

BOOK REVIEWS

David Cheetham, *John Hick: A Critical Introduction and Reflection*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003, pages viii + 189, ISBN: 0-7546-1599-5.

The book offers a very clear and comprehensive introduction to John Hick's philosophy of religion and its evolution. Hick has made some creative contributions in this field by his concepts such as "experiencing as," "epistemic distance," "eschatological verification," "Irenaean theodicy," "the Real," etc. David Cheetham in this book interestingly follows Hick's journey from the evangelical student to the controversial pluralist 'guru'. The author shows that Hick has maintained the foundational aspects of his thought throughout the journey. They include his views of religious belief in the context of "experiencing as," the Irenaean intuition of a soul-making universe, and affirmation of a life beyond death. The author begins, just like Hick, with the problems of religious language and ends where the latter has arrived, namely, with the questions of religious plurality. Apart from the Introduction (1-8), the book contains five chapters dealing with the following five themes respectively, "Faith and Knowledge," "Evil and Soul-making," "Death and Eternal Life," "The Universe of faiths," and "Religious Pluralism." Then we have a postscript of three pages, a bibliography, and an index. The Introduction provides a brief biography as well as an overall picture of Hick's works.

The introduction begins with the observation that "history will probably judge John Hick to be one of the great philosophers of religion of the twentieth century" (1). This statement can be well accepted. But the author's question at the very start of the paragraph that speaks about Hick's works seems to be surprising. He asks: "What is John Hick's theological position?" (4). Cheetham immediately observes, "This is not that easy to answer." Taking into account the nature of Hick's works, it seems that the very question itself about the theological quality is out of place. Cheetham himself might have not meant it in the strict sense. The overall impression about Hick's works is that they are not of *theological* nature, for he is not operating with theological tools, but purely philosophical ones. One does not find Hick basing his reflections or arguments on revelation, faith or Church teaching. According to Cheetham, the reason for the difficulty in answering the above question

lies in the fact that Hick's "work extends over almost half a century and is contained in well over twenty authored and edited books" (4). Then the author continues: "In the earlier part of his career it would have seemed accurate to describe him as a fairly orthodox Christian philosopher." But later "we see an increasing broadening out of his worldview and an embracing of a pluralistic outlook." Hick remains a philosopher, though not a typically Christian one, as he used to be earlier. As a philosopher, however, he is profound and deserves to be considered seriously and appreciated. The author in chapter one on "Faith and Knowledge" confirms our view about the nature of Hick's works in his opening sentence where he characterizes Hick as a profound philosopher who began his philosophical career by concerning himself with epistemology (8). The author shows that experience is an important starting point for Hick. His orientation is, hence, better characterized as empiricist; he emphasizes the evidence of the senses and experience. Hick characterizes all experiences as "experiencing-as." Here he makes very valid and interesting observations and conclusions. He rightly observes that the amount of freedom we have in respect to interpreting our world varies in proportion to the sphere in which we operate. At the level of everyday sense experience it is most restricted and at the level of faith or religious experience the freedom is very broad. A positive and valid contribution of Hick by way of an apology of religious experience is that religious belief is not a special case requiring separate justification (12). Cheetham skilfully treats this point elaborately in the pages that follow. There he lucidly deals with the questions of realism and non-realism as well as the questions raised by logical positivism, verification and falsification, and how Hick counters the demands of the logical positivists by employing the principle of eschatological verification (30ff.). It is to be credited to Hick that he defends against A. Flew on his own terms that religious statements have *cognitive dignity* (27-31).

Chapter two deals with the problem of evil and an attempted theodicy. Cheetham illustrates the affinity of Hick's theodicy to that of the church father Irenaeus for whom the creation was not perfect in the beginning, but was to grow into perfection. Hick rejects the Augustinian notion of an initial perfect world as inconsistent with the fact of man misusing his freedom and evil as its consequence (41-42). Hick adopts the basic Irenaean ideas about man in the image and likeness and his notion of

evil and suffering as remedial rather than punitive. He, thus, speaks of "divine purpose to bring a limitlessly good outcome from the evil that has been weaved into the ways things are" (42). Soul making is the intention behind it all. This is a "process of transforming human animals into children of God" (43), which cannot be achieved in this lifetime. Extending the human journey beyond death is, therefore, essential for this kind of theodicy to make sense. Hick is, thus, committed to the idea of a life after or beyond death. But one does not understand why he should hold the idea of universal salvation. Although one may *hope* for this, one has no reason to affirm with certainty that all will be saved. How such a theory takes human freedom seriously, is not clear. This makes one wonder how and why Cheetham could not find here any logical difficulty in defending Hick's way of thinking (43). The author also tries to answer some objections raised against Hick's position (59ff.).

As Cheetham rightly observes, Hick's greatest contribution is his philosophy of religious pluralism. Now the question is, to what it has contributed. Definitely to a theology of pluralism, as opposed to what is called exclusivism and inclusivism. Chapter five is devoted to this crucial theme as represented by Hick. He considers all religions as human responses to some sort of a higher reality. Hence, they are for him equally veridical responses. For God he uses the term "the Real," which is a transcategorical expression. That God is understood in all the religions as a transcategorical reality is self-evident. Why should one use a new transcategorical term for God, rather than 'God' itself, is not made clear either. It is also not shown in which sense is the new term more transcategorical or for what reason the term 'God' is not as transcategorical as that term, or not transcategorical at all. If the term 'God' is not transcategorical, then the term "the Real" is also not so. There is, in fact, no special advantage for this new term over the old term 'God'. It is also not evident, how Hick has made a Copernican revolution in *theology*, by substituting Christianity with God at the centre. This revolution could be thought of as affecting the thinking of only those who might have placed Christianity at the centre as regards salvation. But there was no authentic Christian understanding of salvation in such terms. Pope Clemens XI condemned in 1713 the teaching of P. Quesnel who taught that there was no grace outside the Church (DS 2429). In 1949 the Holy Office condemned the "Boston heresy" of L. Feeney, according to whom all who

did not join the Church would be damned to hell (ND 855, 856). One may now point out to the much-quoted axiom of Cyprian and Origen "outside the church, no salvation." One should not forget the special historical setting of this axiom. The axiom was formulated against the background of a schism. They were not referring in that case to the non-Christians, but to the Christians who were separating themselves from the Church. As in every case, so too in the case of this axiom, fairness and academic honesty demand that the context has to be properly taken into account when we interpret the text.

Hick finds it problematic to assert the Incarnation of Christ in the traditional form. The problem lies in the fact that "it implies the superiority of the Christian faith above other faiths" (150). This is further specified as follows: "If Jesus is *the* incarnation of God, then it suggests that 'the Christian religion, alone among the religions of the world, was founded by God in person'..." Cheetham now rightly remarks: "This is incompatible with the pluralistic picture that Hick wishes to present of Christianity being just one salvific religion amongst many" (150). This betrays Hick's primary preoccupation as defending his pluralistic view. He proposes pluralism in order to avoid any tint of superiority from the part of any religion. This would mean that he constructs a theory to suit his preconceived imagination rather than his commitment to truth or to the Real. Who taught that equality and fraternity are high values, if not Christianity? What is more important, avoiding a superimposed or attributed imaginary "superiority" or faith commitment to the revelation of "the Real"? Hick's implied premise that the Christian faith in Jesus as *the* incarnate God necessarily implies superiority, and, therefore, that this is not acceptable, is a prejudice and is itself questionable. There can be many occasions in everyday life where sometimes one's or one group's position is true and that of the others, not. Shall we then compromise, just to please every one? I do not want to claim any superiority to any religion, but to point out the hollowness of Hick's argument that truth claims imply superiority, which is in itself bad, and, hence, something to be avoided. By submitting oneself to God's revelation, one religion does not become *eo ipso* arrogant or claimant of a superiority. Jesus Christ has taught us the values of fraternal love, humility and service, and he lived himself all this radically.

If Hick considers that his pluralistic position is the best among the other possible and actual positions, one may now wonder, is he not, on his own terms, claiming superiority? By criticizing and discarding the theodicy of Augustine and others, Hick has indirectly claimed certain superiority to his own theory. And if the claim of superiority is an evil to be avoided, no one, including Hick, may propose any theory that claims to be better than others. In the world of science and technology you cannot accept this outlook. Should we now adopt the pluralistic "all are equally true and valid" position in the world of religions? Is it all so light or/and irrelevant what the different religions hold and have to say about many crucial and existential matters?

It is one thing to argue that all religious adherents have equal dignity and quite another to hold that all religions are in themselves equally true and valid responses to "the Real." There can be errors among humans; so too imperfections. The fact that all are humans with equal dignity does not lead us to the conclusion that what all of them hold is equally true.

For the sake of making all religions equal, Hick seems to propose to extend to all religions one religion's faith and self-understanding. But this is nonsensical and a violation of the faith of other religions. Why should one impose a faith that is foreign to them? It is positively against some religions to propose to them that their founders were all incarnations of God. For instance, Islam would never accept that Mohammed was an incarnation of God, or one of the *avatars*. If every religion believes the same thing and is same in all respects, what precisely is the meaning of *pluralism*?

It is disappointing to note that Hick is uncritically swallowing the opinions of certain scholars and comes to the conclusion "that the historical Jesus did not claim to be God" (148). We could agree with Hick if he would have qualified the assertion that Jesus did not claim it *explicitly*. To create the impression that Jesus did not claim at all in any way his divine status is to close one's eyes to the New Testament witness. It can be shown that Jesus had indirectly or latently claimed his divinity in many ways. How would now Hick explain Jesus' indirect claims involved in his forgiving the sins, demanding a radical discipleship, making himself superior to Moses and the prophets, expressing a special and unique relationship with God whom he called his Father? What made the early Jewish disciples of Jesus to believe that he is God, considering the strict

Jewish monotheism, if the faith had no basis in Jesus himself and in his self-understanding? Just because of the resurrection the disciples could not all of a sudden preach Jesus as God and Son of God. Much before the Councils of Nicea or Chalcedon we find in the New Testament ample evidence for this faith of the early Church in Jesus' true divinity. How can St. Paul refer to the transference of an Old Testament text (Is 45:23) to Jesus that was originally applied to God, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10-11)? The teachings of the Councils are not inventions but clarifications and explanations of the authentic apostolic faith when need arose against the background of heresies. That the Councils used philosophical terminology is to be understood in light of the exigency to elucidate the biblical faith in terms of the ontological mentality and language used by the heretics themselves. Replying to them only in the biblical language would not have solved the problem. The Councils also showed the boldness and openness to transcend any sort of a biblical fundamentalism as well. One may remember here that also Hick's use of the term "the Real" comes under this purview.

This book provides, thus, an occasion for an encounter and debate regarding Hick's philosophy, precisely because the author gives a good study and clear interpretation. He deserves praise and congratulations for the lucid language and the clarity of expressions with which he has brought out the main themes and thoughts of Hick.

Sebastian Athappilly

Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Publications of the Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2003, pages xliii + 584, ISBN: 0-945454-40-6.

The world's religions have traditionally been supporters of justice and equity among humans. While the human community is still striving to

attain the goals of justice, it is clear that environmental justice is becoming part of these broad aspirations. The rights to pure air, clean water and fertile soil are being seen as fundamental human rights. Islam has a particular contribution to make in this field.

The traditional concern of Islam for social justice and care for the poor, the orphaned, and the widowed has a broader relevance that embraces concern for the natural environment as well. Protection of land and proper treatment of biodiversity are now being advocated by Islamic scholars and teachers. In addition, the unity of all reality (*tawhīd*) and the balance of nature (*mīzān*) as recognized by Islam constitute an important basis for religious ecology and environmental ethics. It is significant that the vital role of human beings as trustees of creation is highlighted in this book. This volume assembles voices from across the Islamic world that is speaking with depth, breadth, and urgency on the emerging alliance of Islam and ecology. The Qur'ān is replete with references to the precious resources of water, air, and land, and forbids wastefulness. The *hadiths* (sayings of the prophet) report Muhammad's concern for the protection of natural resources and their equitable availability to all. Clearly, from its origin, Islam offers a basis for ecological understanding.

Yet, the articulation of an Islamic environmental ethic in contemporary terms is quite new. It is a tragic reality that the poor suffer far more directly from environmental degradation than do the rich, who are better enabled to insulate themselves from its effects. On a global scale, a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor happen to be Muslims. Hence, the writers of this volume are more immediately concerned with issues of social justice and the human relationship with the Divine than they are with the state of the environment *per se*. In the perspective of many Muslim thinkers, environmental degradation is merely a symptom of the broader calamity that human societies are not living in accordance with God's will. Thus, a just society, one in which humans relate to each other and to God as they should, will be one in which environmental problems simply will not exist.

The essays in the first section, "God, Humans, and Nature," outline the Islamic view of the cosmic order. It is an appropriate introduction to the Islamic view about those planes where humans belong in the hierarchy of beings. Ibrahim Ozdemir, in his essay, "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'ānic Perspective," contents that a

Muslim who correctly understands the relationship between the Creator, humans, and the rest of creation as stipulated in the Qur'ān will see in it an environmental ethic. L. Clarke, in his essay, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the *Masnawi* of Jalāl al-Din Rūmi," explores the cosmology found in the mystical poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), one of the most influential and beloved of all the Sufi poets. Saadia Khawar Khan Chisti's essay offers an ecological commentary on the notion of *fitra*, understood as the primordial nature of things. Chisti goes on to posit that the original nature of humans is to live in accordance with their environment; thus, environmental consciousness is something that needs not to be taught, but simply awakened.

The next section, "The Challenge of Reinterpretation," brings the preceding view of traditional paradigms into a contemporary context. The essays invite us to look at how the established Islamic world-view can be applied to the environmental problems of the present day. Seyyed Hossein Nasr discusses the obstacles to practising Islamic environmental ethics in the modern world, and gives suggestions to overcome these obstacles. Mawil Izzi Dien, who has been one of the first Muslim intellectuals to make the environment a central concern, mentions the real - life crises of pollution, water scarcity, and other environmental issues facing Muslims today. S. Nomanul Haq makes an attempt to recover how traditional Islam can guide contemporary Muslims in dealing with the environmental crisis. Abdul Aiz Said and Nathan C. Funk bring an ecological reading to the traditional Islamic concepts of unity (*tawhīd*) and peace (*salām*), suggesting that environmental problems present a lack of the latter resulting from a failure to acknowledge the former. Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn provides a comprehensive view of how traditional Islamic law addressed environmental management. Richard C. Foltz point the way from theory to practice, showing how Islamic principles are beginning to be applied to environmental protection.

The essays in the third section, "Environment and Social Justice," focus on a theme that is a central priority in Islam. Fazlun M. Khalid finds the roots of the environmental crisis in Western modernity, which has been imposed on Muslim societies for the past several centuries. Yasin Dutton sees environmental problems as arising largely from illegitimate profit seeking at the expense of human communities. Nawal Ammar argues that environmental issues must be addressed within a broader context that

includes women's rights of equal access to both natural and social resources.

The fourth section, "Towards a Sustainable Society," looks at real-life issues of development facing Muslims today, many of which have environmental implications. Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz focuses on the Quranic concept of balance (*mīzān*) showing how current models of development are violating this principle. Safei-Eldin A. Hamed looks at development in contemporary Muslim societies within the wider scope of existing development paradigms. Nancy W. Jabbra and Joseph G. Jabbra present contrasting examples of family planning in Muslim societies, citing case studies from Egypt and Iran.

The fifth and concluding section focuses on the Islamic garden as a metaphor for Paradise. Attilio Petruccioli discusses ways in which traditional Muslim societies have manifested their place within the natural order through architecture and the building of gardens. James L. Wescoat, Jr., highlights the specific example of the royal gardens built under the Mughal emperors in Lahore during the seventeenth century.

The attempt by Muslims to discover what the tradition has to say about the global environmental crisis today has only recently begun, and this volume is fortunate to include many of the voices, which have been prominent in this welcome and praiseworthy endeavor.

This volume on "Islam and Ecology," is, indeed, an epoch making contribution not only to Muslims but also to the whole humanity, especially when we are struggling hard to tide over the environmental crisis. The contributors have made an honest and sincere attempt to elucidate the evident and occult references in the Holy Qur'ān to substantiate the need for environmental protection. Today we live in a world made up of human hands, a world recreated by human technology and scientific research, which is far removed from the eco-friendly world created by God. Hence, the statements on environmental problems and their solutions derived from the Qur'ānic verses are not exclusive ones but are also traceable in the Sacred Scriptures of other important world religions. What is highlighted in this volume is that an eco-friendly world is nothing but a world where humans submit totally to the divine will and abide by the divine law which is manifested through nature. This volume

is a clarion call and a motivating force for a global united effort to create an eco-friendly world though it sounds a little bit utopian.

James Narithookil

G. C. Nayak, *Mādhyamika Śūnyatā: A Reappraisal of Mādhyamika Philosophical Enterprise with Special Reference to Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, pages xi + 93.

In this intensely argued discussion Professor Nayak, who has a long and admirable career in teaching, writing and administrative service in India, sets the record straight concerning the proper assessment of Nagarjuna's position, a position that has been mischaracterized by some (Harsh Narain) as nihilist and by others (Th. Stcherbatsky, T. R. V. Murti, etc.) as absolutist. *Śūnyatā*, Nāgārjuna's chosen term characterizing the actual nature of things, is not emptiness or void, nor is it the absolute. It is useful to have collected in one place the reasons for once and for all rejecting these two misunderstandings on the part of past (or, in the case of Narain, near-present) writers, although I hardly think the establishment of the correct interpretation of the term is by now news to students of Buddhist thought as it once was. Nayak is certainly correct in reminding us that Nāgārjuna meant by the term *śūnyata* the essencelessness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) of things and neither their nonexistence nor any mystical, superior status. By 'essencelessness' what is being rejected is the notion that anything is independent of causes and conditions, that there are any permanent entities.

Nayak, however, is not content merely with setting the record straight on that score. He has other opponents in mind whose opinions on related matters he finds inadequate. Ninian Smart is taken to task for suggesting "How can one really have loving benevolence for empty beings?" introducing a topic which leads Nayak to an extended assessment of how Madhyamika is no less insistent than Advaita Vedānta on the implications for morality and altruism being exemplified in the liberated person, whether *bodhisattva* or *jīvanmukta*. He finds fault with Ganeshwar Mishra for seeming to undervalue the morality of Advaita (and by

implication of Madhyamaka as well) when Mishra suggests that the ignorance (*avidyā*) which blocks one from liberation is "a mere linguistic error or confusion," that Śāmkara's philosophy is merely a linguistic analysis.

I find myself convinced by Nayak certainly as regards the main argument and also with most of the reasons he gives for his conclusions. Perhaps the most telling parallels he draws are with the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein: as he quotes Wittgenstein, "Philosophy leaves everything as it is," which Nayak adduces to help justify his contention that the enlightenment gained by the liberated persons "has no conflict with our normal awareness," that "the only difference between the enlightened person who is free and the unenlightened one who is in bondage is that the former remains undisturbed and patient through all his afflictions caused by *prārabdha* whereas the latter is impatient and suffers on account of this." The conclusion drawn is that the liberated Madhyamika or Advaitin is perfectly capable of, and, indeed, ideally situated for, the loving benevolence towards others that Smart finds lacking in an "empty being." Nayak's point seems well taken in the context of Madhyamaka and Advaita: does it extend as well to all the other *darśanas* that comprise the panoply of Indian viewpoints on liberation? Mahāyānists and Advaitins claim not, but if Nayak's explanation is correct his conclusion can, I think, be generalized to cover all the classical systems.

Karl Potter

Archie Gonsalves, *How Did I Begin? A Western and an Indian Perspective on the Beginning of Human Individual*, Mysore: Dhyanaavana Publications, 2002, pages Li + 416, ISBN: 81-901250-2-0.

The work under review is a revised version of the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Archie Gonsalves, at the Alfonsian Academy of Lateran University, Rome. Praiseworthy essay has been made throughout the work by the author to maintain a trait of pro-life approach and to explore the nuances and related concerns of the widely disputed issue on the beginning of

human individual in both Western and Eastern world. Nevertheless, Archie fences the endeavour with Norman M. Ford's *Magnum Opus, When Did I Begin?* for a Western perspective, and Ayurveda – an Indian system of medicine – for an Eastern perspective. The author deserves our appreciation unequivocally for the selection of the theme, for there is an ongoing debate on Pro-life versus Pro-choice and a right answer acceptable to all, on the beginning of human individual, is the need of the time: because it will, in turn, tell upon our stand on a wide range of bioethical issues such as post-coital abortive contraception, prenatal diagnosis, technically assisted procreation, in vitro fertilization, embryo experimentation, stem-cell research, and human cloning. The thesis purports, however, to respect life by upholding human dignity and to bridge the lacuna between East and the West on the beginning of human individual and leaves the question “when begins the human Individual?” unanswered, lest the author succeeds where the fields of biology and philosophy fail without precision (144). Archie deserves our acclaim for a systematic and lucid presentation of a critical and comparative evaluation of both the position of Ford and Ayurveda on the beginning of human Individual.

The crux of the introductory chapters, in the first part, is the historical background of the legislation of current teachings of the Catholic Church on the attitude towards pre-born babies. With the contention that the “Declaration on Abortion” issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, does not explicitly speak of the moment in which the spiritual soul is infused and the acceptance of the instruction that “life from its conception is to be guarded with greatest care and the one who will be a man is already one,” the author switches over to the study of Ford's masterpiece, *When did I begin?* The focal points of Ford's thesis, as stated by the author, are 1) When does a human individual begin to exist? and 2) Is every human being, human person too? Being an Aristotelian-Thomist in his approach, Ford, makes a subtle distinction between genetical and ontological individuals. Pointing to identical twinning at the cleavage stage, Ford declares that a human individual begins when the embryo ceases to be a cluster of more or less homogeneous cells, i.e., at the appearance of the primitive streak at day 14 from the moment of conception. In answering to the second question, Ford affirms, “there is no doubt in my mind that the three expressions (Person, Human individual, Human being) may refer equally to a member of our human species.” The

author notes that Ford, in line with Aristotle, believes in delayed ensoulment.

A fairly good portion in the first part is dedicated to a critique of Ford's position by taking support from the criticisms levelled against it by a few others, especially, Paul Flaman, Anthony Fisher, Anthony Zimmerman, etc. The author observes that Ford fails to address the question, who is an individual? The most evident weakness in Ford's presentation is that he does not answer satisfactorily, why the genetic code in the zygote does not suffice to constitute or define a human individual in an ontological sense. The author forgets not, in his critique, to rule out Ford's theory of delayed ensoulment.

The cryptic issue on the beginning of human individual, in the second part, is viewed from a different angle, i.e., from an Eastern perspective. For a biological apprehension of human individual, Archie resorts to Ayurveda. The *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavatgīta* perceive human individual as having divine origin, identical with universal being and a unity of spirit (*purusha* or *ātman*) and matter (*Prakṛti*) respectively. The second chapter, in this section, supplies an orientation to Ayurvedic system with some of its sources of literature of which writings of *Charaka* and *Suśruta* are given special attention; so also it has a brief discussion about the fundamental principles – the most important one is to establish and preserve a harmonious relationship between the great and singular macrocosm and individual microcosms – and the philosophical foundation that are chiefly rooted in *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya* and Buddhist Philosophy, etc.

The axis of concentration is shifted from Ayurveda in general to Ayurvedic biology in particular, in the third chapter of this part. In the genesis, we find a lengthy discussion on the functions and nature of *śukra* (male gamete) and *śonita* (female gamete), how and what of menstruation, sacredness of coitus, and preparation prior to it, etc. The author quotes *Charaka* on the issue of temporality of ensoulment: "The development of human embryo began just when the semen and the ovum came in contact within the womb of the female and at once the soul descended into it and the embryo was ready to develop." The author points out that the Ayurveda developed ways and means to protect life in all its prenatal phases of development and even after that. On contraception and abortion in Ayurveda, he says: "It is not at all true that in Indian society there were no instances where means were adopted to check population. The world's

most ancient text in favour of family planning is found in the *Rgveda*." In the last chapter, Archie seems to be on the look out for answers to some of the difficulties raised by Ford, such as who is an individual?, what constitutes his identity?, problems of identical twinning and the eventual postponement of ensoulment.

The last part, namely, "A Comparative Perspective," is an attempt of Archie to discover some dialogical meeting points between West and East on the beginning of human individual in the light of what is discussed in the preceding chapters, tabulating them under three titles, science, religion and philosophy. Under the title "A Critical Appraisal," Archie, observes that the issue of the "beginning of human individual" is double faceted, i.e., it includes the following two issues: "when did I begin?" and "how did I begin?" The primary concern of the Western perspective, and Ford, in particular, has been always to identify the precise moment when the human individual begins. Whereas in the Indian perspective, in reference to the beginning of the human individual, we never come across the question 'when?' Right from Vedic times down to our days there has been always an interest to know more and more about the early stages of human development. Therefore, the question they have kept on asking is only, "how did I begin?"

There are, in my view, a few defects, which are impediments in granting a credit of perfection to the work. 1) Plausibility of the inclusion of dual dimensional nature of the issue of the beginning of human individual, which is observed as the main distinction between Western and Eastern perspectives, in the section on convergences between East and West, is not made clear. 2) The idea of the first paragraph under the heading "The Complex Process of Fertilization" in the seventh chapter seems to be overlapping in the first paragraph of the "Conception According to Ayurvedic Authors" in the eighth chapter. 3) There are at least twenty noticed errata within the text. The author has failed to pay adequate attention to proofreading. However, as an addendum, I must admit the fact that in comparison with the magnitude of trouble the author has taken in tackling the puzzle of the beginning of human individual in a simple and coherent manner and the wider purview of the topic, the defects mentioned above are trivial.

Shibin Thuniampral