

# Comparative Philosophy of Religion

## Volume 2

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This book series publishes works of comparative philosophy of religion—works that are religiously inclusive or diverse, explicitly comparative, and critically evaluative. It serves as the primary publishing output of The Comparison Project, a speaker series in comparative philosophy of religion at Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa). It also publishes the essay collections generated by the American Academy of Religion's seminar on "Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion." The Comparison Project organizes a biennial series of scholar lectures, practitioner dialogues, and philosophical comparisons about core, cross-cultural topics in the philosophy of religion. A variety of scholars of religion are invited to describe and analyse the theologies and rituals of a variety of religious traditions pertinent to the selected topic; philosophers of religion are then asked to raise questions of meaning, truth, and value about this topic in comparative perspective. These specialist descriptions and generalist comparisons are published as focused and cohesive efforts in comparative philosophy of religion. Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion is an American Academy of Religion seminar devoted to researching and writing an undergraduate textbook in philosophy of religion that is religiously inclusive and critically informed. Each year the seminar explores the cross-cultural categories for global-critical philosophy of religion. A religiously diverse array of essays for each seminar are published along with a set of comparative conclusions.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13888>

Timothy D Knepper • Lucy Bregman  
Mary Gottschalk  
Editors

# Death and Dying

An Exercise in Comparative Philosophy  
of Religion

*Editors*

Timothy D Knepper  
Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Drake University  
Des Moines, IA, USA

Lucy Bregman  
Religion Department  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Mary Gottschalk  
Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Drake University  
Des Moines, IA, USA

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# Preface

Much has happened with The Comparison Project (TCP) since the publication of its first volume of essays in comparative philosophy of religion: *Ineffability: An Exercise in Comparative Philosophy of Religion* (Springer, 2017). Most notably, TCP published a student-written photo-narrative about religion in Des Moines, Iowa: *A Spectrum of Faith: Religions of the World in America's Heartland* (Drake Community Press, 2017). *Spectrum* was in many ways the product of a digital storytelling initiative about local, lived religion and in turn gave rise to the new initiatives in local, lived religion: a monthly open-house series, an annual interfaith youth leadership camp, and collaborative photo-narrative projects with Minzu University of China and the University of KwaZulu Natal.

This is to say that The Comparison Project is no longer just “an exercise in comparative philosophy of religion” (as we said in the Preface of *Ineffability*). In fact, our work with “local, lived religion”—whether in Des Moines, Beijing, or Pietermaritzburg—often dwarfs our efforts in “global, comparative religion.” Nevertheless, our lecture and dialogue series remains the heart and soul of The Comparison Project.

The design of the lecture and dialogue series is still quite simple. Choose a topic that is interesting to our local audiences and important for comparative philosophy of religion, refining that topic through a set of questions. Invite scholars to lecture on the topic from the perspective of different religious traditions, texts, and thinkers. Arrange for local dialogues and special events as well. Then, compare over the content of the series, raising philosophical questions of meaning, truth, and value about the topic in comparative perspective.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of the 2-year series on ineffability (2013–2015), the topic of course was ineffability, with the questions concerning *what* is allegedly ineffable, *how* that ineffability is linguistically expressed, *what reasons* are provided in defense of that ineffability, and *what ends* are at play in that expression and defense of ineffability. In the case of the 2-year series on death and dying (2015–2017), however, we did

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<sup>1</sup>For more details about our methods, see the Preface to our first volume, *Ineffability* (Knepper and Kalmanson 2017).

not flag questions as much as stake territory: the relationship between, on the one hand, traditional theologies of death and rituals of dying and, on the other hand, advances in western medicine and the growing medicalization of death. For better or worse, therefore, the specialist essays and comparative conclusions generated by the series on death and dying—which are contained below—reflect more diversity in terms of their argumentative ends: some engage in philosophical bioethics, others in theological apologetics, and still others in anthropological description (more about this in the Introduction).

None of this would have been possible without generous funding. In the case of our 2015–2017 lecture and dialogue series, we thank Drake University’s Center for the Humanities; Drake University’s Principal Financial Group Center for Global Citizenship; the Medbury Fund; Humanities Iowa; the Des Moines Area Religious Council; Cultivating Compassion: the Dr. Richard Deming Foundation; and Iles Funeral Homes, our special sponsor for the series on death and dying. None of this also would have been possible without the people of The Comparison Project: its directors, Tim Knepper (Professor of Philosophy, Drake University) and Leah Kalmanson (Associate Professor of Philosophy, Drake University); its specialists for the 2015–2017 series, Lucy Bregman (Professor of Religion, Temple University), Allen Zagoren (Associate Professor of Practice in Public Administration, Drake University), and Mary Gottschalk (adjunct professor, Drake University); and its steering committee, students Isaiah Enockson and Anoushe Seiff, and community representatives Sarai Rice (executive director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council, Richard Deming (founder and chairman of Above + Beyond Cancer), Ted Lyddon-Hatten (director of Drake’s Wesley House), and Mary Gottschalk (yet again).

Des Moines, IA, USA  
Philadelphia, PA, USA  
Des Moines, IA, USA

Timothy D Knepper  
Lucy Bregman  
Mary Gottschalk

## Reference

Knepper, Timothy D., and Leah E. Kalmanson, eds. 2017. *Ineffability: An exercise in comparative philosophy of religion*. Cham: Springer.

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