuminate something of the process through which action guides are derived." She begins her defense of this thesis with a study of the Buddhist and Confucian discourse on *qing* (desire) which demonstrates how, in sixteenth-century China, the long-standing indigenous notion concerning the incommensurability of Confucian and Buddhist philosophy was overcome through the exercise, by certain literati, of practical reason (which she identi-

fies as an intellectual skill or virtue that operates within the enlarged context of what Lee Yearley has called practical theories and pragmatic purposes). She then draws an analogy between the intellectual practices of the sixteenth-century Chinese literati and the intellectual practices of the modern academy; using this analogy, she argues that modern scholars can best break through the supposed incommensurability between their own perspectives and those of the traditions they study through the development of a comparative studies approach that gives a central position to the use of practical reason. Her contention is that comparative philosophers of religions both can and should use practical reason as a means of giving legitimation and direction to their enterprise, as a mechanism for the generation of more specific action guides, and as a basic strategy in the actual process of interpretation.

Bantly concludes her study with a future-oriented summarizing comment with which, I believe, Jeffrey Stout would (despite some minor terminological reservations) wholeheartedly agree:

The virtue of practical reasoning as a model of cultural encounter is that it nuances the power issue into pragmatically mediated instances of contingency and creativity. I hope future applications of practical reason to contexts in which ideological systems clash will reveal that the process of understanding is not wrought by zero-sum strategies of intellectual warfare. Rather, understanding is gained through the creation of options whose best recommendation is a rationale for action.

The concluding chapter in the collection is a reflective overview by Richard Parmentier entitled "Comparison, Pragmatics, and Interpretation in the Comparative Philosophy of Religions." In the retrospective section that constitutes the main body of the chapter, Parmentier begins by setting the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions* endeavor in the context of more general comparative studies. He then identifies three different strands that can be discerned in the perspectives that have been set forth by the various participants in the

project—one that emphasizes a comparatively oriented *philosophy* of religions, a second that emphasizes the *comparative* study of philosophies of religion broadly conceived, and a third that emphasizes a kind of comparative study that is specifically focused on the comparative philosophies that have been generated (either explicitly or implicitly) by religions themselves. He summarizes this segment of his discussion with the observation that:

The rich cross-disciplinary fertilization that is revealed in the final papers results from a tacit agreement that these three perspectives should be held in “essential tension,” a collective decision that allows for a “preventive pluralistic methodology” in which historians, philosophers, ethnographers and theologians are all welcome.

Parmentier continues his retrospective discussion in a section that he entitles “Comparison and Interpretation as Practical Reason.” Under this rubric he provides a fascinating and constructively critical survey of the way in which various contributors have formulated their understanding of the role of practical reason, both in the traditions they have studied and in their own enterprises of interpretation and comparison.

In the final, prospectively oriented pages of his chapter Parmentier highlights the need for the participants in the emerging discipline of the comparative philosophy of religions to give priority to two quite specific issues. The first is a crucially important substantive issue that has thus far received little explicit attention. In his phrasing this issue is “the bi-causal relationship between philosophical discourse and the cultural traditions in which that discourse emerges.” The second is a methodological issue or set of issues that requires ongoing attention and clarification. According to Parmentier, priority must be given to further and more sophisticated reflection concerning the kinds of traditions that can fruitfully be compared (and on the justifications and motivations that are involved in each case), on the scope of the units of comparison that can appropriately be employed, and on the “grounds” or “criteria” on which appropriate comparative strategies can be based.

There are many other substantive and methodological issues that must receive serious and sustained attention. These include issues that are raised but not resolved within particular essays in the present volume. They include issues that are made evident by the differences (even conflicts) between the approaches and/or conclusions that are propounded by the various authors. They include still other issues that have emerged in the context of oral discussions but have not yet been seriously addressed in any of the written materials that the project has produced. In addition, there are certainly a host of other issues that have not yet been fully perceived and formulated, issues that will come to the fore more clearly and urgently as the development of the discipline proceeds.

Much progress has been made in the three volumes of collected essays that have appeared in the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series* (*Myth and Philosophy* published in 1990 as Volume 1, *Discourse and Practice* published in 1992 as Volume 3, and the present collection on *Religion and Practical Reason* designated as Volume 7). Much additional progress has been made in and through the three single-author books that have been published in the series during the same time period (Lee Yearley's *Mencius and Aquinas* published as Volume 2 in 1990, Francis X. Clooney's *Theology after Vedanta* published as Volume 4 in 1993, and Ben-Ami Scharfstein's *Ineffability* published as Volume 5 in 1993). And still more progress will be evident in the two additional volumes in the series that are presently in press (José Cabezón's *Buddhism and Language*, Volume 6, which will be available late in 1994, and Paul Griffiths' *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, Volume 8, which will be available sometime in late 1994 or early 1995).

The set of nine international conferences that launched the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series* has now come to a conclusion, and the last of the papers presented at these conferences has now appeared in print. But the project itself will continue in the ongoing work of the participants, in the new Philosophy of Religions area of study that has recently been established at the University of Chicago Divinity School,

and, we are hopeful, in the work of many new colleagues from other institutions as well.

Notes

1. David Tracy and I would like to thank four persons who have provided invaluable administrative assistance in the process through which this volume has been conceived and produced. Francisca Cho Bantly, then a student in the History of Religions program at the University of Chicago, was the project assistant who helped to organize and host the conferences at which most of the essays in the collection were presented and discussed. Paul Powers, a younger student in the History of Religions, took over the duties of project assistant when Ms. Bantly moved on to become assistant professor in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University. Mr. Powers has effectively carried out the very demanding responsibilities of editing many of the articles, of preparing the index, and of shepherding the volume through the various stages of the publication process. Kathryn Kueny and Jacob Kinnard, both doctoral candidates in the History of Religions, also provided crucial assistance at various points.
2. "Conference Summary" printed July 1, 1992. This summary was distributed to all conference participants and played a significant role in guiding the final revisions of the papers that appear in this volume. The editors are extremely grateful for the contribution that Ms. Gressens has made to the intellectual quality and coherence of the collection as it has finally developed.
3. During the time Laurie Patton was a student in the History of Religions program at the University of Chicago (and also since she has assumed her present position as assistant professor in the Department of Religion at Bard College) she has made a major and continuing contribution to the Chicago project and to the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series*. She assisted in organizing and hosting several of the project conferences; she wrote the summary reports on conferences four through six (see Francisca Cho Bantly, *Deconstructing/Reconstructing the Philosophy of Religions* published by the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in 1989); and she published an excellent essay, "Hymn to Vāc: Myth or Philosophy?" in *Myth and Philosophy*.
4. Readers should be aware that Poole has also contributed an essay to *Discourse and Practice* entitled "Wisdom and Practice: The Mythic Making of

Sacred History among the Bimin-Kuskusmin of Papua New Guinea." Although this essay provides material directly relevant to the discussion in "The Reason of Myth and the Rationality of History," this second essay is fully independent and can be read without reference to the earlier text.

5. In addition to Francisca Cho Bantly's role in organizing and hosting the final conferences in the Chicago series (see n. 1), she has also made many other contributions to the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions* project. While Ms. Bantly was a student in the History of Religions program at Chicago, she served for more than four years as the project assistant; she co-authored an essay article about the project entitled "Hedgehogs and Foxes: Rethinking the Philosophy and History of Religions" (*Criterion* 27, no. 2 [Spring 1988]); she wrote a superb summary report on the third conference; she edited a volume containing the summary reports on the first six conferences (the *Deconstructing/Reconstructing the Philosophy of Religions* volume mentioned in n. 3 above); and she published an impressive article on "Buddhist Philosophy in the Art of Fiction" in *Discourse and Practice*. It is clear that she deserves much of the credit for any success that the Chicago project and the *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions Series* may have achieved.