

The Significance of Indian Religions for the Philosophy of Religion *

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The philosophy of religion as a special branch of philosophical inquiry into religious ideas, beliefs and concepts is regarded as a comparatively recent development and a product of the modern Western mind, although some analysis of religious ideas goes back to ancient times, as says Wayne Proudfoot in a recent encyclopedic article (under the chief editorship of the late M. Eliade).¹ He defines the philosophy of religion as the philosophical scrutiny of religion and gives it two main tasks: (1) assessment of the rationality of religious beliefs with some attention to their coherence and to the cogency of arguments for their justification; and (2) the descriptive analysis and elucidation of religious language, belief and practice with particular attention to the rules by which they are governed, and to their context in the religious life. The article is somewhat limited in outlook by concentrating in its survey almost exclusively on concepts which stem from the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, particularly on its idea of God, and hardly touches on non-theistic traditions of Asia, which is somewhat surprising in view of the life-long involvement of the chief editor in comparative religion.

Even narrower is the entry in another encyclopedic venture published twenty years earlier by the same house: according to W. P. Alston, the philosophy of religion is occupied with reasons for and against, and especially with arguments for the existence of God, and also with critical evaluation of religious ideas and the nature of religious experience. Analytical philosophers who restrict themselves to the analysis of concepts and types of religious utterance are regarded as placing themselves outside the discipline of the philosophy of religion.² Besides the omission of non-theistic traditions

* The study was presented in the congress *Czechoslovakia, Europe, and the World* held by the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, and the Council of Scientific Societies of the ČSFR in Prague (26 June - 2 July 1993).

- 1) Wayne Proudfoot, "Philosophy of Religion", in: Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 11, London & New York: Macmillan 1987, 305-334.
- 2) William P. Alston, "Problems of Philosophy of Religion", in: Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 6, London: Macmillan 1967, 286-288.

from his consideration, we have here a further limitation of the field of the philosophy of religion to mere logical argumentation.

There is, of course, no lack of basic works dealing specially with the philosophy of religion, often using it as their title. I will refer to the one by J. H. Hick, since it is one of the latest and since he would appear to recognize the importance of taking into account ideas of all known religious traditions.³ Hick says that at one time the philosophy of religion meant religious philosophizing, often in the sense of a defence of religious convictions, but believes that its proper meaning is philosophical thinking about religion. And he stresses right at the outset that as a branch of philosophy and not of theology, it seeks to analyse concepts such as God, *dharma*, Brahman, salvation, worship, creation, sacrifice, *nirvāna*, eternal life etc. (pp. 1-2). But despite his occasional references to the concepts taken from Indian religions, including the non-theistic ones, his analyses are still heavily dependent on materials and methods derived from the religious history of the Christian world. This possibly prompted Arvind Sharma to tackle the theme from the Hindu perspective in a book which is clearly modelled on Hicks work.⁴ The obvious drawback in his contribution is the fact that it does not include the whole of the Indian religious tradition, since it leaves out the Buddhist standpoint.

Both Hick and Sharma occupy themselves predominantly with the first task of the philosophy of religion as outlined by Proudfoot, namely with the arguments for and against the existence of God, with the problems of the origin of evil and with various types of Theodicy, with the rational justification of revelation and faith, with the question of verification or falsification of religious teachings and with the conflicting truth claims of different religions. Sharma gives more attention than Hick to the question of human destiny, especially from the Hindu angle of the doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation, which is dealt with rather clumsily by Hick who also fails to deal adequately with the Indian concept of liberation (*mokṣa*) as a final state of salvation in comparison with the Christian notion of immortality and resurrection.

As to the second task, that of descriptive analysis and elucidation, both authors dedicate some attention to religious language and its peculiarities with respect to its meaning and to the question whether it has cognitive value, but there is not enough systematization of doctrinal concepts. There is, however, an important point made by them. When considering the achievement of the ultimate religious experience as reported on by mystics of different traditions, both seem inclined to consider favourably the position, expressed more explicitly by Sharma (p. 163), but admitted, with some initial

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- 3) John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall International, Englewood Cliffs 1990.⁴
 - 4) Arvind Sharma, *A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion*, London: Macmillan 1990.

hesitation, also by Hick,⁵ according to which the differing accounts of the object of that ultimate experience, given by mystics of various traditions, may not be an indication of experiences of different realities, but rather of different ways of experiencing an identical reality.

This is a truly universalistic outlook and quite obviously, I think, a result of the input from the Indian religious scene, and particularly from the all-embracing tendencies of Hinduism. It reminds one immediately of the well-known Indian parable of a group of blind men, inspecting an elephant and reporting on their differing experiences of him according to the part of the huge body that each of them was able to investigate by touch, and also of the positions of such different Indian personalities as the nineteenth century Bengali saint Ramakrishna and the recent academic philosopher of Hinduism, Professor S. Radhakrishnan.⁶

I think that at this point it is my duty to select a work on the philosophy of religion which would represent Czech scholarship in the field, naturally from the time before the Marxist catastrophe. My choice is Fr. Linhart.⁷ Although a member of the Theological faculty (in Prague), he was at pains to strike a sound balance between on the one hand the scientific approach to our knowledge of the world and life which respects only empirically and experimentally established data and on the other the philosophical interpretation of reality which must go beyond mere description, classification and systematization of data and has to venture into the tricky territory of trying to elucidate the significance and meaning of reality and, of course, of life itself, including the life of the individual.

In undertaking this task Linhart nevertheless guarded himself carefully against any temptation to use or introduce into his approach any specifically religious cognitive procedures. To him, philosophy had to remain firmly anchored in empirical knowledge and its elucidations had to be compatible with the scientifically established picture of the world and take into account results of empirical research into religions undertaken with the use of psychological, historical and sociological methods. But it does have the task of subsequently going further and probing into the question of the essence of religion as well as tackling the problem of its veracity. Here, however, he was well aware that the philosophy of religion, if it stays on the empirical platform compatible with scientific knowledge and method, cannot reach definite and categorical conclusions. In other words, it cannot provide

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- 5) He first speaks about "characteristically different unitive experiences", which nevertheless have "important common features", and eventually admits that "... it is a possible ... hypothesis ... that the great religious traditions of the world represent different human perceptions of and responses to the same infinite divine Reality." *O.c.*, 119.
- 6) Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1939.
- 7) Fr. Linhart, *Úvod do filosofie náboženství*, Praha: Sfinx Janda 1930.

generally valid logical reasons for the veracity of principal religious tenets such as the afterlife. What it can do is to show that there are sufficient reasons for the recognition of the *possibility* that such tenets may be valid.

The reasons for the acceptance of this possibility which philosophy can offer are not purely logical (although they are not by any means anti-logical) and they cannot be metaphysical, since such reasons can usually be turned round to assert the opposite of the original propositions; these reasons can only be *ethical*. The spiritual and moral life of man can have true and deep meaning only if the spiritual values for which he often so obviously struggles have lasting existence, i.e. if they are eternal. This, of course, requires immortality and faith in immortality is indeed the most essential ingredient of religion and also the basis of all higher life. Only in that context can human life have true and lasting value. And so in this way Linhart's acceptance of at least the possibility of this higher basis of reality on the ground of sober research and analysis suggests for the philosophy of religion in particular, and for philosophy in general, a status which most academic philosophers of today have long resigned themselves to being without.

This stance of Linhart's is bold and modest at the same time. Its boldness is surely obvious in the face of prevailing academic scepticism or current avoidance on the part of philosophers of any commitment to ethical conclusions which would have a bearing on real life. Its modesty lies in his restraint with respect to assertions and his contentment with showing mere possibilities rather than positing false certainties of faith. He never oversteps the mark to impose conclusions from one area, in his case the ethical one, on other areas of research or on the whole of reality as if they were universally proven. This, sadly, cannot be said about most theologians and many scientists. The former sometimes advocate knowledge by faith, the latter often conclude that what their science cannot find or prove does not exist and has to be excluded even from the realm of the possible: varieties of reductionism - historical, sociological, psychological, biological and even sometimes chemical or physical - have been imposed on the field of religious studies as explanations of the phenomenon of religion and religious experiences, without even a glance in the direction of philosophical analysis. The culmination of this attitude was the pseudo-scientific stance of Marxism, now no longer in a position to impose itself by force on academic research, but by no means yet fully overcome everywhere.

Linhart owed his balanced philosophical approach to the critical realism of T. G. Masaryk, whose religious philosophy always respected obvious facts of life and who was backed in his thought by scientific knowledge which has become an integral part of man's understanding of the world and of himself, but he did equal justice to values whose province is the spiritual and ethical dimension of reality, the existence of which could not be explained away as mere psychological experience, but which demanded the recognition of its

ontological anchorage.⁸

Linhart was sufficiently aware of the wide religious scene; thus he paid some attention in his historical survey of the evolution of religion to the so-called primitive stages of religion, as also to the Indian religious scene, but he did not derive from the latter any stimuli for his scheme and assessed it rather abruptly. Vedic religion is alluded to in Max Müller's term *henotheism* only in connection with the emergence of the idea of the unity of godhead, pointing to the higher form of monotheism; the later stages, which he does not name expressly but which obviously fit both Brahmanism and Hinduism, are referred to as examples of *pantheism* and of the stage of national religion dominated by a hereditary caste of priests. Buddhism as a doctrine of salvation is granted the status of a world religion (together with Christianity and Islam). But Linhart had difficulties with the absence of God in its system and more or less dismissed it as too negative, individualistic and quietistic. According to him it is truly a religion only when it becomes untrue to its original doctrine by elevating the Buddha to a divine status.

Here is, of course, the weakest point of Linhart's approach, which is reflected in his scheme of the philosophy of religion. It is entirely dominated by a theistic outlook derived mainly from the Judaeo-Christian world of ideas. As to the actual task of the philosophy of religion as a research discipline Linhart defines it as twofold: (1) to determine the *essence* of religion as a given fact of human life (*quaestio facti*) and (2) to investigate the metaphysics (ontology) of the ultimate basis of religion, its veracity, validity and justifiability (*quaestio iuris*). Both these aspects are reflected throughout his book and we had a glimpse of them when touching upon the concept of the afterlife as belonging to the essence of religion and when pointing out his stance as to the validity of this tenet - as being within the sphere of logical possibility and supported by justifiable ethical reasons.

We can see that the views of the authors so far quoted on the task of the philosophy of religion do not quite coincide, although they show some overlap. It would be possible to add many other authors with the same result. So I think that I am left with no other choice but to produce yet another formulation of the tasks or contents of the discipline of the philosophy of religion as I would like to understand it, before attempting to outline to what extent Indian religions can influence our perception of the subject and its approach to its tasks.

Each of the mentioned formulations has obvious valid points and I would not even exclude from the field of the philosophy of religion the activity which

8) Whether Linhart is right in classifying Masaryk's religious philosophy as an effort to reach a synthesis of realism and idealism, is a question which would merit further discussion. There is no doubt in my mind that Masaryk's ideas could still have a powerful impact on contemporary religious thought and should be given wide-ranging exposure.

Hick so easily dismisses as religious philosophizing. But, of course, there are priorities and the first one is, to my mind, the conceptual analysis of human thought and the ways in which it was expressed, including descriptions of human experiences, in so far as they have religious contents; analysis must be then followed by systematization which involves a certain categorization of religious concepts and, I believe, also a typology of religious philosophies.

Second comes the task of interpretation or elucidation of religious teachings in terms compatible with philosophical means of expression which would have been made possible by the preceding analysis. In other words, it is necessary to attempt to express in philosophical terms what religious teachings actually mean by their statements. This would include the consideration of language problems arising from religious statements, including those which refer to objects or realities inaccessible to normal human cognitive capacity, but claiming cognitive value.

The third task is the vexed problem of the veracity of religious teachings or their validity or at least their justifiability as ontologically conceivable in the realm of the possible. Here one can or even must anticipate that the veracity of religious tenets in terms of objective proof is all but ruled out. A certain kind of validity may in some circumstances be acceptable for them, e.g. on psychological grounds, but never on generally acceptable ontological grounds. Their justifiability in the realm of the possible is, however, a different matter and has already been hinted at in connection with Linhart's arguments. But perhaps we could go even a little further and try to assess them from the point of view of their *likelihood*, not only on the basis of ethical reasoning, as Linhart suggests, which lends them only the status of possible realities, but even on the grounds of logical probability which would give them the much desired ontological reference.

There is a fourth area which, I think, deserves consideration, namely the progress of philosophical thinking about religion, as Hick calls it. Historical surveys of standpoints from which religious doctrines and phenomena have so far been interpreted would provide a useful starting point for revisions of views and the development of new ideas in the subject and so the history of the philosophy of religion is no doubt a valid proposition as an auxiliary discipline. Of course, various thinkers, be they active philosophers or historians, have been expressing views about religion since ancient times, long before the academic discipline of the philosophy of religion came to be defined, and these would naturally belong here as well. But some, if not all, philosophers, who may be classified as system builders, have developed their own speculative views on matters religious (an activity to which Hick applied his label of religious philosophizing) and these, I am sure, should also be included in this context. I am hesitant, though, to venture a pronouncement on the activity itself. Would the religious philosophy of an active contemporary speculative thinker be entitled to admission or would it have to wait,

until it became history?

What now of the contribution of the Indian religious scene to the field of the philosophy of religion as an academic discipline?

It would appear that a positive, although more or less qualified, answer can be given with respect to all four tasks, even if an extensive demonstration of these contributions would require lengthy research. I will confine myself here to a very brief survey of the possible directions in which such research could proceed.

The contribution to the first task is the biggest one. It has to be taken, of course, in a qualified way, but we can find many instances of clarification of concepts, descriptions of religious experiences and their evaluation, and even here and there a start towards some kind of categorization of concepts and towards typology of religious teachings. In the first place, there are extensive and in some systems reasonably well formulated definitions of God or of the ultimate reality which, when taken into account in the process of analysis of religious concepts for the purposes of categorization, considerably modify the accustomed approach to the problem of the existence of God, his nature and his relation to the world. Even the early depictions of the divine in the creation myths of the R̥g Veda foreshadow the philosophical definitions of later systems. One of them declares goddess Aditi (the name means infinity) to be the original precreational entity, the divine by itself. She was the source (mother) who gave birth to the world, the gods and all other creatures. Besides her name there is no other description of her, until she enters the world, to which she gave birth, by herself being born into it as the daughter of god Dakṣa, one of her sons, to become the queen (guardian) of the eternal law (*ṛta*) according to which she had given birth to the world and which regulates both the natural and ethical processes in it.⁹ It is a long way from here in time and in the way the language came to be used, but not in the actual meaning of what is being expressed, to the highly abstract concepts in the Vedāntic system in which the divine by itself, the *nirguṇa brahman*, is without marks, but then appears to have personal properties as the *saguṇa brahman*, when viewed as the Lord. And even in this system the world is still governed by the eternal law, now known as *dharma* and in the ethical sphere as *karma*.

Not only do we have to revise the outdated and simplistic categories into which religions are often classified, such as polytheism and pantheism, Vedism being supposedly an example of the former and Vedānta of the

9) For more details see my article "A Multidimensional View of the Vedic Religion", in: Glenys Davies (ed.), *Polytheistic Systems*, (COSMOS - The Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, vol. 5), Edinburgh University Press 1989, 12-27. For Aditi and other cosmogonical myths see my article "Symbolism in the Vedas and its Conceptualization", in: Karel Werner (ed.), *Symbols in Art and Religion*, London: Curzon Press & Glen Dale: The Riverdale Company 1990, 27-45.

latter, but we have to incorporate into the scheme of the philosophy of religion, when analysing the pros and cons for his existence, a concept of God which is both an impersonal force, albeit an intelligent one (or possessing a kind of consciousness or an element of mentality, i. e. not being blind and mechanical), and a person and Lord, although himself subject to a law which is above him (a notion well known to the ancient Greeks, but usually disregarded in the philosophy of religion since it does not operate in the living religions based on the Judaic tradition). This coexistence of two seemingly opposing modes of being might be a problem for some theologians, but it is not unfamiliar to mystics (e.g. Eckhart), and it would appear to be the normal state of affairs peculiar to the ultimate reality (not only in religion, but also in subatomic physics).

If we now view the concept of God as representing the ultimate reality, the Indian scene will provide us with a further widening of its scope via the Buddhist *nirvāna* which is neither a personal God nor an impersonal divine intelligence and the source of the world, but a state of being when perfection is reached. Even here the coexistence of the two opposing modes continues, despite protestations by Theravāda scholastics: lay Buddhists happily worship the Buddha, although not as a God, but as the highest perfected person existing on the level of *nirvāna*, while in the Mahāyāna system the ultimate reality called *dharmakāya* has its absolute personal aspect in Ādi Buddha.¹⁰ Only the creation link to the world is not there, but the cosmic law is. It seems clear to me that introduction into the philosophy of religion should no longer concentrate narrowly on the question of the existence of God (who creates the world and decrees the laws of existence), but should rather, or also, consider the problem of the ontology of the absolute or ultimate reality and alongside it the notion of the cosmic law inherent in reality with its dual aspect of natural and ethical efficacy.

There are many other concepts to be considered, but I wish to mention briefly just one more as an early example of the typology of religious philosophies. It is given in the Buddhist Pāli Canon in the Brahmajāla Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya. There the Buddha enumerates sixty-two possible speculative views about the ultimate nature of reality and man's place in it. Needless to say he shows where they go wrong or are incomplete and offers his own global vision and solution. While, naturally, most of those possible views are not represented in the known history of human thought, those which have been developed, can be fitted into the Buddha's scheme quite well.¹¹ Christianity, with its doctrine of a one and only creation and a Son of

10) For the dichotomy of "personal-impersonal", coexisting in the absolute, cf. my article "Symbolism in the Vedas. . .", *o.c.*, 34 and 44-45, and "Mysticism and Indian Spirituality", in: Karel Werner (ed.), *The Yogi and the Mystic*, London: Curzon Press (& The Riverdale Company) 1989, 29.

11) The typology of this discourse is very sophisticated. There is a competent translation with

God born into this world who shows the way to his father in heaven would be explained in the scheme as derived from the limited memory of only one of Jesus' previous lives with Brahma in heaven. (Inhabitants of the world of Brahma, at the time of the Buddha the highest god of Brahmanism, are often referred to as his sons.) All the basic tenets of the Christian faith would be accepted as valid except that of eternal life after only one terrestrial one. The final solution can be worked out only after a struggle over many lives, not gained by a mere act of faith or through grace. Again we come across a concept, this time of the afterlife and salvation, which was familiar to the European ancient world, but has not so far been given its due consideration in introductions into the philosophy of religion as a living faith or a view at least as worthy of analysis and description as the Christian one.

As to the second task of the philosophy of religion, namely the interpretation or elucidation of religious teachings in terms compatible with philosophical means of expression, we can quite confidently assert that it does happen in India frequently and competently, even if not in the directly investigative way to which we are used in our academic research, but rather in polemics and discussions between rival schools. The eventual necessity of an overview brought about the emergence of a number of surveys of the teachings of all existing schools of philosophy, such as the *Sarvadarśanaśaṅgraha* (compendium of all systems) written with a considerable degree of objectivity. In India, of course, all systems of philosophy either are systems of religious philosophy or dedicate a substantial portion of their exposition to the questions pertaining to religious tenets, and that goes even for the system of logic which sometimes also approximates the linguistic analysis of religious propositions. It is, I think, still an area open to exploration which could show whether our modern approach has something to learn here.

In the third area of philosophical preoccupation with religion, namely that of the veracity of religious teachings, their validity or at least justifiability as ontologically conceivable, India certainly has something to offer. It is, of course, true that in a way all Indian schools of religious philosophy take for granted the existence of a transcendental realm, culminating in some kind of spiritual ultimate reality, be it God or a state of being in absolute freedom and perfection. It is also true that the tenets of individual schools of thought and sectarian teachings differ in their descriptions and understanding of this ultimate reality. But at the same time there is a widely spread awareness shared virtually by all schools that all such descriptions are mere approximations or only pointers to the real thing. And the final proof of the ultimate is obtained only when it is reached and experienced. This is maintained

commentarial exegesis, an introduction, analyses and summaries by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Discourse on The All-Embracing Net of Views: The Brahmājāla Sūtra and its Commentaries*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society 1978.

especially by circles within the Hindu tradition regarding spiritual practice, which usually goes under the name of yoga, as essential for the final experience and therefore for the final proof or verification of its existence. In early Buddhism this principle is expressed most clearly in the well known Kālāma Sutta of Aṅguttara Nikāya and on many other occasions. What is asked for is an initial portion of confidence in the expounded teaching and in the instructions how to go about the spiritual practice in order to find out truth through personal experience. In other words, the 'proof of the pudding is in its eating'.

This, I think, would correspond to what Hick calls the idea of eschatological verification (p. 103 ff.). In the theologies of theistic systems of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions such a verification is virtually impossible to contemplate since its final proof is accessible only after death. Indian systems, on the other hand, maintain that progress on the spiritual path can furnish a certain evidence, accessible to rational analysis, during one's lifetime and most of them allow even for the realization of the final state or absolute truth in this life. The Buddhist system further offers certain criteria accessible to observation by outsiders both for intermediate stages on the path and for the final perfect state. These are the so-called four stages of sanctity. Similar criteria can be adduced from Hindu sources, although they are not formulated in them as clearly as in the Buddhist Pāli Canon.¹² There is also a comparable approximation to the question of verifiability during one's lifetime in the teachings of some mystics from other traditions, including the Christian one.

Satisfying as it may be for the followers of these systems and practices to look forward to verification by experience of their beliefs or expectations or even to feel able to proclaim such an achievement, this verification, if it takes place, will remain necessarily only individual or at best communal - shared by a few, but never demonstrable in a way which would allow its universal acceptance. However, the philosophy of religion has to give this phenomenon its full attention, especially if it can be encountered and studied on the contemporary religious scene. And it is in the context of Indian yoga and in some schools of Buddhist practice such as Japanese Zen or Theravāda *vipassanā* (insight) meditation that claims of living experiences of spiritual accomplishments are being made. In face of the more or less private or subjective nature of such accomplishments which makes verification by an outside observer impossible even if they are shared by several individuals, it will be a question of deciding on their validity in the context of communal fruits or values they bring into the lives of those who have developed such

12) Cf. my paper "Perceiving the World - 'Seeing' the Absolute: On Indian Theories of Knowledge and Perception" (forthcoming; presented in the Hindu Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on 19.11.91).

accomplishments and also of those around them, or even to society at large. This will involve comparing them across the boundaries of epochs and traditions. One result of such extensive study could then be at least a tentative conclusion about the validity of these claims as factors in real life, if not in the ontological sense with regard to their object. Of course, the possibility of their ontological basis has to be discussed as well, extended to include the consideration of its likelihood as suggested above.

As to the fourth task of the philosophy of religion as a subject, namely to produce a viable history of the philosophy of religion, we cannot expect such a well defined discipline in existence in India prior to its inception in Europe, but surveys of religious ideas and teachings have existed there for several hundred years in the form of compendia already mentioned. Besides, every school of Indian religious philosophy indulged in arguments and polemics against opponents, sometimes amounting even to analyses. Even the Lokāyata school of Indian materialists, whose original sources have not been preserved, dedicated much effort to describing, ridiculing and refuting all religious beliefs and tenets on religious matters held by other schools of philosophy, as is obvious from citations and polemics against it in the texts of those other schools. And so a viable history of religious philosophizing in India, as distinct from the usual histories of Indian philosophy, is certainly feasible and also most desirable. Its impact should then be noticeable in every new approach to the problems and tasks of the philosophy of religion in general.

Religious philosophizing, in fact, is still going on in India, even in academic circles, except where modern European trends prevail. It is a centuries old tradition and it would certainly be a part of the philosophy of religion as a subject. Maybe my hesitation, expressed earlier, to include it is unnecessary. If the philosophy of religion is not going to be limited to mere categorization and analysis of concepts, religious philosophizing will in some degree always surface within it. It is certainly present in Linhart's work when he applied his ethical reasons for personal immortality and proclaims spiritual values, for which man constantly struggles, to be eternal, although he slipped back into religion when he saw the last reason for immortality in the faith in God (p. 192). This need not happen from the Indian point of view. Indian religious philosophy substantially widens the scale of reasons for the possibility and perhaps even likelihood of the existence of eternity, immortality and its apprehension by the human mind even without the need to believe in God in the traditional theistic sense, thus opening to many more people the possibility of seeing the lasting value and deeper meaning of life.

RESUMÉ

Významnost indických náboženství pro filozofii náboženství

Autor rozebírá dvě definice filozofie náboženství objevující se v současných encyklopediích náboženství a filozofie a shledává jejich orientaci úzce teistickou. Obdobná výtka se týká i nejrozsáhlejší monografie o filozofii náboženství J. Hicka, zatímco A. Sharma jej opravuje pouze ze stanoviska hinduismu. Také vymezení úkolů filozofie náboženství je u citovaných autorů neúplné, lze je však výhodně doplnit názory Fr. Linharta (*Úvod do náboženství*, 1930). Vycházejí z předchozích definic formuluje pak autor vlastní vymezení těchto úkolů do čtyř bodů: 1) pojmová analýza náboženských nauk, včetně jejich kategorizace a typologie; 2) jejich interpretace filozofickou terminologií, včetně analýzy jazyka náboženských výroků; 3) zhodnocení platnosti náboženských nauk nikoli jako objektivně prokazatelné, nýbrž s ohledem na jejich logickou přípustnost nebo pravděpodobnost; 4) tvořivé filozofování o náboženství a vytváření teorií o náboženství a jeho povaze.

Autor pak hodnotí, jaký přínos mohou indická náboženství mít pro filozofii náboženství jako akademický obor. Největší je v bodě 1), a to tím, že rozšiřuje pojem božství o absolutno, které transcenduje teistické koncepce, dále v kategorizaci a v typologii nauk a teorií. K bodu 2) podstatně přispěly indické diskuse a polemiky soupeřících filozofických škol a pragmatické souhrny nauk všech existujících škol. 3) Většina z nich si je vědoma prozatímnosti svých formulací; nemá je za dogmata víry, ale nabízí jejich "eschatologickou verifikaci" duchovní praxí (např. jógou), byť i omezenou na praktikující jedince. 4) Indie má jen ojedinělé náznaky tvoření teorie náboženství (např. v buddhismu), avšak náboženské filozofování počalo záhy a dosud je provozováno s živým vědomím důležitosti dimenze transcendentna pro hlubší pochopení smyslu existence.

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