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The Role of the Philosopher Today

EDITED BY

ANAND AMALADASS, S.J.

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Foreword

Prof. K. Satchidananda Murty

I

I was present when most of the papers in this book were either read or given as speeches in the first instance. This happened in January 1993 in one of the most successful seminars that I participated in India. Its success was mostly due to Dr. Anand Amaladass, who secured the wise advice of Dr. R. Balasubramanian and Dr.Herbert Herring, the enthusiastic cooperation of his colleagues in his Institute, and the participation of a number of competent philosophers.

This seminar has taken place in a country decolonized over forty years ago, which has a heritage of a 5000-years old civilization, and which is attempting to appropriate, among other things, democracy, science and technology. No participant in it could have been oblivious of the past of India, philosophical/ religious, or of its present, dominated in every way by the West. Those who liked to justify certain types of Indian philosophical thinking did so, if not under the influence of some modern Western philosophers or school of philosophy, at least after a good long look at what has happened in the West, and, to a certain extent, at least, oriented towards it.

While sporadically Plato and Aristotle, and frequently modern Anglo-saxon (including American) and Central European philosophers are invoked by many contributors, East European (including Russian), Latin American, Chinese, Japanese and African, are not referred to by any. There is, however, a single paper which just refers to the Kyoto School and Nishitani. No paper seems to take philosophy as something separate from religion in a clear rigorous manner. Śaṅkara is a philosopher; so are St. Anselm and Nañciyar,

Azad and Mawdudi; and even so are Kant, Heidegger, Husserl, Rorty, etc. Inter-faith dialogues are projected as means for clarifying the philosopher's role, implying that amiable interaction among Hindu, Christian, Muslim and other philosophers may lead to tolerance and harmony.

It is taken for granted that there are Western and Eastern philosophies, as well as Indian, Chinese and other such. The terms "Bourgeois" and "scientific" philosophies, *"Āryan"* and "Brahmanical" philosophies have been in vogue. So, why not there be also terms like "Dravidian", *"Dalit"*[1] and *"Ādivāsi"*[2] philosophies, or philosophies appropriate for them? Like appropriate technologies, cannot there be appropriate philosophies?

II

It would appear that Philosophy is lost among philosophies, the Human Being among Europeans, Indians, Africans and others; While the Indian has vanished among the Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs, as well as the Brahmins, different sorts of upper castes, the BCs, SCs and STs. Is it impossible to talk anymore of human duties and rights, along with special responsibilities of those who are learned and capable of thinking and discriminating between the true and false, and the good and bad? If not, what is the part they ought to play at present as individuals and as members of their societies and citizens of their countries? This book is justified to the extent it seeks to formulate this question with clarity and precision and provokes its readers to find possible answers.

Do not all intellectuals—whether scholars, scientists, literary men, doctors, lawyers, etc.—everywhere in the world have some common outlook and common obligations? Among them, every group, (e.g. physicists, physicians, philosophers, sociologists, surgeons, or engineers) has its own particular function and special task: yet, all of them as constituting that portion of humanity, whose minds are awakened and sensibilities are refined, ought to be having some shared ideals and duties. Naturally, the particular role of each group depends upon its culture, country, society, and time, as well as

its abilities and expertise. The role of individuals in each group will also vary according to their capabilities and circumstances.

If a philosopher may be rightly assumed to be an intellectual,[3] his role ought to be: firstly that of an intellectual of integrity, and secondly of one who philosophizes truthfully. Truth *(satya)* is

> " the accordance of speech and mind with what is seen, inferred or heard. If what is thus known is to be communicated to others through speech, it should not be deceitful, mistaken or futile. It should be for the benefit of all beings and not at all for harming or hurting them. Whatever harms or hurts beings cannot be truth, but only a sin. Therefore, only after ascertainment of what is good for all, truth must be communicated". *Tasmāt parikṣya sarvabhūtahitam satyam brūyāt.* (Yogasūtrabhāṣya, II.30).

The above is a normative way of defining a philosopher's role. It could be determined in an empirical way also. Some who are generally considered to be philosophers may be chosen, their roles studied and any one of them, or some of them, or what is common to all or most of them, may be taken as exemplary. What were the roles of Socrates and Bruno, Spinoza and Leibniz, Locke and Hume, Kant and Hegel, Russell and Dewey, Nāgārjuna and Śaṅkara, Hemacandra and Appayya Dikshita? Reflection over their lives, thoughts and achievements, may provide guidelines for the living and thinking of lesser mortals.

III

Dr. Amaladass is bringing out a book of which any seminar organizer may be proud. He has been able to gather a good number of (to use Collingwood's words[4]) excellent professional geese. Perhaps no one of them has been able to cackle so portentously as Collingwood, but some of them seem to have done as well as his admirer.

Much scholarship and deep insights are to be found within this anthology. Some months ago, enjoying the delightful hospitality of Satya Nilayam, I listened to these contributions and benefited

thereby. Now on reading them I have found in them much to ponder over. I wish this book a wide circulation.

NOTES

1. "Dalit" means the oppressed, the crushed and shattered. They do need a liberating philosophy, which will make them assert their human dignity, rights, freedom and equality. But those responsible for their "*damana*", oppression, crushing and shattering, are in equal need of a philosophy which will liberate them their inhumanity, cruelty, prejudices and ignorance, and humanize them.
2. "Ādivāsi" means primordial inhabitant. Their "Animism" and "Totemism" are in no way inferior to what is contained in some Vedic-Upanishadic passages, Lao Tzu, Jaina texts, and Leibnizian insights. Profound holistic, egalitarian and ecological truths are to be garnered from the so-called "primitives" all over the world.
3. One "given to the exercise of the intellect". Intellect "the faculty of reasoning, knowing, and thinking". (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990).
4. See citation in Herbert Herring's paper.

The Role of the Philosopher Today:

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Mrs. Radha Burnier

All over the world, the stresses and strains of living are increasing. Technology is quickening the pace of life, but thought patterns are unable to keep abreast of the conditions created by technological development. They have become ominously outmoded, for while nuclear weapons are in man's hand, his thinking remains primitive and tribalistic. The increase in population has instilled a sense of insecurity in the minds of millions of people, young and old. Fear makes aggression and confrontation the norm of conduct. Tribalistic attitudes, sectarian affiliations, religious fanaticism and other forms of compartmentalized thinking are more irrelevant now than ever before, more charged with danger. Rapid communication leads not only to the large-scale dispersal of useful concepts and innovations, but also to the spreading of incendiary emotions and antagonisms which would have, in an earlier day, exhausted themselves locally. The mass production of delectable consumer goods aggravates the spirit of competition, envy and greed. The concept of mastering and imprudently expending or exploiting natural resources has alienated man from the environment that like a mother has nourished him. The human mind (and therefore human society) is seething with discontent. It is utterly disoriented, unable to navigate its way to the internal haven of wisdom, by entering which it can cease to generate disasters and problems.

What is the role of the philosopher in this situation? Civilizations have crumbled due to internal decay and external onslaughts. Our

contemporary human society — we can speak no more of regional cultures or societies — faces an alarming debasement of values and the external threat of environmental deterioration, which however is of our own making. The need of the world defines the philosopher's role for the day. Who else but the lover of wisdom, the philosopher, can discover and share understanding about the royal road to unshakable happiness and spiritual well being? I venture to say that spiritual well being is the ground of material well-being.

From the time of the Upanishadic sages in India, and of Socrates and other philosophers in Greece, it has been pointed out that the unexplained life is not worth living. Today's world proves the validity of this dictum. Modern man is frenzically striving to achieve prosperity without essaying to find explanations for his own life, to understand the concealed potentials of the human spirit, and see even, though from afar, the star of human destiny. Being a consumerist and extrovert, a would-be conqueror of everything he can reach outside, he has lost the art of self-enquiry as well as a sense of proportion with regard to the relation of his microscopic being to the vastness of universal phenomena and mind. The philosopher's role may be to restore to him a sense of perspective, and set him on the path of self-knowledge.

Unfortunately, philosophy has come to be regarded as a theoretical and academic preoccupation, not meant to be applied to the practical task of providing the background and insights to assuage the world's travail, or engage the attention of individuals who are in quest of fundamental principles to guide them in daily life. As a sage pointed out: To be true, religion and philosophy must offer the solution to every problem. To the man of today, rushing from one *ad hoc* solution to another, only to find his difficulties becoming more acute and complex, the true philosopher must offer a consistent and fundamental solution, based on a far-reaching world-view. He must expose the false and reveal the true in terms of the lasting good, in respect of every field of human activity.

The life and thought of the ancient world was leavened by the intermingling of the philosophers with the populace, by their dialogues in the market places, their travels and discourses. They lent

themselves to questioning by the ignorant and the learned, the lowly and the highly placed, and answered with patience, skill and wisdom. They helped to turn the minds of their interlocutors into understanding the perspectives needed for truly orienting their lives. They directed the searchlight of observation, intellect and intuitive perception to ferret out the falsity of their presumptions, and thus of their aims, pursuits and methods. Today's philosophers face the challenge of an entire world crying out for fresh insights to extricate itself from its self-deviced traps (perhaps insights which are new for the present-day world but even though they are ancient as the hills).

The philosopher's role becomes insignificant when philosophy is divorced from religion and education in the most comprehensive, profound and liberal sense of these terms. Religion has deteriorated into a state of deplorable irrationality in behaviour and in thinking. It has become an instrument of superstition and fanaticism, a system of authority and wild belief conspiring with the most retrogressive forces, political and social. To avoid this the warp of religion must be woven with the woof of philosophy to make the fabric of a sane, enlightened life. Philosophy is needed to convince the ill-educated mind to disavow the irrational and the near-sighted and rise to the heights beyond the rational, to the all-embracing awareness of truth that is the true religious consciousness. Philosophy, it seems to me, should not be completely segregated in the precincts of academic institutions, and taken to be a subject for discussion in cloistered circles of specialists. Then it is an art that does not delight by expression. Philosophy must aid people to live rightly; its light must ray out to teach men and women how to lead purer and nobler lives. In other words, the need of the day is for a philosophy that is religious, not in the conventional, sectarian, narrow sense, but as a power to purify the mind of prejudice and the heart of its selfishness. Conversely, we may say that the world needs a religion that is made noble and universal by the light of philosophy.

A blending of philosophical perspectives and the religious approach must be central to education, which has become more and more a machinery for churning out specialists endowed with technical skills. Stress on accumulating information and obtaining conceptual knowledge within the groove of particular disciplines has

played a role in making the mind impervious to the wider and deeper range of experience that is life. The hard and aggressive attitudes so prevalent today are in considerable measure the result of the one-sided education which is given. It prepares people for livelihood and success, not for living. Education that teaches how to live is education that imparts understanding of oneself, which ennobles and sensitizes the consciousness. It must lead to comprehension of the deeper aspects of human nature, and kindle intuitive perception of the meaning and purpose of life.

The philosopher today must emerge from isolation and offer the universal perspectives and deeper insights to save modern civilization from continuing on its morally and spiritually poverty stricken course.

Editor's Introduction

This book deals with the role of the philosopher today from different perspectives. In fact the eleven articles in this book were presented and discussed in a symposium organized by the Satya Nilayam Research Institute for Philosophy and Sanskrit, Madras, in January 1993. The willingness of the authors to send in their papers in advance in order to allow the discussant to respond to the papers has greatly contributed to the success of the meetings and to the quality of the resulting articles.

I

The present trend all over the world does not seem to give importance to unpragmatic inquiries like the philosophical ones due to various factors such as the age-old prejudice against the philosophers as impractical ones, the technological civilization which measures everything in terms of pragmatic results, the abject poverty of the millions in the world, which forces people to look for immediate causes and quick remedies rather than analyzing the ultimate causes, destructive factors like wars, natural calamities and man-made nuclear catastrophes around the world. All these forces make people impatient with themselves and with all that happens around leaving no zest for speculative enterprise. In such an atmosphere where confusion of values and misplaced priorities rule the roost, philosophers are called upon to clarify their role precisely in such a context.

Dr. Herbert Herring responds to this question by underlining the core of *philosophia perennis* i.e. the critical approach to the everlasting fundamental problems of life. He argues that the most important task of the philosopher today is to stress and promote this self reliant use of reason showing how a truly humane life in society can be brought about by an intimate cooperation of unbiased critical reflection and fearless moral action.

Dr. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal presents a Heideggerian perspective of what it is to be a thinker. The early part of Heidegger's thinking centres round the challenge to be resolutely oneself, one's authentic and total self, by a genuine standing out into one's limit-situation and by reclaiming his genuinely inherited possibilities. The later phase of Heidegger's thought focuses on a call that belongs to Being and a response that listens to Being. It is a recollective thinking, making the earth one's home, being at peace with oneself, with others and with nature. To such receptive thinkers the Divine speaks in the wonder and in the silence of the ordinary events and things.

Dr. R. Balasurabmanian before entering into his vedāntic perspective offers a critique of the decline of philosophy in the West. Then he proceeds to delineate the role of the philosopher from an advaitic point of view. It is of interest to note how the author articulates the social dimension of an advaitic thinker, highlighting 'the inequality in various forms connected with the theory of privilege which is avoidable'. A liberated person in this world-view looks at the world with a new perspective that upholds the oneness and takes delight in the welfare of all beings.

The moment one enters into the world of Indian philosophy one notices at once a shift in understanding of the term philosophy itself. For a philosopher in the West, one would claim, there are not sacred texts nor are there holy men in possession of the truth as such. But faith and scriptures are important for a philosopher in the Indian world-view. So some would like to term it theology rather than philosophy. One could accept the distinction between philosophy which is primarily guided by reason and theology which is mainly led by faith. But one should not take even this distinction in a rigid way, since one could not talk of 'pure' philosophy as if one could bracket one's faith that has unconsciously shaped one's way of thinking and there is no theologian who does not use his reason in the process of understanding and interpreting his faith tradition. Hence East-West perspectives on the role of the philosopher challenge both sides to clear the prejudices built on rigid boundaries and reclaim vast areas of speculation that have been in the past kept outside the purview of philosophy, both in the West and in the East.

This is true also of the Islamic tradition. Dr. Syed Ali highlights the Islamic philosophical tradition which takes its inspiration from Quran to uphold basic values in life such as unity, justice, love and goodness. He draws attention to the contribution of Islamic thinkers to the philosophical tradition in the past and deals in particular with two recent thinkers, reformers in the Muslim world: Abul Kalam Azad of India and Abul Ala Mawdudi of Pakistan. It is important to keep in mind how a thinker is conditioned by his historical and political context in which he is situated and his thinking is a response to the problems of his community to which he belongs.

Dr. Gopalakrishnan reflects on the Tamil sources of religion and philosophy. He draws the attention of the philosopher to the rich heritage of the past. It is the task of the philosopher today to highlight the wisdom literature of the past to the present generation, how the values upheld by our ancients could awaken the self-awareness of the people, their belonging to a culture which cherished such basic values, thus their rootedness in a common world-view. It is not a mere glorification of the past, but a philosopher today is called upon to sift the false security one might find by claiming one's belonging to a rich tradition without further growth.

II

It is one thinking to define the role of the philosopher as philosopher in terms of the formal object of his inquiry, differentiating his role from that of a sociologist or an anthropologist, since each discipline has a specific scope and thrust. And it is another thing to talk about the role of the philosopher as a person involved in society, committed to the truth he perceives as a thinker. His role is not to be seen as dissociated from his life-style. The role of a mathematician or a physicist as scientist is judged by the discovery he makes or the theory he proposes. The theory a physicist holds to be true, for example concerning the nature of light—as wave theory or particle theory or wave-particle theory—does not and need not affect his life-style. He may be a virtuous or irreligious person. But that does not colour his profession as a physicist.

But in the case of a philosopher or theologian there cannot be such a gap between theory and the practice he adopts. Could a committed thinker be content with doing exegesis of the Scriptural

texts and philosophizing or theologizing today without taking into account what is happening to the community of which he is a part? It is possible that he is silent, unable to face the consequence of his expressing his views on the situation in public. But if he is part of the unjust organization or forces that go against the basic values of life and if he tacitly approves of such a trend, then his credibility as a philosopher comes down, since that would violate his quest for truth. Could a philosopher in India for instance afford to ignore the various movements that have arisen in protest against violations of human rights?

This question brings us to the different issues that the seminar papers dealt with, viz. the Dalit perspective and the tribal perspective. Dr. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel presents in the form of these his reflections on the religious factor in Dalit liberation inviting the philosopher in India to scrutinize this specific social problem.

Likewise Dr. John Kerketta analyses the tribal culture from within and shows the task of the philosopher in interpreting and assimilating and even correcting some of the values as they are understood and practised by the tribal community today.

III

Search for "wisdom" is said to be the goal of philosophy. By "wisdom" one can broadly mean ideas, insights in understanding the world, in its judgements about its truth and their religious and ethical implications, questioning and challenging the presuppositions of these judgements. By this philosophy transcends on the one hand its culture in the sense that the "wisdom" of one culture is potentially available to the people of another culture. On the other hand this "wisdom tradition" even as it transcends its culture, remains immersed within its cultural setting and presuppositions and in that sense it is not universally available for the assent of the rational mind. So the "wisdom" is always culturally rooted. There has been also a search for wisdom across the cultures. Every culture is confronted with questions and challenges from outside. And thinkers of the past in a particular culture do not offer solutions to such problems. Hence there is today more than even a re-search for

wisdom or doing philosophy at the meeting point of cultures. Dr. Francis X. Clooney looks at this question of an emerging world-culture, illustrating his point with an example from Christian European culture (Anselm 1033-1109) and South Indian religious culture (Nañciyar 1182–1267).

Dr. Ursula Baatz speaks from the Western tradition which has become more of a industrialised society. In such a world priorities of values are different—where tangible results are sought after and unpragmatic enterprise does not command high respect. Dr. Baatz points out that even in such a society there is emerging a deeply rooted search for the meaning of life. But people do not find answer in their traditional philosophy or theology but they turn to other traditions than their own. So the search for truth becomes an inter-cultural venture and hence the task of the philosopher today to investigate the different traditions of thinking as a response to humanity's quest for truth.

Edmund Husserl was not known to be sympathetic towards Eastern thought and for that matter towards anything non-European. But in a book review published in 1925 he shows himself spell-bound by the wisdom of the Buddha, which he considered as offering a powerful challenge to the very best of religion and wisdom in the West. Based on this Dr. Joseph Kottukapally proceeds to develop the idea of inter-cultural dialogue as a role of a philosopher today.

The last presentation in this collection of articles by Dr. Anand Amaladass looks at the Indian history of religions from the point of view of a philosopher whether there has been a dialogue culture in the past handling the question of pluralism. In the history of any nation one can see accounts of conflicts and wars, peace and harmony, economic prosperity and artistic and literary achievements. Indian history bears witness to all these happenings. That people fought against each other, that there were wars and killings do not require great research to point out. History is full of such details. But that there were thinkers in our country, who relfected over their situation, proposed a model, a philosophy to live in harmony and peace, is something rare and so praiseworthy. This paper precisely highlights such intellectual attempts to face the question of plurality in religions.

Indian philosophy records a variety of approaches to deal with this problem down the centuries: inclusivism, soteriological hierarchies, ideas of perspectivism and so on are invoked to explain this plurality. Four instances are cited here: the attitude of Buddha, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa and Abhinavagupta is pointed out. The fourth one is in a way response of Bhaviṣyottarapurāṇa to the rule of the colonial masters of the time in India and the resulting attitude of Hindus to Islam and Christianity. In other words, religious plurality and cultural plurality and the consequent tensions in society are not just modern phenomena, at least as far as India is concerned. And there was certainly a dialogue culture in the Indian tradition, and that needs to be highlighted in the present situation, for the wisdom of the past could still offer insights for us today, when we are open to them.

IV

For the conference held in January, Professor Satchidananda Murty gave the keynote address and he has written the foreword for this book. Mrs. Radha Burnier presided over the inaugural function and her presidential remarks are also included in this volume. I am grateful to both of them for their presence during the conference and for their contribution to this book.

I thank Dr. Herbert Herring for his help in preparing the manuscript and correcting the proofs. My thanks are due also to Miss. Betsy Lewis for typing the manuscripts and carrying out the corrections patiently several times. I acknowledge with appreciation the help I received from Ivan, Melville, Pauly and Sunny in getting the manuscripts in order.

ANAND AMALADASS. SJ
Madras.
August 1993.

1

Why Still Philosophy? The Practical Relevance of Theoretical Reasoning

Dr. Herbert Herring

In our time, ruled by the principles of quantitative progress made possible by technological and scientific inventions and discoveries, there seems to be no need, not even any use for such unpragmatic inquiries which go by the name of philosophy, the philosopher being despised and mocked as an eccentric fellow who knows nothing extraordinary about ordinary matters of life and world and nothing ordinary — in the sense of solid and reliable–about the extraordinary. This misunderstanding of philosophy and the role of the philosopher in society is as old as philosophy itself, for there is some truth in stating that nobody knows what philosophy really is except the philosopher himself; but this is precisely the problem in our times where philosophy is facing an identity crisis, a crisis of legitimation in the minds of philosophers themselves, doubting whether there is a peculiar mental activity that could legitimately be called philosophy, besides such disciplines as sociology, psychology and some natural sciences, as for instance molecular biology and human genetics. Have such sciences not taken over an essential part or even all of the tasks of traditional philosophy?

Indeed, the denial of the possibility of philosophy presupposes a distinct idea of what philosophy is and what it is not. What is the distinctive characteristic, the criterion of the philosopher's performance as against that of the common man's in his particular

profession or vocation? Whereas the work of a philologist, a surgeon, a lawyer, an actor, a carpenter, a baker etc. has basically remained the same throughout the ages and in different cultures, there are almost as many definitions of philosophy as there have been philosophers, apart from the well–known fact that there is an essential disagreement, deep rooted in cultural tradition, between the criteria of phiosophy in the so–called West on the one hand and on the other in Asia (in India and China) where the distinction, valid in the West since Aristotle, between the realms of *Mythos* and *Logos,* religious belief and rational knowledge, has never been acknowledged or at least not in the rigid Western sense.

With regard to this question of significance and legitimacy of philosophy in general and in particular in our age, my former teacher Gottfried Martin had remarked already thirty years ago:

> ...We hear nowadays ever and again the statement that philosophy is no longer possible, the most surprising thing being that there are philosophers whose whole philosophy seems to consist in the statement that philosophy is no longer possible. Certainly, the question after the possibility of philosophy has always been a crucial one; but a philosophy which consists in nothing else but the proclamation of its own impossibility might be the most difficult thing.[1]

When I have said that there is an essential difference in the definition of the qualities of the philosopher in West and East, I meant to recall the Aristotelean distinction between the *noetic* and the *dianoetic* forces and procedures of reason, which is to say: In the Western understanding a saint, a wise man, a mystic is normally not called a philosopher, his source of truth and reality being non–sensuous intuition and spiritual revelation, whereas the philosopher dwells in the field of reason as such, i.e. not merely in reason's instrumental application to any particular object or topic, as in the sciences, but reason in its theoretic self–reflective investigation into capacity and realm of reason itself and its practical realization in all fields of life, individual and social. For all our practical performances or actions–if they are meant to be moral actions within a social system–should be based on reason and its practical manifestation as social responsibility.

It was Johann Gottlieb Fichte, one of the German idealists in the aftermath of Kant and the first Rector of Berlin University, who stated in the First Introduction to his *Wissenschaftslehre* (Theory of Knowledge), 1797:

> The sort of philosophy one chooses depends on what sort of person one is.[2]

It seems to me that one could say with equal right that what sort of person one is depends on what sort of philosophy one has chosen, thus indicating the pedagogic, the practical, the socio–political task of philosophy which has found exemplary expression in Plato's interpretation of life and thought of his teacher Socrates. In Socrates, in his meticulous technique of interrogatory interlocution (which he, a midwife's son, called *maieutikè*, i.e. helping to give birth), leading step by step towards the final goal of the logical procedure, making his interlocutors realize that it was only through their reason based critical approach to life and world that their living conditions could be changed to the better —, in Socrates, his life and death, we have the example for the practical relevance of theoretical reasoning.

It needs no further explanation that when using the name *philosopher* in our context I am not using it as a professional designation, meaning an academic teacher of philosophy. We all know that many outstanding philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Camus – to mention only these – were never philosophy teachers in any university; and my colleagues may pardon me when quoting Ludwig Feuerbach's statement that

> It is the specific hallmark of the philosopher not to be a professor of philosophy.[3]

What then is philosophy, and who is a philosopher?

Is philosophy perhaps a pastime for people who, behind their juggling with concepts and words, try to hide their uselessness for any day–to–day performance? These Cicero might have meant when saying

> Nothing is so absurd that it would not be expressed by some philosopher.[4]

Or is philosophy the intellectual luxury of some idle few who have nothing else and better to do? Of these John Milton, the contemporary of Descartes, writes in his *Paradise Lost*: (Book II. 727 ff)

> Others apart sat on a hill retired,
> in thoughts more elevate,
> and reasoned high of providence,
> foreknowledge, will and fate,
> free will, fixed fate,
> foreknowledge absolute,
> and found no end in wandering mazes lost.

Philosophy as a game with concepts and words and the philosopher building lofty castles in the nebulous air of metaphysics–this seems to have been also Karl Marx's verdict on traditional philosophy when, in the 11th thesis against Feuerbach, he postulates:

> The philosophers have *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.

On closer investigation this statement bears some truth in sofar as Marx demands nothing else than that all philosophizing should have some down to earth relevance, meaning that founded on a critical investigation of concepts and values, the philosopher must never forget to aim at bringing about social conditions worthy of human beings. Taken in that sense, Marx's postulate is but the consequence of Hegel's conviction:

> Once the world of ideas has been revolutionized, reality cannot resist.[5]

And when Hegel in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* declares that every system of philosophy is the conceptualized experience of its time,[6] this means to say that philosophy too – like any other cultural, every socio–economic, scientific and technological achievement – is to a considerable extent an expression of the prevailing conditions and circumstances in an historic period. The philosopher, like any other human being, is bound to inhale

before exhaling. But philosophy at the same time transcends its period in pointing towards new means and ways of future world views and world designs.

Why then not just choose the philosophical system which – according to my personal liking or even general consent – seems to be the most plausible, the most convincing one?

To this Kant has given an answer, presumably *the* answer, towards the end of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 838/B866):

> This cannot be done because
>
> Philosophy is a mere idea of a possible system of knowledge which exists nowhere in concreto... We can only learn to philosophize, that is to exercise the talent of reason, according to its general principles... however with the reservation of the right of reason to investigate the sources of these principles themselves, and of either accepting or rejecting them.

This quotation also indicates the difference between the philosophical method of interrogation and the method of investigation as applied in the various sciences, and it also points to the vital distinction between philosophy and religion.

As to the former: There is no distinction with regard to the objects of philosophical and scientific investigation, for it is the same world wherein philosophers and scientists live and work; but there is an essential distinction with regard to their methods of investigation. Whereas in the sciences it is a particular object that is investigated under a specific aspect, philosophical investigation aims at objects as such and under their most general aspect, *viz.* being as such. This means that the philosopher is not directly concerned with objects but with the concepts and principles of our knowledge of objects, which is to say that the philosopher is concerned with statements and theories about objects, their conditions, justifications and limitations. (The term *object* of course taken in its widest range: as an external entity in space and time as well as my own self becoming an object for myself in the cognitive acts of introspective self–reflexion or nonsensuous direct awareness.) To give but two examples for the

essential difference between scientific and philosophical investigation:

The physicist deals with matter as it is available for experimental research. Thus light, for instance, as an energetic form of matter appears to the researcher under certain given or provided circumstances, in consequence of which–according to Quantum Mechanics – an electron or a photon (the quantum of light) may appear either as wave or as particle. The question what matter really is does not at all concern the physicist, is of no interest to him as a physicist, since it is entirely irrelevant for his work in the laboratory, be it in macro – or microphysics

The second example refers to the social sciences. Here the philosopher, acting as a sociologist, is not directly concerned – as for example politicians or social workers are supposed to be – about the improvement of socio–economic conditions. The philosopher's concern is a theoretical one, namely the conceptual foundation of social change, and if he is lucky he finds someone with political or economic power and means to convert the philosopher's ideas into practice. Take thus Karl Marx who during his time in England (1849 –1883) and when drafting and working out the main theses of *Das Kapital*, the classical text–book of socio–economic materialism, had next to none contact with workers or their representatives. Instead Marx spent day by day at desk G 7 in the library of the British Museum in London, drawing his informations about the workers' deplorable situation mainly from two sources: the so–called Blue Books with the reports of the industrial inspectors, and certain periodicals such as *Edinburgh Review*, *Westminster Review*, *Economist* and others with their elaborate reports and analyses of the social and industrial scene. Marx had not the slightest intention to take to the roads and other public places and to fight actively and openly for social change, which clearly proves his philosophical approach and how strongly he was influenced by the method of speculative thinking predominant in the philosophy of German Idealism, especially that of Hegel.

And how far are philosophy and religion distinguishable? Once

more I refer to Kant and his famous statement of the Preface to the 2nd edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B XXX):

> I had to remove *knowledge* in order to make room for *belief*.

Kant means to say that the most fundamental questions for man–the questions whether there is an absolute Being, whether there is Freedom of man's will, and whether there is something immortal in man which we are used to call Soul –, questions which to answer Kant calls a natural urge of man, cannot be made objects of any investigation within the conceptual framework of rational – discursive, inferential reasoning. These questions can neither become objects of any particular science nor objects of philosophy, at least in the Kantian sense; for Kant's concept of philosophy is that of an *a priori* activity of the mind restricted to what is given to the senses in spatio–temporal experience, including man's own being. When thus the knowledge of worldly things transcends its boundaries, there, and there only, is the realm of religious belief for – as Goethe once remarked – what I can know I need not believe. In this context it may be useful to refer to what S. Radhakrishnan says when discussing the contrast between the cognitive encounter with reality and integral experience or insight:

> There is no generally accepted definition of philoso¡phy; but a definition which is broad enough to cover most of the systems dealt with in histories of philosophy would be this, *a logical inquiry into the nature of reality*.[7]

And of what he calls religious experience we read:

> The last type of knowledge [meant is spiritual apprehension] may be called integral insight, for it brings into activity not merely a portion of our conscious being, sense or reason, but the whole... In this kind of knowledge the subject is not opposed to the object but is intimately united with it. By calling this kind of knowledge integral insight, we bring out the point that it does not contradict logical reason, though the insight exceeds the reason.[8]

When referring once more to Kant's statement that one could never learn and teach philosophy but only how to philosophize, i.e. the critical use of one's own reasoning on one's own account in the sense

of *sapere aude*, have the courage to use your own intellectual capacities, we discover that there is no single philosophical system, no individual philosopher in possession of *the* truth as such; there is only – as Hegel holds – *a progressive unfolding of what can be known of what there is* in various systems. When we are to understand philosophy as the radical questioning, aiming at the roots of everything in this world and world as such (including our own individual existence), in other words, when we understand philosophy as reasoning which takes nothing for granted without further inspection, not even our own reasoning, then we realize in this critical approach the interrelation, even the correlation of reflection and action, *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, *jñāna–yoga* and *karma–yoga*, i.e. we become aware of the truly political relevance of philosophizing in the sense of *mea res agitur*, i.e. it is my affair, my concern which is at stake. Once again in the words of Radhakrishnan:

> *Sophia* or wisdom is not mere knowledge. It is knowledge lived. It is a way of life where valid knowledge is the condition of just action.[9]

Could this then be interpreted to mean that the philosopher considers himself a know–all and a supreme judge about each and everything? Certainly not in the common usage of the term know–all by which we mean somebody who – by mistake or purposely – takes his personal opinion or standpoint for generally binding or the ultimate truth. In contrast to this, when calling a philosopher a know–all we should mean to state that he knows better than others that the ultimate questions and problems of life and world cannot be answered and solved by reasoning alone. It is again Kant who expresses this in the opening sentences of the Preface to the First Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* thus:

> Our reason has this peculiar fate that... it is always troubled with questions which cannot be ignored, because they spring from the very nature of reason, and which cannot be answered, because they transcend the powers of human reason.

But such reasoning in which the philosopher is engaged is a highly risky undertaking, an adventure of the mind the result of which being

totally uncertain; which leads us to the question of the philosopher's responsibility for what he teaches. Often a mistake or an error in thinking, in reasoning cannot be discovered immediately and it does not seem to be very harmful either, since its consequences are not so obvious as, for instance, in the case of a chemist's handing out by mistake to the patient a deadly poison instead of the medicine prescribed by the doctor. Or take the case of an automechanic who, after changing a wheel, forgets to put the nuts in place and could thus be held responsible for a severe traffic accident. However regrettable the consequences of such mistakes—is it not much more dangerous when racistic or imperialistic doctrines or caste ideologies put at stake the fate and future of large numbers of citizens, even whole peoples; ideologies often used by irresponsible politicians and self–ordained religious leaders to disguise their personal petty egotistic aims?

There is admittedly no religious doctrine, no philosophical thought, no scientific or technical achievement safe of not being misinterpreted, misused by fools, crooks or criminals. To prevent this as far as possible everybody who can think and speak for oneself is challenged, everybody who does not care for public appraisal or condemnation, everybody whose concern is to prevent harm being done to other individuals, society at large or even the totality of nature. For man is part of nature, dependent on his environment, and it is thus in man's own interest – not to speak of his responsibility for future generations—to keep the socio–political realm and environment fit for man's survival. Each single philosophical concept, each principle, each maxim should be subjected to an ever anew, never ending critical investigation in order to find out whether it makes man more enlightened and consequently morally better; each concept, principle or maxim should have to prove whether it guarantees the same moral or legal rights to all human beings, regardless their religion, creed, race, nationality or other non–essential, accidental qualities. If such concepts, principles and maxims do all this not imply, not contain, then I would be inclined to apply to them David Hume's verdict with regard to traditional metaphysics:

> Commit them thus to the flames, for they contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[10]

Philosophy is a permanent process of enlightenment, it is–as Kant observes in his *Opus Postumum* –

> not an art of what one can make of man, but what he can make of himself.

In this process of intellectual and moral education (education in the original meaning of the Latin word *educere*, i.e. bring about, uplift) the philosopher's part is that of an experienced adviser, not telling what to do in each single case and situation but on what principles and maxims actions should be based if they were to become righteous, even moral actions. This is the proper meaning of Plato's demand, through the mouth of Socrates in the advice to his disciple Glaucon:

> Unless philosophers bear kingly rules in cities, or those who are now called kings and princes become genuine and adequate philosophers, and political power and philosophy are brought together, and unless the numerous natures who at present pursue either politics or philosophy, the one to the exclusion of the other, are forcibly debarred from this behaviour, there will be no respite from evil, my dear Glaucon, for cities nor, I fancy, for humanity.[11]

The quintessence of this could be expressed with reference to Talleyrand's, the great French statesman's (1754–1838), dictum that war was much too serious a thing to be left to military people. This would mean, regarding life in society, that politics is much too serious a thing to be left to politicians who are—with occasional laudable exceptions—by and large not the most enlightened and honest human beings. Their solemn promises during election times to aim at nothing but the common wealth, will soon be belied by their deeds, once they come to power.

The philosopher in pointing out the different ways to the goal of right thinking and just acting functions as a guide, a scout, leaving it to the guided to follow or not his advice when setting out on the adventurous journey into life. The philosopher can show, even pave the way, buy some provisions and also provide suitable transport –

but travel each of us must alone and at our own risks, left to our critical judgement, unaffected by neither praise nor threat. In showing this courageous honest attitude, we would behave like the child in Andersen's fairy–tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* who, in the midst of hypocritical sycophants, was not afraid to speak out what he actually saw: that the Emperor walked about naked.

In the process of bringing about gradual enlightenment the philosopher, especially the teacher of philosophy, may to some extent rely on philosophical tradition; he may and should make use of great thoughts and systems of the past, not however in an uncritical, dogmatic way, slavishly adopting them as undoubted authorities, but after careful investigation of what should be re–emphasized, brought to light again as valuable and relevant for the present, and ignore or discard the rest. This is also the approach of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan to the history of philosophy as *philosophia perennis*. In his reply to Swami Agehananda Bharati who held that the Hindu, otherwise tolerating all kinds of teaching, must insist on the final authority of the Scriptures, Radhakrishnan makes unmistakably clear that

> Loyalty to the Vedic tradition is a legal fiction that has enabled us to preserve the continuity of thought. A philosophy becomes dogmatic, if the assertions of the Scripture are looked upon as superior to the evidence of the senses and the conclusions of reason.[12]

And the great *Śaṅkara* who normally leaves no doubt that the ancient texts such as the *Upaniṣads* the *Brahma–Sūtras*, and the *Gītā* must be treated as sacred scriptures, declares uncompromisingly, in his Commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

> Even a hundred scriptural texts declaring fire to be cold or non–luminous will not attain the character of authority.[13]

Only that one can be said to philosophize who neither submits to any authoritative text nor to any exemplary individual thinker; since for the philosopher there are no sacred texts nor are there holy or wise men in possession of truth as such. He must have the courage, the mental audacity to discard traditions which are outdated, have no meaning and bearing for our present situation and are, as such, of

mere historical interest. He should on the other hand revive such traditional values which our predominantly property–oriented society, a society governed by the reckless rules of what could be called Social Darwinism, has long forgotten, values such as nonviolence, altruism, honesty of thought and action, civil courage. We can never say for sure whether our good intentions will succeed; this uncertainty of knowing for certain is man's fate in this world and indicative of his essential finiteness. But in the face of a situation in life and society where things are obviously taking a bad turn or are already in a miserable state of affairs – as almost everywhere in our days – we should dare act according to the principle: I do not know whether things become better when changed, but I know that they must be changed in order to become better. The Polish writer Stanislaw Jerzy Lec once said (and this aphorism has become one of the guiding principles of my life):

> When wanting to reach the source of a river one must swim *against* the current.

There was a time, in the Christian Middle Ages, when philosophy used to be treated as the servant maid of theology *(philosophia ancilla theologiae)*, and then came another time, from the middle of the 19th century almost to this day, when philosophy was assigned the place of a servant maid to the sciences *(philosophia ancilla scientiarum)*. If philosophy should be treated as anyone's servant, it could and should only be the family of man as such: *philosophia ancilla hominis seu societatis*, philosophy as serving man in creating genuine humane, humanitarian conditions among human beings. Whether the philosopher will succeed in this is uncertain; this does not only depend on his intellectual honesty but also on the reaction of his social environment. Most important is the philosopher's unceasing endeavour in aiming at this goal, for it is not action as such that counts but the principle of action.

The task of the philosopher is not to directly interfere with public life, for he is normally not the one having the practical means and the political power to bring about social change. His task is that of a caretaker, a custodian who, based on his subtle reflections on the

principles of what we can know and on an open discourse with others, shows the way of how, on what maxims we should act in order to safeguard the future of man – the basic assumption, of course, being that to secure the future of mankind is a desirable aim.[14]

This vital task of the philosopher I find nowhere better expressed than in Collingwood's conclusion to his *Essay on Metaphysics* (1940), where this brilliant thinker writes—in that typical blend of intense seriousness and a certain gaiety of spirit:

> The fate of European science and European civilization is at stake. The gravity of the peril lies especially in the fact that so few recognize any peril to exist. When Rome was in danger, it was the cackling of the sacred geese that saved the Capitol. I am only a professional goose, consecrated with a cap and gown and fed at a college table; but cackling is my job, and cackle I will.

Today there is much more at stake than European civilization; for the first time in history man has achieved the power to eradicate his own species, and it seems indeed that many a scientist and politician is not able or, worse, not willing to read the writing on the wall. It is here where the philosopher must enter the stage; the philosopher – as I have said before– has normally neither the means nor the power to directly enact moral awareness and behaviour in society. What he can and thus should do, however, is, in the words of Collingwood, not stop cackling, that is to say make those with scientific, economic, and political power realize that there is still time, though very little time, to provide a future for mankind and our planet earth. I personally have serious doubts whether the voice of the philosopher will be heard, and, if heard, heeded, whether it will not fade away echoless like the voice of a caller in the desert.

Let me conclude this brief discourse therefore on a somewhat sceptical note, with a remark of a contemporary of Kant, the scientist and satirical writer Lichtenberg, who with reference to the prevailing stupidity in the so–called age of enlightenment wrote:

> One talks a lot of enlightenment,
> asking for more light.

But, good heavens, of what use is light
when people have no eyes,
or when those who have close them intentionally?

NOTES

1. Kant–Studien 51/3, 1959-60, p.367, in Martin's discussion of the German edition of P.A. Schilpp's *Albert Einstein: Philosopher–Scientist,* 1959.
2. WW I, 1, p. 434. ed. I.H Fichte.
3. Quoted as Motto in L. Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*, 1856.
4. "Nihil tamen absurde dicit possit, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum", *De divinatione* II, 119.
5. In a letter to Niethammer, 28th October 1808.
6. "...so ist auch die Philosophie, ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfasst".
7. Quoted from P.A. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,* First Indian edition 1992, p. 816, in Radhakrishnan's *Reply to Critics.*
8. Ibid., p. 60 f., in Radhakrishnan's contribution: *Fragments of a Confession.*
9. Ibid., p. 817.
10. Final words of *Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding.*
11. *The Republic* V,473.
12. P.A. Schilpp (ed.), op.cit., p.818.
13. XVII.
14. It is in this context of, for instance, such vital problems (vital in the genuine sense of the term) as those of Ecology, Ethology, Gene Technology, Birth Control, Euthanasia, Religious and National Fundamentalism that the philosopher should at least be heard in an open discourse, for the simple reason that he as a true philosopher is impartial, not propounding and advocating any particular interest, his only interest being that of human welfare, resting upon the basic awareness that human life is bound to be life in society, and that life in society – if it is to be a real social life – can only succeed when individual or group interests are subjected to unbiased critical considerations of what is right and what is good for the common wealth.

    Due to the shortage of allotted time and space, I cannot work this out in more detail here, especially not the important distinction of *right* and *good* in man's volitions and actions. As to this and other relevant themes of Ethics and Social Philosophy, I point to John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 1971, and Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 1984 (original German title *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 1979.)

2

The Challenge to be a Thinker: A Heideggerian Perspective

Dr. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal

'What is philosophy?, Who is a philosopher?, What is the task of a philosopher?...' These are embarrassing questions even for a philosopher, who is said to be concerned about anything and everything. Although he deals with a wide variety of topics in his philosophical reflections, the philosopher is not at ease with questions that involve his own Being, his task. Hence the task of reflecting on the task of philosopher is more difficult than it may at first appear to be. Has this difficulty of considering the role of a philosopher come about only recently, or has it been so even traditionally?

Philosophers have been considered as 'strange men'[1] who deal with familiar questions in a strange manner[2]. They look at the questions as detached spectators, motivated by intellectual curiosity. Besides this impersonal stance of philosophers to reality from the earlier times, in the contemporary period they take philosophy as a profession,[3] means of livelihood; a way of 'doing' rather than a way of 'Being'. For a philosopher who considers philosophy as an intellectual, impersonal enterprise, and reduces it to a part–time profession, the question regarding the role of philosopher poses little problem. But the existential hermeneutico–phenomenological tradition of twentieth century continental philosophy, especially the thought–pattern of Martin Heidegger[4]. Has brought about a 'revolution' in philosophy by making it a thinker–involved thought, a

self–reflection. This is all the more so, when the question is regarding the role of philosophers themselves. It is a question about my task, my role, my responsibility as philosopher. Here I have to reflect aloud not merely what *I am*, but what *I should* be as philosopher. Hence I cannot take a detached stance towards this question.

In this paper we shall think along with Heidegger in order finally to arrive at his projected vision of the role of the philosopher today. Heidegger himself gives us the clues as to how we must go about when we take up a question for philosophical reflection. He says that we have to enter into it, tarry in it, and move within it, rather than moving around and looking from outside of it.[5] While taking a ride with Heidegger, we need to stop at certain important areas in his philosophical spectrum, keeping in mind the specific goal of our search. Thus in this study we make a stop and take a look first of all at Heidegger's critique of what philosophy and philosophers have been. In the second and third parts we shall consider the role of the philosopher from the perspectives of earlier–Heidegger and later–Heidegger respectively. In the fourth part we shall think further on the role of philosopher, basing ourselves on the insights gained from Heidegger.

I

In order to understand the role of the philosopher today and tomorrow, it is very important that we bring to our philosophical consideration what the role of philosophers has been in the past. A 'look back' will help us in our 'looking ahead'. Heidegger himself relies heavily on his critical 'look back' to the history of Western philosophy for his creative'looking ahead'.

Every thinker thinks only one single thought;[6] and it was the question of Being that has been the singular philosophical concern for Heidegger. His search into the question of Being was awakened and motivated by the urgency he felt to distance himself from the deviating metaphysical tradition of the West, characterized by the 'forgottenness of Being' *(Seinsvergessenheit)*[7]. In order to get away from this deviating tradition, to which philosophers of last two millennia faithfully adhered, Heidegger takes a twofold 'step–back'

(Schritt zurück) which corresponds to the two phases of his thought. Although Heidegger launched his philosophical enterprise with some understanding of the mis–conceived role of philosophers, he grew in his awareness of the dismal picture of philosophers and philosophies of the West during the later phase of his philosophical career[8].

The role of philosophers in the history of Western philosophy had to be in tune with the metaphysical tradition of the West. This tradition, according to Heidegger, begins with Plato and Aristotle, culminates in German idealism and becomes complete in Nietzsche[9]. The profound insights of the Pre–Socratics, such as *a–letheia, physis, logos* etc., were transformed into logic–centered metaphysical concepts[10] by the philosophers of last two millennia, starting with the great Greek masters[11]. In the exclusive preoccupation of philosophers with creating precise concepts and definitions, 'Being' got forgotten, since metaphysical tradition, ever since its inception, has remained onto–theo–logical in character[12]. Instead of considering 'Being' *(Sein)* metaphysical philosophers have been dealing with the 'beingness' *(Seiendheit)* of entities *(Seiendes)* in its unversality and ultimacy. "Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings [entities] both in the ground–giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All–Highest.[13] Insofar as metaphysics considers the unity of entities in their abstracted universal trait, beingness, it is ontology; insofar as it inquires into the unity of entities as grounded in the highest entity, God, it is theology. As ontology and theology, metaphysics is onto–theo–logic.

The onto–theo–logizing role of philosophers was nurtured during the medieval period, when Greek thought was translated into Latin and got baptized as Christian philosophy.[14] With modern philosophy metaphysics becomes epistemology with emphasis on the subject–object polarity. The subject becomes the arbiter of truth. This subject–dominated philosophical tradition, in Heideggerian terminology, is 'representational thinking' *(Vorstellendes Denken)*. In his essay "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" Heidegger considers at length how the world becomes a 'picture' to the representing subject.[15]

"That the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man's becoming *subjectum* in the midst of that which is"[16] Making a 'picture' (idea) of the world is nothing other than representing reality as 'object' *(Gegenstand)* – something that is made to stand over against the representing subject.[17] In Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzschean language the task of metaphysical philosophers has been nothing but 'blinking', i.e. forming or representing ideas about reality, reducing it, to mere object.

The 'objectifying' or 'representational' thinking becomes 'calculative thinking' *(rechnendes Denken)* in the scientifico–technological context. The intellectual domination over reality, enjoyed by the Western representational thinkers, grew into its extreme possibility of calculative manipulation of entities in the technocratic age.[18] The scientist looks at nature as an 'object' to be studied and investigated with math ematical precision. For the technologist nature is a huge source of energy[19] to be exploited[20]. Technological culture tries to subjugate not only nature but even man. Technological power is used by the powerful for the exploitation of the weaker. Man is moved by the 'planetary imperialism'[21] and the 'logic of domination'.[22] By making a philosophical critique of technology in the context of his critique of Western metaphysics, Heidegger does not mean that all metaphysical philosophers are technological manipulators and calculative exploiters. But he is of the conviction that it was the domineering subjectivistic role of philosophers that gave rise to the technological manipulation. Without a metaphysical past, there would have come about no technological present.[23]

The conceptualizing and domineering approach in the task of philosophers found a fertile soil in the Western interpretation of Christian faith. With a wholesale adoption of Greek Philosophy for Christian theology, God began to be conceived in logically precise concepts, and to be super–imposed with metaphysical attributes of the superlative degree.[24] God is reduced to an object of human estimation.[25] The characterization of God in high—precision concepts is indicative of man's presumptuous monopoly over the

truth of God in human concepts. Such an approach from philosophers speaks for man's intellectual domination and manipulation of God. Thus even with the question of God and faith the traditional philosophers and metaphysical theologians took a domineering and conceptualizing role.

Although Heidegger's critical look at the task of philosophers passes through the various periods of Western philosophy, he finds a 'sameness' in the way the role of philosophers was considered: a role characterized by its eminently subjectivistic and conceptualizing approach.

II

Heidegger's 'look back' to the role of philosophers and the way he has characterized it, gives us some indication as to the direction he wants to take in his 'look ahead'. Heidegger started his philosophical enterprise with a view to re–write the role of philosophers by developing a fundamental on–tology—the clarification of the meaning of Being in general from the perspective of Dasein or man.[26] But from this projected plan, Heidegger could carry out in his published works only the ontological analysis of Dasein, which was meant to prepare the way for fundamental ontology.[27] Thereafter Heidegger changed his approach to the question of Being. Thus there are two phases in his philosophical itinerary. Although what he suggests from his earlier thought to be the role of philosophers does not flow from his philosophical maturity, it has still its relevance and is quite meaningful, especially in relation to his call to be 'thinkers' as the task of philosophers according to his mature thought. The earlier thought of Heidegger carries out the ontologico–existential analysis of Dasein in two stages: the preliminary analysis and the primordial interpretation. The preliminary analysis discloses Dasein as projecting, thrown and falling, i.e., Dasein as free and capable of *choosing* from possibilities, as irrevocably *thrown* into a situation, and as falling away from its unique and genuine possibilities. In his primordial interpretation of Dasein, Heidegger gives expression to what man should be authentically and thereby what should be the role of philosophers according to his earlier thought.[28]

Man is prone to run away from himself and to hide himself in the crowd as the anonymous one. He does not want to be himself, but the they–self, *(das man)*.[29] The task of a philosopher is constantly to come back to himself by his resolute choice. 'Coming back' to oneself involves and implies 'taking over' one's 'totality' *(Ganzheit)*. In Heideggerian thought 'totality' is a very significant term. It refers to the whole of man, embracing his ultimate possibility and ultimate facticity, surrounding and permeating man at every moment, making him radically finite. This 'totality' is also termed by Heidegger as 'limit–situation' *(Grenzsituation)*, man's essential 'Being–guilty' *(Schuldigsein)*, permeating presence of the 'not' or 'nullity' *(Nichtigkeit)*, etc. Thus 'taking over' one's 'totality' means assuming the truth about oneself, the naked and genuine truth of one's radical finitude as one's *own*. The general tendency of man is to persist in the blissful ignorance of his finitude.[30] The philosopher is challenged to be himself – his genuine self that is permeated with finitude, against the incessant temptation to be the faceless and anonymous one in the crowd. It is more comfortable to be submerged in, and to be carried away by the crowd. It needs courage and decision to stand out as oneself as one really is and to take action in accordance with it. Hence acceptance of one's finite existence is not a desperate and passive acceptance of one's irrevocable lot. It is one's strength rather than weakness. It engenders an unshakable joy in man,[31] as having assumed the purity and truth of himself.

In short, in the light of Heidegger's earlier thought, the philosopher is called upon to take up the challenge to be himself in full awareness and grip of his possibility and facticity, his capacity and situationality. It is a threefold standing–out into man's 'ahead' into his 'already' and into his present situation. Such a standing out is authentic temporalizing,[32] which is to be the task of philosopher. He has to bring the future and the past into the situation of the present. As authentically temporal, a philosopher has to be historizing as well, by reclaiming *(wieder—holen)* his inherited possibilities for the future.[33] The role of a philosopher demands that he does not merely persist through the indefinite stretch of 'nows' or live an existence fragment by fragment, without any constancy. Thus

the role to be played by a philosopher according to Heidegger–I is a challenge to exercise resoluteness' *(Entschlossen–heit)* to be genuinely oneself.

III

It is only during the second stage of his philosophical thought that Heidegger achieved a rather clear vision as to which direction philosophy has to move and what role philosophers have to play. Heidegger characterizes his later philosophy as 'the thinking of Being' *(Seinsdenken)*, and correspondingly the task of philosophers is to be 'thinkers of Being'.

In Western philosophical tradition the notion of thinking of Being' is far from being unfamiliar. But in Heidegger it evokes something totally different from what the philosophical West has been accustomed to. For, in the words of Heidegger, "thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff–necked adversary of thought.[34] Hence the notions of 'thinking' and 'thinkers' are to be understood in a mode and expressed in a language[35] different from what we are used to. This poses a great difficulty to delineate the role of philosophers as thinkers. From his intricate and poetic explanations, we shall cull out the salient features. Heidegger considers 'the thinking of Being' as a call that *belongs* to Being, and as a response that *listens* to Being.[36] In the purview of this paper it is enough that we focus our attention on the role, man has to play in response to the call of Being.

The challenge to be a thinker demands that he respond to the challenge, to the call, by a corresponding response. "How can we give thanks for this endowment, the gift of being able to think what is most thought–provoking, more fittingly than by giving thought to the most thought–provoking?"[37] The primordial corresponding is the genuine thinking.[38] To correspond (*entsprechen*) to the call of Being means 'to be determined' (*be–stimmt, etre dispose*) by Being, to 'attune' *(abstimmt, accorder)* oneself to the tune of Being.[39] to 'echo' the voice of Being,[40] to reflect the light of Being. Such an attuning thinking is nothing but thanking.[41] Thus the philosopher as thinker must be one who thinks by attuning oneself to and thanking

for all that evokes thought. Reality as presencing or as coming to be evokes wonder in a thinker. "The greatest of all wonders, that something is!"[42]

Heidegger gives much importance to the aspect of 'wondering' or 'astonishment' *(Erstaunen)* in philosophizing. "Astonishment as pathos is the arche of philosophy... It is not merely the beginning, but it carries and pervades philosophy (durchherrscht)."[43] When reality is seen as a brute fact, that is logically definable, mathematically calculable and metaphysically conceptualizable,[44] it does not elicit any 'wonder' in man, rather it will enable him to ask the 'why–question'. This is one of the main differences between the traditional philosopher and the one in the perspective of Heidegger. The former asks "why something is?", whereas the latter is constantly taken aback in wonderment at 'that something is!'. The why–question looks for an answer that settles him down. A philosopher, according to Heidegger, must be 'alive' and dynamic, and it is possible only insofar as he is dynamically disposed, and 'sees' everything as wonderful and thought–provoking.

If the thinker is one who is able to 'see' the wonder in reality, he must be a 'seer' *(der Seher)*. Heidegger himself introduces this term, 'the seer', in his "Der Spruch des Anaximander",[45] a notion that finds itself more at home in Eastern thought than in Western philosophy.[46] The German *'Wissen'* which is etymologically linked to Latin *'Videre'* (to see), to the old Indian *veda* (wise) and ultimately to the Indo–Germanic root uid—(to see, to know),[47] means more of 'wisdom' than 'intellectual knowledge'. The seer is the wise man "who has seen the totality of what is present in its presencing."[48]He 'sees' reality in its revealing–concealing, presencing–absencing, by receptively listening to it.[49].

The thinker must be a re–collective thinker *(der andenkende Denker)*. He must be capable to give thought to what is to be thought. As re–collective thinker, he is a 'gatherer' *(der Sammler)*[50] as well, gathering the revealing–concealing process of reality. The religious tone of An–dacht (meditation, concentration, piety, devotion, prayer, etc.) is fully included in the meaning of *Andenken*

as re–collective thinking. There is a close relation between 'commemoration' and recollective thinking. By recollecting or thinking back on a person or event, he/it becomes alive and present. Here the space– and time– intervals are gathered into a unity. In other words, in recollective thinking, the difference between 'here' and 'there', 'now' and 'then' is levelled off. Re–collecting is not merely a thinking over the past or the beginning. "The beginning is still to come. It does not lie behind us as something that has long been, but it stands before us.[51] In thinking back one thinks ahead.[52] Thus the philosopher as the recollective thinker has the task to think back and ahead, bringing the past and the future into the present.

Heidegger is widely acclaimed as the patron of ecology in the philosophical world, not because his life and life–style was close to the nature and environment, but because his thought—structure was very much ecological. As ecology is concerned about man's relation to his environment, its message consists in evoking man to take the earth as his 'house'. "The house becomes a house only through dwelling."[53] Hence in order to make the earth the home for man, he has to be a 'dweller' there. Heidegger probes into the meaning of 'dwelling' *(Wohnen)*, relating it to 'building' *(bauen)* and 'thinking' *(Denken)*.[54] 'Wohnen' (dwelling) is derived from the old Saxonic *wonen, wunon,* or the Anglo–Saxonic *wunian,* meaning; to be at peace, to be brought to peace, etc.[55] Hence 'to dwell on the earth' means to be at peace with the earth, with nature, with the environment. In a typically Heideggerian terminology we have to say that man, in full acknowledgement of his essentially finite nature, 'dwells' on the earth by 'saving' *(retten)* it, under the sky by receiving *(empfangen)* it, before the divinities by awaiting *(erwarten)* them.[56] It is poetic dwelling! It is opposed to the tendency of the metaphysico–technological man "that exploits the earth, controls the sky, encapsules 'God' in well–defined concepts, and refuses to accept his radical finitude."[57]

In the perspective of such a thought pattern of Heidegger, the role of philosopher as thinker is to be a 'dweller' on the earth, making it his 'home' and being at peace with others, with the nature and with himself:

At the very last stage of Heidegger's philosophical career, his thought found itself in the 'holy' realm of the Divine. The thinking of Being, thus, is turned into a 'thinking of the Divine'. As his philosophy approaches its grand finale, it becomes increasingly poetic in style and religious in tone. Heidegger does not create yet another 'concept' of God, rather he keeps his thinking open and waiting, and the Divine *(das Göttliche)* presences itself. For the receptively disposed man the ordinary events and things are vibrant with Divine presencing. In marvelling at the wonder of reality in its coming to be, man 'sees' the presencing of Being as the presencing of the Divine. Every ennobling experience enables man to 'see' the Divine presencing as a dynamic coming–to–be in the time—and space–bound events and things. Thinkers, poets, artists and mystics are those who wait in releasement *(Gelassenheit)*[58] to be spoken to by reality, by the Divine.

The challenge to be thinkers implies also that we be 'holy' thinkers! Such a role of philosophers as thinkers of the Divine brings Heideggerian thought–structure closer to Eastern thought, according to which there is no difference between thinking of reality or philosophizing and thinking of the Divine or theologizing. According to the Indian philosophical tradition, *Darśana* (the term used for philosophy) is the primordial seeing of reality which is at the same time a seeing of the Divine. An enlightened man is both a learned man (seer of reality) and a holy man (seer of the Divine).

We have been considering the role of philosophers from the perspectives of Heidegger's later philosophy. Basically this role remains as a challenge to be thinkers, although it is expressed variously according to the various themes under consideration.

IV

Now that we have taken a glance at the task of philosophers as envisaged in Heidegger's earlier and later thought, we can bring the insights together and think further on it.

From the constant temptation to remain submerged in the anonymity and facelessness of the crowd, the earlier Heidegger calls

on the philosopher to resolutely and freely make a choice for one's genuine self that is permeated with finitude. According to later Heidegger the philosopher's task is to be a thinker that 'sees' the wonder of reality. Although apparently these two roles seem to be different and mutually opposed, they in fact complement each other and constitute a unitary role. In order to be a thinker, to be receptively open to the dynamic presencing of reality, to 'see' the Divine in the ordinary things and events, one needs to be open to oneself as one really is.[59] Acceptance of one's finitude is a necessary condition for one to be a receptively open thinker. Hence when we say that a philosopher is called to be a thinker, it implies and involves his resolute openness to himself. By being open to the truth of his finite Being, the philosopher has to remain open to the cosmic presencing of Being in reality, i.e., he has to be a thinker.

Having reached this height of thought with the help of Heideggerian 'ladder', we are now in a position to go higher by thinking further. We shall not throw away the ladder as Wittgenstein suggested,[60] since we are basing ourselves on the insights we have received from Heidegger.

"Philosophy is an adventure"[61] and philosophers are to be adventurous. If we heed to the earlier Heidegger's repeated call to freedom, we cannot, as philosophers, remain stagnant in our thought and life. Man is gifted with indefinite number of possibilities; by his thoughtful choosing of possibilities he grows multidimensionally. Man's ability to become and to grow makes him different from animals; it makes him a cultural being. The animals remain condemned to their thrownness; whereas man, in spite of his being thrown to a situation, is able to stand out from it and create himself. It is a risk and a challenge to be creative, to be adventurous. It is much safer to remain as we are. Here comes the role of philosophers to give the lead in being creative, by giving the orientation towards a step ahead from the 'safety' and 'comfort' of mediocrity in thought, religion, literature, art, ... etc. Only insofar as philosophers are creative can their thought be relevant to life. According to Gabriel Marcel, "Philosophy has no weight and no interest whatever unless it sounds an echo in our life, ..."[62] Formerly philosophy has been taken

as an 'intellectual game' with little bearing on concrete human life. Philosophers used to take up the most 'unearthly' themes and used to philosophize equally 'unearthly' way, i.e., in total detachment and indifference. Today philosophers are challenged to bring down their thought to the appeal of the average man by philosophizing on questions with which he is constantly gripped, and in a manner that involves the whole of his Being, and not merely his intellect. Such a philosophizing 'touches' the very 'heart' of man; it vibrates as a persisting 'echo' in our life, since philosophy is a reflection of life. In this respect the role of philosopher would be that of an 'awakener' rather than a teacher. This was the role Socrates played by bringing the Athenians into an awareness of their own ignorance. During the last century the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard went a step further by being the modern Christian 'gadfly' that disturbed the peaceful slumber of many a Christian, smug in the conviction of their dogmatic religiosity. Today the role of philosopher has to be one that 'awakens' people to thought, disturbs them from their slumber of conventionality and mediocrity, spurs them to creative action, and motivates them to dynamic religion.

Heideggerian perspective on philosophy has given it a new colouring different from the dogmatism of traditional philosophy. In the words of Vincent Vycinas, "Philosophy in Post-Heideggerian period has to become increasingly responsive, humble and reverent. It will be not just thought, but a cult and a song."[63] Hence philosophers too are called to play a humble, receptive and reverent role. They are to bring philosophy from the conceptual rigidity of 'logology' to the poetical profundity of 'mythology'. Playing a receptive role philosophers become 'ambassadors' of reality. As every ambassador knows his 'mission' by listening to the call from the source, so philosophers as ambassadors of reality must keep themselves in obedient service to it. They are to be constantly listening to reality in order that they be its true ambassadors.[64] Such an obedient, reverent and receptive disposition on the part of philosophers moulds them into poets, artists, thinkers, mystics, etc. Should not philosophers be poets, artists, mystics, thinkers,...?

Finally a thinker is one who is constantly 'on the way' and who is constantly a 'seeker'. In his funeral oration Bernard Welte sums up

Heidegger's life and thought in a sentence: "He was always a seeker and was always on the way."[65] If the thinker were to be a 'finder' and one who is at the end of the way, his thinking would not be dynamic; rather it would settle him down with ready solutions. A true thinker does not abandon questioning for the sake of an answer.[66] The thinker who is a seeker and who is on the way is constantly on the watch out in receptive openness, in obedient reverence.

We have been seeking in this paper for the role of the philosopher today from the perspective of Heidegger. Our 'seeking' has not come to an end with a 'finding'. We are still 'on the way'. Journeying with Heidegger on his way we have been constantly challenged by the same challenge: to be a thinker.

Notes

1. Edwin A. Burtt, *In Search of Philosophic Understading* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), p.1.
2. Kenneth L. Schmitz, "Philosophical Pluralism and Philosophical Truth," *Philosophy Today*. 10 (1966), pp. 3-18.
3. John J. Stuhr, "Re-visioning Philosophy", *Philosophy Today* 33 (1989), p. 264 Cf. K.C. Anyanwu, "Cultural Philosophy as a philosophy of Integration and Tolerance", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1985), pp. 271-87.
4. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is widely acclaimed as the greatest philosopher of this century, who has given a new 'turn' to the Western thought-structure. His chief merit consists in having restated and thought anew the question of Being in a manner and language hitherto unfamiliar. He is looked up as the source of inspiration for the new wave of thinking in philosophy, theology, hermeneutics, aesthetics, history, existential psychology, etc.
5. "Aber das Ziel unserer Frage ist, *in* die Philosophie hineinzukommen, in ihr uns aufzuhalten, nach ihrer Weise uns zu verhalten, d.h. zu 'philosophieren'. Der Weg unserer *Gespräche* muss deshalb nicht nur eine klare Richtung haben, sondern diese Richtung muss uns zugleich auch die Gewähr bieten, dass wir uns innerhalb der Philosophie bewegen und nicht aussen um sie herum." Heidegger, *Was ist das: die Philosphie?*, 5 Aufl., (Pfullingen: Neske, 1972), pp.3-4. *What is Philosophy?*, trans, W. Kluback and J.T. Wilde, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1958), p.21.

6. "Jeder Denker denkt nur einen einzigen Gedanken." Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?* 3. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971), p.20; *What is called Thinking?,* trans J. Glenn Gray, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p.50.
7. Heidegger's critique of metaphysical thinking is spread out in almost all his works. For a rather concise treatment of it, cf. J.L. Mehta, *Martin Heideggr: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), pp. 355-415; J.J. Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger: Through Authenitic Totality to Total Authenticity,* Louvain: Leuven University Press,1987, pp. 112-16, 120-31.
8. Even in his earlier phase of thought Heidegger has been distancing himself from the metaphysical tradition. But after the 'turn' *(Kehre)* the distance becomes wider, as a result of which his critique tends to be more pointed and the need to overcome it more imperative.
9. "Mit Nietzsches Metaphysik ist die Philosophie vollendet." Heidegger, Vorträge und Aufsätze, 4. Aufl. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1978). p. 79; *The End of Philosophy,* trans. J. Stambaugh (London: Souvenir Press, 1975), p.95.
10. Heidegger deals with it mainly in his *Einführung in die Metaphysik.*
11. They are none other than Plato and Aristotle.
12. Heidegger's characterization of Western metaphysics as onto–theo–logical is almost universally accepted as a valid critique.
13. Die Metaphysik denkt das Sein des Seienden sowohl in der ergründenden Einheit des Allgemeinsten, d.h. des überall Gleich–Gültigen, als auch in der begründenden Einheit der Allheit, d.h. des Höchsten über allem." *Heidegger, Identität und Differenz* 6. Aufl. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1978), p.49; *Identity and Difference,* trans J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper, 1974), p.58.
14. For Heidegger the notion of 'Christian Philosophy' is a contradiction, and thus an impossibility like 'square-circle'. *Einführung in die Metaphysik,* 4. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1976), p.6; *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. R. Manheim (London: Yale University Press, 1959), p.7.
15. This essay is published in his *Holzwege* 5, Aufl. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972), pp.69–104; *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper, 1977), p.115–54.
16. *Holzwege,* p.85; *The Question Concerning Technology,* p.132.

17. Heidegger in his *Der Satz vom Grund* (5, Aufl. Pfullingen: Neske, 1978) interpreting the 'principle of sufficient reason' brings to light the representational character of metaphysical thinking. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., pp. 123-25.
18. Ibid. pp. 126-27.
19. Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* 6. Aufl. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1979), p.18; *Discourse on Thinking,* trans. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund, (New York: Harper, 1966), p.50.
20. Heidegger, *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1982), p.16; *Basic Writings,* ed. David F. Krell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.297-98.
21. *Holzwege,* p. 102; *The Question Concerning Technology,* p.152.
22. H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* (London Abacus Edition, 1974), pp. 119f. This book is a classic that makes a scathing and cogent attack on the evils of advanced techonological societies, and on the consumer capitalism of USA in particular.
23. Ohne die Philosophie gäbe es aber keine Abendländischeuropäische Wissenschaft, keine Freisetzung der Atomenergie." *Der Satz vom Grund,* p.209; p.111.
24. For a detailed study of it, cf., J.J. Puthenpurackal, "Essencing or Essence of God: The Heideggerian Perspective," *Indian Theological Studies* 29 (1992), 98-99.
25. *Holzwege,* pp. 239-40; *The Question Concerning Technology,* p.105.
26. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., p.3.
27. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 15. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979), p.183; *Being and Time,* trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p.227.
28. When Heidegger speaks of what man should be, he means primarily the philosophers. In speaking about man, he speaks about himself as the speaker or as the philosopher. It is quite in keeping with the existential-phenomenological approach of philosophizing from the point of view of 'actor', rather than 'spectator'.
29. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., pp. 32-34.
30. Heidegger considers finitude not as a 'lack' or an evil, but as belonging to the Being of man. *Ibid,* pp. 91-92
31. *Sein und Zeit,* p.310; *Being and Time*; p.358
32. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., pp. 67-74.

33. Ibid, pp. 74-80.
34. "Das Denken beginnt erst dann, wenn wir erfahren haben, dass die seit Jahrhunderten verherrlichte Vernunft die hartnäckigste Widersacherin des Denkens ist." *Holzwege*,p. 247; *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 112.
35. According to Heidegger all Western languages are metaphysical in character. Cf. *Identität und Differenz*, p.66; *Identity and Difference*, p.73.
36. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., p.132.
37. Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, p.94; *What is Called Thinking?* p.143.
38. *Technik and Kehre*, p. 40; *The Question ConcerningTechnology*, p.41.
39. *Was ist das: die Philosophie?*, pp.23-4; *What is Philosophy?* pp. 77-9. With the use of the various prefixes Heidegger fully exploits the meaning of 'Stimmen, Stimmung'.
40. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit. op., 219-20
41. For the relation between 'Denken' and 'Danken', *ibid*, p.150.
42. ...das Wunder aller Wunder: dass Seiendes *ist*." Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 2. Aufl. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), p.305.
43. *What is Philosophy?*, p.81. Heidegger shows that even in Plato and Aristotle 'astonishment' was given considerable importance.
44. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, p. 145.
45. It is published in *Holzwege*, pp. 296-343.
46. Cf. J.J. Puthepurackal, op.cit. pp. 201-2, note 226.
47. *Kluge, Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. 'wissen'.
48. *Holzwege*, p.321.
49. 'Seeing' and 'hearing' are not two activities with eyes and ears respectively. They are to be taken in the sense of 'receptive response', and thus they are used synonymously.
50. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 132; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 172.
51. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., p.155.
52. "Andenken denkt voraus". *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 5. Aufl. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), p.84.
53. Allein das Haus wird erst Haus durch das Wohnen." Heidegger, *Hebel der Hausfreund*, 4. Aufl. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), p.13.

54. Cf. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., pp. 156-60.
55. *Kluge, Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. 'wohnen'.
56. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 144-45; *Basic Writings*, pp.328-29.
57. J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., p.158.
58. Heidegger gives much importance to the mystical notion of 'Gelassenheit', originally conceived by Meister Eckhart.
59. For a detailed analysis of the relation between Heidegger-I and Heidegger–II, see, J.J. Puthenpurackal, op.cit., pp.229–54.
60. *Tractatus Logico–Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 189.
61. G. Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. S. Jolin and P. McCormick, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.11.
62. *Ibid*, p.17
63. Vincent Vycinas, *Greatness and Philosophy: An Inquiry into Western Thought*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p.10.
64. While speaking on the 'thinking of the Divine' Heidegger says that poets are better disposed to listen to the Divine. He calls them 'half-gods' (*Halbgötter*) who, standing between men and gods, get the divine sparks and give them to men in understandable terms.
65. "Er war immer ein Sucher und immer auf dem Weg." *Zum Gedenken an Martin Heidegger*, Messkirch: 1977, p.6.
66. M.E. Zimmermann, *Eclipse of the Self*, (London, Ohio University Press, 1982), p.3.

3

The Beginning and the End of the Philosophy and the Role of the Philosopher: A Vedāntic Perspective

Dr. R. Balasubramanian

1. PHILOSOPHER AND THE PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHIZING

The question about the role of the philosopher is connected with the role of philosophy which, again, is connected with the subject matter of philosophy. As a professional, the work of a philosopher is comparable to, for example, that of a doctor. When we want to discuss about the role of a doctor in society, we have to pay attention to the nature and purpose of medicine in the context of the diagnosis and treatment of diseases as well as preservation and promotion of health of humans and others. Just as we ask, "What is medicine for?" we have to ask, "What is philosophy for?".

Though it is a truism that all cognitive enterprises, scientific or otherwise, undertaken by professionals are for the sake of the people, there is a strong tendency among some technical philosophers today both in India and elsewhere to ignore this well–known truth and

indulge in a kind of philosophical activity which is nothing but a futile intellectual exercise, profitless and uninspiring. It has been the practice among the classical philosophers in India to say in the beginning itself that the philosophical treatise which they write is intended to help the people overcome the suffering or to attain a goal which is worthy of realization. Consider, for example, *Iśvara Kṛṣṇa's* opening verse in the *Sāṅkhya–kārikā* stating that, since there is threefold suffering (*duḥkha–traya*) for human beings, there is the need to undertake the inquiry into the means of terminating it. This healthy practice which was prevalent in the Indian philosophical tradition should not be ignored as nothing more than a pious convention like invocation. On the contrary, it deserves consideration as a pointer to the responsibility of the professional philosopher to society, for whatever he says and does should, by being purposive, be beneficial to the people. In this connection I invite your attention to the remarks of two philosophers, one from the Indian, and the other from the Western, tradition. According to Vācaspati:[1]

> A philosophical system is expounded for the sake of the ordinary people who are in need of it and who are, therefore, eligible for it.

Wittgenstein observes:[2]

> What is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life.

So, three points emerge from the views expressed by the two distinguished philosophers mentioned above. *First*, philosophy which is for the sake of the people has an important part to play in society. This point may be rephrased differently. Though philosophy, as it was understood and practised by the most exemplary philosophers in the East and the West, has dealt with God, the transcendent reality, and the cosmos, the creation of the transcendent being, it has been, in an important sense, *anthropocentric* analysing, exploring, and explicating the nature and destiny of the human being in relation to both God and the physical

universe. Neither God who is omniscient nor the world which is material requires philosophy. On the contrary, the human being who is parviscient, who is not only finite, but is also aware of the finitude, who is capable of knowledge, desire, and will, has the need for philosophy.

Second, there are problems or questions of everyday life covering the entire range of philosophy. Making a distinction between "pure philosophy" and "applied philosophy", we can say that some of the problems, *e.g.* questions about God, the knowledge of the external world, the knowledge of other minds, questions about good and bad, right and wrong, fall in the area of pure philosophy, and some others such as abortion, euthanasia, sexual morality, world hunger, civil disobedience, capital punishment, professional ethics, etc., are dealt with in applied philosophy. Though a hard and fast distinction between these two branches is not possible, still we can say that pure philosophy deals with *general* questions whereas applied philosophy is concerned with *particular* issues which require specific answers.[3]

Third, philosophy must help a person to improve his/her thinking about these problems. Not that human beings do not think outside the domain of philosophy or that they begin to think only with the help of philosophy. On the contrary, phlosophy plays a distinctive role in guiding systematic thinking in three ways. First of all, philosophy in general, and applied philosophy in particular, clarifies "the concepts employed in public discourse and private thought with a view to avoiding obscurantism and unnecessary befuddlement."[4] Secondly, it does not work of formulating arguments for and against any particular issue by highlighting the principle which is applicable to it and drawing the conclusion therefrom. Thirdly, where conflicting conclusions arise as a result of the application of divergent principles to the same issue, it may help a person to take a decision in a concrete situation on the basis of "priorities". These three functions, *viz.* concept clarification, argument identification, and result ranking, which philosophy is expected to do will promote systematic thinking.[5] A word of caution is necessary here. It must be borne in mind that, as R.M. Hare has pointed out, principles and their application to concrete cases can be taught, but not decisions.[6]

I shall now turn my attention to the subject matter of philosophy and make a brief review of the present philosophical scenario in the West. The self–image of philosophy has suffered a lot because of the scepticism about the claims of philosophy and its achievements. No one today is so vocal as Richard Rorty about the damage to the self–image of philosophy in his writings, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,[7] *The Consequences of Pragmatism*,[8] and *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.[9] The age–old conception of philosophy is that it is love of wisdom which, encompassing within its bosom the whole of reality, endeavours to see God, man, and the world as integrally related. The philosophical pursuit was in the direction of the search of the One in the midst of the many and of the explanation of the relation between the One and the many in a holistic way. Fortunately for us in India, there is continuity of the philosophical tradition, though it has given the impression to a superficial observer that philosophy in India has been stagnating without any progress. It is not necessary here to consider the question about the so–called progress in philosophy in general and in Indian philosophy in particular. I shall, however, highlight the strength of the philosophical tradition in India. Uddālaka of the Upanisadic fame speaks of the One by hearing which what is not heard becomes heard, what is not thought of becomes thought of, and what is not known becomes known.[10] The Upaniṣadic outlook of which Uddālaka is the spokesman is only an elaboration of the Ṛg–vedic insight into the primal One as the ground of the manifested universe comprising both sentient and insentient beings.[11] It has inspired both classical and contemporary Indian philosophy in such a way that we can speak about the unbroken philosophical tradition in India. What, then, does this tradition stand for? It is not difficult for us to spell out the central idea of the hoary tradition which has not withered away. To see how things hand together, to explain everything in terms of the One without denying the many, which are related on an ontological hierarchy, and to emphasize the unity of theory and practice – this has been the main thrust of the philosophical tradition in India from the Vedic times down to the present day.

2. PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE WRONG TRACK

The philosophical scenario has been changing from time to time

in the West. Perhaps, these changes, the twists and turns, sometimes major and very often minor, have given the impression of progress in the philosophical thinking of the West. There are competent scholars in the West who have questioned for various reasons the so–called "progress" in the Western philosophical thinking. Rorty, for example, has questioned the Cartesian, empiricist, and Kantian traditions which have laid emphasis on the primacy of epistemology. He has also challenged the claims of "perennial philosophy". "The Demise of the Tradition" is the title of a recent book of Kai Nielsen's.[12] The very fact that he discusses the question about the stresses on, and the retreat of, the tradition and also raises the question, "Can There Be Progress in Philosophy?"[13] is a pointer to the cracks that have developed in the philosophical structure after Descartes.

Before the advent of Descartes philosophy in the West was oriented mainly towards metaphysics. From this one should not hastily jump at the conclusion that there was no epistemology at all before Descartes. The problem of knowledge and belief which haunts the philosophical domain and which is discussed and debated *ad nauseam* is a heritage from Plato. The one that "exists and must exist" vis–à–vis the sensible world as set forth by Parmenides through "The Way of Truth" and "The Way of Seeming" respectively, the One as the ground of the many as taught by Plotinus, Being of metaphysics and God of theology—such metaphysical issues dominated philosophy before Descartes.

From the time of Descartes onwards philosophy has become a technique, a method. The insight into the One through contemplation, through ecstasy, through theōriá, through knowledge, was replaced by a *method* of investigation into the two realms of mind and matter, subject and object. Philosophy as the vision of the One became epistemology in the hands of Descartes, Locke, and Kant and undertook a relentless and rigorous search after certainty, search after secure foundations of knowledge, which, most unfortunately, has proved to be a case of chasing a will–ó–the–wisp. Wittgenstein, Rorty, and others are severely critical of the foundationalism of epistemology and also of the programmatic

analytical philosophy, which succeeded epistemology. So the question is whether a philosopher should be engaged in this type of epistemology and analysis that was rampant in the academic centres of the University?

Let us now look at another turn in philosophy. This time philosophy is reduced to logic. Russell proclaimed in 1914, four years after the publication of the first volume of the *Principia*, that logic is the essence of philosophy. In 1948 he came to the conclusion that logic is not a part of philosophy at all. It is well–known that neither Whitehead nor Russell developed their philosophy on the basis of mathematical logic. Though the earlier Wittgenstein held the view that logic is the essence of philosophy, when he was under the spell of mathematical logic, and suggested that we could know the world from logic *via* language as if the structure of language maps the structure of the world, the later Wittgenstein, following a pragmatic view of language, abandoned the earlier view contained in the first part of the *Tractatus*. Considering that the mystique of logic has failed to deliver the goods, as it cannot help us to understand the mystery of the existence of the world—"*That* the world is, is the mystical", so declared Wittgenstein—should we say that philosophy is nothing but logic and that a philosopher should be engaged in the technicalities of logic and tiresome verbal games?

We may consider one more turn in philosophy. This time it is the linguistic turn. Contemporary philosophers who are preoccupied with the problem of meaning are interested in the analysis of linguistic expressions. Holding the view that the basic empirical statements are statements expressing sensory experiences, one group of logical positivists, *e.g.* Ayer and others, undertake phenomenalistic analysis, whereas another group of logical positivists, *e.g.* Carnap and others, who hold that the basic empirical statements are expressions of observations of physical objects, undertake physicalistic analysis. The whole exercise of the logical positivists is based upon, what Quine characterized as, two dogmas, viz. the analytic–synthetic distinction and reductionism. They are also obsessed with the myth of the given. Such an approach, it is obvious, will exclude metaphysical, theological, ethical, aesthetic statements

as they do not conform to the Procrustean bed of the positivists. Once again the question is whether a philosopher should undertake this type of linguistic analysis.

I started with the view that philosophy, according to Parmenides and others, is the quest after the One, the pursuit of "That which is," by knowing which everything else is known. Philosophical wisdom is seeing things together in a holistic way. According to Heidegger, something has gone wrong with Western philosophy from the time of Plato. Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel has become onto–theo–logical, because it identifies the Being of metaphysics with the God of theology: that is to say, ontology, the study of Being qua Being, is essentially connected, in Western metaphysics, with theology, the investigation of the highest being which is the necessary condition for the possibility and actuality of all other beings.[14] What is wrong, one may ask, with philosophy as ontotheology? Heidegger's simple and straight answer is: forgetfulness of Being. According to Heidegger, the impact of ontotheology can be seen in science and Western culture.[15] Separating themselves from philosophy, sciences developed and established their independence. To quote Heidegger:[16]

> *The end of philosophy proves to be the triumph of the manipulative arrangement of a scientific, technological world and of the social order proper to this world. The end of philosophy means the beginning of the world civilization based upon Western European thinking.*

Science and technology consider beings as objects present on hand to be manipulated without moral and spiritual restraint in pursuit of ends willed by men for men. Not only science and technology, but also our languages exhibit the ontotheological concentration on beings. There is the urgent need to overcome metaphysics which has become onto–theo–logical by an understanding of Being as unconcealment rather than as the highest Being that grounds itself and all other beings. This calls for a new thinking—post–ontotheological thinking—which is non–conceptual, non–representative, non–calculative. So, the question is whether it is possible to have a *thinking* which is neither metaphysical nor

scientific, a thinking which is a response to a call which comes from Being itself.

For entirely different reasons Wittgenstein is critical about epistemology and analytical philosophy. His *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* show that it is impossible for us to determine the "foundations" of knowledge. Nor is it possible for us to work out a "synthesis" of world–view in view of the fact that our social practices and language games are diverse. He was against a grant *Weltanschauung*. We live our day–to–day life within the framework of "ungrounded beliefs". However, in all his writings his insight into the Transcendent, the Mystical, the subject, the philosophical "I", is unmistakably present. He is concerned to show that the Transcendent is outside the boundaries of language, the boundaries of logic. In addition to empirical and mathematico–logical propositions, there are metaphysical, theological, mystical, and moral statements which are not meaningless. He is aware of, and has felt the need of, the mystical ascent. Consider the following passages:

> *My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as non–sensical, when he has used them – as steps– to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it).*
>
> *He must transcend these prepositions, and then he will see the world aright.*[17]
>
> *Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?*[18]
>
> *The subject does not belong to the world, but is a border of the world.*[19]
>
> *The philosophical "I" is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the border – not a part – of the world.*[20]

Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* shows how he was alienated from his times and how he was disgusted with scientism and secularism, the culture of the Enlightenment. He is convinced that religion is "a man's refuge in this ultimate torment".

3. RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A PHILOSOPHER

Philosophy as a discipline must be relevant to society and a philosopher who is doing philosophy has professional responsibility. Opinions may differ with regard to the question of the social relevance of a subject. When I was on a lecture tour in Canada a few years ago, someone asked me why a tax payer should support a department of philosophy or religion. It is obvious that the question was asked not with a view to elicit my answer, because the questioner knew what kind of answer I would give being a professional philosopher, but with a view to convey his own perception of the value or use of the various subjects taught in colleges and universities. Obviously, he would, like many others, classify subjects into useful and useless; and subjects such as philosophy and religion belong to the second category. Here it is not necessary to go into details about the rationale behind this classification. Suffice it to say that the ideal of liberal education which every society should promote and support for the healthy development of the people will include subjects such as philosophy, religion, history, and so on and that to decide the value of a subject in terms of job opportunities and so on is an index of vulgarity and an expression of philistinism.

Then, how about the role of philosophers as professionals and their responsibility to society? The question about the role of philosophers as professionals is closely connected with what they consider to be the *subject matter* of philosophy, with the *method* they follow, and with the *views/ideas/teachings* which they make available to the people. There is a strong view that philosophy as epistemology, or philosophy as logic, or philosophy as analysis as pursued and practised with the appropriate methods by the professional philosophers has neither been enlightening nor socially relevant. It has been stated that the "narrowing of philosophical vision" has resulted in the decline of philosophical influence in American society."[21] If even for a professional philosopher, who is fairly acquainted with the ideas, theories, and arguments in these specialized areas, it is difficult to follow the type of discussion that

takes place in the professional philosophical journals, nothing need be said about the plight of non–philosophers who may be genuinely interested in philosophy.

A decade ago the American Philosophical Association issued a statement on "The Role of Philosophy Programs in Higher Education" explaining the function of philosophy as an autonomous metadiscipline and its contribution to the elucidation of normative issues involved in other disciplines such as medicine, law, history, political science, sociology, and so on. It also amounts to a statement on the role of the professional philosopher for the reason already mentioned. It says:[22]

> An important function of philosophy is to foster interdisciplinary perspective... Every discipline generates some essentially philosophical questions about itself, and many questions about relations among different disciplines are also philosophical... Both in exploring the interrelations among other disciplines and in examining their methods of inquiry, philosophy fulfills a unique and important role as a metadiscipline.

Again it says :

> Philosophy provides a unique and systematic approach to normative issues... It is sometimes thought that moral, social, aesthetic, and other value questions do or can receive adequate treatment in the social sciences or perhaps in literature or history. These other disciplines, however, do not, and do not claim to, deal with normative questions in the way philosophers do...
>
> In most communities there is much concern with a variety of public policy issues... Philosophers are generally competent to speak informatively on certain important aspects of these issues, particularly the normative aspects...

Regarding the first claim I am doubtful whether philosophy should undertake the role as a metadiscipline. This is no other than the claim that philosophy is the "cultural overseer" which can adjudicate any claim in any domain. This, according to Rorty, is a spurious claim. Nielsen summarises Rorty's arguments as follows:[23]

> The traditional conception of philosophy holds that philosophy can be a foundational arbiter of culture. Culture involves claims to knowledge very centrally, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. This has been the proud claim of philosophy, but, as Rorty would have it, the three great philosophical revolutionaries of the twentieth century –John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Martin Heidegger – have shown, in diverse ways and in very different idioms, such a claim to be without warrant.

Though philosophy cannot be a metadiscipline, it can, in its own right, be an autonomous discipline committed to its age–old subject matter—the pursuit of the One which is the source, support, and end of all, the implication of the concept of oneness, and the problems connected with, and arising from, the unity of theory and practice. A philosopher has a decisive and effective role to play in this direction.

There is much to be said in favour of the second claim. Philosophy can certainly pinpoint the normative principles involved in various issues that arise in the day–to–day life of the people, examine the issues in the light of these principles, consider the applicability of other principles to the same issues, examine the cases where the principles will break down, and so on. If so, philosophy, as Dewey would have it, is very much concerned with "the problems of men", and the philosopher has an important role to play in society.

4. PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE VEDĀNTA WAY

According to Vedānta, the role of a philosopher may be viewed from two perspectives – individual and social. As an individual, s/he is engaged in philosophizing. When s/he is doing philosophy, s/he is very much a professional philosopher in pursuit of truth. Subscribing to the view that philosophy is not only a view of life, but also a way of life, she is committed to the unity of theory and practice. As a member of the society, s/he must endeavour to see that the social reality, in his one's life as well as in that of others, reflects the philosophical ideals of oneness. First of all, I shall consider the philosopher's role as an individual who is doing philosophy.

In India philosophy is both *darśana* and *darśana–śāstra*. "*Darśana*" means seeing, perception, intuition. Each of these words in the verbal form is transitive pointing to an object. In order to bring out the full significance of the etymological meaning of the word "*darśana*" we have to ask: "seeing what?" Since the answer is seeing or intuiting truth, "*darśana*" means "*tattva–darśana*". If so, philosophy means the vision of truth, the immediate and direct knowledge of the real. Philosophy also means *darśana–śāstra*. or *tattva–vicāra* in the sense of a treatise on, or inquiry into, the truth or the real. Though classical philosophers of the Indian tradition knew the semantic distinction between *darśana* and *darśana–śāstra*., still they considered philosophy both as *darśana* and *darśana–śāstra*., as it stands for the vision of truth as well as the means thereto. *Darśana–śāstra*., which is a philosophical treatise sets forth the nature and stages of inquiry (*vicāra*) to be undertaken for realizing the truth. In broad terms, philosophical inquiry is of two kinds—*pramāṇa–vicāra* and *prameya–vicāra*, *i.e*. epistemological and metaphysical inquiry respectively. It may be noted that metaphysical inquiry is mentioned only in a suggestive way. The word "*prameya*" means an object of knowledge; so, not only physical objects, but also values such as *dharma*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* are *prameyas*. If so, *prameya–vicāra* should not be understood in the narrow sense of metaphysical inquiry; it also includes axiological as well as ethical inquiry. The *Upaniṣad*, which is also called *Vedānta* and which is the source of the classical schools of Vedanta such as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and so on, provides the clue to the right approach to the pursuit and practice of philosophy.

Let us first consider the celebrated *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text which says: "The Self, indeed, should be seen—should be heard of, reflected on, and contemplated upon."[24] It speaks about the object to be seen or realized as well as the means thereto—guided study of the text (*śravana*), rational reflection of the content of the text (*manana*), and steadfast contemplation on the object following intellectual conviction *(nididhyāsana)*. In short, the *Upaniṣad* spells out, briefly, but unambiguously, the object of inquiry as well as the method of inquiry for the guidance of a philosopher. It is not necessary to go

into the details about the method of inquiry. Suffice it to say that the method will comprise both epistemological and metaphysical investigation by means of different kinds of reasoning *(tarka)* that are called for and by means of analysis of concepts and meanings that are necessary. And so, such an investigation cannot but be technical. This is as much true with regard to philosophy as it is true with regard to other disciplines. This, however, does not mean that philosophy is reduced to logic or epistemology, or that philosophy is equated with analysis of terms, concepts, and meaning. Though attentive to the means, the Vedantic philosopher does not lose sight of the end. Śañkara condemns dry reasoning (*śuṣka–tarka*) which is purposeless and therefore futile. On the contrary, he commends reasoning which is purposive, which regulates thinking towards the goal as set forth by scripture. He characterizes this kind of logic as one which aids scripture.[25]

The *Upaniṣad* not only provides the vision of the One, but also throws light on the social implications of the conception of the One. Consider the following texts:[26]

> He who sees all beings in the very Self and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that (realization).
>
> When to the man of realization all beings become the very Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?

One may think that it is enough if the *Upaniṣad* says that all are one and that one can work out the implications of such a view in the context of plurality of beings which we experience in our daily life. But it appears that the *Upaniṣad* does not want to take any chance in working out the implications of the concept of oneness. It is a matter of common experience that there is a plurality of individuals. It is also well–known that every individual has his/her own life history marked by birth and death, that everyone is a distinct center of experience, etc. According to Advaita, what differentiates one individual from another is the mind–sense–body complex. But the Self in every individual is the same and that the Self which is no other than Brahman is the supreme reality. Since the Self, the sole reality, is in every individual, all human beings are equal. The

Upaniṣad suggests the sense of equality, the divine nature of every human being, by saying that one must see all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings. In other words, all are included in the Self, and the Self indwells in all beings. As if this is not enough, the *Upaniṣad* takes one step forward and declares that to a realized person all beings become the very Self: that is to say, the *Upaniṣad* suggests the identity of the *jiva* with *Brahman–Ātman.* So according to the *Upaniṣad,* one has to pay attention to the ideas of inclusion, indwelling, and identity in working out the implications of the concept of oneness. One cannot think of a better theoretical justification for the enforcement of social justice than the one that has been made available to us by the *Upaniṣad* .

If we examine the history of philosophy, we find that philosophy has developed by performing three functions—speculation, interpretation, and analysis. Philosophers, both in the East and the West, have speculated on the origin of human beings and the world; and as a result of their speculation they have built philosophical systems providing a place for humans, world, and God in the scheme of things. Different philosophical systems such as monism, dualism, and pluralism have a bearing on religion. In fact, scholars like Karl Jaspers speak about the religious roots of the Western philosophical tradition. The strength and grandeur of the Indian *darśanas* lie in the fact that they combine both philosophy and religion. A philosopher who is concerned with the problems of life cannot function *merely* as a technical philosopher analysing terms and concepts, truth functions and argument forms, words and sentences, however important these may be, ignoring the forms of human activity in the spheres of religion, morals, and politics. It means that s/he will be required to go beyond the boundaries of philosophy and step into religion, ethics, social and political philosophy.

5. INTELLECTUAL ROLE OF A PHILOSOPHER

In the light of the philosophical guidance provided by the *Upaniṣad* , the Vedāntic philosopher accepts the world, questions it, and endeavours to transcend it. Each one of these activities requires some explanation. I shall confine myself mainly to the Advaita point of view.

According to Advaita, a philosopher has to start his/her reflection on the given world, which is presented to his/her consciousness. The given world may be characterized as the prereflective world. It is pluralistic in character comprising persons and objects. As a person, a philosopher is involved in it as the subject of knowledge, the agent of action, and the enjoyer of the consequences of action. She notices that the persons she interacts with, and the objects she handles, manipulates, and makes use of, appear and disappear, each one having a distinct life history. S/he also realizes that his/her life is governed by various kinds of social practices, a variety of forms of life, and manifold language games, all of which are pointers to the tradition s/he has inherited. The worldly life which goes on in this way within this horizon, what Śaṅkara calls *loka–vyavahāra*, is natural (*naisargika*).[27] A philosopher, when s/he starts doing philosophy, has to accept, like others, the world horizon, since, being thrown into it, s/he is already a part of it. The world "acceptance" has to be understood from two perspectives – from the perspective of ignorance according to which one not having the vision of the One, sees nothing but plurality and from the perspective of knowledge as a result of which one, having attained the vision of the One, experiences the oneness of all. Though there is the acceptance of the world in both the perspectives, it is not the same, as the behaviour of a person after realization will be entirely different from the one before realization.[28] Accepting the given world, a philosopher begins to question it in the most radical way; and it is this questioning through speculation, analysis, and interpretation that gives birth to philosophy.

There are, according to Sankara, two problems which a philosopher has to tackle at the beginning of philosophy. The first one is the problem of enworlded subjectivity. The Self or consciousness, which is pure subjectivity (*asmad*), is involved in the objective world (*yuṣmad*) through the mind–sensebody complex.[29] Advaita classifies all entities into two categories—the self and the not–self—for the *purpose* of epistemological and metaphysical analysis. This classification is intended to highlight the polarity between the two categories. The not–self includes the mind, the

senses, the body, and the things of the external world, which are all objects of the Self or consciousness, which is the basic *revealing* principle in the absence of which nothing can be known. Neither the mind nor the senses can know anything without the help of the Self. So Advaita holds the view that the Self or consciousness is, to use the Husserlian expression, the "principle of principles", "the light of lights" (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*),[30] as the *Upaniṣad* would put it. The point to be noted here is that the Self, the pure subjectivity, is never an object of knowledge, while an object of knowledge, whatever it may be, can never be the subject, *i.e.* the Self or consciousness. The involvement of the Self in the objective world through the mind–sense–body complex is the problematic according to Advaita. How, then, does this involvement take place? "Through superimposition (*adhyāsa*)", says Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara says that just as light and darkness are mutually exclusive, even so the Self, which is the subject, and the not–Self which is the object, are mutually exclusive, and so it is wrong to identify the one with the other, or to superimpose the nature or characteristic of the one on the other.[31] However, we do commit such a mistake, what Śaṅkara calls, "superimposition", in our daily life. For example, when we say, "I am stout", "I am blind", "I am happy", we superimpose stoutness, blindness, and happiness, which are the characteristics of the body, the sense organ, and the mind respectively on the Self. Similarly, we also superimpose the nature of the Self on the mind and the sense organ when we say that we know through the mind and the senses; again we ascribe the nature of the Self to the body when we speak about the sensitivity of the body. In short, there is the illicit transfer of the nature of the Self on the not–Self, and *vice–versa*. It must be borne in mind that the role of *adhyāsa* is not restricted to epistemology and metaphysics. On the contrary, it is pervasive, in all our activities – cognitive, affective, and connative. Though the Self, the pure subjectivity, is not involved in any kind of activity, we ascribe all activities to it and make it enworlded. Unless one is sensitive to the functioning of *adhyāsa* , one will not be able to understand the Upaniṣadic view that the Self which is bodiless *(aśarīra)*[32] becomes embodied, gets involved in worldly life, and

suffers bondage. Nor can one make spiritual progress on the basis of intellectual and moral discipline, which requires discrimination (*viveka*) on the intellectual side and dispassion (*vairāgya*) on the moral side.

The second problem which also presupposes *adhyāsa* is about the possibility of knowledge. Śaṅkara raises the most radical question: "Under what condition is knowledge possible?" His answer to this question is: *adhyāsa* . Some explanation is necessary to understand Sankara's point of view. The epistemic inquiry, first of all, presupposes the knower (*pramatā*); secondly, in the absence of the knower there is no scope for the functioning of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa pravṛtti*); thirdly the work of the *pramāṇas* presupposes the functioning of the senses (*indriyas*); fourthly, the body is required as the basis for the senses; fifthly, one must have a sense of identification with the body as one's own (*ātmabhāva*); and finally, there must be *adhyāsa* for a person to have the sense of identification with the body. So according to Śaṅkara, the entire epistemic inquiry presupposes *adhyāsa*. In other words, in the absence of *adhyāsa* it is not possible for us to have knowledge; and in the absence of epistemology, metaphysical investigation is not possible. So, a philosopher should be sensitive to the role of *adhyāsa* which is presupposed in the entire range of epistemological and metaphysical analysis *(pramāṇa–prameyavyavahāra).*[33]

Let me now turn my attention to the social dimension of *adhyāsa* in an individual's life. A human being is called upon to play different roles in society – the role of a husband or wife, the role of the head of an institution, the role of the head of the state, and so on. The roles are both relative and temporary. One plays, for example, the role of a husband in relation to somebody; and this role, it is obvious, is relative. One is not the head of the state in one's relation to one's spouse, one's children and friends. Again, the role of the head of the state is only temporary. The very fact that a human being is able to play different roles at the same time shows that s/he is *essentially* different from all of them. The failure to realize this important truth leads to the problem of "role–identification". When a person plays a certain role, *e.g.* the role of the head of an institution,

s/he not only "projects the image" of the role, but also identifies himself/herself with that, forgetting the fact that s/he can never play the role all the time. Some people regret and some others resent the change of role, *e.g.* the change of headship of the department. Identification with a role invariably produces arrogance and pride, what the Greeks called the *hybris*. When a person is the head of the government for a number of years, the strong identification with the role makes him/her, at the height of power and pride, think that s/he is the government, that s/he is the state. The problem of role–identification manifests itself in other ways as well. Someone claims to be a Hindu or a Christian, a Brāhmin or a Kṣatriya, man or woman, and claims privileges and special considerations thereby. Whether the term "role" is used in a functional sense or as a class concept, there is the problem of role–identification, which *Śaṅkara* calls *adhyāsa* . Why does this problem of role–identification arise? "It is because of ignorance (*avidyā*)," answers *Śaṅkara* . Overpowered by ignorance, a person not only does not know the Self in him/her, but also identifies himself/herself with the mind–sense–body complex as well as with the things outside. If only one understands the truth of the Self and is sensitive to the fact that one plays different roles due to *adhyāsa,* one will be humbled in one's life, responsible in one's conduct, and detached and self–controlled in one's attitude and outlook.

6. SOCIAL ROLE OF A PHILOSOPHER

I shall now consider the social role of a philosopher from the Vedāntic point of view. On the social side, Advaita may be viewed as *critical theory* combining philosophy and social theory. Philosophy is a reflection on the essential meaning of life, individual as well as social. It is, therefore, concerned with the freedom of the individual and the factors or conditions essential for the realization of freedom. I have already stated that philosophy, as understood and practised in the Indian tradition, is not only theory, but also practice. It is against this background of the unity of theory and practice that we must try to find out the answer to the problem of spiritual freedom and social justice. Humans as spiritual beings are free,

though for all practical purposes they are bound in many ways. This amounts to saying that a human being is both free and bound, *i.e.* is spiritually free and physically/ socially bound. Spiritual freedom as well as equality which is accepted as the goal should not be projected as a convenient cover to hide bondage and social inequality which we notice as social reality. The fact of bondage and all that it implies in our daily life can never be ignored on the ground that a human being is free. Nor can the freedom of a human being be denied on the basis of the limitations a human being is subject to. Advaita holds that, when the right knowledge of the Self arises, ignorance gets removed along with the false identification with the mind–sense–body complex caused by it. A person who has attained the saving knowledge remains as the Self, which is really bodiless; such a person, though with a body, is really bodiless and is spoken of as the liberated–in–life (*jīvanmukta*).

The problem of freedom has to be looked at not only from the individual side, but also from the social side. The politico–socio–economic order, as it exists in every society, is as much a limitation on human freedom as the mind–sense–body complex is. We find that there is social domination, economic exploitation, and political oppression of one class or group by another. It means that there is the concept of privilege, which is the bane of human life, functioning in all these spheres of daily life militating against the concept of freedom and making a mockery of the doctrine of oneness. Swami Vivekānanda, who was concerned with the problem of theory and practice in Vedānta, as any Advaitin should, declared that one cannot be a Vedāntin and also accept the theory of privilege in any form.[34]

The Vedāntic ideal in its dual form – the concept of freedom and the doctrine of oneness – operates in three ways for the purpose of guiding practice. First of all, it functions as a regulative idea for reordering the economic, political, and social structure. The ideal that has to be realized is oneness of all human beings, who exhibit differences of various kinds. These differences can neither be destroyed nor suppressed because they are "natural" inasmuch as they arise from the material component associated with the Self in its

empirical journey. However, there is a way to overcome them. Secondly, the Vedāntic ideal helps us to develop a moral point of view. A correct understanding of the Vedāntic ideal and all that it implies will generate in a perceptive mind a righteous indignation at the injustice of various kinds practised and perpetuated in society. One committed to the Vedāntic ideal will realize that, though differences among human beings caused by the mind–sense–body complex are unavoidable, the inequality in various forms connected with the theory of privilege is avoidable. Thirdly, the Vedāntic ideal presupposes a certain competence of the human being for realizing the ideal. According to Śaṅkara, there is a special competence in every human being for the pursuit of knowledge and performance of work (*jñāna–karma–adhikāra*).[35] It will be of interest to note that the special competence of every human being mentioned by Śaṅkara has also been stressed by thinkers like T.H. Green. According to Green, every human being has "reason" and "will". By "reason", Green means the capacity in a human being for conceiving the perfection to be attained; and by "will" he means the capacity for action for the purpose of pursuing the perfection.[36]

Just as we speak about the beginning of philosophy we can also speak about the end of philosophy. According to Advaita, reality is trans–relational, trans–rational and trans–linguistic. It is knowable, but not in the way in which stocks and stones are known. It is necessary to bear in mind not only the "matter" of thinking, but also the "method" of thinking. It is well–known that thinking operates through distinctions. As already stated, we have to distinguish the Self from the not–self by means of reasoning of various kinds. It may be mentioned here that Advaita employs the logic of *anvaya–vyatireka* for distinguishing the Self from the not–self.[37] When reasoning has prepared the ground for comprehending the meaning of the scriptural text such as "That thou art" (*tat tvamasi*),[38] it has to withdraw from the scene of operation, since the Self, the ultimate reality cannot be known by means of thinking which is conceptual, representative and relational. Such a non–conceptual, non–representative, and non–relational thinking can be obtained from the major texts of the *Upaniṣads*.

Finally, we may speak about the acceptance of the world by one after attaining Self–realization.[39] To one who has attained the vision of the One, the world of plurality is no more what it was earlier. As the *Upaniṣad* says, such a person perceives the entire world as Brahman,[40] and accepts everything, because everything is Brahman.

NOTES

1. Iśvara Kṛṣṇa *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, Ed. with text, English translation, and notes by S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri (Madras: University of Madras), verse 1,p.1.
2. N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (London: OUP 1958)
3. See Leslie Stevenson, "Applied Philosophy", in *Applying Philosophy*, Ed. by T.W. Bynum and William Vitek (The Metaphilosophy) Foundation, 1988), p.21.
4. Bernard H. Baumrin, "Applying Philosophy," in *Applying Philosophy*, *op.cit.*, p.5.
5. *Ibid*, pp.5–7.
6. See R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (OUP, 1952), p.69.
7. Princeton University Press, 1979.
8. University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
9. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
10. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.1.3:
    "yena aśrutam śrutam bhavati, amatam matam, avijñātam vijñātam."
11. See *Ṛg–veda*, 10.129
12. Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy* (Westview Press, 1991).
13. *Ibid.*, chapters 1, 4, and 7.
14. See Martin Heidegger, "The Ontotheological Nature of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, tr. by Joan Stambaugh *(New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p.59.*
15. *Ibid.*, p.75.
16. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, tr. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp.84–110.
17. *Tractatus*, 6.54.
18. *Ibid.*, 5.633.

19. *Ibid.*, 5.632.
20. *Ibid.*, 5.641.
21. See Morton White, *Science and Sentiment in America* (New York: OUP, 1972), p. 301.
22. See *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association,* Vol.53 (Feb.1980), pp.363–370.
23. Kai Nielsen, *op.cit.*, p.4.
24. 2.4.5.
25. See his commentary on the *Brahma–sūtra*, 1.1.2.
26. *Iśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, 6–7.
27. See Śaṅkara's introduction, called *adhyāsa–bhāṣya*, to his commentary on the *Brahma–sūtra*: *"naisargiko'yam lokavyavahāraḥ."*
28. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma–sūtra*, 1.1.4.
29. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa–bhāṣya*, opening sentence. The word *"yuṣmad"* meaning "you" is used in the sense of the object, the not–Self, whereas the word *"asmad"* meaning "I" is used in the sense of the subject, the Self.
30. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.16.
31. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa–bhāṣya*, opening sentence.
32. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.12.1.
33. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa–bhāṣya*,
34. See Swami Vidyātmānanda (Ed.), *What Religion is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 2nd Indian Edition, Reprint, 1978), p.69.
35. See his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
36. See T.H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London: Longmans, 1941), p.31.
37. What remains the same at all times and places is *anvaya*; and that which is subject to change is *vyatireka*. Advaita distinguishes the Self from the not–Self by five kinds of *anvaya–vyatireka*. The first one called *dṛg–dṛśya anvayavyatireka* shows that the Self is the seer whereas the not Self is the seen. The second one which shows that the Self is the witness whereas the not–Self is the witnessed is called *sākṣi–sākṣya anvaya–vyatireka*. The third method called *āgamāpayitadavadhi anvayavyatireka* brings out the nature of the not–Self as that which appears and disappears whereas the Self is the limit of such appearance and disappearance. What is called

anuvṛtta–vyāvṛtta anvaya–vyatireka shows that, while the Self is what is uniformly present everywhere, the not–Self is not. The fifth method called *duḥkhi–paramapremāspada anvaya–vyatireka* shows that the not–Self is subject to suffering whereas the Self is of the nature of bliss.

38. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7.
39. See R. Balasubramanian, (Ed.) *The Naiskarmyasiddhi of Sureśvara* (Madras: University of Madras, 1988), 4.50, p.376.
40. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1.

4

Islamic Philosophical Traditions: Some Reflections

Dr. Syed Ali

The Muslims since the early period of their history evinced keen interest in philosophy and science, and their interest in these branches of knowledge was both intellectual and spiritual. They exercised authority over a vast area and consequently came into contact with ancient religions and philosophies which claimed to explain the nature of things. It was obligatory on the part of the Muslims to regard as holy the scriptures revealed to other prophets. The moral code propounded by the Quran is not a new doctrine but similar to what has been revealed to prophets who preceded the prophet Mohammed, at different times and in various regions. The Quran declares: "Truly we have sent you with the truth, bearer of good tidings, and a warner, for surely there is not a nation but a warner has visited it" (35:24). The Quran confirms the same way of faith as was enjoined on Noah and Abraham and what was contained in the book of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus and the scriptures of the East and the West. The Quran is a book of guidance to mankind, it gives glad tidings to the righteous and admonishes the unjust and the wicked. It is declared in the Quran that God never abrogates or causes to be forgotten any of his revelations, but according to the needs and exigencies of the times, He confirms them or substitutes for them something similar or better. "Whatever we abrogate of a sign or cause to be forgotten, we bring one better or its like thereof. Know you not that God is omnipotent over everything" (2:106).

Quran is primarily a religious book and not a philosophical

treatise, but it throws light on all those problems which concern theology and philosophy. Both offer explanation to the significance of expressions such as the creator, human origin and destiny, the universe, the individual soul, the inter–relations of these, good and evil, reward and punishment, free will and life after death. They at the same time deal with such concepts as appearance and reality, existence, space and time, permanence and change, and eternity and immortality.

The ultimate goal of man, as has been indicated in the Quran, is assimilation of divine attributes such as life, eternity, unity, power, truth, beauty, justice, love and goodness.

The ultimate being or reality is God. The Quran declares that He is the Absolute and Eternal Reality. He is the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden and there is none like Him. It is not given to man to comprehend His exact nature. His attributes are described by similitudes from what is loftiest in the universe. "God is the Light of the heavens and of the earth" (24:35). "And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the variety of your tongues and colours. Herein truly are signs for people of knowledge" (30:22). Muslim philosophers have attempted to summarize the attributes of God under a few essential heads: Life, Eternity, Unity, Power, Truth, Beauty, Justice, Love and Goodness.

LIFE: "He is the Living One" (40:65). "God! there is no God but He, the Living, the Eternal sustainer"*(2:255). "How can you disbelieve in God? You were dead and He gave you life" (2:28). Man will be in a position to realize one of God's attributes by living in accordance with Divine Laws. The present world is a place of sojourn and its duration is limited. Life on earth is a preparation for the spiritual life in the hereafter which is of a lasting nature. "He it is who created you of clay then determined the term of your life, and with Him is another prefixed term for the resurrection, yet still you doubt" (6:2). "And they shall say: Praise be to God who has made good to us His promise and has given to us the earth as our heritage, that we may dwell in paradise wherever we please. And goodly is the reward of those who travailed virtuously" (39:74).

Man is the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with knowledge, he is the loftiest of all that has been created, the sun and the moon, the day and the night have been made subservient to him. The whole of mankind is one family and human perfection is to be determined on the basis of piety. "O men We have indeed created you of a male and a female, and have made you peoples and the most worthy of honour in the sight of God is he who fears Him most. Indeed God is knowing, Cognisant" (49:13).

ETERNITY: This attribute is exclusively God's. Man has been created and lives on earth for a specified period and tastes death, but within him there is a craving for a state of eternity: "But Satan whispered to him, saying, O Adam! shall I show you the tree of eternity, and a Kingdom that does not fade away" (20:120). Life here is transient but the finite and temporal man has been promised everlasting status on the basis of piety. "And those who are God–fearing shall be driven towards paradise in hordes, until, when they reach it, its gates are opened, and its keepers shall say to them, Peace be upon you. Virtuous have you been: so enter it to abide herein for ever" (39:73).

UNITY: The Quran has laid the greatest emphasis on the concept of unity of God which implies belief in the Supreme–being and a moral code wherein virtue is rewarded and vice punished. Faith in God is not a mere verbal declaration but it should be accompanied by good deeds. "Those who, if we establish them in this land, will observe prayer, and pay the alms of obligation, and enjoin what is right, and forbid what is evil, and to God belongs the sequel of all affairs" (22:41). The idea of unity also implies peace and harmony among the members of a family, community, nation and the world. The Quran declares "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). Islam seeks to establish an atmosphere where people belonging to different faiths, sects, ethnic and ideological groups can live together in harmony and peace, enjoy freedom of conscience and worship, where people will co–operate with one another in acts of piety, goodness and justice and not in acts of injustice, sin and rancour.

POWER: Man has been endowed with knowledge to assume responsibility, he is given the power to distinguish between good

and evil. He is granted freedom of action subject to the will of God.

TRUTH AND WISDOM: In his search for truth and wisdom man derives inspiration by reflecting on the natural phenomenon, the majesty of the heavens and the earth. "Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of the night and the day, are signs for men of understanding heart" (3:190). It was through revealed knowledge and reflection on the phenomena of nature that Prophets of various regions were able to arrive at the ultimate truth. Prophet Abraham's endeavour to understand the ultimate reality has been described in the Quran in the following verses: "And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdoms of the Heavens and of the earth that he may be established in the knowledge. And when the night overshadowed him, he beheld a star, 'This', said he, 'is my Lord', but when it set, he said, 'I love not things which set'. And when he beheld the moon rising, 'This', said he, 'is my Lord'. But when it set, he said, 'Surely, if my Lord does not guide me, I shall surely be of those who go astray.' And when he beheld the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater'. But when it set, he said, 'O my people, I am free from that which you associate with God.' I have directed my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, following the right religion: and I am not one of those who add gods to God" (6:75 to 79).

JUSTICE: The value of justice is absolute and made obligatory on all people, it is a divine attribute; it has been emphasized repeatedly in the Quran that no compromise should be made in dispensing justice. "Surely, God enjoins justice and good doing, and giving gifts to kindred. And He forbids wickedness, abomination and oppression. He warns you that perhaps you may remember" (16:90). It implies that the believers should meet their contractual obligations, fulfil promises, and avoid all such acts which cause loss to others of whatever kind it be. In recent times Muslim thinkers have interpreted the verses of the Quran at great length and emphasized that the main objective of the state should be establishment of justice and equity in human affairs and that the resources of the state should be harnessed for the welfare of the citizens on the basis of social justice.

LOVE AND GOODNESS: Love of God implies kindness towards the kindred, orphans, the needy and those who are less happily situated in life. The Quran and the Prophet of Islam by his example laid emphasis that the believers should be gentle in their behaviour, compassionate and loving, walk on the earth in humility, eschew arrogance. To those who practise virtue and goodness rewards have been promised here and hereafter.

BEAUTY: Every aspect of nature is a picture of beauty and perfection, as it has been designed by the most "Skillful Creator" (37:125), "Who had made everything which He has created most beautiful" (32:7). "He is God, the Creator, the Fashioner, the Shaper. To Him belong the most excellent attributes. All that is in heavens and the earth glorifies Him, for he is the Mighty, the Wise" (59:24). God has sent down the best Discourse (39:23). The Quran narrates the best of narratives so that man can derive guidance from them. "And whoever shall obey God and the Messenger, they are with those upon whom God has conferred His blessings, the Prophets, the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous. And what good companions they are!" (4:69). The Quran exhorts people to pursue objectives of highest value, for God loves those whose deeds are excellent: "If you do good, it would be good for yourselves; and if you do evil that will go against you" (17:7).

Islam accepted the religious teachings that preceded it as having come from the same source as itself. This principle has been particularly emphasized by Muslim thinkers in the case of not only Judiasm and Christianity but also Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The early debates between Muslims and Christians, Greek and Indian Philosophers which took place under the patronage of Abbaside Caliphs were followed by scientific research in Baghdad. Caliph al–Mamum (813–833) established "Baiyt al–Hikma (The House of Wisdom) wherein academicians undertook the translation of logical, scientific and philosophical works from Greek, Syriac, Sanskrit and Pahlavi into Arabic. During this period, seventh to Ninth Centuries, an immense corpus of learning was translated into Arabic language hence it became the most important scientific language in the then known world. Many Greek works,

specially those relating to the Hellenistic period, are available in Arabic only, the orignals having been lost. These works included Aristotle's logical treatises, and the works of Galen and Hippocrates. At a later stage Hunayn ibn Ishaq and his school translated other scientific works of Galen and the philosophical and metaphysical works of Aristotle and Plato. Greek culture had a significant impact upon the growth of Islamic society during the early Abbaside Caliphs, particularly in the realm of philosophy. Muslim philosophers during this period discussed theological issues such as the nature of God and His attributes, and theories relating to creation of the world, human destiny and free will. Islamic philosophy developed within the intellectual universe of Abrahamic monotheism, the Quranic revelation and traditions of Prophet Mohammed and only those elements of Greek Philosophy were incorporated within it which were in conformity with these factors.

Being traditional in nature Islamic philosophy developed schools and perspectives which were followed over the centuries. It was developed by Al–Kindi, Al–Farabi, Al–Amiri and Abu Yaqub, Al–Sijistani and reached its peak with Ibn Sina (Avicenna) who emerged as the prototype of the philosopher scientist in the succeeding centuries. This school was temporarily eclipsed under criticism from such theologians as Al–Ghazzali, Al–Shahrastani and Fakkr al–Din al–Razi. Ibn Sina's school enjoyed a fair measure of popularity in Spain when it became a centre of intense literary and philosophical activity under such exponents as Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

Islamic Philosophical tradition is essentially based on a revealed book and prophecy. It is also concerned with the basic issues of harmony between reason and revelation and provides a metaphysics centered around the supreme doctrine of the One. The original texts in Arabic and Persian not only deal with metaphysics and logic but provide the key for the understanding of both physical nature and the soul. These texts and the philosophical movements of the classical period such as Mutazilism, Asharism, Tahawism, Maturidism, Zahirism or Ikhwan al–Safa are now of academic interest only: Interpreters of Islamic philosophy are now drawing closer to Western

thought. This is a direct result of contacts with the Western civilization whose impact is as great today as that of Hellenistic thought during the seventh to the ninth centuries. The "House of Wisdom" (Bayat al–Hikma) has given place to universities and academies in the entire Islamic world where students of philosophy are exposed to modern schools of thought both Eastern and Western. They are now more familiar with the works of Spinoza, John Locke, David Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Nietzsche, Sartre than those of Al–Kindi, Al–Farabi, Ibn Sina and Imaam Ghazali. The philosophical movements of the past too have been superceded by Puritan and Sufi Schools of thought and several diversified movements claiming revival of Islam. While, various schools give a call to reject all that is modern or Western, political theories that have arisen in Europe since the French Revolution are presented by them as if they are Islamic ideals.

As has been stated above Islamic philosophy draws inspiration from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. The earlier commentators of the Quran have based their theories on the basis of the interpretation of the Quranic passages given by Prophet Muhammad. The Companions of the Prophet transmitted his explanations by dint of the fact that they knew the Arabic language and the circumstances of revelation. But the need arose for further explanation of the verses of the Quran partly because a large number of Muslims were not acquainted with the Arabic language and even those who knew the language were in need of understanding its message and philosophy in greater detail. This gave rise to a new science of "Tafsir" Quranic exegesis.

Verse 7 Chapter 3 of the Quran divides the contents of revelation into two orders "Muhkamat" (categorical) the verses in which God lays down "what is permitted and what is forbidden," "Mutashaabihat" (allegorical) are those verses which resemble each other in meaning even though their words differ. "He it is who has sent down to you the book." Some of its signs are of themselves perspicuous, these are the basis of the book, and others are figurative". The history of the Quranic exegesis Tafsir could be traced to Prophet Muhammad himself, who was its best interpreter.

The Prophet by his words and example explained passages of the revealed texts to his companions. The Quran testifies the role of the Prophet as the interpreter: "We have revealed to you the message so that you might explain to people that which has been revealed to them" (16:44). Early commentators relied on Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) to explain the scripture and they were acquainted with Arabic language, Pre–Islamic Arabic literature besides a knowledge of the sciences related to the Quran and Hadith. The authenticity of the commentator depended on the extent to which he could quote the authority of the companions while interpreting the Quranic verses. This effort is classified as Tafsir bil–mathur, "interpretation according to what has been handed down", that means the traditions of the Prophet and the explanations given by his venerable companions and successors.

Another category of Tafsir which developed during the second century of Islam is known as Tafsir bil–ray, "interpretation by the use of reason", as the successors to the Companions of the prophet gave their individual opinion in explaining the Quranic verses. This tendency became more dominant with the advent of various sects and schools of Islamic philosophy. The Mutazila theologians, in particular, became increasingly speculative in their approach. The commentaries of the Quran which were compiled during the second century of Islam onwards, mostly in Arabic, were purely theological in nature and meant for providing an insight into divine guidance. Today commentaries are available in several European and Asian languages. Besides commentaries covering the entire text of the Quran, individuals have selected some verses of the Quran and explained them at length according to their perspective in the light of contemporary developments.

Muslim thinkers in various parts of the world have tried to present their favourite economic and political theories basing their arguments on the guidelines provided in the Quran. While one group holds that Islam preaches free enterprise, the other upholds the principles of socialism. While some would have us believe that Islam stands for democratic form of Government based on freedom of expression and freedom of thought, others would present equally learned arguments,

quoting religious authorities, for a dictatorial form of government and implicit obedience to those in authority. The fundamentalist organization in the Muslim countries, who plan to capture political power, would not hesitate to preach the philosophy of struggle and revolution in the name of Islam adopting the extremist philosophies that had arisen in the East and the West.

We are not in a position on this occasion to present a complete and comprehensive picture of Muslim philosophy so far as it is based on the revealed book because we do not claim to know what has been written on this subject in various languages and in different regions. We have selected for our purpose only two Muslim thinkers namely Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi to give an inkling as to how each one of them has approached the Quran for validating his own concepts. The two belong to the Indian sub–continent, they wrote their commentaries on the Quran in Urdu and translations of these are available in English. Maulana Abul–Ala Mawdudi (1903–79) was a well–known religious reformer and political figure of the Indian sub–continent. Among his numerous writings is the commentary of the Quran in Urdu under the title "Tafhim al Quran". He started working on this project while he was living in India, but completed it after he had settled down in 1942 in Pathankot, now part of Pakistan. His purpose in writing the "Tafhim" was to make an ordinary literate Muslim understand the divine message, as it was not possible to learn it directly without a sound knowledge of Arabic and traditions of the Prophet.

The commentary of Maulana Mawdudi could be classified more as "Tafsir bi al rai" interpretation by the use of reason as his dependence on hadith material is less when compared to classical commentators or the traditionalists. While explaining the passages of the Quran that deal with the details of legal matters such as ownership, rent, contracts, marriage, divorce, distribution of property, Maulana Mawdudi has called to his aid his profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, history and modern theories of the functions of the state and the financial institutions. He laid emphasis that the emergence of an Islamic state was necessary to implement the Sharia (Islamic Law). This particular aspect of his

commentary combined with his theme "that sovereignty on earth belonged to God" is repeatedly emphasized in his writings. His Tafhim has been a source of inspiration to such outstanding Muslim philosophers as Syed Qutb of Egypt, Rashid al Ghanooshi of Tunisia and Hassan Abdullah al Turabi of Sudan. It offers a blue–print to those groups in North Africa and other Muslim states who are engaged in establishing a theocratic form of government. But the Islamic revolution in Iran had been inspired by the theory of "Imaamate" under the guidance of Shia clergy and Imaam Ayatulla Khomaini.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, (1888–1958) who played an important role in freedom struggle of India tried to bring about reformation of the Muslims through his journals "Al–Balagh" and "Al–Hilal". Besides writing scholarly articles on political, social and cultural issues in these journals, he published, at regular intervals, his commentary on the Quran as he felt the need for conveying its teachings in simple terms devoid of the art of dialectics. Maulana Azad regretted (in his preface to the first edition of the Tarjuman Al–Quran), "The dispositions of the first generation of Muslims were not cast in any conventional or artificial moulds that was why they instantly caught the meaning of the Quran. But the generations which followed would not let the Quran present itself in its simplicity. Their love for inventiveness or novelty would not allow this. They began to dress everything in the Quran in novel costumes, and since the Quran could not fit into such costumes, the effort to force on it things which did not suit it, blurred its true perception and forced its meaning to assume forms by no means natural to it". Though Azad was critical of these innovative tendencies, he himself made use of personal opinion while interpreting selected verses of the Quran.

While giving an elaborate commentary on the opening chapter of the Quran, Azad has laid great emphasis on certain aspects of its philosophy and one such is the system of divine nature "rububiyat", the order behind the whole universe wherein God is the nourisher making appropriate provision for all its needs. Quran's evidence for the existence of God, His unity and His attributes is based on this

system. He says "It (the Quran) lays repeated emphasis on the search for truth, and on the need for exercising outward experience of life and drawing valid conclusions."

Azad then proceeds to discuss the question of Hidayat, "the prayer for guidance on the straight path", and its four grades as mentioned by him are: guidance of instincts, senses, reason and, finally, revelation and prophecy which symbolize the supreme form of guidance. By way of explanation Maulana Azad says, "Divine revelation is meant to afford guidance to everyone without distinction, and has to be distinguished from all other forms of so–called guidance which have become the exclusive preserves of particular communities and have divided mankind into a variety of rival religious groups. It gives to this universal guidance through revelation the name of 'Al–Din' or the religion or way of life appropriate to the nature and function of man or 'Al–Islam'. He lays stress on the oneness of religion given to all peoples in all ages. He asks the question as to how differences exist between religion and religion when revelation directs all mankind to but one and the same truth. He points out that the teaching of a religion is twofold, one constitutes its spirit (Din) the other is its outward manifestation. "Sharia" on "Minhaj" meaning the law prescribed by religion and "Nusk" meaning the form of devotion or worship. Thus according to him the differences which exist between one religion and another are not differences in "Din", but in the manner of giving effect to it. Maulana Azad concludes: "But the character of the 'Din' is so open, so easy and so brief that the entire body of beliefs and practices is summed up in but two terms, viz. faith and righteous work."

Maulana Azad in his commentary on the opening chapter of the Quran has emphasized after a comparative study of religion that unity of man is the primary aim of religion and that the message which every Prophet delivered was that mankind constituted one community and that there is one God whom they should serve, and live like members of one family. "And truly this your religion is the one religion, and I am your Lord. So, keep your duty unto me. But men have rent their great concern, one among another, into sects, every party rejoicing in that which is their own" (23:52–3).

NOTES

The Quran Chapters and Verses are indicated

1. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman Al Quran* (It is a commentary on the Holy Quran), Dr. Syed Abdul Latif's Trust for Quranic & Other Cultural Studies, Hyderabad, 1962.
2. Maulana Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Tafim Al Quran* (It is a commentary on the Holy Quran), Markazi Maktaba Islamic, Delhi, 1973.
3. M.M. Sherif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Royal Book Company, Karachi, 1983.
4. M. Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, Cultural Islamique, Paris, France, 1973.
5. Seyed Hossein Nasar, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, KPI, London, 1987.
6. Andrew Rippon, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988.

5

The Role of the Philosopher from the Perspective of Tamil Religion and Philosophy

Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan

I. THE MEANING AND ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY

The moment human beings contemplated over the confronting issues in their lives with a view to overcoming such issues, the 'act of philosophizing' commenced. Whether they have succeeded in annihilating the problems in life is a matter to be pondered over. Still mankind is moving towards the direction of apprehending the solutions to the crisis in life. As the problems faced by mankind are manifold and varied, the endeavours to eliminate them have also become multi–dimensional.

Since philosophy deals with the perennial problems of life, and the problems are diversified, naturally philosophy has its impact and influence on the different human enterprises such as social, moral, political, economic, religious, linguistic etc. In the words of Professor Suryanarayana Sastri, "We philosophize ... not because of this or that reason, our training or our cravings, but because it is our very nature to do so. This has been realized by the profoundest philosophers who like Bradley have found 'the search for Truth a compelling necessity of their very nature'. And this is where the highest philosophy joins hands with the deepest religion: for the supreme Being of the latter is not an external power waiting on reasons or occasions, but an inner urge conferring its grace uncaused and unmotivated (*avyajakaruṇā mūrti*)"[1].

Philosophy examines the goal of life, the place and role of man in the world and the values he cherishes. However, it does not lay down the goals and methods of livings, but it is living itself. It naturally investigates the sources and instruments of knowledge. This investigation serves as a prelude to understand the nature of the thing known. Again, this understanding enables to determine the nature, scope and limits of human understanding. Philosophy also analyses the findings of the sciences and attempts to construct a comprehensive structure of the knowledge of the world and man's life in it. Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the great Tamil scholar, in two couplets explains the nature of knowledge thus: In matter of any kind and nature, to find out the intrinsic Truth is knowing of the Real (355). Whatever may be the matter, from whatever source it is heard through, the force of wisdom is to perceive and to grasp its core of truth (423).

II. THE LIFE STYLE OF THE TAMILS

The ancient Tamils had expounded grammar not only for the alphabets and words, but also for the meaning of life (*poruḷ*). In a more specific sense, the term '*poruḷ*' connotes a 'thing' constituted of the letters and words. In other words, letters and words represent the 'form' while '*poruḷ*' represents matter, for a word which is the combination of letters denotes a thing. In the section called *Poruḷatikāram*, Tolkappiar, the foremost grammarian, had classified the entire space into five living regions such as mountainous region *(kuriñci),* fertile region (*marutam*), forest region (*mullai*), oceanic region (*neytal*) and desert (*pālai*). Each region had its own deity for adoration, a bird to mark the region, a particular musical instrument to denote the sound and even appropriate time had been allotted to each region.

The greatness of the ancient Tamils can be gleaned from the concept of *āṟṟuppaṭai* which essentially means showing the path to those who search for good fortunes by those who have already obtained. This kind of catholicity marks the religious dictum which forms the apex of Tamil culture *yām peṯṟa iṉbam peṟuka ivvaiyakam* – 'May the whole world attain what benefits we enjoyed.' "Sharing

with others anything of truth, goodness, beauty or happiness which one has found was a cultural and religious urge of the Tamils."[2]

The most remarkable feature of the Tamil way of life was to consider human beings as one entity. Neither parochialism nor favouritism was entertained. Both the sacred and secular literature bear testimony for this. According to the Puṟanānūṟu, all places are one's own and all are one's kith and kin. Both good and evil affect an individual not by others, but according to his own deeds.[3] Linguistic fanaticism, regional chauvinism, bellicose patriotism etc., were unknown to the people in those days. Tiruvaḷḷuvar's *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is a message to mankind and not pertaining to the Tamil people alone. Of the 1330 couplets, nowhere do we come across words indicating Tamil language, Tamilian, Tamil country etc. The words such as *ulakam, ulaku, jñālam, vaiyakam* etc. occur in many places in the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. *Kamparāmāyanam*, though a Tamil version of Vālmiki *Rāmāyanam*, we see the commencement of this grand epic, with the words *ulakam yāvaiyum* (the entire world). Nakkīrar's *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* starts with *ulakam uvappa* (the mirth to be enjoyed by the world) and Sekkilar's *Periyapurāṇam* has its first word *ulakelām* (all over the world). St. Campantar, an young Saivite Saint, in one of his hymns praises *antanars*, celestials, cows, rain, king and condemns all the evils and consequently he wishes that "the whole world would be free from the woes."[4]

The ancient Tamils lived not for themselves, but for others. A verse in the *Puṟanānūṟu* excellently elucidates this idea. The author adduces appropriate reason for the continuous sustenance of the world thus: 'Never do the people take the rare nectar by themselves alone even after realizing its worthiness; unblemished are they; they are not afraid of anyone; but dread for those which are to be dreaded; if fame is the reward for an action, prepared are they to sacrifice themselves; if evil is the result, even if the world is offered as a gift, never do they accept; untired are they. With all the noble traits embedded in them, seldom do such people live for themselves; but sincerely and truly live for others.'[5] Though this verse is explicitly stated in Tamil language and addressed to the Tamil people, the purport of it is implicitly meant for the mankind as a whole.

"The typical Tamil society was essentially aristocratic: desire of fame and fear of shame were the distinguishing marks of the Sankam Tamil Literature. Like *pukaḻ* or glory, *vāymai* – truth and honesty were greatly valued. The innate connection between being, speaking and acting the truth, was recognized. Determination, bravery, liberality, munificience and mercy were also highly valued. Tamil language itself stood not merely as the vehicle of communication of ideas but as the whole aesthetic achievement of the people. The study of its grammar gave the student a logical and metaphysical mental training. *Mut–Tamiḻ* or threefold Tamil which included *iyal, isai, nāṭakam* – literature, music and dance–drama – developed the students' aesthetic qualities. Hospitality was so highly valued that the *Nava Puṇyas* of hospitality gave the structure for household and temple ceremonies of worship of the Deity called *upacāras*."[6]

Since literature is fundamentally and essentially an expression of life through the medium of language, the ancient Tamils have examined the various themes of life and have portrayed and preserved them in the form of literature. Professor T.P. Meenakshi Sundaram points out that "The Tamils have called art 'Tamil'. Tamil seems to have too many meanings and implications. One is that Tamil is love, idealised love; the other meaning is 'art' as in *muttamiḻ*. We have the term muttamiḻ i.e., the three Tamils and they are the fine arts. Muttamil is *iyal–tamiḻ, isai–tamiḻ* and *kūttu–tamiḻ Kūttu* is dance not merely drama. Music is *isai–tamiḻ*. Then we have *iyal–tamiḻ* which is literature and related to art."[7] A philosophical interpretation to the three types of Tamil is given by Professor Rathinasabapathy[8] thus: Since *jñāna, karma* and *bhakti* are interlinked through the intellectual, volitional and emotional attitudes of human nature, Tamiḻ also has been understood in terms of these three aspects viz., *iyaṟṟamiḻ* is related to *jñāna. Isaittamiḻ* is related to *karma* and *nāṭakattamiḻ* is related to *bhakti.*

III. CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

The world is not treated as an abstract entity but is regarded as a repository of wisemen, by the Tamils. The categorical assertions such as "the world survives because of the virtuous men"[9] and "the world indicates noble persons"[10] will prove beyond doubt that the Tamils had blended the physical as well as the ethical realms. If the term 'world' is taken as the middle term, then the conclusion would be *uyarntōr* (noble men) are the *panpuṭaiyār* (virtuous men). However, the ancient Tamils had understood the impermanent nature of the world. The transitory nature of life in this world is well portrayed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar and other poets. The later saints and sages too had emphasized about the unstable nature of the world and the state of mortality. The *Tolkāppiam* states that the physical world is constituted of the five elements which contains within it the seeds of decomposition. Since the world is a composite structure and can be reduced to its constituent parts, it is evident that the ancient Tamils termed the impermanent nature of the world as *kāñci.*[11] The Tamils were aware of the certainty of death and philosophical enquiry was treated as 'meditation on death'. Wealth, power, near and dear etc., would not protect the dying man. The evanescence of the body, how do the kith and the kin weep near the corpse etc. are well described through the term *kāñci.* But this approach should not be taken as a crude pessimism. It leads to a basic optimum that the life in between cradle to grave must be well organized. Birth is equated to the ocean and the human endeavour is to cross over it.

The world which exists as real has been explained through a linguistic device. Even as the letter 'A' is the first and foremost letter which forms the basis for all the other letters, God in the name of *Ādi Bhagavan* is the first Being of this world. Vaḷḷuvar also subscribes to the view that God is the creator of this world, when he condemns begging. According to Tolkāppiar, the world of nature is made up of the five elements and the world is divided into word and substance or categories. The categories are again divided into rational beings, the dead and inert.[12] The time, world, soul, body, God, action, elements, sun, moon and the word are included in the categories or substance (*poruḷ*). These categories are interrelated and teleological in essence. The soul which lives amidst other souls like itself, has to live in time and has to perform action with the body in association with the world of elements. The role of God is to judge the merit as well as the demerit of the actions and distribute the results. While performing

the actions in the world, light is supplied to the soul by the sun and the moon. The lights offered by the sun and moon constitute time which dispels both inner darkness and ignorance with the assistance of the words revealed by eminent souls.

From the epistemological and psychological points of view, the world has been divided into those which are cognized by external senses and by mind. The external senses perceive the external objects, while the objects of internal perception are connected with the love themes such as, shyness, fear, chastity, passion, etc. From the axiological point of view, the world has been divided to have two categories *viz.*, the inner (*akam*) and the outer (*puṟam*). The inner is constituted of happiness and the outer is publicly known and communicated such as valour, war, courage, etc. Tolkappiar places time and space as the first principle *(mutaṟporuḷ)* since both space and time are inseparable and all movements become relative and hence time is not an absolute concept.

IV. CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL

In those days people believed that the soul is not withered away by bodily complex but survives it. Though rational exposition or explanation was not given, it was firmly believed that the body is not the soul. The soul is a free agent and performs actions while living in the body. It was strongly held that none can overcome destiny since man himself is the architect of his own destiny. Though generally destiny or *ūḻ* is difficult to be dispensed with, Vaḷḷuvar opines that specifically those who endeavour incessantly will even triumph over destiny. It is through destiny that Vaḷḷuvar could resolve the puzzle why the highly intelligent ones suffer poverty and privation while the illiterate and dull persons roll in wealth.

Tolkāppiar and the commentators cull out the nature of the soul from the classification of Tamil letters into *uyir* (soul) and *mey* (body) which are known as vowels and consonants in linguistic parlance. Even as the body and soul are related, the 'soul' letters and 'body' letters are united to convey a meaning. In fact, there is only one 'soul' letter known as 'A' and other letters are 'body' letters associated with the 'soul' letter. Though there are twelve vowels in

Tamil, 'A' is the prime letter, even as God is the soul of all souls. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* also we come across the saying: I am the letter 'A' in all the letters. According to the Tolkāppiam, the soul' letter (vowel) associates with the body letter (consonant) and appears differently without losing its identity.

V. CONCEPTION OF GOD

Tolkāppiam depicts the nature of God – love in three stages known as *koṭinilai, kantali* and *valli. Koṭinilai* means the coming down of God to respond to the devotees' genuine prayers. The nameless and formless God takes form and becomes a personal God. This stage refers to the level of devotion and religious worship. *Kantali* is distinct from the previous stage of devotion, but a state of realizing God through intuition and God is known as an impersonal infinite. This process involves philosophical investigation and systematic inquiry, a gradual shift from religion to philosophy. *Valli* is the state of redemption wherein the soul attains liberation through the grace of God. It is to be understood that grace is operative in the first two stages too. In the first stage it helps the devotee to worship God with various modes, while in the second stage grace blossoms from within to acquire wisdom. In the final stage grace culminates in the realization of the truth which paves the way for liberation.

VI. CONCEPTION OF MORAL VALUES

The Tamil conception of morality can be gleaned from a verse in the *Puṟanānūṟu* wherein the poet Kudapulaviyanar advises Pāṇṭian *Neṭuñceḻiyan* that under the latter's rulership all the three basic virtues viz., *aṟam* (righteousness), *poruḷ* (wealth) and *iṉbam* (joy) are to be fostered and preserved for ever.[13] Tiruvaḷḷuvar also analyses the significance of these three moral values. Though he indicates implicitly about the fourth value *viz.*, *viṭu* (Heaven), he has not attempted to elaborate or to explain the nature of heaven. "The reason for the omission of the fourth viz., Heaven or the state of Release is said to be this – that as Heaven is beyond the ken of thoughts or words, its nature cannot be dealt with except in relation to what leads to it – viz., Asceticism. However, if Heaven or Release is not necessarily a state after death but can very well be here and

hereafter, if Heaven is the quality of our life, if the kingdom of God is within us and if release is a matter of release from egoism or self–centredness, from the sense of 'I' and 'Mine', I submit that this Heaven or State of Release is the underlying theme of the whole work."[14]

Tiruvaḷḷuvar has no hesitation to acknowledge that human life is haunted by evils arising out of psychological nature, moral spheres, eschatological sources, social realms and political reasons. Hence the author has been necessitated to analyse the characteristic features of human life in a comprehensive way and from different perspectives. In this process two–fold technique has been adopted by him. First, an illustrative exposition of evils which hamper human progress to achieve salvation is highlighted. All the human beings who are to set at naught the dreads of evils must have the primary understanding of the nature of evils. Secondly, the author suggests the ways and means to overcome evils and enjoy happiness. According to Vaḷḷuvar, *iṉbam* (joy) is exclusively produced by *aṟam* (righteousness). Domestic life is defined in terms of *aṟam* only. But *aram* itself is defined in a negative way *i.e.*, it is devoid of jealousy, greediness, rage and abusive words. *Aṟam* and *aṉbu*, virtue and love, are treated as the quality and effect of human living. Further, *aṟam* and *iṉbam* are natural to human beings, *i.e.*, they are the inherent qualities and not acquired. But wealth or *poruḷ* which is in between *aṟam* and *iṉbam* is to be acquired through human efforts. Vaḷḷuvar insists that wealth is to be acquired through righteous means, distributed fairly and not to be accumulated.

Among the many things seen as real in the world, according to Vaḷḷuvar , there is nothing that is higher than *vāymai* (truth). He also holds that external purification is made through water while internal purification is achieved through *vāymai* . Here also it may mean that *vāymai* is truthfulness, but Vaḷḷuvar defines it not directly. *vāymai* is nothing but the utterance of any flawless word. Now it is clear that if a man gets purified internally, seldom will he utter harmful words which is really the highest virtue. In another place he says that even falsehood becomes the truth (*vāymai*) if it yields exceptionally good results. It is the wish of Vaḷḷuvar that every one should realize the

greatness of truth. For he whose heart is free from every trace of falsehood, will reign supreme in the hearts of all men in the world.

Vaḷḷuvar patronizes the significance of moral living in the spheres of household, ascetic, social, political and economic. His main ambition is that everyone should live as human according to the role he occupies and should discharge the duties accordingly.

VII. CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

The essential characteristic feature of earlier Tamil religion was celebrative and relatively democratic. Possession by the God or ecstatic experience was considered as the *summum bonum* of religious experience. "The religious life of the Tamil civilization and of Cankam times gave evidence of no significant mythological or philosophical speculation nor of any sense of transcendence in a bifurcated universe. Rather, it was oriented by a fundamental veneration of land and a sense of the celebration of individual life. Colourful flora and fauna were extolled and ascribed a symbolic significance that bordered on the sacred; for e.g., peacocks, elephants, and the blossoms of various trees were used as images for the basic realities of individual and cosmos."[15]

When the Tamils lived and flourished without mingling with others, as pure Tamils, they adored the dead, snake and *liṅgam* (a vertical stone). The people of the hilly region worshipped *Murukan*; the people of the forest region worshipped *Māyon*; the people of the fertile land worshipped *Veṉdan;* the people of the oceanic region worshipped the ocean and the people of the desert region worshipped Kāli (Koṟṟavai). Owing to the growth of intelligence and dawn of wisdom, they began to believe that besides all these deities there is one Supreme Being which is Omnipresent and is called *Iṟai*. Since it transcends all, but immanent in everything, they called it *Kaṭavuḷ*. These two are the pure Tamil words which refer to the ultimate reality. According to their customs and conventions, they worshipped the deities and offered the objects available in their lands as token of reverence.

The way in which the people of *Kuriñci* region worshipped, danced and sang towards Murukan is known as *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu*. The

people of the *Pālai* region worshipped, danced and sang towards Kāli which is known as *Veṭṭuva vari.* The people of the *Mullai* region worshipped, danced and sang towards Māyon and that is known as *Āycciyar kuravai.* The people of *Mārutam* worshipped the rivers when they were in floods. The people of *Neytal* adored the ocean by installing the back bone of the whale. In village settlements folk–deities had been worshipped. Those who had lived as wise men and chaste women were revered in the form of idols in temples.

The present forms of worship, *purānic* allusions, ritualistic methods, chanting of the *mantras* etc., are due to the influence of the Aryans into the Tamil region. Besides this, the impact of Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are also seen in the Tamil literature today. Eventually a kind of mixed culture or religious amalgamation emerged in the Tamil country.

Seventh Century witnessed the merger of Sanskrit Hindu culture and religion with the indigenous Tamil Society. As a result of this a new era began leading to pervasive Hinduization of Tamil country. Afterwards bhakti movements, influenced by the epics and puranic mythologies, flourished in Tamil country. Particularly Saivism and Vaisnavism attained popularity through the melliflous and devotion–soaked hymns of the *āḻvārs* and *nāyanmārs.*

VIII. THE PRESENT CRISIS

Throughout the world life in the twentieth century is not a bed of roses but full of thorns. Everywhere we come across racial discrimination, linguistic fanaticism, economic instability, political turmoils, caste distinction, class discrimination etc. The present day world is such that "there is a startling relaxation of tradition, restraints and of established law and order. Ideas which until yesterday were regarded as inseparable from social decency and justice, which were able to direct and discipline conduct for centuries, are swept away. The world is rent by misunderstanding, bitterness and strife. The atmosphere is charged with suspicion, uncertainty and much fear for the future. The growing distress of our race, the deepening economic misery, wars on an unprecedented scale, the divided counsels in high places and the inertia of those in

power and authority, who wish to preserve the collapsing order and save the crippled civilization at any cost, are rousing the world over, a spirit which is, in essence, revolutionary."[16]

The Tamil country is no exception to the above mentioned social and moral deterioration. The Tamil conception of virtues, courage, love themes, social order, political ideologies etc. is only at the scriptural level and enables a few scholars in Tamil language and literature to elucidate the meaning and quote profusely to enrich their power of oration. Since Tamil country was ruled by different non–Tamil kings for a considerable period, and different cultural settings, religious observances and social customs had been introduced, the original Tamil culture became profane and insipid. The Tamil people in the twentieth century had to witness a lot of political turmoils, social insecurities deepening economic crisis and declining moral values. Owing to the advancement of science and technology, people prefer luxuries and comforts setting aside gradually the interests in moral and spiritual values.

However, this kind of social and moral decadence is not new to the Tamil world. Ever during the period of Vaḷḷuvar there was the declining of values. In a chapter on *kayamai* (The Degraded Life) Vaḷḷuvar expresses his agony over the attitude of the unscrupulous persons. He is much disgusted over the immoral behaviour of the mean minded persons who resemble like ordinary human beings in their appearance. The disgruntled mentality of the author is known when he wonders over the likeness so exact between normal human beings and the highly despicable ones. Such immoral persons are sarcastically equated with the celestials, since both have their own way of doing things. The author also degrades such unscrupulous persons as degenerates, since they are always afraid of punishment. Even if there is any goodness coming out of them, it is due to their self–seeking nature. Vaḷḷuvar goes to the extent of condemning such base men as useless who even hasten to sell themselves.

During the time of Vaḷḷuvar a few vices such as drinking toddy, looking at the women of other houses, illiteracy, moral blemishes, etc. must have been rampant, as one can infer from the references

Vaḷḷuvar makes in his work. If the society is to be a balanced one, the individuals must desist from the prohibited deeds and at the same time promote the promulgated activities. So Vaḷḷuvar emphasizes people to refrain from the indulgence of non–meritorious deeds first so that virtues can be well understood and restored to.

So the role of the twentieth century philosopher is tough and hectic. First of all, let us understand who is a philosopher. A person who teaches philosophy in the class room cannot be treated as a philosopher. Matters concerned with academic purposes are mainly meant for elucidation and exemplification. Again, a genuine philosopher need not be an academician. The *Puṟanānūṟu*[17] offers in a clinching way the definition of a philosopher: 'He will be called a wise, learned and respectable man (*sānron*) who is erudite, dignified, humble and has controlled his senses, passions, etc. and lives for certain well ordained principles'. Avvaiyār, a Tamil poetess, states that it would be better to reside in a hilly region amidst the nomadic tribes, than to live in an ancient city which is devoid of *sānror* (the noble persons who are filled with knowledge and discipline).[18] The general goal of education is to realize the eternal values and distinguish them from the peripheral ones and conduct one's life according to this realization. Vaḷḷuvar asks people to learn and to study flawlessly, and after the study one has to live accordingly. While speaking the glory of the wise men, Vaḷḷuvar is very particular about their impartial spectator attitude, which is an important virtue required of a perfect man. "Even as the weighing beam is straight and weighs justly, the wise people never incline to this side or that side."[19] To become the wise man (*sānror*) is the *summum bonum* of the virtuous life. The ancient Tamils while prescribing the duties of the individuals, aptly hold that the mother has to conceive and yield a child; the father's duty is to make him a wise man. From the above descriptions it is clear that a philosopher should not be a hypocrite. If so, then it will stultify the real meaning of the term 'Philosopher'. Besides preaching and exemplifying, the philosopher should 'live' up to the expectations of the ideals of life.

IX. THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER TODAY

From the Tamil point of view, the twentieth century philosopher

has to master the literature in Tamil, both sacred and secular and get himself enlightened. After analyzing and understanding the purport of this literature, he has to make others enlightened in a successful way through writings and public oratory. He should highlight the salient features of the various concepts pertaining to the traditional society so that the present day society must be benefitted. The Tamil people, like anyone else in the world nowadays give undue importance to extraneous and pompous styles of living, by not adhering seriously to inner purification. For, anything other than inner purification is nothing but roaring and bustle. This state of affairs is caused by the craving for wealth or resorting strictly to the value of *poruḷ* (*artha*) which culminates in the enjoyment of *iṉbam* (*kāma* or sensuous pleasure). People generally are fond of acquiring wealth by any means, fair or foul, and regard this endeavour as the *summum bonum* of life. *Vīṭu* or *mokṣa* has become a misnomer and *aṟam* (*dharma*) is uncared for.

As a result of this predominant voluptuous nature of the people, we come across the increasing moral degradation and the upsurgence of vices and crimes in large scale at all levels. Economic offenses and sexual crimes are increasing day by day. The primary concern of the twentieth century philosopher is to have an awareness of the situation *i.e.*, the gratification of the lower passions and mocking at the higher values will be a menace to the social order and social well being. So he has to bring to light the significance of the higher ideals of life as envisaged in the ancient as well as modern scriptures and to illustrate the impermanent nature of name, fame, wealth, etc. The chapter on 'unstableness' (*nilaiyāmai*) in the *Tirukkuraḷ* and the songs of St. Paṭṭinattār are of immense help to the philosopher. Even the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints have emphasized the non–eternal nature of the earthly pleasures and the sensuous enjoyment. The life on this earth is to cherish the values and live as human. St. Cambantar invokes the blessings of Śiva so that the aspirants can lead a good life on this earth free of blemishes. Vaḷḷuvar also praises the people that they will be celebrated in the celestial region who lead the life on this earth by practising all the virtues.

The philosopher has to explain the significance of *mokṣa* as

spiritual emancipation which means a state where there is no tinge of pain at all. Freedom from pain and suffering is explained in terms of blissful existence and not a state of world negation and transcendental state. "The final ideal... stands for the synoptic vision of reality expressing itself in absolute unselfishness, eternal bliss and loving service. While it thus includes the excellences of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, it transcends their characteristic defects. Hence the final ideal is not a mere combination of the three values but a metamorphosis of their combined essence. The lives led by the perfected ones in all religious traditions bear witness to these qualities. The conclusion is irresistible that the concept of *mokṣa* is India's biggest contribution to human welfare. It holds up the message that life is not an aimless drift but is invested with a clear and definite purpose in terms of which it ought to be planned and directed." [20] The religious traditions in the Tamil country and the ethical treatises emphasize the concept of liberation in the form of disinterested service to mankind.[21]

In the religious sphere at present, we have innumerable inexplicable practices which have been traditionally transmitted from generation to generation. People are observing ceremonies, rituals, etc., without knowing their philosophical significance and meaning. For any religious practice without philosophical explanation will lead to superstition and blind observances. Similarly, the philosophical ideologies must be subjected to actual experience and enlightenment. Otherwise, they may culminate in dry intellectualism or dogmatism. The twentieth century philosopher from Tamil perspective has to elucidate the religious significance of philosophical matters and *vice versa*. Here the meanings of the words such as '*meypporuḷ*', '*cemporuḷ*' etc. are really useful to substantiate the above claim. Wisdom lies in intuiting the great substance and that realization will annihilate the dread of death.

Since birth is common to all, discrimination of people on the basis of profession, religious practices etc. is not a worthy act. Since Tamil country at present comprises of various religious traditions, folk–practices, no emphasis or importance must be given to any particular religious faith. Neither fanaticism nor extremism should

be entertained by the philosopher. All the utility aspects of all religious cults must be considered for unity and human solidarity as well as progress. Rāmaliṅga Swāmikal, Tāyumānavar, Arunagirinātar and other saints have paved the way for religious harmony and have synthesized philosophical enquiries. The contributions of the Jaina monks to the moral sphere in Tamil, Buddhistic classics, Christian literature, Islamic writings are to be studied and understood without bias and the salient aspects must be brought to light to infuse oneness among the people.

As far as Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism are concerned, they have rich religious trends and richer philosophical doctrines. Though Viśiṣṭādvaita finds a place in the schools of Vedānta, the contributions of the *Āḻvār* saints are not seriously considered. Hence the Tamil philosopher must strive hard to incorporate the philosophical and religious doctrines enunciated by the Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints. As far as Śaiva Siddhānta is concerned, except a few scholars on Indian Philosophy who have highlighted its philosophy, it does not find a place in the classification of Indian Philosophical systems. According to Professor T.R.V. Murthy, "This traditional enumeration errs by being at once too narrow and too wide; too narrow, as it does not include many other schools – the non–Advaitic schools of the Vedānta, the various Śaiva systems, the philosophy of language etc. which are not mentioned at all. If the intention is to include the basic systems only, then it is too wide. For there are only three basic systems (the Sāṅkhya, the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika, and the Advaita Vedānta) on the Brahmanical side and three (the Abhidhammika, the Madhyamika and the Yogācāra) belonging to Buddhism. The Jaina may be taken as different from both these groups."[22]

In the socio–political realms, the philosopher today has to stress the relevant ideals from the writings of social reformers and political thinkers. Particularly the evils of casteism, untouchability etc. must be eliminated. The root cause of such menaces is ego–centricism and it can be annulled if the teachings of the scholars and the preachings of the saintly souls are well understood and effectively adhered to. The concepts of 'oneness', 'equality', 'equanimity', 'universal

brotherhood', etc. must be interpreted in such a way that they are not mere concepts but precepts. Further the prosperity of any society depends mostly on the greatness of education. Since education is the manifestation of perfection, the ancient Tamils have realized the merits of education. Even by begging one has to be educated. According to Āriyappaṭai Kaṭanta Neṭuñceḷian, knowledge obtained through proper education will enable the people to attain all the eternal ideals in life. To those who wish to learn and study, others should offer sufficient money without bothering about loss. Everyone should learn through incessant efforts and become scholars. Then only they can attain reverence in life and be respected by one and all. Among the people born in a family the ruler will invite as a counsel to him not the eldest but the erudite.[23] Vaḷḷuvar also points out the evils of illiteracy and glorifies the merits of literacy achieved through education.

The philosopher today should realize that the educational institutions are catering to the needs of the students in connection with memory–based curriculum, exam–oriented syllabus, job–oriented course structure and above all non–value based education. Hence the present day education centres around the sense and mind and does not touch the spirit. This kind of education may be said to be incomplete and inadequate since humans are not taught and trained to live as humans. Every human being has three levels of understanding which are proportionate, hidden and manifest depending upon the given stimulus. They function in terms of animal nature, human nature and spiritual nature. The first one is a life constituted by the preponderance of the senses and irrational sensibility. A man of this type behaves almost like animals, motivated mostly by instincts and impulses, setting aside all rational claims. The second type consists of the life of channelizing sensibility and promoting reason and understanding. Intellectual and discriminative knowledge is perpetuated in this type and the senses are controlled by the mind. The third type is inferred in terms of higher human qualities like love, sympathy, mercy, gratitude, self–discipline, righteousness, charity, etc. In an ideal society, if harmony is to be ensured, men must be treated alike irrespective of

peripheral differences. This highest ideal can be achieved only when the individual relinquishes his debased tendencies like beast characters, raises above the human aspirations and inculcates cognition, connation and affection through spiritual propensities. Education in the real sense of the term, should kindle the spiritual moorings and emulate in an individual noble ventures and glorified traits. Education must foster the human values and hence it should be value–based and not merely examination oriented.

Only a man of self–integration can think of and promote national integration. Self–integration is possible through self–discipline which, in turn, is achieved through spiritual education based on cherishing the inherited values of our hoary tradition. Vaḷḷuvar maintains that the education one had acquired during one's sojourn on earth will come to one's succour during his successive births. The modern philosopher has to realize that education in those days was treated as a perfect way of life rather than to eke out one's livelihood. According to a Tamil moral text, education can never be perished in floods, destroyed in fire, subdued by taking frequently and hence it will last long.

Above all the philosopher from Tamil perspective has to reveal to the world the significance of the attainment of perfection which is the realization of the total self. This process in Tamil is known as *Meyyuṇartal*, the realization of the truth which is nothing but the discrimination between the real and the unreal, permanent and the transient, perfect and the imperfect, and the limited and the unlimited. According to Vaḷḷuvar, it is delusion which takes the vanity for the reality. The same delusion which is responsible for the understanding of the unreal as the real, leads the soul again to this world of suffering. He who has freed himself from such delusion is a realized soul, for his vision is unclouded and clear. Such a person will set aside darkness and will be prepared to enjoy happiness. It is to be noted here that pessimism will vanish in a trice and optimism will be sustained due to the attainment of such a realization. Realization of truth implies that doubts are driven away and the eternal bliss becomes imminent. Vaḷḷuvar also holds that even though a man acquires knowledge through his senses, the soul has not profited much if it fails to realize the truth.

It is obligatory on the part of the philosopher today to show the importance of the realization of truth as envisaged in the Tamil scriptures to attain perfection in all walks of life.

NOTES

1. Mahadevan, T.M.P., *Collected Lectures of Prof. Suryanarayana Sastri*, University of Madras, 1961, p.94.
2. Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam, *Christianity and Tamil Culture*, University of Madras, 1977, p.4.
3. Verse 192.
4. *Vaiyakamum tuyar tirkkave*, Third Tirumurai, *Podhu*, *Tiruppāsuram*, 1.
5. Verse 182.
6. Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam, *op.cit.*, pp.5–6.
7. *Aesthetics of the Tamil*, University of Madras, 1977, p.4.
8. Article: 'Philosophical and Religious Heritage of the Tamils' pp. 34–35.
9. *Panputaiyar paṭṭuṇṭu ulakam, Tirukkuraḷ*, 996.
10. *Ulakam enpatu uyarntor maṭṭe, 'Tolkāppiyam*
11. *Puṟattuppāl, 76.*
12. *Uyartinai enmaṉar makkat cutte, ahrinai enmaṉar avarala piṟave'*, Collatikāram, *Tolkāppiam.*
13. *Puṟanānūṟu*, Verse 18.
14. Devasenapathi, V.A., *Thirumathi Sornambal Endowment Lectures on Thirukkural* (University of Madras, 1971), p.323.
15. Eliade, Mircea (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), Vol. 14, pp.226–267.
16. Radhakrishnan S., *Religion and Society*, 1956, p.10.
17. *Āṉṟavintaṭankiya koḷkai sānror vāḻue emmūre, Puṟanānūṟu*, 191.
18. *Verri verkai*, 64.
19. *Tirukkuraḷ, 391, 118.*

20. Ramachandran, T.P., *The Indian Philosophy of Beauty*, (University of Madras, 1979), Vol.I, p.21.
21. *Tirukkuraḷ No.399*

    Tāyumānavar, *'Anbar paṇi ceyya emmai āḻākki viṭṭuvittal iṉpanilai tāṉe vanteidtum Parāparame'*, *Parāparakkanni*, 155. Appar, *'Eṉ kaṭaṉ paṇi ceitu kitapaṭe'*, *Tevāram*, Tirukkatampūr, 9.
22. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 1969, Vol.II, pp.30–31.
23. *Puṟanānūṟu*, 183.

6

The Role of Religion in Dalit Liberation: Some Reflections

Dr. A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who philosophizes in the Indian context today has to take serious note of the deep yearning of the Dalit community who constitutes one fifth of the Indian population of 900 million for freedom, dignity and economic well–being. But any serious and critical scrutiny of our civilization with regard to the Dalit situation in an historical perspective reveals that religion, politics and economics have been interlocking with each other both in the past and in the present. The following points are some of my reflections put in the form of theses for greater clarity.

Thesis—1: The Dalits suffer from religious imperialism and internal cultural colonialism.

The religious tradition which is generally referred to as "Hinduism" cannot be considered the religious heritage of the Dalits for the simple reason that the Dalits suffer the stigma of untouchability in that tradition. The Vedas, the Purāṇas, the Dharma Śāstras and the ritual tradition of the Brahmic priestly class with their value of purity and pollution, their philosophical concepts like karma, svadharma, adhikāra assign the Dalits a low status and they are excluded from the Brahminic religious world. All the same the sociological fact is that the various different communities of people that constitute the Dalits of today do worship the Gods in the Hindu pantheon presided over by the Brahmin priests such

as, to give a few examples: the God Murukan of Tamilnadu, God Ayyappan of Kerala, God Jagannath of Orissa. In fact the Dalits are in their religious fervour more attached to such Gods than the Brahmins.

Historians of Indian civilization explain this phenomenon by pointing to the manner of evolution of the composite Hindu tradition. Priests of dominant Brahminical tradition assimilated various primeval tribal Gods and goddesses by identifying them with one of chief or minor deities in their tradition or made them wives, children or vehicles of their Gods[1]. For instance the tribal God of Orissa became identified withViṣṇu,[2] Murukan of Ādidravidians became identified with Skanda of the North Indian traditions[3]. Ayyanār or Chattan of the tribals in the South with his Buddhist associations became Sastha of Sabarimala, born of two male gods: Viṣṇu and Śiva, Viṣṇu becoming Mohini seducing the God Śiva.[4]

This religious hierarchical subordination was a complementary historical process to the concerned tribal groups' *political* and *economic* subjugation.[5] Some of the authors call this historical process "Hindu Imperialism".[6] or "Brahmin internal cultural colonisation" because through this process the concerned tribal groups or a section of them not only lost their social autonomy and economic independence but also their religio–cultural self–identity as a separate group by losing control over their Gods, places of worship and the right to administer to their own people's religious needs. Furthermore, many of them internalized Brahminical versions of myths[7] relating to these historical process and voluntarily accepted demeaning ritual roles in village festivals, temple rituals and domestic rites corresponding to a servile people in a semifeudal economy.[8]

Such was the nature of the historical process which can also be established from another set of evidences collected from the history of the vanquished Dalits themselves.

1) Archeological and cultural anthropological evidences such as the existence of Dalit Gods, myths, proverbs, rituals and festivals conflicting with Brahminical myths, stories and ritual practices.[9]

2) Existing rights and privileges of the Dalits in the temples and shrines controlled by caste Hindus, including in somecases priestly functions for the Dalits.[10]

3) Civil court cases of dispute over ownership of temple and right to exercise priesthood between the Dalits and caste Hindus from the 19th century to the present.[11]

The policy of the Government regarding reservation to the Dalits, inclusion of popular Dalits shrines under the State Devaswom Boards controlled by caste Hindus, renovation of Dalit places of worship by Hindu Mutts and organizations[12] confirm that the old historical patterns of Brahmin imperialism continue even today.

In short, though there is some legitimacy in considering the Dalits as part of the composite Hindu religious heritage, this kind of religio–cultural predicament is rather an instrument of their social subordination and inferiority rather than an expression of their religious creativity, social identity and personal aspirations. This situation can be considered analogous to the problem of women in all patriarchal religions. A problem of social and personal powerlessness and handicaps within the tradition legitimised by beliefs and ritual traditions of their religion itself which is antithetical to their real self—interests as a social group.

Thesis—2: Religious factors play a limited role in changing social consciousness.

Here one is reminded of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's saying, "Preaching did not make caste system nor will it unmake it". In other words, Brahminical religion did not most probably make caste system by itself nor anti–brahminical religious preaching will unmake it by itself. For instance it is quite natural and probable that Brahminical ideas of clean and unclean people reflected the social conditions in ancient India resulting from economic, political, ethnic and cultural differences and conflicts among the people. But once they are concertized conceptually and built into religious rituals, they become instruments to perpetuate class, ethnic and gender interests and privileges. In the same way

empirical studies suggest that the meaning, content and the field of application of concepts like Karma, rebirth, Svadharma, Svadhikar is very much determined by the material, cultural and educational conditions of the people. It means unless efforts are made to change the material conditions and political powerlessness of the Dalits, providing them with alternative religious symbols may have limited value. This is borne out from the experience of the Dalits who embraced other religions like Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism or went to form their own protest sects like Ravidasis, Vālmikis etc. This is not to deny that providing them with alternative religious and scientific concepts helped them to redefine their self–image and world–view which often result in more intensive struggle against caste stigma as exemplified by Neo–Buddhists, converted Christians, Sikhs, Ravidasis, Satnamis, etc.

Thesis—3: The religious problem of the Dalits cannot be solved by building anti–brahminical political alliances of other religious traditions.

The anti–Brahminical nature of the Dalit literature and the need for the Dalits to acquire political power make some leaders advocate Dalit alliance with other religious minorities such as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. But the majority of the Dalits feel that it is a dangerous path of religious confrontation and Dalit interests will be the casualty in such religious conflicts.

Secondly, the general malady affecting the Indian society such as caste consciousness and discrimination against women persist in all religious traditions in India and the need of religious renaissance applies to them as much as to Hindu tradition.

Thirdly, even though the Hindu Renaissance has failed to bring about any change in temple and domestic rituals based on the concept of clean and unclean or to accept the Dalits as religiously equals by conferring on them the right to become priests in temples, there is a very vocal and articulate section among the Hindus who would uphold human equality and social justice on a secular political platform along with likeminded people in other religions. Dalits feel such secular political atmosphere would be the most suitable to promote their economic, political and

educational interests, and the Dalits should have the freedom to choose a religion that upholds their human dignity, as they become aware of the problem.

Fourthly, it is most unlikely that all the Dalits would at any time in history may belong to any one religion. The Hinduised Dalits have deep emotional attachment to the gods of their early tribal days, like for instance God Murukan of Tamilnad, Lord Ayyappa of Kerala, God Jagannath of Orissa who have now become part of the Hindu Pantheon. Therefore, an anti–Brahminical political front will not solve the religious problem of the Dalits and it might harm them in the crucial area of their economic and political struggles.

Fifthly, like in other religions, Hindu tradition has the internal theological resources for self criticism. For instance, many Dalits as well as non–Dalit writers, poets and religious leaders used Advaita philosophy for criticizing the practice of untouchability and caste consciousness.[13] The concept of God in some systems of Hindu thought and practice also does not permit untouchability and caste as we shall see in thesis 7.

Sixthly, the Hindu civilization is more open to the principle of rationality and evolution in the absence of religious dogmas and centralized religious authority.

Thesis—4: The main stream Hindu Renaissance so far failed to come to grip with the nature of the religious problem which the Dalits suffer under brahminical Hinduism.

Hindu Renaissance certainly played a crucial and very important role in paving the way for the emergence of democratic modern state as opposed to, say a state governed by Brahminical Dharma Śāstras as in some Islamic countries with Shariat as the state law. The Dalits of today therefore, for the first time in their history, possess the necessary political instruments to further promote their struggle for liberation. But the primary reason for this historical development was the revolt of the backward castes and the Dalits. Similar political pressures operating in the country are at the root of BJP, VHP, RSS and Bharat Sadhu Samāj

passing resolutions calling for the eradication of untouchability [14] and their engagement in welfare activities among the tribals and the Dalits.

All the same it cannot be said that these programmes are very dissimilar to the old Brahminical imperialism or cultural colonialism as these programmes have so far not led to any meaningful changes in Hindu theology, temple worship, and ritual practices of purity and pollution, nature of priestly authority nor brought about changes in the administrative control of caste temples and other centres of institutional power. Impact of science and secular humanism on caste Hindus and breakdown of some of the old cultural values may possibly herald Hindu Renaissance in a long–time historical perspective. But many observers of the social scene in India believe that Hinduism at the moment is in a revival phase rather than in a renaissance phase.[15] All the reform or revivalist movements such as Brahma Samāj, Ārya Samāj, Prārthana Samāj, Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, Theosophical Society, Divine Life Mission, Servants of India Society etc. seem to have settled down as some sort of sects within the composite religious heritage extending its influence to members of such exclusive groups mainly made up of caste Hindus. In this situation to expect a system which was historically a tool of absorption and subordination to be an instrument of liberation to its old victims is misplaced. It is a mistake to club together anti–Brahmin movements with Hindu renaissance which worked within the brahminical religious framework.

Thesis—5: Major religious traditions in India remain very much outside Dalits' history, culture, struggles and movements. Therefore, if they are to help the emancipation of the Dalits there should be meaningful inculturation of these religious into the history and aspirations of the Dalits.

Both religious and political parties as they are presided over by caste people tend to divide the Dalits, especially since the Dalits themselves are very heterogeneous people even in the same region in terms of their ethnic roots, cultural identity, level of educational awareness and other

material conditions. Their all India situation is further complicated by linguistic differences. Since the heart of the Dalit problem is all–round powerlessness, it can only be addressed politically in the Indian context today. Politically the Dalits can meet this challenge effectively if there is unity and solidarity among them across different religions and political parties.

As all major religious traditions remain very much outside Dalit history, Dalit culture, their struggles and sufferings, their movements and their leaders, these traditions cannot be thought of as possible cultural instruments of building Dalit identity or as vehicles of their self–expression and aspirations, though all of them may have at theoretical level conceptual resources to facilitate such an historical process of assisting Dalit liberation.

Therefore the praxis of the process of building Dalit identity should begin with the reconstruction of their history, recording of their struggles and movements, the biographics of their heroes and leaders, the study of their traditional religious symbols especially since the Dalits still preserve distinctive ethnic and religio–cultural heritage in various degrees despite their absorption into sanskritic Hinduism and their conversion into other religions.

Thesis—6: Though traditional religion of the Dalits is ambiguous in character, there are positive aspects to it such as its community–orientation and people–centredness. The tradition of the Dalit saints generally advocate worship of God in spirit and truth and condemn external rituals and magical practices.

Though the traditional world view of the Dalits is beset with magical beliefs, spirits, gods and goddesses causing evil, appeasement of ancestral spirits and gods in rituals, spirit possession and exorcism in worship etc. they have more egalitarian, community–centred and people–oriented rituals in their heritage like common sacrifice, common meal and mutual reconciliation before religious acts. They have no separate priestly class as such, as under divine inspiration any member of the community, man or woman, boy or girl can dance, pray and

prophesy. Prayers are said by their elders for the prosperity of the village, country, the world and all its creatures. There are rites of passage and festivals which symbolize their communion with nature. Festivals are either around stages of life of members of the community or around change of seasons in the nature showing a *people–centred* and *nature–oriented* religious spirit.

There are gods like Pottam Teyyam of the Malabar Pulayas which calls for righteousness and divine retribution. There is a large amount of folk–songs, poems of Dalits and backward caste saints which condemn caste, ritualism, pilgrimage, priest–craft and calls for worship of God in spirit and truth. These could form the common body of the Dalit religious heritage irrespective of their religious affiliation in order to reinterpret the past and reconstruct the future.

Thesis—7: A truly Dalit religion or theology has to assist them in realizing their human dignity and spiritual equality with the rest of the people.

Religious history of the Dalit community reveals a deep yearning for liberation from and resentment against Brahminical Hinduism. One finds it manifested in the course of the history in four different ways.

1) A folk religious tradition conflicting with the Brahminical religion in the form of myths, songs, proverbs, festival of abusal, customs and ritual practices centred around Dalit gods and goddesses.
2) Religious conversion to other great tradition such as Islam, Christianity and Buddhism in order to get rid of the stigma of untouchability and the feeling of being an excluded community.
3) Religious protect movement started by sages many of them untouchable and backward caste saints such as Siddhars, Ravi Das, Kabir, Namdev, Dadu, Chokkamela, Ghasi Das and scores of other less well–known saints throughout the country.
4) Denunciation of Brahminical religion advocated by leaders like Mahatma Phule, Periyar Ramaswamy Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, have become the very ideological core of Dalit socio–political

awareness–building and mobilization for the liberation struggles in recent times.

Thesis—8: Historical movements among them though based on their cultural solidarity helped them to a considerable degree in their economic and political emancipation.

All historical movements among the Dalits such as of Ravi Dasis, Valmikis, Kabir Panthis, Satnamis, Neo–Buddhists for humanization led by Dalit sages and leaders were based on their cultural solidarity as a distinctive oppressed group. These have led to greater social mobility and political participation in their history.[16]

Mahatma Phula, Periyar Ramaswamy, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia, also advocated similar anticaste cultural revolution as the best way to democratize Indian society. Various Dalit groups in the country, in spite of their mutual antagonism and ideological ambiguity generally follow this mode of struggle based on their social deprivations and cultural solidarity, rather than on class solidarity. Dalit intellectuals and poets give priority to this social cultural revolution as the best way to solve their economic and political problems.

Thesis—9: Though brahminical Hinduism has the theoretical resources to meaningfully integrate the Dalits, much of the historical emancipation of the Dalits has come to them through their own religious movements which is counter to the brahminical tradition. Dalit literature of today continues to be in the same direction.

The principle of critique against caste consciousness comes from two types of religion–philosophic perceptions in the Indian tradition. One is the advaita vedantic conception of the universe and the other a conception of the ultimate reality very similar to the one God, one humanity, found in Christian and Islamic traditions. Both these streams are found in the ascetic and the sants traditions familiar to India, sometimes in the spiritual life of the same person and the movement he initiated, though without any logical clarity as to its exact nature. Though Brahmins, Backward castes as well as Dalit saints are found following this spiritual path, much of the virulent attacks against

casteism, denunciation of ritualism and priest craft, criticism of Brahmin priests came from untouchable sages or saints who were barbers, butchers, or tailors by profession, low in the esteem of the larger society. They rejected the absolute authority of the Vedas, called for a religion of humanity, emphasized the need for purity of mind and heart against external ablutions, fastings, rituals and pilgrimages. It can be truly called the religion of the unclean people against brahminical priestly religion of external purity, gods and rituals. Though the common people, particularly the untouchables in different regions, followed these rebellious prophets in small groups and sects, they were unable to convert this religion of the anti–establishment into an all India counter–cultural religious movement.

Thesis–10: The Dalits of today live for the first time in their history within a political framework wherein their participation in the decision making is assured, wherein their economic life in principle and in practice to some extent need not conform to their traditional caste occupations, wherein a small percentage of them get educated.

Under the impact of modern political, rational and scientific categories of thought their traditional world view dominated by religion is changing. Broadly speaking there are two streams of thought among them. One group consider themselves as Hindus and follow their traditional religious practices and participate in brahminical controlled worship in varying degrees. The group following Dr. B.R. Ambedkar feels that the Dalits cannot redeem their human dignity and self respect and obtain social equality within the Brahminical religious system and advocate conversion to other religions, particularly Buddhism. Most of the Dalit intellectuals, writers and poets belong to this second group.

I am inclined to think that this second group might set the pattern of their liberation unless the Brahminical Hinduism undergoes radical renaissance under the political threat which the estrangement of the Dalit community poses to the rest of the Hindus.

NOTES

1. D.D. Kosambi describes the historical process in the following words:

   "The higher gods have one or more wives, children... sometimes half–animal like Ganesa—with attendants who may be goblins. The gods ride different animals or birds, *once tribal totems*. The divine family and entourage is an historical phenomenon marking the emergence of a unified society out of different tribal elements which were formerly not united. To justify such combination, the Brahmin books (puranas which claim immemorial antiquity but were written or rewritten to order, generally between the sixth and twelfth centuries A.D.) record fabricated myths. Then comes a higher stage of deep theology and a feudal court of the gods. This is in turn superseded by some philosophical interpretation, mysticism and perhaps social reform. Such are the principal stages, characteristic of Indian religious thought; the element of consistency and logic is unfortunately all too rare in such 'thinking', which never faces reality or gives a clear record of simple facts. The process of combining originally different gods is not continuous; it was repeated in parallel cycles all over the country as diverse local cults were assimilated along with their followers. The organization of the gods followed that of contemporary human society in a cruder way...

   "The people who were absorbed along with these cults managed to retain their identity and to some extent their previous clannish aloofness. *This was accomplished by caste* and always encouraged by unemployed brahmins, who would then serve as priests for the group. The caste group would not normally take cooked food from or with other castes, nor intermarry with them."

   D.D. Kosambi, pp. 45–50, cfr. also *ibid*, pp.168–171. *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Vikas Publishing House, 1987 Edition.

2. A. Eschmanu, *Hinduization of Tribal Deities in Orissa:* The Sakta and Saiva Typology, the Vaisnava Typology of Hinduization and the Origin of Jagannatha, in *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa,* ed. by Anncharlott Eschmanu, H. Kulke and G.H. Tripathi, Manohar, 1978.

3. Fred W. Clothey, *Many Faces of Murugan, The History and Meaning of a South Indian God,* Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1978.

4. Fred W. Clothey, *Sastha — Ayyanar — Ayyappan: The God as Prison of Social History in Images of Man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia,* ed. by Fred W. Clothey, New Era Publications, Madras, 1982.

5. Political and economic subjugation of tribal groups happened in history in a variety of ways either through outright military conquest or through assimilation of tribals into the brahminical caste system by conferring on the tribal chief the status of a kshatriya. Both the study of brahminical scriptures and historico–ethnographic study of particular caste groups (tribal groups) reveal the process at work in history and that development of brahmination meant growth of caste structure within the tribe and among the tribes. I quote here two passages from D.D. Kosambi, the first describes 'hiranya garbha' a kind of baptism ceremony by which kshatriya status was conferred on tribal chiefs and the second the social purpose of the brahminical sacrificial system. 'Several southern kings of tribal origin boast of having had the *'Golden Womb' (hiranyagarbha)* ceremony performed. This is carefully described in some *Purānas.* A large vessel of gold was prepared into which the chieftain would be inserted doubled up, like the foetus in a womb. The brahmin ritual for pregnancy and childbirth was then chanted by the hired priests. The men emerged from the 'womb of gold' as if reborn, having also acquired a new caste, or even a caste for the first time; this was not the caste of the rest of the tribe when they were absorbed into society, but one of the classical four castes, usually *kshatriya*, with the *gotra* of the brahmin priest. Some of the 'reborn' medieval kings might claim the brahmin and kshatriya caste at once, like the Satavahana Gotamiputra. The brahmin priests received the golden vessel as part of their fee, which made everyone happy. All the latter kings, even some Buddhists, insist that they support the four—caste system *(caturvarnya)*, though some of them claimed descent from Nagas, or from the semi–Naga Asvatthaman of the *Mahābhārata,* or some monkey king of the *Rāmāyana.* All this amounted to keeping down a newly created set of vaisyas and sudras by brahmin precept and kshatriya arms. The chief, with the backing of a few nobles freed from tribal law, would become ruler over his former tribe while the ordinary tribesmen merged into a new peasantry. Sometimes the brahmin went further than discovering some respectable genealogy for the chief in the epics or puranas, and beyond writing such ancestries into the record. That is, the brahmin would even marry into the tribe, which could normally create new tribal brahmins. Occasionally, as in central India of about the sixth century, the mixed descendants might rule the tribe. King Lokanatha of Bengal boasts a bit later of such mixed descent from a brahmin

father and a tribal clan chieftainess *(gotra–devi)*. The first Indo–Chinese kingdom was similarly founded by a brahmin adventurer named Kaundinya, whose superior prowess with the bow cowed local tribesmen and enabled him to wed the local 'Naga' chieftainess Soma. Aboriginal matriarchy made such unions quite simple. Sometimes a regular balance was struck, as in Malabar, where the *Nair caste originates from mothers of the local matriarchal population by fathers of patriarchal Nambudiri brahmin caste.* Both groups still retain their separate institutions."

(D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline,* pp. 171-172).

"The fire sacrifices became far too cumbrous for any but the professional priesthood. The ostensible major purpose of sacrifice remained success in warfare, both of which had become correspondingly heavier. *A far more powerful secondary purpose appeared, namely repression of the inner struggle of new classes.* The vaisya (settler, husbandman) and the sudra (helots), are to be exploited for the advantage of the ruling warrior caste, the ksatriya with the brahmin priest's help. The struggle with the vaisya was earlier, reflected in the Rigvedic strife between the collective Maruts and their chief, Indra. We are later told that these Maruts are the peasantry (viz); Indra eats them up as the king the peasants. One of the major purpose of the sacrifice was to make the other three castes obedient to the ksatriya rulers (TS 2.5.10). The Aitaraya Brahmanya says (AB 7.29) 'Like a vaisya... tributary to another, to be eaten by another, to be oppressed at will... Like a sudra... the servant of another, to be removed at will, to be slain at will.' The two lower castes are to be enclosed, both on the outward and return ceremonial rounds at the sacrifice, between the warrior and the priest castes, to make them submissive (SB 6.4.4.13). The effect, and to some extent even the conscious purpose, (as the reference to the lower caste prove), was to control the new class structure that had developed within the tribe. Sometimes the associated internal conflicts were externalized in warfare. After this the *basic class nature of caste* need hardly be doubted, though it was still *class on a primitive level of production'*. In this historical process class nature of the priesthood emerged. 'The constant fighting and round of sacrifices increased the brahmin's sacrificial fees".

(D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 100).

Process of Economic Subjugation:

Accumulation of wealth by priests started in the vedic period to gather momentum in the Maurya and intensified by the time of the Guptas, leading to a semi-feudal economic situation. R.S. Sharma describes: "The most striking development was the practice of making land grants to the brahmins, a custom which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in the Dharmastras, the didactic portions of the Epic, and the Puranas; the Anuasana Parva of the Mahabharata devotes a whole chapter to the praise of making gifts of land (bhumidana— Prasamsa). The early Pali texts of the pre—Maurya period refer to the villages granted to the brahmins by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha... The same is the case with earliest epigraphic record a land grant, a satavahana inscription of the first century B.C., which refers to the grant of a village a gift in the Asvamedha Sacrifice."

(Ibid. 168—171, R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, p.1—2).

Later such grants confer on the donees administrative control of the villages, rights over hidden treasures (mines), power to rule the cultivators and artisans. R.S. Sharma continues "The Gupta period furnishes at least half dozen instances of grants of apparently settled villages made to the brahmins by the big feudatories in central India, in which the residents, including the cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by their respective rulers not only to pay the customary taxes to the donees, but also to obey their commands. In two other land grants of post-Gupta times royal commands were issued to government officials employed as Sarvadhyaksha and also to regular soldiers and umbrella—bearers that they should not cause any disturbance to the brahmins. All this provides clear evidence of the surrender of the administrative power of the state."

(R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism,* pp. 1—4).

A similar process of land grants to Brahmins existed also in South India as the South Indian historian K.A. Nilakanta Sastri writes: 'This grant may be said to start the series of brahmadayas or gifts to Brahmins, which increase in number and importance through the centuries and confirm the decline of both Buddhism and Jainism.

(K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Oxford University Press, Fourth Edition, Seventh Impression, p.101, cfr. also 102).

But this historical process should not be understood merely as a kind of spiritual overlordship of the Brahmins founded on their economic stronghold cultivated assiduously through the centuries.

Prof. Elamkulam Kunjanpillai had already pointed out the paramilitary character of training received by Brahmin scholars. Prof. M.G.S. Narayan, the present member secretary of Indian Council of Historical Research, argues "from the Pallava period onwards the scholarly and warlike bands of Cattas and Bhattas organized in 'salais' or 'gahtikes' played a vital role in promoting and maintaining the new monarchies, thus accelerating the process of Aryanisation of South India. It is my view that the semi–religious paramilitary body of the Catter must be placed alongside the semi–political paramilitary body of the Caver suicide squads known by different names in different parts of India—to have a more integrated picture of spiritual and secular organization which sustained society through the turbulent periods of anarchy in early medieval India. Their elucidation will probably expose the hidden foundations of Indian fedualism.'

(Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan in his Foreword to *Brahmin Settlements in Kerala*, Historical Studies, by Kesavan Veluthat, Sandhya Publications, Calicut University, 1978).

In short, the historical process through which Brahmin upper caste elitism or as some authors call it 'Hindu imperialism' came about was religio—cultural, economic and politico—military.

The role of military power or violence is evident from the beginning of our civilization. Here are some examples: 'O Indra, Soma, burn the Asuras (indigenous). Burn, crush them, crush, torture them who increase in tens and hundreds in dark forests, cut them into pieces. Let their children die and let the earth swallow their generation.' Atharva Veda 8.4.

6. Swami Dharma Theertha, *The Menace of Hindu Imperialism* first published in 1941. Fifth Reprint 1992 by Babasaheb Ambedkar Foundation, Kaduthuruthy, Kottayam 686 604, Kerala.

7. I give here one example. There are hundreds of such examples narrated by the Dalits and Tribals all over the country. "The Pulayas about Trivandrum gave the Rev. Mr.Mateer the following tradition of their origin, no doubt as the result of the lesson taught them by the higher classes.

   'We are content to remain in our present circumstances for Bhagavan (God), after having created the higher castes, considered what to do with the surplus earth, when Parvathi advised him to create therewith a low class to serve the higher ones.' Such is the imposition drilled into the untutored minds of these wretched people by the higher castes." K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.3, First Pub. 1924–33. Reprint, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, p.477.

8. An example from a village in Karnataka is given here. "Once in three years the village celebrates a festival in honour of the village deity, Maari. The Vokkaligas sacrifice goats and sheep during the festival. The Dalits are expected to scatter rice mixed with the blood of the sacrificed animals around the village in the belief that this would protect the villages from misfortune". From a news report appeared in Deccan Herald on 15 August 1989 as the Dalit refused to play this role in that year which led to their social boycott by caste Hindus and clash between them. Caste roles played by barbers, dhobies on occasions of ritual pollution of caste Hindus such as birth, death, first menses of caste Hindu girls, prohibition on the Dalits to walk in the villages with foot wear and similar traditional restrictions belong to this category. Resentment of the Dalits against such old practices are considered anti–religious and leads to Dalit–caste Hindu clashes in recent times.

9. Conflicting versions of myths, songs, ritual practices which point to some historical clashes in the past between the Dalits and the caste Hindus are at present centred around village Gods, well known Hindu temples and famous pilgrim centres all over the country. The two versions of the song of Pottan Teyyam in Malabar is just one example out of thousands of similar cases. Such myths, songs, proverbs and ritual practices are to be collected as part of the attempt to reconstruct Dalit history as these sources throw some light into their past.

10. Religious and social privileges enjoyed by Parisha in SouthIndia, Gastar Oppert writes in his monumental work *The Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa or India*, published in1893.

    In Mysore the Holiya or Holeya takes the place of the Pariah. The word *'Holiya'* may be another form for Pulaiya, unless we assume that the 'i' in Holiya is a change from 'r' and connect the word Holiya with Paraiya.

    However despised a position the Pariah and the Holiya occupy in the places where they live, they have preserved and still cherish, as the Mhar and Bhar do, the memory of former greatness and regard themselves as the original owners of the soil. Political revolutions, about which we now know nothing, have most probably been the cause of their subversion by other kindred Dravidian tribes. Yet, considering the unstable nature of the Indian states, the continual disturbances and fighting which give to Indian history such an unpleasant and unsatisfactory appearance, there seems nothing

peculiar in the claims advanced by those Pariahs, who are in reality the descendants of the original inhabitants. The pariah calls himself to this day the elder brother of the Brahmin, claiming in this manner precedence of the Brahmin. The Brahmins on the other hand ascribe the origin of the Pariahs, Candalas, and other low castes to the connection of Brahmin women with low castemen, or to the curse which sages, like Visvamitra, were so fond of uttering against their own flesh and blood, or against anyone who was unfortunate enough to come across them at an inauspicious moment. The legend of the curse of Visvamitra's sons is interesting, as it ascribes to them the origin of some wild tribes like the Andhras, Pundras, Sabras, and Pulindas.

The Pariahs have according to the Nanaretti eighteen titles like the Vellalar and possess also the same insights.

The chief goddess of the Pariahs is called Attal or Ammal, mother and represents Parvati as mother of the earth, while as Pidari she resembles through her evil inclinations Kali. Different personifications of Parvati and Kali are variously named, as Velattal (Elattal), Nagattal, Egattal, Cemattal, Mariattal or Mariyamman, Angalamman, Ellamman, Punganamman (Pungattal), etc. Temples are found everywhere in South India, and she is generally the village goddess. Mariyamman, the goddess who inflicts and removes small—pox and other diseases, is found among the Gauda—Dravidians of the whole of India.

The feasts of these goddesses extend over a week and last occasionally sixteen days. During the whole of this time a Pariah is kept clothed and fed in the temple as the accepted bridegroom of the goddess. High across the streets festoons of margose leaves are hung, and on the last day, while pots filled with water are carried by the people and the idol is taken in procession round the streets of the village, tom–toms are beaten in honour of the Pariah bridegroom, and after he has fasted and bathed, he gets a new cloth dyed with saffron, and the priest fastens quarter anna piece to the right hand of the goddess and another to that of the Pariah. This ceremony is called kappu.

The name Velattal is commonly explained as mother of Subrahmanya, from vel and Attal. Nagattal, is regarded to signify the same from Nagan (Subrahmanya) and Attal. Some Tamil scholars however do not favour this explanation. When revered in these forms Parvati or Kanyakumari is regarded as a Pariah woman or Matangi.

The Pariahs enjoy even now, in many places, privileges, the origin of which cannot be explained except by admitting the existence of

substantial reasons, which have long been forgotten. A Pariah ties to this day the tali round the neck of Egattal, the tutelary goddess of Black Town in Madras. The Pariah, who acts as the bridegroom, arrives at the temple about ten days before the feast commences and is treated as described above. At Perambur, near Madras, the same deity is called Cemattal, mother of safety. In Mysorea Holiya is generally the priest of the village goddess, and the Kulvadi or pariah headman of the village community is regarded as the real proprietor of the village. At Melkota a Holiya presents to Celvapillai, or utsava–idol, which is thus called as it is carried in procession at the festival, a branch of the Cami or Vahni tree to be used as an arrow for his bow at the hunting festival (parivettai) and while the idol is moving in procession, a Pariah huntsman lets a hare run across the road in front of the car that the god may shoot at it; this done, the idol returns in grand procession to the temple. The Pariah receives as a reward (paritosikam) a garland, the flowers of which are distributed among the heads of the large conflux of Pariahs. This hunting festival is in Malayalam called palliretta, or royal hunt. It is just possible that pari and palli are identical words. The Holiyas pull the car at Melkota and are not debarred from approaching it. They pull also the ropes of the cars at Kancipuram, Kumbhakonam, Srivalliputtur, and other places. In fact they do so wherever there are big temples. To obviate any unpleasantness arising on such occasions, it is laid down, as a rule, that the touch of Pariahs and outcastes who come to revere the deity does not pollute.

Devalavasamipasthan devasevärtham ägatan

Caṇḍālan patitan vāpi spṛṣṭva na snānam acaret.

The Holiyas are permitted in Melkota to enter the Tirunarayana temple on three days of the year. The Brahmins ascribe this privilege to the circumstance that a poor but pious Pariah had observed that a cow approached every day a white ants hole and let her milk drop into it. He searched and discovered that the image of Celvapillai was concealed in it. In consequences, the Pariah took compassion on the cow and supplied her daily with fodder. The great Vaiṣṇava reformer, Bhagavat Rāmānuja, had at the same time been dreaming of this Celvapillai image, and the Pariah showed it to him. As a reward for this act of piety, Ramanujacharya allowed the Pariahs to enter the temple in future for three days of the year. Others say that this favour was granted because the Pariahs had protected him in their paraiceri, when he was pursued. Very likely, the privilege is of older origin. A similar custom prevails in Ḳadiri.

It is most peculiar that the origin of the famous Jagannatha temple is also closely connected with the lowcaste Pariahs. A Savara mountaineer, called Basu, worshipped in secret the blue stone image of Jagannatha, to obtain which the powerful king of Malva, Indradyumna, had despatched Brahmins to all quarters of the world. One of them penetrated at last into the wilderness where Basu lived. Basu detained the Brahmin, made him marry his daughter, and led him after some time blindfolded to the place where the image of Jagannatha was lying concealed. The Brahmin worshipped the god, and, after the lapse of some time, was able to communicate his discovery to the king. As the king was very proud of his power, the god Jagannatha, in order to punish his pride, did allow him to build the temple, but did not manifest himself personally to Indradyumna. This favour was granted him after prolonged delay, and it was only with the help of the Savara Basu that the image could finally be obtained and removed. Until very recently, pilgrims of all castes and outcastes frequented Puri and partook together of their meals, as the presence of Jagannatha is said to destroy all distinctions of caste, race, and faith; but now out—castes are no longer allowed to enter the sanctuary and to join in the eating of holy food, though the food prepared and sanctified at Puri can be eaten by Brahmana anywhere, even in the presence of the lowest people. The descendants of Basu are thus debarred from worshipping personally their own divinity.

Many Pariahs have attained high renown as poets and saints. Take for example, Tiruvaḷḷuva Nāyanār, the author of the Kural and his so–called sister, the famous poetess, Avvai, the Vaisnava Āḻvār Tirupan, the author of the work beginning with Amalan Ādipirān, who was brought up by Pariahs, and the Saiva saint Nandan, who was a Pariah. A Kurumba robber, Tirumangaimannan, became afterwards a celebrated Vaisnava Āḻvār.

These and many other instances can be adduced to prove the once flourishing condition of the now despised lowest classes. Such privileges exist all over the country in the south which need to be collected.

11. Accounts of some cases given by Oppert, Cfr. Ibid. pp.58–62. A recent case around the shrine of the Kuravans in central Travancore. Cfr. A.M. Ayrookuzhiel, *The Religious Resources of the Dalits in the Context of their Struggle* in Essays in Celebration of the CISRS Silver Jubilee, ed. by Saral K. Chatterji, 1983.

12. M.S.S. Pandian, *From Exclusion to Inclusion, Brahminism's New Face in Tamilnadu* Economic and Political Weekly Sept. 1–8, 1990.

    Gopal Guru, *Hinduisation of Ambedkar in Maharashtra,* EPW, Feb.16, 1991

13. Swami Vivekananda, Sri Narayana Guru, Pandit K.P. Karuppan, Mr. M.P. Appan to cite a few.

14. The Second World Hindu Conference, January 25–27, 1979, Conference of Virat Hindu Samaj, October 19, 1981 and similar organizations passed resolutions against untouchability. The Bharatiya Janata Party in its election manifesto in 1991 also included programmes to remove untouchability from the villages. For instance, slogans like one village, one source of drinking water.

15. V.R. Narla who was editor of *Andhra Prabha* from 1942–1959, editor of *Andhra Jyoti* from 1960—1977, and member of Rajya Sabha 1958—1970, is one of them. He writes in 1980 in the preface of his book *The Truth about the Gita:* "But to my utter sorrow, I find that what we are actually having is a tidal wave of revivalism. We are now far more credulous, superstitious, orthodox and hypocritical than we were prior to 1947.... How to explain this? By hindsight I have slowly come to realize that our nationalist movement right from its inception, had its roots in revivalism. The Bhagavad Gita was the source of inspiration for such diverse types of national leaders as (Revivalists) Bankimachandra Chatterji, Vivekananda, Bipinchandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant and Gandhi. It was the supreme gospel of even Nathuram Godse who murdered Gandhi. Need we, then, wonder why we have entered a new dark age after our Independence? Indeed, even the day, hour and minute for assuming that Independence was fixed after studying the course of stars and planets in the heaven." V.R. Narla, *The Truth about the Gita,* Pub. Narla Institute of New Thought, Hyderabad, 1988.

16. Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religious Rebels in the Punjab,* Ajanta Publications, Delhi 1988. Many social movements which have enabled lower castes to acquire upward mobility during the past centuries were based on their religio–cultural solidarity rather than class unity.

7

The Task of the Philosopher Today: Perspective of the Tribals in Chota Nagpur

Dr. John Kerketta

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world as a whole is going through a period of socio–economic, religio–cultural, political – summarily, philosophical transition. This transition is both involutional, that is, growing more inward through reflection, and evolutional, that is, opening new domains for consideration. There are various forces at work from within and from without which seem to question and shake off one's beaten path of thinking. Different sciences question and reflect on reality from their own particular perspective; but none of these sciences looks at the reality as a whole. Philosophy is a science which questions, reflects upon, and searches for the meaning of the reality as a whole. Thus, the task of the philosopher in today's world is enormous, that is, to question, reflect upon and search for the meaning of reality as a whole, of truth itself.

The tribal world in India, and particularly in Chotanagpur, the Southern Bihar, is no exception to these socio–economic, political, religio–cultural – summarily, philosophical changes. Therefore, our Seminar is justified in including the task of the philosopher from the perspective of the tribals. Though it is of great importance to deal

with the subject from the perspective of the tribals in India, for the sake of being precise our paper will limit itself to the tribals of Chotanagpur, (Jharkhand land), in Southern Bihar. Again, it will not deal with all the tribals living in Chotanagpur, but limit itself to Uraons, Kharias, Mundas, Hos and Santhals.

For the sake of clarity, we shall begin by giving a workable understanding of what is philosophy and who is a philosopher. As the tribals of Chotanagpur have no systematic written down presentation of their philosophy and of different areas of philosophy, our next task will be to give a systematic presentation of the tribal world–view. The paper will next look at various forces which are at work in bringing about changes in the tribal world of Chotanagpur. Finally, we shall conclude our paper with a reflection on the task of the philosopher in the tribal context of Chotanagpur.

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHER:

As philosophy has no explicitly designated subject matter of its own, it is difficult to define it. Etymologically, philosophy means love for wisdom, search for wisdom of life. Its object is not limited to any particular aspect of reality, but the reality as a whole, as it takes any area, any subject matter or any experience for its object; it deals with the reality as a whole. Philosophy is a mental operation; and its method is reflective and meditative. One could describe philosophy as a reflection upon varieties of human experiences, as a rational, methodical, systematic consideration of those topics that are of greater concern to human being. It is a process and expression of rational reflection upon human experience; it is concerned with the meaning of living one's life; it is an attempt to understand reality as a whole, an examination of man's moral responsibilities and his social obligations, an effort to fathom the divine intentions and man's place with reference to them, an effort to ground the enterprize of natural science, a rigorous examination of the origin, existence and validity of men's ideas, an exploration of the place of will or conscious¡ness in the universe.

Philosophy is taken to mean also an outlook or background to a

given topic, subject or enterprize. It is the sum total of basic views or principles accepted by a particular age or group.

A philospher is, therefore, every thinker who is an aspirant to, and proponent of wisdom; it is one who asks certain questions, fundamental questions; it is one who has both the ability to ask questions and to answer questions, one who is constantly searching for truth. The results of this interrogation as embodied in a personal or public enterprize are of value to mankind.

SYSTEMATIC PRESENTATION OF TRIBAL PHILOSOPHY: TRIBAL WORLD–VIEW

The tribals of Chotanagpur have no systematic written books on their philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, theodicy or cosmology. But they have asked questions, fundamental questions about life and the reality as a whole; they have reflected upon various human experiences; and they have searched for the meaning and wisdom of life. One can discover them in their cultural expressions, like their myths and stories, songs and dances, rituals and rites of passage, festivals and celebrations, signs and symbols, customs and behaviour, anecdotes and wisdom sayings. Our task here then is to decipher in them their philosophy, their world–view and their outlook to life, and to reality as a whole. But before that, let us see who are the tribals of Chotanagpur.

a. Tribals in Chotanagpur:

The tribe is an autonomous group of people which acknowledges no higher authority than its own, speaking a common language, observing uniform rules of social organization, and working for common purposes, such as trade, agriculture, or defence etc. The tribe considers itself as descended from one common ancestor. The basis of tribal union is blood kinship. It is divided into clans; it is often headed by a chief; it claims a territory which is not very precisely defined. It has a uniform culture and way of life. One can say that tribe is a group of people generally constituting homogeneous unit, speaking a common language, claiming a common ancestry, living in a particular geographic area, and having a social structure based on kinship.

The tribe in its restricted technical sense usually refers to territorially defined, politically independent unit of a tribal society. The emphasis is on the territorially based political unity rather than culturally and ethnically distinct tribal society. In Chotanagpur, however, we find a different emphasis. Here the tribal society does not have a well defined, independent political territory, even within the Indian Union. The tribals of Chotanagpur want to have their own independent state within the nation. The Jharkhand movement is precisely geared to obtaining a homeland for the tribals of the Jharkhand area. Contrary to the technical meaning of the tribal society, the emphasis, here, is on the cultural and ethnic identity of the tribals, and in order to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity they want to have a separate state of Jharkhand.

Although the Hindi word 'Jati' strictly speaking is used to translate caste, yet for the lack of a more suitable word, in the Indian Constitution, the word 'Janjati' is used for the term 'tribe'. Others use words like 'Adim–Jati' (original community), or simply 'Adivasi' original settlers, aboriginals.

As we have said above we are limiting ourselves in this paper to some of the tribals of Chotanagpur, namely, Uraons, Mundas, Kharias, Hos and Santhals. Though each of these tribal groups has its own language, character traits, customs, myths etc., still there are similarities, and there is something common in them which gives them an identity as the tribals of Chotanagpur. Fundamentally their philosophy of life and world–view are the same.

b. Tribal Philosophy – Tribal World–View:

We have said above, that the tribals of Chotanagpur have no systematic writings on their philosophy. But they have asked fundamental questions on life and on reality as a whole; they have reflected upon varieties of human experiences, like birth and death, sickness and happiness, sin and blessing; they have searched for the meaning and wisdom of life and truth itself. One can discover them in their cultural expressions, like myths and stories, songs and dances, signs and symbols, rites and rituals, rites of passage and seasonal festivals, customs and cultural practices, belief systems and

religious practices... In what follows, we shall try to give a systematic presentation of the philosophy of some aspects of their life, or of some aspects of the world–view of the tribals of Chotanagpur.

i. Tribal Outlook to the Origin and Purpose of Life:

The tribals have asked questions, reflected upon, and searched for the ultimate meaning and explanation of life; they believe, as their creation myth tells us, in God who is the creator, destroyer and restorer. Life is a gift from God to be enjoyed to the full. This joy of living is expressed by living in the present, in dance and songs. The tribals sing while working, and dance at night even after day's hard work. They live in the joy of the present not worrying about future. Such a philosophy of life makes them happy, makes them live in the present and care–free, happy go lucky people.

Their God is the ultimate reality, the source of everything, all good, fatherly, a living person. He cares for them; Though the tribals offer him sacrifice, they have no personal relationship to him. Basically the tribals are monotheistic people.

ii. Tribal Belief in the Spirit–World:

Besides their belief in God, the tribals believe in spirits. There are both good and evil spirits. They are not created spirits; but, as their myths tell, they are human beings turned into spirits after death. The tribals propitiate them in order to keep them pacified with human beings; or else they will bring sickness and various types of sufferings and natural calamities. The good spirits are normally good to human beings, but they can also bring calamitites to people if they are not regularly propitiated. On the other hand, the evil spirits are always harmful to human beings if they are not kept pacified through propitiation. The tribal life is very much affected by their belief in the spirit–world. The evil spirits become the cause of sickness. The tribals live always in the fear of spirits as these spirits are present everywhere.

iii. Tribal Ancestor Veneration:

The tribals continue to relate with their dead ancestors. In fact,

they bring their souls (shades) back to the family, and give a place in the family house. They are duly remembered and respected and given to eat and drink. If the dead ancestor is not remembered and duly venerated, he can cause disturbance to the family. Thus the tribal philosophy of remembering and giving respect to the dead ancestors, good in itself, can take a negative form of fear, as any failure to venerate them would bring about calamities in the family.

iv. Philosophy of Tribal Community:

The internal dynamic of tribal community is its very strong sense of belonging and solidarity, and hence a sense of community (tribe) and equality. The strength of a tribal community lies in its sense of community and equality which binds the members into a closely–knit community. Its implications are seen in the formulations of behaviour patterns and ordering of life unto preservation and inculcation of the value of community feeling (bond) and equality for the preservation of the tribe. Hence their institutions are founded for this purpose. Among their social institutions we can name the following: structure of the tribe, bachelor's dormitory (formation of youth), marriage, kinship, totem. The tribes believe in one God, venerate ancestors, placate spirits, and have priests, medicine men. Their main profession is agriculture; and they have barter system, subsistence economy and no market economy. Their political system follows village *panchayat* and village confederation. The tribals celebrate the cycle of life with rites of passage; they are birth, marriage and death. These rites of passage are of socio–religious character. As the tribals live on agriculture, nature and its seasons play important role in their life; so they have socio–cultural and seasonal feasts and festivals round the year. All these social, religious, economic and political institutions and the rites of passage and annual feast and festivals keep the tribal community together and preserve and inculcate the value of community feeling and equality for the preservation of the tribe.

v. Tribal Community over Tribal Individual:

Their strong sense of community and equality makes the tribals and their life community–centred; the good of the community is

above the good of the individual. Thus individual interests, efforts, talents are to be at the service of the community. Individual freedom is for the good of the community. Community decision takes over individual decision. There is no place for competition in any area of life; all must come up together. Any tendency to individualism will be checked by the community. While tribal philosophy of community and equality is very good, it can have many negative consequences, like no initiative of individuals, no progress, jealousy, herd mentality, no independent thinking, etc.

vi. Tribal Society Based on Kinship:

The tribal society of Chotanagpur is based on kinship. The main tribes are divided into exogamous patrilineal clans (surname) named after minerals, plants or animals. These eponyms are respected, but get no religious worship as mythical ancestors. Separate clans are clustered in separate villages with a priest and a village head. There is also a confederation of villages under another headman. Kinship terminology and the mode of address are classificatory. Grand parents and grand children enjoy a joking relationship, while there is reciprocal avoidance and name taboo between a woman and her husband's elder brother. There is name taboo also between husband and wife. Women cannot inherit land in perpetuity. Thus, the tribal society is a closed society based and structured on kinship. It is not always open to other people for community structure and marriage relationship. While it is a well knit society, it could be closed to the rest of the world.

vii. Tribal Rites of Passage:

The tribals of Chotanagpur celebrate their life cycle with rites of passage; they are birth rite, marriage and death rite. Marriage is among adults, monogamous and virilocal. It is prohibited in the direct line and also in the colateral line within three generations. Clan exogamy and tribal endogamy is the rule. Parents arrange marriage through inter–mediaries. Omens are observed during the initial negotiations. Bride price is paid in grain, clothes and cattle. Presents are given at the marriage dinner. Divorce, though rare, was allowed for special reasons; widow marriage is allowed. Marriage between same surname as well as marriage with another tribal group or

non–tribal is not allowed. Thus marriage among the tribals preserves tribal unity and community.

There is initiation rite after the birth of a tribal child. He is initiated to the tribal community and becomes a member of the tribe, with all his rights and duties in the tribal community. Name giving ceremony is through rice oracle; grand children get the names of their grand parents. In fact grand children are the images of their grand parents; grand parents are born in their grand children, but not in the sense of re–incarnation. Again this rite of passage preserves and inculcates in the tribals a sense of community and solidarity.

Finally there is a rite for the dead, in which the dead is brought back to the family; that is, his soul is brought back to the family and given a place in the family house. The dead ancestors are given due respect and veneration. A failure in their duty towards their dead will bring calamities to the family members. This practice preserves and inculcates a sense of belonging and community even with the dead.

viii. Tribal Attitude towards Nature:

The tribals of Chotanagpur depend for their livelihood on nature as they are agriculturists by profession. They depend on forest for fruits, fire wood and for many other needs; their cherished possession is land which they own. They depend on nature for their agricultural work – rain, summer, winter. Thus, they have seasonal festivals and feasts throughout the year. They do not worship nature, but they are very close to nature in their rythm of life, work and celebrations. These seasonal feasts are in correspondence with their agricultural work process. Such an attitude limits their work to the rythm of nature, and prevents them from using other sources of livelihood and other rythms of work.

ix Tribal Economy:

The tribals of Chotanagpur are agriculturists by profession; this is their God–given profession. Taking up any other profession or trade was considered against the God–given profession, and against the spirit of the tribal community. This would go for them against the spirit of equality. There was no market economy; barter system was

the accepted way of buying and selling. The tribals lived in the present and did not think much for the future. There was no saving economy. This philosophy of wealth and economy prevents them from making economic progress.

x. Tribal Attitude to Evil:

The tribals are also faced with the problem of evil –physical, moral, social. They are puzzled with the problem of evil because for them life is to be enjoyed to the full. They have questioned this problem, reflected upon it and given their own explanation to and searched for meaning in, suffering. The tribals are limited to phenomenon. When they are unable to explain the cause of a sickness, or when they are unable to cure a sick person, they have found their explanation beyond phenomenon, that is, in the spirit world. Here, a doctor (Ojha) through his spiritual power which he has from good as well as evil spirits, diagnosis the cause of evil; and the cause is in one of the good or evil spirits which works through a human agent who has evil power from that spirit; these agents are witches, dains. The diagnosis process is called witchcraft. As the cause of evil is spiritual so its cure is to be spiritual. Therefore, the medicine doctor, besides giving medicine, offers sacrifice to evil spirits or good spirits as the case would be, and pacify these spirits. When, even this approach fails, the tribals are reconciled and resign themselves. But witch doctors have made it their profession and harass the people by demanding too much for sacrifice and impoverish the people concerned. The tribals live in an atmosphere of fear of evil spirits as well as under the oppression of witch doctors. Lot of their wealth is spent in paying off the witch doctor with not much result except their psychological satisfaction that they have fulfilled the requirement of their belief–system.

TRIBALS OF CHOTANAGPUR TODAY:

After having seen some of the main areas of the tribal world–view (philosophy or outlook to reality), let us see now in brief the situation of the tribals in Chotanagpur today.

There are various factors from within and from without that have brought about many changes in the tribal world, and have affected their value systems, world–view and their philosophy itself. The

tribals are not alone, they are living in a pluralistic society. Christianization, Hinduization, Islamization, education, urbanization, industrialization, socio–political movements, religio–cultural upheavals, influx of people from different parts of India with their culture, religion, value systems, socio–political, religio–cultural systems have influenced the life of the tribals. Though the tribals of Chotanagpur are getting educated and some of them are pursuing higher studies and working in different parts of India holding high posts in governmental, academic, social, religious, political world, large number of tribals still remain uneducated and agriculturists by profession and live in villages. Their world–view is not much changed, particularly in the area of their faith in the spirit world. But there are changes in all spheres of tribal life. As a result, often there is loss of tribal values, like from a sense of community and equality to individualism and consumerism, from religious outlook to secularism, from working together to competition, from peace loving to the use of violence, from community–centred life to self–centred life, and in so many other areas of life. Consequently, there is loss of direction because of indiscrete imitation of others; there are disorder, deviance, generation gap and antisocial trends. At the same time there are different socio–political, religio–cultural, economic and other movements taking place; there is tribal awakening and revivalism. The best example of this is seen in Jharkhand movement which is struggling for a separate homeland, for a separate state based on cultural and ethnic identity. It is also seen in the revival of tribal religion, that is, *sarna* religion. But above all, there is now a cultural revival, reviving tribal feasts and festivals, rites of passage, value systems, and, thus, there is an attempt to unite all tribals: Christians, non–Christians, and all the rest. The tribal world is going through cultural and identity crisis. It is looking for a transformation of communities and searching for a new identity, deeply rooted in its own culture, but learning from and adapting to what is good in other cultures. It is here the task of the philosopher lies today.

TASK OF THE PHILOSOPHER TODAY IN THE TRIBAL WORLD:

We have seen above that the basic experience of the tribals on life and reality is no different from that of others. They have questioned

their experiences, reflected upon them and searched for explanation and meaning of life; their search has been of truth itself. The tribals have their own world–view, outlook, and philosophy with their positive and negative elements; sometimes they have not been rational enough, limiting themselves to phenomenon and taking refuge to faith. Now, they are affected by other philosophies, outlooks, and world–views which have disturbed their own, and shaken them off from what they once thought to be definitive. They are challenged, questioned, and forced to reflect upon their new experiences. They are finding it difficult to adjust themselves, not able to discern among various forces at work; as a result they find themselves without any direction. It is here the philosopher can help them to question, reflect upon and search for, new identity.

The task of the philosopher is to start with the tribal world–view itself. He has first to discover in them what is good and reasonable, and what is without reason, and not good, what is merely mythical, he has to discover what is oppressive, and through his questioning, reflection and search he should liberate the tribals from the bondage of their cultural oppression and give them a new world–view. He also has to question, reflect upon, and critically examine different outside forces at work today in the tribal world, and help them to face these factors. We give here some of the areas where the philosopher could work with the tribals.

i. Tribal Belief in the Spirit World:

The tribal belief in good as well as evil spirits keeps them under constant fear and controls their movements. This belief blocks their mental, economic, social and global progress. Although there are invisible realities, the philosopher should help tribals question this belief and give reason for not being afraid of these forces.

ii. Tribal Explanation to Evil:

Another area which the philosopher should work in, is tribal explanation to evil, that is, evil spirits, witches, dains, evil eyes, evil mouth, and witch doctor and witchcraft. The tribals are oppresssed by their belief in witches and witch–craft. Besides medical science, there is also the place of philosopher here, that is, to question, reflect upon with them, search for new answers.

iii. Community over Individual:

In tribal philosophy to life, community is above individual, thus also individual freedom, decision and initiative. Although community has its place in an individual's life, individual's life is not to be at the cost of the community. Here, the task of the philosopher is to keep proper balance between community and individual.

iv. Equality over Competition:

The tribal world–view overstresses equality in the life of the people, particularly economic equality, thus leaves no room for competition. Such a philosophy hinders tribals from all economic progress. Again the role of the philosopher is to strike a balance between equality and competition through his questioning, reflection and search.

v. Religiosity and Secularism:

Much of tribal life was governed by its belief–system which in some cases is not based on reason and is simply mythical. The philosopher's task is to question some of these belief–systems and make their faith and belief reasonable, and liberate them from the clutches of such beliefs.

vi. Panchayat System (Village System) and New Political Trends:

The tribal's world is confronted with different political ideologies, and his village system of government is challenged. At the same time there is political awakenting which is mainifested in Jharkhand movement, a search for a separate state. The tribal leaders are losing direction; there is not much questioning, reflection and search. The philosopher can here develop a new political philosophy proper to the tribal system of government.

vii. Closed and Open Community:

With its sense of community and equality and its further implications manifested in customs, the tribal community is a closed community, not easily opening itself to other communities and professions. Although there has been much change in it, the philosopher can further help the tribals in opening up to new ideas,

communities, ideologies, at the same time being critical of them. The philosopher's task is to help the tribals face the challenge of pluralism in today's society.

viii. Agriculture and other Professions:

The tribals believe that God has given them one profession, that is, agriculture. In the past, there has been reluctance to take up other professions, though today the tribals are taking up various professions in various fields. But there is still much to be done to help people take up other professions. Such a change will liberate them from their economic situation.

ix. Liberation from Culture of Silence:

In the past, the tribals have been oppressed in various ways by different people; consequently they developed a culture of silence, of not opposing and speaking out their mind. This also prevented them from independent thinking, and developed into herd mentality. The philosopher's task is to help them use their reason, mental power, to liberate them from culture of silence, to make them think for themselves and stand on their own legs.

x. Mythical and Human Values:

As some of the aspects of the tribal world–view is based on myths, some of the values which the tribal world upholds are mythical, anti–social and anti–life. There are some anti–life elements hidden in the tribal cultural expressions. The philosopher's task is to liberate them from some of these mythical values, customs, and cultural practices, and instead propose human values based on reason.

CONCLUSION:

The philosopher's task today in the tribal context, and particularly in the tribal context of Chotanagpur, is to question with them some of the areas of their world–view, belief system, cultural practices, rites and rituals, reinterpret them and reflect upon their experiences, and search for new meaning, new direction, new tribal values, new tribal identity based on reason and not simply on myths and cultural

practices. At the same time his task is also to question the challenges coming to the tribal world from outside which seem to question their identity, to take from them what is good and reasonable. Thus the philosopher's task today in the tribal world is enormous; summarily we can say that his task is one of mental liberation of the tribals; it is one of helping them to question, reflect upon and search for meaning and truth in their experiences of life, in the happenings of their life situation, in the challenges of pluralism in today's society, and finally making them find their own identity, that is, tribal identity in this pluralistic society. The philosopher will never rest questioning, reflecting upon and searching for truth. His task will continue as long as he has love for wisdom of life.

8

The Task of Philosophy at the Meeting Points of Cultures

Dr. Francis X. Clooney, SJ

PHILOSOPHICAL WISDOM AND ITS CULTURAL ROOTS: SOME INITIAL OBSERVATIONS:

1. Philosophy deals with ideas, but it is more than conceptual. It is an understanding of the world and a judgment about the truth (truths) of what is understood; it is open to the ethical and religious implications of that truth, and hence to revision on a number of grounds. I term this broader constitution of philosophy its "wisdom."

2 By its wisdom philosophy offers a position that is potentially available to persons everywhere, in other places and other times.

3. But philosophy achieves this wisdom only from within some specific cultural setting, even if it transcends that setting: if it pretends to be free of cultural situation and predisposition, it will remain uncritically immersed in its cultural presuppositions.

4. Hence, philosophy is never merely universally available for the assent of rational mind; those who understand its wisdom are drawn also into an understanding of its genesis in its culture. Philosophical "wisdom" is always "the wisdom of a culture".

5. I write the preceding paragraphs with the example of the Greeks in mind. When I first read Plato and Aristotle, I had already spent a number of years studying Greek, and reading literature: Homer, Xenophon, Herodotus, Theucydides, Pindar, Sappho, Euripides, Aristophanes. I could not help but admire the language of the philosophers and their elegant negotiation of a path to thought through reconsiderations of myth, literature, social custom and political norms; thanks to some wise teachers, I learned to see philosophical ideas only in the context of a wider, cultured comprehension of life. Similarly, I have been impressed as much by the fine style and procedure in thought of India's ritual thinkers, the Mimāṃsakas, as I have been by the conclusions they drew from their reflection on ritual and language. The best philosophy occurs in the midst of culture, not apart from it.

6. Philosophy has been pursued in a wide variety of cultures. (Does philosophy "occur" in all cultures? in writing or orally? One's answer depends on how far one is willing to extend the term "philosophy"). Today, every culture is confronted with questions and problems from outside it—many of which are genuinely new for it, and which it is not prepared to face. Even the most excellent thinkers of the past do not offer answers to today's questions.

7. The "culture" ("cultures") of the modern West (from the 17th century to the present time) is especially important insofar as its deliberate critique of—and distancing from—its traditional roots occurred precisely at the time the modern West was becoming globally dominant. The ideas of the modern West, and hence its philosophical wisdom, have contributed very significantly to the way the world is today. One may also suggest that the philosophy of the modern West is post–traditional in a way that makes it different not only from its own antecedents but from all other cultures as well; the culture of the modern West has made every other culture "a traditional culture". Philosophy in traditional cultures that wishes to be taken seriously outside its own cultural setting

must take into account the relativization of traditional cultures and their philosophies that has been effected due to modern Western philosophy.

8. However, even modern Western Philosophy does not escape the rule that all philosophy begins in a culture and remains rooted in a culture. Despite its often anti–traditional claims, the modern West itself quickly emerged as a specific culture, determined by its own traditions, equipped with its own presuppositions, and possessed of its own styles of conversation and argument, as well as protected and burdened by its myths about itself. Its philosophy must be understood in relation to that culture.

9. Despite its influence, therefore, modern Western cultural philosophy has not become a truly global philosophy, directly available to one and all. Under analysis, its wisdom is shown to be deeply rooted in its own culture, extending itself more broadly only because of and not despite these roots, which must be understood if that wisdom is to make sense; insofar as Western philosophy energetically puts forward a universal profile for itself, it is presenting only a kind of abstraction, even a concealment of its traditional and proper cultural roots.

10. If we seek an adequate alternative today to merely traditional philosophies and the *de facto* (though not necessarily) dominant Western Philosophy, we must patiently turn to the variety of cultures present in the world today, and seek to understand them, particularly at their meeting points, as these already exist or are deliberately brought into being and nurtured.

11. Today, in the situation of the increasing intertwining of many cultures, there is an emerging world culture, which exists precisely in the meeting, mixing and shared growth of traditional and modern cultures. One is tempted to call this a "post–modern culture", but the word "post–modern" has (incorrectly in my view) been linked to a merely negative deconstruction of modern culture.

12. This new culture is neither an ideal nor a necessity. It need not have anything to do with visions of utopia, intuitions of the dawning of a higher consciousness, etc., however meritorious such may be. This new culture may not even be a desirable culture; one may wish for alternatives and prefer existing alternatives, traditional and modern. Nevertheless, this new culture, which is neither traditional nor modern, is emerging. We must pay attention to it.

13. And one may, of course, rightly insist that there are still "cultures", and not "culture", and that one can accordingly refer to a plurality of cultural bases for philosophy. Nevertheless, due largely to increasing ease in communication and the emergence of a series of unifying global factors, the new situation is distinct from all previous cultures, traditional and modern; at least from this angle it can be called "the emerging world culture", in the singular.

14. This emerging world culture is the prime place in which to do philosophy: to be educated in life and literature, social political customs, to learn to think and to understand, to achieve wisdom; as the new culture emerges at the complex and shifting meeting points of cultures.

15. This new global philosophy and its wisdom must be arduously achieved through prolonged acts of cultural learning; there are no shortcuts, via swift intuitions of underlying unities, or predictive theories of progress, or abstract and generalized discourses, by which one could merely posit the new wisdom. When one is educated, when one achieves a new place through learning to be there, then one can think properly.

16. Since there is no single coherent world culture (and since even if there were, it would still be possessed of diversity) philosophy today has a necessarily arbitrary element: one must make choices about where to stand when one begins to think; one must always decide about what one will think, in what language(s), with what examples, and to whom one cares to speak. If we draw on several cultures to make a point, it is we who are making the choices.

17. The preceding comments are abstract and general; if my general point is true—that thought must be rooted in cultures in all their rich particularity – then such abstract and general comments are inadequate. We must therefore interrupt this fine flow of ideas with a turn to the particular – and without claiming that this turn to particularity follows naturally from the preceding reflections. We must go about constructing a new locus for thinking and begin to exercise our minds in that context, rather than merely offering merely one more exhortation regarding the need for new thinking.

18. The subsequent part of this essay seeks to offer an instance of the kind of reflection at a meeting point of two cultures which can contribute to the wisdom required at the end of the 20th century. It is an example constructed according to some specific, limiting choices I have made in order to exemplify how one must think in beginning to do philosophy in the new world situation. The example is a textual one though, of course, comparable experiments could be conducted regarding images or sounds, or ritual activities, for instance.

A REFLECTION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON GOD:

19. To illustrate the possibilities and demands placed on the would–be philosopher in the new cultural setting, in this section I introduce two texts, make a few comments on each, and then, in lieu of an extended analysis which would be required to do justice to each, draw a few conclusions about what we learn from reading them together.

20. The first draws on the Śrivaiṣṇava tradition of South India, and introduces an argument by the commentator Nañciyar (13th century), based on a verse by the Vaiṣṇava saint Nammāḻvār (8th century). The second draws on the tradition of medieval Latin Christendom, an argument posed by the 12th century philosopher–theologian St. Anselm, based on a verse from one of the Psalms of the Bible.[1]

NAÑCIYAR'S ARGUMENT

21. Nañciyar begins with a text from Nammāḻvār. Of Nammalvar's four works, the 1102 verses of *Tiruvāymoḻi* are the most important; its verses, grouped in songs of 11 verses each, range widely in theme and tone, and only a few can be called speculative. The very first song is one of the most speculative, and its ninth verse invites one of the most directly philosophical discussions in the lengthy Vaiṣṇava commentaries on

Tiruvāymoḻi:

If you say he is, he is, and his form is all these forms;
If you say he is not, his non–form is all these non–forms;
He is, he isn't: if both are his qualities,
He is, he spreads out everywhere in both ways.

(Tiruvāymoḻi 1.1.9)

Nammāḻvār explores here both the nature of God and the nature of human claims about God; he notes how even contrasting human utterances succeed in partially capturing what God is about, and also the way in which God eludes the specifications one imposes by one's articulations.

22. In the generations after Rāmānuja, Srivaiṣṇava teachers composed long commentaries on *Tiruvāymoḻi*; one of the earliest of these commentators, Nañciyar, saw Nammāḻvār's verse as a refutation of the Buddhist doctrine of *sūnyavāda.* Here is his comment on the verse:

> Accepting both the means of knowledge and the object of knowledge, he has thus refuted those holding opposing positions regarding the proper nature of the Lord and his characteristics. Now [Nammāḻvār] refutes the sūnyavādins, etc., who say: "There is neither means of knowledge nor an object of knowledge; nor is there a Veda, since all is void; nor is there a lord who is the object of knowledge in the Vedas, nor a world which is his domain."

If one asks how this refutation is to be carried out, [it goes as follows]. We ask the sūnyavādin, etc.: If you intend to prove the non–existence of the Lord, you must present a thesis about your intended goal by making some statement; and then you must prove your thesis by stating some reason. But before you state your reason, by the very fact of stating your thesis you prove that there is a Lord.i.e., do you state the thesis, "the Lord does not exist", by saying "he is", or by saying "he is not"? Why do I ask? Just as you cannot show his non–existence by saying "he is", so too you cannot show his non–existence as you intend, by saying "he is not". How so? We see that in ordinary usage both "it is" and "it is not" presuppose some object, and that object is the object of our words. The words cannot indicate some object that has never been seen at all. If there is a pot in the world, the object indicated by the word "pot" can be said to have the characteristic, "it exists": "in that place there is a pot, made of clay". "It exists" means that in the context of the fact of "clay" and "lump", the clay has taken the form of "mouth" [of a pot] and "belly" [of a pot].

Thus if you say "the Lord exists", there is a Lord. By these words you cannot show that he does not exist.

Moreover, if you say that the Lord exists, this Lord cannot exist without his lordly power, and so then the world, his lordly realm, must also exist. If we affirm his existence, his body too must exist. Thus is what is meant by the words, "If you say he is, he is, and his form is all these forms."

Now, even if you intend to show by the words, "the lord does not exist", that he does not exist, [you will fail]. For in ordinary usage even if the intent is to say that something does not exist, one must refer to an existent object. In ordinary usage, if you say, "there is no pot", you mean "it is not here", "it does not exist now", "there is only a lump of clay which has not yet become a pot", "it lies there, broken into shards." Only this usage do we find to be meaningful.

Otherwise, were we to say, "'pot' does not exist at all", we would have to mean, "there is no pot anytime, anywhere, in any way." But then, since there would be no way at all in which we could know "pot", we could not say the word "pot", nor could we even think of it.

Therefore, to say that something does not exist means that it does not exist in one way, but in some other way. Thus, "it is not here, it is there." Or, "it does not exist in this time, but [did or will exist] in that time". Or,"there is no pot, there is only a lump of clay, or broken shards." Thus, to speak of non–existence is to speak of existence in another way.

Thus, to say, "there is no lord", is to say that "he and his lordly domains do in some way exist, but not in that [one] way." Thus, just as one proves the existence of the Lord and his lordly power by saying "he is", by the words "he is not" one also proves the existence of him and his lordly power. This is what is meant by [Nammāḻvār's] words, "If you say he is not, his non–form is all these non–forms."

"His non–forms" indicates that something said to exist lacks existence [here]. Thus "existence and "non–existence" can both be qualities of an existent object. So if you say, "the Lord does exist", or "the Lord does not exist", in both ways you affirm his existence.

In this way too the Veda exists, and as the Veda says, he exists pervading everything.

MY COMMENT ON NAÑCIYAR'S ARGUMENT

23. Nañciyar's argument is modelled on the refutation of sūnyavāda by Rāmānuja in the *Śribhāṣya* (2.2.31). There Rāmānuja does not argue for the existence of God, but more simply (and, if the position is accepted, with a devastating effect on the sūnyavāda) that even the denial of some thing – e.g. "the pot does not exist" – presumes some knowledge of that thing at least somewhere, or in some other time, or in some other form; one cannot deny what is totally unknown.

Hence, whether one claims or denies the existence of some thing, speech about it affirms that the object is not entirely non-existent, void (*sūnya*).

24. In the context of their philosophical reading of *Tiruvāymoḻi's* first song, Nanciyar and the other commentators treat the cited verse as a similar refutation of *sūnyavāda*. Nañciyar echoes the *Śrībhāṣya* passage, but also extends it, by introducing the example of "Lord", as a primary object of the sūnyavāda attack. One cannot say that "the Lord does not exist" unless this same Lord does exist elsewhere or in some other form now, or in the past: and since he is "Lord", that of which he is Lord – i.e., the world – must also exist. Unless we have in mind some idea of the Lord, we could not take up the task of denying to him an existence here and now, in such and such a form. Therefore, even those who deny his existence actually affirm it.

25. It is not evident that Nammāḻvār had in mind either this argument or the refutation of the sūnyavādins. As suggested above, he may more simply have been talking of the pervasive and elusive power of God who is inadequately grasped in the many and often contradictory ways in which we speak of him.

26. Nor is it evident that one can easily make Nañciyar's transition from Rāmānuja's more general argument, about the objects of ordinary existence, to a specifically theological one, about the Lord, source of the universe, etc. "Lord" is not as simple or accessible a reality as "pot"; one may concede a series of partial referents for "Lord"—"person", "powerful", "believed in by many"—without having to admit that they do not in fact belong together in one being. The fact that some people talk about "the Lord" does not mean that the existence of the Lord is undeniable.

27. The argument surely has a certain persuasiveness in the context of the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith world, and there it has its force: for those who know what "Lord" means, denying God's existence is a naive and narrow-minded claim which

overlooks the fact that one already knows something of this extraordinary person. To appreciate the argument's force, one need not be a Śrīvaiṣṇava, but one must appreciate the argument's affirming and justificatory role in the context as specific as a commentary on *Tiruvāymoḻi*.

28. But it is quite unlikely, I think, that whatever the sūnyavādins might think of Rāmānuja's arguments about pots, they would be much impressed by Nañciyar's extension of it in reference to God. The term "Lord" is too easily decomposed into partial referents, and the habitual language patterns of believers—the bare fact that people speak about the Lord—too unreliable to serve as a basis for a proof.

29. The modern critic too may not be inclined to concede to the argument a force beyond that of confirming belief among those who already believe. But he or she may (at least) concede that the argument raises important questions about language and its referential power; she or he may wish to ask, "What is implied by the fact that we can speak to one another of seen and unseen objects?" "To what extent does the act of language imply the reality 'outside of language' of the things of which it speaks?" "Does the persistence of language about God—the fact that people keep talking about God—tell us anything about the (possible) reality of God?" [2]

Anselm's Argument

30. Let us turn now to our second example, a passage from the *Proslogion* of the medieval Christian thinker, St. Anselm (1033–1109). Drawing on one of the ancient Hebrew Psalms for his inspiration, he argues that a proper understanding of "God" entails the realization that God does indeed exist. The Psalm verse reads, The fool says in his heart, "there is no God". Such are the corrupt; they do abominable deeds; there is not one who does good." (Psalm 14.1) It is well known that the Psalms are not philosophical documents, even if the Christian tradition has occasionally treated them as a storehouse of philosophical ideas. In this verse, it is clear not

only that fools deny God's existence, but also that their intellectual foolishness is only an aspect of their larger moral depravity.

31. Anselm takes the text directly as a cue to the fact that it is self–contradictory to deny God's existence.

> There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist; and this being thou art, O Lord, our God. So truly, therefore, does thou exist, O Lord, my God, that you canst not be conceived not to exist; and rightly. For if a mind could conceive of a being better than thee, the creature would rise above the Creator; and this is most absurd. And, indeed, whatever else there is, except thee alone, can be conceived not to exist. To thee alone, therefore, it belongs to exist more truly than all other beings, and hence in a higher degree than all other. For, whatever else exists does not exist so truly, and hence in a less degree it belongs to it to exist. Why, then, has the fool said in his heart, there is no God (Psalm 14.1), since it is so evident, to a rational mind, that thou dost exist in the highest degree of all? Why, except that he is dull and a fool? But how has the fool said in his heart what he could not conceive; or how is it that he could not conceive what he said in his heart? (Since it is the same to say in the heart, and to conceive).
>
> But, if really, nay, since really, he both conceived, because he said in his heart; and did not say in his heart, because he could not conceive; there is more than one way in which a thing is said in the heart or conceived. For, in one sense, an object is conceived, when the word signifying it is conceived; and in another, when the very entity, which the object is, is understood.
>
> In the former sense, then, God can be conceived not to exist; but in the latter, not at all. For no one who understands what fire and water are can conceive fire to be water, in accordance with the nature of the facts themselves, although this is possible according to the words. So, then, no one who understands what God is can conceive that God does not exist; although he says these words in his heart, either without any, or with some foreign, significance. For, God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived. And he who thoroughly understands this, assuredly understands that this being so truly exists, that not even in concept can it be non–existent. Therefore, he who understands that God so exists, cannot conceive that he does not exist.
>
> I thank thee, gracious Lord, I thank thee; because what I formerly believed by thy bounty, I now understand by thy illumination, that if I were unwilling to believe that thou dost exist, I should not be able not to understand this to be true.

My Comment on Anselm's Argument

32. This "ontological argument" of Anselm's is one of the most famous (and, if you wish, infamous) arguments in the history of Western thought; it is a subtle argument, and in this brief space it is difficult to put it in a proper perspective; it is a rational proof, but set within the context of prayer; it implies a believer's understanding of God, even if a fool without any religious acculturation might be persuaded by it; it invites excision from its context, discussion by almost any audience, consideration as a kind of thought experiment; but in context, like Nañcīyar's argument, it is more the argument of a believer talking about what convinces the believer, and less an argument that might change the mind of a real fool.

33. It is easy to dismiss the argument as almost trivial, a trick by which to refute in a moment all the considerable and venerable doubts people have had regarding the existence of God—merely by saying, "it is impossible to think that God does not exist."

34. Yet if one surveys the whole of Anselm's *Proslogion*, one sees that for him the word "God" is a carefully understood one; he has striven quite arduously to describe how the "God" whose existence is necessary is a particular, unique Being, and the

only one to whom the argument—from understanding to affirmation of existence—can apply.

35. But many have still found the argument lacking, and are particularly bothered by the apparent leap from the conceptual to the real. The criticism began immediately, with Gaunilo, Anselm's contemporary who criticized the proof and to whom Anselm subsequently addressed a rejoinder, and continued with many later thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and more contemporary figures.

36. Nevertheless, one cannot merely dismiss Anselm's argument; it compels the philosopher to say more about the relationship of the conceptual and real, and how language mediates what is outside of language; it likewise compels some consideration of what "God" means, and whether this word/ concept is in a special category or not. One must strain to understand how the word "God" is to be understood, and what the implications of that thinking are.

37. Against this all too brief descriptive background, let us consider together the arguments of Nañciyar and Anselm.

THE GENESIS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT AT THE MEETING POINT OF CULTURES

38. We must ask what can be made of the two arguments in a comparison, but also, and more fundamentally in this context, whether together they provide a better cultural context for philosophizing than either does by itself. Let us consider these comparative and cultural–contextual questions in turn.

THE COMPARATIVE QUESTION

39. What one must really do, in order to begin to philosophize at this meeting point of cultures, is to learn to think – and in this example, to read – across cultural religious boundaries. The challenge is not an easy one. Consider, for instance, the task one takes up in reading just two paragraphs together, in order to decide if they are fruitfully parallel.

> Thus to say, "there is no lord", is to say that "he and his lordly domains do in some way exist, but not in that [one] way." Thus, just as one proves the existence of the Lord and his lordly power by saying "he is", by the words "he is not" one also proves the existence of him and his lordly power. This is what is meant by [Nammāḻvār's] words, "If say he is not, his non-form is all these non–forms."
>
> For no one who understands what fire and water are can conceive fire to be water, in accordance with the nature of the facts themselves, although this is possible according to the words. So, then, no one who understands what God is can conceive that God does not exist; although he says these words in his heart, either without any, or with some foreign, signification. For, God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived. And he who thoroughly understands this, assuredly understands that this being so truly exists, that not even in concept can it be non–existent. Therefore, he who understands that God so exists, cannot conceive that he does not exist.

40. It requires considerable patience to read back and forth, and one is made uncomfortably aware of the shortcomings of one's education; to be accultured enough in the emerging world culture even to begin to think properly there is a difficult task.

41. One must explore each argument in context, attentive (ideally) to the varying subtle implications of Tamil and Sanskrit, Hebrew and Latin, to the specific intellectual backgrounds of each text, and to their formal features.

42. Surely, too, one may be inclined to judgments, – this argument is more convincing to me than that argument – for there is noreason to expect that the texts are equally compelling, though one ought not to rush to such judgments, which may be

though one ought not to rush to such judgments, which may be hindrances at many points in one's thinking.

43. One may ask, in particular, about how Anselm and Nañciyar use their scriptural texts, how the meanings of the verses from Psalm and from *Tiruvāymoḻi* are either retained or lost sight of in their reuse. One may ask how they (re)use available metaphysical, linguistic and epistemological systems in the formulation of new defenses of God's (the Lord's) existence.

44. Specifically, one can ask about how words such as "God", "Lord", "existence", "non–existence", "proof", function in each tradition, according to the author's own usage and against the background of prior usages. While identity of usage is highly unlikely, interesting points of similarity and dissimilarity can be adduced.

45. The more immediate effect of a careful and prolonged comparison of this sort—which cannot be undertaken in the short space of this essay—is progress in the education of the would–be philosopher in the subtleties of each example, her or his "acculturation" to the new context for thinking; the philosopher who is a comparativist becomes part of, and helps create, a new culture in which the materials of two older cultures take on a new life in proximity to one another.

THE CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL QUESTION

47. After mastering the comparison and gaining skill of comparative reading one may then ask more general questions. First, Are there compelling ways of thinking and talking about "God", ways which impose assent on the mind? From their very different backgrounds, both Nañciyar and Anselm suggest that there are. Second, Would such compelling ways, were they to exist, pertain only to those who already believe, or would any fair and open mind, which understands how language and thought operate, be compelled to think in this way? Third, If this kind of open and public discourse about God is possible, is it practically possible to move it forward in a positive and constructive fashion at the end of the 20th

century – under what conditions, with which conversation partners, with which kinds of faith and non–faith in view, and according to which view of language and reason?

48. Problems with the insular context of these and other traditional texts and with their hidden presuppositions, as well as inevitable dissatisfaction with the arguments in light of later refinements of thought and argument, may make us postpone coming to terms with them; yet this postponement cannot be indefinite in duration, if one admits that philosophy is able to offer more than an entirely culturally bound discourse; whatever the specific limitations of the arguments, it cannot be denied that they quite respectably demand attention to the interconnections of language, conceptualization and the necessary existence of God.

49. We must at least be able to think about whether both the following statements, or one of them, is true:

    Even a denial of God's existence implies that God does exist, or has existed.

    One cannot understand God without acknowledging that God exists.

    Or, perhaps, this statement:

    When properly understood, the very acts of thinking and speaking are clues which lead us to God.

50. But the real point I wish to make here is that a philosophical consideration of the statements I have just posed proceeds better in a context rich in examples such as that drawn from the writings of Nañciyar and Anselm; a proper philosophy of God proceeds in a richly woven context of discussions old and new. This point can be elaborated in several ways.

51. First, if one draws arguments from just one traditional culture —either Nañciyar's or Anselm's, for instance - one may fail to deal adequately with the limitations of traditional cultures, or with the limitations of modern Western culture; one will also fail to pose the question of God in the most important context today—where cultures are mixing and meeting, languages

overlapping, problems subtly influencing one another.

52. Second, if one strives to use some culture–free language, whereby arguments can proceed merely by way of postulations abstracted from any particular situation—one's discussion is likely to turn in endless circles, cut off from the rich cultural and linguistic situations in which people have thought it important to raise questions about God; such abstracted arguments may proceed with the illusion that they are exempt from cultural specificity, as if they are, at long last, examples of pure and clear thought on the subject.
53. Third, when one reads Nañciyar and Anselm together, one has found a genuinely new place in which to think, a place which is richer, more provocative and more apt to our contemporary culture than would be a consideration of either of them alone; when read together, the texts create a new context ripe with comparative possibilities, in which the efforts of two ancient cultures to think of God combine a single locus for discourse (i) about "God", (ii) about language about "God", (iii) about how believers go about speaking of "God" to non-believers, and (iv) about whether God exists.
54. Fourth, one is able to educate, to cultivate in oneself and others a new project of thought that is meticulously particular —rooted in specific texts, times and places, activities – while yet occurring only in the new world situation where cultures are meeting at many points.
55. One important conclusion *not* to be drawn from this experiment is the idea that we would do better to construct an alternate discourse which is based in neither culture, and which is free from the limits of both. There is no indication that this effort would succeed, nor that it would even be an interesting effort. Rather, one must keep looking to the emerging world culture for new cultural contexts in which to think through the implications of Nañciyar–plus–Anselm and any of the many other such meeting points.

Some Final Remarks

56. If one is to philosophize about the existence of God in the future, and if one wishes to do this in a way that is consonant with the world culture that is emerging around us, then one may also say that the only good reason for not discussing together texts such as I have introduced is the problem of personal limitation; one cannot read and discuss everything, and that one may have chosen other examples, perhaps from various cultures; one may not be able to introduce these particular examples, because one is thinking elsewhere.

57. Whichever one's examples, one must become newly educated enough that one can draw on a variety of examples; a discussion rooted in merely one traditional culture, or in that modern culture of the West which sought, and failed, to portray itself as the one emerging universal discourse, will be increasingly seen as a curiosity which makes people ask: "Why is he discussing examples only from one culture? Why is she pretending to have achieved a truly universal discourse, when it is merely a 'decultured' discourse, 'the culture' of the modern West in disguise'?"
58. A task of the philosopher today, then, is to rethink old philosophical questions, and to raise new ones, in the new global cultural context, comprised of ideas, words, images, practices, and beliefs drawn from different traditions but put together in novel patterns. While I do not wish to claim that this is the only task of the philosopher, and while it would be a mistake to confuse this methodological project with the "final" task of philosophy—the achievement of wisdom—I suggest "philosophy at the meeting points of cultures" is the most important task before us today, at the drawing of a world culture. While the attainment of wisdom will be no easier than it was in the times of the Psalmist and Nammāḻvār or Nañciyar and Anselm, we will nevertheless be helping to construct a home for that wisdom as it is brought into words.

NOTES

1. The translations from *Tiruvāymoḻi* and Nañciyar's

commentary are my own; I have used the following edition: *Pakavat Viṣayam*, Vol.1, Books Propagation Society, Trichi, 1975. The translation from Anselm's *Proslogion* is that of S.N.D. Deane, in *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, Open Court, La Salle Illinois, 1962. For the Psalm verse, I have used the *New English Bible*.

2. Throughout I refer to God in the masculine gender, since this is how Nañciyar and Anselm refer to God.

9

In Search of Truth

Dr. Ursula Baatz

The search for truth is as old as philosophy. Once upon a time there was a man, leaving the house of night in a chariot, led by daughters of sun. He was searching, searching for a way of life, and his search brought him to the goddess of justice, who opened the ways for him. Finally he found the right way and found absolute truth. This is the story Parmenides tells in the beginnings of Greek—and therefore European—philosophy. It is a journey towards ultimate, and the story already tells about the circumstances of the journey—about the interconnectedness of truth and justice; and of truth and choice—Parmenides e.g. had to decide between three ways, the way of opinion, the way of non- being, and the way of being. There are of course other stories about the Journey to Truth, Western and non—Western. This story of Parmenides is in some respect a basic story for European philosophy and has brought about a certain development of Western thought, but this should not be considered now.

Our focus is the fact, that there is a journey, a search, which keeps people going—and not in Europe only. E.g. one of the key words in Indian traditions is *mārga* —way, path. Traditionally, these ways and the people who undertake these journey are said to search for wisdom. Likewise is the philosopher one, who loves wisdom, i.e. who aims for wisdom. And wisdom is not confined to the Great Traditions only. The Little Traditions all over the world have their ways of searching for Jand expressions of wisdom. I do not want to go into this, now because I shall confine myself more to European

perspectives. But the Indian notion of *mārga* is helpful, as it gives some more specifications for this journey—as there is *karma–mārga, bhakti-mārga, yoga-mārga* and *jñāna-mārga.* Thus it gives a hint, that the search for the Ultimate is undertaken on many paths. And although wisdom and truth are interconnected, truth is not the only token designating the desire for an ultimate goal. Likewise it can be love or freedom or God or happiness or good, etc.

As the major part of this paper focuses mostly on epistemology, the title "In search for truth" has been chosen. But in fact, our starting point is not specifically truth, but the desire for an ultimate fulfillment, an ultimate meaning of life. As life is a fragile condition, and values we give to life e.g. status, wealth, stable relationships, etc. are questioned by life itself. Very often it simply comes through the fact of living, that someone is searching for an ultimate, non-destructible value, which will give meaning to one's life even in the moment of death, where all values and life itself are questioned. Thus it is clear, that this ultimate value cannot be conditioned by the transient world. There are many words in the different cultures, religions, and philosophies of this world to qualify this value "beyond" transience. All these qualifiers have of course certain philosophical and even political consequences, and intercultural dialogue refers to that.

In the Western tradition, very often the realm beyond transience is seen to be the realm of reason (Vernunft), whereas in the East as well as in Christian mysticism it is a realm beyond reason and reasoning—it is wisdom`s realm. But whatever might be the name, the fact itself, the search for an non- transient meaning, value, truth, etc. seems to be common to all human cultures, as all human beings are faced by death, irrespective of the widely different response to that fact.[1]

Obviously there is an ability in human life, which goes beyond rationality as "the ability to cope with the environment by adjusting one's reactions to environmental changes in more complex and delicate ways."[2] And it also goes beyond rationality in the sense of setting goals other than mere survival. This ability closes to rationality in the sense of the "willingness to alter one's habits—not

only in order to get more of what one previously wanted but also in order to reshape oneself into a different sort of person, one who wants things that are different from what one had before." This includes the ability not to be overly disconcerted by differences from oneself, and not to respond aggressively to such differences. Rorty calls it tolerance. It includes a certain kind of detachment from the identification of the self with the values and thoughts of the self and an openness for otherness, or even an ability of identification with the other irrespective of values and thoughts of the other. I would place this ability in the realm of wisdom, as such a detachment is traditionally connected with wisdom. But let me give a definition of wisdom not from a traditional religious background, but instead quote from a modern philosopher, Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923): "In my opinion, wisdom seems to mean not only that those who have these quality, possession, or way of thinking are able on every occasion to act or think with rare prudence in pursuing their theoretical or practical goals; it means that in addition they are able to judge the value of the theoretical and practical goals in question. It also means perhaps that such persons can act according to their judgments. Schopenhauer was certainly a philosopher but hardly a wise man. Montaigne was a wise man but not really a philosopher. We think of Socrates as being both wise man and philosopher."[3]

Listening carefully to Mauthner's definition, it is obvious that to him philosophy and wisdom are not necessarily the same. It is not enough to exercise rationality and reasoning to achieve a practical or theoretical goal. What makes someone a wise person is the ability to evaluate "second order desires" (Charles Taylor)[4]—i.e. values going beyond mere values of survival—and live accordingly. That is, wisdom is a matter of lifestyle, of knowing what a life worth living is like and of acting accordingly. Neither contemporary philosophy nor theology are able to transmit wisdom: Being academic disciplines, they are subject to academic routines and standards and employ rational thinking, but do not reflect on personal questions. Here life and death are no matters to deal directly with, e.g.in a way that could alter the lifestyle and give way to search for the ultimate value of one's own life and existence, not just of life and existence in general.

(This critic applies even to Heidegger's analysis of existence, as it is an approach in general terms. e.g. Dasein).

Thus many people especially in the West, but more and more also the younger generation in Japan do not look for philosophy or traditional religion of their respective homelands, but for something else. It is Asia and very often India and Indian traditions, whereto these people turn in their search for a meaningful life. Of course there is a difference between Europeans turning eastwards for wisdom and young Japanese. For Europeans also the Buddhist traditions of Japan provide nourishment for their desire for an ultimate goal. For most Japanese people these traditions have become meaningless, a fact, of which Westerners very rarely are fully aware. As I am more familiar with the European setting, I shall refer to European problems only. Anyhow, as a result of this search for wisdom outside the cultural environment into which we Westerners were born, there is a kind of religious world culture emerging.

Coca Cola, Mc Donald, Blue Jeans and IBM and other economic and high-tech advantages have spread all over the world from the European and North American centers, and there is hardly any place where there is no imprint of this kind of world culture. But alongside with the techno-economical unification of the world there is another current: a search for truth, love, freedom, God, and whatever other names can be found for a beyond of worldly transience. And the search goes beyond all geographical and even cultural borders. Zen Meditation is practised more ardently in Europe and the United States than in Japan, and in some of the Indian Yoga Ashrams there are already Americans acting as gurus—with all the rituals and sometimes pomp according to the old traditions. You can study Chinese and Japanese martial arts with competent teachers in Europe, some of them Asian, some of them European, Americans are teaching martial arts in Japan, and Americans can be included in the transmission line of Korean shamanism, Europeans are becoming Sufi teachers, whereas in Japan e.g. people who are searching might turn to Christianity. A European—Austrian—painter has become priest of the Yoruba tribe in Africa, and there are many more

examples of that kind I have not heard of. It is a challenge to philosophy and theology to cope with the encounter of such different traditions. But strange enough, the only academic people who notice it at all are those concerned with inter–religious dialogue—humanities focus e.g. on the sociological aspects of intercultural encounter, and the philosophers who are interested in interculturality turn to the questions of rationality, Eurocentrism etc. [5] In the USA there seems to be more awareness of inter–cultural problems than in Europe—due to the fact that the US are a society fed by different waves of immigrants grossly different in culture and lifestyle, whereas Europe only now is faced with the problems of migration.

Christian theologians are working on a theology of plurality of religions,[6] which reflects the status of Christianity within the concert of the religions of the world. This is stimulated by the fact that not a few Christians participate actively in practices of other religions. But this is dominantly a theological approach and philosophy provides just the basic hermeneutics. But the few philosophical minded people who are involved in this religious adventure are either more or less superficial trendsetters—e.g. Fritjof Capra, whose contribution is mostly the spreading of these ideas[7]—or they are trying to cover religion, philosophy and psychology, both Western and Eastern, in a typical Western systematic approach—I'm referring e.g. to Ken Wilber. Both suggest, that Western science and Eastern religions and philosophy are congruent, and many people are easily convinced by that. But there are no reflections on the difference of a religious and a scientific approach, and also no reflections on the different socio-economic contexts, and so on.

But what about the *hermeneutics* of this process, i.e. how Western world views can go together with Eastern world views, Western concepts with Eastern concepts? There are few people concerned for this kind of reflection. One of these few is Raimon Pannikar who in his hermeneutics attempts to give a basis for a meeting of East and West. He is to be mentioned here, as he is "one of the most prominent witnesses"[8] not only of a new approach in the theology of religions, but in the hermeneutics of this process.

But alas, as everybody knows, translation is a difficult process;

and its god is Hermes, God of merchants and of thieves. So reflections on the hermeneutics of intercultural dialogue are the exception, not the rule; the game of the theoretician of dialogue. So very often Eastern traditions lose part of their "body and soul" by being practised in the West. (And most likely there is a similar process going on with Western culture and religion e.g. in the East.) Zen in Japan for instance is embedded in a highly hierarchical society, a society which is governed by the notion of duty to family, superiors, state and so on. Buddhism is a very ethical oriented religion—to practice Buddhism includes tacitly the acceptance of the *pañcaśila*. But many people in the West do not see the ethical background and implications of Zen practice, instead seeing it as a way of self-liberation without compassion or regard to others.

It is not necessary to go into details here, as I do not want to scold or to suggest that traditional lifestyles of Eastern societies have to be adopted. This is not possible, because the emerging unification of world cultures is mainly an economic and technological unification, and the religious unification is somehow incidental. As a matter of fact, the economical needs of multinational groups, of technological transfer and world finances are destroying or at least questioning traditional lifestyles. As the philosophers of the Japanese Kyoto-school put it in regard to Japanese Zen: Zen has to change in order to meet the challenge of a technological world.[9] And I think that this is true of all wisdom traditions and of religions in general.[10]

In order to facilitate a hermeneutic approach one has to become aware of a fundamental difference: the difference between an "industrialized world view" and a traditional one. What makes the difference may not be the way rationality is used and the impact of rationality itself, but the "loss of soul". This term was coined by the Jungian psychologist James Hillman.[11]

Soul is a highly differentiated concept and highly ambiguous as well.[12] Traditionally the word is associated with "mind, spirit, heart, life, warmth, humanness, personality, essence, innermost, purpose, courage, virtue, morality, wisdom, death, God... "Primitive" languages have often elaborated concepts about animated principles

which ethnologists have translated by "soul".(.....) One can search one's soul and one's soul can be on trial. There are parables describing possession of the soul by and sale of the soul to the Devil...of development of the soul...of journeys of the soul...while the search for the soul leads always into "depths".[13] And soul is placed in various sorts of relation with the body and the spirit. To be human, to live as human includes being, includes "soul"—or "souls"—as well as "body" in an inseparable relation, and soul is also a substrate of experiencing consciousness. Sometimes soul is imagined as a highly vaporous substance, and there could be many more specifications which could be given.

"Soul" in its different meanings was a concept of philosophy. Traditionally, philosophy included something like psychology, although the word "psychology" came only with the time of reformation. It was coined by Rudolf Goclenius, whose "Psychologia—hoc est de hominum perfectione" appeared in 1590. Melanchthon made the word popular by giving lectures on it. But already in Aristotle there is this famous tractatus "Peri psyches", and what would be Plato without the notion of"soul"? "Soul" in its different shadings is traditionally an undisputed part of philosophy, and of course, of theology, too. It changed with the beginning of the 19th century. Psychology was becoming a scientific discipline, e.g. the concept of soul was to be tested and explained scientifically. And in the course of the development of an empirical psychology, the word "soul" lost its meaning—mid 19th century psychology allowed "soul" only as a vague term, as a pointer to a field of future discoveries.[14]

This trend was stimulated by the interest in anatomy, especially in anatomy of the brain, which went together with the search for the seat of soul. Whereas traditionally the soul was located in the abdomen, in the 18th century the location shifted to the head and the brain, not least a result of the invention of Dr. Guillotine and the frequent use of his invention during the French Revolution to decapitate people. Physicians of that time took interest in the behaviour of a decapitated body as well in the disembodied head and brain. Already earlier Lavater's connection of physiognomy with

moral and intellectual features of humans had prepared the ground—as well as Gall's phrenology (he located moral and intellectual abilities in different regions of the brain). So the human *rèsextensa,* the physical, tangible human body came into the focus of anthropology and psychology. The 19th century in general can be characterized by this focus on *"res extensa"*, on matter. The prevalent quality was touchability—and of course, countability. One of the newly emerging sciences then was statistics. Statistics showed, that the annual rate of crimes did not vary—although of course the single individuals and their decisions were still a factor. Therefore the question of good and bad will had to be put in a different way. Traditionally it was a matter of moral decisions by single individuals. But from the generalization statistics give, it is no matter of morals, but of factors of mathematical functions.

All these contributed to the development of an empiricist world view, e.g. a world view focusing on material bodies, mathematical functions and experimental experience. Therefore metaphysics in the old sense of the word lost step by step reliability—of course, not immediately, but in the course of time. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century brought different kinds of critics of metaphysics—Nietzsche, Heidegger and the Vienna Circle, just to mention the most famous ones. The "loss of soul" resulted in a critique of traditional Western philosophy.

To a large extent that was due to the emerging anatomical and physiological science. Anatomy was coming up since the Renaissance; and resulted in an improvement of medical knowledge; and also in an increasing interest, how the human body works. Of course there was a lot of philosophical inquiry as well—already Descartes was not only interested in philosophy, but also in physiology, mainly the physiology of senses. In fact, his contemporaries appreciated his contributions to physiology to be more important than his philosophical treatises.[15]

The investigations into the physiology of senses were crucial for the abandoning of "soul" as a relevant concept for human self-understanding. One of the main steps in the development of a

psychology independent of philosophy was Johannes Müller's "law of specific sense energies"(1824). He stated that darkness, brightness and colours are *internal* reactions of the eye. These internal reactions are answering to outer stimuli in the specific energies of the eye, i.e. in terms of colours, darkness, brightness etc. Thus the outer world was seen as an unknown realm which affects the human sense-organs but remains unknowable. It is the application and naturalization of Kant's epistemology[16], so that the philosophical framework becomes the pattern of the way the world is perceived and explained. The notion of specific sense-energies had important implications: 1) sensations are objectifiable only in terms of chemical and physical laws and measurements, 2) apart from that, sensations are mere subjective sensations. A split occured now between the objective world of solid bodies and scientific laws and measurements affirming the objective reality of the world perceived, and the subjective world of qualities—colours, sounds, smells, dreams, visions, etc.—making the latter a shady realm of uncertainties. The world of "soul" was a world, where both aspects were intermingled without a distinction between "objective facts" and "purely subjective perceptions". But now body was without soul, and soul was without body- it is a world of disembodied souls and disensouled bodies.

Already in 1816 J.F.Herbart had published a textbook on psychology, in which he abandoned the soul, saying: "The soul originally has no ideas, emotions or desires. It has no knowledge of itself nor of other objects. It possesses no categories of thought and intuition, nor faculties of will and action. The soul has originally no predisposition whatever. The simple nature of the soul is wholly unknown and must remain unknown. Thus it cannot serve as a subject matter for either speculation or empirical psychology."[17] Sense-experiences were redefined in terms of sense-data; and sense data—but emotions as well—in turn had the qualities of material substances. So Herbart could apply mathematical functions to emotional and sensorial experiences. Herbart`s psychology became the most influential psychology of the 19th century. E.g. the text-books in psychology—but also in philosophy—used in the schools of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were Herbartian. Freud's

the Austro-Hungarian Empire were Herbartian. Freud's psychoanalysis evolved from this background. In taking up the language of soul, the psychoanalysis translated the language of dreams, myths etc. into a rational, reifying, thing- oriented language, which refers to then current scientific, mechanical patterns.[18]

However, the loss of soul resulted in a loss of the world. All what is left, is the body and what the body experiences. 1826 the German philosopher Krause wrote: "Whenever you tell an unbiased though educated person that he can perceive unmediated only the distinctions arising from his own sensorials, i.e. only from his body, but cannot perceive outer things as outer things, he will find this at first erroneous, but considering it more closely he will be puzzled. As soon as he senses this might possibly be true, he will be appalled and will find it terrible. It is, as if the foundations under his feet were pulled away, as if the basis of all his previous thinking and sensing were taken away, as if the whole world had been snatched away from him, so that he could keep only himself in a bleak all-is-oneness (Alleinheit) and wilderness."[19] It would be worth while to start from here an examination of 19th and 20th century philosophy—just to mention two positions will show how deeply influencing this new perspective was: one example is Nietzsche, who philosophized "am Leitfaden des Leibes" "along the guide of the body". The other is Husserl, who first analyzed intentionality, i.e. the composite of sensory perception and predicative judgments, then turned to a denial of the worldly experience - epoche - and finally started to analyze the constitution of the world from what resembles Descartes *"ego cogito"*. After the world is lost, there is just the body left. And starting with the body the world has to be reconstituted. And it is not just another philosophoumenon.

In fact, a new world is set up in the 19th century. Almost all we see as almost natural came only some 150, 160, 170 years ago. Electricity, gas, railways, telegraph lines, photography, electric light, telephone, typewriter, grammophon, radio, revolvers and other repetitive guns, film—based on the principle of revolvers, by the way, artificial colours and flavours, artificial yarn, food preserved in tin cans, bicycles, cars, etc. So the "Lebenswelt" of the 20th century

is not the world as it was 200 or more years ago, but a reconstituted world, a man-made world. In India you have a chance actually to see and experience the difference, when you go to one of these little villages somewhere in the country side. But even here people have radios, bicycles and motor scooters. So the underlying conditions of the modern world—i.e. reference to matter, analysis of matter, i.e.material conditions by means of mathematical functions and representation in terms of functions—is present even here and shows the power and attraction of this world, represented by Western technology.

It is a this-worldly perspective and therefore truth is confined to the objective world; i.e. the world of scientific measurable objects. Truth was always a concept as ambiguous as soul—it comprised not only adequation between sentences or concepts and things or facts, but also intuition, evidence, experience of God—which is a truth beyond the "objective" world, the world of objects. Now with the loss of soul, also a change in truth can be seen. Intuition and evidence are terms which disappear throughout the 19th century - of course not completely. Eg. Bergson or Husserl use concepts of intuition—but the overall tendency was and is to refer to truth as provable either by logic or by experiments or by consensus and inter-subjectivity. Truth which has no reference becomes meaningless, as truth has to be proved in terms of an x, to which one can refer. This x might be a thing, a fact, a concept or thinking itself —but somehow it has to be within the compound of this world.

Exactly here starts one of the difficulties with Eastern philosophy. Hegel, contemporary of Müller and Herbart, is arguing on behalf of this when he refutes Indian philosophy. His main argument is that there is no thought—i.e. no innerworldly reference, and therefore also no subject and object. Hence Brahman is the most defective: "... an abstract unity without definitions in itself (Bestimmungen in sich selbst) is the most defective and untrue; exactly this defectiveness is constitutive for the nature of the Indian Brahman; he is unity only as an abstract generalization, as substance without definitions (Bestimmungen).. as which is, that it is abstracted from all specifications, thus also from the specification of an object against a

subject. Whether one starts from the objective or the subjective definition, Brahman will show itself as the defectiveness which lacks the difference of objectivity and subjectivity."[20]

Therefore he also criticizes *Yoga:* "Yoga, because of its peculiar character, is neither Vertiefung in an object in general, as for instance, getting immersed in contemplating a painting or in a scientific matter, nor man's Vertiefung into himself, i.e., into a concrete spirit, such as his feelings, desires and the like. Yoga is rather a Vertiefung without any content, a giving up of all attention to external objects, and the activity of senses, a silencing of all internal sentiments, desire, hope or fear, a silencing of all tendencies and passions as well as an absence of every image, idea and definite thought."[21] Therefore Hegel calls it "abstract devotion", and concludes that it is different from Western, i.e. Christian devotion: "..our devotion comes from a concrete mind and is directed to a God full of content (inhaltsvollen Gott), is prayer full of content (inhaltsvolles Gebet), is a fulfilled motion of the religious mind (Gemuet). Therefore Yoga can be called an abstract devotion only, because it raises itself only to the complete loss of content of the subject and the object and therefore towards unconsciousness."[22]

Hegel's verdict has branded the Indian traditions in particular and the Eastern traditions in general to this day. I do not want to go into details in Hegel's discussion—just not to get entangled into the notions of subjectivity and objectivity to which Hegel refers and which are to be distinguished of course from "subjectivity" and "objectivity" as e.g. Mueller or Herbart or other physicians and psychologists of that time use. I only want to emphasize the problem Hegel has to admit that there can be a realm without reference to subject and object, without thought. Eastern wisdom traditions as well as Christian mysticism claim that there is such an experience. Both are premodern traditions, which were formulated in the context of a premodern world. This fact usually is missed with regard to Christianity. Therefore it is largely interpreted in a twistingly modern perspective.

The main problem of the modern world seems to be that there is something like "ego cogito–centrism". Even the deconstruction of

rationality is performed in rational arguments and on a rational level *only.* The problem is not rationality in itself, because to deny the realm of rationality and its validity is to refer to ignorance. The problem is the *habitual self-reference to the ego cogito.* I would like to emphasize the word "habitual", as it is an embodied habit. By this I mean that the *ego cogito* is the ultimate security we rarely put into question. Descartes stopped with it, and by now it is a kind of cultural standard. But what, if one can question this *ego* in *ego cogito*? Where does this questioning, this quest lead to? It cannot be done by reasoning only- otherwise the questioning is stuck in itself. To overcome the ego- cogito - habit is a kind of death, as there is no more ego-centered security. It is an experiential questioning, not a mere theoretical one. Giving up ego cogito leaves no room to reflect or to rationalize— it necessarily has to be a personal questioning no one else can do for you. It is drinking cold water and knowing it for yourself, as a Zen saying goes. Unless you drink, you will not know. But of course, nobody can be forced into such an experience. Kyoto-School philosophers like Nishitani and Ueda give nice descriptions of this process, which can help as pointers to such an experience of going beyond.

Our point is: whatever truth is found here, it will be a truth without reference. The notion of reference implies comparison, judgement and therefore subject and object. But intuition, to know it for myself excludes comparison and judgement. In this regard it is a truth beyond objective reference. The importance of senses and sense– awareness is obvious. Sense- awareness is somewhat opposed to sense-perception as it is described in philosophy since Descartes. Sense–perception includes judgement, it is "ego–cogito–sentio" and "consciousness of", whereas sense-awareness is primarily openness—there is only awareness, but not "awareness of", which implies a world of subject and object. It may be described as "letting be" whatever there is: myself, others, colours, sounds, visions... and so on. This kind of awareness can lead to an experience which is not already set in terms of subject and object. It is contrary to the solipsistic sense-perception the 19th century philosopher Krause is describing. It would need a separate approach to point out the

differences in detail. Here it should be sufficient to emphasize the difference of a solipsistic state of mind, which is an absorption of the subject object dichotomy into the self–conscious subject, and the experience Eastern wisdom (and Western Christianity) is referring to. Nishitani's reflections on religion and nothingness are a marvellous example of reflective explanation of not–objective truth, i.e. truth beyond the realm of reference.[23] Very often the solipsistic state of mind is mistaken for what Eastern wisdom traditions mean by the experience of oneness. This is due to some extent to the fact that almost all references to experience in non–Western traditions follow the language of sense–perception and therefore 19th century psychology. A closer look on the conceptual frame–work of intercultural and interreligious dialogue would be helpful.

The world cultures outside Western habitual experience live in a world without the *ego cogito* as center of sensorial experience. The world comes unmediated by rationalization—but I would not say without prejudices or even strong egoism. It is simply a priority of senses over against the ability of rational thinking. This is not unknown in Western traditions the medieval theology builds on the priority of senses. Only modern times gave priority to the rational faculty. So inter–cultural dialogue would require also a reformulating of worldly turn in terms of sense–awareness without giving up rationality. Alas, also these steps include at least the willingness to let go established patterns of experience. There are some philosophers who tried to move along that line—Georg Picht's "Kunst und Mythos"[24] has to be mentioned, as well Rudolf zur Lippe's "Sinnenbewusstsein".[25] I consider these as first steps towards a new way of philosophizing, a philosophy which does not deny the realm of sense–awareness. Let me give a simile.[26] There is a blind man with a stick in his hand, knocking with the stick on the curbstone to find his way. He has to be open to his experiences—and moving along, there is an interdependent flow of information between curbstone, stick, man–touching curbstone–man–walking–along–the–street and so on—as soon as he starts to question his experience he will get stuck up and feel insecure. May be, we can take this as a metaphor how life is like closing temporarily the

ever–watching eye of reason. Being a philosopher, it will be interesting to ponder and reflect on what it is like to live like that and to talk with others about it—from our own culture as well as from other cultures.

What kind of truth would it be then?

NOTES

1. Th., Macho, *Todesmetaphern,* Frankfurt 1987.
2. Cf. R. Rorty, "A pragmatist view of rationality and cultural difference," in *Phil. East and West,* Vol.42, No.4, Oct. 1992, p.581.
3. Fritz Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (1910/11), 1980, vol.1, p.446.
4. Cf. Charles Taylor's, *Reflections.*
5. Cf. E.g. the works of Clifford Geertz.
6. Cf. The works of Paul Knitter, John Hick, W. Cantwell Smith, Leonard Swidler, Michael von Brueck on a theology of plurality.
7. Indeed with his *Tao of Physics* he opened the way for an encounter between Western science and Eastern religions. But the book lacks any kind of hermeneutical reflections.
8. Heinrich Ott, "Ein neues Paradigma in der Religionstheologie", in: Bernhardt, R., *Horizontüberschreitung,* Die pluralistische Theologie der Religionen, Gütersloh 1991, p.40.
9. R. Ohashi, (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Kyoto- Schule,* München 1990.
10. E.g. the Second Vatican Council was an attempt by the Roman Catholic Church to cope with the modern world.
11. Cf. J. Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis,* Harper & Row, New York 1972.
12. Cf. G. Jüttemann, M. Sonntag, Wulf, Ch., eds., *Die Seele - Ihre Geschichte im Abendland,* Weinheim 1991.

13. Ibid., 23.

14. Cf. Lotze in his highly influential essay on "Soul" in Wagners *Handwörterbuch der Medizin* , 1846.

15. Cf. Rainer Specht, *Descartes*, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1984.

16. Cf. Manfred Sommer, *Evidenz im Augenblick*, Frankfurt 1987, chap.1 & 2.

17. Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Psychologie*, t.3, pp.152-3; translated by B.B. Wolman in The historical Role of Johann Friedrich Herbart, in: Wolman,B.B. (ed.), *Historical Roots of Contemporary Psychology*, N.Y., Harper, 1967.

18. In this Jung's approach differed widely, as he took dreams and myths to be expressions in their own right and logic.

19. Krause, *Vorlesungen Über die Grundwahrheiten der Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1826, p.39. : Wenn man dem unbefangenen Menschen, soweit übrigens seine Bildung gediehen sein mag, die jenem Vorurteile entgegenstehende Behauptung macht, dass er nur die Bestimmung seiner Sinnglieder, also nur seinen Leib, nicht aber äussere Dinge als äussere Dinge unmittelbar wahrnehme, so findet er dieselbe zunächst irrig, bei genauerer Betrachtung aber stutzt er, und sowie er als möglich ahnt, dass sie wahr sein könnte, erschrickt er und findet sie entsetzlich. Es ist ihm, als wenn Grund und Boden unter den Füssen weggezogen würden, als wenn ihm die gesamte Grundlage alles seines bisherigen Denkens und Empfindens genommen, als wenn ihm die ganze Welt entrissen werden sollte, damit er allein nur sich selbst behielte in trostloser Alleinheit und Einöde.

20. In der Tat ist sie als abstrakte Einheit ohne Bestimmung in ihr selbst das Mangelhafteste und Unwahre; eben diese Dürftigkeit ist es, die die Natur des indischen Brahman konstituierte; er ist eine Einheit nur als die abstrakte Allgemeinheit, als bestimmungslose Substanz.[...]als welche eben dies ist, dass von aller Besonderheit, somit auch von der Besonderheit eines Objekts gegen ein Subjekt abstrahiert ist. Man gehe von der

subjektiven oder objektiven Bestimmung aus, so zeigt sich Brahman als das Mangelhafte, das ohne den Unterschied des Subjektiven und des Objektiven ist." (Werke Bd.11, p. 185).

21. Werke, Bd.11, S. 150.

22. Werke, Bd.11, S. 151.

23. K. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1982; German: *Was ist Religion?*, Frankfurt 1982; the German version is checked by the author.

24. Georg Picht, *Kunst und Mythos*, Stuttgart 1986.

25. Rudolf zur Lippe, *Sinnenbewusstsein*, Reinbek 1987.

26. It is Gregory Bateson's example for the process of awareness. In: *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, London 1972. Ironically, the example of a blind man was used by Descartes as a simile for sense perception. But in his example the blind man does not move.

10

Husserl's Encounter with Buddhism: Its Lessons for East-West Encounter Today

Dr. Joseph Kottukapally

INTRODUCTION

Kipling's famous couplet,
"Oh, East is East, and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently
at God's great Judgment Seat,"[1]

represented a mentality which may not be widespread any more. Even so, East and West *are* a "twain" or, to use a Marxist expression, "opposites", whose creative encounter and "synthesis" is an ever–present challenge and task for the philosopher.

One cannot help recalling here another famous author and his division of history into three stages, marked by religion, metaphysics and science or positive thinking, one succeeding and replacing the other and symbolically representing society's childhood, adolescence and adulthood. According to this Comtian "law of the stages," with the triumphal march of science and technology, starting in the seventeenth century and climaxing in the nineteenth, religion and metaphysics have long become passe and might survive, if at all, as fossils.

The trouble is that religion and metaphysics have not cared to obey the Comtian dictate. Metaphysics continues to make its sedate presence felt, as it has always done; and religion shows every sign of

extra ordinary vitality in contemporary society. And neither does religion seem to conform to the Marxist dictate by being the "opium of the people." As it actually appears, religion has the most diverse forms, ranging from the most benign and elevating to the most vicious and destructive. As for science, which may or may not be about to solve the last problem of theoretical physics thanks to the genius of Stephen Hawking and his peers, the picture science presents of itself and of the world to the lay person is far from reassuring. While science seems to be unravelling the mysteries of a nature getting all the more mysterious, technology seems to become steadily more Frankensteinian. In sharp contrast to the scientistic and positivistic rhetoric of the last century, ours has reverberated with the echoes of "limits" and "relativity," "uncertainty," "finitude" and "anguish".

Palaeontologist and mystical philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who envisioned a new synthesis of religion and science, was ridiculed by many professional scientists, philosophers and theologians. But, not only did the educated lay world listen to Teilhard with rapt and grateful attention; such eminent evolutionary biologists as Julian Huxley and Theodosius Dobzhansky found the Teilhardian vision sensible if not entirely convincing. Neither can we ignore Teilhard's Indian counterpart, Sri Aurobindo, and his world–affirming and world transforming Neo–Vedanta, so tantalizingly similar to Teilhard's Neo–Christianity.

Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Manhattan Project which produced the first atomic bomb, had, according to his own testimony, his mind filled with the Lord's *Viśvarūpa* as described in the eleventh chapter of the Gitā, as he watched the mushroom cloud rise over the New–Mexican desert in July 1945. Nuclear physicist Fritjof Capra has made us familiar with "the tao of physics" and "the turning point", where science, metaphysics and religion do and must meet, both to make sense out of contemporary existence with its extreme complexity and multivalence, and to secure our common future, common to the humans as well as to the rest of life and nature.

The Enigma of Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl is in many ways an enigmatic and elusive figure.

Though he is the founder of the phenomenlogical movement, which produced such renowned philosophers as Martin Heidegger, Jean–Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau–Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur (we might add to the list also Edith Stein, Husserl's favourite student and sometime assistant, who became a Catholic and a Carmelite nun and was martyred by the Nazis). Husserl himself is hardly known outside the circles of professional philosophers and historians of philosophy. There are a number of details of his life, which are either unknown to or ignored by Husserl scholars generally. Although from a Jewish family and liberally educated, at the age of seventeen, he sought baptism from a Lutheran minister and received it ten years later, that is to say, after completing his doctorate in mathematics and having firmly opted for a philosophical career. In spite of his baptism, Husserl was never a "practising" Christian; he always kept a copy of the New Testament on his working table, but would never open it because "I know that once I open it and read it, I shall have to give up philosophy". He kept God carefully and consistently "out" of his phenomenology and even in his death bed (at a Benedictine convent where he and his wife had found security during the Nazi pogrom) refused the comforts of religion; but his last words were, "God has received me into his grace and allows me to die."[2]

A similar enigma marked Husserl's relationship to Eastern philosophy and religion. Quite early in his philosophical career Husserl confidently declared his intention to initiate a methodological revolution in philosophy, which, when completed, would establish philosophy as the most rigorous science, capable of answering all ultimate theoretical and practical questions.[3]

Even when, about a quarter century later, he had to admit that he had reached nowhere near the goal he had once so confidently set for himself, he was firm in his conviction that transcendental phenomenology could alone provide the answer to the crisis engulfing European sciences and humanity.[4]

By and large, Husserl had no interest in or acquaintance with anything non–European. Speaking, in particular, of Indian

philosophy, while many scholars have been quick to notice the close similarities between transcendental phenomenology and *advaita,* Husserl neither knew anything about it nor was, seemingly, in the least interested in it, in spite of the fact that since the early nineteenth century Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit were prominent in European, especially German universities.

As for Buddhism, as we shall see presently, the Buddha's teachings Husserl found presented in Karl Eugen Neumann's translation of the *Suttapiṭakam* spellbound him. This Buddhism appeared to him as at once very non–European and as noble and elevating as the very best of European philosophy and religion; and, therefore, also as destined to contribute substantially towards the ethical, philosophical and religious renewal of Europe. This was in 1925, when Husserl was sixty–five. By the end of that year, however, his old self seems to have completely reasserted itself. We are informed by Professor Karl Schuhmann that in a Seminar for advanced students on "Selected Logical Problems" in the winter semester 1925–26, Husserl just marginally touched upon Indian Philosophy (which he identified with Buddhism) and evaluated it as being more or less on a par with Socratic philosophy, meant to be taken forward by Plato and Aristotle and attain final maturity in transcendental phenomenology.[5] In his famous Vienna lecture on "The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy" in 1935, Husserl recognizes that "Today we possess all sorts of studies on Indian, Chinese and other philosophies, studies that place these philosophies on the same level with Greek philosophy," and acknowledges that there is "not lacking something in common" in these different "philosophies"; but he warns that "one must not allow intentional depths to be covered over by what is merely morphologically common and be blind to most essential differences of principles."[6] He sees a "sharp cleavage" between "the universal but mythico–practical" attitude of the Easterners and the "*theoretical*" attitude of the Greeks, which forms the basis of Europe's scientific culture; hence "it is a mistake for someone brought up in the scientific modes of thought initiated in Greece and progressively developed in modern times to speak of Indian and Chinese

philosophy... and thus to interpret India, Babylonia and China in a European way.[7]

A Special Note

Husserl's short review of the *Suttapiṭakam* appeared in the bulletin of the Piper publishing company (Munich) for Spring 1925.

A special note is due here to explain how I happened to get the text of this review and translated it.

In my (as yet unpublished) doctoral dissertation on Husserl, I had rather strongly criticized Husserl's Eurocentric attitude and off–hand dismissal of all non–European philosophies as of no significance. Thanks to a friend in Louvain, I got an opinion about my work from Professor Karl Schuhmann, then at the Husserl Archives in Louvain (now at the University of Utrecht). Professor Schuhmann, who was kind enough to read through the work carefully and give a detailed opinion, took note of my criticism, though he did not mention it. But after a couple of years he sent me a xerox copy of Husserl's book review with a covering note in which he wrote that he had discovered this "totally unknown Husserl publication" among Husserl's papers and would be happy if I brought it to the attention of Indian Husserl scholars. To me this was a surprise but a very welcome gift. I made a draft translation of this particularly difficult German text (Husserl's German is well known to be difficult even for Germans and I realized that my having worked through most of his till then published works had not prepared me adequately to tackle this text) and sent the draft to Professor Schuhmann for correction. Professor Schuhmann not only graciously returned the draft with corrections, but also helped me to secure the permission of Dr. S.IJsseling, the Director of the Husserl Archives, to publish my translation. Meanwhile years passed and I was busy otherwise than with philosophy. In 1990 the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, jointly with the Centre of Advanced Research in Phenomenology at Atlanta University (Florida, U.S.A.), conducted a seminar in New Delhi on "Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy." One of the papers presented at this seminar was Professor Schuhmann's "Husserl and Indian Thought," which contained his own translation of the Husserl review. Unaware of this, I sent my translation (with an introductory note) to the editor of the Journal of the Indian

Council of Philosophical Research, who was then probably editing for publication the Seminar papers!

As I present my translation here, I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Schuhmann and Dr. IJsseling.

The Text

I have now read most of Karl Eugen Neumann's German rendering of the principal parts of the Sacred Scriptures of Buddhism. Once at it, I just could not tear myself away from it despite otherwise pressing tasks. And, really, what a splendid treasure has been added to German translation literature. The publisher has performed an outstanding service by bringing out the immortal life–work of K.E. Neumann in this new edition which is a model in every respect and exquisitely produced. I dare say, the fairest blossom of India's religiosity, which is purely inward directed in vision and striving–a "transcendental" and not "transcendent" religiosity, I should like to say–opens upon the horizon of our ethico–religious and philosophical consciousness for the first time with these translations, doubtlessly destined to effectively co–determine it henceforth. The consummate linguistic recreation of the canonical Buddhist Scriptures accords us the perfect possibility to get acquainted with a way of viewing the world which is in complete opposition to our European way, to take a stand in relation to it, to overcome it ethico–religiously, to re–live it with real understanding, and out of that understanding experience its living force. For us, indeed, for all who, in this time of the collapse of our culture, become decadent through exteriorization, are longingly on the lookout for purity and authenticity of spirit and for a peaceful overcoming of the world, this eye–opening to the Indian way of world–overcoming is a great experience. For the fact that Buddhism, as it speaks to us out of its pure original sources, is concerned with an ethico–religious discipline of purification and satisfaction of the highest dignity, thought through and practised with an almost unequalled inner consistency, energy and noble disposition, must soon become

clear to every attentive reader. Only in the loftiest configurations of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture can Buddhism find parallels. From now on, it is our destiny to integrate this Indian spiritual type, which is totally new to us, with that which has grown old for us and stands in need of re–enlivening and re–invigorating by the very contrast.

Out of the present writings, through the wealth of faithfully preserved tradition, Buddha himself and his foremost disciples become almost tangibly present to us as representatives of a new type of human "sanctity". It is much to be lamented that the religion that is historically alive in us and is by no means to be surrendered to this Buddhism can no more boast of a German translation of its original scriptures, comparable to this Neumannian translation of the *Suttapiṭakam* in respect of living intelligibility. For, the German language has fatefully moved far away from the language of Luther's Bible translation; its "Church Jargon" is devoid of an impact upon the soul flowing out of the immediate living sense of language. However, the invasion of our contemporary horizon by Indian religiosity will perhaps have its benefit in this regard as well. It will, at any rate, awaken new powers of religious intuition; and even thereby contribute to a new enlivening and deepening of Christian intuition and enhance the capacity to understand Christian religiosity truly and interiorly. Invaluable surely are these splendid re–creations of Neumann to everyone who participates in the ethical, religious and philosophical renewal of our culture.

Eagerly do I await the final sections of Neumann's translations.

Some Comments

Husserl's response to Buddhism articulated in the text above is impressive and highly instructive. We should, of course, heed Professor Schuhmann's warning that "it is no more than an aside in Husserl's overall production" and "one should neither overestimate its significance nor expect too much from it.[8] It is a short review contributed to a publisher's advertising bulletin. As for its

superlative rating of Buddhism and its ecstatic enthusiasm, while appreciating its spontaneity and sincerity, we should not forget that what we have here is not a studied and deeply considered evaluation. It is not only that Husserl's identification of Buddhism as Indian philosophy and religiosity simply is somewhat wide of the mark; almost as soon as he had sent off his review to the publisher, Husserl seems to have shed all enthusiasm for Buddhism, as suggested by his dealing with it in the Seminar referred to above. With all such cautions, however, we should consider the text for what it says, appreciate its distinctive character and learn the lessons it offers.

Unlike Kant, who carefully assigned to religion its "rightful" place "within the limits of pure reason," Husserl consistently kept religion "out" of phenomenology. As we saw earlier, in his "Crisis" lecture, Husserl dismissed all non-European "philosophies" as of no value and relevance to Europe because of their "mythico–practical," that is to say, religious character. In our text, Husserl not only recognizes in Buddhism "the fairest blossom of India's religiosity," and "an ethico–religious discipline of purification and satisfaction of the highest dignity," but also a truly "transcendental" discipline, which "opens upon our ethico–religious and philosophical consciousness," "doubtlessly destined to effectively co-determine it henceforth.

Secondly, in this text we see Husserl evaluating what is non–European totally different from how he otherwise evaluates it. Generally, he ignored all non–European thought; in the "Crisis" lecture he dismissed Asian philosophies almost contemptfully. What a contrast does this text represent! Here he is not only deeply concerned about the "collapse of our culture" and "longingly on the look-out for purity and authenticity of spirit and a peaceful overcoming of the world," but also finds "this eye–opening to the Indian way of world–overcoming... a great experience." With grateful wonder Husserl recognizes Buddhism as standing on a level with the "loftiest configurations of the philosophical and religious spirit of our culture" and, by its very contrast, offering Europe and its decadent culture a "re–enlivening and re–invigorating" elixir. In other words, while in his other writings Husserl appears as a

completely self–assured and self–satisfied, not to say, arrogant, European, here we see him as an earnest and humble lover of and seeker after true wisdom.

A third point concerns Husserl's attitude to Christianity. On his own and very deliberately, he had opted to become a Christian—something not to be taken for granted in Jewish intellectuals during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Equally deliberately and consistently, he kept his Christianity "out" of his philosophy and life. In the present text, Husserl identifies himself as a Christian with a certain pride and zeal as he speaks about "the religion which is historically alive in us and is by no means to be surrendered to this Buddhism." He laments the absence of a translation of the Christian scriptures comparable to the Neumannian translation of the Buddhist scriptures. But he hopes, not only that Christians will at least feel shamed into undertaking a matching modern translation of the Bible, but also that "the invasion of our contemporary horizon by Indian religiosity will... awaken new powers of religious intuition and, even thereby, contribute to a new enlivening and deepening of Christian intuition and enhance the capacity to understand Christian religiosity truly and interiorly." Husserl sees Buddhism as offering a profound and powerful challenge to Christianity; a challenge implying not rivalry and threat, but an irresistible invitation to rediscover its own inner vitality and new resources in a mutual encounter of heart–to–heart dialogue.

A MODEL FOR DIALOGUE

Ours is an age of dialogue. Indeed, one often gets the impression that the term is somewhat overused, even, occasionally abused these days.

There is a kind of "dialogue" urged by people who find their interests threatened and their position weak in a dispute. For them dialogue is a means to secure their position and safeguard their interests.

Some urge "dialogue" to sweetly persuade their partners and win them over, as they are convinced of their own secure possession of

the truth meant for everyone; they feel that the only obstacle in the way of everyone's sharing their truth is their own insufficiently persuasive manner of presenting it or the partner's passive resistence which needs to be overcome with patient and tactful persistence. I have the feeling that the dialogue that has been now for many decades nearly on top of the agenda of the leadership of the Catholic Chruch is of this kind. It is a fact, after all, that non–Catholics, especially non–Christians, are not nearly as enthusiastic about dialogue as Catholic leaders, who are always more eager to "give" and teach than to receive and learn.

Quite a different kind of "dialogue" is urged by many progressive, especially avantguardist Christian theologians, who seem to consider dialogue an end and value in itself. They seem to be prepared to give up or compromise any convictions or truth claims that would stand in the way of dialogue, which then tend to become a means of eliminating differences. Thus, theologians like John Hick and Paul Knitter, who are perhaps the most vociferous and "representative" champions of this kind of dialogue, would gladly give up or "demythologize" the belief, considered by all the Christian Churches as the central and absolutely non–negotiable truth of Christianity, that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the only begotten Son of God and Redeemer of all humankind. These theologians obviously would not expect similar professions of faith in their non–Christian dialogue partners either.

I cannot consider any of the three forms of dialogue described above as authentic. They are rather manipulations, which more often than not remain or end up as self–manipulating monologues. Authentic dialogue is not an absolute value, but a means to an end which is greater and higher than itself; it is the quest in common and in communion for Truth, which is the absolute value. Dialogue is in the service of Truth, which is at once transcendent and immanent. The search for this Truth is a communal endeavour, a process that can never end or be completed. As St. Augustine has said somewhere, we search in order to find this Truth, and find in order to search for it. And because Truth is both transcendent and immanent, or transcendently immanent and immanently transcendent (perhaps

we should say, Transcendent in the sense of Christian theology and "transcendental" in the sense of Scholastic metaphysics and Husserlian phenomenology), every perception and concretization of it is a necessarily relative and open ended communal process. In dialogue personal convictions and insights are helped to become deeper and richer by shared insights and concerns, which become over firmer and closer bonds among the partners.

Let me now highlight certain aspects of Husserl's response to Buddhism which seem to me to be aspects of authentic dialogue.

Husserl encounters Buddhism with complete openness, that is to say, with total absence of pre–judgement and a total readiness to get to know the unfamiliar and be influenced by it to any degree. The result is a supreme admiration and appreciation for Buddhism. In other words, Husserl encounters Buddhism with pure *jijñāsa* and, in the encounter, experiences pure "wonder", which is, as Aristotle has said, the orignal philosophical attitude or emotion.

Thus, Husserl finds in Buddhism, which he encounters for the first time in Neumannian translations of the *Suttapiṭakam,* "a way of viewing the world which is in complete opposition to our European way," "an ethico–religious discipline of purification and satisfaction that is of the highest dignity, thought through and practised with an almost unequalled inner consistency, energy and noble disposition," for which he can find parallels "only in the loftiest expressions of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture."

This wonder and admiration for Buddhism does not make Husserl giddy or lose his bearings. On the contrary, it arouses in him the sense of his own identity and leads him back to his own roots in "the religion which is historically alive in us and is by no means to be surrendered to this Buddhism." The Christian religion, however, cannot afford to remain passive or impassive before Buddhism. For Buddhism challenges Christianity "to take a stand in relation to it, to overcome it ethico–religiously, to re–live it with real understanding and out of this understanding to experience its living force." That is to say, Christianity is not to become frightened or defensive before the awesome power and beauty of Buddhism, but to go out to it and

welcome and embrace it, so as to be enriched, re–enlivened and radically renewed by it. Buddhism, thus "overcome" ethico–religiously, will "awaken new powers of religious intuition and even thereby contribute to a new enlivening and deepening of Christian intuition and enhance the capacity to understand Christian religiosity truly and interiorly.

Summing up, we may learn from Husserl's encounter with Buddhism that true dialogue starts with *jijñāsa*, arouses and grows with *wonder* and results in unitive understanding, which included deeper self–discovery, self–transcendence, revitalization and renewal.

Concluding Reflections

East–West relationship used to be interpreted somewhat antagonistically or hierarchically during the period of Europe's political domination. Westerners generally assumed the superiority of the West—some on the ground of the "superiority" of "Western" science and technology, others also on that of the "Western" religion of Christianity. Articulate Easterners naturally reciprocated: they could not doubt the intrinsic superiority of the Eastern view of life or the inherent folly and limitless dangers of Western aggressiveness, violence, craze for domination and exploitation. We might think of Swami Vivekananda's somewhat aggressive posture at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago exactly a century ago, and also Radhakrishnan's widely popular lectures and books. Neither may it be totally out of place to recall that, while classical Marxism–Leninism assumed the superiority of the West, Mao Zedong was certain that "The East Wind will prevail over the West Wind."

Nowadays, generally speaking, the relationship between East and West (East and West being understood not only in the sense Asia and Euro–Americas but also in a wide and symbolic sense) is interpreted as one of interdependence and complementarity. Our generation has a keen and powerful sense of our fate and destiny being inextricably interlinked and essentially bound up with that of the entire universe. We appreciate more and more that we shall all either hold and stand

or perish together.

Speaking more specifically about the relationship between different religions and world views, not so long ago most Catholic theologians and philosophers (I speak about them because it is among them I belong) were absolutely certain that they alone were in the right, while all others (these others or "adversarii" included very many Catholics who thought differently) were *in the wrong*—more or less. That era is fortunately over.

As for the present time, I wonder if I shall be far wide of the mark if I characterize ours as a period of uncertainty, relativism and relativistic scepticism. Asian, especially, Indian Catholic theologians and philosophers, by and large, would seem to be taking a sort of "comparative–philosophy" or "comparative–religion" approach, characterized by a kind of non–committal neutrality and the conviction (or assumption) that all philosophies and religions are *right*– more or less.

I submit that, after having rightly put behind us the exclusivist or polemical attitude, we should not get stuck in a weakly concordist one, which shies away from strong convictions and uncompromising commitments. It is today imperative that we adopt a truly dialogic or correlational attitude, characterized by an absolute, dynamic and communitarian commitment to Truth and to one another. This attitude is based on the conviction that Truth itself is at once *absolutely transcendent* ("totally Other", *Superior summo meo*) and *absolutely immanent* and thus *transcendental* (*intimior intimo meo*). The experience and articulation of this Truth in symbols, credal formulae, systems of doctrines and institutions must of necessity be relative, ambiguous and ambivalent and, therefore, requiring constant self–transcendence by means of mutually correcting mutually enriching and mutually invigorating interrelationships, which cannot and need not avoid all tensions and contradictions.

Traditionally Judaism, Christianity and Islam have, in their theology, almost exclusively stressed the "transcendent" or "totally Other" character of God (the Absolute), while Eastern religions, especially in their philosophies, tended to overstress the immanence

of the Absolute. Buddhism and Jainism, in their own ways, have stressed its unknowable, ineffable and "non–being" character. Are we not today coming to appreciate more and more that all the different and divergent ways and expressions, which *prima facie* appear to be mutually antagonistic and exclusive, are, in terms of what they seek to express and translate into living praxis, complementary and mutually inclusive expressions of the in–itself ineffable and inexpressible?

Speaking of Christianity in particular, I have always felt it ironic that, whereas, in terms of the distinctively Christian faith in the Incarnation (by which God's only and "consubstantial" Son truly, fully and once and for all became a man and thereby totally and absolutely effected God's immanence in the world and decisively initiated the process of the true divinization of creation) Christian philosophy should be nothing other than theology as lived interpretation and communication of the Faith, Christian philosophy and theology have, since the middle ages, remained compartmentalized and practically divorced between themselves as well as from spirituality and mysticism. One of the sad results of this state of divorce has been the inability of Christian philosophy and theology to truly appreciate divine immanence, which they branded as pantheism and monism. It was hardly appreciated that the exclusive stress on divine transcendence is as wrong and "heretical" as the exclusive stress on divine immanence. Indeed, it is telling that Christian mysticism tended to speak language of the East, and for this reason often got into trouble with philosophers and theologians. Nowadays the champions of orthodoxy dare not "refute" and dismiss as another "adversary" the great Cardinal of Cusa, whose fundamental insight and principle about God–talk was *"coincidentia oppositorum"* which means that whatever may be affirmed about God must needs be completed and complemented by its opposite. But we are still far from being able to fully appreciate and draw the practical conclusions from this principle.

My next and, for the purpose of this paper, last submission is that true dialogue demands that each partner is truly and fully rooted in his/her personal experience and convictions and ought not to be

ashamed of or apologetic about the distinctive particularity of his/her own creed.

We can fully share Radhakrishnan's hope that "The meeting between East and West today may produce a spiritual renaissance and a world community that is struggling to be born." We can agree with him that "The world is groping not for the narrow, stunted religion of the dogmatic schools, not one of fanaticism that is afraid of the light, but a creative spiritual religion.[9] We can also agree that "Dogmas and rites... are not ends in themselves... but instruments to carry forward God's purpose for mankind."[10]

However, when he says, with implicit reference to the Christian faith, "To suggest that the whole course of history is bound up with some unique event which happened at one time and in one place in a universe which had nearly 6,000 million years of existence may strain the scientific conscience of even oridinary people", because "Heaven mingles with the earth from the very start,[11] the great philosopher is both being insensitive and making a serious double category mistake. For, those who believe that "the whole history is bound up with some unique event which happened at one time in one place" do not believe it a "scientific" truth. That belief arises from and can make sense only in terms of a unique *religious experience*. It is not a scientific proposition, but neither does it seem to contradict any known scientific datum or principle.

Indeed, what "scientific" sense does the statement, "Heaven mingles with the earth from the very start" make? Obviously none. But everyone, with a minimum of common sense and sensibility knows that it has a meaning and that this meaning belongs to the realm, not of science, but of metaphor, poetry, philosophy, religion. So, too, it is beyond question that "Heaven mingles with the earth," not in a drab uniform manner, but in most diverse ways and degrees, as the infinite diversity and multiplicity of nature and history so eloquently testify.

But there is a legitimate concern which finds expression in Radhakrishnan's statement. And that is that believers, instead of living out their beliefs with the humility, authenticity and radicality

these call for, seek to advertise and make propaganda for them or, even, impose them on others. How different our world would be if religious people made it their primary concern to radically live out the beliefs and ideals they profess; if they did this they could see all multiplicity and diversity being turned into a transcendental Unity, which is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

We began these reflections with Kipling's couplet; we might as well conclude them with his second couplet, which completes, complements and transcends the first one:

"But there is neither East nor West
Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
though they come from the ends of the earth."

NOTES

1. This is the first of the two couplets of the "The Ballad of East and West." It must not be missed that the Ballad has quite a different meaning when seen as a whole. The second couplet can be read at the end of this paper. The Ballad has been quoted according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations,* 1991

2. Cf. J. Kottukapally, "The Problem of God in Husserl's Thought," in A. Amaladass *et.al.* (eds), *Philosophy and Human Development* (Madras: Satya Nilayam Publications, 1986), 203–213. J.M. Oesterreicher's biographical study of Husserl in his book, *Walls Are Crumbling: Seven Jewish Philosophers Discover Christ* (New York: The Devin–Adair Company, 1952) begins thus: "'See my New Testament?' said Edmund Husserl more than once to favourite students. 'It is always on my desk, but I never open it. I know that once I open it and read it, I shall have to give up philosophy'." (50) According to Oesterreicher, "Husserl, as a student of seventeen, ... approached a minister, New Testament in hand: 'On the basis of this book, I should like to be baptized.' ... But it was not until ten years later, on his twenty–seventh birthday, that he was finally baptized..." *(ibid).*

3. Such was the hope Husserl articulated in his programmatic essay, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" in 1911. A translation of this essay is found in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (which is in fact not a book by Husserl but two essays of Husserl, translated and published under this title by Quentin Laur), New York: Harper, 1965, 71–148.
4. *Cf.* E. Husserl, "The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy," in the book just cited, 149–192. See, also, "Author's Preface to the English Edition," in E. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology* (E.T. W.R. Boyce Gibson) London: Collier Books, 1962, 3–22.
5. Karl Schuhmann, "Husserl and Indian Thought," in *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya *et.al.*) New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1992, 20–38.
6. "The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy" (Cf. n.4 above), 164.
7. *Ibid.*, 171
8. Karl Schuhmann, *op.cit.* (see n.5 above), 26.
9. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections,* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955, 12.
10. *Id. Recovery of Faith,* New York: Harper, 1955, 199.
11. *East and West,* 122.

11

Approach to Inter-faith Dialogue: An Indian Perspective

Dr. Anand Amaladass

I

To begin with the question 'What is Philosophy?' is already to enter into the nature of philosophy, drawing attention to the self–limiting, self–limited role of the philosopher. The philosopher is said to be a stranger to the world, in the sense that he is living in the clouds. The story about the philosopher–astronomer Thales of Miletus who fell down a well because he had not noticed what was in front of him and a village girl from Thrace who laughed at him, apparently an insignificant event, is recorded by Plato himself in the dialogue called "Theaitetos", where Socrates refers to Thales who strove for knowledge of things in heavens but had no knowledge of things that were around his immediate surroundings. That tone of mockery is reserved for those who go in for philosophy. And the history of Western Philosophy illustrates the various attempts made to call philosophers from their ivory towers in order that they might deal with practical questions.

Obviously the understanding of philosophy varies among the philosophers themselves and every one is free to formulate his/her own understanding of philosophy. But philosophy is always present wherever men/women, through thought, grow conscious of their existence. In that sense philosophy is present everywhere, though its all–pervasiveness often goes unnoticed. Wherever standards of value

exist, wherever criticism is applied – whether in the belief formulations of religious communities, in the outlook of the unbelievers, in the nihilistic anarchy, in psycho–analysis or in anthropology–there philosophy is also to be found. The purpose of the professional philosopher is to clarify this omnipresent philosophy by means of the tradition handed down by the great philosophers. Karl Jaspers considers this as great service which we should esteem in our universities.[1]

In his commentary on Aristotelian metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas for instance mentions explicitly the little knowledge we can gather by way of metaphysics.[2] We do not discuss the objective yields of poetry for instance. Poetry's achievement is that it opens the senses to the wonders of this world. Both Aristotle and Aquinas say that what links the philosopher with the poet is that they both have to do with the things that astonish us, with the "*mirandum*". What astonishes or surprises us is understood to be the formal object of philosophy–the "*mirandum*", i.e. what cannot be comprehended, what is always and has been from the time immemorial open to the question–in a word, a riddle, existing from the fact of *being*.

It is also said that unlike poetry or art which have their origin in wonder and ecstasy, philosophy begins with doubt and disappointment. Here the most conscious characteristic of philosophical investigation is taken to be reflective awareness. By awareness is meant the act of turning upon itself and one's doings, a criticism or sitting in judgement over things. If all our perceptions were completely in accord with existent things, there would be no occasion for reflection, no need for examination of oneself. If all our desires were fulfilled as they arise, there would be no disappointment. Hence there is no need to ponder and to take stock of the situation. Because our perceptions are not always veridical and only few of our desires are satisfied and even they not fully, we become reflective. In other words, *duḥkha* is said to be the starting point of philosophy in the East and wonder is the beginning of philosophy in the West. *Duḥkha* is understood as a sense of meaninglessness, an awareness of pain and suffering.

The role of the philosopher is not understood in the same way. Already Descartes proclaimed as a tenet of his programme: "We want a practical philosophy", rejecting the speculative philosophy of the ancients, "whereby we may become the masters and disposers of nature". Hegel believed that it was the job of philosophers to understand historical development, whereas Marx maintained that it was time for them to change the world. And Habermas reacted against Gadamer for giving hermeneutic processes an ontological underpinning, thus making light of economic and political factors which may drastically limit the horizon of some or all of the participants.

The complaint against the philosophers as arm–chair thinkers centers round the question whether philosophers as philosophers should contribute to changing the world or to solving our social and political problems. Philosophers could obviously contribute to political discussion–by analyzing the situation, pointing out the principles that are undermined by such and such a political decision and its consequences and so on–but whether he should take sides or commit himself is what is being disputed. As a free person he is entitled to campaign for political causes, as he is free to do many other things–like driving a car, playing cricket–which are not considered as being philosopher's actions as philosopher. Bertrand Russell maintained for example that there was no intrinsic relation between his philosophy on the one hand and his political campaign on the other. In fact his participation in the ban-the–bomb campaign was not a logical consequence of his reductive analysis. Here again the meaning given to philosophy by Russell is different from the one implied when people demand that philosophers should descend from their ivory towers and enter into the socio–political arena. They maintain that committed action is more valuable and more desirable than philosophizing.[3]

Kant's famous dictum that the path of criticism is the only one still open to us, belongs to those propositions by which the philosophy in which they originate passes its test, in as much as the saying or axiom outlives the system which conceived it. At any rate one cannot remain today at the speculative level alone contemplating

the being as such – *ens ut sic*. A philosopher as philosopher should try to take responsibility and alter the vision of the people, perhaps through his revisionary metaphysics, without laying any claim to a mastery of the absolute, or being self–assertive from the position of a *philosophia perennis*.

II

With this background I would like to enter into the inter–religious situation in general and in particular in India. The situation itself does not need any retelling of it. And the solution is not a ready–made capsule that a philosopher can produce at will. What is being attempted here is to look at the Indian tradition whether there has been a dialogue culture in the past handling such issues, since this is not a modern phenomenon. How did our ancients deal with the religious plurality? Thereby one can highlight a perspective that could awaken a new consciousness in today's context, unless we feel so adolescently self–important unable to perceive the wisdom of the past.

In India there has been a variety of pattern for dealing with the religious plurality. Inclusivism, soteriological hierarchies, different levels of instruction, ideas of perspectivism are invoked to explain this plurality. All these could not be explained simply as tolerance in the modern sense of the term. But there was certainly a dialogue–culture in the Indian tradition. And that needs to be highlighted in the present–day world. Already in the Asokan Edict we find a policy level statement on the need for respecting one another's faith: Rock Edict XII reads thus:

> The Faiths of others all deserve to be honoured for one reason or another. By honouring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. By acting otherwise, one injures one's own faith and also does disservice to that of others. For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith.
>
> Therefore concord alone is commendable, for through concord men may learn and respect the conceptions of Dharma accepted by others.

> King Priyadarśi desires men of all faiths to know each other's doctrines and to acquire sound doctrines. Those who are attached to their particular faiths should be told that King Priyadarśi does not value gifts or honours as much as growth in the qualities essential to religion in men of all faiths." [4]

This formulation of state policy on religious matters hints at the then prevalent religious situation. Though there is not philosophical or theological discussion on the basis of this formulation, it helps us to understand the general attitude of the rulers on this issue, an attitude of tolerance.

1. BUDDHA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS PLURALITY:

The Kālama Sutta from the Theravada Buddhism (Hinayāna) is part of the pali Canon, which is said to have been for the first time written down in the first century BC. A passage from that Sutta gives us an idea of how Buddha handled the problem of plurality. The text reads like this:

> "Once Buddha came with a group of his disciples to a village called Kālāmas, where he was known for his wisdom, his greatness and his holiness. The people of Kālāmas gathered together and greeted the Buddha. They told him that the followers of different schools had often visited them and preached about their teachings. They maintained that their teachings were alone the best and the teachings of all the others must be rejected. The people of Kālāmas were confused and did not know which religion they should accept as true and which one as untrue. So they requested him to free them from their doubts and teach them the truth.
>
> Buddha answered: 'Rightly you are in doubt, since it is ultimately concerned with questionable matter. I tell you: do not believe easily whatever you have heard, when people say that something is particularly good and something is bad. Do not conclude that something would not have been maintained, if it was not true and for that reason, do not accept it as true.
>
> Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down through many generations and in many places. Do not believe in anything because many whisper and speak about it. Do not hold that as sufficient proof for truth. Do not simply believe because one

refers to the written word of an ancient wise man. Do not rest assured that that word has been already tested by the said wise person or that it is trustworthy.

Do not believe in things which you have imagined for yourselves and do not think then that a God or some mysterious reality must have communicated this idea, because it is extraordinary. Do not believe, because you have in view that there is an analogy, a similarity in things and happenings. Do not believe for instance that the earth has enclosing walls, because you see how water is held by the walls of a basin; or that the Mount Meru must exist, because you see the reflection of trees in a mirror; or that there must be a creator God, because even the houses and cities have their architects.

Do not believe because your man in authority appears trustworthy. Do not think for instance that someone is clever and trustworthy, because he has an impressive appearance or do not believe in the words of someone, because his power and capacity spreads far wider than that of the others. Do not believe simply in the authority of your teacher and master and do not believe and act simply because they so believe and act.

I tell you all: You must know for yourselves that this is bad, this deserves punishment, this is rejected by the wise ones; that such a belief helps nobody but only causes suffering. And when you have perceived this, then avoid it."[5]

This attitude is important for an understanding of Indian approach to pluralism in religion. The negative aspect of this attitude is that it rejects basically any form of divine revelation. The positive contribution of Kālāma Sutta is the rigorous demand towards one's own experience and insight. What the teacher says is naturally the starting point but it must be personally assimilated and experienced. Even the words of Buddha remain meaningless, if the disciples do not perceive themselves the truth of his sayings. The teaching of the Buddha invites people to come and see, that is, to experience, and not to come and believe.

2. ABHINAVAGUPTA'S APPROACH:

Another approach to the question of religious plurality is to view

different religions in a hierarchical order, namely, the religions other than one's own have access at least to part of the truth. This view is shared by the Tantric tradition and the Jains. The Jains developed a comprehensive way of viewing reality which they then classified into a system of *nayas* or partial view–points. Halbfass[6] makes a distinction between Hindu models for the relationship between various religious teachings, which he calls vertical, and the Jain model, which he describes as horizontal. Abhinavagupta follows the Jain model as he himself says: "thus it is that the doctrine of the Jains that one entity comprises within it all other entities and all entities are one in essence is perfectly applicable in our excellent teaching." (Mālinīvijayavārttika. 641. p.59). But what he says in the opening section of his Tantrasāra, chapter XXI presents a hierarchy of texts:

"Then it follows that Śāstra, 'revealed teaching', is nothing but the reflection upon absolutely everything in the world and upon the multiplicity of deeds and fruits which belong to those entities in the world. And so we may say that all the diversity of teaching in reality forms a single unit; it is all non–different from the very essence of the Highest Lord, and in reality all leads to one goal and is directed to all individuals alike. But despite this, through the power of Lord's limiting force, people hold on to some part of what should be regarded as a whole and accept only the validity of the part. Some people are attached to the Vedas and Āgamas; others are attached to the doctrines of the Sāmkhya and the Vaiṣṇava texts; still others lean towards the Śaivasiddhānta, which treats of the Highest Lord Śiva as separate from all entities, while there are those indeed who favour the doctrine of Matanga, which teaches about the Highest Lord Śiva as being all things in the universe. Finally there are those indeed who follow the glorious doctrine of the Trika system, in which is taught the true form of the Highest Lord as pure consciousness, pure bliss and total independence, devoid of any limitation. Some reach this point by following all of these parts of the whole teaching in due order; others may skip over some of the intermediate steps. And it is this that we mean when we say that all religious teachings form one whole and that there is but one fruit to be gained from them all.[7]

Abhinavagupta presents the multifarious religio–philosophical traditions of the country as fragments of a single divine revelation.

His attitude to rival schools of thought is always positive. Even in criticising the different schools of *rasa* theory Abhinava remarks that the various theories are stepping-stones for his formulation of the *rasa* theory, since he has gained insights from the earlier inadequate formulations and thus climbed higher on the ladder of tradition with discernment.[8]

3. JAYANTA BHAṬṬA'S ATTITUDE:

We find in the history of Indian religious discussion a number of thinkers who are deeply interested in the questions concerning the factual origin, the status and legitimacy of the sectarian movements and of religious plurality in general. Bhāsarvajña is one of most original thinkers of Nyāya tradition who discusses this point at length in his work *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*, which is a commentary on his work, *Nyāyasāra*. But an unusual concreteness in dealing with this question is shown by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, and so he deserves a special mention with some details. That is why he is brought in here after Abhinavagupta, though Jayanta Bhaṭṭa is earlier than Abhinavagupta in history.

I would like to cite a work of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa of ninth century AD from Kashmir. The work is a drama in four Acts called *Āgamaḍambara* (An Encounter of Scriptures)[9] written with a philosophical purpose in mind. The author is himself a Śaiva, like all Naiyāyikas and he presents the followers of different schools of philosophy as they prevailed in his time the *Bauddha*, the *Jaina*, the *Cārvāka*, the *Mimāṃsa*, the *Nyāya*-cum-*Śaiva*, the Āgamites (*Pañcarātra*) and the sects of Śaiva and *Nilāmbara*. The scene of the play is the capital city of Śrinagar. Śaṅkarṣaṇa, the main character of the play, sets out to put down those opposed to the Vedas and wants to protect the *Varnāśramadharma*. The King Śaṅkaravarman appoints Śaṅkarṣaṇa as minister for religious affairs in the entire state and the steps that were taken by the minister reflect the attitude and the vision of the author in relation to other religions.

The author Jayanta Bhaṭṭa is well known for his work *Nyāyamañjari*, where the validity and the authority of the different Scriptures are discussed and the play echoes his views expressed in

his philosophical work. The play itself reflects his prejudices against the Buddhists for instance through his sarcastic remarks and in the discussion they are defeated by Śaṅkarṣaṇa, the Vedic scholar. What is important for us here is the way a common understanding is reached in the State and the series of actions that were proposed to bring about that harmony among religions.[10]

The proclamation of the king says that all the traditional and irreproachable Āgamas and their practices may continue as they are and the other sinful ones which undermine the prevailing Dharmas should quit the realm. Thus the Nilāmbaras are out and the Vedic path is reestablished by Śaṅkarṣaṇa. He would like that also the Maheśvaras are banished, if he cannot reform them. Meanwhile the action against the Nilāmbaras creates panic among the ascetics in the state and even the good ones started leaving the state. But the minister deputizes persons of importance to bring back the good ascetics with honour. Śaṅkarṣaṇa himself decides to visit the hermitage of Dharmaśiva to allay the baseless fears of the good ascetics.

Then comes the problem of dealing with the Bhāgavata sect. The followers of the Pañcarātra Āgamas, the Bhāgavatas, have started posing as Brahmins; they recite their Āgamas with Vedic accents and call themselves Brahmins, find out fallen Brahmin women, marry them and pick up some kind of learning. It is revealed that the Queen Suganda Devi was considerate to the Bhāgavatas and there was a rumour that among the King's officers there was someone helping the Bhāgavatas. So Śaṅkarṣaṇa goes to meet them but is perplexed as to how he should conduct himself especially when the Bhāgavatas are opposed to the Vedas. So he, though a Śaiva, goes to the shrine of God Ranaswāmin in Śrinagar and prays to the Lord Viṣṇu before entering the assembly.

The Queen, recommended by the minister, nominated Dhairyarāśi, a Naiyāyika, as umpire in the debate between Śaṅkarṣaṇa and the Bhāgavatas. So the umpire places before them the subject of controversy, viz. are the Pañcarātras and other Āgamas authoritative or not? Various views are discussed: the Mimāṃsaka

view of the Veda as beginningless and authorless (*apauruṣeya*), the Nyāya view of God as creator of the Veda and so on. After discussing the pros and cons it is said that their concern is common, as far as the ultimate goal (*mokṣa*) is concerned. Their difference should be taken as one of diversity of path or approach and it is out of compassion and omniscience that the Lord has shown so many paths to suit the diverse kinds of people. A number of analogies is used to explain this point. In truth it is one God who is known by diverse names. Just like several rivers falling into the same sea, just as there are many doors to the same mansion, different paths could be taken to attain the same goal, liberation *(mokṣa)*.

With this approach one sees a danger in defending any Āgama. There will be no end to such claims. Any text and sect could claim validity and authority. In answer to this problem, a common code of conduct is drawn up which is to be used to decide the authority and the right of any religious tradition. The criteria are the following:

a. where a tradition has flowed down from the past without break,
b. whose practices are not offensive to the 'noble ones' and they are not done secretely,
c. which does not have the appearance of novelty,
d. which is not promoted out of greed or other worldly motives,
e. which does not tolerate or legitimize sexual promiscuity, unclean, unregulated eating and drinking, etc.

Only such traditions are authoritative.

Accepting these formulations, Śaṅkarṣaṇa in conclusion advises all to keep two points in mind: 1. Each of these traditions follows its own specific path. In each, Dharmas of universal application like Non–violence *(ahiṃsā)* are inculcated and they are common to all and no exception could be taken by anybody. Outside of these the special practices that are characteristic of each tradition should be pursued as such within the tradition. 2. Secondly, care should be taken not to mix them up. There are those who take the name of one or the other schools, indulge in bad practices and bring their own tradition into ridicule. Such people should not be tolerated from within.

But the second condition cannot be enforced by the group itself, says the audience. It has to be enforced by someone in office of the state. Śaṅkarṣaṇa answers that the king will take up this work but the people should not be negligent on their part in this matter. It means that a common code is needed but there are areas where the state has to play a role to bring order in the society when there are aberrations. Thus the state and religion have to work together in order to bring about harmony in the state, where the religious traditions have their freedom to follow their practices and the state comes in when there are disturbances from within.

3.1. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THIS PRESENTATION:

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's approach to the Inter–Faith situation in the ninth century AD seems to offer some hints even for today's situation.

3.1.1. At the outset it appears that one can establish one's religious tradition by intellectual discussion and arguments and in some cases one can use force through the state authority to ban some traditions. Both these approaches do not work in the long run in all cases. Not all sects are dealt within the same way. That is clear from the play.

3.1.2. Secondly, through dialogue or debate, as it was practised then, an awareness dawns on the dominant group that whatever claims one group makes with regard to its tradition could be validly advanced by the other group as well. Hence the necessity arises to accept also other traditions. The insight gained here theologically is that the difference is only external, since all are seeking to achieve the same goal, namely, salvation.

3.1.3. Thirdly, it is also made clear that justifying any claim in the name of the final goal will have its problem too. Hence some discerning process is needed to say when one tradition is said to be authoritative and so on. Hence a common code is drawn as principle of discernment.

3.1.4. Fourthly, even these norms will not be sufficient to bring about harmony. The cooperation of all is needed in this process of achieving harmony of religious traditions. Each one can go on with his/her traditional practices but still some members of the group could violate the norms and bring discredit to the tradition and to the

others as well. For this the help of the state authority is sought, since the followers of one tradition could not enforce disciplinary measures on the erring members.

3.2. Some points of criticism:

3.2.1. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa is cited usually as an example of tolerant attitude towards other religious texts. But his lofty pronouncements on the equal validity of all religious texts have clear limits. In the *Āgamaḍambara* the acceptance of all religious texts is celebrated with the proviso that they should not advocate practices that are abhorrent to the 'noble ones'. The play also celebrates a religious persecution of a tantric group known as the Nīlāmbaras. Reality is often more complex than its literary reflections, but at least in this case we can suspect from this attitude in the literature that actual practice was ambiguous and varied.[11]

3.2.2. There is a standard argument in the Indian tradition that the one Supreme Being appears as different and assumes different names. The difference is only in name but the goal of all religions is the same. There are many doors to the same house, many rivers flowing into the same ocean.[12] There is an eschatological tolerance in this attitude. Even in the West some theologians[13] hold the view that the function of any religion is to give us access to God but in a necessarily partial way. This is illustrated by retelling the story of the three blind men who encounter an elephant, each grasping a part and wrongly making conclusions about the nature of the whole.

In the telling of the parable there is a central assumption that the narrator is in a position to see whereas the blind religionists are not. While others are culturally bound in their thinking, the narrator has somehow managed to step beyond these cultural boundaries to make a universal claim. It is objected that if we can only know in various imperfect and culturally conditioned ways, how could we possibly know that there is a single "noumenal" divine Reality behind all religious experience?[14]

3.3 What could we learn from this?

Jayanta is a theistic philosopher who understands the Veda as the

personal word and work of God. Seen from his background it is clear that he cannot accept the claims of some of the sects of his time. But what is important for us is that he devices a method of distinguishing legitimate and illegitimate traditions based on the notion of "acceptance" which is equally qualitative and quantitative– *mahājanaparigrhitatva* which means both acceptance by the majority of Indian people and by its elite. All the religious and philosophical traditions are acceptable in so far as the behaviour of their followers does not offend the decent members of the "order of castes and stages of life" (*varṇāśramadharma*).[15]

The political and religious situation of Jayanta's time is not so clear. But the religious policy of his king, Śaṅkaravarman, seems to accommodate all religious sects. Accordingly Jayanta accepts the presence of Buddhists and Jains though he refutes them and wins the battle intellectually.

What is significant here and clear from this play is that there has been a culture of dialogue in the tradition. One may disagree with the criteria Jayanta evolved in his time to distinguish the legitimate and illegitimate traditions – such as for instance newer sects with a flavour of novelty and mixing up of different traditions are not accepted by Jayanta –and one may today formulate newer criteria. But Jayanta did evolve a structure to deal with the religious plurality of his time. There is no inclusivism in his thinking, a kind of subordination and subsumption of different views. He enters into a dialogue with different groups and also places the issue in a wider context of religious variety, bringing in the relationship between state and religion, secular order and religious goals. That gives us some hints as to what direction the inter–faith dialogue could take in the future. Knowledge of one's cultural past certainly enables better self–understanding in the light of which a future orientation might emerge.

4. BHAVIṢYOTTARA PURĀṆA

We also hear of the sectarian rivalry from early times belittling each other's deity and we even hear of kings who were guilty of

persecuting the followers of other religious beliefs. Within the Hindu framework there were attempts to bring these contending elements together and to create a sense of unity and the spirit of religious toleration among the sects worshipping different deities. The daily worship of the '*pañcāyatana*' – a group of five deities – Ganeśa, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Durga was started at a fairly early date.

But what was the response of Hinduism to the Western religions like Christianity and Islam? Are there references to such religious encounters in the Sanskrit writings? There are references to these foreign religions and obviously there were attacks and counter attacks on each other's religion. One such pamphlet controversy took place between John Muir and three other Sanskrit scholars in Bengal (Somanātha, Haracandra and Nilakaṇṭa) which are being published now.[16] Such instances are understandable, especially, when the colonial rulers from the West had political supremacy in India and the situation was not conducive for dialogue as we understand it today. But still the Puranic evidences give a different picture than the political scene of that time. The Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa mentions the reaction of the sages in India. "In the land of the Mleccha there are people who are clever and live according to the Mlecchadharma... But then the power of the Mlecchas prevailed in India and in its islands. When the sages heard that, they all broke down and shed tears". (5, 39–41).

But this purāṇa mentions recent historical events and introduces Biblical subjects and the figures of Moses and Zarathustra, Jesus and Muhammed – topics which should be alien to the puranic field of interest. This purāṇa is dated as 8th (or 12th) century AD. Certainly some of the portions were later additions. But such passages are representative of a trend then existent. Even though it was written by an individual, it had the right to be accepted in the Bhaviṣya because it was an expression of the living tradition.

Pratisarga 1.4.18–60 relate the story of Adam and Eve, founders of the Mlecchas, the eating of the fruit in the garden under the serpent's suggestion; Adam and Eve's sons and the Patriarchs till Noah; the construction of the ark and the deluge. The adhyāya ends

with the prayer to Viṣṇumaya by Noah and the people with him in the ark. Pratisarga 1.5.1–41 speak of Noah's sons and the Patriarchs. Although Moses is also explicitly named, the account seems to be confined to a reproduction of the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis. The adhyāya ends with a hint at the confusion of languages and with the spreading of the Mlecchas as far as India.

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa III.3.2.21–32 mentions a vision that the emperor Śālivāhana has on the Himālaya, beyond a river. A son of God *(Iśaputra)*, born of a maiden *(kumāri)*, known as Iśāmasīha appears to him. The vision proclaims that he has come to the Mlecchas' country to preach and establish the Dharma among them, and explains why he is called 'Maśiha'. Such narratives should be taken as an attempt of some Hindus to assimilate in their tradition all the values of the conquerors.

Everyone who is familiar with Indian literary and religious history knows well how such reactions took place through the centuries. These insertions are the way Hindus reacted concretely to the foreign rulers and it represents the attitude of a living tradition in a particular moment of history.[17]

SOME REFLECTIONS:

Philosophy is essentially evaluative, not organizational or descriptive. All the stands that we have seen above in the Indian tradition presuppose a metaphysical position, a vision of reality. An attempt to evaluate these stands brings in a further dilemma, since this presupposes a prior position. Criticism would show, as Kant has already shown, that we cannot organize unorganized materials, if we were not already armed with some categories or patterns under which to organize them. That seems to be fairly obvious.[18] All the authors referred to above, Buddha, Abhinavagupta, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa and others are already evaluating other ways of thinking and articulating their positions in terms of its relation to other positions. That is a genuine and essential element of classical Indian philosophy. That is the genuine process of growth into philosophical maturity. In fact Bhartrhari points out that if you study only your own system, without reference to others' positions you will not see any contradiction in

your system. The intellect acquires critical acumen by familiarity with different traditions.[19]

If every philosophical system is a metaphysical monad, then discourse or dialogue is not possible. Besides the specific features of each philosophy, there should be some inexpressible common ground on which they stand. There were also attempts in history to reach a stage higher than metaphysics as a natural disposition. The relentless Madhyamika dialectic assails all metaphysics and ultimately what is left is *sūnya,* as the contentless dialectical awareness itself. This is rather anti–metaphysical and even anti–intellectual. Unlike the Madhyamika, the Advaita Vedānta attempts to break through metaphysical theories to capture the direct immensity of the ontic being.

If the philosopher's task is autonomous without being subservient to any interest except seeking truth, then philosophical knowledge is liberation of the mind, evaluating oneself and the situations around without prejudice or narrowness. With such freedom a philosopher can look at events in history and even offer guidelines in the light of the insights gained from the past.

Inter–Faith Future:

It is not a question of predicting what will happen in the future. When one analyses the past events and directions it has taken so far, one can evaluate them from the perspective of the goal of dialogue and reorient it for the future. The goal of coming together is not merely to see where we agree and where we disagree, so that we could be cautious in dealing with each other's faith–commitment. It is true that the goal is to build up good relationship by living together and praying together, by removing prejudices and being better informed of one another. But it is more than that. Dialogue is not a mission in the sense that one religious community renders a service to others; one side is not entering with some well–packed dogmas and a clear understanding of oneself and one's traditions in order that it might share it with others.

Today what is happening in the world between different religious communities is that we are defining each other politically, socially

and culturally and that happens also in religious perspective. Today one cannot say for example that Hinduism is India's religion alone. There are about twelve million Hindus living outside India in the so called Christian West. They define somehow the Christian communities and the Hindus are defined by the Christian communities. In India the Hindus are being defined by the Muslims and other minority communities and Muslims and the rest are being defined by the Hindus. In other words, we cannot define our identity in terms of our creed alone without reference to the socio–political context in which we live and where the other communities are part of this whole context. We cannot even define the conditions of dialogue for others.

The purpose of dialogue is precisely to bring about this awareness that we are constantly defined by the other. This brings in always an existential uncertainty and it is a risk too. Hence a dialogue venture is always risk–taking. We are always on the way. Coming together does not necessarily bring consolation and security but it will awaken also a sense of uncertainty, a *duḥkh*a, a meaninglessness, confront one's structural security and challenge one's complacent attitude of belonging to a well–defined position.

Usually dialogue is understood to be taking place between defined official positions, certain structures. Everybody has his/her tradition, ideal dogmas like the private properties surrounded by walls. Religions are static structures. We see dialogue in terms of a church which is an institution. In that sense the dialogue initiative reaches a blind alley. But dialogues are always challenging the partners both individually and collectively against all time–assured and well–defined securities. That is why it is not a question of minority versus majority community.

That is the spirit that is reflected in the Vedic hymns. The sages begin to wonder whether there is anyone who truly knows and can inform us about the why, whence, how and whither of world–creation. Perhaps the overseer of this world knows about this or perhaps he too does not know. (RV.X. 129. 6–7). In the Christian tradition the symbol of the empty tomb makes his followers to move

on to Galilee, where they will encounter Jesus. (Mk.16, 6–7) Jesus says to the Samaritan woman: "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." (John 4: 21,23) In the encounters with human beings in the existential context one has to discover one's identity. Only in the process of dialogue this discovery takes place. This moment of discovery is a thrill since it is a disclosure of a horizon which in turn defines further orientations. This on–going process is the goal of dialogue, where one finds one's self–identity and fulfillment.

Hence the Inter–Faith Future depends on the ability to be open, to take risk, to take the plunge into the uncertainty. Feeling of security or complacency is always a sign of stagnation, not of growth. The growth takes place always dialectically between the moment of uncertainty and taking risk; the disclosure takes place always in this process. Hence the answer is not withdrawal in the name of renunciation. Sannyāsa removes perhaps some obstacles (material things, power, honour etc.) for the moment of having inner peace by distancing oneself. But the uncertainty of human being itself is not overcome by renunciation. Nor is the withdrawal into our own study rooms and closing ourselves within the church/temple/mosque premises trying to protect our minority or majority rights, thus defining ourselves and our territories.

So dialogue becomes the answer to our sickness such as withdrawal and fundamentalism. Interaction between different religious communities will become a moment of insight into our future. The words that close the Ṛigveda – "Common be your intentions, common be the wishes of your heart; common be your thoughts, so that there may be a thorough union among you" – refer to a common quest, not to a common creed.

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8. Cf. my article: "The Concept of Tradition in Indian Philosophy", in *Philosophy and Human Development*. Ed. Anand Amaladass et al. Madras, 1986, pp.45–58.
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10. Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) did something similar in his time. He wrote his work *De Pace Fidei* (Harmony of Religions) in 1453 in response to the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. He recognizes the conjectural truth of all religions, yet sees their fulfillment in Christianity. He introduces a dialogue between the Divine Word and the then known religious representatives: a Greek, an Italian, an Arab, a Hindu, a Chaldean, a Jew, a Shiite... He seeks to arrive at an orthodox belief so that all different religions may become one. Since free human beings are the bearers of religions, they should sit together and discuss their various religions. The basic assumption is that all religions have had prophets and all

of them know basically the same God, who is wisdom and hence also the Word.

11. Cf. Phyllis Granoff: "Tolerance in the Tantras: Its Form and Function". J.O.R. Special Volume. Quoted above, p.298.
12. This metaphor is found in Kālidasā's Raghuvamśa X.26.; in Puṣpadanta's Mahimastava, 7, and is used in a popular way, though this is not the way the position of Śaṇkara, Rāmānuja or Madhva is formulated.
13. Cf. Eric O. Springsted: "Conditions of Dialogue: John Hick and Simone Weil" in: *The Journal of Religion* Vol. 72. (1992), pp. 19–36. Here the author is reviewing critically the view of John Hick who uses the analogy of the three blind men grasping an elephant.
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    Prajñā vivekam labhate bhinnairāgamadarśanaiḥ/
    kiyadvā śakyamunnetum svadarka-manudhāvatā//

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