

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions

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PRESENTATION

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions (PCT) is a publication of the World Union of Catholic Philosophical Societies. A multi-lingual philosophical journal, it appears annually in print format. Selected papers, along with a supplementary volume, are published in an electronic format.

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions draws on the important contribution of Catholic Christianity to philosophy. Since it aims at the fruitful exchange of ideas among philosophy and religious and cultural traditions, it also includes studies outside the Catholic Christian traditions.

The journal publishes manuscripts in all areas of philosophy, although each issue will contain a number of articles devoted to a specific theme of particular philosophical interest. To encourage dialogue and exchange, the journal will include scholars from Africa, America, Asia, and Europe, and will represent a range of philosophical traditions.

Of course, some may ask ‘Why another philosophy journal?’

The aim of the *World Union* is to bring scholars from the Catholic Christian traditions into contact and exchange with one another, but equally with philosophers from other religious and cultural traditions. More broadly, its aims are

- (i) to initiate and develop contacts with individuals and associations who are engaged philosophical research and study in, or in areas related to, Catholic Christian traditions – and particularly with those who, for social or political reasons or on account of geographical location, have not been able to do enter into close relationship with philosophers elsewhere;
- (ii) to serve as a conduit of information about meetings, conferences, and other matters of common interest;
- (iii) to help, when asked, and as far as possible, in organizing and sponsoring lectures and educational exchanges, particularly in those regions where there is an interest in the Catholic Christian philosophical traditions;
- (iv) to help, when asked and as far as possible, in the publicity and organisation of conferences on themes consistent with the work of the World Union and, especially, with world congresses of Christian philosophers

Most philosophy journals have little interest in drawing explicitly on religious and cultural traditions, or in pursuing exchanges of ideas between philosophy and these traditions – and some might even be said to be opposed to this. Again, while some philosophy journals are published by Christian philosophical organisations or through religiously-affiliated universities, *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* aims explicitly to promote exchanges between religious traditions and cultures, and philosophy.

Finally, to encourage the principle of exchange, *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* will be thematic.

This orientation reflects the intentions of the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, and the view that such exchange is of mutual benefit to philosophy and religious and cultural traditions, without interfering with the proper autonomy of the philosophical enterprise itself.

Articles appearing in the journal will be of a serious scholarly character and more than just commentaries on issues of contemporary concern. Nevertheless, *PCT* is open with regard to methodology and approach.

The supplementary volume, published on the Internet, will include more general articles, discussion notes, interventions, as well as a selection of articles from the printed volume. The aim of this supplementary volume is to provide additional opportunities for the exchange of ideas.

The *World Union* hopes that *PCT* will provide a useful means of bringing scholars from across the globe into closer contact with one another – in a way that draws on insights and values to be found in the Catholic Christian and other religious and cultural traditions.

William Sweet,
General Editor

INTRODUCTION

Nikolaj Zunic

It is not uncommon in certain humanistic disciplines, such as philosophy and religious studies, to be presented by a plethora of disparate perspectives and worldviews. Students who are first exposed to these subject areas are often bewildered by the sheer pluralism of views and opinions. Moreover, professors who teach in these areas usually do not provide any guidance in how to wade through this terrain. Which school of thought is the desirable one? Which is right? How do all these different philosophies relate to each other? In the end, the school of thought which one opts for is a largely arbitrary decision. One becomes either an analytic or continental philosopher; one is attracted to Eastern mysticism or Western spirituality. Is there any way of understanding the “big picture” here? Is there any way of bridging the divide between apparently incommensurable systems of ideas and ways of life?

This volume of *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* aims to do just that. The theme of this volume, “Religious Wisdom and Perennial Philosophy: East and West,” examines the similarities which exist between vastly different traditions of thought, ritual, and prayer, and fosters a dialogical approach to the excavation of the cultural riches which they hold in store for human civilization. Rather than starting from the premise that geographical, philosophical, and religious differences impede cooperation, the papers in this volume all express an optimism about the common roots and sources of philosophical and religious traditions.

The classical notion of a perennial philosophy (*philosophia perennis*) suggests that the impetus and form of philosophical reflection is an abiding characteristic of the human spirit, stretching over time from antiquity to the present. It eschews the point of view that there are myriad philosophies. Philosophy is, at bottom, singular, and its universal goal is wisdom. Similarly, religious traditions have proposed narrative and doctrinal frameworks to explain the deepest mysteries of life. Is it possible that the religious impulse, in its pursuit of wisdom and transcendence, could be an innate feature of human nature? The papers in this volume concur that this not only is possible, but is a reality of the religious dimension.

Modernity has introduced a radical secularization of human life and a rupturing of the bonds that held philosophy and religion in close proximity to each other. Today, many view philosophy and religion, reason and faith, as polar opposites and intrinsically immiscible. However, this was not always the case, and in fact the classical expressions of philosophical and religious wisdom give evidence of having much in common. The challenge now facing many a philosophical and religious tradition is precisely how to contend with the modern paradigm which treats them as antagonists rather than as companions, as foes rather than as friends.