

ASIAN

HO RIZO NS

Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2010

Book Review

Thomas Kadankavil, *Changing Patterns of Thought: Philosophy as Interpersonal Communication*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2010. Pages: xx+136. ISBN: 978-81-89958-36-7.

This small but scholarly work of Prof. Kadankavil is the edited and enlarged form of the 'Dharma Endowment Lectures', which the author delivered at the Faculty of Philosophy of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), Bangalore in August 2010. It has seven chapters, namely, (i) Dialogical Philosophy of Plato, (ii) Philosophy in Process Track, (iii) Constructive versus Destructive Postmodernism, (iv) Interpretation of Religious Scriptures from Asian Context, (v) Fellowship in Religious Experience, (vi) Homogenization of Cultures and Little Traditions, and (vii) Dialogue or Conquest versus Cultures and Religions.

A word about the author: Prof. Dr. Thomas Kadankavil, CMI is an eminent thinker and academician both in Indian and Western streams of philosophy. A prolific writer and a distinguished teacher of philosophy, Professor Kadankavil is also an illustrious spiritual master. He has been Professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of DVK for about three decades, and has also served as the President of DVK, and Rector of Dharmaram College. He has a special penchant and passion for the cause of the subaltern sections of Indian society. Studying and experiencing the little traditions and peripheral groups, their life-situations and existential exigencies had always been a devoted commitment for him. This concern gives his philosophical deliberations an extra vibrancy and urgency. His method of philosophizing exudes an earthiness and freshness, and is permeated by a predilection for a kind of theistic humanism and by an earnest yearning for a faith-centred egalitarianism in the societal life of humans.

The author argues in the book that there is marked paradigm shift in the vocation of philosophising today from that of the ancient and classical periods of philosophy. Philosophy as mere abstract and abstruse, theoretical and academic, meta-worldly and supra-normal speculation has little relevance and significance today. Philosophy should get out of the grips of some illuminati who find joy in arid intellectual acrobatics around some abstract concepts, which have no bearing to life and its multifarious troubles and tribulations. Philosophizing should emerge from the actual human conditions, especially from the awareness and experience of the unwholesome predicaments of human existence. The awareness of miseries, pains, wants and

helplessness of the poor and marginalized, the oppression, persecution and injustice inflicted upon the defenceless people by the oppressive structures of the society, etc., should also become the springboard for further philosophical activity.

Prof. Kadankavil says: “The new way of doing philosophy is to place ‘human beings’ instead of ‘being’ in the centre. The philosophy thus returned to the concrete, to the human being, is not something in the abstract; is not a process of understanding in some hypothetical state of pure nature, but is a task of self-constitution of the subject.” Therefore, to discriminate a person on the basis of birth is an abomination, and philosophy, by cogitative processes and right ratiocinations, has the right and duty to dive deep into the causes of this malaise and challenge the oppressive structures of the society. The author says, “hence the realm of non-philosophical, all forms of subaltern or periphery existence has become a significant field of philosophical analysis. The new wine gets its vigour from a radical criticism of directing all truth to the singular one centre. ... The attempt to erode the autonomy of centre is an attempt to restore the space of the periphery.”

It is high time that the Indian philosopher turns his/her serious attention to Asia, to Asian cultures, religions and philosophies. Asian realities should also provide the tools and raw materials for an Indian philosopher to do philosophy. There is an urgent need of rewriting the history of philosophy, giving due importance to Asian philosophies.

Another feature of the present work is that it tries to project philosophy as interpersonal communication. As the author states, “interrelatedness and dialogical spirit are the sign of our times.” If philosophizing becomes context sensitive, life oriented and human centred, then one inevitable consequence is that it has to become creatively and effectively communicative. The act of philosophizing expresses itself in the process of interpersonal, intercultural and also interreligious communications. Communication is always contextual and the other-oriented. Positive interpersonal communication has to be mutually supporting and mutually enriching. Action is to ensue from this kind of dialogical communication.

The first chapter of the book is ‘Dialogical Philosophy of Plato’. Among other things, it analyses Plato’s idea of dialogue based on his work *Republic*.

This dialogical philosophy deals with Concept of Justice, Philosopher-King, The Supreme Good, and Fine Arts and Philosophy. The chapter concludes with the statement that Dialogue is a way of life of philosophy. The last chapter of the book is on ‘Dialogue or Conquest versus Cultures and Religions’. It deals with some of the enemies of dialogue, like Fundamentalism, Radicalism, Terrorism, etc. The work concludes with a pessimistic note: ‘Liberation: A Mirage’. It would have been great if the author has gone deeper into the nature and dynamics of dialogue and interpersonal communication and their philosophical foundations, and their applications in the present-day scenario of the world. Indian Christian philosophizing needs to take dialogue more seriously. What the Federation of the Asian Bishops’

Conferences (FABC) said about the triple dialogue, namely, dialogue with the poverty of Asia, dialogue with its cultural diversities and dialogue with its religious pluralism, could be a guiding principle for philosophizing.

(The Church has to be) a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions - in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its inspirations, its thought and its language, its songs and its artistry - ; Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His paschal mystery.¹

Philosophizing in India should too definitely engage in this triple dialogue with the triple Asian realities.

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