

## BOOK REVIEW

John B. Chethimattam *Experience and Philosophy*. Bangalore : Dharmaram Publications, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, 1996, pp.xii + 312, Rs. 360.00;US\$ 40.00.

Dr. John B. Chethimattam, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Fordham University, New York, and Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, has added one more interesting book to his credit explaining his own vision of an experiential "philosophical pilgrimage". Swimming along the "stream of consciousness" had been a favourite philosophical exercise for Prof. Chethimattam. Ever since he published his first philosophical treatise, *Consciousness and Reality* (An Indian Approach to Metaphysics, Bangalore, 1967), Prof. Chethimattam was consistently developing the theme of consciousness as the central point of his discussions and dialogues. The volume under review seems to be a summit of this long search and research. It is titled *Experience and Philosophy*, although "Philosophy as Experience" would have been a better title expressing comprehensively what Prof. Chethimattam is discussing and defending throughout this book. The book, however, makes a fascinating reading to those who are well initiated in the Western and Eastern schools of metaphysical discourse on the experience of Reality. It contains the lectures he gave at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, the first of the series of the "Dharma Endowment Lectures" instituted in the Faculty of Philosophy in December 1994.

In this volume Prof. Chethimattam demonstrates his amazing capacity of synthesising the numerous strands of philosophical reflections of both the West and the East into a unified vision under the central theme of Consciousness which is partly experienced by intuitive thinkers, while itself transcends all limitations of the living and experiencing contexts of the philosophers; and this transcendence ultimately indicates that Consciousness as such is the Ultimate Reality which encompasses the thinking subject, thinking itself, the object of thought and thought as such. "Complementarity" is the often repeated referent in the synthetic exercise of Prof. Chethimattam, although he is fully aware that every-contrary strands of thinking cannot be gratuitously graced with

the smothering touch of a dialogical complementarity. Hence he is sharply critical about a number of divergent views that attempted to bypass the Reality of Consciousness altogether.

The texture of the complementarity of various philosophical investigations according to Prof. Chethimattam is the "lived experience of people, made available in every nook and corner of the world through cybernetic explosion and the shared human consciousness as the one medium of interaction" (P. xiii). So this book "is a search to find out how shared human experience leads to new dimensions in philosophical thinking" (Preface, p.xiii).

The content is divided into eight chapters of which chapter one is a comprehensive introduction towards a masterly exposition of the central theme of Consciousness, the experiential ground of all realities, the common basis of both scientific and philosophical investigations. "Life - world and Philosophy" is the title of the second chapter. It contains a survey in clear logical sequence of the living contexts of philosophising from Descartes to Habermas. This chapter focuses on the hermeneutical phenomenologies of Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau Ponty and others who reflected on the dynamics of human consciousness evolved in response to the lived experience of the people of their times. Topics such as the "Metaphysics of Presence", 'Experience and Consciousness', 'Philosophy of Negation' etc, are of exciting reading. Chapter three deals with the "Life-World" in Indian Philosophy: 'The Samkhyan life-world', 'The Buddhist life-world', 'The Rationality of Non-dualism' and 'The Rationality of Kaivalya and Nirvana' reflect the author's perceptive mind and his constructive critical attitude to some of the most fundamental tenets of the philosophical schools of India.

Chapter four on "Mythical Consciousness" highlights the significance of the pre-predicative and pre-logical constructs of human existence, experience and articulation. Mythical thought is so primordial to human culture, morality and faith experience, that a society without their lived and living myths of the ancestors would be a culturally rootless people. In many ways Prof. Chethimattam brings to focus the function of myths as "Creative Memory" of a people which sustains in meaningful symbolic channels the living stream of consciousness of the lived experience of the fore fathers of a cultural heritage.

Chapter five deals with "Radical Hermeneutics", the various schools of interpretations and approaches to the problem of meaning. "The Coordinates of Consciousness" is the title of Chapter six; 'Anthropological and Sociological Experience', 'Evolutionary Perspective on Sociology and Religion,' 'The Aesthetic Dimension of Social Consciousness' and other sub-titles elaborate in detail the peripheries of the centre of human consciousness. Chapter seven deals with "Moral Consciousness and Experiential Approach to Morality", and Chapter eight concludes the whole discussion setting "Experience as the End of Philosophy". The Indian idea of Experience, *Anubhava*, as the *telos* of all rational investigations as established by Sri Sankaracarya has been well taken care of by the author in giving an Indian key towards the harmonious understanding of the variety of philosophical insights of all thinkers the world over.

Dr. Thomas Manickam

Thomas Kadankavil, *Ethical World: A Study on the Ethical Thought in the East and West*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1995. pp. xvi + 345

The book under review written by Dr. Kadankavil is a significant addition to the works on Ethics produced so far in English language. Dr. Kadankavil, being a teacher of outstanding merit as is evident, has been able to discuss in a short compass varieties of ethical doctrines, both Eastern and Western, with a rare lucidity and masterly touch; this has enabled him to produce a book on Ethics which, while being philosophically illuminating, can also serve as a valuable text book for the students. This is one of the special features of this book.

Another special feature lies in the fact that Dr. Kadankavil seems to have a thorough grasp of the ethical doctrines of the East as well as the West, including those of the recent day discussions which come under the purview of what is usually known as Meta-Ethics and of those that come from the thinkers of Existentialist background and from allied thinkers of the recent past.

In the section on Indian Ethics, his discussion on *jivanmukta* ideal is particularly illuminating. The reply given by Dr. Kadankavil

to the question raised by him, "What is the purpose and value of this kind of metaphysical quest in this technical age?", is thought-provoking. "As a matter of fact", says the learned author, "the metaphysical quest in the privacy of one's being is no less arduous in its preparation and execution than the scientific adventures of modern man". (Page 309) To the second question raised by the author, "of what use to the world are these *jivanmuktas*?" the answer given is no less illuminating. "A *jivanmukta* is regarded as a sign of the victory of the Spirit over matter" - (Page 309) says the author. These are being cited here as examples of the deep insight which the learned author has in the sphere of Indian Ethics.

J. L. Mackie, an eminent contemporary moral philosopher, in his preface to *Ethics*, one of the most thought-provoking treatise of the present day in the area of moral philosophy, has made a starting remark as follows. "Perhaps the truest teachers of moral philosophy", says Mackie, "are the out laws and thieves who, as Locke says, keep faith and rules of justice with one another, but practice these as rules of convenience without which they cannot hold together, with no pretence of receiving them as innate laws of nature". This is a significant statement made by a contemporary thinker on the subject. Values such as keeping faith, following the rules of justice, etc. cannot be dispensed with in any case, because without this minimum set of values a society, a group, of even outlaws and thieves 'cannot hold together'. Outlaws and thieves practise these values not as rules of morality, perhaps, but merely as 'rules of convenience,' but from their practice one has a great deal to learn about morality and moral philosophy, according to Mackie. A moral system needs to be worked out with great care and urgency in accordance with the needs of time, keeping in fact certain fundamental rules like keeping faith and following the rules of justice which remain unaffected by the vagaries of time and space. It is a pity that such fundamental rules even are ignored and undermined at many quarters in the name of prudence, practical ethics, and what not. This leads to a grave crisis in morals.

Dr. Kadankavil is quite aware of the fact that "values, though not wholly realizable, clamour for realization. Even if one cannot bring values into existence, they will remain as an ideal to be

realized. Our consciousness testifies that we are not arbitrary about the values. They are not merely psychological or subjective". (Page 127) He is quite right in pointing out that "even in those cases where value is given by human convention, if these have no backing in reality, they immediately lose all value". (Page 127) The entire treatise under review may be regarded as an attempt at finding this "backing in reality" for the realm of values.

I recommend this book unhesitatingly for anyone who is genuinely interested in the problems of morality; the book would of course be of special interest to the students and teachers of Philosophy, I am sure. There is a Bibliography at the end which is expected to be useful to the readers for further study in the subject. It would be more useful if the author could add an Index towards the end and give diacritical marks in the case of Sanskrit terms, when he considers bringing out a second edition of this useful work.

**Prof G. C. Nayak**

**Nyaya Vartika - Tatparya - Tika of Vāchaspati Miśra, Anantalal Thakur, (ed), Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophic Research, 1996, pp. xii + 410**

The publication in sanskrit devanagari script running to about seven hundred pages of text is an authoritative text on the Nyaya system of philosophy. The octagenarian editor of this work has dedicated his life for the study of the nyaya system of philosophy. Through this work he has intended to contribute significantly to the authentic reference material for the students of nyaya.

The present work is the third in the series of five volumes which intend to provide the four authentic works of nyaya system together. The fifth of the volumes is planned to contain the detailed explanation of the findings and the contributions by the author in editing the first four volumes, which would mainly be the source material.

The present publication is said to have been incorporating readings from the newer manuscripts, which were recently discovered. These manuscripts are the buddhist logical texts in original sanskrit and a series of newly published Jaina texts.

The original text is a commentary on the elucidation of nyāya philosophy by Udyota kāra. 'Udyota' is an elucidation on the cryptic formulae by Akshapāda establishing the Nyāya philosophy. The commentator is Vāchaspati miśra - I, whose date is put circa 840 A.D. The purpose of Vāchaspati miśra is to give a correct interpretation for the Udyota work by providing a proper perspective of understanding (called Tika) and refute the misinterpretations.

The work is divided in to five major sections (Adhyāya); and a total of ten subsections (Ahnika) within that. The original cryptic formulae of Akshapāda along with the elucidation of Udyota is taken up for clear presentation.

The philosophies that have originated in India can be seen to have an integrated yet clearly distinguishable facets of the following aspects - 1. The Mystic part which is only a matter of experience. 2. The practical worldly aspect of devout practices and devotion which would relate to the social and emotional aspects. 3. The intellectual part which would adopt the logic at its best of efficacy to establish their view point. The theistic and atheistic religions commonly make use of the Logic (Nyaya) and Grammar of Sanskrit (Vyakarana) to put forth their views and refute other's views. Thus, these two disciplines, and especially the Nyaya has been a constantly evolving discipline in the Indian philosophical scenario. The antiquity of Nyaya system is definitely prechristian and prior to the beginnings of the Buddhism and Jainism. The origins can be traced in the 'upanishadic period.

The techniques of Intellectual and logical analysis and the rules of arguments were well formulated by Akshapāda based on the tradition up to his time in the Nyāya sutras (circa - prior to 300 B. C). At the same (- contemporary) times, there appears to have been concurrent thinkings about the other allied philosophy of the Vaisesikas and the followers of Yoga and the mimamsa systems. Each school might have had their own set of cryptic formulae floating in the traditions - like the Kanāda's Vaisésika sutras, Patanjalis's yoga sūtrās, the Mimāmsa sutras and the Bādarayana's Brahma sūtras. A study of each set seems to presuppose the concurrent tradition of other schools. This is the way the tradition of each school has developed and so is Nyaya.

It is important to distinguish at this stage between the two meanings of the word 'Nyāya'. The meaning of 'Logic and analysis' for this word makes it a universal tool for philosophical argumentation and crosses the bounds of theism and atheism. In the meaning of 'the Philosophy of Nyāya system', nyāya has its own philosophy, beliefs and conventions which are unique to it. The cryptic formulae of Akshapāda is to establish the 'Nyāya darshana' and as a part of this exercise, the TOOLS of Analysis (Nyāya logic) is elaborated. As time passed the different schools of philosophy took the logical part to refute the philosophical part of nyāya system itself. Buddhism and Jainism perfected in the adoption of the logic to almost flourish the vedic and the theistic philosophies. This happened circa 2nd century A.D. the period of the greatest buddhistic logicians.

Over a period of time, by fifth century A.D. onwards, the revival of vedic and theistic philosophies started again and the buddhistic thoughts slowly underwent a downward path. Buddhism spread outside India and started losing its base in India. The theistic philosophies started on a revival note, The Nyāya logic and the Nyāya philosophy played a significant role in achieving this goal and became a forerunner for the vedāntic systems to come up. The great nyāya writers to mention in this regard are Vātsyayana (circa 300 A.D.), Udyotakāra (circa 635 A.D.) and Vāchaspati misra (840 A.D.) These writers wrote their gloss and the commentaries on their previous writers works and enhanced the value of the earlier work with their brilliance. Thus the whole set of works get dovetailed in to another and form a continuity. The present work is thus a continuity of Nyaya logic and the nyaya philosophy propounded by Akshapada. Vachaspati misra presupposes the Buddhistic interpretations and the misinterpretations on earlier commentary Udyotakara and makes his corrective elucidation in the work. The present text still belonging to what is called the ' (Old system) - Prāchīna naya' is readable due to its relative lesser use of the technical terminology of the nyāya logic.

The present book, useful as it is and valuable for those who know how to read the sanskrit script and are familiar with the oral tradition of teaching the nyāya, where the student is supposed to retain a large portion of the original text in his active retentive memory at the time of study, it requires the

support of the other two volumes wherein the 'Udyota portion is published to make the reading and comprehension better. As the editor has reserved his valuable comments and contributions for the last volume (the fifth one) regarding the new materials and the variant readings provided from the newer materials available to him at the time of this publication, we have to wait for the publication before making further noting.

It is hoped that the complete set of publications as planned would be brought out by the publishers as a full set for the benefit of the nyaya students and make the wisdom of the octagenarian traditional scholar reach the posterity, at the earliest.

Dr. B.V. Venkatakrishna

Jose Tharayil, *Priests of Christ: Unity Fraternity and Spirituality. A/waye*: Pontifical Institute Publications PP. xv + 215, 1995, Rs. 200; \$ 19.95.

Dr. Jose Tharayil, a priest of the Diocese of Kottayam, teaches Spiritual Theology and Psychology at the Pontifical Institute, Alwaye, Kerala. This study, which is a dissertation prepared by Tharayil under the guidance of Professor Jean Galot of the Gregorian University, Rome, "offers an in-depth survey and synthesis of the essential unity, oneness and fraternity in the priesthood and ministry of bishops and priests and of their spirituality acquired by the communitarian exercise of priestly ministry motivated by pastoral charity". Apparently the theme of the book is very much relevant to the present day understanding of Holy Orders as the appointed means of bringing about harmony and orderly relationships within the local Church. Popular and scientific studies are available today regarding the relationship between the ordained ministers and the baptized, and their mutual and pneumatic role in the building up of the Body of Christ. Yet, studies pertaining to the unity among ordained ministers are very rare; hence the originality of this work of Tharayil.

The author develops the theology of fraternal communion in priesthood and ministry basing on *Lumen Gentium* n. 28, *Christus Dominus* n. 28 and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* nn, 7 and 8. However, references are made to other relevant numbers of the same document



and teachings of Vatican II. Moreover, sufficient attention is given by the author to substantiate the argument drawing insights from the Scripture, liturgical texts and the writings of the Fathers. The scientific nature of the work and the clarity of thought and expression therein give readers an easy access to the themes dealt therewith. Since Tharayil makes his investigations and reflections in view of relating the theme with the spirituality deriving from the exercise of the pastoral charity of the ordained, the book is naturally appealing to all those who are interested in theology and who serve in seminaries and other formation houses, as teachers and spiritual directors. Again, the author's in-depth analysis of the Council Documents in terms of communion among the ordained members of the Church invites the Orthodox theologians who criticized the *De Ecclesia* calling it a "hierarchology" due to the lack of a proper synthesis of Pneumatology and Christology in Vatican II. The work would be more appealing if Tharayil could present the communion theme in its proper christic-pneumatic perspectives. Yet, the ecumenical import of this work is to be underlined since ministry is one of the major issues on which the present Churches of East and West seek *rapprochement*.

The book is comprised of four chapters followed by Conclusion, Bibliography and an Index. As the author himself puts it, "The first three chapters present separately and precisely the Theology of Priestly Unity and Fraternity... in three distinct aspects, namely, dogmatic and universal, pastoral and particular, existential and ministerial based on the above mentioned three Council Documents". Adding appendices to the first three chapters, Tharayil helps the readers to have a "chronological and progressive analysis of the sources, origin, development and doctrine contained in the Documents". By synthesizing the various perspectives emerging from the investigation, the author defines the spirituality of priests in the context of the fraternal communion among ordained members of the Church especially between priests and bishops (but not relating the theme with deacons!). This work will indeed create some interest among theologians to render all official ministries in the Church at pneumatic means to promote the desire of the Spirit, namely, "life and peace" (Rom 8:6) at personal, ecclesial, social and cosmic levels.

Dr. Joseph Areeplackal CMI

G.C.Nayak, *Philosophical Enterprise and the Scientific Spirit*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, (1994), pp,xii + 160, Rs. 195/- SBN-81 - 202-0405-0.

Prof. G.C.Nayak, the former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri, and Visiting Professor in the Department of Buddhist Studies and Philosophy at Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh since 1992, adds to his list of philosophical writings one more critical study on some of the interesting philosophical topics in his latest title, *Philosophical Enterprise and the Scientific Spirit*. The book is a collection of Philosophical Essays written from a secular perspective and with a scientific bent of mind. The topics are of seminal importance, such as those of values of life, social justice, political thought, hermeneutics on Vedantic and Buddhist theories, inter-cultural issues, meaning of life and questions of delusion.

Going through the whole book carefully an open minded critique would agree with the author that the methodology of his discussions on the various living issues of our times, is based on an open-minded enquiry, characteristic of a scientific temper. A non-dogmatic, presuppositionless scientific enquiry is a difficult pursuit, a rare specimen in researches especially on religio-philosophical and cultural phenomena. However, Prof. Nayak in this book attempts to do such a dispassionate enquiry into the critical validity of some of the assumption of our nationally reputed writers and leaders like Gandhi, Nahru, Tagore, Radhakrishnan and others. Along with a reconsideration of the socio-cultural and political ideologies of these leaders of the recent past, Prof. Nayak also spotlights anew the hermeneutical positions of Sankara and Sri Buddha on the meaning of life and end of life and the deep-seated delusions their inter-pretations of life left behind for generations to brood over.

I would like to highlight just on one of the strong views of Prof. Nayak, namely *social justice* in the context of the *varnāshrama dharma*. On page 57 of his book the author says that he is led to think that what appears to be a form of "social justice" according to *varna dharma*, is as a matter of fact *injustice* to a large section of the society which is deprived of the opportunity

to grow freely in accordance with its aptitudes and talents. On page 60 the author is more convinced to state that there is nothing like *social justice* immutably fixed once and for all; social justice needs to be reviewed and re-evaluated from time to time in accordance with the demands of the society just as the notion of *dharma* also undergoes change according to the social needs.

There are so many such insightful rethinking on several of our traditional assumptions which Prof. Nayak has reflected in this book. The book may be recommended for enlarging the vision of creative thinkers.

**Dr. Thomas Manickam**

Saju Chackalackal, *The Word in the World: A Study on the use of the Scriptures of the World Religions in Christian Worship*, Vidya Vanam publications, Bangalore-560029, India, (1995), pp. xvii+110. Rs. 60.00 (\$ 9.00.)

Saju Chackalackal, lecturer in Philosophy, at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, has published a study on the liturgical use of the non-biblical scriptures in an elegant book form with an enriching Foreword by the renowned bible scholar Prof. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI of DVK, with the title *The Word in the World*. The book deals with one of the crucial issues of Comparative Religion, namely, the religious use of the Sacred Scriptures of other religions in Christian Worship contexts, such as Eucharistic Celebration. The author follows the usual historical and documentary critical method to establish his thesis in favour of using Sacred Scriptures in the Eucharistic context of the mystery celebration of Christ's saving acts, as it is also related to the communitarian contexts of the Christians living in close neighbourly friendship with the people of other religions. Their mutual, social, and cultural living together also often entails this sharing of the spiritual messages of Sacred Scriptures, especially when members of other religions are also present in the Christian celebration of the Eucharist.

The author draws considerably from the insights of the contributors of the two important research seminars conducted by the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) Bangalore on the subject from two perspectives: one on the "Use of the Non-Christian Scriptures in Christian Liturgies" papers and statements

published in 1974 with the title, *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, and the second on the traditional question of "*Communicatio in Sacris*", (the papers and resolutions are published with the title, *Sharing Worship*, (NBCLC, Bangalore, 1988). Hence this book of Saju may be considered as a sequel to the discussions going on in contemporary theological circles in India.

In the section, "A creative Response", the author gives his own understanding of a criterion for integrating the Scriptures of other faiths into Christian liturgy and life as follows:

Today when we attempt at a genuine Christian life in India, patterned according to the genius of the native cultures and religious practices, that which becomes the criterion is our faith in the person of Christ. Jesus' approach to the Jewish Scriptures and their practices, and again, the renewed outlook of the first Generation-Christians remain the guiding lights in our earnest attempts in this regard, (p.82).

The book may be a good digest reading in contemporary theological writings on the use of non-Biblical Scriptures in Christian Worship contexts.

**Dr. Thomas Manickam,**

William Desmond, *Being and the Between*. State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. xvii+557.

"William Desmond is the leading philosopher of his generation. He also writes brilliantly, has a sure grasp of the history of thought, knows a religion from the inside, and is appreciative of the efforts others make to the unending attempt to know what is, what must be, and what can be known." (Paul Weiss "Reply to William Desmond". The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. XXIII, *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, (ed). L.E. Hahn. Chicago. P. 558). Thus Paul Weiss articulates his appreciation of William Desmond and his works. The profundity of his thought and the number of his works would have undoubtedly proclaimed as much, had Paul Weiss not done so. The publication under review - *Being and the Between* is the systematic and comprehensive presentation of

William Desmond's philosophy of *Metaxology*. In this philosophy, Desmond completes a self-imposed task of developing an antidote to the pessimistic and deconstructivist postmodern philosophies which denied even the possibility of philosophy and metaphysics. Currently, William Desmond is Professor of Philosophy and the Director of the International Programme in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

Through several books and scores of articles, William Desmond has been preparing the ground to sow the seeds of his fundamental philosophy of *Metaxology* (William Desmond. Being and the Between. State University of New York. (SUNY) Albany. 1995..... *Perplexity and Ultimacy: Metaphysical Thoughts from the Middle*. SUNY. Albany. 1995..... *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy*. SUNY. Albany. 1992..... *Philosophy and its Others: ways of Being and Mind*. SUNY. Albany. 1990..... *Desire, Dialectic and Otherness: An Essay on Origins*. Yale University Press. New Haven. 1987.) The *Being and the Between* articulates the systematic metaphysics he has to offer.

It is difficult to do justice to this complex and subtle study in a review such as this. The title is insightful. The book is a condensation of rich thought which has intellectual rigor, subtlety and clarity of expression. The readers of this journal may be unfamiliar with his thought and hence I shall give the gist of his reflective system.

Being between or metaxological thinking is a perspective in looking at things and philosophizing. It doesn't follow a rigid pattern of thought looking always for a middle. Metaxology is the union of two Greek words - *metaxu* (between) and *logos* (discourse) *metaxu* refers to a state of being and *logos* to a discourse. Desmond defines the metaxological as that which "gives a *logos* of the *metaxu* (a discourse to) the middle" (Desmond Williams. *Being and the Between*. State University of New York. 1995. p.xii..... *Desire, Dialectic and Otherness*. Suny Press. p. 126.) Metaxology is articulated in terms of a four-fold way of thinking about the meaning of being. The first part of the book is set apart to develop this four-fold mindfulness of being and to convince us of the necessity of reaching out to and practicing the *metaxu*.

First, the univocal sense of being illustrates the unity of otherness and sameness while, second, equivocality explicates the difference of being and mind, stressing oppositional otherness. Third, dialectics elucidates a reintegration of the mind and being, however, colouring this conjunction with a favoured sameness. Fourth, the *metaxu* is a pluralised mediation, receiving the otherness with reverence while keeping the self-respect of the self. The *metaxu* is the climax of this metaphysical mindfulness, at work in every other inferior level. Desmond refuses to call these four-fold mindfulness just new categories; they are means of transcendence, of transcending both of being and mind. For him, there is no master category. The *metaxu* is an end product, inculcating all the other levels; yet separate from it and complementing and completing it, yet it is also a beginning hiddenly at work in these three.

In thinking the *metaxu*, Desmond doesn't fumble before the perennial questions. He searches out the truth in the middle. Its search is not for any axiomatic geometrical truth. We arrive at the truth of the *metaxu* neither through the deductive nor the inductive principles. The *metaxu* manifests this truth between concreteness and abstractness, between exigencies and potentialities. The second part of the book unravels the journey of the mind and being, from origin to the Good through creation, things, intelligibilities, selves and communities, being true, creating a web of relationship.

Desmond's philosophy has theological resonances and hence has a religious dimension too; that is to say, as a binding force between the other and the self, in the true sense of religion. The mind opens up before the other and receives the other with a fellowship that fosters an intimacy. It is nurturing the other without pitying the self. It is being intimate while keeping a distance. It is a welcoming smile thrown to the other, as Desmond himself often does personally. In his own terminology, *metaxu* manifests a "vector of transcendence", of being mindful of the other and oneself. There is neither a sugary death of the mind in the multitude of beings nor a choking embrace by the other. It is a transformation as well as a transcendence.

Hence this philosophy is an antidote for the postmodern capitalist, competitive and consumerist western society. Being open

for the other and wondering at its splendour, radically renews the foundations of this society and moulds a more sociable, communicative, supportive and affectionate community of beings rather than a calculative, determinate, independent, hedonist, utilitarian, pragmatic and isolated entity.

A theological dimension can also be drawn from the *metaxu*: namely, God as the 'agapeic other' or as the 'agapeic being', the Good, the Truth, the Intelligible that invites selves to make the ultimate confession that "before you this is who I am". This true confession transforms the self from a mentality of "I will" to an "I am willing": self-transcendence passes from self-insistence to a kind of will-lessness. "It is the simple and elemental willingness, open to all, even that which kills me... it is a heedless love of the whole. And the name of this love is God."

According to Desmond religious worship is the acceptance of and response to this love. It is also the ultimate praise of the other without demand. Thus, Desmond courageously takes up the cudgel against modernity, the doomsday philosophers and the soothsayers proclaiming the death of metaphysics and God. God is once again becoming a meaningful notion in a metaphysics that gives meaning to life.

Another interesting point for reflection is the claim of plurivocity. No single method of acquiring knowledge has superiority over the other. There is no totalization, no absolutization and no gradation in this plurivocity. Science, art and religion are all important others to philosophy, because all of them have their origin in the agapaeic astonishment and erotic perplexity. It is a common inheritance, unreserved to any intelligibility, surpassing the axioms of geometry. The *metaxu* transcends the instrumentalization of science blending its *logos* with *mythos*.

Desmond, though, concedes that his main aim is not to criticize neither his contemporaries nor his predecessors. In his attempt to situate and contrast his idea of the *metaxu*, he evaluates these philosophers and the philosophical systems developed through the centuries. Scepticism and scholasticism, positivism and deconstructionism, rationalism and empiricism, all kinds of "isms" come under his scrutiny. He evaluates scepticism as a negative perplexity,

scholasticism as too much of a package deal, positivism and deconstructionism as the two extremities of a determinate philosophy whose origins can be traced back to Aristotle's notion of 'to be is to be intelligible'. Desmond deconstructs Cartesian dualism and discovers the inherent absolutist univocity in it. Kant's equivocal obsession for scientism is also under attack. Desmond accuses him of siding with the self due to the synthetic a priori. Kant's 'architectonic' tendencies for the completion of metaphysics were also attacked. Heidegger is also reproached for his belief in the technical will to power as the alleged completion of metaphysics.

Desmond appreciates Hegelian dialectics because of its ability to resurrect erotic perplexity. The problem with Hegel is his absolutization of the self. Though there is an interplay of the otherness and the self, otherness is squeezed in to thought thinking itself and hence in to the self. It is again a determination through logical categories.

Great thinkers and revolutionaries from all ages like the Buddha, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Jesus Christ, Saint Augustine, Saint Francis of Assisi, Spinoza, Fichte, Pascal, Nietzsche, Whitehead, Freud, Marx, Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, Einstein, Cezanne... are all evaluated in the perspective of the sphere of metaxology. He derives thoughts from their thoughts, develops their positions and distances himself from their passions and thus strenuously creates a metaxology of the history of philosophy, unravelling the middle path without any confusion or overlapping of ideas. Space limitations constrain me from making any elaborate study on Desmond's position about the above mentioned authors. Though such an evaluation would be interesting, I fear it overrides the mandate of a book review. Therefore I shall discuss some specific issues that may be fruitful.

Though Desmond refuted any architectonic aim of the completion of metaphysics, and warned against any such deception, my feeling is that metaxology may be useful to go beyond every other system or metaphysical thought and achieve a kind of completion. He rejects any ultimate claim of the completion of metaphysics that puts an end to all metaphysical strivings. Metaphysics should return to the original sources whenever it is felt to be rotten and should be encountered anew in every situation. This is a positive merit rather than a negative one. Metaxology is not merely a re-



newal, it also provides a newness. It is the taste that differentiates the quality of a wine; not the bottle. Desmond provides a new brand of wine in an attractive bottle.

Desmond's theistic outlook and metaxological talk are not foreign to the Indian philosophical tradition. Many parallels can be easily drawn between metaxology and visistadvaita. This comparison needs some explanation.

Desmondian contentions of univocity and equivocality have analogies in the Indian philosophical tradition. Advaita denotes univocity and Dvaita articulates equivocality. The fundamental question debated between Advaita and Dvaita is whether reality is one or many. Advaita advocates monism; i.e., reality is only one. Sankra was the propounder of this univocal system. Everything else is illusion or maya for him. Counter to this reductionism, Dvaita argues that reality is equivocal or two. In Desmondian terms, they are the other and the self. Between these contesting positions Ramanuja, advanced a third way joining the two to form a qualified monism. Reality is neither one nor many but an in between, a qualified one. It is not the synthesis of opposing natures as Hegel viewed it. A qualified unity can be interpreted from the two perspective. Doesn't *metaxu* promise a going beyond dialectics? In fact Desmond had deeply probed the dialectics of Hegel and the ways of going beyond it. (*Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy*. SUNY. Albany. 1992.) Here I shall attempt only a general suggestion. More can't be expected from a book review. The complementarities and differences are promising and worth probing.

When I read through the pages of '*Being and the Between*' I felt that I was encountering an Upanishadic sage who is very much preoccupied with the passage from 'Asat to Sat' (non-existence to existence), from 'Thamas to Jyothi' (ignorance to knowledge) and 'Mruthyu to Amrutham' (death to deathlessness). Desmond's statements on the blending of the sameness and difference sounds like the Mahavakys - 'Tatvamasi' (that you are) and 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am Brahman). *Metaxu* advocates the communion of the self and the other, transforming them into an intermediated community, a beautiful middle, accepting the difference while celebrating the sameness.

*'Being and the Between'* is the metaphysical vision of William Desmond that he developed as a being in the community of beings and in the world of things. From time immemorial, the challenge of existence has always intoxicated and excited human mindfulness. This rencontre of mind and being is an 'agapeic astonishment, and an 'erotic perplexity'; an encounter that induces a simultaneous overflow from the abundance of existence as well as an inflow to the abyss of ignorance, creating an undulation in one's own mindfulness. Desmond acknowledges that this is the primal source of his philosophy. He believes that it should be the origin of every other philosophy and persuades us that we should descend to this seed of innocence when philosophy is felt to be fetid. This is the why of his writing *'Being and the Between'*; his magnum opus. He intends neither to belittle the endeavour of his predecessors nor to sow another seed in the jungle of philosophy. As a thinking being, he is responding to the universal call of the endless renewal of philosophy by returning to the very foundations of wonder and splendour. In the interplay of agape and eros he discovers the renewal of metaphysics that helps to go beyond the dialectics of totalitarianism. This metaphysical activity crystalizes into the philosophy of metaxology, of being in the middle, perfecting and completing all his hitherto work and efforts.

This is a thought provoking metaphysical vision. It challenges the post-modern pessimist and the deconstructionists. He shows that philosophy is possible in our times. Metaxology is promising system of thought that transcends univocity, equivocity and dialectics. It also transcends cultural barriers and grasps the hands of traditions totally foreign to it. It proclaims not an end of metaphysics but a promising renewal by a return to the sources. Philosophy thus becomes renewed. This book will be of great value for any reader interested in philosophy of both the West and the East. The book is a delightfully written and appealing example of creative work. This bold and intriguing argument for philosophy and of philosophy is essential reading for anyone interested in philosophy.

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