



Religious Studies and Comparative Methodology: The Case for Reciprocal Illumination

Arvind Sharma

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A contribution to the methodology of religious studies, this work discusses using comparison to provide mutual illumination among religious traditions while avoiding the problem of assimilating one tradition to another.

Comparison is at the heart of religious studies as a discipline and foundational to the field's methodology. In this book, Arvind Sharma introduces the term "reciprocal illumination" to describe the mutual enlightenment that can occur when a comparison is made between one tradition and another, one method and another, or between a tradition and a method. Developing the concept of reciprocal illumination through historical, phenomenological, and psychological methods, Sharma demonstrates how to use comparison, while avoiding the pitfall of treating it as merely raw material for higher order generalizations.

"Chapter by chapter, Sharma works through his material with such enlightened precision that the reader is persuaded by his formal conceptualization toward the traditions he is approaching, and the method by which he deepens the overall focus. His original scholarship and innovative framework call for a model of mutual understanding rather than competitive oppositional approaches to cultural and religious 'others.'" — Robert M. Garvin, University at Albany, State University of New York



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