Dialogue has been thriving for the past few decades between Christians and Jews, both in the academy and out in the public. According to a common view of the matter, most of this dialogue will have taken place between what are typically termed the “liberals” of the two sides: people whose similar political and cultural visions transcend the differences between them. Moreover, it will have resulted from a weakening of radicals, hostile as they are to relations with other religions, and a strengthening of moderates, with their predilection for rational and pragmatic interfaith discussion. According to this view, then, the Jewish-Christian dialogue has taken place in the secular/liberal setting of the postwar Western world, and been conducted in a modernized and moderated universal religious language. This understanding of the dialogue’s nature and scope, however, is limited in two respects.

First, it does not cover the full range of dialogical phenomena. As the studies to be discussed at the workshop suggest, several dialogical initiatives do not adhere to liberal criteria, in which the interlocutors agree on the role of religious commitment and its contribution to a diverse society. In fact, one can find dialogical inclinations in surprisingly illiberal settings.

Second, the liberal account of Jewish-Christian dialogue is limited in geography and politics to Europe and North America, omitting other places and the concerns of the people who live there. But non-Western dialogical initiatives operate with different religious grammars, hold to different politics, and often reject the liberal program.

To overcome a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop will do two things. First, we will consider a variety of projects generally seen as not amenable to (narrowly understood) dialogical logic. Empirical examination of initiatives that the liberal framework often neglects cannot help but elucidate the variety Christian-Jewish dialogue. Second, by examining that variety, we will probe the logic behind the very concept of dialogue.

In short, our workshop will attempt to develop a grammar of dialogical variety, a theoretical language to befit its multiplicity. We will rethink phenomena that the liberal grammar has until now understood only in part.