SURVEY

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INDIA: FROM PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS TO THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Recently, an anthology was published by Doubleday that deserves the attention of scholars and students interested in the higher tradition of Hindu thought. *Hindu Theology: a Reader*, edited with an Introduction by Jose Pereira, brings together selections from the millennium of Hindu theology following *Saṅkara*. Pereira focusses on material neglected by previous anthologies. He views this material as theology rather than philosophy and he organizes the material in an original fashion. The anthology is a useful and significant achievement. It represents an advance in the understanding of the development of Hindu thought and reveals opportunities for a further development of understanding. It also has some faults.

A quick overview of 20th century scholarship in the area of the Hindu thought tradition will help here. Three typical stages can be seen.

Two important works were produced in the 1920's which influenced subsequent scholarship and interpretation: *Indian Philosophy* (1927) by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and a *History of Indian Philosophy* by Surendranath Dasgupta (1922). These two indigenous historians, products of Western education and using Western historical and philosophical methods, established a model of interpretation for their countrymen. In one sense they were iconoclasts, they broke a mould. India was not the world, the *Vedas* not a scriptural standard, the Tradition was not to be understood simply on its own terms. But they placed India within the world of thought as it was known in the 20's, and they showed that the

Vedas were the source of much of Indic thought and that there was a tradition, a history of Indian philosophy.

However, Radhakrishnan is ambivalent and reluctant to call his work a history. Lacking a chronology, and with fragmentary sources, he hesitates to call his work a history. "My aim has been not so much to narrate Indian views as to explain them, so as to bring them within the focus of Western traditions of thought". (p.10). Thus, there is an apologetic note in his work. Radhakrishnan is disturbed by the ignorance about Indic thought among Western thinkers. He parallels it to Western thought. "The nave utterances of the Vedic poets, the wondrous suggestiveness of the Upaniṣads, the marvellous psychological analysis of the Buddhists, and the stupendous system of Śaṅkara are quite interesting and instructive from the cultural point of view as the systems of Plato and Aristotle or Kant and Hegel, if only we study them in a true scientific frame of mind, without disrespect for the past or contempt for the alien". (p.8) In his later *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy,* edited in collaboration with Charles A. Moore, an attempt is made to prove "both the substantiality and wide range of Indian philosophy and also to convince sceptical Westerners that much of Indian philosophy is *philosophy* not only in its unique Indian forms but also in accordance with the strictest standards of open-mindedness, critical analysis and rational investigation" (p. ix). The standards here are external to Indic philosophy itself. Although this may be necessary, that the standards of a world hermeneutics of particular standards of thought go beyond the particulars of Indic thought, the results here are antiquated. Radhakrishnan emphasizes the earlier period of Indian thought; he includes Buddhism within his survey and concentrates on philosophy. The sources in the *Vedas* and in the Upaniṣads lead up to the six schools. He has a distaste for commentators who are often arbitrary and unfaithful to the sources. Śaṅkara has a tremendous system and Radhakrishnan builds his interpretation of the rest of Indian thought around him. Thus he sees Indian thought as permeated with monistic idealism which takes four forms: the non-dualism of Śaṅkara; the pure monism of Nāgārjuna and Śri Harṣa; the modified monism of Rāmānuja and Badarāyana; and the implicit monism of Madhva to which is related the pluralistic realism of Sāṅkhya. Thus he sees a unity of intention, with all the differences in expression, throughout Indian thought.

The 20's also saw the beginning of Dasgupta's monumental work. Dasgupta also had some difficulty conceiving in his work

in accordance with Western historical canons. However, he had a deeper insight than Radhakrishnan who simply dismissed the commentators. Whereas Radhakrishnan tends to ignore the commentators, Dasgupta sees them as necessary for a true history. "It is therefore not possible to write any history of successive philosophies of India, but it is necessary that each system be studied and interpreted in all the growth it has acquired through the successive ages of history from its conflicts with rival systems as one whole. ...No study of any Indian system is therefore adequate unless it is taken throughout all the growth it attained by the work of its champions, the commentators whose selfless toil for it had kept it living through the ages of history" (p. 64). Dasgupta does not see the sudden emergence of full-blown systems but a long evolution of systems which become progressively more coherent. One might say that the product of an Indian tradition rather than the source is to be studied. Not for India, Pascal's dictum that things are best in their beginnings. Dasgupta does share Radhakrishnan's apologetic concern for Western philosophy. "But it is not only for the sake of the right understanding of India that Indian philosophy should be read....For most of the problems that are still debated in modern philosophical thought occurred in more or less divergent forms to the philosophers of India" (p. viii). Thus Indian thought will make an important contribution to the reconstruction of modern thought. The early Dasgupta is also captivated by Saṇkara's absolute monism. Rāmānuja, Vallabha, Madhva, etc., are seen as "dualists." As he went into the systems in greater detail in his later volumes, Dasgupta came to give greater weight to the *bhedābheda* character of these systems.

The second typical stage is represented by scholars such as Karl H. Potter and J.A.B. Van Buitenen. Potter attempted, in the early 60's a classification of Indian philosophies on a basis different from the six schools which had been followed so unquestioningly by Radhakrishnan, and to some extent, by Dasgupta. There is a lack of logic in the classification of the six schools. It pairs unlike views and separates similar views. For example, Kumarila and Prabhakara are classed together, although they differ on the number of categories, their nature, and on epistemology. Vedānta is even more confused, ranging from Śaṅkara to Madhva. A second deficiency is that it represents only orthodox views, ignoring the Buddhists and Jains without whom orthodox views cannot be understood. The six schools' classification lacks clarity of purpose: "it is intended to be helpful not only to the student of philosophy but also to the student of religion, as well as perhaps to

the student of Indian culture in general" (p. 27). The Indians however, have combined these three intentions. Potter takes up the needs of a historian of philosophy in response to an Indian classification not intended for such an historian. According to Potter, the philosopher in India was one concerned with liberation, but under two aspects either with its attainment or with the establishment of the possibility of its attainment. The former would lead to a path philosophy and the latter to speculative philosophy. The path philosopher addresses the believer; the speculative, men in general. Potter makes this distinction to avoid the trite conclusion that in India religion and philosophy are entangled. He then classifies the speculative philosophies into "leap" and "progress" philosophies. The leap philosopher describes a chain of events which does not include liberation—some leap is needed, e.g., Nāgārjuna, Śaṅkara, and Madhva. The progress philosopher describes the chain of events that leads to liberation. Potter then classifies the progress philosophers according to their views on the causal relations of the chain of events leading to liberation, rejoining the classical Indian scheme of three causal theories: (1) *satkaryavāda*, (2) *asatkaryavāda, and* (3) *anekāntavāda.* Potter feels that if future books on Indian thought presented their material "in the light of this classification of systems rather than in the less accurate traditional manner, all of us scholars and laymen alike, would benefit" (p. 32). This is a fruitful advance. It recognizes the damage that searching for western-type philosophical insight in Indian thought systems does to the integrity of those systems. It recognizes that they are systems with a philosophical coherence of their own and that a modern scholar need not pick them apart as, for example, Dasgupta so often does. It also tries to sort out philosophy and religion. Potter, of course, is the editor of the *Bibliography of Indian philosophies*, which seems to have been based on this classification and which gives great weight to the commentators within each system and not just to the founders.

J. A. B. Van Buitenen has produced important studies and a translation of Rāmānuja, who according to Radhakrisnan, "tried his best to reconcile the demands of the religious feeling with the claims of logical thinking" (II, p. 720), in a philosophy of religion. Van Buitenen succeeds in breaking through a stagnant and misleading juxtaposition of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Rather he tries to understand Rāmānuja against his own background. "Western scholars especially are apt to isolate him from his traditional background in order to shed light, almost exclusively, on

those of his writings which appeal most to an abstract mind accustomed to evaluate philosophies rather 'than philosophers" (*Gita,* p. 29). Thus, Van Buitenen considers Rāmānuja's exegetical principles which had thus far been practically ignored with the result that there is an "unfortunate misunderstanding of the typically theological character of Vedāntic speculation as a whole" (p. 48). "Westerners have an aversion for theology and are unable to see that there is here a religious soteriology rather than a philosophic." Vedānta is after all a positive theology based on scriptures. To understand Vedānta exegesis one has to go back to the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā. Van Buitenen has made the important point that after all, Indian thought, and in particular, Vedānta, including Saṅkara, is not philosophy in the Western sense but a theology, a reasoned attempt to understand the message of Revelation. Therefore a reorientation of all studies of Indian thought is possible. The unity and intelligibility of Indian orthodoxy is understandable.

A third typical study of Indian thought has been introduced by Jose Pereira's *Hindu Theology.* The dominant notion here is theology not philosophy. Pereira is an Indian Catholic of Goan origin. He is firmly grounded in Catholic philosophy and theology of a traditional type, although he is ill at ease with its contemporary phase. He is an artist who sees things architecturally. Thus he evaluates Indian religious thought according to its "architectonic organisation" and its "religious archetype." He believes that the pioneer translators of Indian texts had an "origins" bias. He attempts to correct that bias. There are three parts to his books: "An Overview of Hindu Theology," "Selected Writings," and "Schemes," a series of pictoral representations and charts serving the first two parts. The "Overview" is a brilliant discussion of a hermeneutics of Indic and Western theologies. The West is truly ecumenical. Its peculiar genius strives for the universal. It links all cultures into a one world scheme. However, the West is also extremely parochial: "this most universal of civilizations has also tended to exalt its own achievements excessively." It claims that its own is "the only fit expression of human ideas...it is only through their Western interpretation that their integral nature comes to be revealed; so to their first outstanding Western interpreter rightly falls the honour of being their discoverer" (p.21). Pereira counters that the West's thought has been evolving in a progressive Indicization, not in an obvious contemporary sense, but over several millennia, with a pause only during the Christian Middle Ages. India has lacked only two major philosophic-

religious archetypes: "the unambiguously transcendent God who creates out of nothing," and the analogical metaphysics of Aristotle. Pereira identifies at least thirteen more archetypes, all of which appear in India, and these are also scattered elsewhere in time and place. All were created in "obscurantist" traditions and only rediscovered in the comparatively uncreative modern West: (1) the immensity of space and time, (2) idealism, (3) materialism, (4) skepticism, (5) the 'non-soul' doctrine, (6) the elimination of the 'thing-in-itself,' (7) reality as flux, (8) non-violence; 9-13 are peculiarly Hindu: (9) reality as bipolar, (10) the conditioning and deconditioning of man's being, (11) matter as energy, (12) an energy pervading the universe which is subject to human control, (13) Yogic interiority. I would propose that Pereira leaves out, and this is the major flaw in his book, history as a hermeneutical tool, present in the West and in China, but not in India. Until he struggles with this hermeneutic, Pereira's work remains incomplete.

Pereira compares Hindu theology's bipartite architectonics with the Christian tripartite theology. The bipartite scheme is based on knowledge and the knowable, or the norms of knowledge and what these norms disclose. Thus Hinduism seeks to secure its basis: "The logic of this division is that if one first makes sure of the soundness of the means of knowing transcendent (or any other) reality, the knowledge which the means provide us will be assured" (p. 32). The tripartite scheme centres on God as he is in Himself and in relation to his creation. The latter creation-relation is divided into God as source and God as goal of creation, as efficient and as final cause. "The logic of this division is that a science's very existence depends on its object, and so must be determined according to the latter alone—particularly if it is the Object of objects, God Himself" (p. 36). Obviously the schemes are complementary. The bipartite is more logical from the human perspective, the tripartite from the divine. However, the latter is ambiguous in regard to norms.

With this in mind Pereira classifies theologies in a threefold system. "*Metaphysically,* it may be stated thus: is reality one or many?" (p. 37). There are three possible answers. Difference is real. Identity is real. Or both are real. Theologically, "the Reality has a transcendent and a phenomenal dimension: are these dimensions different or identical, or both?" Christian and Islamic theologies, traditionally, have been theologies of difference, while Buddhism and Hinduism encompass the Trichotomy. "In this way, Hindu theology, representing as it does the Trichotomy more

clearly than any other theological tradition, is aware of it as no other tradition is. Hence Hindu theologians set themselves a two-fold task of expounding the logic of their own branch of the Trichotomy and of demonstrating the illogicality of the other two branches" (p. 38). Each theology has a logic and Pereira notes that to "push the reasoning of any one of them to its limits seems to transform it into one or both of the others" (p. 39). Thus in his selections Pereira uses these three classifications: under Difference he includes Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Madhva, and Śaiva Siddhānta; under Identity he includes the followers of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara. Difference-in-Identity is the heart of Hindu theology; it includes ancient Vedānta, Badarāyana, Bhaskara, Vijñānabhikṣu, Rāmānuja, Nimbarka; Vallabha, Rūpa and Jīva Goswami, Abhinavagupta, etc. Remarkably, Saṅkara is allotted only four pages in this anthology, and Rāmānuja just three. Pereira seems determined to put these theologies both in their place and in their proper context. He views Maṅndana Miśra and Madhusudana Sarasvati as greater than Saṅkara, and Sudarśana Suri is put on a level with Rāmānuja. Pereira exalts above all Abhinavagupta, the "Sun King of Hindu Theology," whose Triadic system is "sublime." There is here a profound re-evaluation of the different Hindu thinkers when Hinduism's greatest achievement is placed in the Trika Saivism.

Hence we see in Pereira an apologetics differing from Radhakrishnan's and Dasgupta's. Pereira exhibits disdain for contemporary Western thought. He speaks of "epochaic bombast." Rather than trying to interest Western philosophers in Indic thought, he seeks to persuade Catholic and Christian theologians that his Trichotomy could enhance Christian theology's understanding of its own universality. Rather than analyzing Indian thought in Western philosophical terms and thereby destroying the integrity of Hindu theology, he would use the Trichotomy as a hermeneutical tool and model for a universal classification of thought systems. He also has an intramural Catholic purpose: "Still, the fact that I have chosen some texts over others of equal value is due to my own Catholic convictions and my preoccupation with the problems of Catholic theology. It is also the immanent architectural genius of Catholicism, with its impatience of fragments, that I owe what ability I possess of seeing Hindu theology as a connected whole" (p 46).

I find the Trichotomy of theologies and Pereira's explication of it a powerful insight into the architectonics of Hindu thought;

it marks a definite and needed advance over the earlier studies. I am not sure that it can be so easily extended to Western thought, although some of Pereira's students are making the attempt. As he observes, India lacks the Aristotelian metaphysics of analogy which has been the foundation of much of Western Christian theology. Christian theology does not simply fit the Difference scheme, precisely as a result of analogy. A further difficulty lies in Pereira's avoidance of contemporary thought. He dismisses neo-Vedānta as not worthy of notice. Radhakrishnan and Dasgupta and most scholars recognize the difficulty of a "history" of Indian thought. We get sequences of systems with increasing coherence not history. Pereira's book is a classification not a history. It is history as a hermeneutical tool that is not adequately considered. It is there to a certain extent in an implicit amorphous mode, but without being brought clearly into the open, its value is lost and underutilized. Here is the challenge to contemporary scholars. If the theologies of India are to engage the modern thinker, theologian or otherwise, works such as those of Joseph R. Levnson in Confucianism must also be developed for the Indian traditions. The surmounting of the dichotomy between philosophy and theology only makes this imperative clearer. The opening up of the later Hindu theologies to empathetic understanding makes it possible.