Jānis Tālivaldis Ozoliņš   *Editor*

Religion and Culture in Dialogue

East and West Perspectives

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In memory of Jacob Jānis Ozoliņš (1981–2013), for Barbara, my wife and my family, both here in Australia and in Latvia.

Preface

This volume is a result of a research project which brought together a diverse range of academics in philosophy and theology from a number of different institutions. The project had very broad aims, and had as its focus the role of culture and religion in shaping human persons and developing moral values. It also sought to engage with a variety of perspectives. During monthly meetings, a number of the contributors from Australian Catholic University met to discuss some of the issues which found their way into the book. Other insights were gained at various international conferences and dialogue during such meetings grew into the papers that came together to form this book.

One aspect of the modern world has been the communication revolution which has seen the possibility of diverse peoples being able to encounter one another and the variety of faiths, cultures and traditions that they have. The authors draw on this diversity in their considerations of the ways in which different cultures and traditions have addressed common philosophical and theological questions. These range from different conceptions of God, to human values and human dignity, as well as discussion of the beliefs that shape cultures and religious tradition. These discussions illuminate our understanding of the nature of the human person and personal identity. In an increasingly globalised world and in the pluralist context of Australian society, an understanding and appreciation of other cultures is vital. The contributors themselves are from a variety of backgrounds and cultural traditions and so the book is a window into a fascinating array of perspectives on a wide range of topics. Each chapter provides a vignette into this mix of religion and culture.

Fitzroy, Australia   Jānis Tālivaldis Ozoliņš

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Contributors

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Peter Drum completed his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Melbourne and is former lecturer in Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. He has a long standing and wide interest in moral philosophy, especially Aristotelian Ethics, and Informal Logic. He is a much published commentator on a wide variety of topics in ethics and moral philosophy. His most recent publications include "Natural Rights, Morality, and the Law," *Beijing Law Review* 2:1 (2011), "Aristotle's Definition of Place and of Matter," *Open Journal of Philosophy* 1:1 (2011), "A Decent Life?", *Res Disputandae*, 20 (2014).

David G. Kirchhoffer was born and raised in South Africa, obtained his doctorate in theological ethics from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and was a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Law in Leuven. He currently lectures at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University, and is a member of its Research Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry. He is also a Senior Research Associate of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Johannesburg, and Visiting Senior Fellow of the Centre for Biomedical Ethics at the National University of Singapore. In addition to several scholarly articles and book chapters, he is the author of *Human Dignity in Contemporary Ethics* and co-editor of *Being Human: A Groundwork for a Theological Anthropology for the 21st Century.*

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Maija Kūle, Dr. habil. phil is professor and director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Latvia, full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and European Academy of Sciences and Arts. She is a recipient of the Latvian order of Three Stars for scientific excellence and the International Felix prize from the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. She has 148 scientific publications, including 12 on phenomenology of Life in *Analecta Husserliana*, and is author of five monographs on history of philosophy, hermeneutics, phenomenology and culture, the Latvian phenomenologist Theodors Celms and life forms in contemporary Europe. She is head of a number of research projects in Latvia including, "Phenomenological Investigations" and "Letonica – an axiological approach". She was a CD member (1998–2013) of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), head and member of FISP committees and a member of the organizing committees of the past three World Philosophy Congresses. She has been a visiting lecturer at JNU (India), Maltepe (Turkey) and other universities.

T. Brian Mooney received his doctorate in Philosophy from La Trobe University and his undergraduate and master's degrees at The Queen's University of Belfast. He has published widely in the areas of Moral Philosophy, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion and the History of Philosophy. His most recent books include *Responding to Terrorism: Political, Philosophical and Legal Perspectives* (Ashgate, 2008), *Thinking Things Through: an Introduction to Analytical Skills*

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Jānis Tālivaldis Ozoliņš, FHERDSA, FPESA, FACE Foreign Member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, is Professor of Philosophy in the School of Philosophy (National) at Australian Catholic University, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia, and was Inaugural Crawford Miller Visiting Research Fellow at St. Cross College, Oxford. He has been a Visiting Professor at Wuhan University, Wuhan China and University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. He is Reviews Editor of *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* Editor of *Res Disputandae*, formerly *Ethics Education*, and an editorial consultant on a number of international refereed journals. He has interests in the metaphysics of Aquinas, Eastern philosophy, philosophy of education and applied ethics and has numerous publications in these areas. His work has been translated into French, Spanish, Turkish, Polish and Chinese. His most recent publications include *Foundations of Health Care Ethics* (CUP, 2015).

John G. Quilter received his doctorate in philosophy for Macquarie University, has been a Fulbright Scholar and has held a number of research scholarships. He has taught Philosophy at Sydney University, Pittsburgh University and, since 1991, at Australian Catholic University. He has been a visiting lecturer at Auckland University, Australian National University and the University of Örebro, Sweden. He has published in Metaphysics, philosophy of religion, healthcare ethics, ancient philosophy, ancient Greek tragedy, moral philosophy and recent Australian philosophy. Current interests include Ancient, Medieval and Eastern Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, epistemic and moral luck and chance as a modality in Physics. He has been the Chief Examiner of the NSW HSC Studies of Religion, Chairperson of the Australia Hearing Research Ethics Committee and served on numerous academic and research ethics committees.

William Sweet is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Philosophy, Theology, and Cultural Traditions, at St. Francis Xavier University (Canada). A Past-President of the Canadian Philosophical Association, he is currently Vice President of the Council for Research on Values in Philosophy, and a member of the Steering Committee of the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie. He has lectured on 6 continents, and has taught at universities in North America, Asia, and Europe. He has published particularly in cross-cultural philosophy of religion, ethics, political philosophy, and human rights. He is editor of the journal Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions and is the author and/or editor of some 30 books; among the more recent are Intercultural Dialogue and Human Rights (2011), Migrating Texts and Traditions (2012), and Ideas Under Fire (2013). He is a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, the Royal Historical Society, and named Presidente d'onore of the Istituto Internazionale Jacques Maritain.

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John N. Williams (PhD Hull) works primarily in epistemology and paradoxes, especially epistemic paradoxes. He also works in philosophy of language and applied ethics. He has published in *Acta Analytica*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Analysis*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Mind, Philosophia*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Religious Studies*, *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective, Synthese and Theoria.* He is co-editor of *Moore's Paradox: New Essays on Belief, Rationality and the First Person,* Oxford University Press together with Mitchell Green. He researches and teaches in the School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University.

Introduction

The contributions in this volume from a diverse range of authors from mixed backgrounds on a variety of topics illustrate well how culture and tradition shape approaches to the themes discussed. While we do not set out to analyse their texts here to see what cultural influences are present in their writing, it is broadly possible to see these emerge through not just the topics chosen, but the theoretical approaches taken to the topics themselves. The pluralism that is evident has produced a lively mix of perspectives and styles. Although there are several ways the essays could have been arranged, they have been presented according to broad themes that shade into each other. The first broad theme, deals with the nature of belief, and this is taken up in the essays by Tobin, Drum and Colledge. The second theme, in the essays of Quilter and Knasas, deals with dialogue among different cultures and traditions. The third theme, evident in the essays of Ozoliņš, Tan, Mooney and Williams, focuses on eastern understanding of God and what it means to lead an ethical life. The fourth theme, evident in the essays by Chițoiu, Kirchhoffer, Sweet and Kūle, takes up the nature of the human person, human dignity, human rights and how to form virtuous human beings.

The introductory essay by Ozoliņš comments on the global forces that have brought cultures and traditions into contact with each other and explores these influences on cultural identity. Although it can be argued that contact among different cultures can lead to a "clash of civilizations", Ozoliņš argues that it can be a source of creativity. Different perspectives bring to light elements of what it is to be human that a single perspective could never uncover. These differing perspectives will all have their influences on forming our cultural identities. He concludes that we should be conscious of the global influences that shape our lives, acting to preserve our cultures and traditions, but also embracing what is good in other cultures.

Bernadette Tobin provocatively introduces her chapter by responding to the question, "Do you believe in God?", by answering, "I only hope I do." The question is about what we mean by God and the answer to this is by no means simple, since it involves some kind of cognitive understanding. Neither is it only a problem for the three monotheistic religions, but also for some of the more monotheistic forms of Buddhism and Hinduism. Responding to this question is not an easy task, because

of the tendency by human beings to de-divinise God, to reduce him from the ultimately mysterious other to some kind of anthropomorphised superhuman being. This leads us to ask questions about what we can know about God. A promising place to start is in the Jewish descriptions of God as the Most High, the God who provides salvation. With St. John the Evangelist comes a new description of God as *logos*, the principle of intelligibility, a God who does not act against the dictates of natural reason. Such a God does not order his followers to torture people to compel their obedience. A substantive conception of God will have implications for our ethical lives.

Peter Drum takes up the question of ethical beliefs, noting that it is always wrong to believe anything on insufficient evidence. This is because the good for human beings is to live according to the dictates of reason. This will also apply to religious faith, for though we may believe on faith, it must also be based on what is reasonable. The difficulty is that in ethical matters there is significant disagreement about whether a course of action is right or wrong. Drum points out that different cultures and traditions while applying the dictates of reason quite often will come to different conclusions about whether something is morally right or wrong. Nevertheless, there are grounds for recognising the universality of certain moral principles and closer scrutiny of differences reveal that they are not as great as first imagined.

The chapter by Richard Colledge considers the relationship between science and religion, continuing the theme of what we can believe and how we can believe it. His interest is in the debates about whether or not science and religion are compatible. He notes that there are two lines of thought, the first, the incompatibilist, argues that either the rational, scientific interpretation of the world is fundamental or the religious interpretation of the world is, but not both. The second, which he calls the equiprimordialist position, argue for the complementary of both. Colledge asks whether both of these positions miss the point that both reason and faith have their roots in something more primordial, namely the human condition. He concludes that religion is not the domain of the irrational, but involves rationality as much as science does. Furthermore, science is not the domain of rationality alone, but also involves faith.

The role of philosophy in fostering interreligious dialogue is the topic of John Quilter's wide-ranging chapter. He begins by noting the difficulties. Religious traditions are, except in a few cases, incompatible with one another, and those who are the leaders of particular religions have a duty to preserve their integrity. The question then, is to consider what kind of dialogue is possible and what would it be about. Quilter thinks that care must be taken if it is thought that the aim of such dialogue is the truth, understood in the way that the research scientists thinks about truth. He produces what he terms the Argument from Religious Diversity and argues that it has an impact on interreligious dialogue. The best approach is to adopt a pluralism in relation to religion and in dialogue with others listen carefully to what they say in an atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual friendship. Respect for the other means that the aim of interreligious dialogue is not conversion of the other to one's own faith.

In talking about dialogue on ethical questions between traditions, we assume that there are common and universal principles that we all share, but, as John Knasas points out in his chapter, how is it that even where we agree, the secondary principles we derive from these can be so different. Thus, we may agree that preservation of life is all important, but disagree about abortion and euthanasia. How does the Thomist respond to this conundrum? Knasas responds by suggesting that Aquinas provides an answer in the *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 94.4. He points out that pluralism arises because human beings tend to act according to sensual pleasures before intellectual ones and so do not follow through with intellectual reasoning. This results in a variety of positions and explains why error is possible.

God and our understanding of Him is never far away in this volume. That this understanding is many faceted is a truism and the chapter on God's immanence and transcendence in Aquinas compared to Mèngzǐ's view by Jānis (John) Ozoliņš provides an illuminating appraisal of two very different cultural traditions. Ozoliņš notes that immanence and transcendence appear to be mutually exclusive, since one the one hand, if God is immanent within creation, He cannot at the same time be transcendent, that is, beyond creation. An adequate response to this question is important, since it tells us about the kind of God that we claim exists. Different traditions have tackled this problem in different ways and Ozoliņš argues that both Aquinas and Mèngzǐ both provide a reconciliation between God's immanence and transcendence.

Jonathan Tan's chapter, continuing an engagement with Eastern thought, illustrates well the similarities and differences of cultures and traditions. In his discussion of the epic Vietnamese poem, Truyện Kiều ("The Tale of Kiều"), by the nineteenth century Vietnamese poet, Nguyễn Du, he informs us that it has been translated into more than 30 languages, a demonstration of its global human appeal. The poem strikes a chord across different cultures and traditions, dealing as it does, with human tragedy that is readily understood. A woman's commitment to filiality leads ultimately to her doom, an outcome that we perhaps do not expect, as commitment to a virtue would seem to be the right thing to do. The poem itself invites a rethinking of traditional Confucian stereotypes of the relations between husband and wife, parent and child. It remains, nevertheless, despite its resonances across cultures, very deeply a Vietnamese poem, the epitome of Vietnamese culture. As such, it provides a perspective on human relations that repays the effort to understand another culture.

Confucian filial piety (xiào, 孝), the duty to care for elderly parents, is the subject of the paper by Mooney and Williams, but their approach is very different. Their main aim is to investigate whether the filial duty of care has been eroded within Chinese communities. They approach their task using the techniques of analytic philosophy, paying careful attention to the meanings of terms, as well as being sensitive to the nuances of the Confucian tradition. This is clearly shown by the way in which they begin with a historical account of the origins of filial duty in ancestor worship and follow this by an account of the Confucian ethics which provides justification for filial piety. They conclude, after careful investigation, that the filial duty of care has not been eroded in Chinese communities.

In much of our philosophical discussion, we talk about human nature, human dignity and human person. Dan Chiṭoiu explains that the concept of person emerges from Christianity during the Patristic period. The concept has two aspects, the first, deals with the idea of the triune God as three persons but with one nature, and the second, the idea of human beings as persons. Chiṭoiu investigates the development of the idea of person in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world, that is, in Eastern Europe. The term "person" is first introduced by the Cappadocian Fathers in the Fourth Century, and brings together two distinct ideas *Hypostasis* and *prosopon*. This investigation, he proposes, will shed light on our understanding of ourselves as distinct existences, not just aggregations of bodies and souls, as well as on our conceptions of God.

William Sweet's contribution to this volume discusses human rights in three different religious cultures, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. He examines the origins of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) from its drafting stages to its declaration and subsequent popularisation, noting that its foundations are within the Western Christian tradition. It draws upon Enlightenment ideas about the dignity of the human person, as well as asserting the universality of human nature. Nevertheless, despite its Western provenance, human rights can be universally understood and accepted as having normative value. Sweet notes that Buddhism is generally thought to have no concept of human rights nor human nature, yet the Dalai Lama has spoken of the importance of human rights. This leads him to consider whether there is any textual support for a conception of human rights within Buddhist texts. He shows that within the Khuddakapatha, the practice of Buddhism can only take place in the company of others and this involves the recognition of human rights. Islam also acknowledges the existence of human rights, and these are supported by reference to the hadith or the Q'ran. Human rights in Islam are culturally and religiously based, but what is salient is that these are held to be universally applicable. Sweet concludes that despite different starting points, it is possible to provide an account of human rights.

David Kirchhoffer's chapter takes up the issue of what is meant by human dignity, given that this cited as the reason for human rights. If the concept of human dignity is empty, as is sometimes asserted, then human rights themselves come under threat. Kirchoffer argues, utilising the UNDHR and what he calls the Component Dimensions of Human Dignity model, that the concept of human dignity is not empty, but anchors our claims of human rights. He notes that in the drafting of the UNDHR, although it is considered a Western text, some important contributions to it came from the Chinese representative on the committee. Human dignity, therefore, is not simply a Western concept, but is an important concept in other cultures, forming the basis of human rights claims. Culture forms the lens through which we see human rights and our sense of our own human dignity is dependent on the respect and love we receive from our immediate community. More than this, our identities are formed by the culture and traditions of our immediate communities.

The contribution from Maija Kūle brings us back to reality by asking questions about the nature of education and the kinds of values which it should impart. If we

are to engage in dialogue with others and with other traditions, the kind of education that we receive should be one that does not simply provide us with skills that are useful in the marketplace. It is difficult to see how we could appreciate other cultures and traditions if we have little appreciation of our own. Kūle points out that the Finnish school system acknowledges very clearly the importance of enculturation and the development of a path in life. This is not simply a matter of gaining a few skills, but a much more enriched understanding of education. Kūle argues persuasively for the importance of human values in education.

Human experience takes many forms and different cultures and traditions interpret its meaning in a myriad ways. Human life bursts with creativity, drawing its energy from God, its ultimate Source. The authors in this volume exemplify this creativity, addressing questions of perennial importance from diverse cultural and philosophical traditions. Each of the authors bring their own cultural identities to the conversations in this volume, providing a rich interchange of ideas, blending both East and West.

February 2015   Jānis Tālivaldis Ozoliņš

Chapter 1
Proglomena: Globalisation, Cultural Identity and Diversity

Jānis Tālivaldis Ozoliņš

Abstract Globalisation and the mass communication revolution of the last 40 years has made the world a much smaller place. It has brought diverse cultures, traditions and languages in far greater contact than was previously possible. The expansion of the free market economy and the growth of transnational corporations has also brought both East and West, as well as North and South in closer contact. While the potential for mutual understanding is great, so is the potential for conflict. The forces which shape cultural identity are varied and the challenge is to appreciate the influences that shape our values and beliefs so that we can understand ourselves. In doing so, we are in a better position to value diverse cultures, religions, languages and traditions and recognise their preciousness. This is important if globalisation is not to result in the growth of a monoculture that destroys the rich diversity of culture as well as our individual cultural identities.

Keywords Culture • Tradition • Values • Pluralism • Cultural identity • Globalisation

One aspect of the modern world has been the communication revolution which has seen the possibility of diverse peoples being able to encounter one another and the variety of faiths, cultures and traditions that they have. As a result, we have become aware of the diversity of ways in which different cultures and traditions have addressed common human questions. It is also obvious that a particular way in which the world is described and understood will be in part determined by the language in which it is expressed. Language is not restricted to oral utterances or to texts, but will also include a myriad bodily cues and cultural practices. In asserting that language expresses a 'form of life', that is, that to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life, Wittgenstein emphasises the role of language in forming the

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world which we inhabit. Wittgenstein (1953, para. 19) Adding to this insight, Gadamer acknowledges the importance of cultural tradition as the foundation of thought, arguing that thinking takes place against a background that includes morals, law and religion (Gadamer 1989, 235–236). Both of these views need to be taken into account if we are to understand what is communicated to us through our encounters with peoples of other nations, languages and cultures.

Globalisation has undoubtedly been both a blessing and a curse. At the same time as it has enabled us to appreciate, through a variety of means, the existence of cultures and traditions different from our own, it has also led to the rise of mass culture. What is to be resisted is that globalisation has resulted in a mutual understanding of ideas, values and practices that are the common currency of global discourse. Without some awareness of the differences between cultures and respect for the cultural and linguistic practices that each culture and language brings to global dialogue we risk failing to see new and novel perspectives on the global problems that we face. In this essay we firstly briefly discuss the possibility of mutual understanding, secondly, what we might mean by cultural identity, exploring the influences which form our sense of cultural identity and thirdly, consider the interaction between globalisation and cultural identity. We propose that without some consciousness of the influences that shape our lives we can fail to be open to new and innovative ideas to which different cultures expose us.

Although globalisation has led to some convergences, such as the rise of mass culture and the almost ubiquitous acceptance of the market economy, it has also exacerbated the differences among different religions and cultures so that in Huntington's famous phrase, there is a "clash of civilizations".[1] Huntington argued that future conflicts in world politics would be between different cultures or civilisations rather than because of ideological or economic differences between nation states. A glance around the globe suggests that the situation is more complex.[2] While Huntington sees the clash of civilisations as problematic, it can also be seen as having some positives. The clash of civilisations also results in creative tensions

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[1] Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The phrase "clash of civilisations" is not Huntington's, but it was popularised as a result of Huntington's 1993 paper and was more fully developed as a theory about the behaviour of nations in conflicts. After 9/11, his theory appeared to be vindicated, though it has been subjected to wide-ranging criticism. See Huntington (1993). Some of his critics include the following. Acharya (2002), Camroux (1996), Fukuyama (1992), Groves (1998), Mazarr (1996).

[2] There are very large number of conflicts raging around the world. In Africa, there are conflicts in North Africa, such as occurring in Libya and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their origins are far from obvious. In some cases, they appear to be ethnic, in others, religious and ideological. In Nigeria, for instance, Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group is massacring people indiscriminately, but also singling out Christians, for particular attention. Conflict in the Middle East also appears to be based on ethnic, religious and ideological grounds, but economic grounds cannot be excluded. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine appears to be more clearly on geopolitical and economic grounds, though one argument has been the need to protect ethnic Russians outside the borders of Russia. It is not our intention to provide an analysis here, simply to note that the reasons for conflict are very complex and multi-faceted. What is striking is that the conflicts appear to be within states and not between the West (broadly understood) and the East. See Fenton (2004) for some analysis and discussion of ethnic conflict.