Chapter 1

Project Summary and Comparative Reflections

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The sequence in which papers created in an inter-religious think tank are presented is always a touchy issue, as we seek to avoid the dominance of one tradition over another. The sequence that follows is intended to facilitate comparative study and to highlight the ways our traditions either provide continuity with one another or may be juxtaposed with one another. I have therefore chosen to begin with the Abrahamic faiths and to present them in the sequence of their historical appearance. Following comparative observations on the Abrahamic faiths, the traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism will be introduced, providing us with a comparative perspective on these two groups of religious families. I shall therefore begin with a summary of my own paper.

1.1   Judaism

My "Judaism: The Battle for Survival, the Struggle for Compassion" struggles to locate the appropriate perspective from which to consider the themes of hostility, hospitality and the hope of human flourishing, as these are refracted through millennia of Jewish experience and expression. Hostility and hospitality are both by-products of the notion of an other and of the presence of an other in our midst. Awareness of self and otherness is fundamental to Israel?s identity and thus constitutive of Jewish self-definition. Therefore an exploration of the attitude to the other is perforce an attempt to define the core of Judaism and to assess its various historical manifestations, its ultimate hopes, and its continued meaning and relevance. As do all papers that emerge out of our think-tank, mine implies a self-critical attitude towards tradition, or certain of its historical manifestations, and an attempt to offer a positive construction of Judaism, emphasizing its continuing vision of hope for Israel and for the world.

One cannot approach the problem of attitude to the other from a Jewish perspective without first taking stock of a fundamental issue, involving the very definition of Judaism. Judaism is at one and the same time a religion, with a religious world view, a set of practices, and a universal message and way of life of one particular people. By its very definition, it is founded upon a fundamental duality, perhaps even tension, between an ethnic component—involving nationhood, territoriality, and a variety of expressions of particularity - and a religious component with universal ramifications that far transcend the boundaries of the original ethnic carriers of Judaism's vision. From the ethnic perspective, otherness is fundamental to the reality of Judaism that is constituted by the very creation of an "us" (Israel), in contradistinction to the rest of humanity, who thereby become an other. Issues of appropriate behavior and proper treatment of the other will thus figure heavily in this perspective.

At the same time, Judaism is also a religious world view that is centered not only upon the constitution of one particular relationship with God, but also upon an understanding of the ultimate reality and person of God. This understanding is perforce relevant not only to Israel but to all of humanity. It includes not only an understanding of God, but also of the fullness of human potentiality, as this is ultimately achieved in relationship with God.

The relationship between these two components has been far from simple in the history of Judaism. In part, this is due to the natural human limitation of transcending one's immediate social group and its concerns. The human perspective tends naturally to narrow in on personal and group concerns and often fails to rise to the heights of a spiritual vision to which it aspires in its greatest depths. But something more has been at play in the history of the Jewish attitude to the other than the battle against natural human egoism and group interest. The evolution and expression of Judaism—the religion of the people of Israel—has been closely intertwined with the changes and vicissitudes in the life of the historical people of Israel. Israel's life has known different periods: exile, security in homeland, additional exile, persecution, attempts at annihilation and more. Because Judaism is the religious expression of a particular people, it is heavily marked by that people's formative historical experience: the struggle for survival. For over two millennia the people of Israel have experienced the profound insecurity of life, not only as part of the universal existential human condition, but on account of the particular historical circumstances that are unique to them and that give expression to a mainly negative historical experience. Thus, any attempt to assess Judaism's attitude to the other must take into account Israel's painful historical reality as the context in which many of its attitudes were formed and much of its reflection concerning the other was formulated.

The present paper is an attempt to strike a balance between these two perspectives. In so doing, it is cognizant of the fact that Judaism is, in some sense, in crisis. The relationship between the ethnic and the religious components, as lived in contemporary Judaism, fails to strike the appropriate balance between the two components. The ethnic-national component has to a large extent eclipsed the spiritual-religious one, or, in some cases, the reverse. Concomitantly, the scars from a long history of suffering have led to a kind of introversion that is negative and that may prevent Israel from fulfilling

its broader spiritual mission to humanity. The paper's thesis is thus that the balance between these two components of Judaism needs to be redressed. A kind of spiritual revival is necessary, placing God and the spiritual dimension at the center, in order for Judaism to rise to the ultimate heights defined by its own vision and self understanding. A movement of return to its higher spiritual calling is also the key to more balanced attitudes to the other than those formed under the tribulations of Israel's history.

The tension between Israel's particular history and the broader perspective through which it reflects on the world is also expressed in the tension between creation and election or covenant. Both are formative moments in religious history and in Israel's self understanding. The purpose of Israel's particularity must be understood in relation to the broader purpose of creation, a fact that is often overlooked in reflecting on the purpose of Israel's calling. Creation is also a significant moment in the shaping of the attitude to the other. The notion of the image of God, in which man was created, is central to a Jewish understanding of the human person, and hence of the other. Nevertheless, this concept has not played as central a role in the shaping of attitudes to the other as might be imagined, perhaps precisely because it does not consider the other in his or her otherness, but emphasizes the commonality of humanity. Other concepts have been more central in this context.

It is significant that the most fundamental means of framing an attitude to the other is not divorced from historical memory. Repeatedly, the Torah offers admonitions of how one ought to treat the *ger*, foreigner, alien, sojourner. Repeatedly it implores us to respect, treat with kindness, and offer identical rights and obligations in relation to the law, but most of all to love him. This surprising command to love the other is grounded in the transformed memory of our exile in Egypt. As former slaves, we are expected to show sensitivity and understanding to the human condition of the *ger*. The historical memory of a pained exile is thus transformed into a commandment of justice and love. It is conceivable that the Torah is going against human nature in requiring us to react in this way towards the *ger*. Its repeated admonitions indicate how central this commandment is, and how much of Israelite virtue revolves around its fulfillment.

Because the history of the people extends beyond the liberation from Egyptian bondage and the attainment of freedom in the land, the powers of history and the ways it conditions human nature have time and again impacted upon Jewish attitudes to the other. From the perspective of a continued exile, Israel could no longer be the host extending hospitality unto others. In a millennia-long struggle for survival against one oppressing force after another, some of the tenderness of heart that the Torah sought to cultivate was lost. The Jewish psyche has understandably become suspicious, xenophobic. Concern for survival still operates as the most central driving force in the life of the people of Israel and shapes most parts of Jewish reality, material as well as spiritual. Judaism thus possesses a profound teaching of hospitality that it has not been able to implement in the course of a bitter history.

The founding of the State of Israel has further exacerbated the situation. As recent studies indicate, the Israeli people maintain deeply ingrained xenophobic attitudes, though these change in relation to who the outsider, the other, is. Clearly, the marks of the Israeli-Arab conflict are visible here, with

the Arabs constituting the group towards which the greatest degree of xenophobia applies. Furthermore, attitudes to the other, in particular the Arab, serve not only real or perceived security needs, but also the needs of identity formation. As other studies suggest, significant aspects of Israeli collective identity are formed in contradistinction to and through tension with the otherness of surrounding societies. The negative patterning and stereotyping of the other thus serve as a means of constructing Israeli identity. One of the correlates of the attempt to create a secular Israeli identity, often independently of the identity forming factors proper to the Jewish religion, is the negative approach to the other.

If Judaism's vices are a product of history and human reaction to this history, its hope lies in the rediscovery of its spiritual resources, and above all of God. It is only by bringing God to the center of the institutions and life of the people and its religion that Judaism can retrieve a lost sense of purpose and the hallmark of its identity and particularity. This is also how the purpose of its calling and its continued relevance to the world can be best realized. Alongside the narrower legal perspective for the hope of human flourishing is found a broader more spiritual perspective. The narrower perspective sees Judaism's message as the dissemination of a basic code of morality, the Noachide commandments. The broader perspective sees God and His knowledge as Israel's ultimate contribution to humanity. Here too, only by placing God at the center of religious structures and concepts can Judaism rise to the heights of its calling.

Following this historical analysis of the tensions that constitute Judaism, its self-understanding and its attitude to the other, the latter part of the paper revisits many of the topics raised in the earlier part by attempting a new positive formulation of the purpose of Israel's calling and of its attitude to the other. Following the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, the concept of compassion is explored through a series of associations, particularly with *da'at*, knowledge and consciousness. Judaism's task is to spread compassion, which is born of the knowledge of God. Compassion permits making space for the other. It also allows us to shift the consideration of religion and its workings from the intellectual and ideological realm to the fields of morality and being. A theory of hospitality grounded in the notion of compassion is not blind to the threat of survival; it places limits on and directs the application of compassion in such a way as to not undermine survival. The Torah's instructions to the *ger* are thus seen as the ultimate form of instruction to compassion. All of this leads to a great theological and spiritual challenge: Is it possible to have compassion upon one's enemies? Herein lies the ultimate challenge to a successful bridging of the ethnic and the religious, the historical and the spiritual.

Beyond describing the dynamics characteristic of Judaism, this paper argues that Judaism must grow in order to retrieve its ultimate calling. The challenge of compassion articulated in the latter part of the paper may be one way of conceptualizing how such growth, necessarily based in a living recognition of God, may take shape.

1.2 Christianity

Stephen Sykes' "Making Room for the Other: Hostility and Hospitality in a Christian Perspective" also begins with the constitutive tension between different moments—creation and salvation. The former appeals to the common creation in the image of God; the latter, to the rescue and restoration of humanity following its fall through the atonement brought about by Christ. Unlike the tension between the universality of creation and the specificity of election characteristic of Judaism, the redeeming work of Christ reconciles the entire world to Christ. This poses a fundamental problem: What is the origin of hostility? In the light of Christian teaching, there is no room for hostility, yet Christian history has evidenced much of it. This problem provides the backbone for Sykes' challenging and self-critical analysis of the theological roots of intolerance and hostility in the history of Christianity. The essay engages Christian history and theology in an open and daring way, exposing potential pitfalls of Christian thought. The assumption of this paper is that only through proper identification of the theological faults or pitfalls contained in theology can we advance beyond past historical failures. Such advancement is necessary not only for the correction of past wrongdoing, but in order to allow Christianity to manifest its ultimate message, thereby offering the hope it holds for human flourishing.

Sykes' presentation has a dual focus, on the one hand, exposing the theological weaknesses that have led to past hostility, and, on the other, the construction of a new theory of hospitality grounded in a Christian context. Such hospitality is more than hospitality to individuals or collectives. It is hospitality to ideas—hospitality to the other in the fullest sense. Sykes' presentation is thus heavily theological, drawing primarily on New Testament texts, as these are studied both for the weaknesses, made manifest in the history of their interpretation, and for the positive constructive suggestions contained in them.

Sykes suggests that hostility is more than an expression of unreformed Christian behavior; it is an unfortunate by-product of essential Christian categories. The very distinction between old and new, untransformed and transformed behavior, as these identify respectively the non-Christian and Christian communities, sows the seeds for a division, an us vs. them, by suggesting a division not only between different actions, but between different people. This may give birth to a theologically based hostility. Theological language also resorts to metaphors that, taken out of context, may harbor hostility. Thus battle metaphors are deployed by Christian faith to signify the seriousness of the struggle with evil. The radicality of battle language may be deployed against people who are thought to constitute a threat to holiness. Historically, these could include groups and races whose customs were unfamiliar or misunderstood.

Thus, the notion might develop that it is a Christian duty to oppose the people who practice alternative forms of life, considered immoral, unholy, or undesirable. When the personification of evil coincides with political and social power, this can lead to the oppression or destruction of the other. In this context it should be noted that use of the concept "image of God" also can have unwanted effects in relation to the other. Christian teaching regarding the fall left open the question of whether the image of God was lost or defaced.

Thus the concept did not guarantee the human dignity of the other. Biblical interpretation of such passages as the curse of Ham further strengthened the view that not all of humanity partook of the divine image, which in turn could support injustice, mistreatment and hostility.

Sykes' discussion of the concept of hospitality struggles with the fundamental problem of the relevance of the teaching of Christian hospitality to the non-Christian. This problem has several dimensions. A key passage in the discussion is 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, where it is stated that Christ died for us. But what does Paul mean by us? In saying that "as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ," does Paul suggest a broad universal understanding of the relevance of Christ's resurrection? Whether the consequences of Christ's resurrection are universal or limited to the community of believers is debated among Christian interpreters. Following this, one may recognize both more universalistic and more sectarian tendencies in Christian thought. This is important for the issue of xenophobia. If one is a stranger to the significance of Christ, this could, under certain circumstances, under the sectarian tendency, lead to segregation, fear or outright hostility, and persecution. This has been particularly vicious in relation to the Jewish people, coupled with charges of deicide.

The universalistic option provides a further possibility for how Christ is significant to an eradication of hostility. Christ's human nature, which he shares in common with all of humanity, opens the door to a unifying vision in which all humans are united in Christ. Thus, ?there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female? (Galatians, chapter 3). A universal reconciliation of any reality estranged from God is the consequence of the coming of God into human life.

In struggling to come to terms with these universalistic and sectarian tendencies within Christianity, Sykes opts for a historical understanding of how the sectarian tendency was formed in the struggles of nascent Christianity that followed the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues. Thus, the sectarian tendencies are a means of identity building. Despite Jesus' teaching of love of the enemy, the marks of such historical opposition between Christians and others have given and continue to give rise to exclusionary politics of hatred. This element of tradition must be kept in check by other elements of the tradition that offset it. If it has any justification, it is similar in kind to that discussed in the paper on Judaism, namely: resistance against attempt at annihilation and the quest for the community's survival. Nothing obliges any contemporary Christian community to view every form of opposition in this manner. A call for wisdom is issued, to discern what kinds of opposition are truly threatening to the community's survival, justifying, so to speak, the appeal to tradition's more violent face.

Christian resources for hospitality may be classified as theological, more specifically: Christological, and ethical. Alongside the notions suggested above, Sykes locates an ethical teaching of hospitality in the writings of the New Testament; to take one typical text, ?Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it? (Hebrews 13:2). While such an exhortation is directed to a group of believers, it is set within a universal context. The Christian tradition of hospitality is a direct outgrowth of the practice of hospitality that existed in ancient

Israel. The uniqueness of the attitude of hospitality, described in my article in relation to the *ger*, may have filtered into Christian practice because many early Christians experienced this care as gentiles and strangers to God's people. Moreover, Jesus' ministry had hospitality at its core. He makes contact with Samaritans, outcasts, sinners, lepers, and unclean and foreign women. Following these precedents, we find hospitality as a fundamental practice for early Christians. Loving and welcoming the stranger is set side by side with the love of one's Christian family members. It is further important to note that hospitality is practiced not in isolation but in the context of a community that provides the strength and resources to carry its inherent burdens. Along with the notion of grace, these are important aids in the Christian realization of hospitality.

Throughout his essay, Sykes has attempted to point not only to ways in which Christian theological understanding must be circumscribed and nuanced to eradicate hostility, but also to the ways in which the Christian teaching of hospitality is relevant to and can be extended beyond the specific Christian community. In the final part of the essay, He returns to the question of whether the Christian tradition may be generalizable. It is here that the balance of factors raised in his presentation comes together: universal vs. sectarian tendency, limiting the oppositional trend in Christianity to particular moments of historical conflict, and the quest for locating a broader message of hospitality that is universally valid. Because he is aware of the multiple voices of tradition and their different and conflicting tendencies, Sykes cannot simply opt for one particular option within the tradition. But the thrust of his argument clearly indicates a strong desire to offer hospitality as a broad category, whose significance extends well beyond the confines of the Christian community. It therefore leads him to the affirmation that what qualifies a person to Christian compassion and hospitality, is her humanity, understood in light of the Christian teaching spelled out above.

The final part of Sykes' essay is devoted to an exploration of the relevance of the concept of hospitality to ideas, as distinct from people. Here Sykes introduces the metaphor of ?making space? for an idea. Human learning is only possible on the assumption that we carry with us a reservoir of unexplored ideas. Many remain dormant; some are revived by new encounters. Thus, room may be made for a new idea, which is so far unassimilated to the larger schemes through which we think. Sykes affirms that the idea of "making space" for an idea from a religion whose schema we do not hold is both possible and desirable. Such "making space" is a form of hospitality, a taking seriously of the other as other, an acceptance of the other on his own terms, without assimilating him to an existing rejection or caricature.

1.3   Islam

Vincent Cornell's paper: "Islam: Theological Hostility and the Problem of Difference" suggests the unique ways in which the problem of xenophobia is relevant to Islam in general and to the relationship of Islam and world religions, on the one hand, and the West, on the other. Islam's problem is not cultural xenophobia. As a world religion that has a sweeping vision of how

different cultural differences can be maintained within the broader umbrella of a unifying religious system, Islam is comfortable with making space for the cultural other. Hospitality as a classical virtue of Arab society has a profound impact upon the practices of Islam. Therefore, Islam's problem is not that of the cultural other. Rather, it is profoundly ill at ease with the theological other. Cornell's paper is therefore an exploration of the range of possibilities contained in Islam for a pluralistic world view that accepts the legitimacy of other religions. Hostility in this context is essentially a theological or ideological hostility that does not recognize the religious other as fully legitimate. Recent events have demonstrated the far reaching concrete hostility to which such theological hostility can give rise. Cornell's paper is thus concerned primarily with the tension between theological hostility and hospitality. Underlying this concern is the realization that Islam is sitting on a time bomb that may explode to its own detriment and that of the world at large. Addressing the profound theological and ideological issues that shape most of contemporary Islam and recovering from within Islam the theological resources that will address Islam's present crisis are a necessary precursor to fulfilling a view of human flourishing that allows all societies to coexist in peace.

Underlying Cornell's presentation is an acute sense of crisis that plagues contemporary Islam, of which the violent face of theologically hostile Islam is an expression. In order to tackle this crisis, one must understand its historical and theological roots. One must distinguish between particular historical forms of Islam, including the form of Islam that has come to dominate large parts of the contemporary Muslim world, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Islam that contains multiple possibilities for actualizing the Islamic reality—many of which were implemented in earlier historical periods, now mostly obliterated from collective Muslim memory. If I may paraphrase Cornell's insight, we may consider a distinction between Islam, with a capital I, expressing the spiritual ideal, contained in scripture, if we will, in God's mind, and the variety of historical islams (now lower-case), each of which is in some way historically contingent and imperfect. Cornell's thesis is a finely balanced statement. Based on historical precedent and the necessary understanding of the ideal (uppercase) Islam, it simultaneously offers a penetrating critique of Islam's present shape and shows how, through an insider's way of constructing and presenting Islam, it can be accepting of and hospitable toward other religious realities. Cornell therefore has first introduced the reader to the current Islamic crisis and to the ways in which large parts of contemporary Islamic reality distort the religion on which their spiritual lives are based. Cornell shares with the reader the pain he feels from the fact that significant parts of the historical Islamic spiritual reality having all but ceased to exist. These include open and creative hermeneutics and Scriptural interpretation and the pursuit of philosophy, accompanied by a loss of spirituality and the marginalization of Sufism. Instead, Islam has become for so many a program of social reformation, attempting to impose a uniform vision of society and a monolithic understanding of Islam upon both Islamic society and ultimately the world. In so doing, Islam has in fact become an ideology rather than a religion. Instead of beginning with the transformation of the human person, through her relationship with God, Islam has become a program for the reshaping of society. Islam is thus measured in terms of power and political

dominance. All this is achieved at the heavy price of the thinning down of the texture of Islamic reasoning and spirituality. The nuances of hermeneutics and the historical riches of spirituality are sacrificed and lost while a monolithic, mono-chromatic, single-textured Islamic reality is constructed. While such construction has come to dominate much of contemporary Sunni Islam, where it is presented as the true, ideal, or pure Islam, Cornell suggests it is in fact a novelty, itself, merely one construct and as such both historically contingent and fallible.

Exposing the historical contingency of this construct of Islam allows Cornell to point the way to the retrieval of earlier historical constructions of Islam that contain theological and hermeneutical riches that offer better ways to deal with the challenge of diffusing the bomb of hostility upon which it sits. It is thus the task of the "Muslim intellectual to look critically at Islamic history and to formulate a theology and moral philosophy that has its roots in the classical intellectual tradition of Islam rather than in a utopian golden age or in a modern ideological construct." Cornell performs this task admirably.

He begins his retrieval of Islamic riches by juxtaposing contemporary simplistic Islamic self-understanding with the classical recognition of Islam's sophisticated complexity. Such complexity begins with the hermeneutical process and the recognition of the multiple layers of Scripture and its interpretation. Cornell introduces Al Ghazali's five levels of scriptural understanding as an illustration of such complexity and as a gateway to approaching classical Islamic texts in ways that appropriate contemporary needs. Based on Al Ghazali's principles, hermeneutical space is opened up for a variety of alternative interpretations, thereby undermining attempts to impose any monolithic and simplistic understanding of Islam. Cornell illustrates the usefulness of Al Ghazali's rules through Sufi interpretation. Abd al-Karim Al Jili, an important Sufi figure of the 15th century, may be understood to be applying these rules to specific Qur?anic verses when he develops a theory of the existence of all religions as expressions of God's will. While Islam is God's quintessential religion, all religions are valid, when considered from the perspective of God's will, as expressed in the Qur'an. A significant contribution to hermeneutics is made when, following Sufi precedent, it is undertaken with God on its horizon.

Cornell continues his exposition by juxtaposing two distinct commands of God, each carrying its own moral imperative. The one is God's creative command, the other is the command of obligation. The former is the perspective through which human beings share natural duties and responsibilities that result from the covenant contracted between God and humanity before the creation of Adam. The latter is the more specifically Muslim perspective, from which practical obligations arise. The former leads to the recognition of a universal commonality, which in turn leads to the acceptance of the other. The latter emphasizes the particularly Muslim obligations and leads to issues of difference and discrimination. From a moral and theological perspective, both commands must be balanced. The problem for so much of contemporary Islam is the almost exclusive privileging of the command of obligation, at the expense of God's creative command. But it is God's creative command that reminds us of the ultimate commonality of humanity. Objectifying the other, to which the second perspective might lead, means to forget the com-

mon basis of all of humanity. It is only by striking the appropriate balance between these two commands that Islamic perspective on the other can open up to hospitality and advance beyond present hostility.

This balance is essential, because fundamental rights are grounded in God's creative command. These include the duty of mutual respect, the right of human dignity, the right to life, and the right of free choice. Furthermore, it is only by balancing the two divine commands that the ideal balance between justice and mercy can be established, with mercy being a derivative of the creative command. The appropriate understanding of the relationship between the two commands also involves the proper understanding of the relationship between moral duties and legal requirements. Cornell establishes the priority of the former, grounding it in the creative command. This moral priority allows him to allocate to the creative command its proper place in the broader economy of commands and thereby to redress prevailing imbalances. Only through such prioritizing can an Islamic perspective transcend the narrow constraints of individual experiences or those of particular societies.

Finally, Cornell appeals to the Qur?anic concept of the human being as vicegerent (*khalifa*) of God on earth. Taking this concept seriously implies taking into account the priority of the creative command and of moral duties that precede the particularities of religious obligations. Furthermore, it implies taking seriously the multi-dimensionality of humanity's existence, mirroring as it does the multi-dimensionality of God's creation and will. By his very nature the human person is a bridge builder, and such bridge building between conceptual worlds extends to the differences between diverse religious systems as well.

Ultimately, Cornell's construct brings to the fore the centrality of God's will. Seen from the perspective of the balance between both commands, it suggests a broader understanding of God's will, through which space is made for the other, grounded in God's very will that the other, including the other's alternative religious path, should exist. The will of God is not uni-dimensional. Following Ibn ?Arabi, we must be reminded that unless we adopt a multi-dimensional perspective, in which individual obligations are viewed in the context of the creativity of God's will, we risk the gravest of sins—namely the association of God and another being, in this case, our own limited, narrow and egoistic understanding of God's will and design. Thus, our own egos are the ultimate cause of all theological hostility, making us lose sight of the ultimate point of our existence.

1.4   Some Observations on the First Three Papers

It is worth pausing at this point to reflect on the relationship between the three papers summarized thus far. Some important commonalities emerge from these papers that represent the so-called Abrahamic faiths. All three writers are engaged in a similar attempt to deal with the history of hostility within their tradition, to contextualize the phenomenon historically, and to strike a balance between the historical dimensions that have given shape to their religions and the theological dimensions that constitute the religions.

For me, the battle for Jewish survival is the source of hostility shown by Jews to others. Sykes adopts a similar strategy with reference to the early Christian community. Cornell, by contrast, offers an historical critique of the particular forms of current Islam as these have led to hostility towards others. In all three cases, hostility is considered non-essential to the religion, a historical accretion that must be contextualized and accounted for in historical terms. All three writers juxtapose the ultimate religious teaching of their traditions with these historical circumstances and thus view their traditions as historically and theologically complex, which presents them with a dual challenge. They recognize the negative components of tradition and the contingency of particular historical circumstances, and thus they must explore and explain the negative elements of their traditions even as they develop more positive resources relevant to the attitude to the other. They also have the task of constructing their traditions in a way that is hospitable to the other, both the concrete cultural other and the religious and ideological other.

While each one of the constructive presentations appeals to elements that are particular to that tradition, one may point to some parallels in the positive resources offered by the three traditions. Two governing notions control the positive presentations of all three papers: God and creation. Note how creation plays an important role in each of the three essays. The notion of the image of God is central to my piece and to Sykes', obviously representing a commonality of the two traditions. While Sykes struggles, through the lens of the Christian tradition, with the problem of the fall and its ultimate impact on the integrity of all of creation, and particularly on the notion of the image of God, it is ultimately the power of creation, even if reconstituted by the ?new Adam,? that offers humanity its common ground. The Muslim tradition does not refer to man as created in God's image, perhaps because the very consideration of a divine image was troubling. Nevertheless, as Cornell teaches us, creation is a fundamental pole through which our religious lives are shaped. Much the way I present the tension between creation and covenant, perhaps even resembling how Sykes describes tension between creation and the Christ event, Cornell speaks of the tension between God's creative command, pointing to a common basis for all of humanity, and the command of obligation, particular to Muslims. It seems that for all three traditions, one of the dangers is that of getting lost in the particularity of the religious community and losing sight of the universal perspective offered by creation of the entire world.

The perspective brought about through appeal to creation is also the means of recalling the breadth of God and His will. God's will is greater than any way in which a religious community may tend to limit it, as it projects God through its own particular lens. The point is perhaps most clearly made in the latter part of Cornell's paper. My quest for a spiritual revival in Judaism aims to achieve precisely the same thing, the recall of God as the central controlling feature of the religious system and hence as the ultimate reference point of Judaism. Also for Sykes, that which takes the religious community beyond its particularity and its own battle for continuing survival is God. The entire Christian faith is based on the actions of God, not the life of the community. And as Sykes teaches us, there is a strong basis in the tradition for recognizing the significance of this action for all of humanity. It is precisely because Christianity is rooted in faith in God that ultimately the universal im-

plications must outweigh the sectarian tendencies. One might add that even the metaphor of ?making space for the theological other? ultimately relies on the divine action of forming a common humanity, thereby mandating the need to listen to the testimonies of life and spirit offered by other parts of the body of the one humanity.

Several other striking similarities emerge from a comparative reading of the three papers. In some significant way all papers appeal to the language of command. Theirs are religions in which God spoke, and in some significant way it is the application of God's speech and its interpretation that provide the ultimate basis for extending hospitality. In the case of Judaism, it is the divine command concerning the ger that sets the stage for hospitality. Similarly, the early Christian community is shaped by constitutive commands to extend hospitality, such as those made by Jesus, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or other early Christian writers. For Cornell, the notion of command is even more fundamental, extending from a particular commandment to a broad principle of law, God's creative command. The God who speaks and commands is thus considered by all three writers as the ultimate source of hospitality. If historical circumstances bring about a teaching of hostility, the ultimate religious ideal, grounded in God Himself and in his commanding presence, is that of hospitality.

But God seems to provide more than just a command. God's reality also provides the basis for emulation and the core attributes necessary for successfully overcoming hostility and implementing hospitality. One is struck by how all three papers, each in its own way, makes an appeal to the concept of compassion. The latter part of mine is an extended attempt to describe Judaism in terms of compassion, grounding this attitude in the very understanding of God through the concept of da'at, the knowledge and understanding of God. It is also interesting to note how the relationship between the creative command and the command of obligation is presented by Ibn ?Arabi in terms of the two divine names expressing God's compassion and mercy. Further, as Cornell teaches us, the very significance of the distinction between the two commands is that it allows us to balance justice and to temper it with mercy, grounded in the creative command. Thus, while command defines obligations and informs the practical horizon, compassion shapes the spiritual vision, calling us to emulate God. While Sykes makes only passing reference to notions of grace in his presentation, would it not be fair to say that the entire faith of Christianity is based upon an act of profound compassion, undertaken by God? And is not the obligation to treat others with love ultimately founded upon the fruits of such mercy and compassion? While there are obvious differences of nuance between the three traditions, it is very interesting to note how similar themes are played out in the three essays, suggesting significant similarities between them.

Two further parallels should be pointed out. The first concerns the importance of community. All three papers make a significant appeal to the community as the carrier of the spiritual message and as the ultimate agent of hospitality. The case is obvious with regard to Judaism, whose very self definition is communitarian. Sykes appeals time and again to the role of the community in ancient Christianity. It is through the lens of the community that the formation of Christian hostility is accounted for. Community is also the

means for extending hospitality, which, according to Sykes, cannot ultimately be administered outside the communal framework. In the case of Islam, one notes the repeated appeal to the Muslim Umma in Cornell's paper. More significantly, the struggle for understanding Islam is one of defining the nature of the community. The problem, in Cornell's analysis, ultimately points to a false notion of how community is to be built, by attempting to impose monolithic standards on Islamic society. While the solution may be a return to the individual and to the riches that spirituality provides, one cannot ignore the fact that the context in which the Islamic problematic is articulated is one of community.

Furthermore, all three papers share a belief in the importance of doctrine and religious teaching. They do so as part of a common process of recognizing imperfections within the historical manifestations of their traditions. These imperfections relate to the body of teaching, or perhaps rather to the ways in which teachings are misunderstood and misrepresented. The suggestion that teaching is faulty and in need of correction conveys both the centrality of doctrine and the belief in the potential to change through teaching and through the changing of teaching. While all three traditions do not necessarily share the same understanding of dogma or doctrine, an interesting commonality emerges regarding how teaching is addressed and redressed in the attempt to either present or reconstruct a better or an ideal form of the religion.

The comparison of these three papers is not only illuminating in and of itself. It also sets in clearer focus the commonalities between the Abrahamic traditions, allowing us to recognize significant differences between them and the other two religions represented in our think tank: Hinduism and Buddhism. Let us then move on to presentations of the Eastern traditions.

1.5   Hinduism

Ashok Vohra's "Metaphysical Unity, Phenomenological Diversity and the Approach to the Other: Hindu Perspectives on Xenophobia and the Hope of Human Flourishing" tackles the very notion of other from an essentially philosophical perspective. His thesis is disarmingly simple: there is no room for a theory of the other in Hinduism. Of course, Hindus have for generations recognized the religious differences between themselves and people of other lands or other religions. Yet, Vohra claims, this does not amount to the creation of a theoretical other but merely a practical other, an other de facto but not de jure. The concept of "the other" cannot be elevated to a formative status in a Hindu context, as many contemporary philosophers attempt to do, because all otherness is considered by the Hindu to be merely phenomenological. There is no metaphysical basis for a notion of the other. The underlying metaphysical concept is that of unity of all life. All is Brahman, absolute being; all differences are thus contingent, phenomenological, possibly illusionary. Vohra introduces the reader to the notion of the human person, according to the Upanishads. The human person is ultimately that which is beyond sensate reality. While sensate reality divides between people, based on considerations of class, race, and the like, the ultimate reality unites peo-

ple, who are all manifestation of one ultimate metaphysical reality.

The implications of this world view to the theme of xenophobia are obvious. If there is no other, there can be no xenophobia; there can be no hostility. All forms of hostility are ultimately expressions of a philosophical error, a wrong perception of reality. Clearly, on the phenomenological level hostility exists, but it is unfounded, the child of ignorance. Therefore, it is not religious teaching that needs to be modified in order to eradicate hostility but rather ignorance of the truth of religious teaching. Vohra does not tell the reader how violence and hostility actually come about. We do not know whether they are purely the effects of personal imperfections—ego, greed, etc.—or whether improper religious instruction plays some role in it. It would seem the fault lies exclusively with the human person, not with the teachings of religion. Therefore, the means for correction lie not in the transformation of religion, but in the transformation of the person. Hostility is a function of ignorance, and it is combated by combating ignorance. Thus, teaching and spiritual understanding are the ultimate weapons in the battle against hostility.

Vohra goes further to demonstrate that not only is hostility metaphysically unfounded, but hospitality is the natural state of the Hindu mentality, founded as it is upon a recognition of the metaphysical unity of all life. This point is made in two ways. The first is through examining the concept of *mleccha,* the other, the foreigner. This concept would seem to be the Hindu equivalent of our concept of "the other," and Vohra therefore analyses it through the dual perspectives of hostility and hospitality. He finds no room for hostility towards the *mleccha*; at worst the attitude towards him is characterized by lack of interest. Such lack of interest will be explained in light of the phenomenological concerns of "religion on the ground" and its attempt to preserve its identity, integrity and purity. But unlike other cultures, these concerns will not lead to an active combat with the outsider. One assumes the basis for this is the underlying metaphysical unity, characteristic of the Hindu world view, presented by Vohra. Furthermore, he suggests that, in many ways, the *mleccha* is assimilated into prevailing culture. Laws and norms concerning the *mleccha* in many ways resemble those relating to the Hindu. Because the *mleccha* is assimilated unto Hindu culture, the classical Hindu other is either uninteresting or less of an outsider than originally imagined. Either way, the *mleccha* provides a very weak sense of otherness, ultimately tempered by the recognition of metaphysical unity.

Hindu mentality is still more profoundly hospitable. Thanks to Hinduism's recognition of ultimate metaphysical unity, it teaches something profoundly hospitable that allows it to accept all religious forms as valid and as pointing to the same ultimate reality. In Vohra's description, Hinduism is far less interested in the particulars of life style, action, faith, and worship, than the three Abrahamic religions already discussed. Through a study of the history of the term "Hindu," Vohra arrives at the conclusion that the lack of a name for the religion suggests its inclusivity. It cannot be named, because it cannot be narrowed down by juxtaposition with anything else. Because it is all-inclusive, it contains all forms and hence escapes definition and naming. While historically the term ?Hindu? was coined by real historical religious others (Muslims, the self- application of the term intends to convey a broad inclusiveness that escapes definition. Such inclusiveness is a funda-

mental trait of the Hindu faith. Once again, we may recognize such inclusiveness as founded upon the ultimate metaphysical unity taught by Hinduism, a unity not threatened by the existence of others. Rather, it encompasses and contains them, making them a part of itself. Hindu writings even contain attempts to incorporate both Jesus and Mohammad in Hindu narrative and thus in the framework of the Hindu imagination.

Working from these metaphysical premises, it is easy for Vohra to point out how Hinduism is not only hospitable to the individual or the cultural and ethnic other, as he does with regard to the *mlecchas*, but how it also accommodates the religious and theological other. Thus a theory of the relations of Hinduism to other religions emerges. This theory is illustrated through the teachings of several of the great spiritual teachers of modern India—Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Radhakrishnan. It recognizes the equal validity of all religions and encourages a particular kind of borrowing and sharing of the finest of spiritual ideals found within the religions. Significantly, the goal is not one of conversion. Vohra takes great care to explain that conversion is impossible in Hinduism; one cannot convert to Hinduism. Perhaps, I might add, this is so because Hinduism, as presented by Vohra, is less of a specific religious path than it is a total orientation. Such orientation may positively influence other religious understandings, but it does not invite others to join its own confines. What India's modern teachers have taught is a fundamental respect for other religions and an openness to the sharing and transfer of the finest spiritual ideals between them.

1.5.1   The Abrahamic Faiths and Hinduism Compared

We may take a moment to reflect upon the obvious differences between the foci of the papers emerging from the Abrahamic faith and this presentation of Hinduism. As Vohra presents Hinduism, its two poles of orientation are the cosmos, or metaphysical Being, and the individual. The religious quest is a metaphysical one. Like that of Rabbi Nachman, it is a quest to gain knowledge, da'at. Yet, its goal is that of the personal liberation of the believer from ignorance, avidya. Not only is the particular form of religion of little importance; community itself seems to play a secondary role. One wonders to what extent phenomenological religion can withstand such a divorcing of the social dimension of religion from a presentation of a religion. Still, it is significant that Hinduism, in Vohra's eyes, can be cast in terms that privilege epistemology and metaphysics over community and the specifics of way of life. One cannot but pose the following question: If Vohra's presentation is complete, does Hinduism really offer the possibility of less violent, less hostile religion? And if so, what is it about Hinduism that enables it to do so? Is it the relativism of all religious paths, considered from the perspective of absolute metaphysical unity? Is it the leap from the individual to the metaphysical absolute, making the importance of community secondary?

One notes with interest how, once again, an appeal to creation and its metaphysics serves the cause of hospitality and acceptance of the other. Unlike the three Abrahamic traditions, which juxtaposed creation to some significant religious moment through which religious meaning is endowed, Hinduism was not presented here as exhibiting a similar tension. Presumably all

forms of Hindu particularity would be nothing but expressions of a broader universal sweep, rather than points of meaning that stand in tension with its metaphysical roots. Thus an underlying recognition of the power of existence, an appeal to the metaphysical ground of all being, of all of creation, provides a common basis. The Hindu perspective is informed not by creation as an act of a sovereign God but by the appeal to creation as instructive of the very basis of existence. While remaining aware of this difference, it is still interesting to note that ultimately creation, variously understood, provides a common ground for all humanity.

1.6   Buddhism

Richard Hayes' "Buddhist Views on Overcoming Obstacles to Universal Friendship" provides another perspective on our theme from a non-Abrahamic angle. Like Vohra, and unlike the three Abrahamic papers, Hayes does not engage in a critique or a reconstruction of the tradition. Yet, his presentation of Buddhism is replete with novel suggestions and insights, touching on the relevance of Buddhism today, in particular to non-Buddhists and on the engagement in inter-religious dialogue from a Buddhist perspective. Hayes' paper provides an interesting complement to Vohra's. On the one hand, both share the same emphasis on the cultivation of the proper understanding in the individual. The Buddhist perspective too sees the root of all hostility in an inappropriate understanding that must be corrected through discipline of the mind. But, while Vohra's paper focused on the metaphysical dimensions of Hinduism, that of Hayes highlighted the psychological processes that are characteristic of Buddhism. This difference is very suggestive of the different emphases of the two religions. The more personal, psychological emphasis offered by Hayes leads to a discussion of various virtues, which introduces us into an arena that is a very fruitful meeting place for the religions. While their metaphysical backgrounds vary, there is room for significant exchange in the areas of virtues and morality. While these can never be divorced from the broader economy of religion, they do provide a meeting place worth pursuing. We are grateful to Hayes for bringing this emphasis into such clear focus.

Hayes departs slightly from the thematic focus of the other papers. While he is consciously concerned with the issue of hostility and the methods of overcoming it, he does feel that hospitality is not the most useful category from a Buddhist perspective. He prefers universal friendship as a category that is truer to internal Buddhist orientation. As he suggests, hospitality is close to universal friendship and constitutes a related antithesis to hostility.

His analysis opens with a discussion of the source of hostility. Where for the Hindu it was ignorance of the ultimate metaphysical ground of being, the Buddhist perspective suggests an inward movement to discover the root of hostility within human psychology. Hayes quotes a poem in which the Buddha says that, as he looked into the hearts of human beings, he saw there a barely visible dart, a subtle and yet deep wound that makes human beings run around frantically and crazily, a wound that tragically undermines all human efforts to find peace. The dart that has wounded us so gravely is identified as

the dart of arrogance and self-importance. It is our pathetic need to see ourselves as special that makes us set ourselves apart from others, to denigrate others and eventually to go to war with others. All conflict, whether in the form of quarrels among individuals or wars among peoples, ultimately stems from the universal tendency to measure oneself up against others. When we do this, either we feel inferior to others and then resent them, or we feel superior and then scorn them, or we feel equal and then compete with them until one gets an advantage over the other. But the wise person looks at all this competition and says "Let them contend with one another all they wish; they shall get no quarrel from me."

Complementing this analysis of the root of hostility as grounded in human psychology is the affirmation of the fundamental unity of humanity, itself the basis for the ultimate aspiration for universal friendship, or, if we prefer, hospitality to the other. Hayes demonstrates the Buddha's belief that the racial, ethnic, and cultural divisions among humans are purely conventional and unnatural. Although observable differences exist among humans, these differences were typically seen by Buddhists as trivial in the context of the overwhelming similarities in both the physical and psychological attributes that everyone shares. But while recognizing the fundamental unity of humanity, the Buddha also recognizes the moral diversity among people. This recognition led to the recommendation that his followers avoid too much contact with such people. In other words, while associating with like-minded people is the best way to cultivate all the recommended virtues, associating with other-minded people is the best way to undermine one's efforts to cultivate virtue. And so it appears that, after all the talk of the unity of the human species, we have the basis for a distinction between self and other, between us (the good folks) and them (the bad ones) of just the sort that could undermine the project of seeing the unity of the human species. One is struck by how similar this problem is to the one posed by Sykes. Thus, different kinds of behavior—virtuous and non-virtuous, moral and immoral—undermine a perceived unity of humanity, thereby posing a challenge to this unity and threatening it with hostility.

Hayes addresses this challenge by examining how, in Buddhism and in other Indian philosophical systems, the religious or theological other is considered, in relation to one's own system. The other is not regarded as other in the sense of belonging to an alien species or perhaps another race or social group, but rather as other in the sense that an adult is other than a child of the same species. The other, then, is just a being much like oneself in an earlier stage of development—someone to be nourished, protected, and helped along until maturity and refinement set in. The process of maturing is seen as a long and gradual continuum with more or less well-defined stages along the way. The transition from spiritual adolescence to adulthood, called the transition from being a foolish ordinary person to being a stream-entrant, is characterized as leaving behind the relatively self-centered pre-occupation with following rules and reaping their rewards and moving into a more altruistic mood of cultivating kindness either for its own sake or because kindness makes life more pleasant for others.

What we find in Indian Buddhism is not much different from what we find in the religions of India in general. No matter which system of religious

thought or practice one examines, the most commonly encountered pattern is that a school will see itself as the model of maturity and other religious systems as earlier stages of development through which it is natural to pass on the way to maturity. There may be a somewhat paternalistic attitude towards people following paths other than one's own, but hardly ever is the practitioner of another religion seen as a threat or even as an annoyance that must be tolerated. Such is the prevailing ethos in Indian religions.

Hayes' discussion of the roots of hostility understood from a Buddhist perspective leads him to a comparison with Kant's views on history and to an assessment of the West's ethos of war, contrasted with the Buddha's prognosis for the world and the appropriate reaction to the violence it contains. Kant's views on history are brought into the discussion, because many people in our times, and particularly a good many of those making war or preparing to do so, are acting as if they are convinced that an eventual end to war will somehow come about by making war on those who are perceived as enemies of the very idea of making peace. This conviction seems to be particularly prevalent among those who see something like Kant's Nature operating behind human history, i.e., an intelligence with good intentions that has provided human beings with the means to rescue themselves collectively from the human condition, but only after making themselves very miserable. If Buddhism has anything to offer the world in its present condition, it is a critique of that conviction. The classical Buddhist view, presented in detail in Hayes' essay, extends an invitation to reconsider the evidence of history.

While the Buddha's message may seem bleak, it does offer a kind of hope. The hope provided by the Buddha's vision is that it is possible for at least some people to attain to a state of maturity wherein they will be able to learn that dividing the naturally uniform species into unnatural divisions such as clans, tribes, races and nations leads only to xenophobia, that xenophobia leads only to conflict, and that conflict leads only to further conflict. These mature people will appreciate the words found in the opening chapter of what is probably the best-known and most frequently quoted Buddhist text, the Dhammapada:

> 3. He insulted me, he hurt me, he conquered me, he robbed me. The wrath of those who think like that will never end.

> 4. He insulted me, he hurt me, he conquered me, he robbed me. The wrath of those who never think like that will end.

> 5. For wrath is not conquered by wrath; wrath is conquered by leaving it behind. This is a universal principle.

> 6. Others do not know that we can live here in harmony. Those who do know it leave fighting behind.

Hayes goes on to discuss the achievement of moral virtues. Specific attention is paid to a set of ten virtues that are suggested as a summary of Buddhist teachings. The ten factors discussed are wisdom, heroism, concentration, mindfulness, joy, flexibility, equanimity, faith, resolve and good moral habit.

Hayes concludes his paper with reflections on religious pluralism and its relation to the fulfillment of human potential and to the achievement of human flourishing. He reminds us of the power of community as a means of

achieving the virtues and hence as an instrument of human flourishing. Thus, the realization of human potential is one that requires the combined efforts of all people. Moreover, cooperation is something that requires mental and emotional flexibility and a willingness to learn not only from one's own experiences but also from the experiences of others. From these two considerations, Hayes suggests that it follows that the healthiest human community is one that encourages individuals to benefit from the entire collective wisdom and experience of humankind as a whole. This leads Hayes to the third observation, that when Buddhist principles are taken to their logical conclusion, they must embody a spirit of religious pluralism and can never be seen from the narrow perspective of the Buddhist tradition alone. He mentions figures such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Stephen Batchelor as contemporary Buddhists who hint at the most promising direction for humanity as a whole. That direction consists in seeking wisdom from whatever source it can be found.

Buddhism, as presented by Hayes, is a sustained reflection on life and the human condition. It lacks the grand narratives, and along with them the great hopes and messianic ideals that characterize the Abrahamic faiths, or even the mystical idealism that is typical of the Hindu faith. Instead, it emphasizes human psychology and the virtues as keys to a happy life. Its practical emphases make it a source of teaching on the human condition, which, as Hayes points out, is part of the current appeal of Buddhism, permitting it to touch people of other faiths. While its goals are ultimately individual and only individuals are destined to attain full perfection, its central emphasis on community as a vital component of the spiritual life allows it to dialogue with the other faiths that share a strong communitarian emphasis. It is significant that, like Hinduism, Buddhism is not envisioned as possessing a fundamental theological hostility to others. Nevertheless, the challenges of the moral life and the need to keep the company of the good do in fact place before it challenges similar to those of other religions.

1.7   On Interreligious Dialogue

In conclusion, it is instructive to reflect on the methods through which the different essays incorporate the significance of inter-religious dialogue into their presentations. Each of the contributors assumes the positive value of the inter-religious exchange of ideas. The theme of hospitality is extended, explicitly or implicitly, to include hospitality to the ideas of other religions. While all authors recognize the importance of the dialogue, the Abrahamic papers are clearly more hard pressed to justify it than the Eastern papers, which almost take it for granted. Thus, I appeal to the crisis of Judaism as a background against which inter-religious exchange may help play a constructive role. Sykes develops the notion of making space for the other, as an extension of the notion of Christian hospitality. Interestingly, neither of us cites traditional precedent for such activity, though it obviously exists within our traditions. Cornell's presentation of Islam is a plea for the retrieval of earlier Islamic sources that recognized, accepted, and legitimated religious pluralism and the possibility of learning from other religious traditions. For

Vohra, this is not a problem to be solved but a given of Hinduism's broad and inclusive nature. And finally for Hayes this is a natural outcome of authentic Buddhist pre-suppositions, supported by the best practices of contemporary Buddhist leaders.