

to a number of texts from the two religious traditions. Similarly, the authors choose not to explore the differences between the Theravada and Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism, whose distinct understanding of Buddhahood will result in a different engagement of Christianity. Perhaps Haight and Knitter will choose to continue this conversation in the future and set out to explore the way in which both Buddhism and Christianity developed a plurality of schools of thought within the orbit of a broader religious tradition.

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RESPONSE TO JOHN D'ARCY MAY'S REVIEW OF *FACING UP TO REAL DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCE: HOW SOME THOUGHT-MOTIFS OF DERRIDA CAN NOURISH THE CATHOLIC-BUDDHIST ENCOUNTER*. By Robert Magliola.

Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2014

Intensely argued debate is most welcome in reviews, but misrepresentation of fact, such that a reviewed text is represented as saying X when it clearly says non-X, is unethical. I contend that the review in question misrepresents me in such a way. Thus John D'Arcy May's review of my book, *Facing Up to Real Doctrinal Difference: How Some Thought-Motifs of Derrida Can Nourish the Catholic-Buddhist Encounter* (BCS 35 [2015], 238–241), says (p. 239) that I assert the “intentionalities” of Buddhist doctrines such as no-self and rebirth are “ultimately contradictory” (readers are directed to my book, pp. 117, 119), whereas I nowhere make any such assertion there or elsewhere. Rather, I assert that Buddhist no-self and rebirth ultimately contradict Catholic teachings about individual identity and “one life-span only.” In fact, I do not think the Buddhist doctrines of no-self and rebirth contradict each other: the Buddhist traditions long ago already explicated very satisfactorily—in terms of the Buddhist doctrinal structure—that the two teachings do not contradict each other (see, for example, on my pp. 77 and 78, my careful explication that it is Buddhism's “karmic cluster” that is reborn). Because my book most respectfully exposit the three major Buddhist traditions, both Ven. Dr. Dhammadipa Sak (Fa Yao Da Shi) and Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi have praised it highly (see their lengthy commendations on my p. iv).

Another instance is the review's reference (again, p. 239) to my statement “Sometimes the policies of the Church itself have been wrongful” (my p. 142), an assertion I make in the context of John Paul II's heartfelt public apologies for the Church's grave institutional sins (maltreatment of Jews, etc.), but the review somehow regards as a rebuttal of the Catholic Church's teaching authority in matters of formal doctrine. Moreover, Catholicism claims that only solemn definitions of a valid ecumenical

council and *ex cathedra* solemn papal declarations are “irreformable” (my p. 61), and these are very few indeed. In my firm opinion, the review often collapses down into black-and-white what is my book’s careful attention to the spacious gray areas in Catholic teaching, areas that Catholicism intentionally retains and cultivates as gray.

My book is next accused of incongruity, representing Catholic doctrine by way of “official” teaching but ranging “freely” over the three major Buddhist traditions because Buddhist authoritative statements are “hard to come by” (p. 239). What I actually say is that “There are now very good books and articles in English that treat authoritative Buddhist attitudes towards other religions” (p. 85). Indeed, besides supplying a pertaining bibliography, I also quote from a string of established Buddhist teachers and masters (pp. 85–101). The real difference between the reviewer’s point of view and mine is that my book reflects what the “vast preponderance of Buddhists in the world”¹ consider authoritative: they “‘heed’ well-known monastic figures or other practitioners who are respected as trustworthy spiritual guides” (p. 36). These Asian teachers/Masters almost invariably adhere to the long-established teachings of their tradition,² and are to be differentiated from those affiliated with the— proportionally—infinitesimally small number of sanghas among (largely) white converts³ in the North Atlantic tier of countries (less than 1 percent of the global Buddhist population).

I further contend that the review in question, by lifting assertions from out of their contexts in my book and splicing them together with other assertions extracted from their very different contexts elsewhere in my book, fabricates contradictions that are then attributed to me. To stitch together these fabrications, the review indulges logical fallacies. A case in point is the stitching together (p. 239) of a footnoted allusion (my p. 36 n. 4) to normativity as it operates in sociological empiricism and my reference, twenty-one pages later, to a theological dispute between Catholics and other Christians (my pp. 57–58). The review contends that my reference to the sociological nature of “the *median* ‘real practices or beliefs’ of a group” (my p. 36) should justify a projection of non-Catholic Christian practice into Catholic theology. This contention commits the fallacy of “category mistake,” projecting non-Catholic practice into Catholic doctrine. Next, the review avers that many Church teachings fall short because the *sensus fidelium* rejects them. This is to foist the opinions of white intellectual elites and higher-income Catholics of the North Atlantic tier of countries (and their geographical projections— Australia, etc.) upon the rest of the global Catholic world: the former is no more than 9 percent of the world’s Catholics,⁴ and where the Church is growing fastest, the global South and East (now 68 percent of the global Catholic population⁵), the Catholic population fervently affirms “official” Catholic teaching and practice (for details, see my

review article treating *Jesus and Buddha* by P. Knitter and R. Haight in the online journal *Dilatato Corde* (vol. 6, no. 2) of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue:
http://www.dimmid.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7bC538F82D-A3DF-4827-AF97-171BA1C98EDA%7d .

Parting word(s): the Derridean thought motif that samenesses are founded on irreducible difference constitutes the scaffolding of my whole book, but the reviewer ignores all this. Ah, *Dukkha*, a Buddhist can say.

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NOTES

1. Pew Research Center, 2012: 99 percent of Buddhists live in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. As a consequence, they almost always reject dialogue based on “common ground.” For such a situation in Thailand, see Bro. Jaime Rivera, SJ’s “From Peripheries to Center to Peripheries: An Exposition and Evaluation of Robert Magliola on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,” Master’s thesis in theological studies, Ateneo de Manila, 427 pp. (2016), chapters 4 and 5:
<https://fromperipheries.wordpress.com>.
3. To be distinguished from the Buddhism of Asian immigrants.
4. Computed according to the statistics of the PEW Research Center, 2010.
5. World Church Database, 2012.