The Jewish– Christian dialogue has been thriving in the last few decades, gaining both public and scholarly attention. In most cases, this dialogue has taken place between representatives of the more open flanks of Christianity and Judaism and has involved participants with a typically “liberal” religious attitude, in a sense that both parties are united by political and cultural visions that transcend the differences between them. The dialogue seems to be an outcome of the weakening of radical voices, which allegedly regard relations with another religion with hostility, and of the growth of moderate religious approaches, which enables rational and pragmatic inter-faith discussions. The Jewish–Christian dialogue, in other words, is judged to be a phenomenon pertaining to the secular/liberal setting of the post-war Western world and is carried out through a modernized, moderated universal religious language.

However, this common understanding of the nature and scope of the Jewish–Christian dialogue is limited in two respects. First, it does not cover the entire range of dialogical phenomena. As the studies discussed at the workshop suggest, several dialogical initiatives do not adhere to liberal criteria that assume a rational agreement about the place of religious commitment and its contribution to a diverse society. In fact, one can find dialogical inclinations in surprisingly illiberal settings. Second, the liberal narrative of the Jewish–Christian dialogue focuses mainly on the geographical and political settings of Europe and North America; it omits other types of dialogue that stem from other landscapes and their unique concerns. These non-Western initiatives are grounded on alternative religious grammars and are oriented toward other sets of political agendas, which often explicitly reject the liberal program.

In order to overcome a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop will focus on two topics. First will be an empirical examination of a variety of projects that have been undertaken in contexts not normally deemed amenable to the narrowly understood dialogical logic. Shedding light on such initiatives, often neglected by the liberal framework of dialogue, contributes in and of itself to the understanding of the Jewish– Christian dialogue in its variety. Second will be a critical inquiry of the variety of dialogical initiatives, which will enable us to interrogate the logic behind the very concept of dialogue itself. The workshop attempts to formulate a grammar suitable for the dialogical variety and to think anew with a theoretical language befitting of this multiplicity, even phenomena that up until now have been narrowly understood through the liberal grammar of dialogue.