

Editorial

TRENDS IN PHILOSOPHY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Philosophy defies precise definition, as there are innumerable ways of doing philosophy. Human ingenuity being unlimited and philosophy being a fundamental discipline that attempts to identify the rules of intellectual application, from daily chorus to the most intricate mathematical formulations that attempt to explain the complex universe as well as the miniscule subatomic particles, it is natural that we have a lot of variety in philosophical endeavours. Although certain major schools of philosophy had turned out to be the key players in the arena of any given philosophical culture, a close perusal of the history of philosophy, be it in the East or in the West, indicates that philosophical speculation has been thriving precisely because of the great variety it facilitates. Of course, paying close attention to the variety would weaken the possibility of a generalisation on what exactly philosophy is.

Yet, why should there be an insistence that only one particular type can be qualified to be categorized as philosophy? Why not we include many other trends that are discarded by the so-called mainstream philosophy and philosophers? Instead of being discouraged with the lame excuse that such an inclusion would dilute the rigour of philosophy, readiness to include all varieties of human thought, be it mainstream or sub-stream or completely from outside the stream, I believe that such a move would pave the way for an inclusive understanding of what philosophy is. In fact, it would prepare the ground to conceive of a domain of philosophy which will truly be representative of human thinking, without tags being attached. Indeed, there is greater scope for a complementary approach, which would, in turn, enhance the humanity as well as the entire spectrum of reality. The age of sheer exclusivism is over, and the third millennium needs to be qualified as an era of inclusive approaches in philosophising.

Of late, it has become fashionable among all types of intellectuals, not only philosophers and theoreticians, but also the socialites and politicians, to be postmodern. It is true that philosophy has come of age, and has been successfully growing beyond the 'modern'. This new trend has been christened 'postmodern', and has developed, again, into a lot more varieties that would also, sometimes, defy any definitive

categorization. While the rigorous quest for system building at the cost of genuine reality and a true understanding of reality has been identified as the main culprit in the 'modern', the postmoderns have been constantly attempting to shun and circumvent the 'systemic' approaches; although it has its own advantages, ultimately, such an attempt ends up as chasing a mirage.

Without conceding to the postmoderns in their attempt to exorcise the modern, I hold that human thought cannot function without patterns and structures, although I firmly believe that none of the patterns or structures could be true once and for all. Then, between the modern and the postmodern, or any other school of thought that would emerge in the course of the third millennium and beyond, what is philosophically feasible, to my mind, is the openness that any philosopher as well as philosophical system could entertain towards the others so much so that, while positively acknowledging the possibility of plurality of thought systems and philosophies, humanity would be benefited through the collaborative thinking. Leaving these newly emerging thought systems to interact with each other – not fighting against each other – would provide room for improvisation and, sometimes, natural elimination of one or the other defunct thought system or philosophy. Third millennium is the age of openness and freedom, not only in dealing with market economies and global politics, but primarily and fundamentally in the establishment, maintenance, and ongoing growth of philosophies and philosophical endeavours. Let the entire humanity take advantage of the human thought that has been evolving ever since it came into existence; let the spirit of openness and freedom of human thought thrive, giving rise to many more philosophies as the third millennium unfolds in the life of the entire creation. Indeed, in this context, we are happy that *Journal of Dharma*, in its thirty-fifth year of existence, is a link in carrying the processes of philosophizing forward.

This issue of *Journal of Dharma* attempts to focus on the various contemporary trends in philosophical search and research that go on in different parts of the world. Without pretending to be exhaustive or holistic, this collection of eight essays on "Trends in Philosophy in the Third Millennium" offers an understanding into some approaches of contemporary relevance. As philosophers have been trying to grapple with reality from different perspectives, that too from different backgrounds and with a variety of tools, their approaches continue to vary and each in turn offers a novel method in philosophizing. Not only the 'linguistic' and

'iconic' turns have been making strides in systematic philosophizing; there have been attempts to reinvent the importance of myth and metaphors in philosophical discourses. Further, as positive sciences move into the inner recesses of reality, positive responses are underway in the form of better understanding and cooperation, paving the way to bridge the traditional wedge and rivalry between philosophy and science. Moreover, as our understanding of the truth still seems to be incomplete, sincere students of philosophy are on the look out for more comprehensive theories, such as heuristic epistemology and others.

While a lot of innovative moves are taking place in the arena of philosophical research, side by side we also see fresh attempts to unravel the unseen dimensions of certain classical systems of thought, including religious philosophies. The traditional reluctance to include religious thought systems within the domains of philosophy seems to have been overcome, and many thinkers are now open to see the valid contributions made by religions to the development of human thought. Interestingly, some of the contemporary attempts to highlight 'postmodern' trends in philosophical speculation are found to have been already part of classical religious systems such as Confucianism and Daoism (this list could be extended further). Indeed, deeper research and better understanding of many thought systems facilitate admission of their richness as well as the possible enhancement of human culture on a wider spectrum.

Another key area where interest is rekindled in philosophy is the field of ethics. Although the postmodern trend is to overthrow any definitive systems and accepted norms, there is a resurgence of interest in normative ethics. This indicates that the humanity, in its ongoing search for meaning and relevance, is not ready to forgo rules and regulations; instead, there is an increasing tendency to reinvent meaning within the already accepted patterns. Yet, the contemporary ethical approaches do encounter a change in the approaches. For example, in place of the traditional emphasis on anthropocentric ethical paradigms, there is an increasing outcry to design normative ethics that pays equal attention to all living beings; in fact, it is a call for a holistic approach in ethics, an ethics that would establish itself amidst a culture of life that would not only have norms to protect the human species but every other species as well.

All these divergent and novel attempts in doing philosophy contribute to the overall enhancement of human thought, which, in turn, enhances the entire spectrum of reality through the agency of humanity. As

humanity is accessing a faster pace of growth in many realms of its existence, we may legitimately hope that a faster as well as qualitatively greater development in human thought would mark innovations in philosophy as well, thus facilitating a better grasp of the nature of reality and more effective means to respond to it.

As the unfolding of reality continues and as philosophy leads humanity to greater heights, it is with great expectation and good will that the *Journal of Dharma* is blessed in its new Chief Editor, Dr. Jose Nandhikkara. A proven academician and an erudite scholar, Dr. Nandhikkara has been teaching philosophy at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore and many other institutes in India for about a decade. His high profile academic training in India (Dharmaram), Rome (Gregorian), and England (Oxford and Warwick), and his philosophical expertise on Wittgensteinian thoughts on culture, philosophy, and religion add colourful feathers to the new office. While thanking all, i.e., the readers, well-wishers, and all the stakeholders of *Journal of Dharma*, for the unflinching support that has been extended to me over a period of past seven years, I wish Dr. Jose Nandhikkara, the new Chief Editor, all the best in his new office. Let his philosophical acumen and practical wisdom take the *Journal of Dharma* to newer and greater heights!

Saju Chackalackal
Chief Editor, *JD*