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China and Europe from Confucius and Aristotle to Now: Old Histories, New Challenges	1
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Stephen Green, Asia House, London, UK

Confucius and Aristotle have provided much of the bedrock of Chinese and European thought respectively about how individuals relate to others and to the natural order. They have in common a this-worldly focus and some strikingly similar elements in their understanding of what makes for the good life. China's Confucian ethos has contributed to a strong sense of the Chinese identity: but it found it difficult to come to terms with the pressures of social modernisation. Europe by contrast has had a theologically based culture, into which Aristotle was integrated, but which fragmented under the impact of reformation and renaissance. In the twenty first century, a modernised Europe and a rapidly modernising China face a shared dilemma: the need for an understanding of the good life which does not reduce it to materialist self-centredness. Both have seen renewed use of Aristotelian and Confucian themes in response. Time will tell, however, whether this response is sufficient.

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Edi Bilimoria, Scientific and Medical Network, UK

This chapter provides some practical examples of legendary historical figures whose profound religious convictions have produced radical, but always beneficent changes in society in three main areas of human endeavour: social reform, science and music. Considerable stress is placed upon the fact that religion, properly understood and applied, has nothing to do with blind belief, wars or an opiate effect on society, its immense uplift of the human condition accruing from the thoughts, words and deeds of those great persons who have engaged with religion in its universal meaning, unshackled from rigid orthodoxy, sectarian attitudes and dogma..

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R. Scott Smith, Biola University, USA

Multicultural, western societies are quite secular, and the secular-sacred divide has been shaped by the fact-value split. But, the fact-value split also influences many other cultures, including in Latin and South America and East Asia. On it, science yields knowledge, but religion and ethics yield opinions and values. Closely related is the public-private split: governments should act on public reasons (ones based on science), and not private ones (ones based on religious and ethical views). Such science is methodologically naturalistic, bracketing anything supernatural or non-physical. This science usually presupposes ontological naturalism: what exists is natural, or physical. But, the author will contend the fact-value split is mistaken; on naturalism, humans cannot have knowledge. At best, people only have interpretations, even in science. However, the author also will argue that people can have moral and religious knowledge. If so, there will be many practical implications for public policy and religious practice.

Chapter 4

Making the Unbearable Bearable through Existential Spirituality 81
R. Scott Webster, Deakin University, Australia

In this chapter the case is made that spirituality can indeed have a significant impact upon practical life. Existential spirituality refers to the way one gives meaning and purpose to one's life. The value of spirituality is best appreciated when one's life undergoes an existential crisis, particularly when a worldview, which was assumed to give sense to one's life, no longer has the legitimacy it once had. When a religious, traditional or customary doctrine or worldview loses its authority through an existential crisis, the individual often experiences nihilism. This can often make an experience of hardship quite unbearable because one's suffering is unable to reference any grand narrative or framework of meaning to give sense to one's situation. Using Kierkegaard's three stages of existence, it is argued that making one's spirituality more authentic by taking personal responsibility on an individual level, might be able to make unbearable experiences more bearable.

Chapter 5

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Ana-Maria Pascal, Regent's University London, UK

The chapter will discuss the key role that offerings play in everyday life in Asian and Byzantine traditions, and the ontological and eschatological beliefs behind it. Other examples of metaphysical gifts are discussed, like the Biblical notion of sacrifice, which is present both in the Old and the New Testament, that is in the Avraam-Isaac episode and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, respectively. Some relevant pagan rituals will also be mentioned, before reflecting on what all these have in common. Since they are observed through a personal journey, and reflected upon through philosophical analysis, findings do not claim to have the 'objectivity' of an anthropological study. Instead, they might lead to a kind of practical understanding similar to that, which narratives or images provide. Indeed, Andrey Tarkovsky's last film, *Sacrifice*, will serve as an illustration of the existential and, at times, eschatological meaning of the range of acts of giving that we discuss – from spiritual gifts, to offerings, and ultimately to sacrifice.

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The present text is divided into three chapters and deals with the intrinsic religious dimension of man as being of communion from an ontological viewpoint and in relation with God, her Creator and Supporter in this mundane existence. This existence is open to eternity as a real personal and communitarian communion in the dynamics of spiritual growth. For Christians, the Church is the path of genuine and redeeming communion with God the Trinity as shown in the foundational biblical metanarrative, typologically interpreted by Christian theology, and spiritually experienced by practicing believers. Sacramentally, this happens through prayer, through the reading of the holy text, and the liturgical and Eucharistic gathering that celebrates the real sacrament of God's presence for us. The relation between the Church with the State in modern and postmodern times testifies to the change in mindset that has occurred by means of the ideological absolutisation of the state and the theoretical marginalization or atomization of religion. On the one hand, this shows the inconsistency of the project and on the other hand, the impossibility to fight with the religious soul of humanity, the religious dimension inherently and intrinsically structured in the ontological relationship between human and divine, in any mundane historical context.

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Mysticism is a way of knowing, but one based solely on experience. It is basically knowledge through love. Although religions have visible differences, mysticism is only one. The yogi and the Kabbalah worshiper, the Sufi, the hesychast and the Western mystical, all go through the same route, have the same behaviour and follow the same purpose. In contrast to other ways of knowing, the mystical way is one of direct experience. Knowledge is not achieved through a focus on the object, but by transforming the subject itself. Not by a protrusion, but by deepening itself. The mysterious path leads inexorably inwards. It is an ascending road passing through asceticism, unceasing prayer (the prayer of the heart) and progressing enlightening, to reach eventually, through ecstasy and revelation, the uniting purpose (Unio Mystica). Although secret and based on initiation, sometimes mysticism attracted massive groups of people, having a strong impact on the social level. Thus, in the last century Romania, there occurred two phenomena mainly due to the Eastern mysticism, respectively to hesychastic teaching and experience. These were the revival movement of religious life within the Romanian Orthodox Church, called the "Army of God", and the movement initiated by intellectuals from the group "Burning Bush".

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Carys Ruth Walsh, St Mellitus College, UK

This chapter examines a dramatic reinterpretation of *The Passion* narrative which took place in Port Talbot in 2011. It explores the roots of the drama (within the medieval mystery tradition and the local context), its production, and the impact which the drama had upon the town, to consider how this reinterpretation, whilst primarily secular in conception and content, might nevertheless have opened a ‘religious space’ for the community. The production of *The Passion* of Port Talbot is discussed in the light of an analogous ‘theo-dramatic’ understanding of how God acts in the world. The chapter goes on to explore whether in the impact of *The Passion*, traces of the sacred might be discerned, embedded within the apparently secular, and that in the ‘religious space’ opened up by this production, the transformative power of a community’s spiritual and religious heritage might have been activated.

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Codrina Laura Ionita, University of Arts “G. Enescu” Iasi, Romania

The relationship between art and religion, evident throughout the entire history of art, can be deciphered at two levels – that of the essence of art, and that of the actual theme the artist approaches. The mystical view on the essence of art, encountered from Orphic and Pythagorean thinkers to Heidegger and Gadamer, believes that art is a divine gift and the artist – a messenger of heavenly thoughts. But the issue of religious themes’ presence in art arises especially since modern times, after the eighteenth century, when religion starts to be constantly and vehemently attacked (from the Enlightenment and the French or the Bolshevik Revolution to the “political correctness” nowadays). Art is no longer just the material transposition of a religious content; instead, religion itself becomes a theme in art, which allows artists to relate to it in different ways – from veneration to disapproval and blasphemy. However, there have always been artists to see art in its genuine meaning, in close connection with the religious sentiment. An case in point is the work of Bill Viola. In Romanian art, a good example is the art group Prolog, but also individual artists like Onisim Colta or Marin Gherasim, who understand art in its true spiritual sense of openness to the absolute.

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Malcolm David Brown, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

This chapter presents “elective affinities” between, on the one hand, strands in contemporary religiosity that seek to rediscover or reinterpret older religiosities in a contemporary context and idiom (e.g. liberation theology, multi-faith activity, the SBNR - spiritual but not religious - phenomenon, and the new monasticism), and, on the other hand, the contemporary phenomenon of the social economy (social business, social enterprise, and the sharing economy). As the social economy occupies a space between the values of capitalism and the strategies of socialism, rooted in a civil society that strives to maintain a freedom from both the economy and the state, so these religious phenomena occupy a space between secularisation and sacralisation, between a separation of church and state and a subsumption of state under church. They are all concerned with social justice now (rather than after the revolution), and bear witness to a potential for religious and societal transformation.

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Mark Alan Charles Jennings, Murdoch University, Australia

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (“PCC”) has successfully navigated the challenges modernity poses to religion, growing rapidly in the twentieth century. Toward the end of the twentieth century, however, neoliberalism began its ascent to its current hegemonic status. Neoliberalism reconfigures social institutions as marketized practices with a measurable ‘payoff’. PCC adapted to this challenge in the form of a “growth churches,” adopting many of the characteristics of neoliberalism. In adopting a homogenous model and method of ‘best practice’ in order to facilitate growth; offering a ‘prosperity’ theology that fits well with the development of human capital; and endorsing the universalization of risk through modelling “pastorpreneur” leadership, it is argued in this chapter that growth churches are a paradigmatic example of a late modern religious phenomenon accommodating neoliberalism in a largely uncritical manner. The chapter concludes with some observations that critique this association between neoliberalism and growth churches.

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Annapurna Devi Pandey, University of California, USA

In the United States, a multimillionaire businesswoman of Ukrainian descent credits the goddess Lakshmi for her wealth and prosperity. Another wealthy American woman displays a picture of the goddess in her Hollywood bathroom. The Odisha goddess has been incorporated into the lives of these Americans but women in the Odia diaspora are still trying to figure out how to honor the goddess. Through the creation of altars and the meditation of morning prayers, practitioners of new age religions have more leeway to incorporate goddess veneration into their lives without regard to Indian tradition. Women in the Odia diaspora realize that weekdays are to be devoted to the goddess, that special household activities should be completed, and that these are not easy to fit into a household where both parents work and children have to be taken all over town after school. In this paper, the author argues that for Odia American women in particular, the goddess Lakshmi represents not just wealth and prosperity, but also women’s agency beyond their roles as wives and mothers. Odia women living in the United States maintain their traditions through community and religious groups. Many see the goddess Lakshmi as an ideal, recognize and honor the feminist powers of the goddess Lakshmi, but seldom do the elaborate rituals because of the constraint of time and space.

Chapter 13

Literary History as National History: The Sufi Tradition in Iranian Culture and Identity 265
Parisa Shiran, University of Melbourne, Australia

This chapter argues that the roots of Persian culture are in Persian poetry. The high esteem in which classical Persian poetry is held among Iranians is well known. This rich literary tradition provides enormous resources for a distinct Persian identity. However, unlike the commonly held perception that Iranian identity is a pre-Islamic construct with deep roots in the Persian cultural heritage of the Great Persia, this chapter reasserts the status of classical Persian poetry as an Islamic literary tradition, one that has had an enormous influence on Iranian society and culture. The creation of a distinct Persian Islamic identity has historically been a “cohesive force,” and this essential Islamic element must be recognized and acknowledged before any verdict about Persian identity can be reached. The chapter discusses the vast influence of Islamic mysticism on classical Persian poetry and its subsequent shaping of Iranian culture.

Chapter 14

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Ambreen Shahriar, University of Sindh, Pakistan

The chapter explores the struggle for inclusion at home and society faced by four young people when they quit the religion they inherited from their parents. Using life-story interviews, it discusses reactions of their families about their decision to quit religion. Furthermore, the chapter sheds light on the ways these young individuals coped with the social problems that they faced after they made a difficult, socially unacceptable choice of switching from their inherited religion. The promotion of symbolic violence in the field and its use by the agents around the participants of this study is discussed through Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field. The chapter aims to understand and highlight the dilemma faced by the participants due to their decision of conversion in a society which is still not ready for this.

Section 6

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Marie Chollier, MMU, UK & CRIR-AVS PACA, France
Mariateresa Tassinari, European University Viadrina, Germany & CPCM-ME, Italy

Starting from secularisation and its social counterpart, namely the institutional roles and functions of religious bodies being replaced by scientific disciplines or rationales, this chapter aims at providing an analytical approach of restorative justice, focusing on chaplaincy interventions in prison and probation settings. A case study of the Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) following a structural and moral analysis is provided. CoSA origin and expansion are developed to understand how a religious initiative became within less than two decades a standardised intervention. This process is described as secondary secularisation to illustrate how secular and religious morals find a common ground by building common good through practices.

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Nadine V Wedderburn, SUNY Empire State College, USA

Robert E Carey, SUNY Empire State College, USA

The June 2015 killing of nine African-Americans by a white male shooter in Charleston, South Carolina re-ignited intense discussions around the relationship of race, justice, and faith in the U.S. Within two days of the massacre, members of the victims' families were shown openly offering forgiveness to the accused killer and praying God's mercy on his soul. This seemingly quick offer of clemency raises penetrating questions concerning the value and purpose of the act of forgiveness, arguably an act of pure grace. This chapter shows that forgiveness, as a complex Christian practice, casts an extraordinary light on structures of identity and the politics of privilege in the U.S. In doing so, forgiveness exposes the myth of a "post-racial America" and reveals the deeply-rooted and longstanding systems of racial oppression and discrimination in American society. Structured around key guiding questions, the chapter provides a way to think through the meaning of forgiveness towards developing an approach to dismantling structures of exclusion that are the hallmark of a racial world view.

Chapter 17

Reconciling Homosexuality and Spirituality in Africa as a Heresy and Survival Strategy: A

Critical Study of House of Rainbow (LGBT Church) in Nigeria 331

Floribert Patrick C. Endong, University of Calabar, Nigeria

The fight against homophobia in Africa has motivated the emergence of various advocacy initiatives including pro-gay religious forces. One of such initiatives – which have audaciously Christianized homosexuality – has been the Nigerian based, House of Rainbow (LGBT church). Using observations and a critical exploitation of secondary sources, this book chapter critically appraises this church in the light of four socio-religious theories namely, secular humanism, postmodernism, religious liberalism and African conservatism. The chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part provides a theoretical framework composed of four movements namely postmodernism, secular humanism, religious liberalism and African conservatism. The second part explores the origin, mission and structure of House of Rainbow. The third part examines House of Rainbow as postmodernist and religious humanist Christianity; while the last part examines the extent to which the gay-only church is more a survival strategy for Nigerian LGBT people than it is a heresy.

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