

**VISIONS OF ALTERITY: THE IMPACT OF CROSS-CULTURAL CONTACTS  
ON EUROPEAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN THE PRE-ENLIGHTENMENT  
PERIOD**

A Dissertation

by

HASSAN BASHIR

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2008

Major Subject: Political Science

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**ABSTRACT**

Visions of Alterity: The Impact of Cross-Cultural Contacts on European Self-Understanding in the Pre-Enlightenment Period. (December 2008)

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Comparative Political Theory (CPT) focuses on political ideas of non-western thinkers and compares these to their western counterparts. In recent years, works of CPT have demonstrated that a comparative perspective allows us to see the many parallels in the theoretical projects of western and non-western thinkers. This approach towards political theorizing opens up previously unexplored avenues to gain a better understanding of the political. CPT has also strongly challenged traditional western political theorists, and political scientists alike, to reconsider the validity of several existing theories about the political. This is a result of CPT's awareness of the bias introduced by western dominance in a globalized world. Works of CPT attempt to neutralize this power imbalance between the west and the rest by attempting to revitalize the non-west in terms of its self-understanding.

This dissertation argues that a comparative perspective must be adopted in political theory, because, while it helps us to interpret non-western ideas it also allows us to understand how the west has come to its present self-understanding. Hence, unlike previous comparative works which argue for CPT as a separate subfield of political

theory in the west, this dissertation brings the CPT enterprise to the center of the vocational landscape of the western political theory. The dissertation supports this claim by presenting an in-depth analysis of four cases of east-west encounters in the pre-Enlightenment period. The analysis is based on several primary and secondary sources from the western and non-western civilizations which span a period of over four centuries.

The significance of the dissertation is distributed along four dimensions. First, it presents a comprehensive review and critique of scholarship done by comparative theorists till now. Second, it highlights additional points of significance attached to the integral role of the non-west in the construction of the west itself. Third, it extends the range of comparative analyses to the pre and early modern periods. Fourth, it considers actual cases of east-west encounters as against CPT's exclusive focus on constructing imaginary inter-civilizational dialogues.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years the subfield of comparative political theory (CPT) has rapidly gained acceptance by and admiration from political theorists in the west. As a result, many western universities are now introducing courses in non-western political thought in their curriculum, as well as non-western theorists into topical courses in political theory.<sup>1</sup> A major reason for rapid growth of this new subfield is the thought provoking work and advocacy for comparative theorizing, by prominent western theorists such as Fred Dallmayr, Anthony Parel and Roxanne Euben.<sup>2</sup> Armed with the notion that political theory is about “human and not merely western dilemmas,” these theorists have inaugurated this new sub-field by analyzing political ideas of influential non-western thinkers in the modern period and comparing them with western political theorists.<sup>3</sup> Main thrust of their arguments has been to show that ideas of non-westerners are in fact attempts to utilize their own cultural predispositions to engage with and respond to modernity and western global dominance. From this vantage point, the comparativists argue that apparently radically different non-western systems of thought can be treated as variants of critiques of western modernity and rationality. Westerners often recognize

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This dissertation follows the style of *The Journal of Politics*.

<sup>1</sup> See Rosow (2004) p. 255

<sup>2</sup> See Dallmayr (1989, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001 2002, 2004), Euben (1999, 2002) and Parel (1992, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2005)

<sup>3</sup> Parel (2003) p.12 and Euben (1999) p. 9

and participate in such critiques when these originate in a more familiar geographic and linguistic setting.<sup>4</sup>

On the face of it, then, one clear advantage of including non-western ideas in the theoretical discourse of the west is to bring greater rigor to the practice of political theory in general. However, this argument is not consciously advanced by leading comparative theorists. Their preference and advocacy for comparative theorizing focuses on making the claim that there is an urgent need to bridge the gap between the supposed irrational Other and the enlightened and intelligible western Self. Political theory, according to comparative theorists, must respond to the new global order which is characterized by deepening interdependence, increased cultural interaction, and the resultant global diversity. However, this response must not be an attempt to domesticate the Other and provide an even more universalistic, Eurocentric explanation of dilemmas, which CPT forcefully claims are human and not just western. The fear of domestication of the Other is not unfounded; comparative theorists agree with Edward Said's Orientalist thesis that there is a close connection between exteriority and power which lies at the core of western rationality.<sup>5</sup> This insight into the nature of western rationalist discourse makes it problematic for these theorists to use popular methods of comparison prevalent in western social science. To an extent the same also justifies the need for CPT to be recognized as an independent discipline which focuses not on objectivity but on revitalizing the Other in terms of its self-understanding. To achieve this aim, comparative theorists, by and large, use the Gadamerian hermeneutic/ dialogic method to

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<sup>4</sup> Euben, *Ibid.* pp.11-12

<sup>5</sup> Said (1978) and *Ibid.* p. 23

bring the west and non-west together in their work. This method, they believe, is less susceptible to the distortions of power than the social scientific models which feed on the rationalist discourse.<sup>6</sup>

The above assertion by comparative theorists forms a partial basis for this dissertation. I argue for an expansion of the context, which can be done by inclusion of actual historical and socio-political interactions between the west and other peoples before the European Enlightenment. In this period, the interaction between the west and non-west was not necessarily characterized by unequal power, and though there was no globalization as in the modern period, there nevertheless was real and continuous contact between the two sides. This contact was sparked by several factors, which include, but are not limited to, the search for allies against common enemies, desire for new markets and trading partners, the quest to satisfy curiosity and explore new lands and the goal to spread one's religious ideas. All of these factors hint at, or imply, a superior view of the tradition to which the visitors belong, hence, presenting a scenario in which contacts with other cultures serve as a means to test and hone the superiority of one's tradition. In fact, cross-cultural contacts in the pre-Enlightenment period are particularly useful, from the point of view of the debate between CPT and traditional political theory, because of the lack of knowledge and erroneous or stereotypical views of the Other and the Self held by parties on both sides of the contact equation. In the late modern period the situation is very different. Now the west, due to its technological and scientific advancement, has overtime erased contributions of the Other in historical considerations

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<sup>6</sup> Euben, *ibid.* pp. 22-3



of the development of western self-understanding which has resulted in producing a superior view of the west in comparison to other cultures. In a very powerful sense, then, CPT's insistence on including the non-west in the theoretical discourse of the west in order to make the claims of traditional political theory more inclusive, reminds us of the spirit of cross-cultural contacts in the pre-colonial and pre-modern times.

If one understands CPT as an attempt to dispel an implied western vision of history – in which the history has already reached its pinnacle in the garb of modernity and is firmly situated in the west – it becomes necessary for comparative theorists to develop methodological techniques that are powerful enough to transcend west's dominant understanding of itself as the end of all human history. The justifications given by comparative theorists for preferring the hermeneutic/ dialogic model also reveal a keen understanding of this complex task. According to them, CPT's mission is to gain a more inclusive understanding of the political, but this understanding must be accomplished after bypassing the distortions of power at work in the current relationship of west with other cultures.<sup>7</sup> Despite such awareness, comparative theorists do not cast any serious doubt on claims made by traditional political theory regarding the west's achievements, or for that matter, the implications of these claims as regards the reliability of knowledge generated by political theory in general. Hence, some forcefully argue that the western canon must be accepted in its current form because it serves the important purpose of demarcation of boundaries between the east and the west. CPT's

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see Euben's discussion of the implications of using social scientific models of explanation for understanding Islamic fundamentalism *Ibid.*, pp. 22-5

task in this formulation is to make strategic border crossings and produce hybrid understandings of the political.<sup>8</sup>

The above observation, when tied to CPT's focus on interactions between west and its Others in the modern period, and the justification for CPT's inevitability in context of globalization, raises several interesting questions. The primary among these, which for me runs to the heart of CPT's dilemma, arises from the very notion of introducing non-western ideas in order to achieve a broader understanding of the political, while keeping intact the claims of traditional political theory. How can non-western ideas be introduced as anything but silent partners in a discourse in which the west has an inescapable priority? On the other hand, if one treats non-westerners as coequal or as rival traditions, it trivializes the justification to have CPT as an independent subfield of political theory. This is to say, in a modern and globalized world where intercultural contacts are inevitable and the west is dominant, any discovery which shows that the non-west is responding to the claims made by its counterpart (whether to refute or uphold them) is like an empty suit. What real options does the non-west have here, except responding to the western understanding that the political is essentially western? In whichever manner the non-west engages with the west, in the late modern period, it basically ends up contributing to some side of a debate whose rules are defined and monopolized by the west.

In fact, I argue that what CPT treats as non-western is in fact already western by means of constant exposure to western civilization through direct contact; examples

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<sup>8</sup> Parel (2005) p. 2

include Gandhi and Syed Qutb, both of whom received considerable professional training in western countries. Similarly, to argue for Latin American political thought, as distinct from traditional western political theory, is also problematic. U.S. influence on Latin America and, before that, the influence and presence of western European colonial powers on the continent makes one doubt the real possibility of a uniquely preserved Latin American political theory, whose story now needs to be told by political theorists.

What, then, are the contributions of CPT to our understanding of the nature of the political as regards its humanness rather than its westernness? Some, such as Dallmayr, argue that it reveals central core themes that are common to all humans regardless of their geographical location. While this is indeed a useful observation, it nevertheless lacks rigorous testing because comparative theorists, by and large, limit themselves to the modern period in which alternative traditions are almost always already responding to western themes. The centrality of core themes can equally be a function of western global dominance in this period of human history, as much as it can be an effect of our being human. After all, “being human” also entails our being observant of our surroundings and responding to challenges or opportunities that they pose.

In the modern period, the erosion of indigenous cultures by the west is a norm. Attempts to argue that there are purely non-western understandings of the political will always remain suspect. This, however, does not mean that CPT’s claim to include the non-west in the mainstream of western theoretical discourse is incorrect and that there are no alternate conceptions of the political. Rather, in order to comprehend these alternate conceptions, there is an immediate need to broaden the scope of CPT by

expanding its context to other periods of human history. This will not only provide a rigorous testing ground for some of the claims already made by CPT, but it will also further improve our understanding of the premise and motivation of non-western doctrines, i.e., even those which have already been analyzed by comparative theorists. An expansion of context also provides an opportunity to open CPT to other approaches of traditional political theory, such as techniques used by political theorists who have a historical bent, or those who approach the political from the perspective of the history of ideas. Finally, in terms of usefulness of CPT in furthering larger objectives of political theory as a western academic discipline, an extension of context may also considerably enhance political theory's general standing within the overall framework of modern political science. It can do so by raising the bar for empirical political scientists through bringing in new evidence to challenge or improve the assumptions and range of observations that go into the collection of data and the making of datasets. In the above context, then, this dissertation supports the argument for adopting a comparative approach to political theorizing. However, unlike comparative works done till now, the focus of this dissertation is on four cases of actual east-west contacts in the pre-Enlightenment period ranging from the thirteenth to the late sixteenth centuries.

The first case, discussed in the third chapter, looks at William of Rubruck's journey to the Mongols in mid-thirteenth century. Rubruck's was the first eye witness account of the Mongols to reach the west. In order to contextualize William of Rubruck's significance the chapter begins with a brief discussion of west's perception of the Mongols, at the time. After this it looks at recent evaluations of William's account by

prominent western scholars.<sup>9</sup> The chapter then does a textual analysis of William's actual account from the perspective of this dissertation.<sup>10</sup> The chapter looks at William's description of the Mongols and their land from multiple vantage points. In particular, it assesses how William thinks about himself and his actual task, the manner in which he describes all things that are new or unusual and then how he relates these to his pre-existing experience and knowledge. In short, William's account is treated as a western lens on the Mongols and I try to decipher the implicit and explicit themes in his choice of words and in the ways in which he relates to the Mongol peculiarities he encounters. As I argue in the chapter, William's account is a unique source for comprehending the impact of the Other on the creation, or at least realization, of the Self. This uniqueness stems from the matter-of-fact manner in which William records his experiences. His objective, at least in his own mind, is fairly simple and the hardships of his long and uncomfortable journey are justified only by the fact that he is on a holy mission. This single-mindedness on William's part is a blessing in disguise because he seems least concerned about mesmerizing a potential audience at home with tales of wonders of the east. William admits that he is not a scholar and his account is exactly that, non-scholarly and unembellished by fancy words or concepts. As Campbell rightly suggests, his focus is on making contact with concrete persons whom he maybe able to convert as against describing a people.<sup>11</sup> Thus, William's compulsion to rely on the vulgate makes his account distinctively representative of average Europeans of his time. Elements of

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<sup>9</sup> Nederman 2000 and Campbell 1988

<sup>10</sup> I use the translation by Jackson (1990)

<sup>11</sup> Campbell, *op.cit.*, p. 116

the Mongol culture which intrigue or offend William are the things that would have a similar impact on many Europeans of his time. In this situation the manner in which William becomes aware of and puts into effect the difference between him and his quarry, enables us to see the contribution of the Other in the construction of the western Self, in what we may call, the embryonic stages of western modernity.

Next case, discussed in chapter IV, looks at the observations of the first Jesuit mission to the court of Indian Emperor Akbar the Great A.D. 1580-1583. Here I analyze several primary sources, which include the commentary by Father Monserrate who was a member of the Jesuit mission and accompanied Akbar on several of his campaigns during the three year period of their association. In addition I also look at the letters which the visiting missionaries exchanged with their peers Europe during their stay at Akbar's court. I also look at Indian perceptions of the Self and Other as recorded in native sources of Indian history. As the chapter describes, Akbar's place in history, as the most influential and successful Mughal ruler, is normally attributed to his phenomenal success in dissolving differences between two major segments of India's population, the Hindus and the Muslims. However, Akbar's politics was not limited to these two religious groups only; he was keenly interested in all faiths and had constructed a house of worship adjacent to his court with the sole purpose of fostering religious debate among representatives of various faiths that included Muslims, Hindus, Jains, Parsees and Christians. The Jesuit missionaries were invited personally by Akbar with an expressed desire to learn more about the Christian faith. Given this background, Monserrate's commentary is exceptionally well suited for the purposes of this

dissertation. In a sense Monserrate's and Rubruck's purposes were the same, i.e., conversion of an eastern king to Christianity. The confidence to embark on such a quest, in the first place, was the result of the European perception of Muslims as an enemy. Hence missions to the Mongols, who had emerged as the latest threat to Europe through their conquests of European lands, were also seen as a new opportunity to build alliances against a common enemy. The facts that the Mongols had a unique understanding of their own role in history - one which informed them that they were destined to rule the world- and that they could not see any other purpose of a visit from a European envoy except to confirm submission of their rulers to the Mongol king; did not even occur to the Europeans. Similarly, in Akbar's case it is evident, from several perplexed remarks by Monserrate in his commentary regarding the Emperor's true religious bent, that the Jesuits retained hope of converting the Emperor on the basis of the evidence that he did not conform to the stereotypical image of a Muslim ruler in the European mind. Hence, Akbar's willingness to hear severe criticism of Islam provided false hope to the Jesuits that he might actually convert to Christianity. That Akbar eventually came up with his own religion, which he called *Din-e-Ilahi* (Faith of the Divine), and that in founding this religion he attempted to bring together elements from not just Christianity and Islam but even non-Abrahamic religions, reveals that in his mind religion was subservient to political gain. As the ruler of India, which had a diverse and multi-confessional population, his main interest was in resolving the issues that created friction among his subjects and thus prolong peace and thereby his own rule. In the chapter I am not overly

concerned with the failure or success of Akbar's endeavor but I discuss the main features of his political thought and discuss its implications for CPT.

The third case, discussed in fifth chapter, considers the experience of Jesuit missionaries in late-Ming China. Here I examine the Journal of Matteo Ricci which covers the period from A.D. 1583 - 1610. Ricci was co-founder of the Jesuits' China Mission and the main force behind its development. Europe's knowledge of China, before Ricci's Journal was published in Europe in A.D. 1614, was limited to Marco Polo's account of the Far East, which preceded Ricci's by almost three centuries. In a sense, therefore, Matteo Ricci was responsible for reintroducing China to Europe. The journals differ in content and style from Marco Polo's description of Far East in several respects. First, unlike Polo, Ricci was a missionary with a definite mission of bringing Christianity to China. Second, Ricci's journal covers a period of almost thirty years and includes not only his diary, but also his correspondence and other documents of which he was either the initiator or the recipient; it therefore, can also be seen as a history of Christianity in China. Ricci never expected his diary to be published, which makes it even more useful for the purposes of this dissertation, because things that Ricci chose to record reveal not only the character of Chinese society but also what in that society struck Ricci and his associates as most noteworthy. Third, and perhaps most important, is Ricci's general approach towards dealing with the Chinese. He devised a detailed program of accommodation of Christianity to the Chinese culture. Given that China was almost completely closed to the Occident, Ricci's approach also reveals elements of the Chinese culture which were deemed suitable for adoption by European visitors. In



particular, Ricci focused on winning a position for the missionaries at the Chinese imperial court and gain respect among the ruling scholar class, by establishing that he and his colleagues were scholar of Chinese literature, mathematics, astronomy and of course the Christian faith. The case of Jesuits in China therefore represents the event through which Europe was first introduced to Confucius and China to Euclid and Copernicus. The very fact that Europeans mingled with Chinese society on the natives' terms in order to spread their faith is instructive of how commonality was achieved to introduce difference. In introducing this difference, the Jesuits constantly revealed how they understood themselves, and through the choices they made, they open a window on self-understanding of the western civilization. Furthermore, by shifting the focus to the recipients instead of the bearers of the message of Christianity, they ended up generating an intense debate at home about "purity of faith" which again reflects on maintenance and creation of difference as the key element of intra-civilizational and cross-cultural dialogue. Hence, in discussing the case of Jesuits in China my main aim is to explicate the inevitability of the production of difference from the Other as the key element of one's self-understanding.

The fourth and final case, discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, is the discovery of the New World by Europeans. I take this case out of the chronological order primarily because of its unique characteristics but also because I want to use it in support of my concluding arguments in favor of a new approach for CPT in context of otherness and canonicity, which as I later explain, form an integral part of any approach based on philosophical hermeneutics. I also juxtapose this case

against the other three cases discussed in earlier chapters. My specific focus in this instance is on Columbus's initial impressions of the Amerindians and also on the writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas. The brutality of the Spaniards and the protest mounted by Las Casas reveal the flexible and immensely complex nature of how we understand ourselves. At the same time, it also confirms that in cross-cultural contact there are no predetermined outcomes. I attempt to demonstrate in the chapter that observation of the physical attributes and social practices of the inhabitants of the New World elicited novel reactions from the Spaniards. These reactions ranged from assertion of a sub-human status on the Indians, assigned in the light of past knowledge and experience of the west, on the one hand, to the emergence of a scholarly rift among the Spaniards regarding the rights of the Indians and the role, purpose and power of the Church in general. In all these reactions the westerners not only placed Indians, in what they thought was their rightful position on the scale of human and civilizational development, but they also questioned their own place on this so-called scale. Most important of these, and one that occupies the primary position in the works of Las Casas in my view, is the responsibilities of the powerful and supposedly rightly guided Christian west. The role that Las Casas assumed, after witnessing the events of Spanish conquest of the New World, can be seen as a hallmark of the western tradition, to consistently reflect on and bring to the mainstream, the voice of those who are on the margins. From the broader perspective of this dissertation, this tradition is a natural outcome of the necessity to constantly evaluate one's actions and redefine oneself in context of the reality of cross-cultural-contact. This suggests that understandings

developed in the initial stages of cross-cultural contact, and the reactions they provoke, are never permanent. Stressing the self-determined task of CPT then, inclusion of the non-west into the theoretical discourse of the west is virtually inevitable. A look at the European experience in the New World, therefore, helps us in understanding this suggested inevitability. Furthermore, this becomes even more important, as the discovery of the New World also represents a time in human history when the west had just begun its ascent to world domination; to find oneself face to face with the responsibility of defining and then criticizing the newfound definition of what it means to be human is one of the most potent sources of understanding the contribution of the Other in the making of Self.

The choice of cases above in no way suggests that Europeans had a monopoly on cross-cultural encounters in the period of concern here. However, keeping the west on one side of the contact equation is justified in the context of the discussion of CPT in this introduction and in the second chapter. As argued there, in these cases power distortions are not the sole defining element in determining perceptions of the Other. No doubt, parties involved in these encounters approached each other with some preconceived notions, but these are not the same as in the late modern period, where the west's global dominance is almost inescapable. In addition, because these are accounts of actual encounters by eye witnesses, one does not need to construct imaginary dialogues, which as this dissertation argues, tend to favor the west. The reality of physical contact also brings forth the dynamic nature of cross-cultural contact, which involves immense complexities and in which options for action are never predetermined. The responses

formulated as a result of observation or questions put forward by one side allow us to understand not only how the Other is constructed but also how the respondents view themselves. More importantly in these situations, the manner in which similarities are recorded becomes more telling than the preconceived differences with which the encounter actually began. It is posited here that difference is continuously created, so that distinction between one's own culture and the Others' is produced every time the contact is made. Finally, the room for creativity and surprise, which is made available by the place and nature of an encounter, can lead us to a more comprehensive understanding of the political in different cultural contexts.

The above expands the task of CPT itself by requiring comparative theorists to investigate the possibility of an externally situated venue for the construction of Self when approaching the political in any context. In fact, a major dissatisfaction which the comparativists have with traditional political theory, i.e., monopolization of the political by the west, can itself be better understood by adopting this approach. This is to say, a deeply ingrained imperialist tendency is the defining element of modernity itself.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the course which traditional political theory, as a western academic discipline in modern times, has adopted is inevitable. This imperialist tendency leads to a kind of universalism regardless of where the political is conceived. Human dilemmas in the modern period are modern dilemmas and this understanding has equally reached all cultures, due to the speed with which ideas can travel in this age. When CPT argues that radically different non-western ideas are attempts to respond to western rationality and

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<sup>12</sup> See Mitchell (2000) p. 24

modernity, it ignores the possibility that these could equally be an engagement with those in one's own culture, who have already been positively influenced by western modernity. This suggests yet another production of the Other, i.e., an 'internal Other'. The presence of internal others, i.e., those who question the universalism claimed by the dominant paradigm, has been a fact in all societies at all times.<sup>13</sup>

However, reverting once again to the imperialist tendency of modernity, it is noteworthy that, by definition, imperialism survives through the exclusion, subjugation or marginalization of all that does not agree with its program. Hence, to understand the nature of modernity one has to look at what it excludes in order to maintain its universalism. Similarly if one insists that modernity is synonymous with the west, then one has to look at all that is non-western in order to understand the west itself. As a critique of CPT, an understanding of alternative visions of the political, even in the modern period, is desirable not only because these join the category of theories which criticize the logic of modern rationality. Instead, these should be brought into western discourse because, in the absence of a through analysis of challenges posed by these external critiques, any understanding of the western Self is basically incomplete.

In the context above, the significance of this dissertation is distributed along four dimensions; first, it presents a comprehensive review and critique of scholarship done under the rubric of CPT; second, it provides a new dimension to the significance attached by comparative theorists to the inclusion of non-western theorists; third, it extends the range of comparative analyses to the pre modern and early modern period;

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<sup>13</sup> Schwartz, (1994) p.8

and finally, it considers a range of cases where actual encounters took place between representatives of the west and other cultures. These encounters highlight the fact that cross-cultural interaction is messy, dynamic and extremely complex, as well as recognizing that the creation of the Other is reflective of one's self-understanding(s).

This dissertation has six chapters. Chapter after the introduction is a comprehensive review of scholarship done under the rubric of CPT where I focus on the methodological preferences of comparative theorists, as well as, the cases that they have considered. While specific focus, in this chapter, is on the works of Fred Dallmayr, Roxanne Euben and Anthony Parel it also considers works of scholars who have inspired these political theorists to adopt the comparative perspective in political theory. The chapter also introduces previously unexplored ideas about political theorizing in the works of non-western thinkers and compares these to the methodological preferences of western theorists.

The next three chapters are dedicated to cases of cross-cultural contact between Europeans and other peoples. Brief descriptions of these cases have been provided earlier in this introduction; however, a few things need to be stressed in terms of the general approach here. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the historical circumstances in which the contact was made. After this it analyzes primary sources relevant to each case and discusses how in each instance a unique understanding of the Self comes forth in the observations recorded about the Other by European eye-witnesses. Wherever possible, I also discuss the impact of these eyewitness accounts on western civilization, after these were published in the west. There can be many

dimensions in which this impact can be studied, however, in line with the scope and purpose of this dissertation; I will remain limited to exploring the ways in which claims made by Comparative theorists are affected by the cross-cultural contacts under consideration in this dissertation.

In the final chapter I bring together findings of the past chapters and see how they transform the debate generated by CPT within traditional political theory. My main argument, as I have delineated earlier, is that an examination of European cross-cultural contacts in the pre-Enlightenment period provides us with additional, and perhaps stronger, reasons than those advanced as justification to do CPT by comparative theorists till now. Such an expansion of context, i.e., a consideration of periods other than late modernity, makes us realize that adopting the comparative approach is virtually unavoidable for political theorists anywhere, as it provides us with better understanding of not only 'the political' in different cultural contexts, but also, with a more inclusive understanding of how we have become what we are. Hence where CPT, up till now, has focused on the need to reach a more inclusive understanding of the political through considering non-western theorists; this dissertation advances that argument, by exploring the construction of the political in the west itself, as a function of non-western contributions in the development of western self-understanding.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY: SCOPE, PROGRESS AND PROMISE

Comparative Political Theory (CPT) may be regarded as an invitation for western political theorists to treat ideas of non-westerners about the *political* as valid ideas rather than unintelligible oddities or isolated instances of unexpected brilliance originating from cultures that are otherwise deemed politically bankrupt. To a non-specialist reader such a description of CPT may sound a little too strong. Yet, for those who are part of the scholarly debates about political theory in western universities, this invitation is nothing short of sensational. In recent years, for instance, comparative theorizing has opened up the possibility of seeing ideas of a radical Islamic fundamentalist thinker like Syed Qutb of Egypt as conceptually parallel to Hannah Arendt's critique of western rationalism.<sup>14</sup> CPT makes such a reading of Qutb's ideas possible by demanding that mechanistic Eurocentric models of interpretation be avoided when evaluating non-western ideas. In a sense, therefore, CPT identifies inherent deficiencies of the academic environment which western political theorists have created and within which, in the absence of an alternative, they are bound to operate. This claim has profound implications and the potential to change the practice of political theory as an academic discipline in the west.

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<sup>14</sup> See Euben, op.cit., who compares elements of Qutb's thought with not only Hannah Arendt but also Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and John Neuhaus among others.pp.123-153



As a field CPT was formally inaugurated by Fred Dallmayr in 1999, so one can call him the founder of CPT, even though there are some earlier scholarship was undertaken with the same objective as Dallmayr's.<sup>15</sup> This chapter, which is a review of the scholarship accomplished under the rubric of CPT, begins by elaborating on the question: what is CPT? It then looks at the methodological preferences and arguments in favor of the usefulness of specific approaches to comparative theorizing. Third, it evaluates the choice of cases by comparative theorists from the point of view that these best substantiate CPT's claim regarding the usefulness of including non-westerners to achieve a richer understanding of the *political*. Finally, the chapter discusses the arguments made by non-western thinkers in making sense of their tradition vis-à-vis the west, and analyzes implications of these for CPT. In sum, therefore, this chapter is both a critical review of work done under the rubric of CPT and a work of CPT itself.

The first explicit statement in support of the need for CPT comes from Dallmayr who, in the introduction of his edited volume, proposed "to inaugurate or help launch a new field of academic inquiry as well as of general intellectual concerns: the field of comparative political theory or philosophy."<sup>16</sup> Dallmayr's justification for advancing this proposal is based on two claims: first, reshaping of the world in the image of a global village, which has happened towards the end of the last century and is unprecedented in human history, second, the practice of contemporary western academia of limiting itself to the canons of western political thought while attempting to gain an insight into the

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<sup>15</sup> See Parel and Keith (2003)

<sup>16</sup> Dallmayr (1999) p. 1

nature of the political that could be termed universal.<sup>17</sup> Dallmayr's major thesis, therefore, is that in a globalized world western theories are deficient when it comes to capturing the diversity of the human condition. Overcoming this deficiency is of utmost significance because of the rate at which the usefulness of seeing the world in terms of geographically insulated regions has been rendered invalid by the effects of globalization. For him, it is important to develop a new outlook which would better capture the dilemma of our times, that is, the "lag of human understanding behind the immensity of technological change."<sup>18</sup> Dallmayr acknowledges the existence of comparative politics, a well established sub discipline of western political science, but he is also critical of the manner in which explanatory models are developed and employed by comparative political scientists. He argues that these models derive heavily from key features of modern western politics and the stance assumed by these empirically-oriented comparativists is one of a global overseer armed with a universal yardstick against which all societies are measured.<sup>19</sup> Hence, following in the footsteps of Empirical political science is not an option for Dallmayr, as it would only replicate the problems that have led him to propose the new discipline in the first place. To avoid these problems, the trajectory along which he launches CPT relegates the status of the west from a universal teacher to that of a fellow student in a cross-cultural learning experience.<sup>20</sup> In this characterization, both of these students, Dallmayr believes, do their learning while

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-2

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.1

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p.2

<sup>20</sup> Loc cit.

revolving around the normative status and acceptability of western modernity.<sup>21</sup> Hence modernity, defined as a, “welter of ideas and practices deriving from European Enlightenment,”<sup>22</sup> delineates the arena in which political theorists will act in order to reach a more inclusive understanding of the *political* through comparative theorizing.

In sum, therefore, Dallmayr’s call for comparative theorizing is an invitation to study non-western political ideas in a manner similar to their western counterparts. This further implies that we must cope with the complexities of their sources and interpretation in the manner normally practiced by western political theorists when analyzing works that constitute the canons of western political theory. In fact, how to study non-western texts is the primary reason for calling Dallmayr the founder of CPT. He is an ardent advocate of employing Hans Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic approach towards non-western texts. According to Dallmayr’s interpretation, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics provides a way to steer a course between “Eurocentrism” and “Euro-denial” and find a mid point where alone a dialogue between the east and the west can flourish.<sup>23</sup> Dallmayr’s reliance on Gadamer, coupled with his insistence that a move towards comparative theorizing is inevitable in the late modern period, pushes him towards casting CPT as a dialogical exercise. A reinterpretation of Gadamer is not within the scope of this dissertation. However, a brief description of Dallmayr’s use of Gadamer in support of his argument for CPT is merited. According to Dallmayr,

From Gadamer’s vantage, every dialogue – between readers and texts or between people across distances - has to start from the sedimented “pre-

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>22</sup> Loc cit

<sup>23</sup> Dallmayr, (2002) p.5

judgments” of participants, pre- judgments that are meant to function not as prison walls but rather as launching pads for excursions into unfamiliar terrain. Proceeding from this premise, his work develops a philosophical account of dialogue or a perspective that sees human encounters as necessarily dialogical.<sup>24</sup>

Gadamer’s basic insight seems to be that all human statements are historically situated and that they simply cannot be understood unless we take into account the historical context which not only necessitate their production, but also shape their form, i.e., dialogue. In other words, as they are historically situated, human beings possess an inner frame of reference by default and all social encounters are automatically gauged against this existing framework of sedimented patterns and stereotypes. By implication, then, the key to true comprehension of the other lies in discrediting the literal or immediate meaning of her words (written or spoken) as well as actions, because what one says (or does) is merely a part of a wider context which forms the whole. As is obvious from such conceptualization of human affairs how one understands oneself is also a product of the same forces. Furthermore, since reality or truth eludes mere observation, during any encounter we are constantly making sense of others’ actions by incorporating them into our own frame of reference. This incorporation is simultaneously accompanied by transporting oneself into the others’ way of creating sense and interpreting the world. The inevitable movement of the other and the self in turn adds to the pool of “sedimented pre-judgments” which, according to Dallmayr, are launching pads in the Gadamerian scheme, rather than prison walls, for necessary excursions into the realm of the unknown. As Gadamer affirms:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.3

The meaning of the part can be discovered only from the context – i.e., ultimately from the whole. Fundamentally, understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts, and vice versa, is essential. Moreover, this circle is constantly expanding, since the concept of the whole is relative, and being integrated in ever larger contexts always affects the understanding of the individual part.<sup>25</sup>

Gadamer's approach towards understanding human affairs has several implications for conducting social inquiry. He calls the above description a 'hermeneutic circle' and clearly suggests that trustworthiness of any interpretation of the other's actions (or words) is directly proportional to the amount of information we possess regarding the social, historical, political and institutional contexts in which statements are made or acts performed.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the very act of information gathering, by shuttling between the part and its whole, expands the diameter of the circle itself. In delineating this scheme, Gadamer shows the futility of searching for laws that govern human behavior, hence, providing a critique of empirical social science through highlighting the immensely complex nature of social inquiry in general. To reiterate, it is virtually impossible to acquire complete information because of the fluid nature of the whole at both ends of the contact, i.e., the self as well as the other.

As Dallmayr defines CPT in terms of facilitating the inclusion of non-western ideas into the theoretical discourse of the west, therefore, usefulness of employing Gadamerian insights into the nature of human understanding and knowledge seem like the most natural course for Dallmayr to advance this project. As the earlier and

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<sup>25</sup> Gadamer, (1989) p.124

<sup>26</sup> Gadamer in fact improved on the concept of the hermeneutic circle originally proposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. For a detailed discussion see Jean Grondin, (1991) , pp. 91-123

following quotes suggest, of particular interest to him is the dialogical construction of this interaction. Writes Dallmayr:

Gadamer's hermeneutics proves most helpful: [for civilizational dialogue] namely, by centerstaging a mode of dialogue that is open-ended and hospitable to multiple and expanding horizons.<sup>27</sup>

The use of dialogical models in the western, as well as other cultural traditions, has a rich and long history.<sup>28</sup> However, as Dallmayr states, the open ended nature of Gadamer's conception makes it especially useful for CPT. Part of his rationale for launching CPT was dissatisfaction with the perceived inescapable hegemony of the west in the late modern period. Gadamer's model seems to him to be radically non-instrumental in nature, as it simultaneously allows for questioning as well as being questioned.<sup>29</sup> In other words, according to Dallmayr, when seen through a Gadamerian lens, nobody has definite answers. The dialogue, in this state of uncertainty, can only be conducted in a tone which not only lacks conviction as regards the external validity of one's own beliefs but is also devoid of any authority to talk down the other.<sup>30</sup> Dallmayr cites this as one of the advantages of this approach over previous and prevalent modes of thinking about the other in the west, namely, Said's *Orientalism* and Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, which view inter-cultural relations in terms of domination and conflict

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<sup>27</sup> Dallmayr, (2002) p.27

<sup>28</sup> See Cary J Nederman, et. al. (2006) Nederman and his co authors evaluate CPT's excessive methodological reliance on Gadamer and Heidegger and argue that comparative theorists limit the scope of CPT by relying excessively on the 'dialogical model' of philosophical hermeneutics. Furthermore they isolate and explain at least 5 different models of cross-cultural dialogue evident in the medieval period alone. Namely: 1) dialogues of rational demonstration or conversion; 2) dialogues of mutual edification; 3) dialogues of mutual incomprehension; 4) dialogues of critical self reflection; 5) dialogues of mutual accommodation and respect.

<sup>29</sup> Dallmayr, Loc. Cit., p.27

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-8

respectively.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, where Said and Huntington adopted a descriptive approach, Dallmayr's project is prescriptive in nature. It is prescriptive because of an acute awareness of the current state of globalization and the demands it makes on the success of a meaningful engagement between the west and its others.

It is interesting, however, that even though Dallmayr insists on the adoption of a Gadamerian approach, he is not so keen on discussing the implications of using a Gadamerian lens for the broader discipline of political theory in the west. As I attempt to show in later chapters of this dissertation, excessive reliance on Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics has the potential to seriously question some of the most widely accepted claims in western political theory. In this context, then, if philosophical hermeneutics is the correct approach for CPT, then CPT is on a confrontational course with traditional political theory instead of being content on remaining one of its subfields. This situation is complicated further by the fact that even when comparative works have been attempted in the past by prominent western thinkers, they have only contributed towards worsening the situation. The comparative strain in western philosophy, in the words of Gerald J. Larson, is representative of a tragedy of the modern west to laud "naïveté posing as sophistication."<sup>32</sup> In context of Dallmayr's preference for Gadamer, then, an obvious task for CPT scholarship is to reassess what

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Larson makes this comment when highlighting the fact that in the western philosophical tradition comparative strain appears only in the works of Schopenhauer and Hegel and both these thinkers take the extreme positions of uncritical affirmation of everything non European, in case of Schopenhauer and exuberant rejection of the same in Hegel's work. For a detailed discussion see Larson, in Larson and Deutsch (1988) pp. 6-8

the west has come to believe as its superior heritage.<sup>33</sup> As the later chapters of this dissertation will illustrate, an inevitable consequence of cross-cultural contact is cross pollination of ideas between cultures. While it is not within the scope of this dissertation to trace the genealogy of prominent civilizational ideas to prove this thesis, it does not require any special effort to acknowledge the soundness of this claim. In one of his earlier works, Dallmayr himself refers to the phenomenon of partial assimilation or cultural borrowing as one outcome of cross-cultural encounter.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, most of the examples to support his argument come from the pre and the early modern periods. Yet he makes the case for CPT's need in the context of the late modern period and the current wave of globalization. It seems that either Dallmayr does not want to explore the full potential of CPT or he does not want to rock the boat when it comes to questioning the achievements and claims of western modernity. Dallmayr attempts to cover up this problem by referring to Gadamer's advocacy for tolerating legitimate critiques of modernity.<sup>35</sup> As the bulk of CPT scholarship (since Dallmayr's foundational work) demonstrates, this practice has also become one of the most preferred ways to cast and legitimize the works of non-western thinkers.<sup>36</sup>

Another disturbing aspect of this approach, to seek cross pollination narrowly by limiting it to late modernity, is that it casts a conspiratorial hue on the efforts of

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<sup>33</sup> For a similar argument from the perspective of alternative conceptual structures see Krishna, in *Ibid.* pp. 71-83.

<sup>34</sup> Dallmayr, (1996) Pp. 18-24.

<sup>35</sup> Dallmayr, (2002) p. 26

<sup>36</sup> Best example of this is presented by Roxanne Euben (1999). She views ideas of Syed Qutb in particular and Islamic fundamentalism in general, as a critique of western rationality, a tradition well known in western political theory. Other examples include similarity of views in the thought of Islamic thinkers such as Abdul Karim Sarosh, Hamid Enayat and Mohammad Al Jabiri and critiques of western modernity in the works of Charles Taylor. See Dallmayr, *Ibid.*, pp. 100-104



comparative political theorists as well as the motivations of non-western thinkers. This is to say that west's need to include non-western thinkers, in Dallmayr's scheme, is implicitly a function of its inability to maintain insularity or physical domination over the non-west due to globalization. On the other hand, this western inability and increased transparency facilitated by globalization also emboldens the non-west to closely scrutinize western claims of being heirs to a superior heritage, therefore, limiting western faculty to keep ignoring the omissions of non-western contributions in its own development.

In the above context, one could argue that the prudence for a call to CPT lies in its usefulness in maintaining western superiority rather than challenging it. Non-western systems of ideas, when viewed in the context of globalization and not in their own historical, socio-cultural and linguistic complexities, will always have a greater tendency to resemble established western approaches towards political theory, especially when the non-western authors, chosen by the new comparative theorists, have spent considerable time in the west as part of their professional training. Examples include Gandhi, Syed Qutb, Mohammad Iqbal, Ali Shariati and Abdul Karim Sarosh. In a sense, projects of these thinkers depict only one aspect of non-western thinking, i.e., that which defines itself in contradistinction to the west. Without a doubt omission of these non-western critiques of western rationality and modernity reflects on the poverty of western scholarship in terms of taking seriously the ideas that originate outside its own domain. Non-western systems of ideas are equally as theoretically diverse and complex as their western counterparts and any attempt to understand them must pay full attention to detail

and not only to the variants which seem relevant in a globalized world.<sup>37</sup> In addition, most non-western theorists chosen by comparativists are those who developed their ideas during western colonial domination or in its immediate aftermath. This, in my opinion, does not do justice to the richness of non-western traditions themselves. The theoretical diversity of the non-western systems at the time of decolonization and later can only be understood by reference to the long and complex histories of how these ideas were reshaped from a period when the west was peripheral in a non-western centered world, to keep them relevant for current times when the two are virtually interdependent. In these complex histories is embedded the record of how attitudes towards each other were developed. The description of how one is different is the basis for one's claim to the others' inferiority. Dallmayr, in his fervent advocacy for CPT, clearly misses out on the need to understand how this difference is created within each tradition. For example, when non-western theorists, especially Islamic fundamentalist theorists, critique the west, they are suspicious of it in general and rarely refer to the presence of like minded critical western thinkers. An argument, then, that portrays a thinker such as Maududi or Qutb as a non-western critic of modernity is misleading right from the beginning, simply because the Islamic fundamentalist critique of western rationalism and modernity is based on the faith that Judaism and Christianity are revelations superseded by Islam.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For example formal attempts to promote comparative political philosophy can be said to have started around 1992 with the appearance of Parel and Keith, *Studies under the Upas Tree*. Yet it is clear that western academic interest in non-western, especially Islamic, ideas has seen an unprecedented increase since September 2001 terrorist attacks on the twin towers. This is not only the case in Political Theory but also in other related disciplines such as History and Sociology.

<sup>38</sup> For example in his *Social Justice in Islam* posits his main topic, i.e., the nature of social justice in Islam in context of a religio-social discussion of Christianity and Islam. See Qutb (2000) trans. Hamid Algar pp.19-36

The west, in such a context, is essentially a Christian west and it is detestable to an Islamic fundamentalist thinker because its current condition, i.e., modernity, promotes godlessness in society. Furthermore, just as these Islamic fundamentalist thinkers erroneously, but consistently, treat the west as a monolithic analytical category, CPT scholarship also misses out on the immense diversity within Islamic fundamentalist thinking itself.<sup>39</sup> Yet another significant aspect of Islamic fundamentalism, to continue with the example, is the inspiration that it takes from the thinkers from the pre modern period. If we stick to the modern period, as Dallmayr suggests, we are most likely to misunderstand the many concepts which modern thinkers borrow from their medieval predecessors and reshape to fit a modern context.<sup>40</sup> This suggestion, yet again, brings into question Dallmayr's choice of method and period for doing comparative theorizing. In Dallmayr's defense, one could argue that his work signifies only the starting point of a new subfield and later scholars would take it into other directions using diverse methodological approaches and other historical periods. However, when one looks chronologically at Dallmayr's work on inter-civilizational dialogue over the decade

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<sup>39</sup> Western/ Comparative thinkers have studied Islamic fundamentalist thinkers from the point of view of different Islamic such as Shiite, Sunni or Wahabi fundamentalism. However, this focus remains invariably on those thinkers whose ideas have seen some success in the political arena. Whereas the fact is that even within these sectarian fundamentalisms there is immense diversity. For example, Syed Qutb and Maududi represent only one side of Sunni fundamentalist Islam and both have equally influential critics with greater religious following within their respective societies. For western differentiation between variants of Islamic fundamentalisms see Parel and Keith, op cit. pp. xiv–xxvii. For critiques of Maududi and Qutb see Asif Iftikhar (2004).

<sup>40</sup> A classic example of this is the key position of the concept of *Jahilliya* in the thought of Qutb and Maududi. *Jahilliya* refers to Islamic conception of a state of ignorance which prevailed in *Hijaz* before the dawn of Islam. In political terms *Jahilliya* refers to the three types of governments that exist on earth namely, the good or right government which is in accordance with God's laws, the bad or wrong government which is focused on achieving human ends and the worst kind of government which is likened to anarchy as there is no recognition of God. Qutb and Maududi apply *Jahilliya* to the modern period, reinterpreting the bad government as ignorant government. For discussion of Qutb's application of *Jahilliya* in modern times see, Euben, op.cit., pp. 56-62 and for types of government in Islam, see Crone (2004) pp.3-15.

before his formal invitation for CPT, it becomes clear that it is after much deliberation that he decided to define CPT around the current status of western modernity. As discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation Dallmayr's bias for late modernity is also confirmed strongly in his more recent writings on the necessity of CPT for the west in context of globalization.

Dallmayr's fixation with late modernity is also evident in the works of those who have felt inspired by his call. Foremost among these is Roxanne Euben, who focuses primarily on cross-cultural learning between the Islamic and western civilizations. Euben is also most responsible for shaping CPT as a legitimate discipline. Her first book, *Enemy in the Mirror*, which is also the first full length work of CPT, analyzes theoretical insights from the works of influential Islamic fundamentalist thinkers (in particular, Syed Qutb), and compares these to the ideas of prominent western critics of modernity. Euben claims that, as an enterprise, political theory may have started from the western civilization but is not coterminous with it.<sup>41</sup> Based on this claim, she describes CPT as a hybrid of the established subfields of political theory and comparative politics, which attempts to understand the nature and value of the political in a variety of cultural and historical contexts.<sup>42</sup> The fundamental assumption in this description of CPT is that, despite serious political and moral disagreements, disparate cultures exist in conversation with one another.<sup>43</sup> This intercultural conversation happens because of the fact that human beings face common dilemmas which know no geographical or

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<sup>41</sup> Euben, *ibid.*, p.9

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid* p.10

civilizational boundaries. This, according to Euben, strongly supports the possibility that there is humanly significant knowledge outside the confines of the western canon.<sup>44</sup> The possibility of the existence of such knowledge discourages the practice of judging cultures as inferior against the knowledge gained by political theorists in one specific context.

An obvious question that comes to mind is that if this is the case, then what justifies the need for a separate subfield? Why can we not apply this insight towards doing traditional political theory using prevalent methods? Euben's response is that it is only when conceived in this manner that comparisons or insights from foreign cultures do not erode the integrity of political theory as a field. Rather, if one looks at the earliest known uses of the word *theory* in the west, CPT's project would appear to be one of reclaiming the foundations of Political Theory as a field.<sup>45</sup> Since *theory* in these early uses often referred to the exercise of observing and learning from the other, therefore CPT acts as a reminder for traditional political theorists that their vocation is inherently a comparative enterprise.<sup>46</sup> Euben's conscious effort to keep intact the current status of political theory, while recasting the same as being inherently comparative in nature, seems like a fallacy to me. This is further complicated by her methodological preference for studying Islamic fundamentalism. She borrows the notion of a thick description from anthropologist/ ethnographer Clifford Geertz, who builds on the Weberian notion that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid..

<sup>45</sup> To substantiate this Euben cites Herodotus' description of the journey of Solon from Athens for sake of theory. Ibid. pp.10-11.

<sup>46</sup> In support of her argument Euben refers to the practice of periodization in traditional political theory and suggests that ancient, medieval and modern are essentially comparisons in time and through history. Ibid. p.11-12

'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,' and argues, that cultural analysis is an interpretive science in search of meaning.<sup>47</sup> This meaning can be achieved through a semiotic approach to a culture in order to gain access to the conceptual world of its members and make it a real possibility to carry out a conversation with them.<sup>48</sup> Since CPT, by definition, is an endeavor to facilitate the inclusion of non-western ideas in the theoretical discourse of the west, it should come as no surprise that Geertz's scheme holds special attraction for Euben's project, just as Gadamer's insights did for Dallmayr. Thus a dialogical model, in order to converse with the other, is the preferred method for Euben, too. However, Euben ignores the fact that Geertz, in delineating his interpretive theory, also warns us about the theoretical formulations which arise out of following in his footsteps, i.e., "they hover so low over the interpretations they govern that if stated independently of their applications, they seem either commonplace or vacant."<sup>49</sup> Geertz's caution, coupled with the brief discussion of diversity within Sunni Islamic fundamentalism above, makes Euben's interpretation of Qutb's thought suspect of having any real value beyond the Qutbian brand of Sunni fundamentalism itself. Yet Euben claims that her reading of Qutb's ideas is valuable precisely for the opposite of Geertz's caution, as her interpretation challenges accounts that identify Qutb solely as a critic of Nasserist socialism and Egyptian corruption.<sup>50</sup> Euben goes on to claim that her reading of Qutb's thought, as a systematic engagement with and a critique of post-Enlightenment rationalism and westernization,

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<sup>47</sup> Geertz, (1972) p. 5

<sup>48</sup> Euben (1999) p. 13 and Ibid., p. 24

<sup>49</sup> Geertz, Ibid., p.25.

<sup>50</sup> Euben, op.cit., p. 155

provides several methodological insights. First, entertaining radically different systems of ideas on their own terms allows us to gain a richer understanding of these systems, as it discourages the practice of shunning anything as irrelevant or irrational and provides us with new ways of looking at the world. Second, her interpretive account of Islamic fundamentalism not only makes this previously inaccessible system of ideas intelligible, but that it also contributes to the prevalent explanations given by social scientists, for the recent resurgence of Islamic fundamentalist politics, through making it causally adequate.<sup>51</sup> Finally, she argues that employing a dialogical model is perhaps the best way to approach systems of ideas which are otherwise elusive in nature. The model's suitability is based on the assumption that it rejects the positivist standards of objectivity in favor of its alternate, which entails understanding as a reciprocal, transformative and ongoing process. Because of its ongoing nature, it remains permanently open to new interpretations, thus taking into account the inequalities which are a hallmark of a post colonial and globalized world.<sup>52</sup>

Globalization is also the starting point for Euben's second major work, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, published in December 2006.<sup>53</sup> There are many similarities between her two books. However, unlike *Enemy in the Mirror*, where she constructed an imaginary intellectual dialogue, here she focuses on actual travel narratives produced by Muslims and westerners without particular regard to any one period. These travel narratives, in her opinion, challenge the traditional notion that political theory as a

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<sup>51</sup> Current social science according to Euben occludes the very central ideas which make any fundamentalism appealing to its followers in the first instance. *Ibid.*, p. 156

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157

<sup>53</sup> Euben (2006) p. 1

discipline must be organized around specific western texts whose canonical status both presupposes and secures the preeminence of the philosophical treatise as the genre most appropriate to the discipline.<sup>54</sup> The source of this challenge is again Euben's specific understanding of theory, in which search for theory is intrinsically linked to travel or journey. She writes:

... I define theory as a practice of inquiry in which critical distance plays an integral role, thereby shifting the emphasis from 'theory' as a body of ideas subject to domestication or in need of constant chastening to "theorizing" as a reflective activity engaged in by ordinary people at particular moments in time.<sup>55</sup>

The privilege of theorizing, in Euben's definition, belongs clearly to those who are able to achieve a critical distance from the comfort of the familiar to the perplexity of the unknown. She, however, uses the phrase critical distance in a fairly broad sense, for her, this critical distance is not only achieved through travel; an argument which would have justified her choice of travel narratives as the genre of choice, but also by opening oneself to other periods of history for reevaluating one's self-understanding in the present age.<sup>56</sup>

CPT, then, is not just about venturing into the non-west but also equally into a west that exists in a distant and forgotten past. In my opinion, the keyword here is 'forgotten,' since Euben seems to be arguing that the present is simply the contemporary expression of what was once familiar, therefore, works of traditional political theorists who focus on periods before the dawn of European Enlightenment may also be

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 14

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.11

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Pp.174- 5



characterized as works of CPT.<sup>57</sup> Arguments that are doubtful of the uniqueness of the attributes of modernity have been stated more convincingly and in much greater detail by other prominent political theorists too.<sup>58</sup> But Euben's claim in the context of CPT is interesting because she not only relies on globalization as a condition necessitating comparative theorizing but also questions the manner in which globalization is understood by traditional political theory and empirical social science in the west. Euben's specific argument in this regard is that globalization in its current form, that is deterritorialization of politics and culture par excellence, is uniquely beyond the grasp of traditional political theory due to its parallel focus on canonical texts of western thought and preoccupation with the relations between sovereign and people and the state and society.<sup>59</sup> The essentially territorial nature of these elements of political theory pushes scholars, who attempt to understand the nature and implications of globalization, towards analyses that are essentially presentist and provincial in nature themselves.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Euben's broad use of the terms 'travel' or 'journey' away from the familiar, as the necessary condition for theorizing in general, shifts the focus from a particular culture as having a monopoly over the *political*. As argued above, this shifted focus now rests on the individuals who make the journey and the translation practices they employ based on their cultural predispositions.<sup>61</sup>

Translation here is used in terms of the manner in which the unfamiliar is internalized and restated by the traveler. Implicit in this characterization is the notion

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.177

<sup>58</sup> See for example Cary J. Nederman (2005) pp. 1-15. Also, Laursen and Nederman, (1998) pp.1-8

<sup>59</sup> Euben (2006) p.175

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.177

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.187

that ‘self’ and ‘place’ are conjoined. As the place changes, so does the self, hence making the ‘other’, at the place one is visiting (physically or mentally), a primary contributor to any notion of self-understanding. Euben argues, when stressing both a balanced curriculum for new generations of political theory students and her choice of the travel narrative as a genre, that

... the capacity for imagination, reflection, and judgment is cultivated not by reading to affirm what one already knows but by exposure to what disturbs, provokes, and dislocates... Texts that themselves reflect and enact such dislocation ... can serve as an invaluable resource for those who do not or cannot travel, in part by enabling imagination of and reflection on modes of life other than their own.<sup>62</sup>

CPT à la Euben, then, is an invitation to adopt the stance of a traveler.

Continuing with the same analogy, in a globalized world where none can help but travel due to the increased frequency and necessity of intercultural contact, traditional political theorists who do not strive to achieve Euben’s crucial critical distance are mere wanderers or tourists, they are inherently resistant to the influence of insights that produce genuine theory, because of their uncritical faith in the comprehensiveness and superiority of their own culture. Eric Leeds, describing the mentality of these modern day travelers states that it:

... reflects upon surfaces and is adaptive rather than creative: wide rather than deep, mirroring rather than penetrating.<sup>63</sup>

However, unlike Euben, Leeds attributes above words to the mind of the modern traveler as an unavoidable consequence of the condition of globalization. And interestingly, the modern traveler for Leed is not a western traveler; modernity is not the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p.196

<sup>63</sup> Leed (1991) p. 287

monopoly of the west.<sup>64</sup> The dilemma of the moderns, in this context, is not that globalization has changed the rationale for travel, but that, it has significantly reduced the previously rewarding outcomes of undertaking the journey.<sup>65</sup> He likens any traveler in a globalized age to a prisoner, regardless of her civilizational affiliation, stating that:

[In]... a global culture now knit by international systems of transportation, production, distribution, communication, destruction. The world we cannot, as yet, leave. Travel ... has become like the activity of a prisoner pacing a cell much crossed and grooved by other equally mobile and “free” captives. What was once the agent of our liberty has become means for the revelation of our containment.<sup>66</sup>

Leed’s description significantly reduces Euben’s charges against traditional political theorists’ tendency to regurgitate western texts and bask in the glory of western superiority over other civilizational contexts. To say the least, Leed’s observations are possible only if we drop the notion that west has a decided advantage in a globalized world, a perspective that has been missing in the works of CPT till now. The absence of this perspective in all comparative theorizing under the rubric of CPT is, to a great extent, the main inspiration for this dissertation. Leeds’ characterization suggests that globalization is a leveler of the playing field rather than a homogenizing force, and in my opinion rightly so. The urgency felt by the comparativists, such as Dallmayr and Euben, to include non-western conceptions of the *political*, in the theoretical discourse of the west, is a result of this leveling effect of globalization. As stated above, in this period, the west has lost the advantage that it enjoyed in the pre-globalized era.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid pp. 287-289

<sup>65</sup> Leed distinguishes between several kinds of travel and the impact that these have had on human society, and vice versa, from the ancient to the modern period. His main argument is that “travel is central rather than a peripheral force in historical transformations; and the creation of locale, the mapping of territory, the territorialization of humanity are achievements of mobility.” Ibid, p. 18

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 286

Consequently, I think, CPT's self imposed compulsion to control methodologically for the power disparity between the west and its others, before a truly neutral comparative study can be undertaken, works implicitly towards regaining the lost advantage of the pre-global era for the west. This is also strengthened by the fact that in a globalized world, the west still has all the options to continue regurgitating its canon; however, such recycling does not provide good explanations for the dilemma's faced today, due to the inherent deficiencies created by systematic exclusion of the non-west in the making of western self-understanding.

A conception of CPT, which is based firmly in the belief that the west's current influence over the rest of the world is unprecedented in human history, and not focused on exposing the theoretical misconception that west's achievements have been made in isolation from its others seems an exceptionally ill-conceived project to me. Ill-conceived, because, it does not reconcile the call for a new sub field with any unique objectives which this new sub field can achieve.

Arguments made by comparativists themselves present a mixed picture of what they understand their job to be. One can glean from the above discussion of Dallmayr's and Euben's works that CPT's task is to engage the west in a dialogue with its other primarily because it is no longer possible to avoid doing so. In addition, this dialogue must be carried out only after recognizing that the west is extremely powerful and constantly subjects the others to its own theoretical preferences. Finally, due to such subjection, it is only reasonable to assume that responses are made to the western

influence by its weaker opponents. Hence emerges a possibility of knowledge outside the western domain.

Other comparativists have explained the task of CPT differently. For instance, Anthony Parel and Ronald Keith approach the notion of a comparative political philosophy from the standpoint of locating and comparing instances of equivalences between different cultural and linguistic traditions.<sup>67</sup> The term “equivalences,” which they borrow from Eric Voegelin, implies that, when properly contextualized, there are more similarities than differences in the ideas of apparently incompatible historical and intellectual traditions which make comparison between different traditions a real possibility.<sup>68</sup> This is a fairly different understanding of the field, as it clearly considers the task of CPT to seek comparisons between the west and its others and find similarities between the two.<sup>69</sup> More importantly, however, this approach is exploratory in nature and assumes that there are equally significant observations made by non-westerners. The essays in their edited volume, which seek equivalences between western and Chinese, Indian or Islamic traditions, also confirm this. But to seek comparisons with other intellectual traditions and especially in context of political theory requires the presence of an equally well established non-western canon. The unsystematic and repetitive choice of cases by comparative theorists does not provide much confidence in the notion

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<sup>67</sup> Parel and Keith (2003) p.12

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp.12-13

<sup>69</sup> A counter argument to this approach (in context of situations that necessitate theorizing) can be seen in the works of Jonathan Z. Smith. Smith argues that it is not aspects which are similar that invite comparative theoretical reflection because similarities can easily be compared without the need to theorize. In fact, according to Smith, similarities are called similarities because they obviate the need for a theory about the other. On the other hand the Other that has nothing in common with the Self can simply be ignored because there are no theoretical costs for the later in misunderstanding it. See Smith in Neusner and Frerichs eds. (1985) pp.219-246

that such counter-canons exist. This makes identification of a canon of non-western texts an additional responsibility of comparative theorists. In his later work, Parel has actually tried to highlight this issue. He argues that the function of a canon is to provide indispensable basis of historical identity, internal coherence and further development.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, he suggests that without such canons any comparisons would not be possible at all, as there would be no clearly marked boundaries to cross.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Parel's work on Gandhi seems to be a step towards identifying an Indian canon of political theory.<sup>72</sup> Gandhi and his politics are no strangers to the west, primarily because he was trained as a lawyer in the west, spent considerable time in which he was politically active in the western occupied South Africa, and led a successful national independence movement against the British in India. But even more importantly, the question is; given that Gandhi borrowed his notion of non-violence from Tolstoy, named his farm in South Africa after Tolstoy and inspired the civil rights movement in the US, is it correct to consider him the representative of a distinctly Indian political theory? Any discussion of Gandhi as an Indian political thinker must invariably include a discussion of his relationship to the thought of other prominent Indian thinkers and politicians of the time such as Bhim Rao Ambedkar, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, M.A. Jinnah, Abulkalam Azad and Subhash Chandra Bose.<sup>73</sup> Much of Gandhi's thought was in fact a response to his critics, who were also equally committed to getting rid of the British Raj in India. But the question that is paramount, in context of this dissertation, is this: What

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<sup>70</sup> Parel (2005) p.1

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p.2

<sup>72</sup> See Parel (1997, 2000, 2005)

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed discussion of the ideas of these thinkers and their critiques of Gandhi see, Coward (2003)

would we achieve even if we are able to identify a more balanced Indian canon? It seems like twisted logic on Parel's part in specific and comparative theorists in general to stress first the need for CPT because the western canon and the subsequent discipline of political theory is too restrictive, and then actually go on and create similar restrictive canons in non-western geographical contexts. Furthermore all this effort, according to Parel is required, so that these new borders can now be crossed and a geographically neutral understanding of the *political* can be achieved?

The notion of cross-culturally enlarging the political theory canon has also been addressed by Farah Godrej who suggests that the texts to be introduced in the enlarged canon must, first, address themselves to certain foundationalist questions about the political dimension of human experience, and, second, do so in a manner that is provocative and enlightening.<sup>74</sup> I think that the most precise and comprehensive evaluation of Godrej's criteria is given by her when she writes that at best, her "criteria remain at the level of vague generality."<sup>75</sup> The noteworthy thing about Godrej's approach is that she wants to enlarge the existing canon cross-culturally instead of constructing a separate canon in a non-western context. However, at the same time, she introduces a selection criterion which evaluates the candidacy of non-western texts depending on their being provocative and enlightening (whatever that means).

Provocation is invariably a function of the degree of comfort we feel by adhering to that which is familiar. Godrej's approach makes me uncomfortable on several levels. First,

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<sup>74</sup> Farah Godrej (2006) pp. 88-90

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 91. Even though Godrej indulges in a fairly lengthy discussion of what she means by the 'political' and the 'provocative and enlightening'; but her explanation however remains far from anything but vague Ibid. pp. 91-111.

since political theory is ostensibly a western vocation (as argued by Euben, Dallmayr and Parel), the probability is high that a western bias will carry itself into the texts chosen for enlargement of the canon. We must remember that it is because of the same bias that a call for CPT was issued in the first place, so logically speaking, Godrej's criteria essentially negates the need for a separate subfield. Second, it negates the whole notion of accepting the non-west on its own terms. As an unintended, but happy consequence, this approach exposes the limitations of CPT's, as well as Godrej's personal, excessive reliance on the dialogical model of philosophical hermeneutics.<sup>76</sup> Finally, as I argue in the final chapter, such an approach can let an otherwise sincere effort go astray.

Quite ironically, if we look at non-western texts and individuals chosen by comparative theorists till now, it seems that Godrej is right. A common and overriding theme in Gandhi and Islamic fundamentalist theorists is violence. Gandhi's appeal for the west, in terms of the enlightenment component of Godrej's scheme, is his advocacy for non-violence as a tool to fight the oppressor. Similarly, Islamic fundamentalism is of relevance because of its exceptionally violent tactics, especially suicide bombings. This technique in its modern form was perfected by the Tamil Tigers, who are neither Muslims nor fundamentalists and also not in conflict with the west.<sup>77</sup> However, it is only after Islamic fundamentalists used it as a tool against western targets that the west felt provoked enough to understand the nature of this phenomenon. In fact, before becoming

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<sup>76</sup> Godrej completely accepts Dallmayr's methodological preferences for doing CPT. Ibid. pp.179-183. For a discussion of the limitations of relying on the dialogical model of philosophical hermeneutics derived from the insights of Martin Heidegger and Dallmayr as well as other known dialogical models ignored by comparative thinkers, see Nederman et. al. (2006), op cit

<sup>77</sup> For a history of suicide bombing see Barlow (2007)



a direct target, western policies had always supported religious elements to further their own agenda in Islamic lands.<sup>78</sup> The point which I want to highlight is not that comparativists have done a bad job; instead, it is that if the provocation and enlightenment are the criteria on which non-western texts should be included in the recognized canon of political theory, then we must shed the pretense of non-western texts as having any intrinsic value for political theory. To say the least, this was the approach of western political theorists towards non-western texts even before a call for CPT was issued by Dallmayr.<sup>79</sup>

What, then, should be the rationale and mode of comparative theorizing for someone like myself who is convinced that the time is right for a more balanced discipline of political theory, but is not satisfied with the rationale and work done by comparativists in this regard till now? I believe some of the answers, and only some, can be gleaned by going back to the drawing board with the purpose of seeing if there can be an alternate basis for CPT.

The most vital issue in this reevaluation of CPT is the status and nature of modernity. The story of CPT, as we know, begins with modernity. Dallmayr, Euben, Parel and Godrej are all concerned that traditional political theory, as a field, is considered coterminous with the west and there is an urgent need to dispel this erroneous notion. As a result, and in support of their arguments, these comparativists choose the works of those individuals from non-western traditions who, to paraphrase Parel, are the

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<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of US and western support for radical Islamic groups and governments in the post world war II era see, Timothy Mitchell, (2002) pp. 1-18

<sup>79</sup> An example of this is Leo Strauss's work on Arab and Jewish philosophers from the medieval period. See Strauss's introductory essay in Pines (1963) translation of *Maimonides's The Guide of the Perplexed*; and various essays in Strauss (1959)

most significant political thinkers of their respective cultures and whose basic focus is to update their particular political traditions in the context of the challenges posed by western modernity.<sup>80</sup> There are two significant issues here: First, is modernity really synonymous with the west? And second, if non-westerners tend to update their ideas and approach towards the *political*, when in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis a dominant west, why wouldn't the west have done the same when it was not the dominant civilization? My purpose here is not to start a contest of egos between the west and the rest in the shape of CPT. Instead, it is to offer grounds for a conception of CPT which focuses less on confuting the unsophisticated nature of the non-west and more on exposing the parochialism of the west. The idea here is that the west's dominance over rest of the world has a history that only begins in the middle of the modern period and continues till now. Works of scholars who are not obsessed with globalization and late modernity, such as Andre Gunder Frank and Donald Lach, show convincingly that until the end of eighteenth century, Europe continued to be peripheral to an Asian centered world economy.<sup>81</sup> In this context, CPT's practice of using the terms "modernity" and "west" interchangeably is fallacious.<sup>82</sup> It is fallacious because it wrongly assumes modernity's birth place is in the west and tries to assert the position that, in an inter-civilizational context, flow of ideas since modernity's birth is unidirectional i.e. from the west to the rest. Because of this unidirectionality, the non-west is placed in a situation

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<sup>80</sup> Parel and Keith, op cit., pp.14-15

<sup>81</sup> See Frank (1998) And Lach (1994).

<sup>82</sup> For example, Euben (1999) mentions that Qutb's ideas can in fact 'challenge the presumed equation of modern condition with the western condition', but she never elaborates on this notion p.12. Similarly Dallmayr, Parel and Godrej also hint on this problem but they hardly ever consider situating CPT in a period other than late modernity.

where all its options converge on responding to modernity. As I have argued above, the choice of cases by comparativists is not very helpful in remedying this situation either, but still, the argument is that the condition of modernity can be more appropriately understood as environmental in nature rather than being in possession of any one civilization.<sup>83</sup> As I have argued earlier in this chapter, globalization actually levels the playing field, e.g., in a post communication revolution and under a global capitalist economic framework, India alone, with a middle class of over three hundred million people (which is equal in size to the total U.S. population) can change the direction of influence between itself and the west. Theoretically, CPT so conceived, virtually becomes the hope of traditional political theory to continue its delusion of the notion that the political is western. Even if we treat this delusion as inherently value neutral, the question remains: why have a separate subfield in shape of CPT to pursue it through alternate means?

On the other hand, if we reorient CPT towards questioning modernity's western domicile, we are likely to make greater progress in most of the areas identified by comparative theorists as essential to sustaining the comparative endeavor in political theory.<sup>84</sup> If we do not accept that modernity originated in and is coterminous with the west, we automatically open the door for abandoning the geographical reference every

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<sup>83</sup> These arguments disagree with the notion of a definite western dominance in a global age. See for example Crothers (2007) pp. 149-158, Veseth (2005) pp. 20-23. In addition even in context of Islamic Fundamentalism Bruce Lawrence argues that religious fundamentalists use tools made available by modernity to propagate their message. Euben in *Enemy in the Mirror* also relies on this definition. See Lawrence (1995), Introduction.

<sup>84</sup> For a similar argument see Mitchell, ed. (2000) pp.16-20. Mitchell argues that modernity must be treated as the staging of history instead of being a stage of history itself. Also see Mitchell (1989) pp. 217-236.

time we mention modernity. In a paradoxical sense, this is an approach which tries to gain a more rigorous and complex understanding of modernity, and subsequently of the *political*, by focusing on exactly the reasons which may have prompted western political theorists to exclude analyses of non-western ideas from their works.<sup>85</sup> This leads us to an understanding of CPT which is not based on a method but on its actual content, on the one hand, and which produces the kind of analyses which would be resistant towards contributing to the notion of a universal western modernity.<sup>86</sup> I have argued above, that in its current form, CPT inadvertently contributes towards enhancement of the notion that the *political* is essentially western. More specifically, this contribution takes place because the category of the west is not dropped by comparative thinkers and modernity is taken to be a western condition.<sup>87</sup> To be sure, this does not mean that scholarship accomplished under the rubric of CPT is insignificant in any way; on the contrary, such work has helped enormously in highlighting alternate conceptions of the *political* produced outside a western core. Yet by upholding the categories west and modern, the significance of non-western systems of ideas in the cases chosen by comparativists is reduced to the status of a respondent to ideas generated in the west. As a consequence of this, works of CPT look more like the product of an effort focused on achieving a convenient plurality, a larger notion of the *political*. I call it a convenience because comparativists do not, in any rigorous manner, address this question: what is it within

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<sup>85</sup> Mitchell, (2000) Ibid. pp. xii and 12-13

<sup>86</sup> The problem of defining a subfield based on a method rather than substance has been discussed by Sartori in his seminal piece (1970) pp 1033-1053. Sartori argues that the label comparative politics indicates the *how* but does not specify the *what* of the analysis. Also see Lijphart (1971) pp 682-693

<sup>87</sup> For a critique of Euben's use of western and modern and its implications for CPT see Norton (2001) pp. 736-749

modernity that empowers traditional political theorists to argue that their notion of the *political* can be expanded and replicated to the level of universality?<sup>88</sup> In my opinion, if we do not explore this question, comparative analyses will continue to imply a primarily singular notion of the *political* that is only partially, and perhaps temporarily, transformed into a multiplicity of civilizational forms due to the impact of non-western local circumstances, highlighted in comparative works. I call this non-western *political*, partial because it is only a representation of a broader and universal notion of the *political* and temporary because the truth value and accuracy of that broader notion of the *political* is never seriously doubted by comparative theorists.

The other major theme in CPT scholarship, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, is the preference for a dialogical model of philosophical hermeneutics because it is open ended and hospitable to multiple and expanding horizons. One of the problems with constructing an inter-civilizational dialogue in this manner, as pointed out by Nederman et.al, is the fixed expectation that there will eventually be a fusion of horizons. These authors convincingly show, by way of comparison with other well known dialogical models in history, that such an outcome rarely takes place.<sup>89</sup> But more importantly, their comparison brings forth another useful dimension of dialogical encounter between the west and its others, namely, an opportunity for “self criticism and the realization of the cultural linguistic and conceptual limits to achieving

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<sup>88</sup> Comparative theorists, such as Dallmayr and Godrej, discuss the general history of how the ‘western’ has become ‘universal’ but they do not discuss this issue vis-à-vis the question raised here. Their reluctance or failure to do so, as I have discussed, arises out of their treatment of west and modern as synonymous and by keeping the scope of CPT limited to the late modern period. See for example, Dallmayr, (2002) and Godrej op cit. pp. 16-71. For an alternate explanation of the universality of modernity see Mitchell, (2000) op.cit., pp.7-16.

<sup>89</sup> Nederman et al. (2006), op cit. p.18

communication.”<sup>90</sup> I argue that if we separate “modernity” from the “west” a similar outcome occurs because the west and the non-west will both function as modern subjects in such a formulation. There are serious implications of this separation for CPT: First and foremost, in the context of modernity it would allow comparativists the basis to consider alternate understandings of the *political* free from their value in terms of provocation or enlightenment for the west, as suggested earlier by Godrej. If we look at CPT’s favorite topic in this context, i.e., Gandhi and his contemporaries who resisted the British, they would appear as representatives of a modern and westernized colonial elite of British India. The ideas of these thinkers and activists would appear less as constituting a distinctively Indian political thought and more as something which should always have been an integral part of the story of modernity. As characterized in the works of Partha Chaterjee, this westernized colonial elite was able to turn modernizing discourse against the civilizing prerogatives of a colonial power by constructing an Indian tradition that was not open to colonization.<sup>91</sup> The fact that Gandhi’s ideas were seen specifically as a stubborn resistance to modernity by the British, despite the formative elements of his thought discussed earlier, confirms the limitations identified by Nederman and his co-authors mentioned above. Western inability to comprehend non-western notions of the *political* is epitomized in the following comment by Winston Churchill on Gandhi:

It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the east, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, while he is still

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> See Chaterjee (1993) and (1994)

organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the king-emperor.<sup>92</sup>

Gandhi's background in western legal training, his strategy of defying the very legal code that he was trained to uphold, and his distinctly non-western and unsophisticated appearance, constitute an amazing collection of negatives. But the fact that Churchill chooses these characteristics to describe Gandhi is reflective of how he, as a representative of the west, creates and deploys the difference between himself and his counterpart. In creating this difference, Churchill reveals how he constructs his own, and by implication the west's, superior image. Similarly, all these elements are also representative of how Gandhi chooses to define himself. The irony of Churchill's remark is in the fact that Gandhi is on his way to a dialogue with the west. In his remarks during this meeting, Gandhi is reported to have said to an immaculately dressed viceroy:

I have caused a great deal of trouble for your government. But as men, we can set aside our differences for welfare of the nation.<sup>93</sup>

Gandhi's comment and desire to resolve conflicts through discussion has a decidedly modern western tone to it, yet his words chastise and correct the west's self image as the great civilizer. This correction, as a reading of *Hind Swaraj* reveals, was achieved by intentionally locating India's strength in the facets of Indian society which were untouched by colonial rule and unaffected by the westernized Indian elite's practice of employing western terminology and logic in an attempt to overthrow the

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<sup>92</sup> Winston Churchill 1930. Text copied from <http://www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/churchill.htm> last accessed online on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2008

<sup>93</sup> Gandhi's speech at the London Round table Conference 1931. Ibid. last accessed online on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2008

Raj.<sup>94</sup> This vision allowed Gandhi to challenge the dominant western colonial power through recourse to a glorious past record of India's civilizational achievement. What is extremely important for CPT is the fact that Gandhi does not restate a political history of pre-colonial times; in fact, he is curiously silent about any verifiable facts of that period. Gandhi's India is an imagined India, one whose contours are defined precisely in terms of what the west is not. Thus, if India had to be cast as a great civilization, then the west could not be any such thing. This is confirmed by his dismissive view of western civilization when he comments that "[i]t would be a good idea."<sup>95</sup> Gandhi's attitude mirrors the western universality of which comparativists are so weary. What is more, the metaphor used by Euben in her title *Enemy in the Mirror* fully applies here, albeit with a profound twist, i.e., roles which Euben assigns to the two sides of the contact are reversed in this instance.

What, then, are the implications of the above discussion for CPT? I think that, first and foremost, it highlights the need to recognize that constitutive elements of civilizational attitudes and identity are equally externally located. If this is the case, then CPT's current dominant practice of treating the west and modernity as synonymous is incorrect. A separation of these two terms deprives the west of its assumed monopoly over the modern which, as the discussion in this chapter reveals, is maintained by assuming the impossibility of a modern non-west. When CPT upholds a fusion of the categories of modernity and western, it basically perpetuates the above assumption, even if implicitly, in the works produced by comparative theorists. Second, when the west and

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<sup>94</sup> See Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* passim trans. Parel (1997)

<sup>95</sup> Dallmayr (2002) p.17



modernity are separated, CPT is able to make sense of the *political* in a rigorous manner by considering a multiplicity of historical and geographical contexts, as originally suggested by Euben. This rigor is evident in the inevitable challenge that CPT poses, in this new construction, for traditional political theory, i.e., either to convincingly refute CPT's claim of a constitutive external or to complicate its own understanding of western universality. Third, this approach relieves CPT of its excessive reliance on one kind of dialogical model, i.e., of philosophical hermeneutics. To be sure, dialogue, in this suggested construction, remains the dominant mode of studying inter-civilizational interaction. However, in this instance, it not only results in multiple understandings of the *political*, but does so in a truly open ended manner. In fact, in a manner so open ended, that modernity itself could be the outcome of inter-cultural and inter-civilizational contact. Yet this open endedness is not achieved arbitrarily and is based on verifiable criteria. Finally, by dropping modernity from the picture, CPT's subject matter remains no longer restricted by the late modern period. This not only allows comparativists to show that the political is possible in non-western contexts, but also forces traditional theorists to reexamine their modern self-understanding in the light of ideas from their own forgotten non-modern past, which is equally marginalized but is as important as the non-west.

In the chapters that follow, as mentioned earlier, I examine four cases of actual inter-civilizational contacts between the west and its others in the pre-Enlightenment period. Each of the cases represents a crucial point in human history where opportunities for broadening civilizational horizons were perceived and capitalized upon by a west

which did not have the definite superiority that has until now been responsible for shaping CPT as a field. As the discussion in this chapter shows, most comparativists have focused on understanding the nature and purpose of the political in non-western contexts and have measured it against a western standard, i.e., achievements of the non-west have been shown as comparable to those of the west. Such an approach towards CPT is valuable in that it identifies and justifies the usefulness of doing theory comparatively. However, when viewed as a group from a distance, these studies represent a hotchpotch of interesting works which lack rigor of the kind one sees in the works of traditional political theory. Furthermore, as I have argued above, the tendency to treat non-western ideas as singularly important episodes in the development of non-western systems of thought and a lack of attention to the broader movements, of which these ideas are often a part, restricts a fuller understanding of the linkages that define these non-western works in the first place. In this context, the cases chosen for this dissertation are not only important because in each case an early representative of the west experiences and records what he has witnessed in previously difficult-to-access foreign lands; but also, when looked at as a group, these cases enable us to develop a narrative of western perceptions regarding the Other in multiple contexts. I have argued, that the narrative which emerges out of these western accounts of the Other also reveals an implicit counter-narrative about changing perceptions of the western Self. As Mary Campbell reminds us, up until the early modern period, east, or more specifically, Asia and the Orient, were not just geographical references. Instead, these were as much places

in medieval western imagination as they were upon the face of the earth.<sup>96</sup> In fact, for medieval Europeans, according to Seymour Phillips, “The East probably began almost as soon as they left familiar ground, after which any strange experience might be expected to befall them.”<sup>97</sup> The discussion of cases in later chapters of this dissertation attempts to throw light on how this familiarity with the west’s own position and values was challenged and affected by contacts with the Other.

At the same time, one must remember that there are always a minimum of two sides to the contact equation. In the first three cases, westerners approach others who are politically, economically and also in terms of civilizational achievements and history, superior to themselves. In these circumstances the only comfort that these representatives felt came from their conviction regarding the truth of their religious beliefs. Yet this comfort could only be exposed cautiously, or not at all, if the corresponding Other was not in a tolerant frame of mind. Dangers and discomforts also came from putting oneself up for scrutiny by strangers who did not appreciate the piety of their beliefs or the value of the way the visitors thought or behaved. Inevitable compromises were also made by western representatives because of unfamiliarity with language and customs. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Europeans are on the losing end of the compromise here, since they are visitors on an unfamiliar terrain. What they observed needed to be reconciled with what they knew, or thought that they knew, about the east already. Theorizing in these circumstances took place often, if not continuously, as prior ideas in the minds of westerners frequently necessitated verification and new

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<sup>96</sup> Campbell, (1988) pp.3-6

<sup>97</sup> Phillips (1994) in Schwartz op.cit., p.35

ideas were formed. Yet in many instances, observable facts failed to persuade them to drop those ideas which conflicted with reality. To deny what one sees needs theorizing as does that which has never been imagined.

In context of CPT, specifically, I hope to highlight in later chapters the manner in which a western identity is upheld in the face of the unexpected. The cases here, therefore, open a window on how identities such as East, West, Self and the Other come into being.<sup>98</sup> Especially the last case, which I discuss in the concluding chapter, i.e., the arguments of Las Casas in defense of the Indians, provides for an interesting contrast to the first three cases. As Mary Campbell reminds us about the significance of the New World, “When Europe found the Other World for which it had sought throughout the East, that ‘earthly Paradise’ became the scene of the hugest genocide the world has ever known.”<sup>99</sup> Las Casas’s account of the destruction of the Indies and his identification and defense of indigenous rights guarantees him the position of an originator of descriptive accounts of the New World.<sup>100</sup> In his arguments, we get a unique opportunity to see once again the process whereby the notions of Self and Other are created and enforced on the mind of a people. However, as I argue, the case of the New World is different from all other cases discussed in this dissertation, because the power balance is heavily in favor of the Europeans and the conditions of the contact are diametrically apart from the cases discussed earlier.

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<sup>98</sup> Wynter argues, , specifically in context of travel narratives, that it is primarily because of such narratives that we have come to see ourselves as the west at all. See (1976) pp. 78-94

<sup>99</sup> Campbell, Op cit. p.7

<sup>100</sup> According to Campbell, Las Casas shares this position with others such as Columbus and Raleigh see Ibid., pp. 167-168

### CHAPTER III

#### **“NO PEOPLE AND A FOOLISH NATION”<sup>101</sup>: THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY MONGOL EMPIRE THROUGH WESTERN EYES**

This chapter focus's on William of Rubruck's account of his journey to the Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century (A.D. 1253-1255). William's is one of the earliest eye witness accounts of the Mongols to reach the west. Besides being one of the earliest, it is also unrivalled in reliability and detail among all other sources available on the Mongols of this period. Campbell terms William of Rubruck the “first fully present narrator”<sup>102</sup> in addition to calling his narrative the beginning of the “responsible literature of travel.”<sup>103</sup> Apart from these stylistic characteristics, his account also merit inclusion in this dissertation because of the timing of his journey and the fact that it greatly helps us in understanding the processes and considerations which went into the creation of the image of the Mongol Other in the western mind.

William's account is also indispensable for this dissertation because of the purpose of his journey, i.e., to evangelize the Mongols. The details that we find in William's account, therefore, arise out of the circumstances which he faced in winning, or failing to win, these strangers over to the Christian faith. Yet his personal experiences are recorded in the context of the demand made by his benefactor, Louis IX, to record

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<sup>101</sup> Scriptural phrase (Deuteronomy 32:21 and Romans, 10:19) employed by William of Rubruck to describe the Mongols. William (1990) p. 139

<sup>102</sup> Campbell (1988) p. 8.

<sup>103</sup> Campbell, Ibid., p.120

everything that he saw. As a result, William is forced to adopt a broader perspective on his personal experiences. Since he is a missionary, forced into a quasi-diplomatic position, the happenings as well as the feelings recorded by him can be termed as truly representative of the sentiments of any European of his time. This same quality also distinguishes William's account from other extant descriptions of the Mongols of this period. More specifically, instead of giving details of the wonders of the east William seems more intent on dispelling them by taking special care to transmit only that which he had himself witnessed.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the discomfort of travel which was enhanced by William's personal beliefs and status of being a Franciscan missionary, the frustration of not knowing the language and being perpetually misrepresented by interpreters, the lack of resources, and the irrelevance of his message for the Mongols, all bring out the complexities involved in actual intercultural contact. As I explain later in this chapter, these complexities bring forth the unsettled nature of the Self and the Other, which is apparent in the manner in which Rubruck continuously tries to represent what he experiences in Mongol lands by attempting to place the strange and readjust the familiar in context of his existing knowledge. As Spurr argues, such representation is an inescapable feature of all travel writing because of the author's need to constantly demarcate identity and difference for establishing her authority with the reader.<sup>105</sup> Since a traveler is a stranger herself, therefore, Rubruck, who is in the Mongol lands with the specific purpose of evangelizing the local population, must make an effort to portray an

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<sup>104</sup> For example we find details of monsters and other fascinating creatures and customs of the East in the accounts of Marco Polo and even Rubruck's contemporaries such as John of Plano Carpini. For Marco Polo see Chambers (1979) pp. 33-4 and Campbell (1988) pp.7-11 and 105. For Carpini's account see Dawson (1955) pp. 20, 23 & 30.

<sup>105</sup> Spurr (1993) pp.1-12.

impressive image for the locals, about who he is and what he represents. As we shall see, in doing so, Rubruck invariably has to bring up, for scrutiny, those elements of his identity which in a western context he would rarely have the occasion to explain or question. The contact between William of Rubruck and the Mongols, therefore, is very significant for the conception of CPT that I have delineated in the previous chapter, as it brings forth the contribution of the Other in the creation or realization of Self.

Following from the above discussion and since, in context of this dissertation, my central focus is on William of Rubruck as a representative of the west, it seems to me that the true worth of his account can be understood if it is juxtaposed against other accounts of the Mongols from the same period. Therefore, wherever appropriate, I shall be referring to other well known European accounts of the Mongol people and lands, especially John of Plano Carpini's *Historia Mongolorum*, which records a visit to the Mongols prior to William (A.D. 1245 & 1247).<sup>106</sup> In addition, I shall also be punctuating my discussion of William's text with details available in non-western primary sources of Mongol history, such as Juvaini's thirteenth century biography of Chingiz Khan *Ta'Rikh-i-Jahan Gusha* (History of the World Conqueror) and famous Muslim chronicler Rashīd Al-Dīn's account of the rule of Chingiz Khan's successors in his *Jami al-Tawarikh* (Compendium of Histories).<sup>107</sup> Here it also helps to remember that the desire to create linkages with the Mongols, on the part of the known civilizations of the

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<sup>106</sup> I will use the translation of Carpini's account provided in Dawson (1955) pp.3-72. It is noteworthy that Carpini's account was more William's in popularity because of its inclusion in the most authoritative encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*. However William's account as I discuss throughout this chapter is much superior in content and methodology. Campbell, p.113

<sup>107</sup> These sources are originally in Persian and I will be using Boyle's translations for both; for Juvaini, Boyle (1997) and for Rashīd Al-Dīn, Boyle (1971)

time, was not simply because of intellectual curiosity or religious zeal; instead, these endeavors were driven in large part by fear of the Mongols because of their ferocity and unprecedented success in conquering other people. In order to highlight this aspect of Mongol relations with other peoples, I will also discuss papal bulls sent by Pope Innocent IV to the Mongol rulers and Mongol response to the pope's messages as given in the sources mentioned earlier. It was the Mongol *modus operandi* to invite a people to accept them as their masters and avoid their wrath, before they invaded them. Wherever available in translation, I will make use of these Mongol invitations and compare them to the responses sent specifically to the Europeans. A discussion of Mongol directives and responses to foreign communiqués is especially helpful in understanding the unique characteristics of Mongol political thought and attitudes towards their external world.

I have implied above, while highlighting the significance of Rubruck's account, that the west had little, if any, comprehension of the way the Mongol mind worked. This claim is also confirmed by the initial western reactions to the Mongol appearance on the west's geographical and imaginary horizons. As a result, many myths about Mongol origins had taken root in western thinking, some of which had carried on from earlier myths from the time of Alexander the Great.<sup>108</sup> In fact, in the western mind, Asia had always been a land of wonder and mystery and the emergence of the Mongols was invariably treated as an extension of the mythical status of the continent from which they came.<sup>109</sup> In the case of Muslims, however, Asia did not present as much of an enigma as

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<sup>108</sup> For a discussion of a peoples' tendency to resort to mythical explanations of previously unknown and inexplicable events see Westrem, (1998) pp. 54-75.

<sup>109</sup> For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, specifically in context of early modern European travel literature, see Kamps and Singh (2001) pp. 1-7; Campbell p.3-4 and Allen (1976) pp.41-62



did the loss of power and empire at the hands of the infidels. Before they descended, from virtually nowhere, the Mongols were largely irrelevant to the survival and well being of any of the great empires of the time. The ferocity and speed of the Mongol invasions coupled with the absence of prior knowledge about these strangers compelled both Muslims and Christian writers of the time to think of Mongol invasions as a divine punishment for their sins.<sup>110</sup> While such a characterization of the invaders is supported by the attitude and pronouncements of the Mongol rulers themselves, the same also reveals the mechanisms that the invaded employed to understand and make sense of what they had just experienced but which they obviously never could have imagined.<sup>111</sup> The unique significance of the Mongol episode in world history lies, therefore, in the fact that they possessed unbiased hostility towards all other empires of the time and forced each of them to redefine their self-understanding.

It is also noteworthy that the time at which the Mongols appeared on the Moslem and Christian horizons, neither had a clear advantage over the other.<sup>112</sup> Hence, desire for an alliance with a third party to defeat the opponent was natural in both camps.<sup>113</sup> However, as I have stated above, the unbiased Mongol hostility towards Muslims, Christians and Chinese alike dampened all hopes of any Mongol-Other alliances. Still, because of the sudden and unexplained Mongol retreat after massive destruction of

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<sup>110</sup> See for instance David Morgan (1994) pp. 201-217. In addition, the name ‘Tartars’ itself is evidence that the Europeans liked to think of the Mongols as not of this earth see below. Also see James Chambers (1979) pp. 33-4, and Campbell, (1988) pp. 3-4

<sup>111</sup> For instance Juvaini, a Muslim historian in the Mongol court, allegedly reports that after the capture of Bokhara Chingiz Khan mounted the pulpit and said, “O people, ... I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.” See Boyle (1997) p.105. Also see below the discussion of Muslim justifications for conversions of lands in Dār-ul-Islām i.e. the house of Islam since earliest times to Dār-ul-Hārb i.e. the house of war. Morgan Ibid. pp. 204-5

<sup>112</sup> Sinor, p.516

<sup>113</sup> For details see Denis Sinor (1977) “The Mongols and Western Europe” pp.515-517

Hungary in 1242 and reports of attacks on Islamic lands, Europeans retained some hope of a possible alliance with the Mongols.<sup>114</sup> This is also evident from the fact that both Carpini and William carried letters to this effect from the pope and Frederick IX respectively.

Most historians argue that the Mongol task was facilitated by two major factors; first, deep divisions between different western nations; and second, a condition of stalemate between the west and the house of Islam.<sup>115</sup> However, as I explain below, these historical circumstances could not have helped the Mongols much if they did not espouse a particular political outlook, employed sophisticated administrative techniques, and practiced a strict code of military conduct.<sup>116</sup> Details of these elements of Mongol political thought and practice are available in Muslim/Persian sources I have mentioned above. Using these non-western sources allows us to see the differences in western and non-western interpretations of the Mongol invaders. In addition, the strategy of using non-western sources to supplement assessments of a western source, in my opinion, is particularly useful from the CPT's perspective. And especially in the context of the discussion in the previous chapter, I feel that such an approach is absolutely unavoidable because of the degree to which the political and intellectual histories of the east and the west are intertwined. Historically, and since the rise of Islam, Christians and Muslims

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<sup>114</sup> Sinor argues that there is no satisfactory explanation for Mongol retreat, *Ibid.* p. 519. According to Phillips, however, the Mongols retreated to participate in the election of their new Khan after the news of the death of Great Khan Ögedei reached them in December 1241. *Op. cit.* pp. 72-3. In addition, Saunders raises the possibility that the Mongols may have considered Hungary as the western extremity of the Eurasian steppe, hoping to settle there like the Huns almost eight centuries before them and planned no further advance. J. J. Saunders (1971) p. 87

<sup>115</sup> See for example Saunders (1971) pp. 78-89

<sup>116</sup> See Allsen (1987) pp.5-7

considered each other the only true danger to the survival of their respective civilizations.<sup>117</sup> In this rather neat division of the world, the appearance of the Mongol-Other was an anomaly that needed immediate attention from those at the helm of affairs, political as well as intellectual, in Islamic and Christian lands.

In the case of Muslims, the unique dilemma presented by Mongol conquest of Islamic lands went directly to the heart of Muslim political thinking. In Islamic political theory, the Jews and Christians were tolerated on the grounds that they were people of the book; hence, their religions were considered true but incomplete and based on distorted divine revelation. The relationship between Islam and infidels on the other hand was defined as *Dār al-Hārb* (abode of war) where, other than necessary brief moments of truce, a general state of war prevailed. The theory provided that in due course all of *Dār al-Hārb* will come under *Dār al-Islām* (abode of Islam). The Mongol conquests presented a situation in which *Dār al-Hārb* expanded at the expense of *Dār al-Islām* and for which there was no conceptual provision in Islamic system of ideas.<sup>118</sup> This unprecedented situation, therefore, required the Muslims to redefine their fundamental beliefs and place the invading Mongols into the frame of reference that they employed to make sense of their outer world. A convenient, and perhaps sensible,

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<sup>117</sup> Muslims believe that Christianity and Judaism were superseded revelations and Christians think of Muhammad as a heretic. Broadly speaking, this confrontation, over the centuries revolved around the control of the Holy Land. For a detailed discussion of Muslim views of the world during these times see Lewis (1982) Chapters 1,2 and 5 pp. 17-70 & 135-170. And for European views of Islam see Rodinson (2002) pp. 3-37; also Tolan, Part 2, pp. 69-135

<sup>118</sup> See Morgan (1994) pp. 202-203

solution was to consider the Mongols a punishment from Allah for the sins committed by the faithful.<sup>119</sup>

Europe's response to the Mongol menace was not very different either. The name "Tartar," given to the new invaders attests to an approach very similar to the Muslims. According to Connell, the initial use of the term "Tartar" for Mongols is credited to King Louis IX of France who might have used it erroneously while referring to "Tatars." However, the term was popularly adopted because of its mythical value.<sup>120</sup> More specifically,

A 'Tartar' was an agent sent from hell, a precursor of Antichrist, a nuncio of Satan, a son of Ishmael breaking forth from bounds in the mysterious East, the land of Gog and Magog, to unleash his fury upon the Christian world as punishment for its sins.<sup>121</sup>

The above conceptions were also probably helped by Mongol attitudes as detailed in their alleged victory speeches in Muslim lands, which are authenticated in written replies to western monarchs and the Pope. For instance Juvaini allegedly reports that after the capture of Bokhara, Chingiz Khan mounted the pulpit and said, "O people...I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Statements to this effect can be seen at several places in the writings of Muslim historians of the period. See for example Juvaini's thirteenth century biography of Chingiz Khan *Ta'Rikh-i-Jahan Gusha* Boyle (1997) pp. ; and Rashīd Al-Dīn's *Jami al-Tawarikh*, Boyle (1971) pp.

<sup>120</sup> Connell (1973) p. 117, also see Fn 10 on page 118.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p.118; other descriptions of the term can be seen in Spuler (1968) p.1; Phillips (1988) pp. 70-1; Chambers (1979) p. 85; for an excellent discussion of the myth of *Gog* and *Magog* and its relevance to the image of East in the western mind see Westrem (1998) pp. 54-75

<sup>122</sup> Boyle (1997) p. 105; also see Morgan for a discussion of Muslim justifications for conversions of lands in Dār ul-Islām i.e. the house of Islam since earliest times to *Dār ul-Hārb* i.e. the house of war, Ibid. pp. 204-5

Similarly, in his reply sent to pope Innocent IV through Carpini, Mongol great khan Güyük wrote:

...[Chingiz Khan and the Kaghan] both ... have been sent to make known God's command, nor to the command of god... How could anybody seize or kill by his own power contrary to the command of God?<sup>123</sup>

Considering the Mongols a punishment from God for one's own sins reflects on the Muslim and Christian inability to envision a third worldview. This inability arose from creating and nurturing, over centuries, an image of the Other which, according to Blanks and Faressetto, was literally a photographic negative of the desired ideal image of the Self.<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, Mongol political success did not really change this rather neat and naive view of the other; instead it dropped a kind of a self reflecting mirror between the east and the west. This characteristic of the Mongol episode makes studying this period in world history a unique and fantastic opportunity to understand how images of the Self and the Other are created and maintained. The Mongols, at least in the western imagination, remained barbarian and uncivilized even after they conquered western lands.<sup>125</sup> However, as the Mongols did not build upon the success of their initial western campaigns, the threat they posed to the west reduced in intensity and rekindled hopes for a possible alliance. This fact coupled with eastward and internal movements of the Mongol stampede in post European conquest period, encouraged the west to seek alliances with them against their pre-Mongol traditional enemies.<sup>126</sup> As this chapter unfolds, I will highlight salient features of Mongol political thought. However, for the

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<sup>123</sup> Dawson (1955) p.85

<sup>124</sup> Blanks and Faressetto (1999) p. 3

<sup>125</sup> See Campbell p. 91 and Jones, pp. 376-407

<sup>126</sup> For details of Mongol change of direction see Sinor, p. 515

moment it is noteworthy that, despite all the innovations that the Mongols introduced in terms of administrative techniques, resource mobilization and the art of war, the only significance that they held for the west was as potential allies against Muslims.<sup>127</sup> This rather dismissive attitude reveals that, to a great degree, the sources of construction of the Other's image, even in the face of possible total self-destruction, remained unchanged. The picture on the Muslim side is very different, but a detailed discussion of that response is not within the scope of this dissertation. For the moment it is sufficient to note that considering the Mongols as a divine punishment was itself a mechanism to perpetuate western and Islamic ideal self image created in contradistinction to each other. I will, however, briefly come back to this point towards the end of this chapter.

Another important characteristic that makes the Mongol episode a particularly interesting one to focus on, in the context of CPT, is the impact that Mongols had on inter-civilizational contacts in general. In the last chapter, I argued that globalization levels the playing field between the haves and the have-nots. Before the Mongol invasions, eastern lands were almost completely inaccessible to the west, and all western knowledge about these lands, according to Campbell, was based on works such as *Wonders of the East* and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*. The self-image of medieval Europeans, created by this knowledge depicted a world which was normal at its (European) center and monstrous at its (Asian and African) margins.<sup>128</sup> To a great extent, the status of divine scoundrels, allocated to the Tatars by the Europeans, was helped and

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<sup>127</sup> Among their many innovations it has also been argued by historians that the Mongols used gun powder in batter for the first time. See Philips p.67

<sup>128</sup> Campbell, p. 8. and Ch. 2; and also see Philips pp. 61-63

even necessitated by this self-understanding. The profundity of the Mongol episode in the history of Europe, therefore, is also evident from the fact that it was only during this period that westerners were first physically able to visit these lands. William of Rubruck, during his journey in the Mongol lands, consistently came across people belonging to different religious, racial and national affiliations.<sup>129</sup> This opening up of the east was a direct result of the Mongol cosmopolitan outlook which, unlike Christian and Islamic cosmopolitanisms, was centered on a political rather than moral and spiritual notions of unity. The western inability to understand this novel way of looking at the world is perhaps best represented in the following character sketch of the Mongols in Carpini's account:

They break any promises they make as soon as they see that the tide is turned in their favour, and they are full of deceit in all their deeds and assurances; it is their object to wipe off the face of the earth all princes, nobles, knights and men of gentle birth... and they do this to those in their power in a sly and crafty manner: then because it is unfitting that Christians should be subject to them in view of the abominations they practice and seeing that the worship of God is brought to nought, souls are perishing and bodies are afflicted beyond belief in many ways; it is true at first they speak fair words, but afterwards they sting and hurt like a scorpion...<sup>130</sup>

The above passage distinguishes the highpoints of difference between a civilized Christian/ western self and a barbarous Mongol people who could not be trusted, because of their lack of civility, in matters of mutual accommodation. However, the reality of Mongol strategy and success, as I explain later, is very different from the above and based on concrete political measures adopted by Chingiz Khan and followed

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<sup>129</sup> Nederman also refers to this aspect of the Mongol society as its most striking characteristic noted by William of Rubruck (2000), p.56

<sup>130</sup> Dawson, p. 44

vigorously by his successors. At the moment, the point I want to make is that these Mongol practices opened up the east in a sense similar to globalization today. Increased inter-civilizational activity during the Mongol period not only facilitated readjustments of the Other in the Christian and Muslim parts of the world, it also made such readjustments absolutely necessary. This leads me back to my point in the last chapter that CPT's status as a separate subfield of political theory must be independent from the recent wave of globalization and accompanying technological innovations. To be sure, a certain increased degree of inter-civilizational contact is an important precursor for initiating comparative theorizing, as in the absence of such contacts any genuine knowledge of the Other is more or less irrelevant. It is only in circumstances such as those created by Mongol invasions and modern globalization that prevalent myths come into question and previous models of self-understanding are rendered deficient. This is further attested to by the fact that with the decline of Mongol power, western access to the east was once again blocked and the west's knowledge of the east almost remained frozen in the two hundred years between William of Rubruck's and Marco Polo's journeys.<sup>131</sup>

What, then, were the principles of Mongol political thought, which gave free access to representatives from all other cultures and empires to Mongol seats of power, despite the fact that Mongols had hostile intentions towards them? I think a brief response to this question is important, as it provides us with the tools to understand several of the observations which William recorded in his account of the Mongols. The

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<sup>131</sup> Campbell p.8. Also see Spuler, p. 188-9.



rise of the Mongols began with the career of Chingiz Khan, who, after the turbulent early years of his life, was immensely successful in uniting and leading the people of his clan to lay the foundations of future Mongol Empire.<sup>132</sup> Chingiz's most distinguishing characteristic, according to his biographer and other historians, was his unparalleled military genius. Juvaini compares Chingiz to Chosroes of Persia, Pharaohs of Egypt and the Caesars of Rome, and states that:

All that has been recorded touching the practice of the mighty [kings] was by Chingiz Khan invented from the page of his own mind without the toil of perusing records or trouble of conforming with tradition; ... had he [Alexander] lived in the age of Chingiz-Khan, would have been his pupil in craft and cunning and ... he would have found none better than blindly to follow in his footsteps.<sup>133</sup>

While I find it totally legitimate to discount the exaggerated style of Juvaini's prose, it is nevertheless a verifiable fact that Chingiz Khan's success was indeed a function of the rules that he invented and enforced meticulously. This legislation, known as the *Yasa*, was deemed sacred by his successors and we find references to it in their letters which were written long after Chingiz's death.<sup>134</sup> According to Juvaini again, Chingiz ordered;

...that Mongol children should learn writing from the Uighur; and that these *yasas* and ordinances should be written down on rolls. These rolls are called the *Great book of Yasas* and are kept in the treasury of the chief princes. Wherever a khan ascends the throne, or a great army mobilized, or the princes assemble and begin [to consult together] concerning affairs of the state and the administration thereof, they produce these rolls and model their actions thereon.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> For details of Chingiz Khan's early years and the condition of the Mongols before his rise to power see, Spuler pp. 17-20; Sanders pp. 44-51 and Boyle (1997) pp. 4-23 and pp. 34-39

<sup>133</sup> Boyle pp. 23-4

<sup>134</sup> For example reference to the *Yasa* is made in the letter to pope Innocent IV by Great Khan Güyük. See Dawson p. 85

<sup>135</sup> Boyle (1997) p. 25

The *yasas* therefore were also the beginning of the written mongol language in a script borrowed from the Uighur language. This highlights Chingiz's status as the founder of not only the Mongol polity and empire but also, in a way, the Mongol faith. From the point of view of extending CPT to the pre-enlightenment period, it is noteworthy that Chingiz's career also bears a remarkable similarity to the life and directives of Mohammad, the prophet of Islam. In addition to the fact that Mongols, like Arabs, were nomads, one cannot help but notice that Arabic, before the Qur'an was revealed and recorded, was an oral language. Chingiz's *yasas* and the Qur'an formed the basis for the religious, societal and political practices of both their peoples. Similarly, the speed at which the Mongols and the Muslims conquered other known and well established civilizations of their time forms a virtual mirror image of each other. Finally, the practice of sending messages to a target population for submitting to their commands before an invasion took place is also common in the two traditions.<sup>136</sup> Once again a detailed description of this characteristic of the Mongol empire is not within the scope of this dissertation. I mention this aspect of the *Yasa* only to highlight their fundamental value for the Mongol polity by comparing it to the place held by the Qur'an in the Islamic tradition.

It is also noteworthy that, for the value that it held for Mongol rulers, the *Yasa* is surprisingly vague on most aspects of social and political organization of the community.<sup>137</sup> It stresses on the need to rely on divine support for their missions and

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<sup>136</sup> This aspect of Mongol and Islamic traditions is understudied however for a brief but interesting comparison of the careers of Chingiz Khan and Mohammad see Khazanov, pp. 461-479.

<sup>137</sup> The directives of the *Yasa* can be found scattered in various places in Juvaini's *Ta'Rikh-i-Jahan Gusha* and other sources of Mongol history. However, I am almost paraphrasing a list of its tenets here that

avoid bragging about the strength of their military when sending messages to foreign courts. The *Yasa* instructs the Mongol princes and Khans to hold the wise and skilled of any people in high regard and admonishes allocation of grandiose names and titles for Mongol rulers themselves. To inculcate bravery, strength and endurance in the youth, the *Yasa* requires arrangement of hunting campaigns in peacetime. It sets the minimum age of 20 years for all soldiers and organizes the army in units of ten, hundred, thousand and ten thousand. It gives guidelines to both the ruling khan and the populace about contributions for the upkeep of the Khan and the populace's right to hold on to their possessions. The Khan was entitled only to the contributions made from surplus possessions and had no right over the belongings of an individual who died without heirs. Instructions are also recorded for the establishment of staging posts with horses for envoys in transit at every two miles. In addition to the above, Juvaini also notes that Chingiz was,

“... adherent of no religion and the follower of no creed, he eschewed bigotry, and the preference of one faith to another, and the placing of some above the others; rather he honoured and respected the learned and pious of every sect, recognizing such conduct as the way to the Court of God.”<sup>138</sup>

Thus lack of preference for a single faith also reflected in his *yasas* and he commanded to consider all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another.<sup>139</sup>

Chingiz Khan's descendents made efforts to follow diligently the directives recorded in his *Yasas*. This is also evident from the communiqués of Mongol Great

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Spuler extracts from the Syriac text titled “Maktēbanūt zaḥnē – Chronicon Syriacum” by the famous thirteenth century scholar, Gregorius Bar Hebraeus. See, Spuler, pp. 39-41

<sup>138</sup> Boyle (1997) p. 26

<sup>139</sup> Loc.cit.

Khans to the European leaders long after Chingiz's death. These communiqués have been examined in detail by Eric Voegelin with a focus on gleaning from them the basic framework of Mongol political theory.<sup>140</sup> On their face value, these communiqués seem straightforward orders of submission to the European powers. However, Voegelin argues that these communiqués are essentially legal instruments written to fulfill the requirements of due process in Mongol public law, which was derived from constructing a parallel between the monarchical constitutions of Heaven and Earth.<sup>141</sup> The Mongols, and more specifically Chingiz Khan and his successors, had a duty to rule the world. However, while God's authority and domain was clear, the Khans' rule was yet to be established. As Voegelin suggests, "The Mongol Empire is according to its self interpretation, not a state among states in this world, but an *imperium mundi in statu nascendi*, a World-Empire-in-the-Making."<sup>142</sup>

This conception of one's destiny is bound to have profound impact on one's self-understanding. At the very least, it gives rise to a self-image which is bound to appear extremely arrogant to non-Mongols. This is also an aspect of Mongol life which is duly noted by all who visited these lands during the rule of the great Khans.<sup>143</sup> However, to revert for the moment to the Mongol communiqués, it is important to note that these letters only follow the first command of the *Yasa* and only promise to reveal other

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<sup>140</sup> Voegelin (1940-41) p. 378

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 402 & 403

<sup>142</sup> Ibid p. 404 (emphasis original). A clear manifestation of this self-understanding was the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe. Batu, whose forces eventually invaded Hungary and Poland, was passed on the rulership of the territory beyond Volga from his father Jochi. This undefined region was in essence a potential instead of actual Mongol territory and in order to rule Batu first had to conquer these lands. For details see, Saunders pp.80-1

<sup>143</sup> For example William of Rubruck, p.98

commands once the superiority of the Mongols has been accepted.<sup>144</sup> Again, as Voegelin points out, such a scheme makes war a punitive expedition against those who refuse to accept the heavenly decree of Mongol world-rule rather than a preemptive attack against non aggressors.<sup>145</sup> Once the submission was achieved, either voluntarily or through force, the remaining commands of the *Yasa* would come into play. As is clear from above, these remaining commands pertain to the administrative and civil conduct of the Mongol empire.

Before I finally move on to William of Rubruck's account, a brief note on the impact of the Mongols on the course of world history is in order. Chingiz Khan's career and his *Yasa* both hint on a remarkably goal oriented and rational approach to politics. And because of such an approach, the Mongol episode in world history, according to Spuler, played a fundamental role in determining the later course of development in the Latin west and in Islamic lands. More specifically, in the post-Mongol period, Islam increasingly locked itself in its past by systematizing theology and discouraging any intellectual activity which did not directly contribute towards enhancing religious piety; and as a result, instruction in philosophy and non-theological arts was eliminated from the *Madrasas*. This shift in direction primarily took place because of the very orthodox religio-political stance of the Mamluks of Sultan Baybars, who were eventually successful in repulsing the Mongols and restoring the line of Abbasid Caliphs.<sup>146</sup> The decline of progressive Islam resulted in a gradual shift of the Old World knowledge to

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<sup>144</sup> Dawson, p. 85

<sup>145</sup> Voegelin p.405

<sup>146</sup> See Spuler, p.186-7

the Latin West, which had the good fortune to remain safe from Mongol, or any other so called barbarian invasions, since the Viking raids.<sup>147</sup> I have mentioned above, that it was during the Mongol period that the Far East first opened up for the westerners to actively pursue their mixed motives of trade and religion. In the aftermath of the Mongol decline, when traveling to the east became dangerous once again, the Europeans were forced to consider alternate routes to these lands by sea.<sup>148</sup> This European desire to reach these far away lands was fuelled by the intercultural contacts and the knowledge they generated. This increased intercultural activity, as I have suggested above, was a result of the administrative policies of the Mongol rulers which, as the *Yasa* reveals, were focused on revenue generation and smooth access to even the remotest parts of the empire. However, for the Europeans, the Mongol policies created the opportunity for the first time to gain precise knowledge of what existed only in legends and myths.<sup>149</sup>

One can easily glean from the above discussion many additional possible avenues of enquiry in context of the impact that the Mongols had on world history and the influence that Mongol political ideas might have had on the history, thought and attitudes of the Islamic, Chinese and Western civilizations. It is, however, neither possible (because of limited space) nor advisable (due to the limited scope of this dissertation) to venture into that discussion. My purpose in bringing out these historical details of the Mongols has precisely been, as I stated earlier, to frame William of Rubruck's account for the specific conception of CPT discussed in the previous chapter.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., pp. 187-88

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.188

<sup>149</sup> For example Japan and Java appeared for the first time on the European maps. Similarly historians argue that the knowledge of gun powder and its use reached Europe as an result of the contacts initiated during this period and pursued later by Europeans. Ibid., p.189 and Appendix 2. pp. 196-199

William of Rubruck's account features prominently as the most authentic European source in almost all general histories of thirteenth century Mongols.<sup>150</sup> I began this chapter with a mention of some unique stylistic characteristics of William's account as pointed out by Campbell. She also believes that William's account marks a new era in the history of travel writing.<sup>151</sup> This distinction becomes all the more important when we take seriously Campbell's claim that "the history of travel writing in the pre-enlightenment period is the history of Europe's relations with the Orient."<sup>152</sup> William's account is, therefore, not only important as a source on the Mongols, but also holds serious merit on its own terms in providing a model for the role of the witness in observing alien phenomena. This is to say, the method that William adopted in writing his travelogue was up to him and the commendable manner in which he accomplished this task is independent of the uniqueness of the circumstances he encountered in the Mongol lands. Part of this merit also comes from the fact that William accurately records not only what he saw, but also what he felt when he saw it.<sup>153</sup> As Campbell illustrates, by juxtaposing William's narrative against Marco Polo's account, the former has no points to prove and the generalizations that William draws are based on verifiable experience rather than conjecture.<sup>154</sup> Of course, Campbell's discussion and treatment of William's account is within the thematic boundaries of her broader work on the history

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<sup>150</sup> For example see Spuler, pp. 70-114; Chambers, pp. 137-142; Saunders, pp. 101-105 & 156

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, Pp. 112 & 120

<sup>152</sup> It is also noteworthy that, for her purposes, Campbell considers the new world as part of Asia as for her east is not a geographical distinction but a conceptual one. Ibid., p.4.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 113

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

and development of the genre of travel narratives. Yet she makes the significant observation that it was

only with the thirteenth century's penetration into the secular East ... [that] the literary struggle toward the establishment of the modern genre of travel writing finally, formally begin... an experience that calls for new conventions and challenges the powers of language with an unprecedented object – the secular journey through the real world. ... in Marco Polo's and Friar William's accounts we find ... structures that follow space through time – emphatically the *traveler's* time, not the time of the scriptural past or the unnarratable, unvisitable present of *Wonders*.<sup>155</sup>

Campbell's forceful endorsement of the significance of William's work also implicitly recognizes many novel opportunities made available to Europeans, for the first time, during the Mongol era. If the history of travel is the history of Europe's relations with the Orient, then the Mongol episode and William's narrative are the two most significant sources to understand the development of relations between the West and its Oriental other in their embryonic stage.

The significance of William's account in the context of the unique circumstances of the Mongol era and its implications for the inter-religious/ inter-civilizational dialogue during the high Middle Ages, has also been discussed by Nederman.<sup>156</sup> In fact, Nederman's work, in this context, is more appropriate for the purposes of this dissertation. Where Campbell identifies William's place in the overall history of travel narratives, Nederman's treatment of his account is focused on bringing forth the novelty of William's experience within a thematic analysis of European discourses of toleration up to the early modern period. He not only strongly argues against the common

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. pp. 120-121

<sup>156</sup> Nederman (2000), pp. 53-68 and Nederman et.al., (2006)



misconception that thinkers in the Latin Middle Ages were restricted by the unitary nature of Latin Christianity to have any worthwhile views on tolerance as a worthy principle or practice but also convincingly illustrates that reasoned defense of the virtues of religious toleration can be found in the works of thinkers as early as about 1100 A.D.<sup>157</sup> Once again William's account, as Nederman argues, holds a special place in this pre-Enlightenment debate on toleration. More specifically, the contact between William and the Mongols provides us with the rare opportunity to see the actual act of navigating a religiously and culturally diverse and tolerant society by a Latin Christian missionary. This contact brings forth all the problems of inter-civilizational and inter-religious dialogue while highlighting the possibilities and practicability of peaceful coexistence.<sup>158</sup> In his later work, Nederman and his coauthors use William's example specifically in context of CPT's preference for the dialogical model of philosophical hermeneutics as the best way forward for comparative theorizing. Here again, Nederman's approach is instructive for CPT, as it clearly demonstrates that the Gadamerian *fusion of horizons* is not always a given outcome of an inter-civilizational dialogue.<sup>159</sup> But from the perspective of this dissertation and the conception of CPT elaborated upon in the previous chapter, the most significant aspect of Nederman's work on toleration is his conviction that

One may enlarge the horizons of current toleration theorists by means of a careful examination and appreciation of how early thinkers dealt with similar issues about diversity of human conviction and action. In turning our gaze towards the Middle Ages, we encounter a rich and complex

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<sup>157</sup> Nederman (2000) pp.1-10

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>159</sup> Nederman et.al (2006)

reality, in which thinkers as early as the twelfth century challenged the validity of repressive practices, proposed remarkably tolerant doctrines, and were sometimes prepared to respect deep differences among personal and group beliefs and actions, especially in religious matters.<sup>160</sup>

The spirit in which CPT scholarship started and has grown is verbatim the conviction expressed above. Nederman, in my opinion, provides substantial incentive to comparative theorists for expanding their horizons beyond the late modern period and seeking redress of the monopolistic tendencies which have taken root in western political theory. It was precisely the dissatisfaction with this aspect of traditional political theory that formed the very basis for investing in CPT as a new subfield; and the bias introduced by the monopolistic tendencies, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is not just restricted to the west but to a modern west. Furthermore, the notion that it is only in context of the recent wave of globalization and technological advancement necessitates a better understanding of the Other is once again rendered deficient when we consider examples from the pre-Enlightenment period such as William's and others discussed in later chapters of this dissertation.

I have, until now, mentioned the unique stylistic characteristics and historical importance of William's account as discussed by other scholars. But as I stated earlier, my motive in choosing William's account for this dissertation is quite specific, i.e., to see what his encounter with the Mongols reveals about the contribution of the Other in the making of the Self. The first eight chapters of William's report to Louis IX give a general description of the Mongols, focusing mainly on regional geography and history,

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. pp. 9-10

Mongol dietary habits, domicile and norms of societal conduct.<sup>161</sup> The strangeness of what William encounters, even during this early part of his journey, is evident from his comment that the Mongols and their land was like a different world to him. However, the impression that one gets from this portion of his report is that of a detached observer who has no stake in what goes on in the Mongol society.<sup>162</sup> From the ninth chapter onwards, the tone of William's report changes from that of an observer to that of a participant. Interestingly, it is also here that he first refers to the Mongols as Barbarians and reaffirms his analogy of a different world.<sup>163</sup> After initial attempts to be polite, William concludes that the Mongols are a thankless and an extremely arrogant people and believe that nobody should deny them anything.<sup>164</sup> Upon taking leave from the Mongols, in this initial encounter, William once again compares the experience of getting away from the natives as an equivalent of escaping from "the clutches of demons."<sup>165</sup> Mongol impudence and thanklessness, as we shall see, would be the least of William's worries during his long journey in this strange land. Yet it is these basic attributes of a civilized people, in the western mind, that shape William's impression of the Mongols.

Soon after this first encounter, William comes face to face the more concrete difficulties involved in accomplishing his mission. William's mission, as he repeatedly claims, was a result of both his will to preach Christianity in Mongol lands and also to

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<sup>161</sup> William of Rubruck, pp. 59-96

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.71

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.97

<sup>164</sup> Interestingly, William, during this encounter also refers to the mongol self image of being 'masters of the world' but makes no reference to the Yasa or official version of this claim as believed by the Mongol rulers. Ibid., pp.97-98

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

fulfill the order of his superior, Louis IX, to deliver a letter to Sartach, a Mongol prince, who, according to a rumor in Europe, had converted to Christianity.<sup>166</sup> It is, however, interesting that it was the possession of a letter by Louis IX, the emperor of the Franks, that resulted in William being pushed from one court to another to eventually reach the supreme ruler of the Mongols, the Great Khan Möngke.<sup>167</sup> I shall return to this aspect of William's journey later, but for the moment I want to go back to the more serious problems mentioned above. The most fundamental issue in having a successful or even a meaningful conversation with the Mongols was, of course, the language.<sup>168</sup> Quite early on William describes his interpreter as "neither intelligent nor articulate."<sup>169</sup> But the problem, as becomes clear later and is acknowledged by William, too, was greater than mere lack of intelligence or eloquence of part of the interpreter; instead, it related to a total absence of a comparative vocabulary or expression in the Mongol language for the things that William wanted to say. This is especially frustrating for William, because whenever he saw the opportunity or had the inclination to preach Christianity, his interpreter openly admitted that he did not know how to express the things William was saying.<sup>170</sup>

If language was one barrier, the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and religiously pluralistic nature of the Mongol society was another. Initially, William tries to identify with the problems of the Christians. For example, when discussing the Russians, he

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<sup>166</sup> Among other places see *Ibid.*, p. 97 & 101.

<sup>167</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 119

<sup>168</sup> Barriers involved in having a meaningful dialogue between William and the Mongols have also been discussed in detail by Nederman (2000), pp. 58-60.

<sup>169</sup> William, p.101

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* p.108. Also see Nederman who makes note of various such instances throughout William's narrative. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

writes, “Because the Russians are Christians, they [Mongols] put Saracens in charge of them.”<sup>171</sup> William’s observation here is contradictory and refutes several stories, given in the accounts of Rashīd Al-Dīn and Juvaini, about Mongol policy objectives.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, the second part of William’s observation is more telling about the actual Mongol policy, i.e., “and when they can supply no more gold or silver, they and their little ones are herded out into the wilds to tend the Tartars’ livestock.”<sup>173</sup> Mongol policy as given in Chingiz Khan’s *Yasa* was to be religion neutral as long as all religions served Mongol political purposes. Indeed, one finds several instances in the Mongol Empire where civil administrators were of a different religious affiliation than the populace under their control. However, the reasons for such appointments in fact prove that the Mongols did not prefer one religion over another. The criterion often used was the ability of the person appointed.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, even though Chingiz’s *Yasa* instructed his successors to attribute all knowledge and power to the Mongol god (i.e., *Tengri* or eternal Heaven), when sending communiqués to other rulers, he made no requirement to enforce Mongol beliefs on conquered peoples.<sup>175</sup>

Following from above, it is also not unusual to find claims of Mongol preference to one religion over other by Muslim authors. For instance writing about Güyük Khan (second great Khan after Chingiz), Juvaini claims that he

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<sup>171</sup> William, *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>172</sup> See, Boyle (1997), pp. and Boyle (1971) pp.

<sup>173</sup> William, p.107

<sup>174</sup> For references to literature which explores the administrative policies of the Mongols see William, n.1 p. 107 by Peter Jackson. For the task oriented appointments see the instance where Chingiz Khan changes his decision to annihilate a whole conquered peasant population when convinced by a Chinese administrator that he could make the region and its people productive and benefit the Mongol Empire see Saunders, pp. 67-68

<sup>175</sup> See Saunders, p. 68

... went to great lengths to honoring the Christians and their priests and when this was noised abroad, priests set their faces towards his court from Damascus and Rum and Baghdad and the As and the Rus; .... He naturally was prone to denounce the faith of Mohammad. Consequently the cause of the Christians flourished during his reign, and no Moslem dared to raise his voice...<sup>176</sup>

Of course, Juvaini blames Güyük's Christian advisors for this injustice to the Muslims.

But in an even more telling passage on Batu, he writes;

He [Batu] was a king that inclined towards no faith or religion: he recognized only the belief in God and blindly attached to no sect or creed... The kings of every land and the monarchs of the horizons and everyone else came to visit him; and before their offerings ... could be taken away to the treasury, he had bestowed them all upon Mongol and Moslem and all that were present.<sup>177</sup>

Juvaini, who is Muslim, translates Batu's lack of preference for any specific religion as an indication of his faith in one God, which, if we follow the *Yasa*, is most likely the Mongol sky-god *Tengri*. Still his audience, in comparison to Güyük's, shifts dramatically from Christian priests to kings and monarchs of the world. And even though Juvaini admits that Batu distributed offerings that he received to all who were present, he remembers specifically to mention Mongols and Moslems.

William's observation about the Mongol practice to appoint Muslim administrators over a Christian populace and Juvaini's understanding about Batu's lack of special attention to the Christians, as against Güyük's practice, reveals what I argued earlier, that despite the danger that the Mongols posed to both Christians and Muslims the primary concerns of representatives of both these civilizations remained focused on their age old rivalry with each other. What is more, it shows that favor for one's own

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<sup>176</sup> Boyle (1997) p. 259

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 267

civilization was gauged in terms of absence of the same for the opponent. William's own encounter with Sartach (Batu's son) and Batu, near the middle of his journey, is also noteworthy. In particular, he notes that when he was conveyed the order to visit Batu's court by Sartach secretaries, they told him to refrain from saying that their master was Christian and cautioned him that he was a Mo'al.<sup>178</sup> William perhaps correctly understands that Mongols believed that Christians were a people rather than a faith-based affiliation. But interestingly he refuses to understand the Mongol limitation in grasping this concept and translates it as yet another example of their arrogance and their desire to promote their own name above all others.<sup>179</sup> Even more important here is the fact that William is not totally insensitive to the Mongol concern for being known by their correct identity, as he clearly understands why they do not want to be called Tartars.<sup>180</sup> For all we know, Sartach's representatives could be cautioning William for his own good and to stay clear of any unintended trouble at Batu's court, who, as we can ascertain from Juvaini's observation, did not prefer any one religion over another in the true Mongol fashion.

William's experience at Batu's court once again confirmed his fears about Mongol indifference to his message and mission. When Batu asked him to speak, William went down on one knee, "as one does to a man,"<sup>181</sup> but was admonished by his guide to kneel with both knees on the ground which, for William, was done only during

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<sup>178</sup> William, p. 120.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid pp. 121-125. It is also interesting that even though William knows the difference between a Mongol and a Tartar but he nevertheless continuously calls them Tartar, throughout his report, as if he is defiant and wants to use a name that they do not prefer.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p.133.

prayer. Given his posture at that particular moment, he therefore, decided to choose his words from a prayer stating that

Be absolutely sure that you will not possess the things of Heaven without having become a Christian. For God says, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”<sup>182</sup>

On hearing these words, Batu smiled and others present in his court ridiculed William, who bore this with patience and, through his interpreter, stated his actual reason for visiting Sartach. Batu did not take any offence at William’s words and instead gave him the honor to share a drink with him, which was regarded highly by the Mongols. This again affirms Juvaini’s claim that Batu was indifferent to Christianity.<sup>183</sup>

It is possible that the significance of William’s experience at Batu’s court may simply be a reconfirmation of his feelings that Mongols were arrogant and uncivilized. Still, at least one that William records is of great significance, i.e., the reason for Batu to ask William to go to Möngke’s court.<sup>184</sup> The letter that William carried from Louis IX asked for permission to allow William to stay in the Mongol lands, which only Möngke could authorize. Batu played an important role in the election of Möngke as Great Chan. There are numerous references by Juvaini and Rashīd Al-Dīn attesting to his power within the Mongol ranks, yet his admission that he was not authorized to take the decision of allowing William to stay in Mongol lands is confirmation of the strict hierarchy maintained in the Mongol system based on Chingiz Khan’s commandments in

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. In addition, William also mentions that Batu was absolutely unforgiving to Buri (his first cousin) and beheaded him because he, in a drunken state, mentioned Batu’s name with disrespect in front of his men. This could be taken as an example of both, Mongol intolerance for insubordination or Batu’s fury. The prayer chosen by William could have provoked Batu’s anger but William was probably saved because he was not a Mongol. Ibid. p.145

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.134



the *Yasa*.<sup>185</sup> Second, Batu's decision also casts a different light on William's whole mission. Among the many scholars who have examined and analyzed William's report, only Sinor claims that William undertook his journey because of his own religious zeal and not on the instructions of Louis IX.<sup>186</sup> Batu's reasoning, that Louis IX had asked for permission for William to stay, and William's references in his report to Louis that at no point did he portray himself as Louis's envoy, confirm Sinor's reading. Sinor, however, does mention the reasons for Louis's interest in renewing contacts with the Mongols after Pope Innocent IV had miserably failed in developing any workable relationship with them. More specifically, Louis's efforts were based on a visit by two Mongol envoys in 1248 with a proposal for an alliance. These Mongol envoys who had Christian names reported that Great Khan Güyük and a number of other Mongol dignitaries had been baptized and now had the desire to help the crusaders to repossess the holy land.<sup>187</sup> While this confirms Juvaini's claims of Güyük's Christian leanings, it does not sit well with the letter that Güyük wrote to Pope Innocent IV (both of which are mentioned earlier in this chapter). Leaving aside the truth of the matter of Güyük's religious inclinations, what I want to highlight here, by referring to Sinor's argument, is William's absolute disappointment upon eventual failure of his mission. However, before I discuss

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<sup>185</sup> See Boyle (1997) pp. 559-56. Also see William's reference to the respectful greetings that Batu's and Möngke's envoys received in each other's camps. Ibid. p.146

<sup>186</sup> Sinor, pp 524-525

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp. 521-524. This also confirms Juvaini's claims of Güyük's Christian leanings mentioned earlier in this chapter. William also refers to Güyük's envoys to Louis IX when asked by Möngke if there had ever been envoys from or the French to each other. P. 230

this aspect, I want to mention one other extremely significant event that took place when William was at Möngke's court in Karakorum.<sup>188</sup>

The journey to Möngke's court and the time that William spent there is the most interesting, and also the most revealing, part of William's journey. During these several months of travel, William first saw the real potential of actually converting the locals to Christianity. However, this only remained a potential, again because of his lack of a lack of a good interpreter.<sup>189</sup> Upon reaching Karakorum, William's first reaction was one of sheer amazement at the religious plurality that he witnessed in the Mongol capital.<sup>190</sup> Some of these religious practices, while detestable to William, are also a source of great inquisitiveness because of their novelty and an absolute lack of a parallel in the west such as Buddhism. In this regard, the following observations are extremely revealing, especially because here we find William in a similar fix as his interpreter, who could not find parallel vocabulary to express the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith in the Mongol language. He writes;

Wherever they go, they also have constantly in their hands a string of a hundred or two hundred beads, like the rosaries we carry...<sup>191</sup>

When I saw them I took them for Franks, being clean shaven, but the miters they were wearing on their heads were of paper<sup>192</sup>

Wherever they go, they always wear saffron tunics, fairly tight and with a belt outside, exactly like Franks, and have a cloak hanging from the left shoulder and folded round the chest and back to their right side, the way a deacon wears a chasuble in Lent.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> I will be using contemporary spellings of Karakorum instead of William's 'Caracorum'

<sup>189</sup> William. p.142

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. pp 150-152

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p 153-154

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p.154

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

The significant thing in these passages is the fact that William is able to describe alien Buddhist religious practices, which are unheard of in the west, by emphasizing their similarity to western religious rites. This similarity, as William emphasizes, is such that it is hard to tell the difference between Buddhist monks and French priests. This is to suggest that the barbarian (or in this case the infidel) Other, when encountered, can only be described and understood in terms which are understandable to the Self. The strangeness of Buddhist practices and customs were after all not so strange when William reflected on them and was required to explain them to a potential audience. However, the realization that there are similarities is immediately obscured when William talks to the monks; the conversation about religious beliefs, which is cut short by the inability of the interpreter yet again, immediately creates the difference which distinguishes William from the infidels.<sup>194</sup>

The other and perhaps the most remarkable event in William's whole journey was what Southern has called "the first world debate in modern history between representatives of East and West."<sup>195</sup> Scholars have analyzed this debate from multiple vantage points.<sup>196</sup> However, one element of it that I find most interesting, and which is also mentioned by Samarrai, albeit from a totally different perspective and extremely briefly, is the fact that the alliance that formed before the debate began was between the Christians, the Muslims and the Nestorians against the Buddhists.<sup>197</sup> Of the faiths represented in this debate, the three that had the most similarity combined against the

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid. pp. 155-156

<sup>195</sup> Cited by Samarrai in Blanks and Faressetto (1999) p. 139.

<sup>196</sup> See for example Nederman, pp. 62-64. and Southern, pp. 47-52

<sup>197</sup> Samarrai, p.139

one which had little to share. What is more, William convinced the Nestorians to make an alliance with the Muslims against the Buddhists based on his understanding of similarities between Islam and Christianity.<sup>198</sup> As Nederman points out, there is no indication in William's text regarding who won the debate or even for that matter what could be termed as victory in such a debate.<sup>199</sup>

From my perspective, the debate represents the type of discourse promoted and encouraged by CPT in its embryonic form. The circumstances in which William's journey took place and its miserable outcome in terms of his ultimate objective of evangelizing the Mongols are instructive in understanding the complexities involved in an inter-cultural encounter. William's account is perhaps the most suitable place to begin a discussion of CPT, primarily because it simply does not allow us the luxury to build neat imaginary dialogues between representatives of different civilizations. Moreover, if we accept Sinor's claim that William's journey was a result of his own religious zeal then maybe in his person we have found the first comparative theorist, i.e., especially if we accept Euben's definition of theory, as I explained in the previous chapter. Similarly when we shift our focus from William to the Mongol age we find globalization in its embryonic form. Again the central role ascribed to this phenomenon by comparativists seems to be overstated. As I argued in the last chapter, the Mongols were powerful, but their policies of religious toleration and facilitating international commerce allowed representatives of threatened, if not weaker, civilization to visit previously inaccessible regions of the world. The suddenness of the Mongol rise is yet another factor to keep in

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, and William, p.231. For the whole debate see pp. 232-235

<sup>199</sup> Nederman, p.64

mind, as in terms of non existence of precedence, the Mongol rise parallels CPT's claims about the recent wave of globalization and technological advancement. The surprise with which the Mongols took the world forced members of established civilizations to reflect on how they understood themselves. In terms of methodological guidelines, encounters between the Mongols and William, as well as representatives of other civilizations, instruct us to entertain the notion that inter-civilizational contact almost invariably results in broadening of horizons. As Nederman and others have highlighted, this broadening of horizons does not always translate into a Gadamerian *fusion of horizons*. As we see from the analysis of William's narrative above, the Mongols remained "no people and foolish nation" in western eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

### WISE MEN OF THE FRANKS<sup>200</sup>: JESUIT MISSIONARIES AT THE COURT OF EMPEROR AKBAR THE GREAT (A.D. 1580-1583)

This chapter discusses the observations of the first delegation of Jesuit missionaries invited by the Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great to his court. The first Jesuit mission came to and stayed in India for approximately three years (A.D. 1580-1583). In his invitation, addressed to the Chief Fathers of the order of St. Paul, Akbar had expressed the desire to know more about the Christian faith and asked requested the presence of, “learned priests, who should bring with them principle books of the Law and the Gospel, so that I [Akbar] may learn the law and what is most perfect in it.”<sup>201</sup> This was indeed a most fortunate development for the Society of Jesus, which had piggybacked on Portuguese success and established itself firmly in India at the time of this invitation.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, the prospect of converting the Mughal emperor to Christianity was directly in line with the general missionary practice of the Society, which preferred to achieve mass conversions by employing a top-down approach.<sup>203</sup> There is ample evidence that the Jesuits were wishfully optimistic in their assessment of

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<sup>200</sup> Persian: *Dānāyāni Farang* – The term used to honor either the king of Portugal or Spain in the invitation to begin friendly relations between Europe and India; written by Abul Fazl at Akbar’s behest. See Haider (1998) pp.8 and 10-11. According to Koch the letter was definitely addressed to Philip II of Spain, see (1982) p.15

<sup>201</sup> Jesuits were popularly called Paulists because of the college of St. Paul in Goa. See Correia –Afonso (1980) p.6. For English translation of the actual invitation see prologue p.1.

<sup>202</sup> For a brief account of the arrival of Jesuits in India see Ibid. pp.6-7. Also for a discussion of the evolution of Jesuit missionary strategy in foreign lands see the discussion in chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>203</sup> See discussion in the next chapter of this dissertation.

the Indian emperor's readiness to adopt their faith. But the record of their observations also reveals that in their zeal to Christianize the whole of India through its Emperor, the Jesuits failed miserably to understand Akbar's politics or personality. His interest in Christianity, though genuine, was nothing more than his general desire or curiosity to know about the essence of diverse religious traditions. This desire, and the politics which took shape because of it, are perhaps the outcome of the problems and challenges he confronted in consolidating his empire the most distinguishing characteristic of which was religious diversity. As a consequence of this situation, Akbar invited and encouraged discussions on doctrinal issues among delegates from various religious traditions at his court.<sup>204</sup> There is no single consolidated record of these debates, but this problem is somewhat compensated for by the fact that participants and contemporary historians on opposing sides of the debates have recorded their perspectives in accounts of Akbar's reign, in particular, and Indian history, in general.

The primary source that I have chosen for analyzing this encounter between early modern India and Europe is the commentary of Father Antonio Monserrate, a member of the first Jesuit delegation.<sup>205</sup> Monserrate accompanied Akbar on his military campaign to Afghanistan and was aware of the plot which prompted that invasion. His observations on India generally, and more specifically on Akbar's interest in art and literature, his religious leanings, style of government and warfare, and his political ideas, are a treasure trove of valuable insights into the European interpretation of early modern Indian

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<sup>204</sup> This is indeed an oversimplification as Akbar's interest was not merely restricted to resolving the problems of ruling over a multi-confessional polity. Discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>205</sup> Monserrate (2003) hereinafter referred to as the commentary

society, culture and religions. In addition to Monserrate's commentary, I will also look at the letters that Monserrate and his colleagues sent to the Society superiors during their stay at the court.<sup>206</sup> Second, I will rely on the *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Akbar's partisan and minister (vizier) Abul Fazl.<sup>207</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari* is the third volume of Akbar's court history, the *Akbar Nama*, and is a detailed gazetteer of Akbar's reign. The *Ain* will help us in contextualizing the observations made by Monserrate in his commentary, on the one hand, and informing us about Akbar's political thought, on the other. As with the Jesuit missionaries, I will also be using letters sent from Akbar's court to foreign rulers, governors and local leaders within his Empire and his allies. Third, I will consider *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh (Selections from Histories)* of Al Badaoni.<sup>208</sup> Al Badaoni was Akbar's courtier, too, but wrote a dissident account of his reign. His history sheds important light on the intellectual tensions which were the hallmark of Akbar's India. The *Ain* and the *Tawarikh* are massive works, the completion of which took decades, and they cover much more than what is of immediate concern in this chapter; it is significant, therefore, to mention that the focus here is intentionally limited to the sections of these works that deal with explaining Akbar's political thought and practice and are also relevant in context of inter-civilizational contacts.

These sources show that Akbar's invitation to the Jesuits was initiated in the context of the ongoing arguments at his court about the nature and purpose of the sovereign's role and in terms of the relationship between religion and politics. By virtue

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<sup>206</sup> Correia-Afonso (1980)

<sup>207</sup> Allami (1993) herein after referred to as *Ain*. I have used Blochman's and Jarrett's english translation of the original Persian done in three volumes.

<sup>208</sup> Al Badaoni (1990) herein after referred to as *Tawarikh*.



of their training and missionary methodological practices, the Jesuits were well equipped to engage in these debates and hold their ground against rival religious traditions.

However, historical records left by the Jesuits suggest that they read more into the imperial invitation than was merited. The Jesuits in fact treated these religious debates almost as an irritant in effectively pursuing their ultimate goal to convert the emperor. Their inability to comprehend with the broader context in which they received the imperial invitation reveals the significance of the mindset with which one approaches the Other for an inter-civilizational dialogue.

The choice of Akbar's India as a case to be included in this dissertation is also significant from the perspective that the Mughals were descendants of the Mongols. Akbar's political thought exhibited visible signs of influence from key features of Mongol political ideas, in particular, the continuing impact of the code of laws allegedly developed by Chingiz Khan.<sup>209</sup> This aspect of Akbar's lineage, both personal and political, represents a certain degree of continuity with the case discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, and from a European perspective, India played the role of a launching-pad for Jesuit missionary work in the east. For instance, Matteo Ricci, whose life and work in China are the subject of the next chapter, began his missionary career in the east from India. The same holds for Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary of note to work in the east, who used India as a base for approaching Japan and China. These two features provide a broader civilizational context for analyzing this encounter

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<sup>209</sup> See a discussion of these laws, known as the *Yasa*, in the previous chapter. Also for a discussion of the persistence of these laws in the policies adopted by Timurid rulers of India until Akbar's time see Iqtidar Alam Khan (1973) *Introduction* pp. ix-xii. Haider (1992) pp.53-62. Also for a history of Mughals' Mongol lineage and their connection to the family of Chingiz Khan see Malleson (2005) pp.9-13.

between the western civilization and Mughal India. Another significant element that needs to be at the back of any analyst's mind when discussing Mughal India is the fact that the Mughals themselves were foreigners in India. Akbar's reign is interesting specifically because, even though he was the third in succession among the Mughal rulers, he was the first who actively worked towards consolidating his empire and forging a nation from the religiously and culturally diverse Indian population around the figure of the emperor.<sup>210</sup> In crafting his political plan, Akbar and his vizier Abul Fazl borrowed ideas from the Central Perso-Islamic, Turko-Islamic and Greek traditions.<sup>211</sup> As I have stated earlier, the Jesuits failed to read Akbar's secular intentions and interpreted his politics, which surely was unconventional for a Muslim monarch, as being directed against Islam and therefore in favor of Christianity. The Jesuit misinterpretation was due to western civilization's past experience with Islam.

Akbar was the third Mughal ruler of India but the first two, Babur and Humayun, were merely conquerors.<sup>212</sup> Babur remained busy in acquiring more of India's territory and his son Humayun in re-acquiring what he inherited from his father but had lost because of lack of interest and political acumen to deal with matters of the state.<sup>213</sup> Akbar, who was Humayun's son, was the first among Mughal rulers who consistently enlarged the territorially meager empire inherited from his father and also invested great effort in consolidating his conquests. Akbar achieved this consolidation simultaneously on two fronts. First, the measures were taken to build an infrastructure for the efficient

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<sup>210</sup> For a detailed discussion of this aspect of Akbar's India see Ali (1996) pp. 80-88. And for a comprehensive literature review of works dealing with this aspect see O'Hanlon (2007) pp. 889-891

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. pp. 80-88

<sup>212</sup> For a detailed discussion of this aspect of the Mughal dynasty see Malleson op.cit. pp. 1-8

<sup>213</sup> For details see Ibid. pp. 57-70

administration of the empire through the creation of a composite ruling class.<sup>214</sup> Second, the imperial patronage was directed to the arts, i.e., translations of religious and secular literature from ancient and regional languages into Persian, painting, architecture, religious and secular debates at the court and historiography.<sup>215</sup> As a result of these measures, Akbar was successful in establishing himself as the first “national king of India,” meaning that his status as the ruler was accepted by all in his empire regardless of their ethnic, religious or cultural affiliation.<sup>216</sup> A crucial connotation that this term suggests is that Akbar was successful in molding an Indian nation founded on ideals independent of the religious affiliations of the populace in his empire. While this was no small feat given the times during which Akbar accomplished this task, it also raises some interesting questions regarding the popular notion that India was ruled by a Muslim minority for over 700 years till the advent of the Europeans. As the discussion of Akbar’s political thought below suggests, he was able to achieve such a status primarily through the consistent rejection of the inherited obligations and influences of his Muslim birth.

The key features of Akbar’s political thought as mentioned by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*, and summarized here at the cost of oversimplification, seem to be extracted from his tendency to reject an ideologically bound traditional basis of identity. In the context

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<sup>214</sup> For further information on his administrative measures, development of a composite ruling class and politically motivated alliances see Ali (1993) pp.699- 710, Chandra, Grewal and Habib (1992) pp. 61-72, Zaidi (1994) pp. 76-82, Khan (2001) pp. 16-45 and Khan (1968) reprinted in Eaton (2003) pp. 120-132. Also see Hussain (1999) pp.1-10

<sup>215</sup> For details about Akbar’s patronage of these facets of his rule see, among many others: For painting *Ain* pp.113-115, Brend (1988-89) pp. 281-315, Dimand (1953) pp. 46-51, Minissale (1998) pp.61-64 and Soucek (1987) pp.166-181. For translations, historiography, literature and debates; Ali (1992) pp. 38-45, Mehta (1992) pp. 54-60, Alam (1998) pp. 317-349, Bhadani (1992) pp. 46-53 and Hambye (1982) pp. 3-12

<sup>216</sup> See Chandra et.al., *Ibid.* p. 64

of India, he opted for the state to reject both the dominant religious ideologies, i.e., Hinduism as well as Islam, and proposed instead a synthesis anchored on the notion of *sulh-i-kul* or universal peace. By doing so he attempted to divest the Muslim and Hindu officials of the state, of the tendency on part of each, to view the Other from their respective religious frameworks of thinking. This was no doubt a truly ingenious approach to solving the problems of a multi-confessional polity. However, what is even more remarkable is the manner in which Abul Fazl lays the theoretical foundation for *sulh-i-kul*. He writes

God, the Giver of intellect and the Creator of matter, forms mankind as He pleases, and gives to some comprehensiveness, and to others narrowness of disposition. Hence the origin of two opposite tendencies among men, one class of whom turn to religious (*dīn*) and the other class to worldly thoughts (*dunyā*). Each of these two divisions selects different leaders,<sup>217</sup> and mutual repulsiveness grows to open rupture.<sup>218</sup>

In the above quote it is noteworthy that the nature of the temporal world or the human condition is defined in terms of the creation of intellect in man instead of the act of creation of the first man. It is the intellect which equips human beings with reason, whether limited or comprehensive, and makes them realize their self-interest. Based on this self-interest, human beings then choose their leaders in distinct religious or worldly arenas. It is noteworthy that Abul Fazl emphasizes the inherently conflicting nature of religious and worldly reasoning. This could lead one to assume that in Abul Fazl's scheme conflict is not only an unavoidable, but also an irresolvable feature of human existence. He therefore clarifies in a later passage by exploring the question whether

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<sup>217</sup> Abul Fazl's note "As prophets, the leaders of the Church; and kings, the leaders of the State." *Ain* p. 171 note 1. Italics and caps original.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171

there is any possibility of achieving common ground between the conflicting religious and worldly tendencies of men and answers in a matter of fact manner that,

When the time of reflection comes, and men shake off the prejudices of their education, the threads of the web of religious blindness break, and the eye sees the glory of harmoniousness.<sup>219</sup>

One can detect a clear predilection for reason over revelation in Akbar's thought via Abul Fazl's reasoning.<sup>220</sup> However, before one goes further, another important point to note here is the presence of a glorious harmony in God's world which the humans can only recognize after they have shed the fallacious images conjured because of the presence of varying degrees of intellect. If God's world is harmonious, as Abul Fazl repeatedly asserts in elegant Persian prose and verse throughout this chapter in the *Ain*, then the blame for strife in human society lies squarely with human intellect, which ascribes false significance to religious or temporal matters.<sup>221</sup> Divisions between religious and temporal worlds thus are creations of the human intellect and not of God and therefore untrue. Furthermore, since God is one and he created man and his intellect along with everything else in the world, humans, when they are able to see beyond their

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> As Abul Fazl's English translator Blochmann states in a footnote to this passage, that the original text uses the Persian word *taqlīd* which he has translated into "religious blindness." *Taqlīd* he further clarifies means "to put a collar on one's own neck to follow another blindly, especially in religious matters."<sup>220</sup> Blochmann also cites Badaoni in further justification for his translation who mentions the use of the term *Taqlidiyāt* (things against reason) by Abul Fazl and his partisans when referring to matters pertaining to prophet-hood and revealed religion. Badaoni blamed the Portuguese to have taught this line of reasoning to Abul Fazl. See Blochmann in *ibid* p. 171 note. 5

<sup>221</sup> For instance Abul Fazl writes "There is but one lamp in this house, in the rays of which, wherever I look, a bright assembly meets me." See, *ibid*.

self created images, find that everything in the world is in perfect harmony and universal peace reigns simply because the cause of conflict has been overcome.<sup>222</sup>

Yet, the ability to see beyond this deception is not everyone's forte, primarily because of the factors mentioned earlier, but also because even if some people possessed such wisdom, the majority's inability to see beyond the deception would cause its members to be cautious in the interest of self-preservation.<sup>223</sup> Abul Fazl states that if a time comes when a people or a nation as a whole learn to worship truth, they invariably look towards their king because of his exalted status. These people then also expect their king to be their spiritual guide, because he alone is ordained with the "ray of Divine wisdom."<sup>224</sup> He claims that Akbar is such a king, indifferent to the usual joys and sorrows of the temporal world, and "is the spiritual guide of the nation, and sees in the performance of his duties a means of pleasing God."<sup>225</sup> As the bearer of divine authority and a representative of the divine will, it thus becomes Akbar's responsibility to avert conflict of any sort between the people under his rule and inform them of the true nature of things beyond the veil cast by imperfect human intellect over human understanding.

Abul Fazl also distinguishes between a true king and a selfish ruler. He states that in the case of the former, the many advantages that a mighty king has are longer lasting whereas in the case of a selfish ruler these are short lived.<sup>226</sup> This is so because a true king does not attach himself to the outward grandeur of the empire and dedicates himself

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<sup>222</sup> Habib argues that this notion of universal peace goes back to Ibn al Arabi. See Chandra et.al., *Ibid.* p. 69

<sup>223</sup> *Ain*. pp. 171-172

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* p. 172. For a detailed discussion of use of metaphors of light in Mughal ideology see Asher (2007) pp. 161-194.

<sup>225</sup> *Ain* *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* p.2

to removing oppression and provide for everything which is good. These include, among other things, security, health, justice, faithfulness, and truth.<sup>227</sup> In further elaborating on the nature and conduct of a true king, Abul Fazl establishes a direct link between God and king without any intermediaries.<sup>228</sup> The true king, because of his divine nature, also possesses god-like abilities which restrict him from reacting in a typically human fashion to worldly stimuli.<sup>229</sup>

The theory of sovereignty or that of the ideal monarch which takes shape from the precepts discussed above is surprisingly modern in its outlook. As Akbar puts it repeatedly in the letters written to other monarchs and the administrators of his empire, and Abul Fazl says in the *Ain*, the true king must “put the reigns of desire into the hands of reason.”<sup>230</sup> Once the king accepts reason as his guide it obligates him to ensure and provide swift justice without regard to the class and status of the petitioner, protect the life and liberty of the populace, save the populace from potential tyrants, and promote happiness in his realm by achieving harmony and peace by ridding the polity from several potential and existing diseases introduced because of the presence of varying degrees of intellect in ordinary humans.

Abul Fazl, however, once again underscores the fact that it is only the true king who can achieve these goals in their true spirit as he never tries to defy the dictates of

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> More specifically Abul Fazl states that royalty is the light emanating from God. In Persian, i.e., modern language, it is called *farr-i-īzīdī* (the divine light) and in ancient language it was called *kiyān khura* or the sublime halo. See *ibid.* p. 3. Also see Asher *op.cit.*, pp.168-171

<sup>229</sup> *Ain* Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid

reason.<sup>231</sup> In other words, reason is prior to the set of public goods mentioned above because they can only be truly achieved with recourse to reason. The other accompanying set of obligations for the ideal ruler which this rather circular theory of sovereignty demands from the true king is that, since he represents divinity, i.e., the factor which distinguishes him from ordinary humans and selfish rulers, he does not withhold his blessings from those who do not follow the path of reason and are driven by their defective or incomplete intellect. In other words, entitlement of the populace to the set of obligations mentioned above, i.e., justice, security, right to happiness, guidance to embark on the path of truth and reason, etc., are the universal rights of the populace regardless of their religious orientation.<sup>232</sup> In the ultimate analysis the true king is divine, tolerant and magnanimous towards his subjects. As might be expected, Abul Fazl in the *Ain* clearly endows Akbar with the qualities of a true king and posits him as the perfect man. He also gives several examples of the Emperor's deeds and acts in support of his claim in the *Ain*.<sup>233</sup>

One could think of Abul Fazl's theory of sovereignty as flattery from a trusted and be loved aide of the emperor. However, when one looks at Akbar's correspondence with other rulers, members of his family, and his administrators, it appears that he believed in his own divine nature and regularly practiced and propagated the policy of *sulh-i-kul* to others.<sup>234</sup> For example, in his letter to the European king mentioned in the

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. pp.3-4

<sup>233</sup> For instance see ibid. pp. 3-5 and 170-176.

<sup>234</sup> This is not to say that Akbar never performed acts in contradiction to this theory of kingship but then because he alone understood the path of reason the reason for the necessity of any atrocities or seemingly unreasonable acts could not be understood by the common folk since they did not possess Akbar's reason.



title of this chapter, Akbar accepts the divine status of his counterpart and therefore highlights their common quest to rule in accordance with the dictates of reason, making it the basis for extending a hand of friendship.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, he addressed the European king as “Wise Men of the Franks.” This manner of addressing a monarch only begins to make sense after the brief discussion of Akbar’s notion of the fallibility of human intellect and his theory of sovereignty, i.e., Akbar allowed the same status to his European counterpart that he had assumed for himself. It is also noteworthy that towards the end of this letter, Akbar categorically stated his belief that

Most people were prisoners of the shackles of uncritical acceptance (*taqlīd*) without any real piety, they adopt the customs of their predecessors, relatives and associates that too blindly without any reflection, careful consideration and arguments. They accept the same faith among those whose followers they were brought up, and they remain without virtue of verification (*tahqīq*) – a prerequisite of wisdom and truth – the finding of which is the proper goal of reason.<sup>236</sup>

Similarly in one of his *farmans* (ordinances) to the current and future administrators of the empire, Akbar cancels the tax on all items that constitute means of necessary livelihood for the populace.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, he requires from his officials to ensure that

Weak people were not oppressed by the strong and the tyrants do not stretch the hand of cruelty and oppression over the downtrodden and crush them ruthlessly.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Haider (1998) p.8

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., pp.9-10

<sup>237</sup> These included food items, medicine, oil, perfumes, garments and cloth, household articles made of metal, leather, grass etc. See *ibid.* p. 14

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

In another circular, which enumerates the duties of the imperial officers, Akbar clearly instructs them to

Study books on ethics and good morals ... so that they may be acquainted with the various extreme stages and requirements of faith and piety and may not be diverted from the right path by mischief-mongers.<sup>239</sup>

The circular further states that

The best service to God in this world is the growth of relations and the accomplishment of works of people's welfare which they should perform without regard to (personal) friendship, enmity or relationship.<sup>240</sup>

Officers

Should patronize the people whom God had blessed with the courage to speak truly for such men are rare. While mean and wicked people have no inclination towards truth and desire their ruler to be involved in trouble, the good and righteous fear to speak the truth apprehending some trouble for themselves and being cautious that the addressee may not feel hurt.<sup>241</sup>

Finally they

Should not interfere with religious matters, customs or beliefs of people, for a wise person would not intentionally choose his own loss in transient worldly affairs, how could he then deliberately select a wrong path in eternal matters? If the men are right, they (the officers) should not oppose them unnecessarily. If they are not on the right path, even then they (the officers) should not interfere or oppose them, for they (men) are the victims of ignorance and as such deserve sympathy rather than opposition and oppression.<sup>242</sup>

A brief look at the instructions to the officers in imperial ordinances and the letters to other rulers supports the notion that Abul Fazl's political ideas, as expounded in the *Ain*,

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<sup>239</sup> The circular is titled "Akbar's Dastūr'l-'amal (a Circular Enumerating the Duties of Officers) addressed to the Ummāl and Mutasaddīs of the Empire." The recommended books are Akhlāq-i-Nāsirī, Manjiāt Muhlikāt, Ahyā'u'l-'Ulūm, Kīmiyā'i Sa'ādat and Masnawī-i-Maulānā Rum and Kalīla u Damna. See *ibid.* p. 79 and also notes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 for a brief description of these texts on p. 87.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 79-80

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82

were at the core of Akbar's imperial policy. It is useful here to remember that Akbar ruled India for almost half a century and one could divide this period into various phases. In the first phase, he concentrated on reacquiring and expanding the territorial limits of his realm, as the kingdom that he had inherited from Humayun, his father, was not substantial.<sup>243</sup> During the second phase of his rule, i.e., by the mid-1560's, Akbar had acquired substantial territory and he began to concentrate on developing a solid bureaucratic administration and imperial service to manage the expanding empire.<sup>244</sup> In the development of this administrative infrastructure, he appointed Hindus and Muslims alike to key governmental posts. This proved to be a highly effective move, as it raised Akbar's status from that of a conqueror of India, belonging to a foreign minority, to the accepted leader of all Indians.<sup>245</sup> During this phase, he also forged alliances with Hindu Rajputs, rulers of independent smaller states, and married Hindu princesses to cement those alliances.<sup>246</sup> According to Spear, Akbar's imperial service opened the previously non-existent opportunity to be part of the highly prestigious imperial service to those who previously sought fame and glory through recourse to obscure local independence, via insurrection, or through committing gang robberies.<sup>247</sup> The dates of the letters and

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<sup>243</sup> At the time of Akbar's death in 1605 AD his empire stretched horizontally from Kabul and Kandhar in modern day Afghanistan in the west to Bengal and Orissa in the East, vertically it encompassed Kashmir in the north and Berar in the South. See map in Spear, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.* pp.34-5 and 40-51

<sup>245</sup> Akbar's policy also deviated radically from his Mughal predecessors as well as sultans of Delhi before them, who preferred to govern through centrally located military camps commanded by their trusted generals. See. *ibid.* pp. 31, 34.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 34-35. Also see Zaidi (1997) pp.15-25.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.* p.36

the *Ain* and *Twarikh* suggest that the ideas delineated above derive from third phase of Akbar's rule, which begins in early 1570s.<sup>248</sup>

During this third phase, Akbar actively pursued a policy of religious toleration and invited members of different religious traditions to visit his court and argue about doctrinal matters pertaining to their respective faiths. According to Badaoni, this act was based on lack of formal educational in Akbar's life, which made him believe that

The Truth is an inhabitant of every place: and that consequently how could it be right to consider it as confined to one religion or creed, and that, one [Islam] which had only recently made its appearance and had not yet endured a thousand years! And why assert one thing and deny another, and claim pre-eminence, for that which is not pre-eminent?<sup>249</sup>

As has been mentioned earlier, Badaoni offers a dissident account of Akbar's reign. His history is replete with similar comments about and details of events, but, from the perspective of an orthodox believer in Islam.<sup>250</sup> Badaoni also illustrates the ideological tensions, as regards the correct relationship between religion and politics and the role and status of the sovereign in early modern India. Badaoni's primary concern is Akbar's willingness to open up Islamic beliefs to debate by followers of other faiths. He also perturbed by the skill of non-Muslims in articulating the logic of their respective faiths through recourse to reason, writing that "within a short period of time no trace of

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<sup>248</sup> This could mean that Akbar became more religiously tolerant and sure of the divine sanction for his acts as he established his rule on a firm footing in India. However evidence suggests that he was always liberal minded for instance in 1564 he abolished the *Jizya* or poll tax on non Muslims, prohibited enslavement of non combatants and also abolished a longstanding tax on Hindus visiting their holy places. For details and quotes from *Akbar Namah* pertaining to these measures see Jinarajadasa (1934) pp. 6-11

<sup>249</sup> *Tawarikh* Vol. II, p. 264.

<sup>250</sup> See for instance *ibid.* pp. 264-9, 277-8, 314-8, 323-6

traditional Islam was left in the Emperor.”<sup>251</sup> Badaoni dedicates several pages in the second volume to demonstrating the specific influence of different religious traditions on Akbar’s policy and thought.<sup>252</sup>

While the tone of Badaoni’s narrative seems to ridicule the Emperor for his follies, he also seems perplexed by the fact that Akbar did not find any problem in believing in all the religions simultaneously and in adopting whatever suited him the most from each tradition. For instance, due to the influence of a Brahman, he appeared in public with his forehead marked like a Hindu<sup>253</sup> and strongly agreed with the notion that the transmigration of souls was an indisputable common element in every religious tradition.<sup>254</sup> He also prohibited the slaughter of cows and used to chant spells taught by Hindus to subdue the sun.<sup>255</sup> Similarly, Badaoni states that Akbar firmly believed in the truth of the Christian faith because of the influence of Christian monks from Europe.<sup>256</sup> At another place, he expatiates on the influence of Zoroastrians on the emperor who persuaded the latter to start the practice of keeping a perpetual sacred fire like the kings of Persia.<sup>257</sup>

Badaoni also underlines the fact that part of the reason for Akbar to move away from Islam was frequent disagreements among Muslim scholars present at his court. These scholars represented different sects and seemed to hold diametrically opposed

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p.263-4

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. pp. 265-279

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. p. 269

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 265

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. p. 268

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. p. 267

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. pp. 268-9

views on most doctrinal issues.<sup>258</sup> This obviously militated directly against Akbar's agenda, since he was keenly interested in developing a strong basis for the peaceful coexistence of all religions within his empire. One must remember here the earlier discussion about the fallibility of human intellect. If we take Akbar's and Abul Fazl's argument at face value, then by not adhering strictly to the dictates and doctrines of a single religion, Akbar was probably seeking to demonstrate his superior or even divine ability to see beyond the supposed restrictions imposed by intellect on the reasoning ability of ordinary human beings. Support for this claim can be found in Akbar's attempt to form a new religious or ethical creed popularly known as *Din-i-Ilahi* or the Divine Faith.<sup>259</sup>

A detailed discussion of the true nature of *Din-i-Ilahi* is not within the scope of this dissertation. However, it is pertinent to briefly discuss some of the key features of *Din-i-Ilahi* and also the circumstances which propelled Akbar to think seriously in terms of instituting a new religion. These circumstances relate to Akbar's growing discontent with Islam in particular and organized religion in general during the last phase of his rule. Badaoni, after deliberating at length on various un-Islamic practices that the emperor had fallen into or was flirting with, reproduces verbatim the text of a document presented to Akbar in A.D. 1579 by Muslim scholars and jurists holding positions of

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<sup>258</sup> See for instance *ibid.* pp. 262, 266-7, 269-70, 277

<sup>259</sup> Several Indian scholars argue that Akbar never intended to start a new faith. For instance Athar Ali makes the point that *Din-i-Ilahi* is an incorrect translation of the actual Persian term *Ain-i- Iradat Gazinan* [literally: regulations for those privileged to be (His Majesty's) disciples] used in the *Ain* by Abul Fazl. Blochmann translates this Persian term as Ordinances of the Divine Faith. See *Ain* p. 175. Similarly in his lengthy note on Akbar's religious views Blochmann again makes the error of translating Badaoni's Persian terms *halqa-i- iradat* and *silsila-i-muridan* (both terms literally: circle of disciples) as Divine Faith and the New Religion in two passages. For the note on Akbar's religious policy see *Ain* pp.176-223. For Ali's argument see Athar Ali in Israel and Wagle (1983) pp.126-127. Also see Habib's comments in Chandra et.al, op.cit., pp.70-71

prominence in various parts of the empire.<sup>260</sup> This most extraordinary document proclaimed that, according to Islamic sources, the rank of *Sultān-i-ādil* (just ruler) is higher in the eyes of God than the rank of the *Mujtahid* (an authority on points of religious law). Therefore, in the interest of the nation and political expediency, Akbar's decrees regarding religious questions on which the *Mujtahids* cannot agree will be final and binding on the entire nation.<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, according to the document, the emperor was entitled to issue new orders as long as these were in conformity with some verse of the Quran and held real benefit for the nation.<sup>262</sup> Though Badaoni does not give a specific date, he states that soon after receiving this document Akbar abolished use of the Islamic Hijri calendar and inaugurated a new era which began with the first year of his accession to throne; this era was termed *Tārīkh-i-Ilāhī*.<sup>263</sup> In addition, he notes that anti-Islamic activity at the court gained greater momentum and that subjects like astronomy, mathematics, medicine, poetry, history and novels were cultivated and thought more significant than study of the Quran or Islamic law.<sup>264</sup>

Abul Fazl and Badaoni present two extremes of the overall spectrum of ideas regarding religion and politics which had currency in Akbar's India. It was in this very context that Akbar sent the invitation for Jesuit missionaries to come to his court. The Jesuits, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, were ecstatic about Akbar's interest in the Christian faith and sensed that he was possibly on the verge of conversion

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<sup>260</sup> For the details of the signatories see *ibid.* p. 278 and for the copy of the actual text see pp. 279-280

<sup>261</sup> See *ibid.* p.279

<sup>262</sup> Badaoni claims that the document was written and signed first of all by Abul Fazl's father, Sheikh Mubarak, who was the *Mufti* of the empire (chief jurist). *Ibid.*,p.280

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* p. 316 Akbar also commissioned the writing of a new history of the thousand years starting from his own ancestors. See Moin (2005) pp.1-2

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

to Christianity.<sup>265</sup> Soon after their arrival at the court, the Jesuits inquired from a Christian priest, who was acting as their host on the emperor's request, into Akbar's views on religion in general and the status of his knowledge about the Gospel in particular.<sup>266</sup> The fundamental bias of the European missionaries becomes evident even during this early phase of their stay at the court. Based on his interaction with Akbar, the host informs the missionaries that in his opinion the emperor revered Christ and the Virgin and was not far from acknowledging and embracing Christianity as the true faith. Immediately after this sentence, and quite ironically, the host identifies the doctrinal issues, which according to the king, prevented him from converting to Christianity. He says,

But as the king himself said, his judgment is clouded, as it were, when he heard that there are three persons in one God, that God had begotten a son from a virgin, had suffered on the cross, and had been killed by the Jews.<sup>267</sup>

The host further suggests that if somehow Akbar could be made to believe that the Gospel had in fact come from God, the inconsistency between these doctrinal matters and human reason could easily be resolved.<sup>268</sup> This solution could only be suggested by somebody who was ignorant of Akbar's political and religious ideas discussed earlier in the chapter. First of all, the doctrinal matters mentioned by the host all defy human reason. Second, the proposed solution indicates an incorrect understanding of the problem that needed to be resolved in order to convert the emperor. Akbar claimed to be

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<sup>265</sup> See Commentary pp. 28, 30

<sup>266</sup> Monserrate identifies this priest as one Francis Julian Pereira (Vicar General in Bengal stationed at Satgaon). According to him Pereira was "a man of more piety than learning" who acquainted Akbar with the tenets of Christianity and asked him to send for more learned priests from Goa. See *Ibid.* note 1, p.1.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*



the representative of God. One must also remember that this conversation between the newly arrived missionaries and their host took place after Akbar had received the authority from Muslim scholar to be the supreme authority on earth even in religious matters. As the conversation further reveals, the Jesuits seem to have interpreted Akbar's lack of devotion to Islam as their good fortune.<sup>269</sup> This is also evident from the fact that in their meeting with the King, after this conversation, the Jesuits were invited to participate in the religious debates at the court. Monserrate notes that the Jesuits took this as "an opportunity to debate the accuracy and authority of the Holy Scriptures on which the Christian religion is founded and that of the vanity and lies of the book in which the Musalmans [Muslims] put their faith."<sup>270</sup> Monserrate relates that the King was impressed by the arguments made by the missionaries, and in private asked them for an explanation of the doctrinal issues mentioned by their host earlier.<sup>271</sup> Interestingly, the Jesuit response to the king's request was to pray and seek enlightenment from God on these issues and humbly wait for His response.<sup>272</sup>

Monserrate records several similar debates after this one and notes that the king was happy that all the missionaries were united in their opinions, whereas the Muslims could never seem to agree on anything.<sup>273</sup> Akbar himself also encouraged the missionaries in believing that he was on the verge of conversion. According to Monserrate, he suggested to the missionaries that if he felt his conversion to Christianity

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<sup>269</sup> According to the host Akbar believed that "Muhammad was a rascally imposter, who had deluded and infatuated men by his lies" See *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* p.37

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* p.38

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39 for debates see pp. 39-42, 50-51, 57-8, 100-101, 118-121, 136-9,

would cause an upheaval in his empire, he would pretend to his people that he is going for pilgrimage to Mecca but would instead go to Goa and get baptized.<sup>274</sup> In addition, Monserrate claims that Akbar always sided with the missionaries during religious debates and praised them extravagantly.<sup>275</sup> However, despite this optimism, the missionaries also realized the problems involved in converting the emperor, partly because of possible political repercussions, but also because of their assessment of Akbar's nature and approach. Some of these are spelled out in a letter written by father Acquaviva, a member of the delegation, to Everard Mercurian, Superior General of the Society of Jesus.<sup>276</sup> The primary problems that Acquaviva mentions are that Akbar “wanted to understand the scriptures through recourse to reason, and that he is very curious and wants actual miracles to be convinced.”<sup>277</sup> Acquaviva further suggests that Akbar is familiar with the authority of the Pope and the power of the King of Portugal and would be positively influenced towards Christianity if he received some gifts from these two.<sup>278</sup>

Other than these insights into Akbar's approach towards Christianity and religion in general, Jesuit letters generally highlight two other tendencies which are of significance for CPT. First, they repeatedly point to the problems linked to communicating their point of view to the King because of their limited language ability in Persian or Arabic and the resulting necessity to communicate through an

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid. p.48

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. 51

<sup>276</sup> See Correia Afonso (1980) pp.53-62

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. p. 59

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. p.60

interpreter.<sup>279</sup> Second, even though they realize the difficulties involved in the conversion of the emperor and gradually even came to the point of accepting the futility of their enterprise, they did not give up hope because of Akbar's lack of interest in Islam. Acquaviva, for instance, categorically states that,

we have not lost hope, for it is no mean achievement to have reached half the way, that is, his [Akbar's] having lost faith in his religion.<sup>280</sup>

Similarly, in terms of missionary zeal, the Jesuits fare great pride and joy in the fact that they could be very close to martyrdom. They had publicly announced that Mohammad was an Antichrist and for such an act the punishment was the death penalty.<sup>281</sup> This point is important for CPT, as the Jesuits failed to comprehend the complexity of Akbar's approach to religion and politics because of their own bias against Islam. What Acquaviva claims as half the achievement, i.e., Akbar's loss of faith in Islam, could actually be the most serious problem of his having lost faith in religion in general, including Christianity.

Comparative theorists who favor construction of imaginary dialogues by comparing philosophical treatises from non-western traditions with their western counterparts risk the same error committed by the Jesuits. Such an approach can lead to construction of faulty hypotheses because of incorrect problem identification at the planning stage of a comparative study. As the discussion of Akbar's and Abul Fazl's theory of sovereignty clearly suggests, Akbar's chief concern as a ruler was to achieve cohesion in a religiously diverse populace. He overcame this problem first by

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid. pp. 66-7, 75 and 77. Also see *Commentary* pp.30, 119, 172 and 179.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>281</sup> Ibid. p. 61

theoretically constructing for his subjects a Rawls-like *veil of ignorance* through a description of the centrality as well as fallibility of human intellect in understanding religious or temporal matters. Second, he acquired authority from Muslim scholars for his superior status vis-à-vis Muslim jurists in deciding matters of faith. A truly aware Jesuit mission would not have misinterpreted Akbar's willingness to hear criticism of Islam as a hopeful sign for their own purpose. In fact, Akbar's perplexity on the select doctrinal issues related to Christianity, as noted before, could be interpreted as his mockery of the intellect of those who believed in Christianity, since all these questions were about phenoma that defy human reason.

A related possibility for Akbar's tolerance of a critique of Islam, which cannot be ignored, is the timing of the Jesuit mission's presence in India. One must remember that this was the completion of the millennium since the migration of the prophet from Mecca to Medina. Several measures that Akbar enforced during this period are suggestive as regards his intentions. One such measure, discussed earlier, was his replacement of the use of Islamic calendar with a new era which began with the first year of his accession to throne. Another measure was to stop the minting of coins of all denominations from A.D. 1581-2 till 1590-1. Minting of coins resumed in A.D. 1591-2 (*Islamic Hijri 1000*) with the date *alf* or 1000 inscribed on them.<sup>282</sup> These measures must also be looked at in the context of Akbar's Divine Faith and Badaoni's statement that "on copper coins and gold *muhurs* the era of the Millennium was used, as indicating that the end of the religion of Muhammad, which was to last one thousand years, was

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<sup>282</sup> For details of this see Najaf Haider in Habib (1997) pp. 55-65.

drawing near.”<sup>283</sup> All these measures suggest that Jesuit criticism of Islam and Muhammad in fact favored Akbar’s intentions regarding the creation of a religious creed which would incorporate elements from diverse religious traditions. This point is further supported by Akbar’s brief speech, reported by Monserrate, in which he makes reference to the incompatibility between and hostility among different religions and commands representatives of each to explain their faith to the emperor and to each other so that it could be decided which religion is best.<sup>284</sup> Akbar’s solution, as we know, was *sulh-i-kul* or universal peace, but to the Jesuits this presented an opportunity to establish the superiority of Christianity despite the fact that they had not given any satisfactory replies, based on reason, to the questions asked by Akbar regarding Christianity.

The above discussion also foregrounds the ever present possibility and significance of unintended outcomes during an inter-civilizational encounter. The Jesuits had a specific mission in mind which blinded them from interpreting the broader context in which Akbar was operating. Neither could they understand that they were in a sense acting as Akbar’s foreign and impartial advocates against orthodox religious forces in India. One must also remember here the Society of Jesus’ unique position in the ecclesiastical politics of the west, which will be described in detail in the next chapter of this dissertation. As members of a counter-reformation movement in the early modern period with a twin focus on mission and education, the Jesuits were singularly well prepared to counter arguments pertaining to the separation of the Church and State and

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<sup>283</sup> *Tawarikh* op.cit., p. 316. For detailed discussion see Moin (2005) pp.26-54

<sup>284</sup> *Commentary* p. 182 This is also the only point in the whole narrative where Monserrate mentions the missionaries began to suspect that Akbar wanted to found a new religion. See p. 184

in countering heresy. Furthermore, they were present in India for quite some time and had launched foreign missions to China and Japan from their base in Goa. If they had engaged Akbar and Abul Fazl, with whom they had extensive contact, from a philosophical rather than a religious standpoint, they probably would have been more successful in achieving their ultimate objectives. This is indeed speculation but it is probably not totally without merit, as we find several statements in both *Tawarikh* and the *Ain* that Akbar was profoundly interested in privileging philosophy, sciences, and the arts over religious reasoning.<sup>285</sup> In fact, Akbar's interest in painting was legendary and is frequently attested to by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*.<sup>286</sup> The change that occurred in Mughal painting because of the impact of European art that came to Akbar's court via the Jesuits, and later by way of other European travelers and visitors to India, had a crucial and lasting effect on Indian art and architecture as well as on the manner in which Mughal emperors liked to be depicted in their portraits.<sup>287</sup> Wellesz, for instance, states that Christian images, brought by missionaries, were copied by Akbar's artists and

adaptations of such images to very different subjects appear in the illustrations of manuscripts.... One of the figures seems to have been inspired by 'Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane'. 'Sita purging herself by fire' might almost be mistaken for a Christian martyr. The various birth scenes in manuscripts of the Akbarnama are reminiscent of presentations of the Birth of the Virgin.... Even the pictures of Hindu ascetics, on which the nudes are often rendered with great cleverness, give sometimes the impression of being distant reflections of Christian hermits.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> For instance see *Tawarikh* p. 316, *Ain* pp. 110-115

<sup>286</sup> For instance *Ain*. p. 113

<sup>287</sup> See Koch op.cit., pp.14-29, Wellesz (1952) pp.24 – 44 and Jones (1987) pp., 30-56, 152-156.

<sup>288</sup> Wellesz *ibid.*, pp.40-41.

Europeans visitors to Akbar's court had brought works of art to India as gifts or souvenirs from their homelands with hope to gain favor from him, or to convert them to Christianity, as in the case of Jesuits. But, because of Akbar's inability to read himself and the resultant unusually high interest in artistic renditions of history, these souvenirs ended up having a much stronger and long lasting influence on Mughal India than the actual message that the Europeans wanted him to accept. European art therefore played a significant role in the self-imaging of Mughal India in general and of Mughal Emperors in particular. In this context, then, argument favoring a methodology for CPT that insists on the fusion of horizons is accomplished through constructing imaginary dialogues and is pre-occupied with controlling the power disparity between parties on both sides of the equation is inherently suspect because of its intrinsic tendency to overlook the unintended outcomes of an inter-civilizational encounter. As the cases of Jesuits in India and China (to be addressed in the next chapter) show, honest but unintentional cultural, linguistic and religious mistranslations are almost unavoidable and may in fact result in the most profound identity-transforming outcomes for all parties involved in the dialogue.

A striking example of mistranslations mentioned above can be seen in the way Monserrate describes the Hindu religion. The manner in which he describes the origin of the Hindu faith is, curiously, in terms of the dawn of Abrahamic faith that emerges from a single source by a founder.<sup>289</sup> In addition, he also makes sense of idol worshipping practices and the structure of relationships between Hindu deities in light of his own

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<sup>289</sup> *Commentary* p.90

knowledge of similar practices in the west in the pre-Christian era, comments are replete with references to Athenians, ancient European poets, names of and relationships between Roman Gods such as Jupiter, Neptune, Orcus, Minerva, etc.<sup>290</sup> In visualizing the Hindu religion in this manner, Monserrate almost totally equates ancient India with ancient Rome.<sup>291</sup> Monserrate's description of the Hindu system of beliefs provides us a glimpse into the embryonic stages of the manner in which later Europeans and colonial powers interpreted it.<sup>292</sup> This European interpretation of the Hindu faith as "Hinduism" had profound implications for Colonial British policy towards Indians, on the one hand, and on the natives of the sub-continent, on the other. In fact, the claim made by Muslims of India in support of division of the subcontinent, on the basis that Hindus and Muslims were two distinct nations and could not live together, was a result of this nationalist identity. From the point of view of CPT, then, Monserrate's unintended cultural mistranslation had a crucial bearing on how Europeans understood Hindus and Muslims of South Asia and also how they distinguished themselves from their colonial subjects.

To conclude this chapter it is pertinent to refer once again to comparative theorists' predilection for the late modern period and their tendency to equate the notion of "west" with "modern" as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. The discussion in this chapter reveals the primacy of reason and rationality (*tahqiq*) over blind acceptance of a religion (*taqlid*) as the key motivating factors in Akbar's and Abul Fazl's political practice and thought. Furthermore, we find the notion of a social contract

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. p. 93.

<sup>292</sup> According to Grewal term Hinduism came into currency during the nineteenth century and became much more current during the twentieth. See Chandra et.al. op.cit., p.66



between the true ruler and his subjects and also advocacy for the role of the state in terms of guarantor of the free practice of religion. These ideas and state practices, which bear a distinctly modern mark, are seen in action in early modern India before they are developed in Europe by some of the most well known proponents of the social contract tradition.<sup>293</sup> Given this fact, CPT's tendency to identify the west with modernity, as discussed in the theory chapter of this dissertation, poses serious problems to the extent that it forms the sole basis for establishing a new subfield of political theory. The discussion of Akbar's India provokes us to question the notion that modernity is a point in human history which the west reached before the rest of the world.<sup>294</sup> The first Jesuit mission at Akbar's court is only one instance of the early contacts between India and its western other. As we saw in the example of the development of west European understanding of Hinduism as an eastern faith, the records and correspondence maintained by these and subsequent western visitors gave rise to a more nuanced self-understanding in the west, which was developed in contradistinction to the defining characteristics of their counterparts in other civilizations.

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<sup>293</sup> Hobbes (b.1588- d.1679), Locke (b.1632 – d.1704) and Rousseau (b.1712- d.1778)

<sup>294</sup> See Timothy Mitchell for an excellent argument regarding modernity as staging of history instead of being a stage in history. Mitchell (2000) pp.1-34

## CHAPTER V

### **“DELUSIONS OF CELESTIAL PERFECTION”<sup>295</sup>: THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN JESUIT MISSIONARIES AND CHINESE LITERATI IN EARLY MODERN CHINA**

This chapter’s focus is on the encounter between Jesuit missionaries and the Chinese Literati in the late sixteenth century. Of particular concern within this broad focus is the life and work of Matteo Ricci, who was co-founder of Jesuit’s China mission and the main representative of the Society of Jesus and, by implication, the Catholic Church in the region.<sup>296</sup> My main sources for analyzing this encounter between the west and its Chinese other are Ricci’s journals, which were translated from original Italian into Latin by his colleague and contemporary Nicola Trigault.<sup>297</sup> The journals, which cover a period of more than thirty years, present a vivid picture of late Ming China and are a particularly well suited source to gain meaningful insight into the complexities of the east-west encounter in particular and inter-civilizational contact in general. In addition to Ricci’s journals, I also look at writings and policy directives of some early

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<sup>295</sup> Karl Marx on China, see his “[Trade or Opium?] Published in New York Daily Tribune on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1858. Available online at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1858/09/20.htm> . Last accessed September 30, 2007.

<sup>296</sup> While Ricci’s status as co-founder is popularly accepted, because of his invaluable contributions in establishing the china mission, some recent studies argue that the actual co-founder of the mission was Michele Ruggieri. See Brockey (2007) pp.30-31. In addition, others such as Standaert (1985), call Valignano the co-founder of the China mission see p. 56.

<sup>297</sup> Trigault’s translation includes Ricci’s observations recorded in his meticulously kept diary, the Annual Mission Letters and his letters to other missionaries and close friends. I use the English translation from Trigault’s Latin by Gallagher (1953) hereinafter referred to as Journals

Jesuit missionaries and administrators and arguments of Chinese critics of Christianity and western civilization available in English translation. All these primary sources are supplemented with several influential interpretations of the Jesuit experience and activities in the east.

It helps to point out here that Ricci was neither the first European nor the first Jesuit to have come to China, but he may be characterized as the first European who felt the need to understand the Chinese on their own terms and devised an elaborate method of accommodation of Christianity to the Chinese culture.<sup>298</sup> Because of his remarkable scholarly ability and his willingness to try innovative missionary methods, Ricci is often called the carrier of Euclid and Copernicus to China and an introducer of Confucian thought to Europe.<sup>299</sup> This characterization is not incorrect, even though some recent studies have raised questions about the usefulness and success of Ricci's efforts in the context of the actual Jesuit mission of Christianizing China.<sup>300</sup> From the point of view of this dissertation, however, I am not so concerned with the success or failure of Ricci's approach as I am with his conviction that Christianity should enter China implicitly by way of the Chinese Literati and his reasoning to adopt an 'integrated, interwoven missionary method' to realize that conviction.<sup>301</sup> Such an approach required Ricci to invoke and amplify his training as a mathematician, logician, geographer and cartographer over his status of being a Jesuit missionary. It also demanded that Ricci and his colleagues learn Chinese and master the spirit as well as the content of Confucian

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<sup>298</sup> See Hsing-San (1985) p. 37

<sup>299</sup> See for instance Journals p. xix, Gutheinz (1983) pp.106-7 and *Ibid.*, p. 37-9

<sup>300</sup> See Hart "Translating the Untranslatable: From Copula to Incommensurate Worlds" in Liu ed. (1999) pp. 48-50

<sup>301</sup> Gutheinz *op.cit.*, p.106

thought. This, as history tells us, was a monumental task which Ricci and his associates accomplished to near perfection. Given these facts it should be obvious that Ricci's life, works and experiences deserve much more detailed treatment than can be accomplished in a single dissertation chapter. It is therefore worthwhile to acknowledge here that my focus remains intentionally limited to those elements of Ricci's approach which, in his opinion, would have softened Chinese minds for the acceptance of western-Christian ideas, on the one hand, and prepared religious authorities in Europe to accept his version of the non-idolatrous nature of the Chinese, on the other.

I begin with a broader discussion of the Jesuit missionary practice and experience in the east and the Society of Jesus' position in the ecclesiastical politics in the west. I then move on to the significance attached to the Christianization of China by the Jesuits and early attempts made in this regard.<sup>302</sup> Having thus set the stage I introduce Matteo Ricci into the picture. As stated above, the focus here will be on those aspects of Ricci's experiences which have a direct relevance to CPT as described in the first chapter of this dissertation. Jesuit missionaries, during their initial decades in China, had retained an overtly religious and European appearance and equated themselves in dress and demeanor to the learned Buddhist monks who represented the most visible, if not dominant, religious group in China.<sup>303</sup> Based on his experiences and observations during this early period, Ricci gradually came to the conclusion that the missionaries would be more successful in their endeavors if they abandoned this approach and shifted their

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<sup>302</sup> From 1552 to 1583 twenty five Jesuits had gone to China but were allowed to stay only for a short period. See Ronan and Oh (1988) p. xix

<sup>303</sup> See Brockey, *op.cit.*, p.25, also, Peterson, "What to Wear? Observation and participation by Jesuit missionaries in late Ming society," in Schwartz (1994) pp.409- 411

focus towards engaging with the Chinese Literati by cultivating their image as Christian-western scholars and teachers of western science instead of missionaries from the west.<sup>304</sup> In addition to highlighting the salient features of Ricci's efforts in achieving this objective I shall also look at the western scientific achievements that he chose to present to the Chinese and the philosophical topics on which he published his views in Chinese language. Ricci's choices in these regards reflect his attempts to represent the west and Christianity in a manner which, in his opinion, would have positively influenced the upper reaches of Chinese society and compelled them to accept the west as China's civilizational equal.<sup>305</sup>

As is well known, Jesuits' accommodation methods later gave rise to the infamous rites controversy in the west. I will, therefore, also discuss features of the accommodation method which contributed to the rites controversy in order to illustrate the highly complex and multifaceted nature of inter-civilizational engagement in which transforming influence is active on both sides of the contact equation. Because of this simultaneous transformative process I will also touch upon Chinese accusations and criticism of the Christian faith in post-Ricci China. A comparison of the anti-other arguments in the east and the west, I hope, will highlight the ever-present potential of reversal of fortunes earned during a cross-cultural contact by either side. The chapter will conclude by juxtaposing the analysis of Ricci's encounter with the Chinese Literati

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<sup>304</sup> As explained later in this chapter, the accommodation method was not solely Ricci's idea; instead, the Jesuits realized the need for such an approach after they came into contact with the Japanese in the East and the policy in its early stages was defined by Francis Xavier and Alessandro Valignano. Ricci, however, was most responsible for perfecting it into an organized method in the Chinese context. For details see, among many others, Journals, pp. 275-7, 446-9 and Young (1983) pp. 9-24.

<sup>305</sup> Ricci was cautious of not presenting the west as superior to Chinese civilization. For example see Duignan (1958) pp.727-8.

in late Ming China with some of CPT's dominant methodological preferences as mentioned earlier in this dissertation. These include the bias toward a Gadamarian hermeneutical approach to comparative theorizing in which a fusion of horizons is presupposed and the limited nature of Anthony Parel's suggestions that the ultimate objective of CPT should be to seek Voegelin-style equivalences between disparate civilizations and that the primary purpose of comparative theorizing should be to identify comparable non-western canons.<sup>306</sup>

As stated above, it is important to refer briefly to the peculiar circumstances of the Society of Jesus in the west in mid- sixteenth century. The society, founded in 1540 by Ignatius Loyola, was one of the several movements within the Catholic counter-reformation for the rejuvenation of spiritual life and piety in early modern Europe.<sup>307</sup> However, according to Höpfl, it differed considerably from other European movements. These differences were mainly evident in the Society's views on the need for engagement with and seeking patronage of secular institutions, influential individuals and rulers as well as an overriding concern with heretical 'deformation' and a simultaneous and equal focus on the twin vocations of mission and education.<sup>308</sup> Because of these factors, the founders of the Society were quickly able to influence and enlist brilliant young students into the Jesuit educational institutes and gain the

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<sup>306</sup> The problem of presupposition of a 'fusion of horizons' has also been pointed out by Nederman and his co authors for a description of their arguments and the analysis of Parel's suggestions see the first chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>307</sup> See Brockey, *op.cit.*, p. 6; Ross (1994) pp. xiii-xiv; Mungello (2005) pp.15-16 and Donnelly (2006) pp. xii-xiii

<sup>308</sup> See Höpfl (2004) pp. 1-7. Höpfl's work is the first full length study of Jesuit political thought. In addition, the Jesuit concern with heretical deformation is understandable because of the post reformation era. Brockey, *ibid.*, looks at the Jesuits from the vantage of being part of a larger religious culture in post reformation Europe and argues that the Jesuits carried considerable cultural baggage with them when they visited faraway lands like India, Japan and China.

patronage of many influential individuals of the time throughout Catholic Europe.<sup>309</sup> In its second phase of expansion, the Society, taking advantage of the Spanish and Portuguese expansion established residences in the new colonial cities of Africa, Asia and the Americas.<sup>310</sup> These new residences served as launching pads for attempts to extend missionary work and to seek conversions in foreign lands such as India, China and Japan. According to Rubiés, it was the Jesuit stories carried back to Europe from these foreign lands which gave rise to the notion “that the souls lost by the Church in Europe due to the “heresies” of the Reformation were being made up in the missions of the New World and the East.”<sup>311</sup>

One must bear in mind, however, that these phases of expansion were not really trouble free. For instance, during the first phase, the founders of the Society had to carve out a unique space for themselves in the middle of several influential and well established religious movements in Europe. As O’Malley rightly points out, one factor which defined the policy and practice of early Jesuits was the limitations they faced because of the absence of any official pastoral privileges enjoyed by members of the other orders.<sup>312</sup> This jurisdictional limitation meant that the Jesuits did not have any ready made clientele from the “people in the pews.”<sup>313</sup> Hence, in order to be competitive in the European religious scene of the time, the Jesuits needed to build a friendly image and also differentiate themselves in their teachings and approach from the existing and

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<sup>309</sup> Brockey claims that the strength of the society rose from a mere ten members in 1540 at the time of founding to a thousand by the time of the founder’s death sixteen years later and five times that by A.D.1580. *Ibid.*, p. 6. Also see Donnelly (2006) p. xiv.

<sup>310</sup> O’Malley (1993) p. 51

<sup>311</sup> Rubiés (2005) p. 237

<sup>312</sup> O’Malley *op.cit.*, pp. 72-74

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74

more established religious movements. Understandably this condition created a bond of mutual dependence between the Jesuits and those pockets of society which were traditionally ignored by other orders. O'Malley cites early Jesuit writings that urge members of the society to focus on people who did not have ready access to ministers and pastors.<sup>314</sup> The other important segments of society which the Jesuits targeted were the European secular elites.<sup>315</sup> These early practices were instrumental in defining Jesuit activities outside Europe in the second phase of their expansion as well. Since they were used to dealing with previously ignored segments of society, it does not come as a surprise that the Jesuits were generally positive of their assessments of the indigenous peoples of India, Japan and Brazil.<sup>316</sup> In addition, their focus on and success in enlisting members of the European aristocratic classes reflects on their techniques to attract similar segments of society to gain protection in colonial and foreign lands during their second and third phases of expansion. So, for example, when Francis Xavier (d. 1552) entered Japan, he won permission to proselytize the Japanese by impressing members of the Japanese elite by putting on an aristocratic appearance and through giving gifts of clocks, music boxes, wine and spectacles.<sup>317</sup> The success of Xavier's approach in India and Japan encouraged the Society's superiors in Europe to consider a more relaxed approach towards matters of ritual purity for the missionaries working in non-Christian

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., pp. 11 and 74-76. As an example of this also see Donnelly, op.cit., pp. 191-193 for excerpts from Juan Polanco's *Chronicon* on Jesuit efforts for preaching to and caring for reformed prostitutes.

<sup>315</sup> Some authors argue that the Jesuits did not actively pursue these secular elites instead it was because of the notoriety that the Jesuits had gained for their religious zeal and knowledge which attracted the pressure to be of service from the high and mighty. See for instance Alden (1997) pp. 15-9 and Höpfl, op.cit., pp.10-11.

<sup>316</sup> O'Malley, op.cit., pp.76-7

<sup>317</sup> Ibid and also Sebes (1988) pp. 23-4



lands. In terms of missionary methodology, this relaxed approach was a highly significant development as it marked a departure from the traditional practice of treating Christianity as a distinctly European enterprise.<sup>318</sup> From the Jesuit perspective, the space for such a practice originated from the belief that all that was good belonged to Christianity and means justified ends in evangelical pursuits.<sup>319</sup> This approach seems distinctively like arguments made in favor of CPT in terms of orientation and content, as it allowed the Jesuits to not only preach but also to learn from the natives of heathen lands. In other words, by attempting to understand others as they understood themselves, the Jesuits were able to develop a comparative perspective and identify those elements of heathen faith and philosophy that could be used as common ground to expound the superiority of the Christian point of view. Furthermore, the Jesuit approach also brings to the forefront the issue of intentionality implicit in claims of understanding the Other in such a manner. As the title of this chapter suggests, belief in an almost divinely sanctioned superiority and consequent glorification of one's own tradition must be factored into any efforts aimed at a fusion of horizons between disparate civilizations. These beliefs, as I argue later, can result in quite unintended consequences, which can be detrimental to the primary objectives of comparative interlocutors, on the one hand, and can cause faulty theorization, on the other.

The Jesuit understanding that the key to Christianizing the east lay in persuading the Chinese to adopt Christianity came as an unintended consequence of their

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<sup>318</sup> Before the Jesuits adopted the accommodative approach, those converted to Christianity also had to adopt European names, wear European clothing and observe European rites. See, for instance, Sebes *Ibid.*, p. 22

<sup>319</sup> Several authors have highlighted this aspect of Jesuit missionary work. See for example *Ibid.* p.23-4, Alden, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-4 and Höpfl pp. 25-6

willingness to enter into a dialogue with the Japanese. The Japanese, who thought of themselves as knowledgeable and wise, accepted their inferiority to the Chinese in matters of wisdom, scholarship and other civilizational traits. This understanding emerged during Xavier's dialogues with Buddhist monks in Japan. These monks repeatedly raised doubts about the viability of the Jesuit message because of the absence of any mention of the same in the works of the Chinese philosophers and scholars.<sup>320</sup> These dialogues were also significant as they impressed upon Xavier the need to become part of a particular civilization through learning native customs, languages and norms of behavior in order to be successful as a missionary.<sup>321</sup> This understanding grew out of Xavier's conviction that among all the lands he had visited the Japanese were "the only ones who could by themselves perpetuate Christianity," partly because of the Chinese influence on them.<sup>322</sup> This was also the beginning of Jesuit interest in establishing themselves in China. In a letter to Ignatius, wrote Xavier,

These Chinese are very talented and dedicated to studies, especially with respect to the human laws pertaining to the governing of a state. They have a great desire of knowledge. They are a white race, without beards and with very small eyes. They are a generous people and, above all, very peaceful.<sup>323</sup>

And in another, written immediately before he was to leave for China, Xavier stated;

... three of us ... are going to the court of the King of China, which is near Japan, a land that is extremely large and inhabited by a very gifted

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<sup>320</sup> Coleridge (1912) vol. 2, pp. 300-1 cited in Sebes (1988) p. 24 also pp. 25-6

<sup>321</sup> See for instance Xavier's letter to Loyola dated January 29<sup>th</sup> 1552 in Costelloe (1992) pp. 344-8. Xavier here describes characteristics of the Japanese and makes suggestions about the kind of skills that missionaries sent to Japan must possess.

<sup>322</sup> See Ibid., pp. 347 and letter to his companions in Europe, dated January 29<sup>th</sup> 1552 in Ibid., pp. 341-2.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid (letter to Loyola) p.347

race and by many scholars... they are greatly devoted to learning; and the more learned one is, the more noble and esteemed he is.<sup>324</sup>

It is interesting to note that Xavier's knowledge about China was solely based on his experiences with Buddhist monks in Japan, yet he was convinced that China held the key to converting the east. Xavier died before he could ever reach the Chinese mainland; however, his fascination with reaching China was shared by those who followed him as key office holders of the Society in Europe. Most prominent among these Jesuit officials was Alessandro Valignano (d. 1606), who was appointed *Visitador* (personal delegate) to all Jesuit missions in the *Índias Orientais*, by the General Superior of the Jesuit Order in A.D. 1573.<sup>325</sup> As personal delegate of the General Superior, given the high degree of centralization characteristic of the Society of Jesus, Valignano had extraordinary power in overseeing and governing the regions under his jurisdiction. These powers included admission, dismissal, appointment, and transfer of members, and also determination of local Society superiors and implementation of new mission policies, based on native circumstances. In addition, Valignano was not under any obligation to seek approval or even counsel of political authorities in the regions in which he operated.<sup>326</sup> This obviously created the potential for conflict between religious and political authorities, on the one hand, and within the Society, on the other, as it challenged the influence and authority of the Jesuits present at the Portuguese court.<sup>327</sup> The same also further intensified hostility between Jesuits and their rival religious orders in the west.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Xavier to Ignatius, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1552 in *Ibid.*, p.384

<sup>325</sup> For details of Valignano's life and career see Üçerler (2003) pp. 337 – 366. *Italics* on p. 339.

<sup>326</sup> See *Ibid.* p. 340-341

<sup>327</sup> For the specific points of discontent between Portuguese Jesuits and Valignano see *Ibid.* pp. 341-4.

<sup>328</sup> For a description of these potentially conflictual situations see Alden *op.cit.*, pp. 21-3

Valignano, however, remained unaffected by these tensions and successfully kept pushing the sphere of Jesuit activity further east.<sup>329</sup>

In addition he also initiated what maybe called the first ever diplomatic mission from Japan to Europe by attempting to bring four Japanese youths to represent the Japanese Christian feudal lords at papal, Portuguese and Spanish courts.<sup>330</sup> Valignano's purpose in initiating this project was to impress Europe with the success of Jesuit missionaries in the east and to dazzle the Japanese youth with the achievements of European civilization.<sup>331</sup> This act is also reflective of the Society's image, which Valignano was interested in burnishing in western eyes, and of the means which he used to counter the accusations of rival religious orders against the Jesuit approach to missionary work. A discussion of the ultimate consequences of this episode, which were quite far reaching and unexpected, is not within the scope of this dissertation. The purpose here is to simply identify the general approach of Jesuit activity in the east under Valignano's leadership. The hallmark of his approach was the willingness to learn from the circumstances in foreign lands and adapt the missionary policy accordingly and also back up the new policy with clear demonstration of the positive results being achieved.

Valignano's primary region of interest was the Far East where, in the case of Japan, he virtually overturned the policies of his predecessor Francisco Cabral in favor of a policy of accommodation of Christianity to Japanese culture.<sup>332</sup> He gave directions for a similar approach to be employed in China and appointed Ricci to that mission. Yet

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid. pp 55-6

<sup>330</sup> See Üçerler *op.cit.* pp.347-9

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Valignano actually had to give up his authority over India and was restricted to Japan and China by the General Superior of the society. For details see Ibid. pp. 60-2. Also Standaert *op.cit.*, pp.56-7

another significant aspect of Valignano's leadership in the region was his conviction, like Xavier, that Christianity and Europeanism should be separated if the former was to be successful in the Far East. Valignano's belief is reminiscent of Fred Dallmayr's notion of CPT, namely that the most suitable approach for comparative theorists and CPT is to locate a mid-point between the two extremes of Euro-centricism and Euro-denial and engage with non-Europeans from that vantage point.<sup>333</sup> The story of the Jesuits in China has several other important lessons for CPT as well, but it would be appropriate to briefly recount some of their more significant experiences before moving on to those insights.

As it is clear from the discussion above, by the time Ricci moved to China, leaders of the Society of Jesus were convinced of two things. First, in order for Christianity to succeed in China, or the east generally, accommodation of Christianity to eastern cultures was necessary, which required a deeper understanding of these cultures through learning their languages and other significant cultural traits.<sup>334</sup> Second, the Jesuit leaders believed that Christianity should be presented in a most palatable manner to the natives of the eastern lands. This forced the Jesuits to present only those aspects of Christianity to the natives which would be readily acceptable to them given their specific backgrounds. It was in context of these convictions that Ricci was ordered to China by

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<sup>333</sup> See a detailed discussion of this notion of CPT in the first chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>334</sup> This is not to say that the Jesuits treated all East as one. For instance in early Jesuit writings we find evidence that images of Japan and China were different from what the Jesuits experienced in India. A higher opinion of the Chinese and the Japanese races was, to a great extent, also based on physical appearances of these races and the color of their skin. Both, Xavier and Valignano, believed that the Japanese and Chinese were closer to the western race than the brown skinned Indians. See for instance Xavier's letters to Loyola, cited earlier, where he recommends and justifies different characteristics for missionaries being sent to India and Japan. For an analysis of Valignano's views see Sebes, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-4

Valignano in AD 1583.<sup>335</sup> Because of Valignano's instructions, Ricci's early career in China was dedicated to learning the Chinese language and reporting the circumstances of the Chinese kingdom to society superiors in Europe.<sup>336</sup> These early years, and the responsibilities assigned to him by Valignano, coupled with his keen intellect, helped Ricci in appreciating the complexities involved in fulfilling the role of an interlocutor between east and west. Ricci's journals, in his own words, are meant for a European audience and he consistently provides comparable examples from Europe to equip his audience with the tools to understand better the Chinese customs, laws and attitudes.<sup>337</sup> In doing so, Ricci and his translator Trigault also inevitably reveal the process through which they made sense of Chinese peculiarities. Early on, the journals claim the superiority of Ricci's narrative over other sources of information on China, available to the Europeans, by pointing out that

We [the Jesuits] have lived in friendly intercourse with the nobles... We speak the native language of the country, have set ourselves to the study of their customs and laws and finally, what is highest of importance, we have devoted ourselves day and night to the perusal of their literature.<sup>338</sup>

The narrative that follows this claim is fairly elaborate and describes the geography, culture and government of the Chinese kingdom.<sup>339</sup>

As stated above, more telling and interesting sections of this narrative are those which juxtapose China against Europe. Ricci frequently intersperses explanatory notes in

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<sup>335</sup> For Ricci's career before coming to China see, among many others, Ronan and Oh (1988) pp. xix-xx, Sebes, *Ibid.*, and Spence (1983) *passim*

<sup>336</sup> Sending regular reports to Europe was a standard feature of the Jesuit missions in foreign lands. In case of Ricci specific instructions regarding this were given by Valignano. See Standaert *op.cit.*, pp.56-7

<sup>337</sup> *Journals*, p.4

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.* p.5

<sup>339</sup> The whole first book of the *Journals* presents such a description. See *Ibid.*, pp. 3-116

his description in order to contextualize Chinese peculiarities for his readers. For instance, he explains that the Chinese king is called the Lord of the Universe, because the Chinese believe that their vast dominion is to all intents and purposes coterminous with the borders of the universe. Furthermore, this understanding prevailed despite the knowledge of neighboring kingdoms which were deemed unworthy of any serious attention.<sup>340</sup> In order to squelch any feelings of ridicule or surprise, which such an idea of self assigned jurisdiction might generate in the Europeans, Ricci immediately goes on to say that if the Chinese knew about similar titles assumed by European monarchs they would also be amazed at the absurdity of such notions, as no European ruler ever had any jurisdiction over China.<sup>341</sup> But this conciliatory tone and strategy should not be mistaken as the overriding theme of the narrative, because Ricci frequently mentions European superiority in several areas. The most significant in this regard is his observation that the Chinese sense of superiority is a result of their ignorance and that they have the tendency to prefer that which comes from abroad over what they possess, once their deficiencies are made clear to them.<sup>342</sup> This claim seems absurd when examined in the context of repeated assertions, by Jesuits in general and Ricci in particular, that the Chinese think of the non-Chinese as barbarians.<sup>343</sup> In fact, according to Ricci,

Even the written characters by which they [the Chinese] express the word foreigner are those that are applied to beasts, and scarcely ever do they

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<sup>340</sup> See for instance *Ibid.*, pp.7 and 43

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

<sup>343</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 88-9, 131, 142 and 167

give them a title more honorable than they would assign to their demons.<sup>344</sup>

This attitude towards the Other reminds one of the images that the Europeans had of the Tartars, as explained in the second chapter of this dissertation, and indeed Ricci also mentions that the last known raids on the Chinese mainland were made by the Tartars and since then the kingdom has been peaceful.<sup>345</sup> One could, therefore, claim that hostility towards foreigners was partly because of memories and stories of past invasions. However, Ricci puts forward a totally different reason for this hostility. According to him, Chinese hostility to foreigners derived from their conviction that they could learn nothing of value from a source other than what was contained in their own books of wisdom.<sup>346</sup>

Going through the journals, it appears that many of Ricci's claims about the Chinese are self-contradictory. While it is not possible, or even required, to discuss all such claims individually, it is worthwhile to explore them in a little more detail from a methodological perspective. To reiterate, for purposes of clarity, Ricci's journals are of great significance for CPT because they actually show attempts to achieve accommodation between two disparate cultures over a considerably long period of time. However, when these journals are read in the context of the brief discussion of the Jesuit place in European ecclesiastical politics of the time, it becomes clear that their publication, after Ricci's death, was to serve the twin purposes of reporting on the Chinese to the Europeans and convincing the Europeans of the Jesuits' achievements in

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid. p.89

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p.9

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p.142



China. Partial proof of this claim is evident from the fact that Trigault heavily edited the actual journals to glorify the Jesuit mission in China and also to make them palatable to a European audience.<sup>347</sup> This insight into the character of the Society of Jesus brings forth, once again, the significance of intentions for doing comparative work. Or more specifically, and as discussed later in this chapter, the Jesuit endeavors in the east highlight the unintended consequences of the intentions with which any comparative work is undertaken. But before one goes on to discuss these aspects of comparative theorizing, it would be useful to discuss a few specific episodes from the Jesuit experience in China. Based on these experiences the tenets of the accommodation method devised and adopted by Matteo Ricci.

Perhaps the most significant occurrence that paved the way for Ricci to influence and impress the Chinese was the interest shown by Chinese Literati in the cosmological chart of the universe displayed in the Jesuit mission.<sup>348</sup> Ricci was requested by the Governor of the province to make a similar description of the world in Chinese. The journals are also quick to reassert the point that the Chinese had never known such a description of the world and were intrigued by the depiction of their kingdom as only one part of the great east.<sup>349</sup> Ricci welcomed the invitation and immediately began work on a bigger more detailed map of the world with Chinese illustrations.<sup>350</sup> Ricci, however, made several amendments and added new annotations to the original map, “in keeping

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<sup>347</sup> See the translator’s preface in the Journals p. xvii. Also Rule (1968) pp.105-124 who compares Trigault’s translation with D’Elia’s critical edition of Ricci’s Italian manuscript, titled *Fonti Ricciane*. See note 1 p.105.

<sup>348</sup> Journals p. 165

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p.166.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

with the Chinese genius.”<sup>351</sup> In addition, the journals boast of Ricci’s ingenuity because he accommodated the Chinese misconception of being located in the center of the world by depicting the kingdom towards the center in the new map.<sup>352</sup> This clever tactic paid off in two important ways in making headway with the Chinese; first, it developed a much higher general opinion of the European education system among the Chinese elite; and second, it helped to reduce the characteristic Chinese fear of foreigners by confirming that Europe and China were separated by great bodies of water and other natural barriers which dampened the overriding Chinese concern of a possible attack by foreign barbarians on their soil.<sup>353</sup>

Ricci was greatly emboldened by the success of the map and concentrated on preparing and presenting other scientific objects which bore testimony to Europe’s superior status vis-à-vis China in the scientific realm. It is, however, interesting to note that the Jesuit effort in this regard was not focused on creating a general awareness about European scientific achievements. Instead, the Jesuits identified and chose to emphasize only those aspects which they thought were of direct relevance to the Chinese and would have emphasized European equality to China in the scientific field.<sup>354</sup> It is also important to remember that at this stage the Jesuits were still in the process of creating a favorable

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p.167. However, it is also interesting to note that the Chinese were not the only one to have held such a notion similar ideas about Jerusalem being the center of the world was a common part of the Christian imagination during the European Middle Ages. See for instance Higgins, “Defining the Earth’s Center in a Medieval “Multi-Text”: Jerusalem in the Book of John Mandeville” in Tomasch and Gilles (1998) pp. 29-53

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. Map’s success can be also assessed from the fact that there were at least eight editions published during Ricci’s life time, for a detailed analysis of the its impact see Ch’en and Ricci (1939) pp. 325-59.

<sup>354</sup> For instance the scientific objects introduced by the Jesuits included metallic astronomical spheres, globes, clocks and sundials etc. See Journals, pp. 168-9. In addition Ricci was careful to avoid offending the Chinese when presenting European scientific knowledge see Allan (1975) pp.32-3.

space for themselves in China. In other words, this was the pre-dialogue stage of the Jesuit-Chinese contact. The Jesuit approach, which worked quite nicely, at least until the time of Ricci's death, suggests that in order to hold a meaningful dialogue between representatives of diverse traditions one must first clearly establish that a dialogue is worthwhile because of advances already made independently in areas of possible mutual interest. The journals repeatedly state it was Ricci's success in establishing the Jesuits' expertise in the scientific field which eventually led to a sustained dialogue on equal terms between Ricci and the Chinese Literati.<sup>355</sup> Nicolas Standaert has described this pre-dialogue phase as the "first stage" of the "major principle" of cultural contact.<sup>356</sup> Once this mutual interest is established, the next stage involves acceptance of those characteristics of the other, both in thought and behavior, which are non-existent in one's own culture. However, these alien elements are almost never accepted, as they exist in their indigenous cultural setting and are always subject to reinterpretation before their incorporation into one's own system of ideas.<sup>357</sup> It seems only logical to assume that events during both these stages of cultural contact are important since the approach adopted and the intentions at work during the first stage are intrinsically linked to the fate of the dialogue which takes place in the second stage of the overall process. In case of the Jesuits in China, I believe, it is the expectations developed by both sides during

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<sup>355</sup> An interesting counter argument to the popular interpretation that Jesuits dazzled the Chinese with European superiority in scientific matters by presenting scientific objects (described elsewhere in this chapter) is presented by Clunas (1991). He suggests instead of being a proof of establishing European superiority in scientific matters this episode must be looked at as a normal feature of the Chinese society in the late Ming period where 'goods from overseas could be a familiar and desired category, regardless of the nature of individual items involved' and that for the Chinese 'Novelties were not novelty.' pp.59-60.

<sup>356</sup> Standaert, *op.cit.*, p.57

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 57-8

the pre-dialogue stage determined the fate of the Jesuit mission in the post-Ricci period. In addition, in the pre-dialogue stage, Ricci realized that there were many similarities between the Chinese society and his own. Once these similarities were identified, it became inevitable for him to theorize and alter Jesuit preferences so that the ultimate objective of Christianizing China could be achieved. One must recall here the suggestion made by Parel that CPT's purpose must be to seek similarities between disparate civilizations.<sup>358</sup> As we can see, in case of Ricci, similarities merely necessitated a new approach towards the phenomenon or civilization with which one is trying to engage in a meaningful dialogue. Ricci had to make drastic changes to Jesuit approach in light of what he experienced. Ironically, the first of these changes was to give up the way of the Buddhist clergy, who were perhaps the closest parallel to European religious missionaries, in terms of vocation, in China and to adopt the dress and life style of the Chinese Literati. It was after a decade of living in China that Ricci asked for Valignano's permission to allow him and his associates to change their identity.<sup>359</sup>

Ricci's request, granted by Valignano, also had other serious implications in late sixteenth-century China and Europe. In Europe, because of the Jesuits' uneasy existence within the overall religio-political landscape of the west, it meant leaving the door open for fresh attacks on the integrity of Jesuit missionary strategy and ulterior motives because of issues related to ritual purity and also, in case of possible success, its potentially devastating impact on prevalent thinking, which supported the European monopoly over Christian faith. Ricci and Trigault were fully aware of this problem and

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<sup>358</sup> See the first chapter of this dissertation for an analysis of Parel's ideas.

<sup>359</sup> Journals, p. 259

as a result they repeatedly assert, in the journals, that the Chinese assumed that intellectuals and literati had the unity of method and customs regardless of their locale because of their reliance on reason and logic to practice their craft. According to Ricci, this belief necessitated that the Jesuits follow “the customs and wear the clothes demanded by the customs of the country in which they reside” in order to be accepted by the locals as European scholars.<sup>360</sup> This interesting argument reveals the importance of having an efficient strategy to keep the audience at home convinced that the Jesuit activities, in the zeal to achieve short term goals, did not in any way compromise their European identity. To a certain extent, the critique of CPT in the first chapter of this dissertation also highlights a similar tendency in a majority of attempts to conceptualize CPT. Most comparative theorists advocate inclusion of ideas of non-western thinkers into the mainstream study of political theory in the west. However, they at the same time also appear unwilling to discuss the impact of such an inclusion on the achievements of traditional political theory.<sup>361</sup> To restate for purposes of clarity, the main justification for studying non-western systems of ideas regarding the political was dissatisfaction with traditional political theory’s western domicile and its patronizing attitude toward other traditions through a claim to universality. Consequently comparative theorists aim at juxtaposing ideas of prominent non-western thinkers against the arguments of their western counterparts to achieve a truly universal understanding of the political. In my opinion, and as the Jesuit case proves, the comparative endeavor in political theory, up until now, has ignored the potential transforming influence on the self-identity of parties

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., p. 260

<sup>361</sup> See the discussion regarding justification for a separate subfield in the first chapter of this dissertation .

on both sides of the contact equation as an inevitable outcome of being exposed to new ideas. However this transforming influence may or may not push the encounter towards a fusion of horizons as the parties involved can also use the new information to develop more comprehensive and effective approaches to refute the other. To elaborate this further through recourse to the Jesuit experience in China, it is necessary to briefly describe Ricci's missionary method and its outcomes.

Ricci's innovative missionary method in China was based on his observation, that China had a unique and very advanced literary culture and that almost all Chinese preferred to read books over oral forms of acquisition of knowledge. This culture in turn was made possible by the easy and efficient Chinese printing method.<sup>362</sup> Ricci actually welcomed this Chinese trait as, according to him, written words, read at leisure and in one's own language, could be much more persuasive than an oral sermon in a foreign language.<sup>363</sup> Of course, this also suited Ricci, as he was an accomplished scholar himself. Writing books in the Chinese language also ensured that Jesuits could spread their ideas to lands which they could not easily visit themselves, including, all fifteen provinces of the Chinese kingdom, the Japanese, the Koreans, the inhabitants of Cochin China, and the Leuchians.<sup>364</sup> However, making positive use of this Chinese trait required that the Jesuits adhered to the literary qualities and standards that the well respected Chinese scholars adhered to. To this effect, Ricci set out to revise the first Chinese Compendium of Christian Doctrines, which was written with the help of translators and

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<sup>362</sup> Journals p. 446

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

at a time when he was still a newcomer and did not fully understand the social and political realities of China.<sup>365</sup> The guidelines adopted for the revision also explain the key features of Ricci's approach. The revised compendium was, in Ricci's view, "a more ample explanation of the Christian Doctrine" and was meant for the consumption of "pagans" and "neophytes" was based "entirely on arguments drawn from natural light of reason rather than such as are based upon the authority of the holy scripture."<sup>366</sup> In addition, the new compendium also contained citations "which served its purpose" from the works of ancient Chinese writers and refuted all Chinese religious sects except the one that was adhered to by the Literati and was developed by Confucius "the prince of Philosophers."<sup>367</sup> Confucianism, suggested Ricci, contains but little that is reprehensible and besides it made excellent political sense since the Jesuits "were accustomed to use the authority of the Literati to their own advantage."<sup>368</sup> Politically, this was Ricci's master stroke, because he not only openly endorsed the beliefs of the Literati, he also argued against the beliefs of the idol worshippers and hence established a doctrinal unity with the former and gained their support for Jesuit activities.<sup>369</sup> By siding with the Literati and depicting Confucianism as a non-idolatrous ethical system based on natural reason, he created an image of the Literati as virtuous pagans who were worth saving.<sup>370</sup> Ricci's overall approach reminds us of William of Rubruck's move to convince the Nestorians and Muslims to forge an alliance against the Buddhists during the religious

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid. p. 448

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. pp. 447-8

<sup>370</sup> See Rubiés, *op.cit.*, p. 246

debate at the Mongol court.<sup>371</sup> In attempting implicitly to make an alliance with the Literati, Ricci, of course did not expose those elements of his own faith which could have alienated the Literati nor did he question those Literati practices and beliefs which later became the source of the rites controversy in Europe and China. Ricci's approach, as the journals claim, was very successful in the short run.<sup>372</sup> But he could not foresee the long term problems that it eventually caused. Apparently, Ricci's success rested on extremely shaky foundations, since the manner, and possibly the only one, through which he could fuse horizons between the Jesuits and the Literati was by misrepresenting the self and misunderstanding the Other.<sup>373</sup>

The above raises some interesting concerns about the dominant methodological preferences of comparative theorists. First and foremost, in the context of Dallmayr's argument in favor of adopting the model supplied by Gadamarian philosophical hermeneutics for CPT, the Jesuit experience in China suggests that the desirable outcome for comparative theorizing should be the exact opposite of achieving a fusion of horizons because of the tendency of erroneously marginalizing those civilizational attributes that are fundamental to one's self-understanding. Second, it exposes the inherent weakness of the practice of constructing imaginary dialogues between representatives of disparate civilization as the preferred style for doing CPT. An imaginary dialogue assumes that both parties have agreed to talk to each other. The case of Jesuits in China shows that reasons for scarcity of interaction during the pre-dialogue

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<sup>371</sup> See second chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>372</sup> Jesuits were highly selective in presentation of Christianity to the Chinese in particular they did not discuss crucifixion and resurrection of Christ on the pretext that such concepts will be repugnant to the Literati. See Rubiés p. 240. Also see, Journals pp. 154-9.

<sup>373</sup> See Rubiés, *ibid.*, pp.240 – 241



stage are equally important for understanding a system of ideas. Hence, an imaginary dialogue, which juxtaposes ideas of the representatives of a non-western tradition against familiar western concepts, serves at best to achieve a temporary fusion of horizons which could easily fall apart when the genealogy and basis of non-western ideas is taken into account.<sup>374</sup>

Ricci published numerous widely circulated works in Chinese, based on the criteria that he had determined for revision of the compendium, on topics related to philosophy, religion, ethics and mathematics.<sup>375</sup> The fame gained through these works eventually won Ricci and the Jesuits a place at the Chinese imperial court. Hence, as Rubiés rightly asserts, it was

... as members of a Renaissance civilization, and not as Christians, that sixteenth century missionaries could go further than their medieval predecessors. It was also largely in relation to the secular sciences that the Chinese intellectual elites welcomed, or rejected, the enormous effort of cultural transmission undertaken by the Jesuits.<sup>376</sup>

Rubiés' argument raises interesting concerns regarding the fundamental assumption on which the whole CPT enterprise is based, i.e., to understand the non-westerners as they understand themselves. The above quote highlights the fact that the Jesuits completely misunderstood the relationship between their increasing fame and success in China and the possibility of conversion of the Chinese people to the Christian faith. This misunderstanding seems to be based on two fundamental errors committed by the Jesuits. First, Jesuits' works were focused on gaining friends in the scholarly class and

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<sup>374</sup> See for example the discussion on Islamic Fundamentalist thinkers and works of CPT in the first chapter of this dissertation. Consider also the Chinese notion that all foreigners are barbarians as discussed earlier in this chapter.

<sup>375</sup> See Raguin (1985) p. 30, Journals pp. 447- 451

<sup>376</sup> Rubiés p. 262

their success in achieving this objective could not be generalized to the broader Chinese population. Second, the compromises that the Jesuits had made in initiating a dialogue with the Literati were not of the kind that could later be reversed. They had projected their image as European scholars and were accepted only because they had the expertise to solve problems which were important to the Chinese but which they could not handle themselves, e.g., production of an accurate astronomical calendar.<sup>377</sup> Furthermore, they presented European civilization to the Chinese as scientifically advanced but having a rather straightforward and uniform religious character. As stated earlier, the Jesuits achieved this by hiding from the Chinese the deep divisions in matters of faith that characterized the Europe of their time. This invited severe criticism of Jesuit methods and motives from rival Christian groups at home and also from the rival groups of the Literati factions with whom they had gained favor. These attacks became especially scathing after Ricci's death which, in a sense, reflects his personal abilities. It is obvious that the purpose of these attacks was to discredit the Jesuit religious teachings by exposing logical inconsistencies in the Christian doctrine as explained by the Jesuits.<sup>378</sup> However, the manner in which the Jesuits' scientific skills were denounced by these anti-Jesuit arguments is most revealing. Some of Ricci's Chinese critics discredited his skills and knowledge by emphasizing classical Confucian teachings about the need for a positive relationship between skill and the nurture of body and mind. Maintaining the

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<sup>377</sup> See *Ibid.*, who states that it was the disciples of the famous European mathematician Christopher Clavius, which included Ricci, who were most appreciated in court circles. Whereas, translations of prominent European philosophically and theologically oriented works were largely ignored by the Chinese, these included commentaries of Aristotle's logical corpus and works of Thomas Aquinas P. 262. For a detailed account of western natural philosophy published in Late Ming China see Peterson (1973) pp. 295-322.

<sup>378</sup> See Lancashire (1969) pp.222 – 228.

notion that all foreigners are barbarians, they argued that, first of all, skills such as Ricci's were already present in the writings of ancient Chinese scholars and, second, that even if these skills were new they had no impact on good government and good education which related to the mind of an individual and not in the skills that he could demonstrate. This superior ability of the mind remained the exclusive domain of the Chinese.<sup>379</sup> Other critical comments highlighted the universal notion present in neo-Confucius teachings that man was superior as compared to the rest of creation and existed in continuum with the heaven. Since heaven was the ultimate standard for goodness, therefore human nature, because of this privileged connection, was essentially good. This notion clashed directly with the Christian emphasis on man's essential sinfulness and the consequent need for a savior. These critics accepted the presence of evil in men but also argued that sinfulness or evil could be cured through recourse to a Confucian education, which, unlike Christianity, showed the path and the remedy to cure such moral weaknesses.<sup>380</sup>

The above criticisms, which are only a small sample of a whole industry of anti-Christian and anti-western polemics, show the weakness of Ricci's methods. While he was able to befriend and even convert some of the very influential members of the elite Scholar class, through displaying his scholarly abilities and by posing as a western scholar, he was not very successful in converting key players in the religious arena in China. In other words, by adopting the social customs and dress of the Literati, Ricci

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<sup>379</sup> See quotes from *Sheng Ch'ao P'o Hsieh Chi* (trans: Collection of Writings of the Sacred Dynasty for the Countering of Heterodoxy) in *ibid.*, pp. 221-2. Also see Rule (1968) pp.121-2 and note 116

<sup>380</sup> See *Ibid.* pp.228 – 230. On proliferation of moral tracts in late Ming China also see Waltner (1994) pp.429-431

was successful in becoming one of the Literati only and not as such a Chinese. His strategy of presenting a rather monolithic picture of the Christian faith backfired because most of the accusations leveled against his teachings were frequently the subject of religious and intellectual discussions in Europe. He mastered the Chinese classics and in his Chinese works responded to those through recourse to reasoning methods learned during his own humanist training at Jesuit institutions in Europe. However, in his zeal to fit in with the upper reaches of Chinese society, he ignored the complexities of Christian doctrine and the western scientific milieu.

The problem on the scientific front is evident from the fact that at the very time at which the Jesuits were introducing, using and promoting Copernican theories and ideas in the East to gain imperial favor, they were recognized as the leading opponents of Copernican scientists and of skeptical and post skeptical philosophies in Europe.<sup>381</sup> The selective approach on the religious front, on the other hand, was apparent from the choice of the single most influential segment of Chinese society to gain access to the larger population and also by choosing to hide key elements of the Christian doctrine on the pretext that the uninitiated Chinese would not be able to grasp the complexities involved in understanding the superior Christian message. This selective approach placed the Jesuits in a precarious position in the middle of two great world civilizations which had developed almost completely independent of each other with different but very dynamic and rich scholarly traditions. Both these civilizations believed in notions of heavenly perfection and, in the end neither was willing to give up their superior self-

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<sup>381</sup> See Rubiés pp.257-8 and also note 54

image. As a result, the Jesuits were discredited in both the civilizations China as well as Europe.

It was the Rites controversy which eventually caused the downfall of the Jesuit China mission. As we have seen, Ricci's strategy was to befriend the Literati by arguing that in its pure form Confucianism was based on natural reason and principles fully acceptable to Christianity. Based on this argument, he identified with the Chinese society those whose customs and life styles should be acceptable to the Christians and hence perfectly all right for the Jesuits to adopt for achieving future mass conversions. The remaining Chinese population was depicted as consisting of those who engaged in idolatry and indulged in customs totally unacceptable to Christianity. This theoretical division, made in the last decade of the sixteenth century, was accompanied by the beginning of sustained efforts by Ricci to establish himself as a scholar completely on par with and acceptable to the best in the Chinese scholarly elite. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Ricci had reached the Chinese capital and felt reasonably comfortable about the foundations of the church in China. It was at this point that he began to put into action the final stage of his plan for the Literati, which was to convince them that Christianity was not in conflict with the ideals of Confucian teaching and that it was possible for a high official of the Chinese empire to be Christian and a follower of Confucian teachings at the same time.<sup>382</sup> Ricci set about doing this by publishing comparative works on Confucianism and Christianity which were sure to be widely circulated because of his own reputation and because the Chinese, as stated earlier, had a

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<sup>382</sup> For details see Ross, *op.cit.*, p 145

rich literary culture and preferred to read books over oral forms of acquiring knowledge. Most of Ricci's famous works, including the revised compendium and translations of other European texts, were produced during this stage of his career in China. Consequently, it was also during this period that the most scathing critiques of Ricci's work surfaced from his opponents.<sup>383</sup> It is indeed interesting to note that Ricci was especially diligent in stressing to his Chinese audience that his new writings did not in any way suggest disrespect for Confucianism. Instead, he took the stance that the more he immersed himself into the realm of Confucian teachings, the more it became clear to him that the Chinese culture in its original form proclaimed a unique form of monotheism.<sup>384</sup> To this end, as Dunn argues in his seminal study, Ricci developed a Chinese philosophical vocabulary for Christian terms.<sup>385</sup> Many of these terms came under rigorous scrutiny by the Chinese and the Europeans and were adjudicated as being based on an inaccurate understanding of Confucianism by the Chinese, on the one hand, and as misrepresentation of Christianity by the European critics of the Society of Jesus, on the other.<sup>386</sup>

It is noteworthy, from the point of view of this dissertation, that critics on both sides were not merely interested in achieving a more accurate vocabulary by providing more nuanced understanding of both philosophies, i.e., Confucianism and Christianity. Instead, the tone and content of these critiques emphasized the superiority and ultimate

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<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* p. 149

<sup>384</sup> For a detailed description of Ricci's Original Confucianism see Young, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-39

<sup>385</sup> Dunne (1982) argues that the Jesuit mission failed because of the mistranslation of terms used to explain Christian terms to the Chinese, See especially pp. 282-297. Also see Loewe (1988) pp.190-198

<sup>386</sup> For a detailed account of Chinese critiques see Lancashire *op.cit.*, pp.218-241 and for an excellent summary of European critiques see Rubiés, pp. 239-244

truthfulness of each system of ideas. Based on his understanding, Ricci had insisted that many of the ancestral rites practiced by the general public, and special Confucian rites followed by the sect of the Literati, were mere social practices and had no religious connotations. These rites reinforced notions of filial piety and formed the basis of the very fabric of Chinese society. Based on his argument for the secular nature of these ancestral rites, Ricci sought and was granted approval for continued practice of such rituals by Chinese Christians from his European superiors and the Vatican. As Ross points out, if Ricci had not painted these rites as secular, there simply would not have been any Chinese Christianity.<sup>387</sup> In support of his arguments Ricci interviewed many of the members of the Literati regarding the true nature of these rites and reported in the journals that the Literati claimed that, instead of being a religious sect, their association could be best understood as “an academy instituted for the proper government and general good of the kingdom.”<sup>388</sup> Based on this claim and his admiration for the Chinese scholarly tradition, he argued that in truth, “the teachings of this academy were far from being contrary to Christian principles which provided the basis to believe that such an institution could derive great benefit from Christianity and might be developed and perfected by it.”<sup>389</sup> One could accuse Ricci of being too desperate to achieve a compromise between Confucianism and Christianity, but this should be a question for the historians to decide. However, from a theoretical perspective and especially the one developed in this dissertation, it is interesting to note that Ricci believed that Confucius

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<sup>387</sup> Ross, *op.cit.*, p.151

<sup>388</sup> Journals, 98

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

philosophy was deficient and could only be perfected once it was brought in line with Christian teachings. Interestingly Ricci was acceptable to the Chinese only because of their misunderstanding that he appreciated and believed in the superiority of the Chinese tradition. This faith in the superiority of one's tradition resulted in the persecution and eventual expulsion of Christian missionaries from China, as well as, a prohibition against allowing Chinese Christians to practice ancestral rites through a papal bull by Pope Clement XI in A.D. 1715, hence bringing the Jesuit enterprise in China to an end.<sup>390</sup>

If one hypothetically replaces the Jesuits with comparative theorists and their policy of accommodation with the question of appropriate methodology for doing CPT, the Chinese rites controversy provides at least two interesting macro level insights for CPT. First, the Jesuit case cautions us that an endeavor to compare and understand ideas of a non-western civilization must not be an attempt to equate eventually and merge them with those of western civilization. It also reminds us of the significance of taking into account the cultural baggage that interlocutors carry with them when initiating an inter-cultural dialogue. Moreover, as the Jesuit and other cases of inter cultural contacts discussed in this dissertation show, while one's own cultural disposition is instrumental in making sense of the Other, it also has the tendency to exaggerate the differences and similarities that are encountered in a foreign setting. This tendency can cause the desired inter cultural dialogue to be based on flawed assumptions that can cause it to unravel on

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<sup>390</sup> For a detailed account of developments in the period after Ricci's death and the development of rites controversy see Ross, *op.cit.*, pp.190-207



closer scrutiny and become counterproductive vis-à-vis the original intention of the interlocutors.

Second, the encounter between China and the west reminds western theorists with a comparative bent that excursions into foreign lands, or foreign ideas, with the intention of achieving a degree of accommodation between disparate systems are fundamentally transformative and leave a permanent mark on parties on both sides of the contact equation even in instances where achievements of these theorists are reversed. For example, even though the advances made by the Jesuits in terms of their accommodation policy were eventually reversed because of the rites controversy, they nevertheless contributed heavily to the religious debates raging inside the Europe of their time. As Rubiés convincingly argues, because of their peculiar missionary spirituality, quite paradoxically, the Jesuits may actually have ended up playing the role of a catalyst in bringing about the eventual secularization of Europe.<sup>391</sup> The gist of Rubiés's argument is that the religio-cultural and educational background of Jesuit missionaries working in China compelled them to identify and emphasize the distinction between the original intention of Confucian philosophy and the secularity of those Chinese civil customs that did not contradict the "natural light of reason." The sophistication with which the Jesuits elaborated on and responded to their critics (i.e., rival religious orders as well as philosophers) on this point brought the foundations of the Christian-European identity of the time under intense scrutiny and eventually contributed to the emergence of the concept of a rational civilization that could exist independently of theological

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<sup>391</sup> For details of Rubiés argument see pp. 267-279

definitions.<sup>392</sup> Rubiés's account of the unintended consequences of Jesuit strategy in China, and the discussion in the first chapter of this dissertation, remind us of the possibility that in the zeal to promote a geographically neutral and truly universal understanding of the political, comparative theorists in actuality may be promoting an even more intensely Eurocentric account of the same. Furthermore, given comparative theorists' assumption that CPT with a geographically neutral orientation can peacefully co-exist with traditional western political theory, one could argue that a fate similar to the one suffered by the common objective of all religious orders within Counter Reformation Catholicism could also befall the overall practice of political theory in the west. To be sure, according to the notion of CPT developed in this dissertation, such an outcome would be a welcome one; the argument here is against the problematic nature of the manner in which the role of CPT has been conceptualized until now by prominent comparative theorists within the broader practice of political theory in the western academia.

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<sup>392</sup> The Christian identity, Rubiés argues, was based on the notion that 'whilst there was always a secular sphere for political life it was necessary to identify any non-Christian religious practices as idolatrous and thus devilish.' See *Ibid.*, pp.268-9

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS: OTHERNESS, CANONICITY AND COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY

The main objective of this dissertation was to enumerate and analyze the reasons given by some of the leading political theorists in North America to start a new subfield of political theory in the form of CPT. The key arguments by these political theorists or comparativists, as I have referred to them throughout this dissertation, suggest that analyses of systems of ideas developed in the non-west reveal that there is “humanly significant knowledge outside the western canon.”<sup>393</sup> CPT, in this context, is the proposed new subfield based on the notion that “political theory may have started in western civilization but is not coterminous with it.”<sup>394</sup> The fact that it supports both these notions clearly makes this dissertation a work of CPT. However, as discussions in the previous chapters show, there are also significant differences between this dissertation and previous works of CPT. The most fundamental of these differences concerns the usefulness and necessity of CPT. More specifically, where almost all comparativists seem to agree that CPT is useful in the context of the current wave of globalization, this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that comparative theorizing must be adopted because ideas about the Self are often shaped as a result of the encounters with the Other. This different approach to CPT creates the possibility to move the comparative

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<sup>393</sup> Euben (1999) p.10

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

endeavor from a peripheral existence to the center of the vocational landscape of traditional political theory in western universities.

Following from these observations, then, this dissertation also supports different methodological preferences for CPT. Most previous works of CPT assume that the west has a decided advantage over its others in a globalized world and suggest that one must first effectively control the civilizational power disparity and then attempt comparative theorizing. This dissertation refutes the validity of such a methodological claim by looking at records of actual encounters between east and west which took place in the pre-enlightenment period when the west was not the most dominating civilization in the world. These records confirm the significant influence of ideas espoused by the Other in the shaping of the Self, but do not provide evidence for a major role played by power inequalities between participants in inter-civilizational dialogues. The stories of these encounters suggest that notions of western self-superiority and self-righteousness not only persevered but perhaps grew even stronger in the face of powerful opponents. In fact, in instances in which Europeans made accommodations to a foreign culture, these were based on their faith in the superiority of Christian doctrine and were allowed only with a clear understanding that an accommodative approach will eventually help Europeans in evangelizing their hosts.<sup>395</sup>

It is important to mention here that one must, without a doubt, include the impact of forces of globalization as a key factor in any description of the world and the human condition in the late modern period. But to interpret globalization in terms of facilitating

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<sup>395</sup> See for example discussion of the Jesuit accommodation method practiced in China in the chapter on Mateo Ricci.

the west in maintaining its political or ideological influence over the rest of the world is probably an overstatement. After all, it is in the age of globalization that events such as the terrorist attacks by radical religious fundamentalists on the US mainland and in Europe equally became a possibility. Without advanced networks of travel and communication such attacks could neither be planned nor executed. In a recent article, which discusses implications of globalization for the United States and the west, Fareed Zakria writes that

in 2006-2007, 124 countries grew their economies at over 4 percent a year.... Over the last two decades, lands outside the industrialized West have been growing at rates that were once unthinkable... the overall trend has been unambiguously upward. ... A list of 25 companies most likely to be the world's next great multinationals ... [includes] four companies each from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan; three from India, two from China, and one each from Argentina, Chile, Malaysia, and South Africa. This is much broader than the much-ballyhooed rise of China or even Asia. It is the rise of the rest – the rest of the world.<sup>396</sup>

These facts show that forces of globalization have provided CPT's supposedly disadvantaged non-west with the tools to equal the west in economic terms at least. Hence an argument for CPT that is based on the centrality of globalization is clearly overstated. Furthermore, this approach also limits the content of this new subfield of political theory to a period where the existence of a state of globalization becomes a prior condition for political theorizing itself. Globalization, in my opinion, is significant in the late modern period only because of its role as a catalyst and as an agent for broadening the theoretical horizons of the west and convincing traditional political theorists to recognize the inevitability of including non-western systems of ideas into

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<sup>396</sup> Zakria (2008) p.23

any discourse which claims to find universally applicable/ acceptable solutions pertaining to the dilemmas faced by human beings in general. It is important to remember here that catalysts only speed up ongoing processes and, as such, lack the ability to generate independent reactions of their own. As the cases discussed in this dissertation highlight, contacts with the east provided new data to the west about the world and its inhabitants and forced western observers to reassess and adjust their self-understanding accordingly in the light of this new information. Furthermore, because of the technologically advanced nature of the globalized world, we now have greater means and stronger reasons to test existing theories and come up with new ones, as our medieval and early modern predecessors did in the cases discussed in this dissertation.

Even if we choose to ignore the doubts raised by the above stated facts regarding globalization, the popular methodological and theoretical approaches to CPT do not fully satisfy the objection that traditional political theory creates a western monopoly over the *political* because of its sole reliance on western canonical texts. As this dissertation has argued, an attempt to counter this situation via an argument based on the unprecedented nature and impact of processes of globalization in the late modern period eventually results in strengthening this notion of a western monopoly. This is to say that the non-west becomes relevant only as a result of a process, i.e., globalization, which is initiated by the west. The west's interest in its Other in the late modern period, in this context, is because of certain unexpected outcomes of the process which was meant to perpetuate western monopoly over the rest of the world. Hence, it is the above stated facts about globalization that now require that the west must understand the source and logic of the

ideas originating in the non-west in order to maintain its supremacy. This logic is confirmed by Fred Dallmayr, arguably the most ardent advocate of CPT in the west. In one of his recent pieces, he writes,

It is surely advantageous for ourselves, for the pursuit of our concrete self-interest, if we know more about the world and the people we are dealing or have to contend with. This is particularly true in our shrinking or globalizing world today—a world exhibiting a great diversity of cultural, philosophical, and religious traditions. As long as we are mired in ignorance or blinded by coarse prejudices, we are likely to go astray or to encounter roadblocks which can frustrate or obstruct the unhampered pursuit of our interests and preferences.<sup>397</sup>

To be fair to Dallmayr, he issues the above statement with an eye on avoiding conflicts in a world where inter-civilizational contact is absolutely unavoidable.<sup>398</sup> The question that he ignores, and one which should intrigue political theorists in the west, however, is: why would inter-civilizational conflict necessarily be the outcome of an increased frequency of contact? Dallmayr frames his response to this question in terms of western rationalism and the notion that human beings only act because of selfish motives. Therefore, he makes the plea to western political theorists to gain a better understanding of non-western systems of ideas because it is in their own self interest. Dallmayr's argument raises two problems: first, how is his approach different from Huntington's approach, which predicts a clash of civilizations as an inevitable outcome of the increased interplay between forces of globalization?<sup>399</sup> The second problem is that Dallmayr, perhaps unwittingly, relegates non-western ideas to a position where their

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<sup>397</sup> Dallmayr (2007) p. 8.

<sup>398</sup> Dallmayr argues that in the worst of possible scenarios, such ignorance can lead to violent backlashes, to culture clashes or "clashes of civilizations," and even to self-destruction. Ibid. pp.18-19

<sup>399</sup> As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation in an earlier piece Dallmayr argues that his approach is different from other approaches to inter-civilizational contacts namely Edward Said's Orientalism and Huntington's Clash of Civilizations.

usefulness is assessed only in context of their utility for the west. The fact, as demonstrated through the analyses of east-west encounters discussed in this dissertation, is that non-western systems of ideas have intrinsic value of their own and are based on foundations similar to those found in the experience of the west. Furthermore, it is ideas from a foreign civilization which are often responsible for honing, if not formulating, the self-understanding of civilizations. This dissertation suggests that this influence is almost unavoidable and does not carry any requirement for an ultimate “fusion of horizons.” Inter-civilizational encounters, as Erich Leed correctly states, belong to the category of cross-cultural contacts “which generate a new kind of self consciousness, a species of collective self-awareness.”<sup>400</sup> In this context and writing about European travel writing, Leed argues that

from the sixteenth century on, Europeans encountered with increasing frequency a world of contrastive ethnicities, which allowed them to make comparisons between themselves and others. Out of these comparisons arose a self image of a culture no longer merely the heir of ancient traditions, a periphery of ancient centers, but a center in its own right and a culmination of history on the cutting edge of the “modern.”<sup>401</sup>

Even though Leed is only interested in writing a history of travel, a phenomenon which he thinks is a central force in causing historical transformations, he, nevertheless, ends up supporting the notion of CPT presented in this dissertation by making the claim for the centrality of comparison in understanding the nature of the Self.<sup>402</sup> Similar arguments regarding creation of the Self in contradistinction to knowledge about the Other have been made by other notable scholars also. For instance, Todorov, in his

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<sup>400</sup> In support of this description Leed cites Thucydides’ account of the Greeks who became aware of their collective self identity only after they had to unite against the Persians (1991) p.20

<sup>401</sup> Ibid. p.21

<sup>402</sup> Ibid. p.18



classic study of the European encounter with the New World, describes the significance of his work by stating,

It [his work] permits us to reflect upon ourselves, to discover resemblances as well as differences: once again self-knowledge develops through knowledge of the Other.<sup>403</sup>

In fact, and as I discuss later in this chapter, Todorov's study of the discovery of the New World by Europeans is of unique significance for the argument presented in this dissertation. This is because all the cases discussed in this dissertation relate to places and peoples about whom the Europeans had some degree of prior information. Even in case of China, which was closed to foreigners, Jesuits had received considerable information from the Japanese. Detailed descriptions of the Chinese can be found in the letters sent by early Jesuits back to Europe.<sup>404</sup> Similarly awareness and the urge to gain better understanding about the Mongols was a result of their successful military campaigns against Muslims and against the west itself. Contacts in this context most probably, as Dallmayr suggests, were initiated from a utilitarian perspective and in pure European self interest. In addition, given that European representatives in all these cases were missionaries who had come to the east with the primary objective of evangelization, it is logical to suggest that the main frame of reference for the Europeans was religion. As we have seen, European religious motivations, on the one hand developed certain expectations about the east and its inhabitants, while, on the other hand, these guided the interpretation of the unfamiliar customs encountered in foreign lands. For example, regardless of the differences in time and locale, we find that

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<sup>403</sup> Todorov (1999) p.254

<sup>404</sup> See for instance several of Francis Xavier's letters in (1992) pp.334, 341-2, 347-48, 382, 384

European Christian missionaries automatically chose Muslims in eastern lands as their prime opponents.

The rivalry between Islam and Christendom could be of prime importance in a milieu where the encounter was between Muslims and Christians only. In the encounters discussed here, the missionaries, by making Muslim-Christian rivalry the issue of prime importance, totally missed the socio-political or even religious context of the eastern lands which they were visiting. Akbar, for instance, couldn't care less about the supremacy of Islam over other faiths, as confirmed even by the Jesuits.<sup>405</sup> Similarly, the Mongols also did not care about this issue at all as long as the adherents of all religions did not bear ill will toward their Mongol masters.<sup>406</sup> However, as we notice, Akbar's contempt for Islam and Mongol indifference to religion were interpreted as a hopeful sign for spreading Christianity in India in case of the former and as an absolutely hopeless pursuit by Rubruck in the later instance. This assessment of the east reflects on how these European visitors understood themselves, i.e., they measured the goodness or the badness of the Other in terms of their distance from successful future conversion to the Christian faith, which was the primary component of their own self identity and from which they could not disassociate themselves in order to make any realistic assessment of what they experienced in the east. In cases like Jesuits in China, where Muslims were absent from the scene, the missionaries had to invoke their secular learning as the defining element of the European civilization in order to engage in a dialogue with Chinese scholars. But even in this case the focus on secular rather than the religious

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<sup>405</sup> See Jesuit letters in Correia-Afonso (1980) pp. 44-7, 51, 57, 59-60.

<sup>406</sup> See For instance Boyle (1997) p. 26, Spuler (1968), pp. 39-41, and Dawson (1955) p. 85

elements in the dialogue was justified to the Society superiors in Europe as necessary for successful future conversion of the Chinese people to Christianity.

Contacts with the east were also instrumental in enhancing European geographical horizons. As R. W. Southern argues, it was contacts with the Mongols that enlightened the Europeans about the enormity of size of the non-Christian world. He writes,

By the middle of the thirteenth century ...it was seen that this picture [European estimate of population ratio of non-Christians to Christians] was far too optimistic. There were ten, or possibly a hundred, unbelievers for every Christian. Nobody knew: and the estimate grew with access of knowledge.<sup>407</sup>

According to Southern, an immediate impact of this new information on European self-understanding was a change in attitude toward the Crusades, which either seemed almost impossible or at least in need of serious reassessment in terms of their aims as well as methods.<sup>408</sup> This reemphasizes Leed's and Todorov's argument that it is contacts with the Other which are responsible for shaping our collective self-awareness.

In light of the above, then, traditional political theory which does not pay heed to the notions of the *political* envisaged outside the boundaries of the west is by definition a limited enterprise. This is to say that traditional political theorists' exclusive reliance on the western canon enables them only to understand and analyze the internal dynamics of their own civilization. If it is true, as Leed and Todorov argue and as this dissertation supports, that the content of the western canon may itself have been profoundly shaped by west's contact with its others, then to talk of a western civilization or a western

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<sup>407</sup> Southern (1962) p.43

<sup>408</sup> Ibid

identity in such circumstances automatically requires the understanding of that which westerners have excluded from any description of the self and termed “non-western.” A comparative perspective, therefore, helps us in understanding the nature and basis of a built-in civilizational criterion against which the degree of civility and humanness of the Other is measured by different civilizations. For example, as the discussion of the civilizational traits of the Chinese revealed, all foreigners were barbarians as far as the Chinese were concerned. Similarly, all foreigners were acceptable to the Mongols as long as they were willing to submit to the supremacy of their Mongol masters. But perhaps the most telling of the cases, in this regard, is that of Mughal India where Abul Fazl and Akbar forged the concept of an Indian civilization whose most outstanding characteristic was diversity in terms of its people, terrain, languages, and customs. In other words, Abul Fazl used the very existence of diversity as the unique distinguishing, and hence unifying, characteristic of India.<sup>409</sup> The ideology that he devised to legitimize this diverse entity was the notion of perpetual peace or *sulh-i-kul*. This ideology, to use Todorov’s term, demanded a distributive rather than an assimilationist approach because of its cross-religious or cross-cultural outlook.<sup>410</sup> In terms of the built-in scale for valuing civilizations, then, Indian civilization’s greatness lay in its ability to absorb diversity and make it its own. As a consequence of this approach the greatness of civilizations which boasted of their unity of faith was automatically suspect from an Indian point of view.

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<sup>409</sup> See Allami (1993) ch. 1, bk. 3, pp.7-10

<sup>410</sup> Todorov uses the terms “distributive” and “assimilationist” to characterize Las Casas’s approach towards the American Indians. For details see. op.cit., pp. 190-1

The Mongols, the Chinese, the Jesuits, the Europeans, and the Mughals were all aware of their Others to some degree. And as the frequency of European contact with the east increased, it forced representatives of the encountering civilizations to make presentations of what their respective civilizations stood for. Admittedly, it was mostly the visitors who had to make this presentation in order to acquire acceptance and space in the foreign lands. But, as the cases discussed in this dissertation suggest, both, the foreigners in order to make these presentations, and the hosts, in making a favorable or otherwise decision about the ideas presented, were required to achieve a certain degree of Alterity in order to communicate with each other. In my opinion, therefore, it is the formulation and presentation of arguments by members of different civilizations in this state of Alterity which should be central to the CPT enterprise, because prior to this stage the Other is theoretically irrelevant. It is also only in a state of Alterity that a simultaneous need arises to gain insight into foreign ideas, on the one hand, and to formulate and present those which define the Self, on the other. In this process, the peculiarities which a culture or civilization has internalized, and which do not seem questionable to its members anymore, come up for questioning by those who neither know nor care about their logic and significance. Many of these internalized concepts can be the basis of a civilization's confidence in its own superiority over its others. So, in a manner of speaking, then, it is only in a state of Alterity that "leaps of faith" are exposed to questioning by both the self and the Other.

A classic example of the above can be seen in Matteo Ricci's decision to hide the significance of Christ's crucifixion and passion for Christian faith from his hosts and to

present instead the picture of baby Christ and Madonna to his hosts which, resulted in the Chinese misunderstanding that the Christians believed in a female God. Ricci was accurate in his assessment of the Chinese mind, which is also confirmed by the incident when a eunuch from the royal palace discovered the figure of Christ on the Cross in Ricci's belongings and interpreted it as evidence that the Jesuits were involved in dark magic.<sup>411</sup> Ricci's decision to hide the crucifixion could only have been made in a state of Alterity which enabled him to understand how the Chinese would respond to doctrines of Christian faith. But even more important is the fact that Ricci, a Jesuit missionary aiming to Christianize China, chose to compromise on one of the fundamental tenets of his faith in order to start a dialogue with the Chinese. Ricci's life in China is filled with similar examples, some of which have been discussed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

In addition to the above examples, and as I stated earlier in this chapter, it is also useful to consider briefly here some aspects of the impact of the discovery of the New World on European self-understanding. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I have pulled this case out of the chronological sequence of other cases because of its unique circumstances. These unique circumstances provide interesting points of comparison with previously discussed cases in understanding the impact of the Other on one's self-understanding.

The most striking characteristic of the encounter between Europe and the New World, in context of this dissertation at least, is the impact that the absence of a Europe-

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<sup>411</sup> Ricci (1953) pp.365-6

like system of ideas among Amerindians had on European understanding of the Other in general and on their own civilization's role in a global context in particular. For example, on the first day making landfall in the New World Columbus noted in his diary that

the [Indians] should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion. Our Lord pleasing, at the time of my departure I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses in order that they may learn to speak. No animal of any kind did I see on this island except parrots.<sup>412</sup>

It is noteworthy, according to Columbus, that the Indians have no religion and that they cannot speak. Furthermore, Columbus states that he wants to take the Indians to Europe in order to teach them how to speak rather than teaching them European language/s. The act of speaking refers to a unique human characteristic and Columbus's choice of words suggests that he considered these naked natives of the New World as something less than human.<sup>413</sup> As to the notion that Indians did not have any religion, Columbus notes at several places that when the natives saw the Europeans they repeatedly raised their hands towards the sky, thanked god, and believed that the visitors had come from the heavens.<sup>414</sup> The fact that the Indians believed that Europeans were visitors from heaven, as Columbus himself states, shows that they had some sort of a system of religious beliefs. Similarly, the fact that the Indians were able to answer Columbus's questions, with signs and actions, suggests that they could communicate like humans and did not

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<sup>412</sup> Columbus (1989) pp.68-9 hereinafter referred as *Diario*

<sup>413</sup> Todorov also affirms this see *op.cit.*, p. 30

<sup>414</sup> *Diario*, Pp. 73, 75.

know the language of the visitors.<sup>415</sup> Columbus's reading of the Amerindians, however, suggests that their nakedness and lack of civilizational elements, comparable to Europe's traditional others, made them an "Entirely Other" for early Europeans visitors.<sup>416</sup> This category of the Other is described by Haidu in following terms

In context of Occidental philosophy the "Entirely Other" designates a substance (in the Aristotelian sense) simultaneously irreducible to the substance of the enunciator and unknowable precisely because of the radical difference between the two substances. God and man are so different that man cannot formulate a positive discourse regarding the other substance.<sup>417</sup>

This unique nature of contact with the New World, in the context of the cases discussed earlier in this dissertation, can also be affirmed via comparison with William of Rubruck's experience in Mongol lands. As discussed in the second chapter, William noted that when he went among the Mongols, he felt as if had entered a new world. However, the presence of Nestorian Christians and Muslims at the Mongol Khan's court allowed him to place these Others into an intelligible frame of reference and on a sort of a civilizational scale that allowed him to communicate his observations in understandable terms to his intended audience in Europe. The facts that Rubruck actually had the opportunity to prove in a debate that Christianity was the only true faith, that he failed to convince the Mongols to allow him to stay in their lands and preach his faith, and his eventual desire that if it was in his power he would constantly preach war against the Mongols, present a picture where the attempts to engage with and convert the Other

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Todorov's discussion of Columbus's attitude towards the Amerindians in the immediate aftermath of the discovery also supports the claim for the Indians being an "Entirely Other" for the Europeans. See *op.cit.*, pp. 42-50

<sup>417</sup> Haidu (1990) p.683



have failed and resulted in absolute disillusionment. In the case of Columbus, on the other hand, the inhabitants of the New World are actually no more significant than his interest in the flora and fauna and natural resources such as gold. For example, in the passage quoted earlier, the characteristics of the inhabitants of the New World seem to be only as important as informing the Europeans about the kind of animals that are found there. Furthermore, the observation that Indians quickly learn to repeat things in a European language was interpreted as a sign that they would make good servants and also quickly accept Christianity. In other words, without explicitly saying so, Columbus relegated the Indians to a sub-human status because of his inability to converse with them or to relate to their condition.

In addition to this, scholars seem to be in agreement that the discovery of the New World encouraged Columbus to view himself as playing an important role in the unfolding and fulfilling of Christian prophecies and resulted in consequent depictions of the New World as the Garden of Eden or the fabled east. This again proves that the status of an “Entirely Other” was assigned to the inhabitants of the New World by early Europeans visitors.<sup>418</sup> But the noteworthy point here is that while radical differences between the Amerindians and the Europeans placed these people uniquely beyond the grasp of Columbus’s intelligence, they nevertheless caused the Europeans to reflect on their own role in context of this newly discovered reality. This highlights the centrality of Self-Other encounters in the broadening of one’s knowledge about one’s larger environment, on the one hand, and reasserts the notion, on the other hand, that the Other

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<sup>418</sup> Among many others see Campbell (1988) pp. 165-209; Todorov (1999) pp.14-33; Pagden (1991) pp. 148-151; Watts (1985) pp. 73-102 and Leed, *op.cit.*, pp. 161-162

has a formative influence in determining how we understand ourselves. Even though a detailed discussion of European attitude and policies towards the inhabitants of the New World is not exactly within the scope of this dissertation it maybe useful to go in a little more detail about the manner in which the discovery of the New World eventually forced the Europeans to reflect on their self-understanding and on the canonical texts which formed the basis of their identity.

Robert Paine argues that the European dilemma in the context of the discovery of the New World was twofold. First, “a new continent had to be added to the *Orbis Terrarum*,” however, because of “first principles of the sacred cosmography it had to be ontologically ‘the same’ as the other continents.”<sup>419</sup> And second the Amerindians had to be placed within the existing framework of European knowledge. These aspects pushed the Europeans towards “fighting on two fronts – of living by the canon and of breaking loose from it.”<sup>420</sup> Paine’s description of a canon, in this context, and its alternate could also be very enlightening for CPT. Building on Baehr and O’Brien notion that “a *canon* exists as a totality – exclusive, unalterable, and impregnable to the possibility of critique,”<sup>421</sup> he argues that

As the Truth, a canon must not be tempered with; but how is the Truth to be understood, even as the world around it changes? So there will be commentaries, but always in accord with the founding precepts of the canon – beyond them lies the abyss of heresy.<sup>422</sup>

In the above context, then, CPT’s endeavor to include non-western texts into the theoretical discourse of the west and the suggestion of some comparativists to develop a

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<sup>419</sup> Paine (1995) pp.49-50

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. p.51

<sup>421</sup> Baehr and O’Brien (1994) cited in Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid

non-western canon seems problematic right from the beginning. This is to say that only those non-western texts could be acceptable to western political theorists that are either already in agreement with or in contradistinction to the founding precepts of the western civilization and the rest should be rejected as irrelevant. The development of a non-western canon under such conditions will automatically be governed by the rules that shape the western canon, so the original dissatisfaction voiced by comparative theorists, that the west seems to have a monopoly over the *political*, will remain intact.

Furthermore, the task of CPT in this context is limited, by definition, to finding similarities between disparate civilizations, again because radically different non-western texts must be rejected as irrelevant if the sanctity of canons is insisted upon. As a result, and as the analyses in this dissertation suggest, even if CPT is successful in developing a non-western canon, it could only be an image of its western counterpart and may not reflect fully the complexity of non-western systems of ideas.

Furthermore, the very emphasis on keeping the western canon intact and creating a counter non-western canon in order to do comparative theorizing reveals the distinct and limiting characteristic of political theory as a western vocation, especially in the face of globalization which is characterized by comparativists as an unprecedented condition. Gellner, for example, suggests that during transportation from theology to cultural studies the need for canonicity is the dominant characteristic of societies which lack “a sense-of-theoretical-alternative.”<sup>423</sup> CPT in such a characterization of civilizational attitudes can either be the provider of a theoretical alternative to traditional political

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<sup>423</sup> Gellner (1973) p.164

theory or it can perpetuate the primacy of canons for political theorizing and hence produce understandings that are essentially western in orientation and are already being produced by traditional political theory.

This dissertation has suggested that the task for CPT should be to explore the possibility of non-western influences on the development of the western canon, hence challenging the truth claims embedded in the very notion of canonicity itself. The dissertation also suggests that CPT's focus on identifying non-western texts for the sole purpose of comparison via recourse to imaginary dialogues is problematic precisely because such an approach fails to resolve effectively the dilemmas on account of which the call for a new subfield was issued in the first place by Fred Dallmayr. A detailed discussion of these criteria has already been presented in the first chapter of this dissertation. However, it is worthwhile to reconsider one major claim, or more specifically a methodological guideline, suggested for CPT by its founders, i.e., the quest to understand non-western ideas as they are understood by non-westerners themselves.

Here once again the European experience in the New World comes in handy, especially in Las Casas's writings, which provide an interesting source to comprehend some key issues related to understanding the Other in terms of its self-understanding while staying rooted in the canonical teachings of one's own civilization. As stated above, discovery of the New World, as a case to discuss methodological aspects of CPT, is particularly useful because of the "Entirely Other" nature of the Amerindians accorded to them by the Europeans. In this regard, Pagden points out that Las Casas's ideas regarding the rights of the Indians and the Indians' unassailably human status were based

in the language of neo-Thomism.<sup>424</sup> And Las Casas's main task, in pleading the case of the Indians, was to demonstrate that it was his reading of the canon that was "the only true one" because he had "been there."<sup>425</sup> If Pagden's analysis of Las Casas's writings is true, then in context of CPT the noteworthy point here is that the western canon needed to be reinterpreted if the Amerindians were to have a place in the experience and history of the west. As Pagden states,

Only an interpretation of the canonical texts, that the "cruel and implacable enemies of the Indians" had used against them, could secure the human status of the Indians before a community for whom exegesis was the only access to knowledge.<sup>426</sup>

Las Casas's defense of the Indians, then, had a twofold significance in terms of European self-understanding. On the one hand, it introduced the notion that Europeans in the New World were perhaps behaving in a so called non-western or a non-Christian manner towards the Indians.<sup>427</sup> On the other hand, Las Casas's arguments expanded the western canon in terms of its interpretive capability.<sup>428</sup> In the context of the overall argument made in this dissertation, the noteworthy point, highlighted by these implications of Las Casas's work, is that even when the Europeans did not find any obvious similarities between themselves and their Others it caused self-reflection and redefinition of how the Europeans understood themselves. The European experience in the New World, therefore, suggests that CPT's task cannot be limited to seeking

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<sup>424</sup> Pagden, op.cit., p. 151

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. p.152

<sup>427</sup> See for instance Las Casas's comments on the profile of an ideal missionary and the only correct way to preach Christianity in Sullivan (1995) pp. 205-214.

<sup>428</sup> For Las Casas's description of categories of Barbarians and exclusion of Amerindians from the category called natural slaves by Aristotle see Las Casas (1993) pp. 123-7.

Voegelin-style equivalences between disparate civilizations as suggested by Anthony Parel. The Europeans in this instance had to reflect seriously upon and theoretically justify their treatment of and stance towards the New World and its inhabitants. The self-reflection, or even self-correction, in the light of new evidence, which was embedded in these theoretical positions towards the Amerindians, has been elaborated by several prominent political theorists in the west. For example, according to Pagden, it was the failure of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery to reconcile with the known facts about the social life of the Amerindians that led theologians like Francisco de Vitoria to recognize that there were inherent contradictions in the theory itself.<sup>429</sup> In the same vein, Todorov highlights the epistemological significance of the discovery of the New World and argues that this discovery was the cause whose effect was the beginning of the modern era, which rendered previous modes of making sense of reality essentially redundant.<sup>430</sup> Pagden affirms Todorov's position and highlights Las Casas's argument regarding "being there" as an essential condition for acquiring the ability to interpret reality.<sup>431</sup> Without the encounter between the "Entirely Other" Amerindians and representatives of the European civilization, such radical readjustments in European self-understanding as reflected in the European approach towards acquisition of knowledge would probably not have been possible.

The discovery of the New World, in comparison with other encounters discussed in this dissertation, also raises the possibility that maybe the degree of strangeness of the

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<sup>429</sup> Pagden (1992) p.5

<sup>430</sup> Todorov, *op.cit.*, p.5

<sup>431</sup> Pagden (1991) pp. 151-2

Other is directly proportional to the intensity of the potential challenges to the manner in which one understands the Self. To be clear, and to reiterate a point made earlier in this dissertation, as long as the Self has no knowledge of the Other, or the Other exists in a far removed state, there is no theoretical cost for the existing civilizational understanding of the Self and thereby the world. However, as the knowledge about the Other increases, primarily because of increased direct contact, theories of self-understanding automatically come under scrutiny. In this situation even if we choose to ignore the Other, we need to have a theoretical foundation for doing so. Again as Pagden argues,

Observers in America, like observers of anything culturally unfamiliar for which there exist few identifiable antecedents, had to classify before they could properly see; and in order to do that they had no alternative but to appeal to a system which was already in use.<sup>432</sup>

Hence, as the frequency of European contact with the New World increased and each became a permanent fixture in the life-world of the Other, the weakness or the inadequacy of the existing system of ideas also became more visible and eventually required modification in the light of new facts.

Yet another significant episode for CPT in the story of early European experiences in the New World is the debate regarding the intellectual and religious capacity of the Amerindians between Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda.<sup>433</sup> Las Casas and Sepúlveda held diametrically opposed views on the Amerindians; however, as Lewis Hanke argues, the significance of this debate lies in the fact that it was the first time that a colonizing nation organized a formal inquiry into the justice of the methods

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<sup>432</sup> Pagden (1992) p.4

<sup>433</sup> For a details account and commentary of this debate see Hanke (1974) pp.69-112

used to extend its empire.<sup>434</sup> In addition, it was also the first time that an attempt was made to stigmatize an entire race as inferior and as born slaves.<sup>435</sup> Part of the argument on both sides of the debate was based on Aristotle's theory regarding the condition of natural slavery in some human groups. Aristotle framed his theory in the context of the relationship between passion and reason and its impact on human behavior, arguing that groups in which passion ruled supreme were inferior by nature.<sup>436</sup> Consequently, Sepúlveda argued that the Amerindians were barbarians, who were governed by passion rather than reason, and therefore they were slaves by nature and the Spanish war against these people was justified.<sup>437</sup> Las Casas responded to Sepulveda's argument by reassessing Aristotle's statements on barbarism, as a phenomenon, and showed that there were several kinds of barbarians and that the Indians did not fall into the category which Aristotle called natural slaves.<sup>438</sup> Building further on this claim, he also challenged Sepulveda's argument regarding the legality of Spanish war against the Indians.<sup>439</sup>

In defending the Indians, Las Casas also indirectly forced his audience to rethink several firmly established aspects of Christian identity. For instance, he brought up the issue of Church's jurisdiction over infidels and non believers in the context of the natural law tradition and linked his arguments about treatment of the Amerindians to Christian relations with the traditional Others. He argued that "Jews, Moslems and idolaters who do not live in Christian kingdom are not under the jurisdiction of the Church, nor any

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid. p.67

<sup>435</sup> Ibid. p xi

<sup>436</sup> For a discussion of Aristotle's theory in context of the New World see Pagden (1992) pp. 41-50

<sup>437</sup> Hanke discusses Sepulveda's arguments in terms of Las Casas's responses see op.cit., pp. 83-88

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. pp. 83-4

<sup>439</sup> Ibid. pp.90-1



Christian prince, no matter how their crimes may violate natural law.”<sup>440</sup> Once again, Las Casas’s experience in the New World brought forward new data to challenge existing theories and approaches towards the Other, not just in the context of the New World, but also in terms of Christian understanding vis-à-vis the Other in a more general manner. It is noteworthy that Las Casas’s key strategy in formulating all his arguments in defense of the Indians was to mix the American reality with familiar European theories. As mentioned earlier, this was the “being there” aspect of his reasoning, which Las Casas claimed was a necessary condition to gain any real understanding of the New World and its inhabitants.<sup>441</sup>

The episode of the discovery of the New World and the subsequent European attitude towards its inhabitants has serious implications for the CPT endeavor. As mentioned already, this east-west encounter demonstrates that even a contact with an “Entirely Other,” especially if it is on a continued basis, can disturb existing understanding of the Self. Hence a methodological approach which insists on the continuation of a tradition, while acknowledging increased frequency of contacts with the Other, is unlikely to achieve a neutral dialogue between the east and the west. In context of CPT, this is most evident because of its heavy reliance on the model of Gadamarian philosophical hermeneutics. To quote Haidu once again,

In hermeneutics, subject and object are related by a key term: “tradition.”...[which] takes the shape of an uninterrupted dialogue... continuous from one text to another in the form of question and answer, each text producing an answer to the question asked... by an earlier text.

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid. p. 88

<sup>441</sup> In his account of the destruction of the Indies Las Casas repeatedly invokes the eye witness nature of his account as the proof of its authenticity See Las Casas (1992) pp. 9,12,13, 15,16, 19, 23, 48. Also see Pagden who makes a similar claim (1991) p.151

The series of questions and answers constitutes the “tradition,” which becomes the condition of possibility of the cognitive relation between text and reader.<sup>442</sup>

Building further on the above description, Haidu argues that reliance on hermeneutics, then, invariably implies a conversation in which all involved have already agreed on the foundational significance of certain common codes. In this context, CPT’s practice of constructing imaginary dialogues between western and non-western texts and its attempt to identify a non-western canon while relying on philosophical hermeneutics with an aim to achieve a fusion of horizons does not appear to be a good strategy at all. This is because philosophical hermeneutics pushes one to understand a single tradition in terms of a continuous dialogue. If one wishes to introduce a foreign text into such a dialogue, then the text in question must first fulfill the criteria of providing a useful answer to the questions which have been raised by some earlier texts in a foreign tradition. In terms of east-west dialogue, then, eastern texts selected in this manner for inclusion into the western discourse are unlikely to present a nuanced picture of their indigenous tradition to a western reader. As a consequence of this, CPT’s objective to understand the Others “as they understand themselves” is unlikely to be achieved if there is a heavy reliance on philosophical hermeneutics as the method of choice.

Furthermore, in order to be fair to non-western civilizations, CPT’s quest to identify an alternate non-western canon must also be composed of texts that represent a continuous non-western tradition in shape of a dialogue consisting of important questions and answers which are significant in terms of the subject matter of political

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<sup>442</sup> Haidu, *op.cit.*, pp. 672-3

theory. In this context, the concern of primary significance in my opinion is not whether such a construction is possible or not. Instead it is the very notion that a non-western tradition virtually needs to be constructed first. And that, too, mirrors our understanding of western civilization. This situation is further complicated when comparativists insist that the purpose of comparisons must be a “fusion of horizons” between east and west. The problematic part of the scheme here is that the choice of philosophical hermeneutics as a method has already pushed us in the direction of texts which are western-like in their orientation so that a fusion of horizons is in fact the predetermined outcome of the whole enterprise. And non-western texts in such a construction only serve the purpose of providing more data to support the answers already believed to be good in the west. As the cases discussed in this dissertation show, and as other critics of this approach in CPT have also argued, a fusion of horizons is not always the outcome of east-west encounters.<sup>443</sup>

Yet another significant aspect that becomes evident from the examination of actual east-west encounters is that power disparity, while important, is not a major factor in determining how different civilizations understand themselves. In fact, as I stated earlier, notions of self superiority are maintained, if not strengthened, during a Self-Other encounter, regardless of the power differential between the parties involved. Instead of power, the common factor in inter-civilizational encounters turns out to be the initiation of self-reflection. And this self reflection, as we have seen, is often focused on maintaining a superior image of the self, regardless of whether one’s own civilization is

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<sup>443</sup> See Nederman et.al. (2006)

at an advantage or a disadvantage in terms of power. CPT's focus on neutralizing the west's advantage in the era of globalization misses what should be the central point of theoretical focus during an east-west meeting. The proof of this claim, i.e., initiation of self reflection as a result of Self-Other encounters, can best be seen once again in the case of the discovery of the New World, where even an encounter with an "Entirely Other" raised challenges for European self-understanding.

Using Haidu's terminology, then, one could say that the discovery of the other, in the cases discussed in this dissertation, challenged not only the answers that the European civilization had provided itself, but also the questions which it thought were being raised by the very foundational texts themselves. Examples include reassessment of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery by Las Casas and Sepúlveda in the context of the reality of the encounter with the Amerindians, Muslim and Christian understanding of the Mongols as a punishment from God, and Ricci's reassessment of the Christian doctrine in his quest to find a place for Chinese practices related to Chinese ancestral rites by the literati in an attempt to create Chinese Christianity. The same is true of the Jesuit mission to Akbar's court and Rubruck's journey to the Mongol lands, which, on the one hand, informed the west about the nature of Hindu and Buddhist faiths and, on the other hand, increased their awareness about the characteristics and size of non-Christian populations in the east, thus forcing the westerners to reassess their civilizational objectives and redefine the scope of their foundational texts. Furthermore, and at the very least, these examples force us to entertain the possibility of a strong role played by external elements in the development of European self-understanding.

The task of CPT, in light of the cases discussed in this dissertation, then, must be to identify and include the role played by elements external to a civilization in the development of the self-image of any given civilization. This approach also justifies the creation of a new subfield in the shape of CPT whose scope is defined by an exclusive focus on elements which are generally ignored by traditional political theorists. Focus on these ignored systems of ideas, without any bias for their geographical origins or historical position, promises to bring in new data for assessing self-images of various civilizations. These data would represent multiple civilizational standpoints on issues of common interest because of their origin in the instances of inter-civilizational interactions. Conceptualizing CPT from this vantage point will allow us to develop a more nuanced general understanding of the human condition in any given period and perhaps would permit us to propose more viable solutions to the dilemmas faced by us in a globalized world particularly.

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