

Comparative Theology, Religious Discourse, and Phenomenological Imagination

This chapter seeks to explicate the critical method, ethical orientation, and practical strategy of comparative theology in connection with the sociological study of religion. It furthers to develop a correlational research model between critical method and religious truth in a phenomenological-hermeneutical framework. A “critical” comparative theology sought after in this chapter does not merely remain in text reading and commentaries, because the social dimension of religion is not exhausted into the world of the text. The text reading and commentary are a key (but not the key) in comprehending religion and the society in which we live.

Accordingly, this chapter deals with the social scientific study of religion in Max Weber and Emile Durkheim for their relevance to comparative theology; then, it shall examine the extent to which phenomenological inquiry would be foundational for developing comparative theology. We shall examine Clifford Geertz’s phenomenology of culture in connection with Paul Ricoeur. In interaction with this phenomenology, a theological construal of phenomenology is to be explored and construed mainly upon Karl Barth, Emmanuel Levinas, and Paul Tillich.

We shall further to elaborate comparative theology in taking issue with the historical-critical method of Ernst Troeltsch in favor of the correlation research model founded upon a phenomenological-hermeneutical frame of reference. This procedure critically integrates Foucault’s notion of problematization into an archeological analysis of power relations, in regard to the elective affinity between religious ideas and

material interests for immanent critique and solidarity. To begin, we pay attention to the relation between religion and society.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Religion is primarily the general framework and constant foundation by which to understand the world of people and guide their everyday life. For Weber, human act and behavior is social and purpose-driven with respect to its means because it is related in its meaning to other people. This purposive rationality is based on the means–end relation, doomed to be meaningful.

Weber's analysis is decisive in the fashioning of the practical way of life to finding an elective affinity between religious ideas and material interests through typological meaning and its social, ethical pattern. We find such inquiry and procedure in his exposition of the influence of the Protestant ethic upon the rational side of modern capitalism. This sociological study remains a classic example of exploring the relationship between religious ideas and ethical disposition and behavior.¹

The Puritan idea of election and their ascetic methodical way of life find elective affinity in the historical course of modern capitalism, propelling the rational action of the capitalist spirit in the process of the disenchantment of the world. Puritan divines have combined religious ideas with material interest into an active ascetic life conduct, and the path to salvation is progressed in the disenchantment of the world.² Religious ideas are also influenced by external interest situations, along with the way of life of the ruling strata (agency) corresponding to it, that is the social stratification itself. Reversely, when the direction of life conduct is methodically rationalized, it is also profoundly determined by the ultimate values which direct and govern the rationalization and social structure.³

However, Weber's diagnosis of the last phase of Western modernity remains despairing and even pessimistic in his provocative notion of "iron cage,"⁴ to which Western modernization is captive. It implies that such modernity travels through Europe to the rest of the world. The world appears to be more denuded of irrationality. The world image, patterned and created in the progressive intellectualist rationalization, is governed by impersonal powers and rules.

Against this background, Weber argues that human beings are cultural beings, endowed with the ethical capacity of taking a deliberate attitude through the prophetic religion in favor of a universalist brotherhood.⁵

Weber's exhortation is seen in an esthetical style of argument in that in music, the Pythagorean "comma" resists complete rationalization. We need the Pythagorean comma as resistance to the rationalization of practical life, as shifted into the realm of the irrational. This refers to Weber's stance committed to securing "the only possible 'beyond,' added to the mechanism of a world robbed of gods."⁶

For Weber, salvation aristocracy grounded in the particularism of grace and vocational asceticism has imposed violence upon the world because it regards the world subject to violence and under ethical barbarism.⁷ Inner worldly asceticism renounced the universalism of love and brotherliness. In Weber's account, the principle of solidarity of brothers and sisters in faith might be in approximation to a universal communism of love (*caritas*); it is added to every ethical religion which retains the giving of alms as a universal and primary component.⁸ However, Weber failed to elaborate a religiously inspired prophetic ethic of solidarity in his exposition of world religions.

In Eisenstadt's account, Weber's emphasis on the dichotomy of the two realms of religiously inspired ethics of solidarity and structural change of social institution would lead to a mistaken view. Yet, the explication of the combination between charisma and institution building is the best clue to understand Weber's contribution to the interaction of two entities underlying "in the fabric of social life and in the process of social change."⁹ In this critically revised notion of Weber, his sociology of religion may contribute to the reality of multiple modernities by elaborating prophetic religious ethic in connection with social structural innovation and change.

Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, begins with a substantive description of religious phenomena, in terms of the sacred/profane dichotomy, in which religion is defined by its general social functionality. Sacred things are characterized as "things set apart and forbidden" by society, which is united as the moral community, the church.¹⁰ Here, religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices" creates and maintains social solidarity (solidarity effect), and it is grasped as a social fact, in which sacred things are socially constructed by collective imagination. The dialectical relation between religion and society can be expressed: "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities."¹¹ The lifeworld of collective realities is anchored and constructed in the relationship between religion and society.

Social facts as things or consciousness exist *sui generis*, having their own nature as a collectivity. Collective life is made of representations (such as the idea of the gods, the myths and the religions, ethical duty, and moral discipline), and collective representations impose themselves on the individual. The method of studying the collective representations is strictly of a sociological character, because social facts must be objective and rational, taking place outside the individuals. Thus, this perspective dethrones the psychological viewpoint of religion and endorses a sociological-objective one to be investigated from the outside.¹²

In the tradition of Weber and Durkheim, Clifford Geertz furthers to articulate the cultural dimension of religious study. Sacred symbols work in a way of synthesizing people's worldview, ethos, and moral configuration.¹³ According to Geertz, religion is a cultural system, that is a system of symbols. The religion acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in human beings. It formulates conceptions of a general order of existence and clothes these conceptions with such an aura of factuality; thus, it makes the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.¹⁴ In religious symbols, moods and motives are made powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting, making up our way of life or ethos. This symbolic realism characterizes an individual's emotions and motivations as uniquely realistic in terms of a general order of existence.

As Geertz puts it, in ritual, "the world as lived [ethos] and the world as imagined [worldview], fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality."¹⁵ This religious symbolism finds consonance with Durkheim's position such that "collective effervescence" occurs in religious symbolism such as ritual, maintaining the communal sense of solidarity and belongingness.¹⁶

Given the sociological understanding of religious life, Weber's study of religions provides us with an important tool for scrutinizing the elective affinity between religious ideas and material interests in a historical course of development. Durkheim's association of religion, solidarity, and collective reality helps us see such a perspective in developing the immanent critique of the underside of religious discourse imbued with power relations. Furthermore, Geertz's symbolic realism offers the point of departure for us to develop a phenomenological imagination in reference to comparative theology. This interdisciplinary perspective facilitates our concept of comparative theology for exploring the extent to which comparative theology would contribute toward a postcolonial endeavor

of transcending the pathology of modernity in the context of multiple modernities. Let's turn to phenomenology as a method for comparative theology.

PHENOMENOLOGY: INTENTIONALITY AND LIFEWORLD

First of all, a phenomenological approach to religious studies can be seen in Rudolf Otto's (1869–1937) book *The Idea of the Holy*, in which Otto discovers the characteristics of the frightening and irrational experience in religious persons. He characterizes all these experiences as numinous (from Latin *numen*, god), designating the two indispensable features of religion, respectively, as sense of the sacred, awe, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. The sacred is revealing itself as *totaliter aliter* (the wholly Other).¹⁷

This perspective is analogous to Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology. For Heidegger, phenomenology implies "that which appears" (*phainomenon*) and logos (reflection or speech). Phenomenon means what shows itself, the self-showing. Logos, in the deeper sense, is itself to let something appear. The truth of logos is conceptualized as self-revealing. Since things show themselves, phenomenology investigates the ways in which appearances manifest themselves to us. This means "to the things themselves!"¹⁸

If the phenomenon appears, three levels of phenomenality are established in terms of: (1) its relative concealment in correlation with experience, (2) its gradually becoming revealed in correlation with understanding, and (3) its relative transparency with testimony.¹⁹ In the procedure of phenomenology, understanding is of special significance because it is comprehended within the structural relations, or hermeneutical circle. Comprehension is not restricted to the momentary experience of meaning since the meaning is interconnected with "the experience of a structural connection."²⁰

This phenomenology of self-revelation (*aletheia*) and hermeneutical circle takes issue with Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of intentionality, which is developed in his critique of psychology and natural science. Husserl makes a distinction between a "natural" object and its idealized presence within human thought, which is established as a transcendental realm of "thought objects" against the object in the natural world. The essence of the "tree" and its "hyletic stock" (or raw being) cannot be understood by a natural attitude, for instance, by wearing different

colored eyeglasses, whether red, yellow, or black. This could be analyzed by a pure logic established by apodictic inner evidence, a priori validity, which is unadulterated by “naturalized” consciousness or natural science.

As the natural world can be “bracketed out” (*epoche*), one also suspends one’s judgment and traditional view of it, turning attention to one’s experience of the true, existing within the idealized meaning of intentional consciousness (the reduction proper). In the moments of *epoche* and the reduction proper, the phenomenological reduction implies a reflective inquiring back into consciousness. Since it contains an ideal “meaning” within it, the consciousness is defined as “consciousness of.” Intentionality is the fundamental characteristic of consciousness to recover the original thought by suspending our judgment upon the natural world.

After phenomenological reduction, the world is recovered and then constituted by thought.²¹ Because the intentionality is the act of bestowing a meaning, phenomenology is a method for the analysis of noetic–noematic relation as the paradigm for all experiencing, or a discipline of transforming human beings with a natural attitude into a critical, transcendental subject.²²

Certainly, there is the limitation of an “ahistorical” theory of consciousness and eidetic reduction for “presuppositionless” knowledge, but later Husserl proposed multiple notions of lifeworlds; it is a historically and cultural pre-given, correlating with and deepening phenomenological reduction. As Husserl writes, “We become aware that we scientists are, after all, human beings and as such are among the components of the lifeworld which always exists for us, ever pre-given.”²³

The multiple notions of lifeworlds are historically given, culturally transmitted, and socially constructed; thus, Europeans, Africans, and Asians have their own truths, facts, and meaning, but in radically different manners. Despite all relativity, the lifeworld (history, language, and culture) has a general, common structure that is not itself relative.

The multiple interpretations of the varieties of lifeworld are conceived of as the totality of life in its multitudinous facets, in which life in general carries itself out in its particular everyday life: labor, language, and life in relation to the Other. The noematic (the world) correlates with the noetic (the subjective, living) aspect, such that this lifeworld is the horizon of all different diverse horizons for any kind of action in everydayness: the natural attitude.²⁴ The noetic–noematic structure of lifeworld

signifies the essential relatedness of world and conscious life. Because there is no “pre-suppositionless” knowledge apart from history or culture as mediated in language, the noesis–noema paradigm is embedded within the lifeworld as the domain of self-revelation and influences upon human consciousness.

Given this, phenomenological method can be undertaken, first, by detachment from the natural world in suspension of one’s judgment, then proceeding back to the intentional act of consciousness. If the noema–noesis paradigm is already with the “interior” lifeworld transmitted within the life of consciousness, this phenomenological epistemology (in distinction with mere opinion of the natural world) may entail a critical method in analysis or problematization of the natural world. All in all, consciousness “of” noematic meaning is consciousness “within” the multiple contexts of lifeworld. The correlational model of intentionality of human consciousness within the multiple realities of lifeworld provides an important research model for us to develop a comparative study of religion in terms of suspension (critical distance), return, and engagement with the world of religion in the problematization of power relations in the analysis of the interplay between religious ideas and material interest in society and history.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND CULTURE AS SEMANTICS

Phenomenological theory based on intentionality and lifeworld finds its constructive import in Ricoeur’s hermeneutics. Developing “phenomenological” hermeneutics, Ricoeur opens up the paradigm of text interpretation at the level of methodology in taking up Weber’s definition of the object of sociology in terms of meaningfully oriented behavior. Ricoeur conceptualizes meaningful action to be considered as a text, developing methodology in terms of text interpretation. Meaningful action is an object for social science under objectification, which is equivalent to the fixation of a discourse by writing.²⁵

For this purpose, he introduces the concept of discourse as language event, either spoken or written. In living speech, discourse is “saying” about “something” to “someone.” In written inscription, discourse is to be fixed because it disappears. The fixed discourse is the noema of the speaking, which refers to the meaning of the speech event. Initially, as an event and instance of discourse, the text had only a sense in internal

relation or structure, but now it has a meaning, which finds its realization in the discourse of the reader. "By virtue of its sense, the text had only a semiotic dimension; now it has, by virtue of its meaning, a semantic dimension."²⁶ Insofar as the sign considers the depth of semantics as disclosed by structural analysis, the interpretation "is a re-saying which reactivates what is said by the text."²⁷

This perspective becomes crucial in Geertz's phenomenology of culture. For Geertz, "at base, thinking is a public activity."²⁸ The symbolic structures or symbol systems that people have developed as the meaningful structure of experience "are historically constructed, socially maintained, and individually applied."²⁹ A phenomenology of culture seeks to describe and analyze everything tinged with imposed significance, which is to be "apprehended only through a screen of significant symbols"—the vehicles of its objectification.³⁰

This anthropological inscription of social discourse or the symbolic structures is analogous to the phenomenological distinction between the event of speaking (saying) and the said of speaking (said). What one writes is the noema (content or gist) of the speaking as the meaning of the speech event. "The meaning (noema) and the intention (noesis) coincide or overlap."³¹

More than that, Geertz heuristically deciphers the cultural event of social discourse as the ensemble of text. His theory of culture has a semantic dimension. Along with Max Weber, he argues that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun." Culture is taken as those webs and the analysis of them is "an interpretive one in search of meaning."³²

For this purpose, Geertz travels toward early Husserl and late Ludwig Wittgenstein, who attacked on privacy theories of meaning in order to overcome a psychological theory of culture. "Culture consists of socially established structures of meaning"; "culture is public because meaning is."³³ In Wittgenstein's account, "one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not understand the people...We cannot find our feet with them."³⁴

For the thick description of the culture, Geertz treats the culture purely as a symbolic system in its own terms, avoiding the defects of psychologism and the "hermetical" schematism.³⁵ For the description

of the symbolic system in its own terms, Geertz mediates a semiotic significance in hermeneutical reference to Weber's position. "The imposition of meaning on life is the major end and primary condition of human existence, that access of significance more than compensates for the economic costs involved."³⁶ What is crucial here is to comprehend the culture as an ensemble of texts.

For instance, when the Balinese cockfight is taken as a symbolic structure, it can be seen "as a means of saying something of something." Geertz's notion of the text goes beyond the notion of scripture or writing, and a cultural hermeneutic is constructed to understand symbolic signification in indigenous, semiotic terms. Here, we are faced with social semantics from the event of speaking because the cultural practice is saying something meaningful to someone in its own semiotic terms. Regarding symbolic forms as "saying something of something," the culture as an ensemble of texts cannot merely be handled sociologically, but also calls for hermeneutical need.

THEOLOGICAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE WORD OF GOD

Geertz's perspective strikes us as acumen to develop a theory of interpretation in the social, religious context. A theological phenomenology is concerned with the cultural event of living discourse as social semantics. A notion of a text beyond written materials and documents, even beyond dialogical practice, is grounded in the theological interpretation of creation as *larva Dei* (masks of God: Martin Luther) or *theatrum gloriae Dei* (theatre of God's glory: John Calvin and Karl Barth), that is a sematic text of God. This theological notion of the world as the stage of God's glory may be dated back to the tradition of *interpretatio naturae* in the Middle Ages which culminated in Spinoza attempting to read nature as a Scripture of God.³⁷ The Scripture and natural world constitute a single text through which God continues to address through the symbolic system of culture and its people's life.

Theological phenomenology, which is concerned with the analysis of faith intentionality and the word of God through the transcendental Saying, seeks to locate "faith" and seeks "understanding" in the multiple domains of religion, culture, and society, faith seeking understanding in multiple contexts of religion, culture, and society. In a theological phenomenology, there is an affinity sought with Levinas' phenomenology of Saying. Levinas

develops his phenomenology of the Saying as the transcendence beyond being, in light of the God of the Bible. The Saying of the infinite precedes all the said, in a way of signifying prior to all experience. If the Infinite passes in prophesizing, God's saying begins in a cry of ethical revolt.³⁸

If Levinas comprehends God as Infinite saying grounded in the process of prophesizing, it marks a new domain of interpretation of the *dabar* (God's word in deed; self-revealing) and the tradition of prophetic significations. It paves the way to a phenomenological hermeneutic of Saying and the Other, through the face of which God speaks. Interpretation of *dabar* in prophetic signification is not separable from the Saying of the Infinite through the Other and ethical responsibility.

This perspective helps us better comprehend Barth's reflection of *totaliter aliter* in the speech-act regarding the relation between revelation (saying) and the scripture (said) while applying this inquiry to the relation between revelation and religion. Barth's dialectical approach to the relation between revelation and religion is first in critical, dialectical evaluation of religion as unbelief because the revelation is sublation of the religion when the latter is driven in power relations, disgracing the original meaning of religion in what is called blamage effect. In this effect, the religious idea is distorted and blasphemed by material interest.³⁹

In the next move, Barth sees religion, as established through the revelation, as the source of immanent critique. Revelation makes religion, through the critique, into one of the analogical witnesses to the divine reality as *totaliter aliter*. Seeing the revelation as the source of the critique of the historical course of religious development, it is hard to have a comparison of religions, with the intention of judging which religion would be better than the other. All religions, Christianity included, stand in a dialectical, yet "phenomenological" relation to divine transcendence in the self-revealing of speech-act, which relativizes religions as a human phenomenon.

In Barth's theology of the Word, there may be a dimension of phenomenological, hermeneutic deliberation of God's speech-act through the world and in the otherness of the other as a field of the divine semantic; this is analogous to Levinas' notion of alterity under God's traces of Saying. The word of God challenges our natural, taken-for-granted attitude, or naïveté of faith about divine reality. Faith seeks understanding of the divine mystery in the speech-act by way of intellectual suspension, problematization of the interplay between religious idea and material interest, and analogical clarification. This refers to my utilization

of Barth's theology of the word in construction for comparative theology. This approach to speech-act theology brings us to examine Tillich's phenomenological-existential approach to revelation and religion.

PAUL TILlich AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

In the study of the encounter between Christianity and World religions, it is Tillich who undergirds a dynamic-typological model. His theology is one of the significant contributions for theological construal of phenomenology in the study of the history of religions. For him, the universal religious basis is rooted in the experience of the Holy within the human finite condition; first, manifested in a sacramental dimension applied to all religions. Then, it occurs in a mystical basis as a critical movement against the demonization of the sacramental basis in which the concrete dimension of the sacrament is devalued for the Ultimate. Finally, the ethical or prophetic basis comes into play by critiquing the corrupted consequence of the sacramental or the mystical for the sake of the justice. However, in the absence of the sacramental and mystical components, religious experience becomes easily moralistic and finally secular.⁴⁰

Tillich's term "the religion of the concrete spirit" refers to the inner telos, toward which every religion drives. It is of Hegelian character, leading to a union of the great religions, as identified in the synthesis of the three elements in Paul's doctrine of the Spirit.⁴¹ The religion of the concrete Spirit is actualized in moments of *kairoi* in other religions, fragmentarily. Theonomy which implies from *theos*, God and *nomos*, that law points to the ultimate meaning of life, beyond heteronomous (religious authority suppressing human reason) and autonomous (self-actualization of reason in all the cultural functions). Theonomy appears in the religion of the concrete spirit in fragment, never fully. Tillich attempts to interpret the theological tradition in light of religious phenomena and his method of the history of religions first utilizes religious materials for systematic theologians to existentially experience them. Then, he shows the extent to which the religious question is located within human experience. Thirdly, it is to present a phenomenology of religion manifesting itself in the history of religion, for instance, the symbol, the rites, the ideas, and various activities. Fourthly, it attempts at clarifying the relation of these phenomena to traditional concepts in terms of relatedness, difference, contradiction, and new problem arising out of this relation. Finally, it relocates the reinterpreted concepts into the framework

of the dynamics of religious and secular history in our own present situation for a new element of truth.

Tillich's "phenomenological" theology in an existential move and his religious symbolism are grounded in the totality of human experience surrounded in all social, political, and economic ramifications, partly in revolt against these surroundings. This perspective offers the way in which people understand themselves in their very nature rooted in religious experience. Without experiential basis, Tillich argues, no theology is feasible, and he seeks to formulate the basic experience in a universally valid manner.⁴²

In Tillich's existential approach, there is a Christian theistic inclusivism and Christian dynamic-typological approach in a threefold manner: sacramental, mystic, and prophetic. This typology is made meaningful in the Christian understanding of the self (Kairos of Christ) in connection with the history of religions (*kairoi*).

Nonetheless, it would be hard to apply Christian ideal typology to other religions without further ado. A research of religions in historical course of development sometimes would contradict Christian ideal typology because religion is historically transmitted and socially constructed, shaped in cultural and linguistic connection with human life. Spiritual experience of religion in a sacramental, mystic, and moral basis is embedded within the socio-historical construction, entailing its particularity in difference from other religious manifestations. Existentially inspired theology in Tillich's fashion needs to be apprehended in connection with society as the lifeworld, collective reality of religious representations; this has its own content in distinction from the spiritual culturalist representation of religion framed within sacramental-mystic-ethical basis.⁴³

A NEW COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY: PROBLEMATIZATION AND IMMANENT CRITIQUE

Along with Barth, Levinas, and Geertz, I am concerned with grounding a new model of comparative theology, in which the sociological study of religion and hermeneutic theory are taken into account, with utter seriousness. In this regard, comparative theology is theologically motivated and hermeneutically reasoned upon the word of God, bringing theological agenda on the interreligious table for comparative dialogue; then, it is "comparatively" interested, creating a frame of reference by learning

religions in a sociological context. This comparative theology does not reduce theology to cultural or religious studies or pursuing metanarrative global pluralist theology⁴⁴; nor is it intent in violating theological inquiry and subject matter by overwriting the study of the history of religion into its own theological argument and confession. The credibility and intellectual integrity in the sense of “faith seeking understanding” is not neutralized nor abandoned, but its theological horizon can be widened in dialogue with, and learning from other religions by respecting their adherents. Tillich’s insight into the phenomenology of religion can be incorporated into the constructive side of comparative theology, but transcending its existential reductionism and ideal typology.

In the comparative study of religion, methodological inquiry adopts a stance of undergirding any value judgments (*epoché*) and critical method (problematization of the questionable domain in the analysis of the interplay between religious ideas and material interests), as regards power relations and blamage effect. It develops an immanent critique in learning from the religious source, not from the non-theological position. I utilize the term immanent critique⁴⁵ in the construction of religious-inspired ethics of solidarity and emancipation as the source of the critique by dissecting the questionable, even dangerous course of historical development. It comes into play by critically analyzing the conflict and contradiction between religious ideas and ethical orientation in the social context; it calls into question the interplay between religious ideas and material interests, embedded within power relations and hegemonic discourse. In doing so, it seeks the source of solidarity and emancipation within religious ideas and tradition in support of an endeavor transcending the pathology of Western modernity in the aftermath of colonialism. Such comparative method and results can be utilized for theological deliberation and judgment in dealing with the reality of multiple modernities.

In our study of phenomenology, Husserl’s theory of intentionality within lifeworld can be revised as a critical method and analysis in the suspension or problematization of the regime of questionable elements, with respect to culture and religion. Since we are in-the-lifeworld as the structure of anticipation for meaning, the noesis-noema-correlated paradigm is not presuppositionless knowledge at all, but is already mediated and always formulated in self-reflection and meaningful discourse within the multiple reality of lifeworlds.

ARCHEOLOGY AND CRITICAL, SOCIAL ANALYSIS

An archeological analysis of religious discourse and effects of power becomes crucial in correlational research in undergirding an analytical method of problematization, and exercising immanent critique of religion entangled within effects of power and dominion.⁴⁶ In Foucault's account, phenomenology has effected a union between the Cartesian *cogito* and Kant's transcendental position, reviving the deeper meaning of the Western *ratio*. It has allegiance to the discovery of life, work, and language, and interrogation in matters pertaining to man's mode of being and his relation to the Other as the unthought.⁴⁷ It has always been driven by the question of ontology in its description of the empirical reality, led into an ontology of the "unthought" in forgetfulness of Being. This is what Foucault finds to be positive.

But Foucault initiates a new method of archeology concerning the relation of *man* to the unthought, by interrogating their twin appearance in Western culture. There is an unavoidable duality of the Other in relation to Western *man*.⁴⁸ In modern thought and movement, the other as the unthought is apprehended by reflection, the act of consciousness, which fundamentally "is advancing towards that religion where man's Other must become the Same as himself."⁴⁹

However, Foucault's notion of phenomenology tends to level down the difference between Husserl and Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Husserl's notion of *epoche* and multiple interpretations of lifeworlds are out of Foucault's sight, but I utilize and renew the phenomenological method in critical interrogation of the reified reality of labor, life, and language. This phenomenological revision model thwarts the modern thought which attempts to totalize the Other into the sameness of Western *man*, à la Hegel's phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenological inquiry can be renewed and radicalized in terms of the immanent critique, and by way of interrogation of the questionable regime of the taken-for-granted "truth claim" in sociological analysis of the interplay between religious ideas and material interests. This correlational research cuts through the limitation of Foucault who runs short of analyzing the relation of the modern self and colonized Other.

This said, my appropriation of Foucault's archeological method does not follow in his Nietzschean footsteps of disseminating power reductionism and abandoning the modernity discourse. But it is critically

utilized for reinforcing the sociological study of elective affinity between religious ideas and material interests in a social, historical context to vet and unearth the blame effect. It is in service of immanent critique in a phenomenological-hermeneutical frame of reference, on behalf of anamnestic solidarity with innocent victims and those on the margins in the world of religion and society.

For Gadamer, basically the hermeneutic phenomenon is not a problem of method at all, nor is it concerned with a method of understanding.⁵⁰ More than Gadamer, hermeneutical reflection of religious text needs to be explicated in an archeological analysis of the interplay of textual ideas with social material formation. A critical, social analytical hermeneutics helps us clear the confusion between domination, authority, and violence with respect to the interaction between a knowledge system and social formation. This perspective reinforces and renews Gadamer's position, in which the authority is based on recognition, not the abdication of reason. Thus, critical, social analytical hermeneutics has "nothing to with blind obedience to a command."⁵¹

An appreciation of religious texts cannot be understood apart from the recognition of its claim through critical reason in the archeological analysis of power relations and effects in society. The meaning of tradition, for instance, the exodus tradition or the religious symbol of the cross, plays as the source of solidarity, but opposite traditions of crucifix and crusade are immanently criticizable in light of the original source of the religious symbol. The source of the solidarity effect is explicated through the act of suspicion, interrogation, analysis, and critique. Such inquiry deepens Gadamer's statement: "The abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research ... must be discarded. The effect (*Wirkung*) of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity of effect."⁵²

The hermeneutical, ontological model of unity of effect can be deepened and renewed in the correlational program in social, critical analysis of elective affinity of religious traditional rationality and social location. Truth sets us free, because truth is not in the progress of history nor in bondage to critical reason of the historical inquirer, but the history is judged in truth imbued with the living Word of God, as read and heard in the anamnesis reasoning upon the innocent victim in the text and social life. *Aletheia* (manifestation of truth) comes to language as expressed in it. This implies language as the house of being with

its universalist claim. But language is also disclosed as the house of ideology in which the lie manifests itself as propaganda and violence in the subjugation of those on the margins.

If the ontological hermeneutic plays a boundary concept in “top down” influencing of human consciousness through language and the history of effect, a correlational method plays a concrete inquiry, taking on critical reasoning and method in terms of analysis and dialectical procedure involved in the local regime of culture, society, and religion. This correlational inquiry between “method and truth” supplements Gadamer’s ontology of “truth” over against “method.”

CORRELATIONAL RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD

The phenomenological inquiry for correlational research circumscribes the privileged stance of ontological hermeneutics that tends to sidestep the critical method in the analysis of language, culture, and religious discourse. The phenomenological suspension (“an aspect of the intentional movement of consciousness toward meaning”)⁵³ and its return with a critical method to culture and religion supplement the hermeneutical theory of distancing by qualifying it as a critical method to be more relevant to the historical-critical method in the comparative study of religion.

This perspective takes issue with Ernst Troeltsch’s critical method (analogy, critique, and interconnection) in the historical study of religions in the context of the school of history of religions. For Troeltsch, religion has gained its particular form and content in interaction with the historical and cultural background and location. Here, God is identical with the Absolute, beyond all historical manifestation and relativities, but God is present relatively in historical religions. Thus, a revelation of God can be seen on the religious dimension and manifestation in history since the latter can be understood as the unfolding of the divine life. Religious a priori formulates such a dialectical relationship between the Divine Absolute and immanence, such that in fact, human life is religious.⁵⁴ Religious a priori is expressed in the religious dimension and manifestation in history.

This historical relativism in universal orientation toward divine future tends to undermine the site of history already affecting the inquirer in social location, since his/her critical consciousness always moves with the lifeworld of history, tradition, and social location. The past is no longer shibboleth, but is involved in shaping and effecting the researcher

in the investigation of the history of religion. This perspective can be a corrective to Troeltsch's psychological empathy and intuitive participation in the inner life of the past.⁵⁵

Troeltsch's serious flaw lies in sidestepping the blamage effect of religion in the historical course of development, because he establishes religious a priori as the source of religion in interaction with the relative revelation of the divine. However, religious manifestations founded upon religious a priori can be also exposed to corruption and distortion in historical development and social context.

In articulating the significance of the history of religions for systematic theology, Tillich attempts at complementing Troeltsch and transcending him, at some points, in ways that revealing and saving powers are present in all religions. Religion, as such, is not the end in itself, but a means. The limited, even distorted adaptation and the failure are subject to critique assuming three forms: the mystical, the prophetic, and the secular.⁵⁶ "Religion must use the secular as a critical tool against itself."⁵⁷

However, our inquiry is more concerned with elaborating the immanent critique by finding the source of critique and solidarity in religious sacred texts and ideas rather than borrowing the outside source from secular movement. It also widens existential narrowness toward social being (*homo socius*) with ethical responsibility in a society fused with a multi-religious horizon. If the sacred is in the depth of the secular, the phenomenology of the sacred should be apprehended first in textual reading for finding the source of the immanent critique, while seeing the secular or cultural practice as the field of divine semantics in analogical procedure and approximation.

A NOTE IN TRANSITION

Drawing upon our analysis and elaboration of critical inquiry for comparative theology, the next several chapters lay a theological foundation and rationale for foregrounding a new model of comparative theology by comparatively reading Martin Luther in regard to Pure Land Buddhism. My reading strategy shall be undertaken for interreligious renewal and solidarity, despite incommensurability, incomparable difference, and tolerant deferral between Luther and Shinran. Then, I proceed to engage Barth's theology by developing his relational theology toward elaborating a new model of comparative theology. For this purpose, I endeavor to analyze and bring up his theological insight for a postcolonial horizon

of God's mission theology and culture, with respect to his prophetically inspired political theology (Chap. 3). To unpack his relational theology, I undertake a critical exegesis and renewal of Barth's understanding of Trinity, God's gracious election, and *analogia relationis* (Chap. 4). For a theology of phenomenology, a comparative study should be taken regarding Barth and Levinas, especially in their respective critical view of Heidegger (Chap. 5). Based on this clarification and argument, it would be more effective for us to discuss Barth's dialectical theology of religions in terms of the study of Anselm and Feuerbach (Chap. 6). This research helps us better comprehend Barth's comparative study of Pure Land Buddhism while critically examining critiques from Paul Knitter and Francis Clooney, and evaluating his "speech-act" comparative theology among multiple modernities (Chap. 7).

NOTES

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Mineola, NY.: Dover, 2003).
2. Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trans. and eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 290.
3. *Ibid.*, 287.
4. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 181–182.
5. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber*, 330.
6. Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *ibid.*, 282.
7. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *ibid.*, 336.
8. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 212.
9. Weber, *On Charism and Institution Building*, Introduction by Eisenstadt, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), ix.
10. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free, 1995), 44.
11. *Ibid.*, 9.
12. Durkheim, "Sociology in France in the Nineteenth Century," in *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, ed. Robert N. Bellah (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 16–17.

13. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), 89.
14. Ibid., 90.
15. Ibid., 112.
16. Durkheim, *Elementary Form of Religious Life*, 9, 220, 228, 350, 424, 429.
17. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 25–30.
18. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY.: SUNY, 1996), 30.
19. G. Van Der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology* 2, trans. J. E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 671.
20. Ibid., 675.
21. Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 45.
22. Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 15.
23. Husserl, "Elements of a Science of the Life-World," in *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 369.
24. Husserl's notion of the life-world is taken up in Gadamer's hermeneutics. *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 242–254.
25. Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," in Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 203.
26. Ricoeur, "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding" in Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 159.
27. Ibid., 164.
28. Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 360.
29. Ibid., 364.
30. Ibid., 367.
31. Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 19.
32. Ibid., 5.
33. Ibid., 12.
34. Ibid., 13.

35. Ibid., 17.
36. Geertz, "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 434.
37. Ibid., 449.
38. Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in *Emmanuel Levinas Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana university Press, 1996), 146.
39. CD I/2: §17. 2. Religion as Unbelief. CD for the abbreviation of *Church Dogmatics* by Karl Barth, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Trance (London and New York: T. and T. Clark, 2004). The notion of blame effect and the source of the immanent critique in historical course of religious development is much indebted to Helmut Gollwitzer's critical theology of religion. Helmut Gollwitzer, *Befreiung zur Solidarität: Einführung in die Evangelische Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1984), 110–111.
40. "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," in Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 71.
41. Ibid., 70–72.
42. Ibid., 78.
43. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, xiv.
44. Keith Ward. "The Idea of 'God' in Global Theology," in *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today*, ed. Norbert Hintersteiner (Amsterdam/ New York: Rodopi, 2007), 377–388.
45. Robert J. Antonio, "Immanent Critique as the Core of Critical Theory: Its Origins and Developments in Hegel, Marx and Contemporary Thought," *The British Journal of Sociology* 32, no. 3 (1981): 330–345.
46. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, trans. Colin Gordon and others, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 131.
47. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 325.
48. Ibid., 326.
49. Ibid., 328.
50. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxi.
51. Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," in Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 71.
52. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282.
53. Ricoeur, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," in Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 116. Our elucidation of phenomenology as the methodical inquiry for theology circumvents Van der Leeuw's definition of phenomenology merely as human vital activity and attitude. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 2: 676.

54. Thomas W. Ogletree, *Christian Faith and History: A Critical Comparison of Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 40–41.
55. Ibid., 48.
56. Tillich, “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian”, in Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, 64–65.
57. Ibid., 65–66.

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2017, XII, 329 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-58195-8