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# Introduction

In our age of globalization, the world appears to be getting increasingly smaller each day. We are better informed, better connected, and have greater access to information about one another than ever before. In the face of the “war on terror,” understanding not only motives or loyalties of other cultures, but also their social and cultural norms has become a primary challenge for Americans. The horrific events on an otherwise ordinary September morning forever changed the way Americans view the world and themselves; this new view, if anything, is the gift of our collective tragedy. It is now painfully clear that our collective ignorance of the world around us must end—it must end if for no other reason than to spare future generations from experiencing similar tragedies. The *9/11 Commission Report* not only documented heroism and villainy, but also offered Americans a chance to better understand themselves. Although not the intent of the report, it nevertheless punctuates the lack of understanding Americans have of the diversity of the world’s cultures. Despite the villainous motives of those who attacked, their knowledge of American culture enabled them to blend in for so long. They were the world’s “cosmopolitans.”

Keeping an eye out for future terrorist attacks is certainly an important reason for us to become more cosmopolitan, but it is not the only reason. Nor is it the purpose of this volume. Our purpose is, rather, one of understanding and appreciation, and as we know, true understanding and appreciation are always multifaceted and complex. To simplify is simply simple-minded, and it has deleterious consequences. Given the diversity and complexities of cultures that have emerged on this planet over the millennia, understanding one another is our greatest challenge, and could quite possibly be a question of our survival as a species.

This vision of understanding and its celebration was quietly realized in 1936 on a distant island in the Pacific. In the year in which Hitler broke the Treaty of Versailles and sent troops to the Rhineland,

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Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan founded the first comparative philosophy program in the world at the University of Hawaii, not so far from Pearl Harbor. Their vision was to bring together Western and Asian philosophers in a discourse of diverse cultures and traditions in hope of creating spaces for understanding. As Moore has written, “Understanding is a very complicated matter. Genuine understanding must be comprehensive, and comprehensive understanding must include a knowledge of all the fundamental aspects of the mind of the people in question. Philosophy is the major medium of understanding, both because it is concerned deliberately and perhaps uniquely with the fundamental ideas, ideals, and attitudes of a people, and also because philosophy alone attempts to see the total picture and thus includes in its purview all the major aspects of the life of a people.”<sup>1</sup> The present collection of accessibly written essays is a modest attempt to contribute to the dissemination of Charles Moore’s vision of understanding and to those who continued his work over the generations, and to those who continue it today. Such a vision leads to cooperation and the sustainability of humanity.

Global cooperation in business, medical research, human rights law, and even the future of space exploration depends on knowing about and truly understanding the ideas and ideals of each and every culture on the globe. Such a task is, of course, herculean, but the attempt to deal with a smaller portion of it—that concerning the Asian countries of China, India, and Japan—is precisely the mission we set for our authors.

Our first set of authors was given the theoretical challenge to offer reasons why it is that all undergraduate professors—in community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities—across America should take seriously their duty to guide their students into cosmopolitanism in general and the study of Asian thought and culture in particular. Both handled this task in a way specific to their own areas of specialization.

The philosopher John M. Koller, in “The Importance of Asian Philosophy in the Curriculum,” addresses this issue head-on when he argues that “understanding basic Asian values and ideas is crucial for survival in an interdependent world . . . [and] necessary for a deeper understanding of ourselves and our own society. . . .” But Koller does not simply make the theoretical case. In addition, he offers prospective

teachers, especially those delving into this area of pedagogy for the first time, eleven important guidelines for valuable text selection and techniques for responsible leadership.

Roger T. Ames, the comparative philosopher and specialist on Chinese culture, begins his argument with an interesting thought-experiment: Imagine seeing the whole of the world through the eyes of Chinese imperialism. Imagine what the curriculum in the United States would look like if the Eurocentric philosophies of Descartes and Kant were replaced by the teachings of Confucius and where Shakespeare and Bach were viewed as exotica. With a different historical worldview, argues Ames, one would view the contemporary world quite differently. Given that the Chinese begin their investigation of the universe, humanity, knowledge, and the interconnection between the three with basic presuppositions that Ames claims are profoundly different from those in the West, one cannot help but agree that in order to be a cosmopolitan one cannot avoid studying China and Confucianism.

For studying to be the most fruitful, however, requires guidance from a teacher. And teaching has never been easy. Teaching undergraduate students to understand a culture alien from their own is even more difficult. Taking the difficulty of this task seriously, we decided to ask experts in various fields of Asian studies—specifically those involving India, Japan, and China—to help others infuse Asian philosophies and religions into their specific curricula by documenting both the foundations and pedagogical techniques they have found helpful and insightful throughout their teaching careers.

The remainder of the book—parts 2 and 3—is devoted to the two main ways in which scholars approach the teaching of Asian philosophies and religions in the undergraduate classroom: texts and contexts. By concentrating on texts, scholars offer undergraduate professors new to the mainstreaming of Asian thought and culture creative practical guides to the introduction of great texts such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Daodejing* into their Western curriculum. Professors of history, literature, philosophy, political science, and religion (just to name a few) will find part 2 eminently readable and useful. Part 3 will offer transglobal contexts in philosophy, religion, history, and art, such as Chinese landscape painting as a way of approaching a better understanding of Asian thought and culture and of our own, as well as the need for more intercommunication between the two.

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Part 2 is divided into treatment of three geographical areas—India, China, and Japan—so that burgeoning teachers of Asian thought and culture can pick and choose what they want to teach, either by general area or by specific text. In the first section of Part 2, the *Bhagavad Gītā*—the story of an ethical struggle on a battlefield taken from the great Indian epic the *Mahabharata*—is the focus of the piece by philosopher and feminist Vrinda Dalmiya. Dalmiya is able to draw out a beautiful account of the story itself from the intricate tapestry of Indian philosophy more broadly, all with an eye toward traditional Western analyses of ethics and ethical decision-making. Lessons drawn from the text include those learned from struggling with the knowledge of one’s duty, conflicts of duty, and the overall problem of moving from theory to praxis within the context of ethical decision-making. Dalmiya’s piece is a sophisticated treatment of the text that is nonetheless eminently accessible; it is pedagogically invaluable if one wants to incorporate the *Bhagavad Gītā* into a standard syllabus.

The next piece, “Vimalakirti’s Triumphant Silence,” by the Asian scholar Jeffrey Dippmann, focuses on the classic Indian sutra (Sanskrit for “string”), the *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra*. Dippmann focuses on this specific text because he believes that it helps one “bridge the gap between Indian and Chinese Buddhism” and because it has particular interest to students due to its “physical” nature and, one could argue, racy content. As college and university students often find themselves struggling, on the one hand, with the need to focus on academics in order to have a good life in the long run, and, on the other, with the immediate desire to partake in the more decadent “good life” that is a part of campus life, this timeless sutra about struggle can easily be made pertinent to most traditional students. Dippmann explains how it is one can adopt this text to show both the differences between Asia and the West as well as the similarities of the human condition that haunt all persons.

In “The Things of This World Are Masks the Infinite Assumes: Introducing Samkhya and Yoga Philosophy,” the philosopher Tom Pynn begins his essay by discussing an important 9/11 date from the year 1893 when, in Chicago, many American scholars first realized the beauty, power, and diversity of Asian thought and culture. The texts Pynn believes can best teach this power are the *Yoga Sutras* and any of the Samkhya texts and commentaries, such as Iswara Krishna’s *Samkhya Karika*. With the help of detailed commentary, Pynn offers

the first-time user of such texts a comprehensive and comprehensible flow chart of the differences and similarities between Yoga and Samkhya philosophies, as well as their convergences with and divergences from Western philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes. Pynn ends his chapter with a general comparison between the philosophies of Asia and the West via the interesting and very popular subject of subjectivity.

Many developments of Asian thought and culture have their chronological beginnings in India; its ideas and ideologies later migrated into China, where they were reinvented and changed forever. From China, these ideas went on to be discovered by the rest of East Asia. Through this process of appropriation, they were again influenced by indigenous beliefs and ways of understanding. Our text retraces this historical path, and it is to the great texts of China that the second section of part 2 now turns. The first article on China is by the philosopher Ronnie Littlejohn and deals with one of the most widely read Asian texts, the *Daodejing*. The *Daodejing* is one of the great classic texts of Chinese religion and philosophy, and Littlejohn offers the novice teacher of the *Daodejing* a step-by-step guide to its use in the classroom. In addition, Littlejohn helps the reader understand the depth and breadth of the *Daodejing*, a book that he claims in “Too Twisted to Fit a Carpenter’s Square” is so intricate and rich that its “gnarly fiber” makes it impermeable to the tools of modern analysis and interpretation, and thereby retains its historical dignity.

The *Daodejing*, in conjunction with the *Zhuangzi* and the *Sunzi* (*The Art of War*), is taken under the pedagogical wing of the philosopher Robin R. Wang. Wang offers suggestions for teaching these fascinating texts separately and in concert so as to show how the Chinese mind “participates in the deeper inquiry about the nature of philosophy, especially what it means to be doing philosophy.” Her goal is not only to help with the introduction of the texts into the Western classroom, but also to show how such an introduction transforms the classroom itself by “creating a space between teacher and learners” that will alter the way the text and learning are perceived and performed. Wang’s article suggests that welcoming the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Sunzi* into the classroom will create an environment that teaches *about* Asian thought and culture by providing a space for a small part of it to come alive through the process of learning itself.

The last piece in the China subsection of “Texts” is by Xinyan Jiang and concentrates on the fourth-century BCE Confucian thinker Mengzi (Mencius). The *Mengzi*, argues Jiang, provides readers with a “systematic elaboration of Confucianism” and puts forward “novel ideas” (that were later widely accepted) on the foundations of Neo-Confucian thought. Given that Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism are both the historical foundations and contemporary cornerstones of Chinese thought and culture, anyone studying this genre of ideas cannot avoid reading Mengzi. The title of Jiang’s contribution, “Mengzi: Human Nature is Good,” makes it clear that the *Mengzi* focuses on the essence of humanity, which makes it of special interest for students of psychology and sociology as well as religion, philosophy, ethics, and all areas of applied ethics including, for example, business ethics. Mengzi, according to Jiang, begins with the presupposition that “human nature is good” and that one need only contemplate one’s own feelings—of commiseration, shame, deference, and of right and wrong—if one wants to understand oneself and others. In a similar vein to that of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Mengzi argues that the seeds of goodness are inherent in humankind and that what people need is the proper environment in which to grow into virtuous citizens. Although not explicitly stated, Jiang suggests a parallel between Mengzi and the students who read him. If students of Asian thought and culture come to the material with the “seeds of goodness,” and if they are given the proper environment in the classroom—in this case, the opportunity to read Mengzi—their concern for humanity as a whole will take root and flourish.

From China we move to Japan. In this section the classical texts being proposed for the classroom are not discussed individually but rather as one part of a large whole or “school of thought.” The comparative philosopher Brian Schroeder addresses the problems and prospects of teaching Zen texts, focusing on those texts written by and about the great Zen master Eihei Dōgen. Zen, Schroeder begins, is often thought to be the “very antithesis” of Western thought and culture, but through the work of Dōgen and the Soto Zen sect of Zen Buddhism that he founded, the obtaining of “Zen mind” through ordinary experiences such as cooking or walking on the beach is something that is open and available to everyone. Schroeder suggests Dōgen’s own biography, specific readings, interesting anecdotes, and various

meditative exercises are ways of introducing Western students to Japan and to the “way” of Zen.

There are a variety of Buddhist schools in Japan, and it is the work of the Kyoto School founder Nishida Kitarō that is, according to the comparative religions thinker Gereon Kopf, the best way to introduce Japanese thought and culture to the undergraduate philosophy classroom. In his entry “The Absolute Contradictory What: On How to Read the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō,” Kopf argues that the best way to understand the work of Nishida is as a response to the philosophical standpoints akin to that of Advaita Vedanta. Kopf stresses the need to see Nishida’s philosophy as one of “nondualism” stressing a “three-world model . . . that accommodates different ways of thinking as the alternative between two mutually exclusive paradigms.”

Part 2 of our collection is concluded with the work of the philosopher Jason M. Wirth, who takes even a broader approach to the teaching of Japanese thought and culture by presenting the Kyoto School—especially the work of Nishida Kitarō, Suzuki Daisetz, and Tanabe Hajime—in comparison to German idealism, which paralleled its development and was also an independent invigorating force within the Japanese Buddhist tradition. In so doing, Wirth frames the Kyoto School as one of the most important intellectual “spaces” from which one can understand the major philosophical foundations of both Asia and the West that profoundly affect contemporary thought and culture on both sides of the Pacific. Wirth stresses the Kyoto philosophers’ use of language and tradition as a means by which the most profound and primordial aspects of Asian philosophies and religions have been rescued from the obscurity and indignity to which they have been consigned as Western ideals have grown more popular.

When the historical, artistic, philosophical, or religious implications and foundations of Asian thought and culture were viewed to be more fundamental to the pedagogical style of particular scholar-teachers than any specific text or a particular writer or school of thought, we included their work in part 3, “Contexts.” Part 3 serves the purpose of incorporating a broader range of pedagogical tools for the mainstreaming of Asian philosophies and religions into undergraduate curricula and classrooms.

The first section of part 3 categorizes three suggestions for such mainstreaming under the broad and general category of “frameworks.”

The first suggestion is made by a historian of Japan, John A. Tucker, who argues that if one is to be educated to become a cosmopolitan, then one's historical perspective cannot be simply Western in origin or approach. As scholar-teachers, we have a duty to offer our students a historical perspective that is "grounded in 'world systems'" so that it "affirms a more global" account of intellectual "systems" for properly understanding human history. With respect to the scope of this volume—India, China, and Japan—Tucker offers a "systems through texts" approach in which he suggests professors use many of the texts mentioned in the first section, as well as other classic volumes such as the literary, philosophical, sociological, religious, and, most especially, historical contexts from which to introduce Asian philosophies and religions into any undergraduate classroom.

Francis Brassard, an Asian scholar and Buddhologist, begins his pedagogical piece by offering the reader a global perspective of human thought and culture—specifically via the great religious traditions—so as to better frame the need for the study of Asian contexts to properly understand and teach the great classical texts of the region. According to Brassard, without first understanding the global context of human nature and what is taken to be the ultimate reason for being across cultures, one is unable truly to see the power of the Buddhist canon. And, in turn, if one is unable to see the historical and cultural framework of Buddhist thought that now extends to all parts of the world, then readers of Asian texts will never grasp the power and profundity of any of the works that grow out of it. According to Brassard, a mainstream understanding of the texts first requires a mainstream understanding of the contexts.

But what if the context in question suggests a complete denial of itself? This is the conundrum addressed by the philosopher and logician Shigenori Nagatomo in "A Sketch of the *Diamond Sutra*'s Logic of Not." Nagatomo argues that certain Asian texts—for example, the *Diamond Sutra*—argue from a context that emerges from contradiction, including its own self-denial when it states: "*A* is not *A*, therefore it is *A*." What would be viewed by most Western thinkers as nonsensical (at worst) or paradoxical (at best) is within the scope of Asian philosophies and religions as one of the many tools for understanding problems, including those theoretical issues that often lead thinkers into paradox. Nagatomo claims that the "dualistic, either-or egological stance" presented in works such as

the *Diamond Sutra* present both Asian and Western thinkers with certain theoretical difficulties. However, this stance also presents an unusual framework from which one can rethink the questions and answers that are used to “understand one’s self, the relationship between ‘I’ and ‘other,’ and our ecological relation with nature.”

The scholars above offer a variety of theoretical frameworks for the more novice professors of Asian thought and culture so as to provide them with secure scaffolding from which they can appropriately and securely renovate their Western curriculum to better support more diverse contexts of thought and culture. In addition, for the reader more familiar with Asian texts, the above authors provide interesting and innovative ways of understanding the wisdom of India, China, and Japan in various contexts. Other scholars have worked at making these new contexts more accessible.

Art has always held a special place in the human heart and soul, and the next set of authors believes works of art are the best entrée into alien contexts we can offer our undergraduate students. The humanities scholar and interdisciplinary thinker Harriette D. Grissom claims that one can best understand the thought and culture emerging from the Indian subcontinent through the study of art, specifically religious art. Grissom suggests beginning with the Kailashanta Temple at Ellora, the entire architecture of which is “hewn from a mountain” and is rife with “archetypal, religious, and philosophical symbolism.” By examining this mammoth “sculpture,” one can reach a greater understanding of Indian ideas of self, their construction of the perennial struggle between the material and spiritual, and their notion of *purusha*, or the “cosmic body.”

Art and artists, according to the Chinese art historian Stephen J. Goldberg, offer society something more than the products of their genius. A Chinese artwork and its creator offer students (and professors) a chance to access the most fundamental aspects of Asian thought and culture. With respect to Chinese visual art, the very essence of which, according to Goldberg, may be “politicized” so as to act to challenge the “sociocultural authority and power in traditional China,” studying art gives those of us who are more distant “in geography and generation” to traditional China a chance to close the gap and “attend” to and appreciate the subject matter and contemporary import of Chinese Confucian philosophy.

As we move from different artistic contexts—from the temples of India to the textured landscape paintings of China—we once again mirror some of the cultural borrowing throughout Asia. The last category of part 3 is certainly not the least, and it is an area of focus that many scholars consider to be the heart of Asian culture and thought: philosophy and religion. The first contribution in this section is by the comparative philosopher Mary I. Bockover and is called “Teaching Chinese Philosophy from the Outside In.” Bockover is a self-proclaimed “outsider” and believes that such an acknowledgment is actually pedagogically useful when trying to get “into” another context. Her introductory remarks will make even the most novice users of Asian texts comfortable with the project of “infusion.” From her comparison of different translations of the *Daodejing* to her insight into the problems and apprehensions that the new scholar/teacher may experience, Bockover offers one a comfortable first look at a text that opens the door to the understanding of Chinese culture and the interconnectedness between ancient Chinese culture and the mind of contemporary Chinese Americans (many of whom are our students). Finally, Bockover offers a template for exciting students—many of whom feel the need for political activism as opposed to contemplative meditation—into becoming both more philosophical and more cosmopolitan.

Though many scholars, even those who specialize in comparative philosophy, warn the Western reader to behave parsimoniously with respect to trying to juxtapose the philosophies and religions of Asia with those of the West, the analytic philosopher James Peterman believes that some comparison is healthy and pedagogically efficacious. He suggests using Plato’s *Euthyphro* and Confucius’s *Analects* in the same introductory course, since both texts “help define and inaugurate the path of their respective, quite different traditions.” As such, urges Peterman, traditional students in the Western classroom are introduced to the thought and culture of Asia through a range of topics and approaches to philosophy and religion. He also suggests that the give-and-take of methodological contexts will enable students to truly grasp the point of comparative studies by exposing them to the need for a more cosmopolitan attitude.

From the outset, this project recognized the serious need for a volume with both content and pedagogical focus to assist college and university professors wishing to introduce Asian philosophies and religions—or,

more generally, thought and culture—into their courses. Following the premise that teaching requires a solid content base as well as pedagogical methodologies, this collection of essays offers contemporary, yet accessible, interpretations of primary philosophical and religious texts from India, China, and Japan both for Asia-trained professors and for newcomers. The book is designed to appeal to those outside the disciplines of religion and philosophy as well as to those in those disciplines who wish to incorporate Asia-related materials into their standard Western courses. While providing content assistance, the anthology also offers pedagogical ways of incorporating Asian philosophies and religions into other humanities courses. Philosophy and religion play an important role in the development and preservation of culture, and we believe Asian histories and cultures should be understood through the foundation of their religions and philosophies.

Religion, and later philosophy's crucial emergence from it, is found at the taproot of all cultures' growth and evolution. When human consciousness raises itself to more reflective and critical levels, philosophy emerges as the primary human thinking activity that gives birth to other human endeavors. Although religion and philosophy ought to have more prominent roles, given their central places in human evolution, both disciplines have struggled, and continue to struggle, to eke out a living on the margins of contemporary education. One aspiration of this book, voiced by its contributors from within those disciplines and from without, is to articulate the need to position religion and philosophy in a more central location in educational discourse and practice, and to punctuate their contribution to the complexities of understanding and to the creation of a more cosmopolitan compartment by Americans.

On a more practical note, we seek to offer non-Asian-specialty teaching professors from the humanities and social sciences a means to begin deciphering for themselves and delivering to their students some of the fundamental philosophical and religious texts of Asia. Piggybacking on this aspiration is a more specific one that offers non-specialists in Asian philosophies and religions ways to begin thinking about the integration and infusion of Asian philosophical and religious materials into various Western philosophy and religion courses.

The authors in this volume are experts in a variety of fields; some are primarily Asianists, many are philosophers and religion specialists. In all cases, our authors are exemplary teachers and scholars, and for

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this reason, they were chosen as contributors, and we are grateful for their contributions. Not only do we trust this collection of essays will serve a useful purpose and be interesting in its own right for those already familiar with the thinking and cultures of Asia, but also we trust that it provides a modest mechanism by which the complexities of understanding will lead to more cooperation and the possibility of a more humane future by creating more “citizens of the cosmos.”

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### Note

1. Charles A. Moore, ed. *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967), 2.