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Intellectual Acknowledgement in Favour of Religious Freedom and Justice: Comparative History of Religions and Ideas as Methodology for Education

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Abstract: This succinct essay addresses the issue of freedom of religion for Indigenous cultures. Freedom of belief cannot subsist without justice, i.e. equal recognition. By ignoring the intellectual achievements of Indigenous and other non-Western philosophies and non-Christian religions, scholarship (in the humanities and social sciences, as well as in interrelated education in schools, colleges, and universities) constitutes an important reason for the depreciation of freedom of religious beliefs and, thereby, injustice. I argue that the scientific and pedagogical methodology of the comparative history of religions (developed by theorists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continued and elaborated by non-Indigenous and Indigenous scholars and educators) should be included in education at schools, colleges, and universities to combat this structural inequity. A historical consciousness of intellectual culture worldwide would not only have an impact on contemporary Indigenous cultures, but also on cultures with an Indigenous heritage (as, for instance, Latino and Chicano cultures of the United States), and would contest antisemitism and prejudice against Islam. To exemplify the history of intellectual and religious multiplicity and complexity, I mention traditions of (ritual) time, writing and semiotic systems, moral ideas, political principles, and the (constitutional) governance of a few selected Indigenous cultures of the American continent to be further researched by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and to be taught in schools and academia. Finally, I offer concrete recommendations for what is to be done for this new historiography.

Keywords: Religious Freedom and Justice, Intellectual Acknowledgment in Education, Methodology of Comparative History of Religions and Ideas, American Continent

The subject of the interim report by Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed of the United Nations (UN document A/77/514, *Freedom of Religion or Belief*) is the right of Indigenous cultures to freedom in practicing their customary religious traditions. The premises, conclusions and recommendations are summarized in the introduction:

> The Special Rapporteur explores "indigenous spirituality" as a typically nature-based "way of life," documents experiences of affected rights holders – from forced displacement to environmental destruction – and provides recommendations to protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief of indigenous peoples, consistent with international law.[1]

Community, language, ceremony, nature, natural beings, and sacred territory are vital for the religions, philosophies, and continued existence of Indigenous cultures. As specified in Shaheed's interim report, it is, therefore, imperative that Indigenous traditions, values, and rights be safeguarded by international law.

1. Ahmed Shaheed, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief" (New York: United Nations, October 10, 2022), 2. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77514-interim-report-special-rapporteur-freedom-religion-or-belief.

Unfortunately, since the dawn of the religious, judicial, and political "Doctrine of (Christian) Discovery" in the age of European colonialism, such rights and traditions have too often been desecrated. The Doctrine of Discovery laid out in Papal Bulls of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries presumes a "*Terra Nullius*" in colonized territory, i.e., a land with no Christianity and consequently no full-status human beings. Settled territory could and still can, by precedent from (English) common law, be confiscated with impunity from native nations and communities. Following this aberrant logic, The Doctrine of (Christian) Discovery violated (in the colonial age) and violates (in the postcolonial) Indigenous religious rights linked to traditional sacred land.[2] In this way, the dominant Christian theology of the age provided religious justification for European-Christian colonialism, which still endures in the postcolonial period.[3] The resulting injustice and loss of religious freedom have taken root in three related historical consequences:

1) The military, political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and religious (missionary) colonization of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries;[4]
2) The "postcolonial" continuation of military, political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and religious (missionary) colonization of the nineteenth century onwards;
3) The consistent lack of equal recognition for Indigenous and other marginalized cultures in North Atlantic education and scholarship.

The third injustice on this list represents a derivative kind of "*Terra Nullius*" approach that has underestimated the value of Indigenous traditions, with significant consequences for religious freedom and justice. With regard to academic positions, research subjects, and the content of curricula – all of which have a significant bearing on the curricula and teaching of broader school systems – universities and colleges have a convention of ignorance when it comes to the intellectual achievements of Indigenous and other devalued (minority) cultures. This educational lacuna (e.g., the failure to teach native rationalities) is an underlying structural source of prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion directed against other religions and cultures, which, in turn, undermines their liberty. The "*Terra Nullius*" approach to knowledge and thought acknowledges nothing other than the Western tradition, with little or no recognition of the religious and philosophical ideas of other cultures. Since a disregard for Indigenous culture prevents people from taking Indigenous rights to self-determination and self-government seriously, including the right to genuine religious freedom, a certain mindset has and is being shaped in scholarship and in the educational system, in which the domination of European philosophy and Christian theology contribute to inequities that undermine justice.

The objectives of this essay are, first, to consider the way scholarship and education promulgate the cultural inequity that undermines religious freedom for non-Western cultures; secondly, to argue that the scientific and pedagogical methodology of the comparative history of religions and ideas ought to be applied at schools, colleges, and universities as a long-term remedy for this structural problem; and thirdly, to give some examples of the great intellectual and religious sophistication of a few selected

2. Cf. Indigenous Values Initiative, "What is the Doctrine of Discovery?", *Doctrine of Discovery Project*, July 30, 2018, https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/what-is-the-doctrine-of-discovery/.
3. Cf. Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2008).
4. Despite the impact of European colonists, North American native nations and confederacies had significant powers. See Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over of the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of the U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023) and Pekka Hämäläinen (*The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2022).

Indigenous cultures of the American continent – traditions eminently deserving to be studied by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and to be taught in schools. The conclusion then offers a summary of recommendations as to what is to be done. To be clear, the comparative history of religions approach is rooted in the work of European theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it is offered here as a theoretical starting point, not an endpoint. The work of recent and future scholars – including Indigenous scholars – will be indispensable going forward. The comparative history of religions methodology is indispensable because it is the original and established general theory recognizing the equal value of Western and non-Western traditions.

Injustice in the History of (Religious) Ideas and Thought

A legal right to freedom of expression of religion or belief is inadequate in and of itself. There is no meaningful freedom of religion without an equitable and respectful appreciation for the beliefs, symbols, and ritual systems of others. In the preamble to The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, translated into more than five hundred languages, the conception of universal human rights and universal human dignity is linked to freedom (and justice and peace) in the essential "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."[5] Given the importance of such recognition and equity as fundamental conditions of (religious) freedom, meaningful religious rights for non-mainstream groups require a deeper understanding and recognition of Indigenous and other non-Western cultures than Western scholarship and education have historically shown. The resulting disregard and discrimination, past and present, stand in stark contrast with the intention of Articles 1 and 2 of the UDHR:

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood […]. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as [differences in] *religion*.[6]

A freedom of this kind that comes with dignity and rights is simply not possible without acknowledging that every culture has valuable intellectual, moral, and religious ideas. In this context, meaningful acknowledgement means empowerment, i.e., freedom and agency for marginalized and undervalued cultures, which will only happen when equity is achieved in terms of intellectual appreciation for ideas developed outside the mainstream culture of the North Atlantic.

Academic norms determine the educational content taught in schools, shaping the *Bildung* or cultivation of young people. Traditional Western academia's failure to recognize worldwide intellectual complexity thereby constitutes an educational deficiency, which, in my estimation, establishes *the* ultimate and persistent structural reason for prejudice, systematic discrimination, and exclusion. A change is therefore urgently required in the school system, including the higher education of colleges and universities, built upon innovative pedagogical theory and methodology and inspired by the content of disciplines with international concentrations. It is quite remarkable to note in this context that, although a slave owner himself, Founding Father and third President of the United States Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) "complained that traditional university curricula, based on European precedents, did not pay enough attention to the natural history and cultures of the Americas and Africa. When

5. United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Resolution 217A (III), A/RES/217(III) (December 10, 1948), https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.
6. United Nations, "Universal Declaration" (italics added).

Jefferson designed a curriculum for the University of Virginia, he included traditional European subjects and added courses in American Indian cultures and languages. To Jefferson, control of educational content was just one more way in which British mercantile imperialism sought to dominate (and often exterminate) native peoples, from Ireland to Africa to America."[7] Modern pedagogical approaches must build on and exceed such ideals of recognition and equity.

As the Interim Report notes, despite various efforts from governments and organizations to combat the serious ills of the destabilization and repression of Indigenous cultures, the situation has not improved.[8] Conceiving other cultures as inferior because they (whether explicitly or implicitly) are not accepted as intellectual and religious equals in science and education does not only create a common mentality of inherited prejudice – it also distorts the basic values that guide the creation of legislation, as we have seen in the judicial and political repercussions of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery.

Education and scholarship have a fundamental role in generating and conserving the deepest assumptions of a society. Article 26.2 of the UDHR accordingly makes the following statement:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.

Unfortunately, though, this is not commonly the case for the content taught in schools, colleges, and universities. Generally, students (most significantly in teachers' education at universities and colleges) are trained in the belief that "the great intellectual traditions" – rational and moral thought expressed in Indo-European languages and arts (aesthetics) – can be reduced to the history of the North Atlantic.

This inequity has a long history rooted in antiquity, stretching from ancient Greece and subsequently ancient Rome – in the so-called "classical" disciplines, a perturbing Eurocentric concept not representative of the history of the world – to the establishment of modern-day liberal constitutional democracies in France, England, and the United States of America at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. This Western account of intellectual tradition does not give equal value to the history – in the form of the independent intellectual and aesthetic achievements – of Asia, Oceania, Africa, or the Americas. This misleading intellectual historiography is, in some ways, no surprise, given that many people believe that the cultures and religions outside of the North Atlantic world have less worth or even no worth. These cultures are supposedly not comparable – and thereby not equivalent in terms of human rights and dignity – with the European cultures of the North Atlantic.

How do we solve this sombre predicament? The remedy ought to be a sweeping reform of the methodology and content of education, including scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. In theory, this overhaul could be quite simple because a scientific discipline already offers an inspirational, educational model: scholarship and education on the history of thought, theories, and ideas should follow the requirements of the comparative (global) history of religions and ideas. This model offers a ready methodology for conceptualizing intellectual diversity and intricacy.

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7. Donald A. Grinde Jr. and Bruce Eliot Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1991), 157–158; Cf. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time, Vol 1: Jefferson the Virginian* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1948), 267.

8. This applies to discrimination against people from so-called minority cultures and religions within nation states, but also against cultures of geographical regions beyond Europe and the United States of America. Prejudice against Indigenous cultures and religions, as well as antisemitism and biases against Islam are current examples.

Comparative History of Religions and Ideas as Methodology for Education

For more than a hundred years, the comparative history of religions has been *the* comprehensive scholarly and educational approach when it comes to analyzing ideas, thoughts, concepts, symbols, and (ritual) practices from every region of the world. The academic discipline of the comparative history of religions and ideas is diachronic (i.e., recognizing that religions and other intellectual traditions change throughout history) and synchronic (i.e., acknowledging the religions and ideas of various cultures, which may have differing as well as comparable qualities). The comparative history of religions and ideas accordingly offers an educational methodology based on a conceptualization of intellectual heterogeneity, in contrast with the homogenous and hierarchical philosophy and Christian doctrinal theology of the North Atlantic. It is a methodology for the comparative analysis of philosophical, political, and religious (including intellectual and moral) ideas, principles, virtues, and values in history. The great importance of the comparative history of religions and ideas lies not only in the knowledge gained, but also in the recognition of an international intellectual history with a multiplicity of ideas, theories, and traditions of thought.

Without the more profound understanding and comprehension provided by the comparative history of religions and ideas approach, the "stigmatization and stereotyping" already deplored above will surely continue. Scholarly inquiry using the comparative history of religions and ideas is, therefore, by its nature, an educational methodology of equity. Whereas, for instance, philosophy, arts, and political science tend to converge in research and education on the intellectual thought and theory of the North Atlantic, the comparative history of religions and ideas (as a comprehensive scholarly discipline) analyzes ideas and thought equitably from every area of the world to the advantage of education. There is no assumption that either European philosophy or Christian theology will be the essential nucleus. Every system of ideas, symbols, or practices is ideally studied and taught as a rational peer in a way that can address the need expressed in the UN interim report to "develop human rights-based educational resources recognizing the connection between the colonization and dispossession and/or marginalization of indigenous peoples; and tackle unconscious bias, stigmatization and stereotyping towards indigenous peoples and their spirituality, including among teachers, police, judges and other public servants."[9]

Due to the unfortunate and destitute postmodern relativism *in vogue* in the humanities of the past few decades, quite a few Religious Studies academics are reproachful of the "universals," the "overgeneralizations" or the so-called "essentialism" of the comparative history of religions and ideas. A historical and comparative approach addresses differences and multiplicity, though (not "essentials" or "universals") along with equivalencies. Such a comparative epistemology of the differences between cultures and religions has great value, recognizing intellectual achievements, combatting "stereotyping" and "stigmatization," and providing extraordinary access to various ideas, thoughts, and theories outside the North Atlantic.

Historically speaking, this approach is rooted in the work of theorists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries who elaborated its comparative and historical methodology. Influenced by comparative linguistics, comparative religion (also known as the "science of religion," after the German term *Religionswissenschaft*) was promulgated in 1867 by Friedrich Max Müller.[10] His interest was initially focused on the related subjects of history and the comparative study of languages, or "philology."[11] In his book, *India: What Can It Teach Us?: A Course of Lectures Delivered Before The University Of Cambridge*, produced in 1882 for the Indian Civil Service, Müller propagated understanding and respect for the many cultures of India by means of education in Sanskrit, religions,

9. Shaheed, "Interim Report," no. 86(i).
10. Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 31, n7.
11. Friedrich Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four Lectures delivered at the Royal Institution, with Two Essays, On False Analogies and the Philosophy of Mythology* (London: Longmans, Green: 1873), 154ff.

history, and culture. As a remedy for prejudice, he advocated that the study of history should be intellectually all-inclusive:[12]

> And in the study of the history of the human mind, in that study of ourselves, of our true selves, India occupies a place second to no other country. [H]ow imperfect our knowledge of universal history, our insight into the development of the human intellect, must always remain, if we narrow our horizon to the history of the Greeks and Romans, Saxons and Celts, with a dim background of Palestine, Egypt, and Babylon, and leave out of sight our nearest intellectual relatives, the Aryans of India.[13]

Müller's comparative approach to religious concepts and ideas is explained in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, where he adapts Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's proverb, "He who knows one language, knows none," to "He who knows one religion, knows none."[14] The term "comparative" signifies in his work the consideration of meaning and understanding in appreciation of cultural, linguistic, and religious varieties.

Following Müller, in the middle of the twentieth century, Joachim Wach, the founder of the discipline of comparative history of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School, contended that religions should be conceived of as equal for the purposes of research and education. In other words, there is no theological hierarchy of ideas in an international comparative history of religions.[15] In the essay "The History of Religion in America" (1959), his colleague at the Chicago Divinity School, Joseph M. Kitagawa, defined three fundamental premises for the comparative history of religions:

> There are three essential qualities underlying the discipline of the history of religions: 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."[16]

Every discipline in the humanities and social sciences can learn from these elementary insights. In broader social terms, they also have a significant function to play in the kind of reflective education (*Bildung)* that ultimately leads to understanding and tolerance: "The history of religions," Kitawaga writes, "if it is taught competently in the undergraduate colleges, universities, and seminaries, can widen the intellectual and spiritual horizons of students by bringing them these deeper dimensions of life and culture in the dreams and faith by which men live."[17]

Another distinguished member of the faculty of the Chicago Divinity School, Mircea Eliade, exemplifies just such helpful impartiality in the comparative analysis of different religious traditions of the history of the world.[18] In this, Wach, Kitagawa, and Eliade have also been followed by the prominent

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12. Friedrich Max Müller, *India: What Can It Teach Us?: A Course of Lectures Delivered Before the University of Cambridge* (London: Longmans, 1892), 1; 5; 14–33; 76–77; Lourens P. van den Bosch, "Friedrich Max Müller: His Contribution to the Science of Religion," in *Comparative Introduction to History of Religions*, ed. Erik Reenberg Sand and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1999), 16.
13. Müller, *India*, 14–15.
14. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 15; 122–123; Van den Bosch, "Friedrich Max Müller," 27.
15. See Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* (New York: Columbia University. 1958).
16. Joseph M. Kitawaga, "The History of Religions in America," in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).
17. Kitagawa, "The History of Religions in America."
18. See Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958); Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* (3 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

scholars Charles Long,[19] Davíd Carrasco,[20] and Philip Arnold[21] within the intellectual tradition of the Chicago Divinity School. Their work stands as an instructive example as we face the task of implementing the thoroughgoing change our educational systems need.

Enthused by the ingenious scientific methodology of the Comparative History of Religions (and Ideas), the scholar and educator need merely ask the same questions and address the same intellectual topics using the same terminology incorporating autochthonous words, concepts, and phrases from the culture/religion in question when writing in the academic lingua franca of English (*vid infra*).

Intellectual and Religious Complexity and Multiplicity in "*Terra Nullius*"

Empirical examples for contemporary and future research and education – not just a theoretical avowal – are indispensable to exhibiting a history of intellectual complexities that comprise religions and philosophies related to languages, writing, and semiotic systems, morals (values and virtues), political principles, and (constitutional) governance institutions of astonishing importance across the North Atlantic.

To substantiate the argument for the comparative history of religions and ideas as a theoretical conceptualization of multiplicity for the purposes of education and scholarship, this section offers succinct selected examples of extraordinary intellectual achievements from three regions of the American continent: the encyclopaedical cartography of the Nahua and Pinome civilizations of Mesoamerica; arithmetic and mathematics, with the concept of a "zero," in the religions, philosophies, languages and logosyllabic writing systems of the Epi-Olmec and the Maya civilizations of Mesoamerica; the khipu writing/semiotic system of the Inka and various civilizations of the Andean region in South America; and the constitution and political and religious governance system of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in the eastern part of North America. These – along with abundant other cases from other continents – are the kinds of cases that call out to be studied and taught widely through the methodology of the comparative history of religions and ideas.

As Müller observed, cultures outside Europe may have extensive histories that present modern scholars with a difficulty in that they are mainly recorded verbally as opposed to being preserved in writing.[22] This is quite accurate in many instances, although we should not underestimate the usefulness of oral information passed down through generations. Fortunately, several writing systems and semiotic techniques can be found and studied among American civilizations. For example, complex arithmetical and mathematical systems (some even include the coefficient zero) were combined with intricate temporal ritual and symbolic practices in the religions and philosophies of cultures of Mesoamerica from the Epi-Olmec to the Aztecs and expressed in logographic writing.[23] Stephen Chrisomalis's monograph

19. Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).
20. Davíd Carrasco, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* (3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Davíd Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, eds., *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado), 2007.
21. Philip P. Arnold, *The Urgency of Indigenous Values: Haudenosaunee and Indigenous Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press), 2023.
22. Friedrich Max Müller, *Lecture on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India: Delivered in the Chapter-House, Westminister Abbey in April, May, and June 1878* (New York: AMS Press, 1978) 54ff; Van den Bosch, "Friedrich Max Müller," 21.
23. For references to research on writing and semiotic systems, see Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo, *The Ritual Practise of Time: Philosophy and Sociopolitics of Mesoamerican Religious Calendars* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo, "Multilingualism and Linguae Francae of Indigenous Civilisations of America," in *Crossing Boundaries: Studies in Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra* (ed. Mark Geller and Jens Braarvig; Berlin: Max Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2018), 471–522.

Numerical Notation: A Comparative History (2010) is an excellent example of how different principles of arithmetic and writing in various cultures of the history of the world can be treated as intellectual triumphs comparable to the achievements of the North Atlantic.

The interdisciplinary research project pursued under the direction of Davíd Carrasco exemplifies an encyclopedia of the epistemology and ideas of the Nahua and Pinome, as recorded in the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan* (MC2) produced c. 1540 in the community (altepetl) of Cuauhtinchan in Puebla, Mexico. This complex document represents the "scriptura franca" of a multilingual community, containing information on history, geography, topography, botany, zoology, calendars, time, space, origins, rituals, beliefs, and worldview. As such, MC2 constitutes a primary source of Mesoamerican religious historiography and rational knowledge, including particularly the ideas of the Nahua and Pinome.[24]

In terms of political philosophy, the native governance systems of North America have received at least some attention. In 1988, the Congress of the United States of America made the following statement in "Concurrent Resolution 331":

> To acknowledge the contribution of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations to the development of the United States Constitution […]. Whereas the original framers of the Constitution, including most notably George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are known to have greatly admired the concepts of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy; Whereas the confederation of the Original Thirteen Colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself […]. The Congress, on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges the contribution made by the Iroquois Confederacy and other Indian Nations to the formation and development of the United States.

"The Great Binding Law of Peace" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is the ancient constitution that defines the world's eldest functioning democracy, practiced in the Long House.[25] It is a religious and political constitution of the sovereignty of the people, defining a representative consensus system. It is noteworthy that at the time of its formation, analogous democratic constitutional governance was non-existent in the autocratic (monarchic) or oligarchic (aristocratic or bourgeois), and androcentric regimes of the North Atlantic. Despite "Concurrent Resolution 331," though, this significant case in the (religious) history of democracy and political philosophy is seldom taught in schools, colleges, and universities.

Like other Indigenous nations of the Americas, Andean cultures face scholarly prejudice for not having an alphabetic system – a perceived lack considered to signify cultural inferiority. Scholars like Sabine Hyland have challenged this tendency by analyzing khipu ([multicoloured] knotted cords) as complex semiotic works in Andean civilizations. Hyland's cooperative fieldwork with Andean peoples is "preserving and promoting intellectual achievements of the Andean peoples and languages,"[26] and her scholarship provides an educational example to emulate, as it has been included in curricula for schools of the United Kingdom.[27] This is an excellent reply to Jefferson's complaint and to James (Sa'ke'j)

24. Cf. Davíd Carrasco and Scott Sessions, eds., *Cave, City, and Eagles's Nest. An Interpretive Journey through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 2007).
25. Cf. Grinde and Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty*; Oren R. Lyons, "The American Indian in the Past," in *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations & the U.S. Constitution*, ed. Oren R. Lyons and John Mohawk (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1992), 13–42.
26. Jamie Locke-Jones, "Preserving and Promoting the Intellectual Achievements of the Peruvian Andes," Research Impact, University of St. Andrews, March 17, 2023, https://impact.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/preserving-and-promoting-the-intellectual-achievements-of-the-peruvianandes ; cf. Pharo, "Multilingualism and Linguae Francae of Indigenous Civilisations of America," for references to the research of Hyland and other scholars.
27. Locke-Jones, "Preserving and Promoting the Intellectual."

Youngblood Henderson's statement that "curricula are the organized portion of education that has been the silencing tool of Western education of all the 'others.' […] The failure to acknowledge Indigenous intellectual achievements […] often contributes to prejudice against Indigenous peoples and their languages."[28]

I mentioned that political science, philosophy, and the arts usually fail to research and educate on the prodigious intellectual traditions outside the North Atlantic. In the wide-reaching social science discipline of anthropology, we encounter a quite different yet parallel quandary. It is something of an enigma since this field of study was founded upon the method of observational and participatory fieldwork among Indigenous and other cultures beyond Europe.[29] In the chapter "Anthropologists and Other Friends," the Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. critiques the meaningless and extraneous information often gathered by anthropologists.[30] Deloria writes that:

> The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today. After all, who can conceive of a food-gathering, berry-picking, semi-nomadic, fire-worshiping, high-plains-and-mountain dwelling, horse-riding, canoe-toting, bead-using, pottery-making, ribbon-coveting, wickiup-sheltered people […]. Over the years anthropologists have succeeded in burying Indian communities so completely beneath the mass of irrelevant information that the total impact of the scholarly community on Indian people has become one of simple authority. Many Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears that the anthropologists know everything about Indian communities. Thus many ideas that pass for Indian thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists and echoed by Indian people in an attempt to communicate the real situation.[31]

According to Deloria, this has led to an "intellectual stagnation" among young native Americans, which has severe political consequences for advocating for civil rights.[32] By contrast, the comparative history of religions and ideas epitomizes a methodology in which intellectual topics are explicated in terms of the historical-linguistic sources of the religion or philosophy in question. This is (to be) done in interaction with community members and/or by analyzing (historical) textual material in the vernacular. The findings are then compared, looking at both differences and equivalences, with North Atlantic and other religions and philosophies.

I will close this discussion with an example of a comparative study in which Indigenous scholars were consulted in discussing important moral, philosophical and religious issues. In 2009, I was commissioned by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters to contribute to an extensive anthology about the concept of human dignity as defined in The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.[33] I had the pleasure and privilege of a conversation with Onondaga leadership from one

28. Quoted in Locke-Jones, "Preserving and Promoting the Intellectual."
29. Anthropologists have been mainly concerned with discussing the ability of intellectual thinking in Indigenous cultures, and not with analyzing what they think or have achieved through their rationality. Cf., for instance, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Fontana Press, 1973); Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); Marhall Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think. About Captain Cook, for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
30. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 78–100.
31. Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 81–82.
32. Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 83.
33. Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo, "The Concepts of Human Dignity in the Moral Philosophies of Indigenous People of the Americas," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity*, ed. Dietmar Mieth, Jens Braarvig, Marcus Düwell, and Roger Brownsword (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 147–154.

of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in Syracuse, New York State. They took great interest in defining human dignity and human rights from the perspective of Haudenosaunee rationality. I subsequently organized an international conference on "The Concept of Human Dignity in Indigenous Philosophies" in 2011 at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Several Indigenous intellectuals from the American continent and Norway were invited as speakers to discuss these and related philosophical matters from the perspective of their history and intellectual traditions, as well as present religious, judicial, linguistic, and socio-political conditions and experiences. This kind of acknowledgement of religious and philosophical ideas operates according to the conventions and theoretical approach of Müller and succeeding theorists of the Chicago Divinity School – serving as a paramount scientific and educational ground for (religious) freedom and justice.

What is to be Done: Historiographies of Religious and Intellectual Complexity

The lack of engagement with the epistemologies of cultures beyond the North Atlantic, undermining religious freedom, has provoked the argument in this essay for a comparative history of religions and ideas approach in various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences and as a pedagogical methodology in education. The above-cited history textbook about the Andean scriptural technology khipu for elementary education, educating pupils that a complexity and sophistication of thinking existed/exists outside of the Western cultures of Europe and North America, is an exemplary case as a prerequisite for imitation. There are indeed also other examples,[34] but there should be many more.

A comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study of education and scholarship should be undertaken in universities, colleges, and schools to establish with precision the misrepresentation of non-North-Atlantic cultures and religions. To stimulate research and education on such varieties of intellectual erudition, academic positions (chairs) focused on the comparative history of religions, ideas, and the arts should be systematically established at universities and colleges, specializing respectively in a geographical variety of cultures and languages. In this way, the content of the subjects and curricula in education and research can be corrected, giving equal value to all cultures and religions – which undoubtedly will substantially impact instruction in elementary school.

The recent ambitious book by anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow[35] epitomises a new kind of historiography endorsing achievements outside the North Atlantic. Some of the arguments in the case studies offered by Graeber and Wengrow are contentious. But their work is a promising start. More such systematic, in-depth research studies explicating non-North Atlantic historical accomplishments are needed. Inspired by Müller, but not following his method of seeking a common linguistic and religious inheritance[36] (because unrelated cultures and differences are just as absorbing as equivalents), the comparative history of religions and ideas ought to be introduced as a guiding methodology in every relevant field of study in the humanities and social sciences, with the additional aim of influencing education in elementary schools.

As briefly mentioned, there is an issue here regarding the language application methodology. English is the lingua franca of academic language. It is, therefore, important to introduce terminology and concepts with central passages from Indigenous rationalities and other disparaged cultures' nomenclature to make the analysis more exact and just. Just as there is an interdependence of intellectual

34. Cf. for instance the excellent book for children about Maya calendars and time by Laanna Carrasco and Davíd Carrasco: *Mysteries of the Maya Calendar Museum* (Cruce de Camino, 2012).
35. David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Picador, 2023).
36. Van den Bosch, "Friedrich Max Müller," 21.

ideas and concepts within autochthonous language and literacy, there ought to be linguistic analysis of the exceptionality of each religion and philosophy, which also encompasses a comparison between Western (North Atlantic) and Indigenous and other cultures. It is here to be mentioned that as the (linguistic) history of religions and anthropology has shown, vocabulary from non-North-Atlantic languages has been introduced for analytic concepts (*mana*, *shaman*, *nagual, fetish*, *taboo*, etc.), generating essential contributions to the terminology of academic North Atlantic languages.

I should emphasize in closing that the necessary reform of education policy called for here does not imply that the prodigious and multifaceted intellectual North Atlantic history should be entirely replaced or ignored, far from it. Otherwise, a comparative and historical approach will have no meaning. Complexity must be integrated into academic knowledge of the world. This can be exemplified in the United States with regard to the Latino or Chicano (Mexican American) example. Harvard University professor Davíd Carrasco traces his scholarly background as a comparative historian of religions back to his youthful experience of having an "Aztec Moment" at the National Museum of Anthropology (Museo Nacional de Antropología) in Mexico City. This was the realization that the historic urban civilizations of Mesoamerica were equivalent not only aesthetically but religiously and intellectually to ancient Europe. Just as a historical consciousness generated by an "Aztec Moment" may have significance for the understanding of the permutation of Spanish Catholicism and Indigenous religions attested in Día de los Muertos and the Virgin of Guadalupe in the United States,[37] new kinds of awareness and respect can inform the study of contemporary Indigenous cultures and cultures with an Indigenous heritage.

It should be made categorically clear that the argument for intellectual inclusion is not just about tolerance or acceptance. It is about learning from an exchange of information and experiences with civilizations independent of Europe and the United States of America. For instance, we can acquire political and moral principles for making decisions regarding future generations from the logic of the Haudenosaunee. In their philosophy, there is a rationality of the long term (looking seven generations ahead) that can offer a corrective view of the common North Atlantic rationality of short-termism.[38] I should stress, too, that my argument in this essay does not entail that *only* the extraordinary ideas of Indigenous and ostracized cultures should be studied in universities, colleges, and schools and that the history of the many consequences of colonialization, violence, marginalization, and injustice must continue to have an important place in research and education. The argument is that there should be an equilibrium in respect and attention that is currently missing.

37. See Davíd Carrasco, *The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
38. Cf. Lyons, "The American Indian in the Past."

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