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1991
A STUDY ON WACH'S AND ELIADE'S APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE RELIGION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy and Religion
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Li Wang

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A STUDY ON WACH'S AND ELIADE'S APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Date Recommended 11/25/92

Director of Thesis

Date Approved  February 24, 1992

Dean of the Graduate College
I began to undertake the study of comparative religion, or scientific study of religion, when I graduated from Peking (Beijing) University in China in 1983. By that time only a few Chinese scholars had been involved in this field. I enjoyed participating in such an enterprise; at the same time, I realized that there was much to be learned in that religion was a so labyrinthine a phenomenon that its meaning could not be easily comprehended. While teaching and researching at my Alma Mater, I became very interested in modern Western theories of comparative religion and the relevant fields. Therefore, I came to the United States to obtain my M. A. in humanities at Western Kentucky University.

I have now acquired knowledge of philosophy and history in the field of religious studies as provided by American scholars. In the present thesis I will concentrate my attention on the theories of two important figures of the "Chicago school" of comparative religion in order to deepen my learning of, not only the study of religion, but also of Western culture. Above all, I recognize that obstacles in language and differences in world view may bring about difficulties in communication and understanding, but that a
thirst for knowledge and unremitting efforts will eventually
open up a new field in the exchange between Eastern and
Western cultural traditions. My task is an attempt to explore
for such a land.

The task may also be regarded as a summation of my two-
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A STUDY ON WACH'S AND ELIADE'S APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE RELIGION

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The main viewpoints and methods of two important figures of the "Chicago school" in the comparative study of religion, Wach and Eliade, are investigated, and then are discussed on three levels: the disciplinary, the philosophical, and the historical. On the disciplinary level, their theoretical emphases and methodological characteristics are discerned. On the philosophical level, their presuppositions are classified by an "archic analysis," a scheme of one's philosophical orientation provided by Walter Watson. And on the historical level, their theories are examined against the concrete religious data of Chinese Buddhism. Finally, the conclusion is drawn from the analysis of the relations among these three levels, and the significance of the discipline of comparative religion is interpreted.
INTRODUCTION

The study of religion, namely, an intellectual inquiry into the spiritual, cultural, and social complex of mankind in different dimensions and from various perspectives and methods, whether in the West or the East, is an intriguing and oracular territory. Through the ages, numerous scholars including philosophers, historians, scientists, and theologians have explored this ground for understanding and interpreting the manifestations, characteristics, nature, and essence of religion as well as the relations of religion to other fields: social, economic, political, cultural, and so on. However, in the modern sense, the study of religion as an autonomous discipline did not begin until the third quarter of the nineteenth century. When Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) defined "the science of religion" (Religionswissenschaft), which was based on "an impartial and truly scientific comparison of all, or at all events, of the most important, religions of mankind,"¹ the growing discipline began its

difficult yet fruitful progress.

From its birth the discipline has been confronted with the issues of its name and definition. In the beginning, it was called the "science of religion," or "comparative religion," then, "phenomenology of religion," and finally "history of religions." The definitions, accordingly, were also variant. Nevertheless, the common body of the discipline remained the general (rather than merely particular) study of religion, that is, the "general science of religion" (Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft).² However, since the 1970s, many scholars, especially in the United States, have preferred to continuously use the current term "history of religions," whereas the "old" title of "comparative religion" has gained popularity again in many European universities.³ Besides the methodological debates, the diversity of the name of the discipline in fact reflected the different understanding and interpretations of the terms, such as "history," "science," and "comparison." For example, keeping their distance from misleading "comparative religion" to an "evolutionistic" attitude, which intended to determine


³ Sharpe, Comparative Religion, xiii.
the "relative superiority or inferiority" of religions, many scholars were in favor of employing the expression, "history of religions." For example, Joachim Wach insisted on translating the name of the discipline as "history of religions." Mircea Eliade used the "history of religions" in the "broadest sense of the term," but sometimes he also directly employed "comparative religion" as the title of the discipline, such as when one of his major works was named Patterns in Comparative Religion. However, it seems that the problem remains to be dealt with because the "history of religions" is still a confusing concept, which is liable to cause misunderstanding as it might suggest the study of the history of various particular religions.

Relatively speaking, if the title, "science of religion," is used to use as little as possible, then the better term, "comparative religion," may more correctly suggest the implications of the discipline of Religionswissenschaft. The reasons for this are first, as has been mentioned, the establishment of the science of religion

4 Ibid., xii.


was primarily based on the method of comparison. Since the word "science" in English was "to be misleading," comparative religion in fact became the synonym of the science of religion in the early stage of the discipline. Second, with the development of comparative religion, many other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and phenomenology, were gradually involved. Each provided its approaches and later grew into a branch of the study of religion. At the same time, comparative religion preserved the comparative method as its essential approach. Third, it is hard to prove that the method of evolution is invalid for comparative religion, even though the Darwinian-Spencerian concept of evolution in early comparative religion has been abandoned by most Western scholars. In fact, some scholars, such as Robert N. Bellah, a sociologist of religion, have attempted to formulate the new schemes of religious evolution. Therefore, I am inclined to think that it is appropriate to continually use the title of comparative religion in order to intimate the characteristics and connotation of the discipline.

The interpretation of the name of comparative religion

8 Sharpe, Comparative Religion, xii.
is closely linked to its definition. On the one hand, many scholars, especially in the early period, often defined the terms broadly, that is, in an evolutionary or Occidentalist sense. Take Louis H. Jordan (1855-1923) as an example; in 1905, he declared

Comparative religion is that science which compares the origin, structure, and characteristics of the various religions of the world, with the view of determining their genuine agreement and differences, the measure of relation in which they stand one to another, and their relative superiority or inferiority when regarded as types.¹⁰

Some contemporary scholars also use the term in a similar way. For instance, Eric J. Sharpe has defined comparative religion as "the historical, critical and comparative study of the religions of the world."¹¹ Moreover, in his Comparative Religion: a History (1975), he discusses the various fields of the entire study of religion.

On the other hand, many other scholars focus on a narrow definition; that is, comparative religion is merely one of the branches within the study of religion. Frank Whaling, for example, has explained the approaches and tendencies within comparative religion as "the ways in which religious traditions and phenomena have been impartially compared."¹²

¹¹ Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 1.
Because "the fundamental nature of comparative religion as such is the fact of comparison,"¹³ Whaling's comparative religion is employed in a more narrow, non-normative and phenomenological sense; that is, to classify, compare, and model the religious facts impartially.¹⁴ Thus the need for a clear definition remains a current concern.

In my opinion, the comparative study of religion is only a part rather than the whole, but its approaches are the basic and essential ones among the disciplines of the study of religion. In other words, here the term comparative religion is employed in a moderate sense, even though it is not limited within the "non-normative" sense. Perhaps for precisely illustrating the nature of the discipline, comparative religion can be defined as a universal inquiry into the character, structure and meaning of religion by means of historical-systematic comparison and classification.

Thus, the term comparative religion, used in this paper, is more or less equivalent to the "history of religions," which has been approved by many scholars, especially those who belong to the well-known "Chicago school."

We know that the Chicago school has exerted a great influence on the study of religion for several decades. This is due particularly to the important contributions of its two representative figures, Joachim Wach (1898-1955) and Mircea

¹³ Ibid., 280.

¹⁴ Ibid.
Eliade (1907-1986). There can be no doubt that to study their outlooks would enable us to better understand comparative religion. Therefore, the task of my thesis is, first, to investigate Wach and Eliade’s main presuppositions on comparative religion; next, to compare their theoretical viewpoints and methods; then, to analyze both their philosophical orientations and historical significance; and finally, to appraise the academic value and limitation of their theories. In a word, my chief purpose is to seek some enlightenment from Wach and Eliade’s insights on comparative religion.
CHAPTER I
JOACHIM WACH’S THEORETICAL VIEWPOINTS

As a German-American scholar, Joachim Wach devoted his whole life to develop the study of comparative religion and sociology of religion. Although born in 1898 in Chemnitz, Saxony, with a Jewish family background, he was a professing Christian. In 1918 Wach went to the University of Leipzig. He studied comparative religion from Friedrich Heiler, and was also influenced by Ernst Toreltsch, Adolf von Harnack, Nathan Soderblom, Max Weber, and Rudolf Otto. In 1922, Wach completed his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "The Foundations of a Phenomenology of the Concept of Salvation." He became a faculty member at Leipzig and stayed there until 1935 when he was deprived of his teaching position by the Nazis. He went to the United States and became a professor of the history of religions at Brown University. From 1945 to 1955, Wach taught at the University of Chicago, where he made his final endeavor for the study of comparative religion: the establishment of the Chicago school.

Wach’s wide interests involved many areas of the study of religion, from the history of religions to the philosophy

15 Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 238.
of religion, sociology of religion, and Mahayana Buddhism. His major works include Der Erlösungsgedanke and seine Deutung (1922), Religionswissenschaft (1924), Mahayana (1925), Das Verstehen (1926-1933), Sociology of Religion (1944), and Types of Religious Experience (1951). There are also several posthumous works, which were edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa and others: The Comparative Study of Religions (1958), Understanding and Believing (1968), and more recently the translations and collections of his early publications: Introduction to the History of Religions (1988), and Essays in the History of Religions (1988). Wach’s main theoretical framework on comparative religion can be reviewed as follows.

1. The Nature and Task of Comparative Religion

One of the central concerns of Wach’s theory is the methodological foundation of comparative religion as an academic discipline. During the early period of his scholastic career, Wach began an appeal for the emancipation of comparative religion (Religionswissenschaft). For the sake of its independent development, comparative religion must distinguish itself from other disciplines. Therefore, it was necessary for comparative religion to cast off the trammels of "normative" disciplines, especially theology. The main task of theology, as Wach saw it, is "concerned with understanding
and confirming its own faith." Many theologian who maintained the proposition that "he who knows one religion knows all," treated the study of foreign religions merely as a means to serve this purpose. In contrast with this attitude both quantitatively and qualitatively, the field of comparative religion is "distinct from that of theology: not our own religion but the foreign religions in all their manifoldness are its subject matter."

Another normative discipline from which comparative religion should become free is the philosophy of religion. According to Wach, the growth of comparative religion was closely connected with philosophy in the nineteenth century. However, by the early twentieth century, comparative religion, together with other individual humanistic disciplines, was not satisfied with merely providing evidence for the philosophical study. Instead, there was a reconsideration of the nature and task of philosophy, and the impact of these disciplines upon philosophy:

The degree to which a philosophy is "saturated" with data, the breadth of the empirical basis for philosophical construction, and the shape of a philosophy’s methodology may all be traced to the

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 2.
influence of a particular group of disciplines.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, Wach followed Max Weber's criticism of professional epistemological philosophy\textsuperscript{20} and emphasized the differences between the development of the humanistic studies and of "professionalized" philosophy. These disciplines revealed their worldviews and conceptions of life in a manner of "philosophical vein," which was different from the manner of philosophy. Therefore, to find the specific facts which determine its development allowed comparative religion to continually depend on philosophy in its real view.\textsuperscript{21}

On the other hand, drawing a clear distinction between comparative religion and normative disciplines did not mean that it only employed descriptive approaches, like many other humanistic and social scientific disciplines. In Wach's judgement, comparative religion was not a "pure" descriptive discipline though it was essentially descriptive.\textsuperscript{22} One thing which was equally important for the discipline was "understanding" because "the central concern of Religionswissenschaft must be the understanding of other

\textsuperscript{19} Joachim Wach, \textit{Introduction to the History of Religion}, 15.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 17.

religions." Accordingly, Wach defined the discipline as

The general science of religion, which reckons within its province phenomenology, history, psychology, and sociology of religion, is essentially descriptive, aiming to understand the nature of all religions. Comparative religion, then, laid its foundation on a hermeneutical principle, which was derived from Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. Based on this principle, comparative religion "will seek to grasp with understanding all that foreign religions produce of faith, cult, custom and community." In other words, the hermeneutical principle, in contrast to the purely descriptive approaches, such as purely psychological, sociological, and typological viewpoints on religion, helped comparative religion to interpret the actual meaning of human religious life. It was probably in this sense that Wach declared, "We now have again found the right and the courage to evaluate." As a consequence, Wach summarized,

...the task of the history of religions is to study and to describe the empirical religions. It is a descriptive and interpretive discipline, not a normative one. When it has studied concrete religious phenomena historically and systematically, it has fulfilled its task.

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24 Wach, Sociology of Religion, 1.


26 Ibid.

27 Wach, Introduction to the History of Religions, 49.
2. The Principle and Method of Comparative Religion

The method of comparative religion, as Wach considers, must be in accord with its subject matter, namely: "the multiplicity of empirically given religions." Therefore, religious experience and its manifestations should be explored, understood, and portrayed by historical and systematic methods: "'lengthwise in time' (diachronically) and in 'cross-sections' (synchronously), that is, according to their development (Entwicklung) and according to their being (Sein)."

For Wach, comparative religion should first investigate the development of empirically given religions. It must be observed that the word "development," which Wach uses, does not mean "evolution" of religion in a normative sense. Instead, Wach justifies it as "becoming" of religion, that is, "the reconstruction of the historical course and development." Because many scholars, such as C. P. Tiele, P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, and Troeltsch, did not distinguish between the history and the philosophy of religion; their methodological approaches to comparative religion were confused. Thanks to Max Scheler’s endeavor to

28 Ibid., 19.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 56.
clarify the boundary of the philosophy of religion, comparative religion sets up its phenomenological and hermeneutical foundation. Hence, Wach further emphasizes,

If the history of religions wishes to become an independent humanistic discipline, it must be clear on how its point of departure differs from that of the philosophy of religion. The history of religions must begin with the historically given religions. Its method must, therefore, be characterized as empirically determined. In this regard it contrasts with the philosophy of religion, which will always depend heavily upon the a priori, deductive method. Certainly, the history of religions, too cannot proceed without deductions, but it may never begin with them.\(^{31}\)

According to this methodological principle, neither its origin nor truth of religion should be pursued by comparative religion. In order to understand religions, the interpreter must "bracket" his own viewpoint including his own faith in order to "objectively" seek the meaning of a religious phenomenon.\(^{32}\) At the same time, he must be subject to an attitude of infinity; that is, his interpretation must be a "sympathetic understanding."\(^{33}\) This principle is also exhibited in the systematic investigation of religion.

The systematic study of religion, which explores the religious facts in their "Being," primarily employs the comparative method. Although it is used by all humanistic disciplines, Wach stresses, the comparison is particularly

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 94.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 163.

important for the study of religion. On the other hand, Wach disagrees that the discipline, from its early stage is designated by the names of "comparative religion," "Vergleichende Religionsgeschichte" (comparative historical study of religions), and "Vergleichende Religionswissenschaft" (comparative history of religions). For Wach thinks, "the methods can only be means, never ends in themselves." 34

Wach's criticism also refers to an attitude that has overvalued the comparative method in the evolutionary sense: "When scholars prefer the evolutionary, historical point of view to an excessive degree, little room remains for systematic consideration." 35 The function of comparison, according to Wach, involves two approaches: the formal systematization and the material systematization. Each has its significance and limit. 36 On the one hand, the formal systematization of religions, which pays more attention to the comparison of some common aspects between two or more religious phenomenon, must form the systematic ideal-typical concepts and "identify the regularities and principles that appear in historical development." 37 After a common concept, such as Wach's example of "monasticism," has taken shape, the further task of grasping the "essence" will be left for the

34 Wach, Introduction to the History of Religion, 134.
35 Ibid., 135.
36 Ibid., 134.
37 Ibid., 137.
philosophy of religion.\(^{38}\)

On the other hand, the material systematization, which studies and interprets the individual religious phenomenon by means of comparison and contrast, is more important than the formal systematization, "for it operates more deeply in the empirical and concrete, which is the root of the entire discipline."\(^{39}\) But the material systematization also has its limit, for it is unable to overcome the historical study of religion. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the material systematization with the formal systematization.\(^{40}\) In fact, the systematic study of religions cannot be separated from the historical study of religion, just like the "Being" cannot be apart from the "Becoming." In the process of exploring, understanding, and portraying the empirical religions, these two branches of comparative religion are closely connected to each other. Wach therefore clearly explains their relation in this way:

The history of religions seeks to study, understand, and interpret religions. Thus, it will first seek to clear up their becoming, their arising, their waning—in a word, their history. But the history of religions cannot be satisfied with purely historical sequences and with tracing developments. Cross-cuts must be made. Systematic study, interpretation, and presentation must proceed from decisive, central points. Such a study transcends the historical to supplement or complete it; but in fundamentals it points back to the historical as its source, its home. As a result, systematization is

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 138.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 138.
not the ultimate; in some sense, it is circumscribed by history.\textsuperscript{41}

3. Religious Experience and its Sociological Expression

The main task of comparative religion is to understand the experienced religion, at the same time, to broaden and deepen the \textit{sensus numinis},\textsuperscript{42} namely, a kind of religious experience in Otto's term. What, then, is religious experience? What is its nature and character? In what form does religious experience express itself? Through answering these questions, Wach formulates one of the most important of his theoretical themes.

Wach follows Otto's brief definition that "religion is the experience of the Holy," in order to emphasize the "objective" aspects of the nature of religious experience.\textsuperscript{43} Wach constitutes four criteria by which the nature of religious experience can be characterized.

The first criterion of religious experience is regarding religious experience as, in Paul Tillich's existentialist

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 142.


term, "a response to what is experienced as Ultimate Reality,"\textsuperscript{44} which means our reaction to what "we realize as undergirding and conditioning all that constitute our world of experience."\textsuperscript{45} This kind of religious experience, according to Wach, has four features: first, it includes an assumption that the degree of consciousness are the presuppositions of experience. Second, it has been regarded as a kind of "encounter" of Ultimate Reality by homines religiosi (religious believers). Third, it is continuous and dynamically connects the experiencer with his experienced object. Fourth, its nature must be understood in its conditioned historical context.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, since it comes from what the homines religiosi responds to as Ultimate Reality, religious experience is not only subjective, but also objective.

Besides this primary criterion, there are three more criteria of religious experience. The second criterion is the integrality of religious experience; that is, the response to Ultimate Reality must involve not only a part of the person's being, such as the mind feeling, or will, but the entire


\textsuperscript{45} Wach, \textit{Types of Religious Experience}, 32.

\textsuperscript{46} Wach, \textit{The Comparative Study of Religions}, 31.
person. The third criterion is the intensity of religious experience, which involves man’s most powerful potential capability. The fourth criterion, which is different from aesthetic experience, proceeds from practical commitment and actions. Wach asserts that by means of these four criteria of religious experience, which must be present together, genuine religion and pseudo religion can be distinguished. In pseudo religion, "man relates himself not to ultimate but to some finite reality," whereas genuine religion is universal, not limited to time or space. From this point, Wach classifies four types of "secularism" as "pseudo religion": Marxism, biologism, populism or racism, and statism. Above all, one of the most distinct sign, according to Wach, is that "religion is a ubiquitous expression of the sensus numinis."

Another special consideration for Wach in religious experience is its expression. According to Wach, there are three types of forms in which religious experiences can be expressed:

a. Theoretical forms, such as symbol, myth, doctrine and dogma;

b. Practical forms, such as cults and worship;

and

47 Ibid., 32-36.
48 Ibid., 37.
49 Ibid., 38.
50 Ibid.
c. Sociological forms, such as religious grouping, fellowship and cult association.\footnote{Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, 2. See also Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Introduction: Verstehen and Erlösung," in *Introduction to the History of Religions*, xii, a scheme, "Universals in Religion," which was derived from Wach, *Types of Religious Experience*, 30-47.}

Wach observed that there was considerable study on the first two types. At the same time, it was equally necessary to take into account the third type, namely, sociological expression of religious experience.\footnote{Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, 2.} Therefore, it was in this field that Wach explicated his further concern for the development of comparative religion: to establish the sociology of religion.

Max Weber was regarded as the first scholar who studied systematic sociology. However, his main concern was Calvinism within Christianity. Moreover, he concentrated his work on the relation between religion and economics. His field of study was too narrow for Wach's sociology of religion. Wach also criticized the scholars Ernst Troelsch, and H. R. Niebuhr, for their ideas on sociology of religion included theological or "normative" factors.\footnote{Ibid., 3-4.} Sociology of religion, in Wach's judgment, is an objective and descriptive discipline, whose purpose is "to study the interrelation of religion and society and the forms of interaction which take
place between them." Its main task is to study religious groups by means of comparative and typological analysis. Sociology of religion must cooperate with other relevant disciplines, such as phenomenology, psychology, and history of religion, but "say nothing of theology."

Wach's theory of the sociology of religion discusses many aspects of the relation between religious groups and society, such as identity of natural and religious grouping, social differentiation and religion, specifically religious groups, religion and the state, and types of religious authority. Yet here we shall briefly investigate only one interesting theme; that is, the relation of social differentiation to religion.

Wach divides religion into two aspects: subjective experience and objective expression. The latter is influenced by social differences whereas the former is not directly. For instance, two men who live in the same cultural, and religious circumstances but experience differences in occupation, social position and wealth, "may have similar experiences of the holy and still express their faith differently, worship differently, and belong to different types of religious associations." This is owing to the fact that the religious experience as the foundation of the human spiritual life, can

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54 Ibid., 11.
55 Ibid., 6.
56 Ibid., 234.
integrate various believers into a common fellowship. However, their objective expressions, in general, depend on different social conditions. Furthermore, people of different social strata may have their preferences of traditional religious ideas and rituals.\(^7\) Obviously, Wach's theory of the sociology of religion is an attempt to further elaborate his concepts of religious experience.

4. The Character of Wach's Theory

As may have been seen, the main framework of Wach's theory involves his points of view on the tasks and nature of comparative religion, on its phenomenological method and hermeneutical principle, and on religious experience and its sociological expression, namely, sociology of religion. Wach's many outlooks have been incorporated by the Chicago school and have become the basic principle of the school. My brief remarks on Wach's main methodological tendencies may be expressed as follows:

In the first place, Wach has firmly established a methodological foundation for comparative religion as an autonomous scholarly discipline. From the late nineteenth century, the discipline of Religionswissenschaft was in many aspects influenced by "normative" perspectives, especially theology. Many Christian theologians attempted to use the

\(^7\) Ibid., 234-235.
comparative study of religion to prove the superiority of their own religion, and confirm their own faith. Thus, there was an increasing danger that comparative religion would become the dependency of theology in the early twentieth century. It was at this time (1924) that Wach published his *The History of Religions: Theoretical Prolegomena to Its Foundation as a Scholarly Discipline* in German. Wach's appeal for the emancipation of comparative religion from normative disciplines, especially theology, indeed proved the discipline's right to independent existence. Moreover, Wach defined the nature and task of comparative religion as a descriptive and interpretive discipline, "aiming to understand the nature of all religions." It must be noted that such a discipline, though it does not involve "value judgment," still embraces not only objective (i.e. descriptive) but also subjective (i.e. interpretive or critical) characteristics. Consequently, the nature of the discipline retains room for challenges from both the normative and non-normative viewpoints.

In the second place, Wach's method of comparative religion has considerable value. Following the hermeneutical principle, Wach advocates the historical and systematic methods of study in order to understand and portray the empirically given religions. That is to say, on the one hand, to study the religious phenomena lengthwise in time, or to explore the development (in Wach's term, "Becoming") of
religion diachronically; on the other hand, to study religious facts by cross-section, or to investigate religious "Being" synchronically. This twofold method enables us to understand religions comparatively, integratively, and dynamically. Comparative religion cannot fulfill its task by means of merely any one of the methods, either the historical study or typological study. Therefore, the historical systematic method can be regarded as the essential scientific approach to comparative religion. Moreover, as has been noted, since the discipline of Religionswissenschaft emphasizes the method of comparison, it seems better to designate it as "comparative religion," even though Wach preferred the title, "the history of religion(s)."

In the third place, Wach rightly emphasizes that comparative religion must cooperate with relevant disciplines, especially psychology and sociology. His Sociology of Religion was an important attempt to apply the principle and method of comparative religion in the field of sociology, though his analyses and the patterns he employed in the book may not be all satisfied. Nevertheless, as to the relation of comparative religion to other disciplines, Joseph Kitagawa's statement seems more precise. According to Kitagawa, Religionswissenschaft or the history of religions, although

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58 Kitagawa notes that for most of his career, Wach used "history of religion" in the singular, but after he taught at Chicago, he changed to "history of religions" in the plural; see Kitagawa, "Verstehn and Erlosung," xi.
an autonomous discipline, does not regard itself as a self-sufficient discipline nor the "queen of all disciplines" of religious studies, normative or descriptive. Instead, they can be treated as auxiliary disciplines to one another.  

In the fourth place, Wach’s viewpoint, in the final analysis, reveals a methodological contradiction. On the one hand, the interpreter of religion must "bracket" his own point of view including his own faith, if he has any, and at the same time retain a sympathetic attitude; on the other hand, after understanding the meaning of a religious phenomena, he has not yet completed his task. He should finally broaden and deepen his own faith, his sensus numinis, his religious feeling and experience. It is hard to say that such an "integrated understanding" is objective and non-normative. In other words, there is an inconsistency between Wach’s phenomenological method and his hermeneutical principle. It would be helpful here if we compare Wach’s point of view with Kitagawa’s perspective. Kitagawa poses three essential qualities of the discipline of the history of religions (i.e. comparative religion): "First is a sympathetic understanding of religions other than one’s own. Second is an attitude of self-criticism, or even skepticism, about one’s own religious

background. And third is the scientific temper. Clearly, this viewpoint of the Chicago school seems more objective and impartial. Now let us turn to another important representative personage of the school, Mircea Eliade.

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60 Ibid., 15.
CHAPTER II
MIRCEA ELIADE’S THEORETICAL VIEWPOINTS

Mircea Eliade was born in Bucharest, Romania, in 1907. He studied philosophy at the University of Bucharest. His M.A. thesis was on the Italian Renaissance, from Ficino to Bruno. After receiving his M.A. degree in 1928, Eliade went to Calcutta University to study Indian religions, especially the theory and practice of yoga. In 1933 he received his Ph.D. degree with a dissertation on yoga. Then he taught at his Alma Mater from 1933 to 1940. During World War Two he served at the Romanian Legation in London in 1940 and in Lisbon from 1941 to 1945. After the war, Eliade taught as a visiting professor at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1957 he joined the University of Chicago faculty and later became a Distinguished Service Professor until his death in 1986.

Eliade was an erudite scholar, not only in the comparative study of religion but also in philosophy and literature. As a creative writer, Eliade wrote numerous works which were published in Romanian, French, and English. His great learning covered a broad range of the world of religion. A list of his main works included The Myth of the Eternal Return (1955, later as Cosmos and History,

It seems impossible to survey the theoretical framework of such an "encyclopedist" of the study of religion in a few pages. Hence in this chapter I would like to focus my attention on some important concepts which Eliade has elaborated.

1. The principle and method of Comparative Religion

As has been mentioned, the discipline of comparative religion, in Eliade's view, is using the title of "history of religions" in its broadest sense. What, then, is the task or purpose of the history of religions? What methodological principle must the discipline follow? What method should it employ? Through answering these questions, Eliade has developed his new ideas on both hermeneutical principles and
historical and systematic methods of comparative religion.

The view that Eliade shares with Wach and many other historians of religions is that comparative religion must study the meaning of religions. Moreover, he suggests that only in this way can comparative religion fulfill its true "cultural function." He writes,

"Like it or not, the scholar has not finished his work when he has reconstructed the history of a religious form or brought out its sociological, economic, or political contexts. In addition, he must understand its meaning—that is, identify and elucidate the situations and positions that have induced or made possible its appearance or its triumph at a particular historical moment.

It is solely insofar as it will perform this task—particularly by making the meaning of religious documents intelligible to the mind of modern man—that the science of religions will fulfill its true cultural function. For whatever its role has been in the past, the comparative study of religions is destined to assume a cultural role of the first importance in the near future."

That is to say, in the contemporary world, that is, since the 1960s, there has been an increasing dialogue between the Western and the Non-Western people. This dialogue, according to Eliade, must be not only in an empirical and utilitarian language, but also in a language to deal with the central cultural values, especially the religious traditions. Under these circumstances, comparative religion will necessarily play an important part in

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Not only will comparative religion provide Westerners with the understanding of foreign and archaic religions for cultural dialogue, but also it may deepen the "knowledge of man," on which "a new humanism, on a world-wide scale, could develop."\(^6^3\)

This is a process following a principle of a "total hermeneutics" which leads to "the creation of new cultural values."\(^6^4\) So it can also be called a "creative hermeneutics." Such a principle, according to Eliade, enables the discipline of comparative religion not only to discover and encounter possible new culture values, but also to change man. In this sense, he has, in effect, extended the boundary of the discipline:

In the end, the creative hermeneutics changes man; it is more than instruction, it is also a spiritual technique susceptible of modifying the quality of existence itself. This is true above all for the historico-religious hermeneutics.\(^6^5\)

This creative hermeneutical principle relates to its methodology. Sharing his view with Raffaele Pettazzoni and Wach, Eliade maintains that comparative religion comprises two intellectual operations: a systematic or phenomenological approach and a historical approach. The former studies religious phenomena in their structures and classifications

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 2-3.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 61.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 62.
and at last tries to reveal the "essence" of religions. The latter, on the other hand, researches the history of religious phenomena in change and transformation in order to find their cultural significance. These two approaches, according to Eliade, are equally valuable and should be combined with each other in that they are complementary. Eliade noticed that there was a tension between phenomenologists of religion and historians of religions around the 1950s. Nevertheless, he considered that such a tension was "creative," for it can enable the discipline of comparative religion to be free from "dogmatism" and stagnation. In a word, Eliade advocates that comparative religion, in light of its integrated and synthetic approaches, can grasp the meaning of religious phenomena and understand the "total man" and his specific existential situation of "being in the world."

To grasp the meaning of religious phenomena, Eliade emphasizes the importance of studying religious symbolism. He says, "The historian of religions is preoccupied uniquely with religious symbols, that is, with those that are bound up with a religious experience or a religious conception of the world." Every religious fact, as a hierophany or the manifestation of the sacred, has a symbolic quality; for man

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66 Ibid., 8-9.

67 Ibid., 9.

is not only a homo religiosus but also a homo symbolicus. All his acts involve symbolic meanings because they refer to the sacred, that is, "supernatural values or beings." Hence an important task for comparative religion is to find out the common function of religious symbolism. According to Eliade, the religious symbol as a multivalent "cipher" of the structure of the world always reveals the reality of human existence. The most important function of religious symbolism is that it can represent the paradoxical aspects of "ultimate reality." It is because of religious symbolism that man realizes the unity of polarities and antimonies of the reality as the paradoxical coexistence. This function runs through its history. Therefore, it is necessary to study the historical situations in which the religious symbols undertake the "making of worlds" in order to "decipher" and understand their general transcendent meanings.70

In addition, it is worth notice that Eliade himself prefers the term "morphology" to "phenomenology" of religion. The morphological method, which Eliade especially applied in his Patterns in Comparative Religion, in fact, has developed the systematic approach to the study of comparative religion. For this reason, a great number of concepts, categories, and patterns of religious phenomena in Eliade's works have attracted wide attention.

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69 Ibid., 95.

70 Ibid., 97-107.
2. The Sacred and the Profane

One of Eliade’s core concepts is the "sacred" or the subject of religious experience. Since religious phenomena are neither "purely" nor exclusively religious,71 the sacred and the act of its manifestation, in Eliade’s term, "hierophany," must be studied morphologically and historically. Meanwhile, the study of the "sacred" is always dialectically connected with its opposite modality of the "profane." Thus Eliade simply defines the sacred as "the opposite of the profane."72 Through comparative analysis of the connection and opposition between the sacred and the profane, Eliade attempts to illustrate the nature and characteristics of religious experience and its expression.

According to Eliade, each category of religious phenomenon, such as rite, myth, symbol, venerated object and place, sacred human being, animal, plant, and so forth, implies two ways of expressing the sacred. On the one hand, each has its own modality, which means that it is a kind of morphology; on the other hand, each presents a certain historical sacred experience, which indicates that it relates to history. Therefore, both ways are equally important in


understanding the religious phenomenon.  

Eliade uses his term hierophany to explicate how sacred reality manifests itself. There are various hierophanies at different levels. For example, on an elementary level, hierophany shows a stone or a tree as manifestation of the sacred; on the supreme level, it reveals the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In spite of the different forms which hierophanies indicate, there is something underlying the manifestations, that is, the sacred, or "a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world." Once a hierophany has taken shape, it will suggest its own paradoxical character. On the one hand, any object, as a manifestation of the sacred, becomes "something else"; on the other hand, it still exists in its own common conditions, or, it remains "itself." The only distinction is, in the eyes of homo religiosus, namely, man who has religious faith, by whom "its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality." 

The two modalities of experience, that is, the sacred and the profane, reflect two attitudes toward man's existential world. On the one hand, the "archaic" man inclines to live in a situation which is closed to the sacred because he regards it as a power and a reality. Thus, the

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73 Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 2.
74 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 11.
75 Ibid., 12.
religious man "deeply desires to be, to participate in
reality, to be saturated with power." The modern and
nonreligious man, on the other hand, views the things, which
are regarded as sacred by the religious man, merely in their
social, economic, biological, or psychological world in the
secular sense. Therefore, it is profoundly significant for
comparative religion to divide into the two modes of the
sacred and the profane. For this reason, Eliade says,

In the last analysis, the *sacred* and *profane* modes of
being depend upon the different positions that man has
conquered in the cosmos; hence they are of concern both
to the philosopher and to anyone seeking to discover the
possible dimensions of human existence.76

These two models of being in the world are demonstrated
in many aspects of human spiritual life, especially in space
and time. In the case of space, there are two different
experiences: the sacred space and the profane space. On the
one hand, space, in the eyes of religious man, is not
homogeneous; rather, it is broken into different parts: the
sacred space and its surrounding expanse. Since the
hierophany in the sacred space reveals a fixed point, the
center of the orientation of the future life, he can find the
reality of the world. Therefore, "...religious man has always
sought to fix his abode at the 'center of the world.' If the
world is to be lived in, it must be *found.*"78 For

76 Ibid., 13.
77 Ibid., 15.
78 Ibid., 22.
nonreligious man, on the other hand, space remains the profane space, homogeneous, neutral, and relative: "No true orientation is now possible, for the fixed point no longer enjoys a unique ontological status; it appears and disappears in accordance with the needs of the day." In the sacred place, the hierophany not only makes a fixed point from the chaos of the cosmos by breaking the homogeneity of space but also opens a way of communication among three cosmic planes: earth, heaven, and underworld. This communication in effect has an ontological sense for it locates the fixed point at the "navel of the earth" and becomes the "Center of the World." It is in this center that religious man desires to live so that he can be as close as possible to the gods. Such cosmological symbolism is presented in various places, cities, mountains, temples, and houses. Thus, Eliade concludes that "the world becomes apprehensible as world, as cosmos, in the measure in which it reveals itself as a sacred world." As to time, in Eliade’s view, there are also two kinds of models: the sacred time and the profane time. In contrast to the latter, which is ordinary temporal duration, the former is neither homogeneous nor continuous. It is a kind of mythical time in which religious man finds himself to return to the original period. When he participates in a traditional rite,

79 Ibid., 23.
80 Ibid., 37.
81 Ibid., 64.
such as the religious New Year festival, the *homo religiosus* participates in the same events, the same situations of the previous year, in which he is led into a reappearing and unchangeable sacred time. Thus, the sacred time "is an ontological, Parmenidean time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted." The existence of the sacred time is attributed to the creation and sanctification of the gods.

In this way, religious man experiences not only the profane but also the sacred time. For him, the latter is more important because it enables man to live in the eternal, mythical presence created by the gods. Nonreligious man, on the other hand, also has certain secular experiences of discontinuity of time or different temporal rhythm in his life, for example, an important moment for meeting his sweetheart. However, his experience is essentially different from religious man's in terms of the 'sacred.' For nonreligious man, time as man's "deepest existential dimension," relates only to his own life, but does not involve any divine manifestation. Conversely, religious man regards the periodic interruptions of the profane, temporal duration as nonhistoric sacred moments, which emerge during the religious rituals. Thus, in the sacred time *homo religiosus* reasserts the divine models of the myths:

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82 Ibid., 69.

83 Ibid., 70-72.
In short, through the reactualization of his myths, religious man attempts to approach the gods and to participate in being; the imitation of paradigmatic divine models expresses at once his desire for sanctity and his ontological nostalgia.\textsuperscript{\textdegree}

3. Cosmos Religion and Historical Religion

Eliade’s concepts on the sacred and the profane is closely linked to his profound concern history, which constitutes his theory of "the myth of the eternal return" by comparatively analyzing two kinds of religions: cosmos religion and historical religion. In contrast with historical or biblical religion, which is based on a linear outlook of history, cosmos or traditional religion holds a cyclical view of time, which refers to the paradigm of the original cosmic creation-eternal archetype.

The conception of the "archetype," which Eliade uses in a different meaning from Jung’s psychology, is symbolized in archaic man’s mythical moments, or \textit{in illo tempore}. A traditional religious activity, such as marriage, is sacred because it is regarded as a repetition of the archetype, the exemplary actions accomplished by gods or heroes in the beginning.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} The repetition of the archetype enable archaic man to review the process of primal creation by which cosmos

\textsuperscript{\textdegree} \textit{Ibid.}, 106.

is transformed from chaos. It is in this repetition and review that archaic man find his "being" and "reality." In that sense, man is constructed "according to an archetype."86

One of the important examples of archetypes is the symbolism of the center. The sacred center includes the sacred mountain, the sacred city and temple. Each sacred center, especially the sacred mountain, as an axis mundi (cosmic axis), located at the center of the world, where three cosmic zones, that is, heaven, earth, and hell converge. The pilgrimage to the sacred center is difficult and dangerous, but for archaic man, to attain the sacred center means "a rite of the passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to divinity."87 Since the archetype of cosmic creation occurs in the "universal pillar" or at the center of the world, the symbolism of the center, in fact, reflects the repetition of the cosmogony.

Moreover, the archetype of the repetition of the cosmogony refers to mythical time in which archaic man renews the creation and finds his reality. By participating in the periodical events, he finds, first, only that which is connected with the archetype is real, and second, only these moments are full of meaning. Thus, his repetition of the cosmogonic act abolishes the profane time. History, in his

86 Ibid., 10.
87 Ibid., 18.
view, moves in endless cycles. Therefore, the myth of eternal repetition, in effect, becomes a kind of archaic ontology. As Eliade says,

If all moments and all situations of the cosmos are repeated ad infinitum, their evanescence is, in the last analysis, patent; sub specie infinitatis, all moments and all situations remain stationary and thus acquire the ontological order of the archetype.

In contrast to this cyclical and astral view of history, modern or historical religion, for example Christianity, is dominated by a linear theory of history though it retains some archaic factors of cosmic outlook. For Christianity, it was the Redemption that endowed time with meaning. Jesus Christ died for the redemption of man's fall only once, but "once for all." With the development of Christian theology, there were controversies between cyclic views of history and linear views. In the Middle Ages the Christian dogma was twofold: the eschatological notion kept a dominant position but was complemented by the cyclic idea. Since the seventeenth century, more and more thinkers including philosophers, scientists and theologians have begun to assert historical linearism. Through the "enlightenment" movement of the eighteenth century, especially the theory of evolution in the following century, the historical linearism had been fashionable in the West. Nevertheless, in the twentieth

88 Ibid., 34-35.
89 Ibid., 123.
90 Ibid., 143.
century, there have been signs to indicate the revival of the cyclical theories of history, which challenge historical linearism. ⁹¹

The main problem raised here is in what manner man can tolerate the "terror of history." According to Eliade, archaic man rejected the value of history by periodically living in his archetype and thereby escaping from the terror of history. This traditional, anti-historicist outlook exerted a great influence in archaic society and even continued into the modern age. Thus Eliade asserts,

...by virtue of this view, tens of millions of men were able, for century after century, to endure great historical pressures without despairing, without committing suicide or falling into that spiritual aridity that always brings with it a relativistic or nihilistic view of history. ⁹²

Furthermore, for modern man, who has faith in his historical religion, especially Christianity, the mythical horizon of archetypes and repetitions can even extend his very limited creativity and freedom. The traditional man creates his own history and obtains his freedom through his mode of existence. In other words, through the periodic repetition and reentry of his new life, archaic man "recovers the possibility of definitively transcending time and living in eternity." ⁹³

Moreover, archaic man’s participation in the periodic

⁹¹ Ibid., 144-146.
⁹² Ibid., 152.
⁹³ Ibid., 158.
cosmogony initiates his creative power on the cosmic plane. The Oriental, especially the Indian philosophies and techniques, are full of "creationistic" implications which transcend the existent condition of mankind. Therefore, from this point of view, the traditional religion is not only the one of freedom but also of creation, "for what is involved is creating a new man and creating him on a suprahuman plane, a man-god, such as the imagination of historical man has never dreamed it possible to create." 94 On the other hand, historical religion has transcended the horizon of archetypes and repetition of traditional religion by means of a new notion of the faith in an almighty God, for to God "everything is possible." 95 This faith enables modern man to live in a progressive course of history and to tolerate the "terror of history." In other words, without the presupposition of the existence of God, he would live in a desperate situation.

Since the 'invention' of faith, in the Judaeo-Christian sense of the word ( = for God all is possible), the man who has left the horizon of archetypes and repetition can no longer defend himself against that terror except through the idea of God. 96

Therefore, Christianity can be regarded as the religion of "fallen man," for he fell from the paradise of archetypes and repetition into history and progress. 97 Moreover, after

94 Ibid., 159.
95 Ibid., 160.
96 Ibid., 161-162.
97 Ibid., 162.
this first fall, for the modern nonreligious man, especially in modern Western society, there was a second fall, namely, the fall of secularization. He has lost faith in the absolute, contrary to his religious ancestors, who believed in the sacred as an absolute reality and that man had to obtain his reality only by means of his participation in the sacred activities, through which he could be close to the gods. Modern nonreligious man accepts neither the sacred nor the transcendent, he desires to live in a new existential world in which he makes himself a subject of history. "The sacred," however, "is the prime obstacle to his freedom. He will become himself only when he is totally demysticized. He will not be truly free until he has killed the last god." 

Nevertheless, according to Eliade, most nonreligious men, in fact, still keep their religious symbolisms and mythologies in the depths of the "unconscious," which come from their existential experiences. As a result, the second fall, together with the first, made modern man finally forget the Creation of God in historical religion as well as in the reality of the archetypes in cosmic religion.

In a word, Eliade's creative hermeneutical principle and morphological method provide new speculations on comparative religion, which are in many aspects different from those of Wach.

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98 Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 203.

99 See ibid., 209, 212-213; idem, Cosmos and History, 162.
4. The Fashion of Eliade’s Theory

Generally speaking, Eliade’s approach to comparative religion remains in the hermeneutical and phenomenological tradition which Wach advocated. However, they have different theoretical focuses and methodological emphases. In particular, Eliade’s style and manner of representation is quite different from Wach. The characteristics of Eliade’s theoretical fashion of comparative religion may be expressed as follows.

In the first place, Eliade develops the theoretical principle of comparative religion by means of his "creative hermeneutics" and "new humanism." On the one hand, Eliade shares many viewpoints with Wach and other historians of religions; that is, comparative religion must not only describe religious phenomena but also interpret the meanings of religious contexts. On the other hand, Eliade extends the function of this interpretation into a new ground: to create new cultural value and to change man. Eliade’s "new humanism" enables comparative religion not only to play an important role in the dialogue between the Western and the Eastern cultural traditions but also deepen the "knowledge of man," that is, to enrich man’s experience of his existent situations. In this sense, comparative religion may be finally regarded as a kind of "philosophical anthropology"\(^{100}\)

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\(^{100}\) Eliade, *The Quest*, 9.
in that it involves more profoundly philosophical speculations on the world of man's life. This is probably one of the most important contributions that Eliade has made in the study of religion. In this respect, as Eric J. Sharpe remarks, Eliade's commitment is, to a great extent, contrary to Wach's Christian idealism.\footnote{Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 241.}

In the second place, Eliade's morphological categories and the types of religious phenomena greatly enrich the language of comparative religion. When he analyses the structures of myths, symbols, and rituals, Eliade employs his own distinctive terms, such as hierophany, \textit{in illo tempore}, \textit{axis mundi}, archetype, \textit{homo religiosus}, \textit{homo symbolicus}, the nostalgia for paradise, and the like. These categories, together with his types of religious phenomena, reflect the various expressions of religions. Moreover, Eliade always tries to use these categories in their own historical situations in order to interpret their meanings. For example, one of the most important concepts of his morphological framework is the sacred. Dialectically relating to the profane, the sacred is the essential thing of religious manifestations because it is regarded as the supernatural reality of religious man's existential world. Eliade illustrates the qualities and function of the sacred by means of the comparisons of numerous historical hierophanies or symbols mainly in archaic religions, such as Australian,
Indian, Egyptian, Greek, and Chinese traditions. This shows a rich and colorful picture of the world of religious experience and its expressions. Obviously, Eliade’s style is different from Wach’s emphasis on theoretical or even philosophical argument, though both share the same Tillichian presupposition of the Sacred or Holy, that is, "Ultimate Reality." Thus Eliade, in fact, provides a kind of rhetoric for comparative religion, as Charles H. Long comments, "a rhetoric that attempted to present the imaginary religious world to us."^102

In the third place, the concepts of cosmos and history characterize Eliade’s views of comparative religion. A central concern of Eliade’s theory is man’s destiny and freedom in time and history. His classification of the two types of religions, cosmos religion and historical religion, is in the light of the different notions of time—cyclical outlook or linear historical viewpoint. Through the repetition of the archetype, archaic man can not only tolerate the "terror of history" but also understand his creation and obtain his freedom in the sense of his existence. Eliade sets a high value on such a "myth of the eternal return" in that it embraces humanistic significance. It is important for the

modern Western man, who has forgotten his archetype and lost his reality, to regain contact with archaic man in order to enable him to give rebirth to his soul. In other words, Eliade attempts to use this theory to treat the nostalgia of modern Western man. He considers that some contemporary cultural fashions have revealed this nostalgia, which involve a tendency toward anti-existentialism and antihistoricism. The theory of the myth of the eternal return in this sense reflects the central concern of "new humanism," that is, to understand the cultural value and true situation of man's life. In this respect, Eliade's idea seems to be contrary to Wach. For the latter, the concern of human destiny and salvation at last must be close to the emphasis of Christian theology.

On the whole, Wach and Eliade not only have different respective styles but also theoretical emphases. Wach pays more attention to the systematic framework of the theory of comparative religion, especially the sociology of religion, whereas Eliade stresses the psychological, cultural and spiritual aspects of religious phenomena by means of morphological study. As a result, Wach gives us a clear theoretical profile of the discipline; Eliade makes us think deeper to understand religion and man. Although Eliade seems to neglect the social, economic, and political influences upon

religion, his study on the cultural role religion plays in history indeed contributes a new and original idea. The classification of cosmos religion and historical religion may be a somewhat arbitrary assertion, but Eliade's bold presumptions are valuable in both methodological and philosophical senses.
CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS

The main task of this chapter is to analyze Wach and Eliade’s philosophical orientations. That is, to examine their presuppositions of comparative religion on a philosophical level. Since both Wach and Eliade’s central concerns are to interpret the meaning of religions, my aim here is to understand the meaning of their theories themselves. There are various ways to undertake this task. A recent approach to the "architectonics of meaning" raised by Walter Watson provides a new classification scheme for interpreting the meaning of a text, including a philosophical, literary, or religious text, work of art, or even a cultural tradition. The soundness and the limitation of the scheme itself remain to be verified by further discussion, yet the employment of this taxonomy here proves profitable for discerning Wach and Eliade’s "archic profiles," that is, philosophical orientations.

In Watson’s view, "the most significant philosophic discovery of the present century" is "the fact of pluralism,
that the truth admits of more than one valid formulation." On the one hand, pluralism performs its function through a series of cycles of epochal shifts from ontic to epistemic to semantic and back again to ontic. These shifts are due to the change of the primary or universal subject matter, that is, being, knowing, and meaning. Watson finds that philosophy has gone through five such cycles in the West. The latest one began from an ontic epoch in the seventeenth century, which paid more attention to nature as "being;" it was followed by an epistemic epoch, which focused on the process of "knowing." We are now in a semantic epoch, in which "meaning," the "expression of knowledge in what we do and say," has become the primary concern.

On the other hand, the function of pluralism, which exhibits the shifts of universal subject matters among the epochs, is based upon the general relation called "reciprocal priority," that is, each universal subject matter, such as being, knowing, or meaning, embraces and underlines the other two. This reciprocal priority can account for the philosophic diversity within an epoch because it reflects the values of a fundamental principle named "archic variables."

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105 Ibid., 9.

106 Ibid., 5.

107 Ibid., 9-10.
The word "archic," which Watson uses, is derived from Greek, archet, meaning "principle" or "leading." The term "variable" refers to the common aspect or primary subject matter of a text. In this sense, Watson says, "The archic variables are archic or first insofar as they cause without being caused, and are variables insofar as they assume different values in different texts."\(^{108}\)

Accordingly, by means of "archic analysis," the primary principles of a text can be revealed and characterized. There are four kinds of "archic variables" or "archic elements," which constitute an "archic profile" of a text: (1) Perspective; (2) Reality; (3) Method; and (4) Principle. Now let us begin to examine the archic elements of Wach and Eliade’s texts.

1. Disciplinary Perspectives

The first archic variable is perspective, that is, "the way in which the text presents its own authorship."\(^{109}\) It includes four patterns. (a) Personal perspective refers to an idiocentric viewpoint—each one (individual, group, cultural) has its own perspective. Protagoras, Descartes, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and William James can serve as the examples.\(^{110}\) (b)

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{110}\) See ibid., 16-21.
Objective perspective attempts to exclude subjectivity so that things can be seen "in themselves." Examples include Democritus, Francis Bacon, Max Weber, Freud, and Shakespeare. (c) In diaphanic perspective, personal viewpoint is subordinated to a higher power or wisdom. Plato, Augustine, Hegel, Heidegger, Lao Tzu, and Chu Hsi are examples of authors who hold this perspective. (d) Disciplinary perspective has to do with impersonal viewpoint in which the subjectivity is universalized or shared by all possible inquirers. Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, and Dewey hold this perspective.

For these four archic variables, which one, then, is held by Wach and Eliade? It seems to me that both of them use the disciplinary perspectives. For Wach, first, comparative religion as an autonomous academic discipline should include three fields of study: theoretical, practical, and sociological aspects. Accordingly, Wach has explored the religious experience and its expressions in these fields, especially in sociology of religion. He has also argued that the nature and task of the discipline are descriptive and interpretive in order to understand the meaning of religions. In this way, he establishes and develops the disciplinary perspective which shares with all possible researchers of

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111 See ibid., 22-26.
112 See ibid., 27-32.
113 See ibid., 32-37.
comparative religion by means of laying the foundation for the discipline.

Second, Wach emphasizes that the method of comparative religion must involve both historical and systematic study of religion in the light of hermeneutical principle. In other words, not only "Becoming" but also "Being" should be investigated in comparative religion. Only in this way, can comparative religion fulfill its task, that is, to study, understand, and portray religions. In fact, Wach's approach of integrally and dynamically interpreting religious phenomena provides all researchers of the discipline with a universalized perspective.

Third, Wach also pays attention to the relation of comparative religion with relevant disciplines. On the one hand, Wach insists that comparative religion must first be free from normative disciplines, especially theology, so that it can independently develop. On the other hand, he also stresses that the researchers of comparative religion must cooperate with other disciplines, either normative disciplines, including philosophy of religion and theology, or descriptive disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. Thus, Wach, in fact, further develops his disciplinary perspective. In a word, Wach's viewpoint, which shares its subjectivity with all possible researchers, will finally universalize a multiplicity of independent and impersonal disciplines.
Eliade, too, holds a disciplinary perspective. As has been seen, Eliade in general shares some fundamental viewpoints with Wach, in spite of their different theoretical emphases, paying more attention to the morphological study of religious phenomena and the cultural role which the discipline plays in the one case, and focusing on the systematic framework of the discipline’s theory in the other. One thing, that both Eliade and Wach advocate in common is that the main task of comparative religion is to understand the meaning of religions. Hence this discipline’s standpoint for Wach is "integrated understanding" and for Eliade is "total hermeneutics." Moreover, Eliade holds that comparative religion, as an autonomous discipline, should equally attach importance to two methods: the phenomenological approach and the historical approach. He points out that there is a tension between these two approaches but such a tension is creative for the discipline. Therefore, Eliade’s viewpoint, like Wach’s, sharing its universalized concepts and methods with all possible students of comparative religion, is a disciplinary perspective.

2. Essential Realities

The second archic variable is reality or signification

\[^{114}\text{See Joseph M. Kitagawa, "The History of Religions (Religionswissenschaft): Then and Now," in The History of Religions: Retrospect and Prospect, 140.}\]
of the text, which refers to the universal subject matter on which the text has its perspective. The reality is divided into four types. (a) Existential reality is a kind of phenomena which will be found in appearance. The examples which Watson offers include Protagoras, Berkley, Hume, Einstein, Max Weber, Wittgenstein, Nagarjua, and Shakespeare. (b) Substrative reality can also be called material reality or entitative reality, which as a primary quality underlies all manifestations or appearances. The texts of Democritus, Newton, Machiavelli, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Tolstoy, and Lao Tzu demonstrate this kind of reality. (c) Noumenal reality is a kind of transcendent reality in which the meaning is related to a higher order or power. Works of Parmenides, Plato, Augustine, Kant, and the Koran can be regarded as examples of noumenal realities. (d) Essential reality is when "each thing is real as what it is," that is, each individual thing is defined as its essence or generic trait. Examples of essential reality include Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Michelangelo.

In correspondence with their disciplinary perspectives, the primary subjects of both Wach’s and Eliade’s texts can be

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116 See ibid., 50-57.
117 See ibid., 57-60.
118 See ibid., 61-68.
regarded as essential realities. According to Wach, the subject matter of comparative religion, is "the multiplicity of empirically given religions," which includes, religious experience and its manifestations. In the first place, Wach insists that the task of the discipline is to study, understand and present religious experience and its manifestations. To fulfill this task, comparative religion must employ both the historical ways to study the "Becoming" of religions diachronically and the systematic ways to study the "Being" of religions synchronically. By these ways, the religious phenomenon can be treated for what it really is based on its essential characteristics.

Second, Wach pays more attention to the study of religious experience per se. The religious experience is regarded as "the response to what is experienced as Ultimate Reality" and its nature is characterized by four criteria. Thus Wach draws a clear distinction between this kind of religious phenomena and other phenomena.

Third, Wach also focuses his study on the expressions of religious experience. He discerns three types of manifestations of religious experience, that is, theoretical, practical and sociological patterns. Through a study of the third pattern, Wach develops a sociological study of religion. The primary subject matter of comparative religion has then separated the changing (religious expression) from the unchanging (religious experience), and the generality is found
in each individual religious phenomenon. Therefore, the reality or signification in Wach's text, is essential.

Similarly, Eliade’s disciplinary perspective also refers to an essential reality. Eliade first emphasizes that religious phenomena must be understood as what is really religious. Although there is no "purely" nor exclusively religious phenomena, to grasp the essence of religions one must find the unique characteristic of a religious phenomenon, that is, it always involves "the element of the sacred." Therefore, the religious phenomenon must be examined in itself.

Secondly, Eliade establishes his morphology of religion to study religious phenomena for what they are. He explicates the sacred and its manifestations, "hierophanies," by means of both historical and phenomenological approaches. Through his numerous concepts, categories and patterns of religious phenomena in certain historical situations, Eliade attempts to understand the essence of religious facts. That is to say, there are some general things among his primary subject matter.

Finally, Eliade especially focused his attention on the study of religious symbolism in that religious symbols are closely connected to the sacred, a core concept of religious experience. Religious symbolism always portrays the reality of man's existent world and finally represents the "ultimate

119 Eliade, Pattern in Comparative Religion, xiii.
reality." Therefore, the general transcendent meaning of religious phenomena must be understood by means of "deciphering" religious symbolism. Since the symbolism as the most distinctive quality represents the general aspect of religious phenomena, it is the essential reality that appears in Eliade's text.

3. Problematic Method and Dialectic Method

The third archic variable is method, that is, the "way in which the text orders the real." Method is a structure which relates the perspective with signification or reality. Four methods are discriminated in their different ways: (a) The agonistic method refers to whatever method the author uses to compete with others. Since its validity is tested by success in conflict, the method can also be considered a pragmatic, operational, or rhetorical approach. The authors who used this method are Protagoras, Heraclitus, Galileo, Einstein, Milton, Freud, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, and Beethoven. (b) The logistic method is a way in which the validity of an argument is decided based on the process followed from the premises to the conclusion. In such a compositive or combinatorial method, the part determines the whole. Democritus, Epicurus, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza,

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120 Ibid., 71.

121 See ibid., 73-77.
Leibniz, Newton, Hume, Darwin, Russell, and Max Weber are regarded as logicists.\textsuperscript{122} (c) The dialectical method is considered a self-transcending way, in which the whole determines the parts rather than the parts determining the whole like logistic method. In addition to Plato, Hegel, Marx and Sartre, those who use this method include Pythagoras, Augustine, Comte, Bergson, and Whitehead.\textsuperscript{123} (d) In the problematic method validity lies in the reciprocal determination between the parts and the whole. This is a kind of analytic method or inquiry by which the problem or subject matter proceeds to its conclusion. This method is exemplified by Aristotle, Kant, Dewey, and Edgar Allan Poe.\textsuperscript{124}

The way that Wach formulates his disciplinary perspective and essential reality is a problematic method. In the first place, Wach seeks to solve the problem of the nature and task of comparative religion as a scholarly discipline. He examines two kinds of discipline from which comparative religion must be distinguished. The first is the normative discipline, including theology and philosophy of religion. The second is the descriptive discipline, whose approaches are regarded as the essential approaches of comparative religion. Nevertheless, Wach insists that comparative religion is not "pure" descriptive discipline, for it must understand the

\textsuperscript{122} See ibid., 78-84.

\textsuperscript{123} See ibid., 84-91.

\textsuperscript{124} See ibid., 91-99.
meaning of its subject matter. In other words, it must be based on a hermeneutical principle.

Second, Wach seeks to interpret the meaning of religions through historical and systematic study of religious phenomena. These two methods, as has been noted, enable the researcher of comparative religion to obtain a dynamic and integrated understanding.

Third, Wach seeks to solve the problems of religious experience and its sociological expression, or sociology of religion. He focuses on a study of the relation between religious groups and society through comparative and typological analyses. Thus, Wach’s inquiry begins from what is partly indeterminate and finally makes it become a determinate whole. This method which is synoptic or problematic enables him to establish his theory on comparative religion.

Differently, although sharing the disciplinary perspectives and essential signification with Wach, Eliade employs the dialectic method in which his text formulates the reality. This method in general works through double negation in order to reach a higher agreement; in this sense, the whole determines the parts. Eliade’s dialectic tendency is revealed in three aspects. First, his principle of "total hermeneutics" is dialectic. On the one hand, there is an encounter and dialogue between the Western tradition and the Non-Western traditions, in which comparative religion can help
the Westerner's understanding of foreign cultures. On the other hand, such an understanding will make the Westerners reflect upon their own cultural tradition, then deepen the knowledge of man and create new cultural values. This is, in effect, an encountering-reflecting-creating process.

Second, Eliade's idea on the development of methodology is dialectic. Eliade shares his view with many other historians of religions in that the methods of comparative religion include both the systematic or phenomenological approach and the historical approach. Moreover, he further considers the relation between these two approaches. On the one hand, it is necessary to combine these two approaches in order to totally understand the meaning of religions. On the other hand, the tension or controversy between these two approaches would enable the discipline of comparative religion to create and develop new methodological viewpoints. In this sense, his "total hermeneutics" may be regarded as a result of this dialectic development of methodology of comparative religion, so that, he may comprehend the meaning of religious phenomenon in its historical condition and understand the "total man" and his world of existence.

Third, Eliade's morphological analysis of the sacred and the profane is dialectic. As has been noted, the relation between the concepts of the sacred and the profane is both connected and opposite. On the one hand, Eliade defines the sacred as "the opposite of the profane." This opposition
presents itself in each hierophany or religious manifestation because the sacred is based on an "ultimate reality" which is beyond this "profane" world. On the other hand, any object such as hierophany still exists in its own ordinary status. Such a contradictory character (that is, both "something else" and "itself") of the sacred reveals two modes of man’s world of being: profane, or secular, mode and spiritual, or cosmic, mode. These two modes or structures are united through the function of religious symbolism. Thus, Eliade uses this holoscopic and two-voiced method to interpret the relation of the sacred to the profane as well as their cosmic meaning.

4. Reflexive Principle and Creative Principle

The fourth archic variable is principle, that is, the internal purpose or function of the text. Principle is regarded as primarily important because it can make perspective, signification, and method of a text a "functioning whole." Like the other three archic variables, principle also has four subdivisions. (a) Creative principle refers to the initiating powers such as free will or an arbitrary activity of God by which something emerges without antecedents. This principle can be often seen in the Western tradition. Examples include the book of Genesis, St. Augustine’s writing, the Koran, and works by the Greek Sophists, Calvin, Hobbes, Locke, Michelangelo, Marx,
Heidegger, Whitehead, Sartre, and John Dewey. (b) Elemental principle indicates something unchanged that underlies changing things. This principle has been dominant in Indian tradition. The authors who present elemental principle are Anaximenes, Parmenides, the authors of Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, Lao Tzu, Hume, Nietzsche, Freud, and Poe. (c) Comprehensive principle is an unchanging cause that determines the form or design of the whole. Chinese tradition has incorporated this principle. Among those who use this principle are Anaximander, Heraclitus, Plato, Leibniz, Confucius, Chu Hsi, Kepler, Einstein, and Tolstoy. (d) Reflexive principle is a kind of situation in which activities function among themselves. Such a function that "causes functioning" is evidenced by knowledge, virtue, or art for its own sake. Those who have made use of the reflexive principle are Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, the Stoics, St. Thomas, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Chaucer.

What principles, then, are functional in Wach's and Eliade's texts? It can be found that they share disciplinary perspectives and essential realities, but different methods (problematic and dialectic), which apply different principles:

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125 See ibid., 103-114.
126 See ibid., 114-126.
127 See ibid., 126-135.
128 See ibid., 136-148.
Wach uses the reflexive principle whereas Eliade the creative principle. For Wach, the task or purpose of comparative religion is firmly based on its hermeneutical principle, which may be characterized in three aspects. First, the principle determines the nature and task of the discipline. Wach's theoretical starting point, as Kitagawa has explained, is in accordance with two assumptions: the first is that the "givenness" of understanding is based on the endowed nature of human beings who live on this earth; and the second is that human nature is disposed toward religion. Therefore, Wach insists that the central concern of comparative religion is the integrated understanding of the nature and structure of religious experience and its expressions. Such a Verstehen, or the "understanding of understanding," has become the chief aim of the discipline. Accordingly, comparative religion as an autonomous discipline, must be distinguished from other relevant humanistic and social scientific disciplines, normative or descriptive.

Second, the principle formulates the method of comparative religion. In light of the principle that to study and to describe the empirical religions, comparative religion must use its own way to order the religious data. Two main

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130 Ibid., ix.
methods have been formulated: the historical and the systematic study of religion. The comparative and typological aspects have been emphasized. "Objective" and "sympathetic" understanding have been strongly encouraged. All these enable the discipline to fulfill its task of understanding religious phenomena historically and systematically.

Third, the principle concludes the final aim of the discipline. Wach assumes that everyone has a religious nature which will develop through training. Thus, after studying, portraying, and presenting religious phenomena, the interpreter should broaden and deepen his own faith, his religious experience of the Holy. Although he advocates that the comparative religions must develop as an academic discipline, Wach does not want that faith to allow itself "to be shaken by an intellectual discipline. True decision for a faith... is not only not impaired but is aided and deepened by Religionswissenschaft." Clearly, the purpose revealed in Wach's text involves a process of self-realization or functioning in and of itself. Consequently, his principle is reflexive.

On the contrary, Eliade's principle exhibits another kind of function, that is, creation. As has been noted, for Eliade, it is through the creation of a new cultural value

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132 Ibid., 16.
that comparative religion can fulfill its function. This principle of "creative hermeneutics" intends to deepen the "knowledge of man," to initiate a "new humanism," and finally, to change man. For modern Westerners, this is a process from encounter to creation. For this reason, Eliade envisages,

The will properly to understand the "others" is rewarded... by an enrichment of the Western consciousness. The encounter might even lead to a renewal in the philosophical field, in the same way that the discovery of the exotic and primitive arts half a century ago opened up new perspectives for European art.133

Perhaps such a "philosophical anthropology," that is, a renewal in the philosophical field, refers to the further exploring of man and his nature as well as his real existent situation from the viewpoints of not only classic Western philosophy but also of Eastern and Archaic religious-philosophical tradition. Above all, the final purpose of Eliade's "new humanism" and "total hermeneutics" is functioning as a result of a creative activity. Therefore, the principle that he holds is creative.

In short, Wach's archic profile comprises disciplinary perspective, essential reality, problematic method, and reflexive principle. It should be noticed that since these four archic variables constitute an "Aristotelian mode,"

Wach’s archic profile belongs as such to a "pure" mode. On the other hand, Eliade’s archic profile, which embraces disciplinary perspective, essential reality, dialectic method, and creative principle, is a "mixed" mode. According to Watson, there is no formal reason to say that one mode is superior to the other; they are a formal parity. Therefore, if my archic analysis is correct, the differences between Wach’s and Eliade’s philosophical orientations are bound up with their different theoretical emphases and methodological tendencies as well as their world outlooks respectively. What is more important on the philosophical level is that the similarities and differences between Wach’s and Eliade’s theories can be more clearly discerned.

134 Three other pure modes are the Sophistic, Democritean, and Platonic; see Watson, The Architectonics of Meaning, 151-154.

135 Ibid., 154.
The focus of concern in this chapter is to examine Wach’s and Eliade’s theory on comparative religion in concrete religious data. That means an attempt to lay their assumptions on a historical level to further observe and understand the meaning of their approaches. The religious data selected here is from Chinese Buddhism, which shall be elaborated and interpreted according to my perspective, even though they might be mentioned by Wach or Eliade.

1. Chinese Buddhism and Politics

In his *Sociology of Religion*, Wach uses a typological method to study the relation of religion to the state and politics, in three historical stages. The first typology refers to the identity of state and cult. There are two stages in this typology. In the first stage, the secular and religious groups are identical, and the rulers serve both political and hierarchal functions. In the second stage, government and cultic organization independently develop. On the one hand, the leaders of religious groups exert more and more influence upon political and cultural fields; on the
other hand, the state, in most cases, attempt, to control religious activities. Then conflicts often are the result.  

The second typology is a kind of new faith, including secret societies and mystery cults. They, in general, reject the orthodox cults and are inclined to seclude themselves from the main community and political life. Sometimes, they object to the government, such as the Chinese secret societies.  

The third typology, universal religions, is in the third stage of the relation of religion to politics. During this period, the political system fully develops and the religious cult demands to become a world religion. Religious organization no longer plays a decisive role in the development of government. The individual has his own freedom and responsibility for choosing religious faith. Orthodox faith is then challenged by new religions, the state therefore may be confronted with three choices: an attitude of indifference; adoption of the new religions; or rejection and persecution. For example, the Roman Empire treated Christianity initially with indifference, then with persecution, and finally with acceptance, by adopting it. The rise and decline of religious groups are by-and-large affected by the change of political power (dynasty, ruling class, or government).  

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137 Ibid., 306-308.  
138 Ibid., 309-311.
Chinese Buddhism, according to Wach's classification, belongs to the third typology in the third stage. It is known that in pre-modern history, Buddhism alone successfully integrated itself with traditional Chinese civilization. Other religions, such as Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and Zoroastrianism lasted only a short period. The relation of Chinese Buddhism to Chinese politics in history can be characterized as follows.

In the first place, there was a long and difficult course in which Buddhism spread throughout China. We know that Buddhism originated in India in the sixth or fifth century B.C. when Gautama Sakymuni Buddha founded his teaching. From the middle of the third century before Christ, Buddhism began to expand to other countries. Although it is hard to pinpoint the exact year in which Buddhism reached China, most scholars agree that Buddhism first came to China from the "Western Region" between the Western Han (206 B.C.-24 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (25-220 A.D.) Dynasties. Buddhism then progressed through the stages of embryo, growth, flourishing, and decline. In the beginning, Buddhism was regarded as a kind of faith of Huang-Lao Taoism, popularized only among upper classes, especially the emigrants from the Western Region. With the translation of the Buddhist scriptures and the establishment of the Buddhist temples, Buddhism gradually took root in China. Especially during the political split between Northern and Southern China from the
Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) through the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-589), Buddhism formulated itself and was distributed throughout every area and at all social levels. By the time of the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) Dynasties, Chinese Buddhism reached its zenith and truly integrated itself with Chinese traditional culture. From the Song Dynasty (960-1279) Chinese Buddhism began to gradually decline. This long and complicated course of the spread and development of Buddhism in China is closely bound up with Chinese political attitudes as well as having a profound effect upon their cultured character.

In the second place, the rise and decline of Chinese Buddhism to a great extent depended on the different policies of the feudal dynasties. In the majority of cases, the imperial courts treated Buddhism with an attitude of both utilization and restriction. On the one hand, common people who suffered greatly sought comfort in spiritual life, and feudal rulers used the new religion to control their subjects. Under these circumstances, Buddhism developed rapidly. On the other hand, since traditionally the Chinese feudal state regarded Confucianism as orthodox ideology because of its strong political-ethical quality, Buddhism in general only played a second-class role in social life. Moreover, when some rulers thought that the development of Buddhism would threaten their political and economic interests, especially along with the strong opposition of Confucianists and Taoists,
the government adopted the policy of persecution of the Buddhists. Thus four radical persecutions took place on a large scale, during the reign of Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei in 438, Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou in 574, Emperor Wu of the Tang from 842 to 845, and Emperor Zhou of the Late Zhou in 955. Each time Buddhism suffered a heavy blow at both state and local levels. For example, in the third persecution of 845, more than 40,000 temples were destroyed, and 260,500 monks and nuns were compelled to resume secular life. Therefore, the attitude and policy of the feudal state determined to a great extent the destiny of the development of Buddhism.

In the third place, Buddhism made great efforts to conform to Chinese tradition. In spite of hostile environments at certain times, Buddhism endeavored to compromise with the feudal state on political issues and to incorporate itself into Chinese civilization. First, Buddhism used adaptable ways to spread its belief. When they translated scripture, some Buddhists tried to explain the Buddhist concepts in terms of the Chinese tradition. Second, Buddhist practice adapted in various ways to the Chinese way of life. For example, Buddhist meditation adjusted according to the traditional Taoist method; Buddhist rituals became combined with Chinese traditional folk activities. Thus,

Buddhist practice became natural and pragmatic for the Chinese. These facts greatly enabled Buddhism to spread among the masses of population. Third, while providing Chinese traditional philosophy with its exquisite metaphysics, Buddhism became syncretized with the core principles of Confucianism. One of the greatest obstacles in the spreading of Buddhism was its monastic institution that conflicts with the ideas of Zhong (loyalty) and Xiao (filial piety). In order to solve this problem, Buddhism, on the one hand, borrowed Confucian classics to interpret the basic Buddhist doctrines and argued for the identity of Confucianism and Buddhism. On the other hand, Buddhism assimilated Confucian notions, such as Zhongyong (the doctrine of mean) and Xiao, into Buddhist theories. Traditionally, Buddhism maintained that "the monk does not bow before the king." But after a long controversy, Buddhist clergy had to abandon this requisite and even began to regard the emperor of the time as "living Buddha" or "living Bodhisattva." At last, Buddhism successfully changed itself from a heterodox religion into true Chinese Buddhism.

In accord with the discussion above, Wach rightly points out that there are three types of attitudes of the state to a universal religion: indifference, adoption, and rejection. In light of this typology, it can be observed that in most cases the Chinese feudal state adopted the first and second attitudes toward Buddhism, but sometimes the third. There was
an obvious difference between Buddhism in China and Christianity in the Roman Empire. For the latter, the state’s attitudes, as Wach observes, began from the first, changed to the third, and finally adopted the second. A second perspective that should be noted is the attitude toward the state held by members of a universal religion. As has been mentioned, by integrating themselves into the good graces of the Chinese feudal dynasties, members of Buddhism participated in and affected the government and political affairs in various ways. In a certain sense, even the existence of Buddhism per se had an impact on politics. A third ramification of Buddhism in China must be considered, that is, the orthodox position of Confucianism as the official ideology. Throughout Chinese history, even in the golden age of the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism never became a state faith except in the border areas such as Tibet and Mongolia. In spite of the strong challenge of Buddhism, Confucianism kept the dominant position by reforming itself, including the assimilation of certain philosophical notions of Buddhism. Therefore, when we use Wach’s sociological typology to analyze Chinese Buddhism, the whole complicated situation must be taken into account.

2. The Sacred Center of Chinese Buddhism

As has been observed, the sacred space is one of most important aspects of Eliade’s theory of the sacred and
profane. According to Eliade, the sacred as the opposite of the profane is closely linked to the reality of religious man's existent world. Space in his view is not homogeneous and is divided into the sacred space and the surroundings. By virtue of the symbolism of the sacred place which reveals the fixed point of the cosmos and the center of the world, religious man can find the reality of his existent situation in the cosmological sense. The symbolism or hierophany of the sacred place includes two functions: to make a fixed point of cosmos from chaos and to open a way of communication between the three cosmic planes: heaven, earth, and hell.

The sacred center includes the sacred mountain, the sacred city or temple as a "universal pillar" and the "navel of the earth," where heaven, earth, and hell meet and the ontological passages take place. The religious symbolism in the sacred center implies religious man's desire to live as close as possible to the gods. Therefore, it is extremely important for archaic man to attain the sacred center despite the difficult and dangerous pilgrimage. By virtue of the pilgrimage to the sacred center, religious man can transmute himself from the profane condition into the divine world to renew his archetype in the cosmological sense.

Like other world religions, Chinese Buddhism possesses numerous sacred places and temples, such as "three great caves" and "four famous mountains." As Mahāyāna faith, Chinese Buddhism includes Bodhisattva (the being of
enlightenment and the deity of salvation) belief as well as Buddha belief. Accordingly, "four famous mountains" have been popular because they are regarded as the Bodhimandalas, specific places where four great Bodhisattvas preached or taught the Dharma (Buddhist truth). These four Bodhisattvas and sacred places are the following:

(1) Wenshu or Wenshushili (Mañjuśrī) -- the Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom. He is often placed on Sakyamuni Buddha's left in the temple. His hand holds the sword of wisdom and he sits on a lion. His Bodhimandala is located on Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province.

(2) Puxian (Samantabhadra) -- the Bodhisattva of Great Performance. Sitting on a white elephant, he represents the right-hand assistant of Sakyamuni Buddha. Mount E'mei in Sichuan Province is identified as his Bodhimandala.

(3) Guanyin or Guanshiyin (Avalokiteśvara) -- the Bodhisattva of Great Mercy. Originally represented as a male, the image of Guan Yin generally take the form of a female figure who holds a willow twig and a bottle of spring water. Mount Putuo in Zhejiang Province, represents his Bodhimandala. Guanyin has became the most popular image in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism.

(4) Dizang (Kṣitigarbha) -- the Bodhisattva of the Great Vow. He in general appears as a monk in Chinese sculpture and painting. Mount Jiuhua in Anhui Province is regarded as his Bodhimandala.
These sacred mountains or cosmic axes are equated with important minerals, as in the following popular saying: "Golden Mount Wutai, Silvery Mount Putuo, Copper Mount E’mei, and Iron Mount Jiuhua."¹⁴⁰ By virtue of its history of at least 1,500 years, Mount Wutai can be regarded as an epitome of the sacred center of Chinese Buddhism. The reasons why Mount Wutai became a typical Buddhist symbol may be summarized as follows. First, it has significant geographical features. Mount Wutai literally means "five platform mountains," for each mountaintop is flat, like a table top. Moreover, the Northern Platform is the highest point in North China, with an elevation of 3,058 meters (10,033 ft.). There truly is no hot weather in the mountains all the year round and every platform is often a world of ice and snow even in the summer. Therefore, Mount Wutai has also been called Mount Qingliang ("clear and cool mountains"). As early as the time of the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.-207 B.C.), it was regarded as a "wonderland."

Second, Buddhists attached signification to the mountains. It was considered, according to Buddhist scriptures, such as Flowery Splendor Scripture (Avataṃsaka Sūtra) of the Huayan school, that Mount Qingliang was Wenshu (Mañjuśrī) Bodhisattva’s Bodhimandala, where he lead his ten-

thousand followers preaching the Buddhist faith. Buddhists identified Mount Wutai with "Mount Qingliang" in the scripture. Therefore, a large number of temples were established there and many brilliant monks made a pilgrimage to study Buddhist doctrine not only from various parts of China, but also from other countries such as India, Nepal, Japan, Korea, and Burma. Mount Wutai then gradually became an international Buddhist center in East Asia.

Third, the past dynasties provided Mount Wutai Buddhism with strong support. As has been noted, in general the feudal Chinese states regarded Confucianism as the official ideology. As a result, Buddhism was treated both as utilitarian and with restriction. Most dynasties, however, treat Mount Wutai with supportive and protective policy. Many emperors of the Northern Wei (386-534), Sui (581-617), Tang (618-907), and Northern Song (960-1126) issued edicts to build temples in Mount Wutai. With the spread of Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism) into Mount Wutai, the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) Dynasties accordingly paid more attention to this sacred place. The rulers of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in particular believed in Lamaism and worshiped Mount Wutai, in that the pronunciation of the name of their original territory "manchuria" was close to the name of Wenshu (Mañjuśrī).

Bodhisattva. Hence Emperors Kangxi (1654-1722) and Qianlong (1711-1799) pilgrimaged eleven times. They ordered the conversion of ten temples into Lamaseries and bestowed great privileges on the chief Lama of the Mount Wutai Monasteries. In a word, Mount Wutai was preserved as one of the largest Buddhist monastery complexes for thousand of years.

Thus, Mount Wutai became a typical Buddhist symbol for three reasons: the first is geographical conditions; the third is social and political situations; only the second belongs to the religious phenomenon itself, which is the inherent or essential cause of the formulation of Mount Wutai as a religious shrine. That is to say, non-religious reasons, such as natural, physical, social, economic, and political factors only provide certain objective conditions or situations for the emergence of a sacred center. It is the idea of religious man, that is, the Buddhist's ideal, faith, imagination, and activity, that initiate the decisive changes of Mount Wutai from the profane into the sacred, and to provide the context at last for the "center of the world" to take shape.

The following features characterize Mount Wutai as a sacred center of Chinese Buddhism. In the first place, owing to the continued building of temples by past dynasties, Mount Wutai contains the largest group of monastic structures in China. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the most flourishing period of Buddhism, there were about 360 temples built, including seventy-two especially magnificent ones. By
the early years of this century, there were more than a hundred temples, including more than twenty Lamaser series still standing. Today, there remain forty-seven temples in good condition while others have undergone reconstruction. About half of the temples are located in Taikuai Town, which is the central area of Mount Wutai. Each Temple has a unique artistic style, which complements the others. The "Great White Pagoda" contains a relic of Buddha (Śarīra Stūpa); it is bottle-shaped, measures fifty meters high, has a circumference of eighty-three meters, and has bells at the top. It symbolizes Mount Wutai. Other temples are distributed along a river or around the five "platform" tops of the mountains. Two temples remain that were constructed during the Tang Dynasty 1,200 years ago: Nanchan Temple (Southern Chan Temple) and Foguang Temple (Buddha's Light Temple). These are the oldest wooden structures of temples in China. Thus, various ancient monastery buildings are located in the unique terrain of Mahāyāna Buddhist sacred center. Here the homogeneity of space is broken into the sacred and the profane, and the cosmic zones (namely, heaven, earth, and hell) converge and communicate with one another.

Second, the set of symbols at Mount Wutai, especially the images of Wenshu Bodhisattva, fulfill its cultural function. Since Wenshu is a "patron deity" of this sacred place, the temples usually enshrine him and the pilgrims primarily worship the images of him. As a result, the images
constructed of Wenshu are grand, peculiar and varied. For example, in Shuxiang Temple (Particular Image Temple), a spectacular image of Wenshu riding on a lion is 9.3 meters high. In Xiantong Temple (Displaying Magical Power Temple), there is an image called "a thousand arms and a thousand alms bowls Śākya-Wenshu Bodhisattva." The image has five overlapping heads and many arms; each hand holds a golden alms bowl in which there is an image of Śākyamuni Buddha, representing Wenshu’s endless wisdom. Moreover, it is said that the "five locks" of hair on Wenshu’s head, signify "five kinds of wisdom." Correspondingly, on each of the five tops of the platforms was established a temple for pilgrimage during the Sui Dynasty (581-617). The names of the five images of Wenshu Bodhisattva are listed as follows:

(a) Eastern Platform--Clever Wenshu  
(b) Southern Platform--Wise Wenshu  
(c) Western Platform--Lion’s Roar Wenshu  
(d) Northern Platform--Undefiled Wenshu  
(e) Central Platform--Child Wenshu

All these images of Wenshu Bodhisattva, along with other historical relics, such as images of Buddhas, scriptures, sculptures, pagodas, caves, tablets with inscriptions, pillars, bells, mural paintings, myths, poems, music, and penmanship formulate a complex of the symbolism of Chinese Buddhism. Not only is the paradoxical coexistence of the sacred revealed, but the homo-centric perspective of the
making the world is comprehended in the structure of symbolism. Thus the symbolism of Mount Wutai fulfills its cultural function through the ages.

Third, the pilgrimage to Mount Wutai provide an opportunity for a Buddhist to transcend himself into divinity. Throughout history, thousands of believers, from emperors to common people, have pilgrimaged to Mount Wutai. In the beginning, a visit to the five platforms and a performance of worship of the five images of Wenshu Bodhisattva was called attaining "the great pilgrim platforms." That was truly a very difficult goal to accomplish. Later on, the five images of Wenshu were collected and placed within the Dailuoding Temple, situated on a hill. Thus people could easily reach the location of the images in that one temple instead of having to scale the five mountaintops. That single ascent to the Dailuoding Temple was called "the small-sized pilgrim platforms." Besides the five platforms, each temple, image, pagodas, or pillar can be regarded as an object of pilgrimage. An example is the cave of the "Buddhist goddess." There is a narrow entrance inside the cave. According to myth, when a man crawls into and then returns from the cave, he will be endowed with spiritual renewal. In Eliade's terms, his reality and eternity come from the renewing of his cosmological archetype. In a word, by means of the pilgrimage, a Buddhist attempts to enter or reenter the center of the world in order to be as close as possible to the
Bodhisattvas as well as the Buddhas in order to fulfill his desire for the sanctity and his "ontological nostalgia."

From what has been discussed, it is evident that both Wach's presupposition on the relation of religion to state and Eliade's assumption on the sacred place can be employed to interpret historical data of Chinese Buddhism. Wach provides a sociological and typological scheme, whereas Eliade furnishes a cosmological and morphological concept. Both are valuable insofar as they are based on the historical and systematic method of comparison. Nevertheless, since they have different theoretical concerns and methodological emphases, it should be noted that each theory has its limitation. Wach rightly pays attention to the sociological factors which affect the change of religion, but his theoretical analysis is relatively weak. Eliade, on the other hand, is profoundly concerned with the cultural function which religion itself plays in human history. However, he seems to ignore the social, economic, and political impacts upon religion. Therefore, it would be helpful to combine the advantages of each to a certain extent when we employ their theories, to interpret the concrete historical-religious data in order to obtain a better understanding.
CONCLUSION

In retrospect, we have investigated Wach’s and Eliade’s main viewpoints on the discipline of comparative religion, analyzed their philosophical orientations or archic profiles, and interpreted their methodological approaches in the historical data of religion. To put it another way, we have examined Wach’s and Eliade’s theoretical presuppositions on three levels: the disciplinary, the philosophical, and the historical. Questions may then be raised here: which concept of three levels is the most important one? How do philosophical orientations make a difference between the theories? What is actually the significance of the discipline of comparative religion or the history of religions? To answer these questions, further reflections should be taken into account.

In the first place, for comparative religion, the philosophical doctrine seems the most important one among the three levels because it can provide the other two with a fundamental standpoint, perspective, and methodological principle. While the disciplinary approach will formulate the viewpoint and method in its field and the historical investigation will illustrate concrete facts, both depend on
philosophy as their foundation of theoretical or historical thinking. As has been seen, the differences between Wach’s and Eliade’s philosophical orientations determine their theoretical emphases and methodological characteristics respectively. At the same time, their historical analyses of religious phenomena are also influenced by their philosophical bases. Wach uses a typological scheme and pays more attention to the sociological expression of religious experiences, whereas Eliade employs a morphological concept and stresses to decipher the cosmological signification of historical context. Nevertheless, to say the philosophical level is the most important does not mean that the philosophical outlook will replace the disciplinary inquiry or the historical exploration. Instead, the latter in both cases has its independent field and task. The role which philosophy plays here is only as guidance in the sense of both starting point and the end-result, leading to a deeper speculation. From this point of view, Wach’s Christian idealism and Eliade’s new humanism can be considered the result of philosophical speculations.

In the second place, the similarities and differences between Wach’s and Eliade’s theories on comparative religion are attributed to their respective philosophical orientations in the sense of the change of archic variables. As has been discussed, Wach’s archic profile, as a "pure" Aristotelian mode, includes disciplinary perspective, essential reality,
problematic method, and reflexive principle. Eliade's archic profile, on the other hand, is constituted by disciplinary perspective, essential reality, dialectic method, and creative principle. It is because of their differences in archic elements of both methods and principles that their theoretical emphases and methodological tendencies are variant. Wach seems to pay more attention to the macrostructure of the discipline of comparative religion. Like Aristotle who founds the system of human knowledge, such as metaphysics, physics, ethics, and rhetoric, Wach attempts to establish the historical-systematic methodology with respect to the knowledge of religion. On the contrary, Eliade concentrates his attention on the microcosmos of religious phenomena per se and the dialectic relation of religion to man's existent world. Consequently, Wach seeks to develop the discipline of comparative religion within the scope of religious faith which even reflects theology; whereas Eliade intends to fulfill the cultural function of comparative religion, which open a new avenue toward philosophical anthropology.

In the third place, the significance of comparative religion can be interpreted on three levels. First, on the disciplinary level, comparative religion contributes to a synthetically intellectual inquiry of understanding religious phenomena. As a discipline of general scientific study of religion, comparative religion explores the nature, characteristics, structures, and relationships of different
religions by means of historical-systematic comparison and classification. Since religion is a social, cultural, and spiritual complex of mankind, comparative religion must deal with many factors of other fields, such as philosophy, ethics, psychology, anthropology, history, folklore, sociology, linguistics, literature, archaeology, architecture, and natural sciences. Through cooperating with these disciplines, comparative religion interprets the meaning, and to a certain extent, reveals the nature and structure of religions. In this respect, Wach’s historical-systematic methodology and sociology of religion and Eliade’s morphological study of religious symbolism have contributed new approaches for the development of the discipline.

Second, on the philosophical level the presuppositions of comparative religion can substantiate philosophical reflection. While studying the meaning of religious phenomena, comparative religion involves philosophical questions, such as the significance of cosmos, the relation of man to his existent world, the nature and destiny of mankind. These questions challenge philosophers to ponder the world and human life from new horizons. In fact, Wach’s viewpoint on religious experience and its sociological expressions, and Eliade’s ideas on the sacred, the archetype, and the "terror of history" have left room for further philosophical speculation.

Third, on the historical level, comparative religion can
provide the study of a specific religious tradition with methodological guidance. The typological schemes or categories, even with their limitations, can help the researcher observe the whole picture of a particular religion and comprehend its overall situation in his study. As has been seen in the previous chapter, applying Wach’s typological scheme on the relation of religion to state, and Eliade’s morphological concepts on the sacred center will bring about a new understanding of Chinese Buddhism. Therefore, the general approaches and methods of comparative religion can promote the development of the study of particular religions. At the same time, these approaches and methods must be examined in practice. In fact, comparative religion and historical study of particular religions can help each other progress. From this point of view, Wach’s and Eliade’s theories are indeed valuable contributions to the study of religion. Through studying their approaches and methods new light can be shed on a new realm.


Garver, Eugene. Review of The Architectonics of Meaning:


