

RESPONSES

What is Indian philosophy?

The art of living in harmony

*Aaron Ortner**

You are a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and your background is in ancient philosophy, Greek and Latin. Did these ancient languages bring you to philosophy or was it the other way around?

Like many of us, I think, the embryo of philosophy was nourished by language. I began studying Latin at fifteen because my stepfather was hired by Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers to adapt Waldo Sweet’s *Artes Latinae* to a digital format. I was a guinea pig for the project but warmed to Latin because it clarified my thinking and threw my conceptual framework into greater relief. Wittgenstein might say that my concepts became more pronounced. By the time I started studying Greek at twenty-seven, I had already spent years pursuing philosophy. My background with Latin made plain to me that, if I were to make any great advancement with Greek thinkers, grounding myself in their language would be a critical venture.

What is the focus of your thesis?

I intend to explore how the analogical dialectic that forms the foundation of Aristotelian identity transitions into A.N. White-

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head's 'actual occasion'. The 'actual occasion' is most generally the analogical relation of space and time that unites them as a continuum and serves as the basis for a form of identity constituting thought and extension that I call 'constels'.

Philosophy in the Western canon begins in Ancient Greece, and yet we know that Indian thought influenced Greek philosophy early on. Pythagoras is said to have travelled to India. How deep were these intellectual currents?

The intellectual currents flowing between the two are far deeper and more complex than any one instance can show. It is quite true that India influenced Greek philosophy on several levels. At the most general level, it seems that there was an infusion of Indian thought into Presocratic Greece and then a dialectical contribution from Greece to India around the second century A.D. There are obvious similarities between the *Iliad* and the *Mahābhārata* and the *Odyssey* and the *Rāmāyana*. The development of the One and Many along with Macrocosm and Microcosm seem to be down to an influence on Pythagoras. Along with this, the level of detail concerning metempsychosis between the Upanishads and Heraclitus provide powerful evidence of Indian influence.

While there is endless debate concerning the precision of date and detail, scholars generally estimate the development of Indian philosophy as being between 1500 and 500 B.C. The Greeks made rapid strides with many similar concepts between 700 to 500 B.C. Such a quick development in Greece, compounded most of all by the demonstration that Heraclitus borrowed from some Upanishads (and the general Persian connection in Ionian politics and therefore its educated class) suggests that Greek philosophy was given some impetus by influences from India through the mediation of the Persian empire and its political assemblage.

What other interesting connections have you found between ancient Indian and Greek thought?

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A sensible view is that some ideas occur independently while others are influenced. Similarity in detail often suggests a broader foundation of similarity, maybe even to the degree by which we may discover a common root. After all, independent ideation seems as likely to occur on an individual scale as on a societal one, or even the entirety of the species. For instance, one may study a text and draw conclusions that have already been contemplated elsewhere. Indeed, our internal power of reason might be likely to generate identical ideas because the external world provides us with similar ‘texts’ as it were.

The diffusion from India to Heraclitus is indicated when we see similar details or advancements in short periods that have taken much longer elsewhere. Heraclitus’ system of five transformations (elemental) and two exhalations (the Greek equivalent of Indian *samsara* and *moksha* in which the soul either returns to another body or is released from the cosmic cycle) are not preceded by similar characterisations before him in the Presocratic traditions, yet the exact same series of transmutations occur throughout Upanishadic literature (Brihadaranyaka, Yajnavalkya, Chandogya, and the Kausltaki Upanishads).

For instance, Heraclitus’ ‘dark exhalation’ recycles the soul back into a reincarnated body by a certain order of transition through the elements, Soul:Water:Earth:Water:Soul. This is called the ‘path of the fathers’, which eventually proceeds through smoke to a re-entrance of the cosmic wheel of rebirth, while another, the path of the gods, follows a different order and goes through fire to a release from the cosmic wheel to the realm of gods. But these are very particular and exact similarities. This suggests that there ought to be a continuity of tradition that can explain the combinations of a complex system as it has gone through discrete stages of development. This example, then, shows how an influential Greek Presocratic derived his doctrine from India.

On the other hand, India only had a “proto-dialectic” before the Alexandrian diffusion. Much of the same process occurred there. Such a proto-dialectic is indicated in the structure of the Loka yakitas doctrines and the Lokayata schools, Sañjaya, and the Jain

doctrine known as the *syādvāda*. Likewise, Nāgārjuna systematised Siddhartha's use of skeptical denials after the Alexandrian diffusion. While India did not have a fully generated dialectical method until Nāgārjuna or later, dialectics itself was a mode of thought derived from *ideas* that diffused from India to Greece during the Presocratic age. The notion of cyclical time, One and Many, Macro and Micro, and the tripartite doctrine of reincarnation. This is because, explicit or not, dialectical modes of thought must have been latent in constructing the idea of substrate from the One and the Many, as Plato used dialectic to complete Parmenides' riddles. Pythagoras unites the One and Many through the harmony of numeric ratio. This necessarily leads to the inference of uniting various types of motion, drawing the necessary link between the finite (straight line) microcosmic human and the eternal macrocosmic god (curved or circular).

Dialectical circulation is also the process of diffusion between major and hitherto considered isolated cultures. That means that the circulation of ideas between traditions is part of the structure and shape of each individual tradition so that the common structure of ideation is circular in part and whole. In other words, the dialectical progression of ideas that guides and culminates in any given tradition, say, Greek or Indian philosophy, can also be found within the wider realm of ideational development between societies, like microcosms to their universal macrocosm.

The Precession of Equinoxes might exhibit the root of such a dialectic. It is the foundation of myth, yet no one is able to triangulate the location of its origin. It is likely the foundation of the syncretic nature of myths, religions, and philosophical systems of thought. Most likely it centres on the 2nd millennium B.C. in or around Mesopotamia. Still, its dialectical nature can be seen in the attempt to reconcile the geometry of space and astronomy with the arithmetic of music. Where the former provides objective empirical organisation to the world, the latter introduces the narrative exposition of subjective experience, both of which combine to generate mythic stories in order to create an objective ethical system.

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Indeed, the combination of the sexagesimal (circular) and decimal (straight) systems created numerological foundations for the Platonic Solids in the *Republic* and the genealogies of Genesis. Plato's five solids, for instance, can be derived from certain numbers that are contained in the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* myths. The simplest solids as formed by the triangles under the ratio of the root of two and the root of three, which are combined in the golden ratio Φ (1.68) as a fifth the dodecahedron, which is quite literally Time and the Space of the Fixed Stars, or the motion of the Same (Φ is the symbol of both philosophy and the Golden Ratio, symbolising the combination of the curved, or circle, and the straight.). Geometrically, each of the four solids represents a soul and its analogous state that, when organised symmetrically, form *Kallipolis*, the ideal city.

The point is that, while this progression took over a millennium to reach its full import in Plato, its mythic, astrological character shows clear signs of dialectical progression. Both regions, though bracketed from each other, were able to draw together by realising the same cosmic principles that express themselves in humanity's power structures.

If you have one, who is your favourite ancient Greek thinker and which idea of theirs do you think has burning relevance to debates in contemporary philosophy—or quite simply to modern life?

That is a difficult question because I can't decide between Plato and Aristotle. The full answer to this question, at least for me, can be found in Whitehead's *Science in the Modern World*. There he draws out several themes of relevance here in the form of debunking the fallacies of misplaced concreteness and simple location. Fundamentally, these fallacies are responsible for the 'vacuous actuality' that is at the core of scientific nihilism. These are not only philosophically incoherent but are even morally divisive. Our inability to resolve quantum mechanics and Einsteinian relativity lie in our inability to let go of Cartesian fallacies.

Are you seeing growing interest in ancient Indian philosophy? What are some opportunities and limitations for classical Indian thought to be studied and taught in universities in the West today?

Well, as with anything, when one begins to study an area, one tends to find a new world of emergent interest. The West tends to be complacent in studying any other tradition than its own. I have been guilty of that for too long. ANU and UH Manoa are trailblazing a higher form of dialectical philosophical education. Yet, I do think students should be well-grounded in their own tradition. It makes for a truly greater adventure when one begins to look elsewhere. There is so much in both traditions that I feel it may be an error to attempt taking it all in at once. There should be some sort of balance, I think, but I am not the one to know what that is.

You live and work in Hawaii. *Synkrētic* has a strong focus on the thought and traditions of the wider Indo-Pacific, including the Pacific. Are there connecting points between ancient Greek and Indigenous Pacific thought?

Well, as with my response to the question pertaining to Indian and Greek diffusion, I think that the obvious connection is astronomy and myths. I am no expert in Hawaiian lore, but people such as Bruce Ka'imi Watson are researching and teaching on the subject of Hawaiian philosophy. It is likely that the philosophical tradition of Hawai'i was capsized by the advent of the West. They seemed to be developing something along the lines of epistemology. I look forward to seeing what Ka'imi finds.

You have written a paper in the form of a Platonic dialogue about modern philosophers travelling back in time to Ancient Greece to thrash out philosophical problems.¹ What inspired your fantastic premise?

I was inspired to write the dialogue as an undergraduate who had a fervent belief that the Western tradition had lost its way (much as Whitehead describes it). I was not yet very familiar with American

process philosophy or the phenomenologists, otherwise I might have been less severe in criticising modernity for forgetting its roots. That was the point of the time travel aspect, that Western philosophy was dead. Scholars, I thought (and still think true of some circles), had simplified the ancient Greeks in the same manner that Nietzsche and Heidegger criticised academia: they lost sight of analogical dialectic.

Your time travellers Theodore Sider and Derek Parfit, as well as their companions Bernard Williams, John Locke, Plato, and Aristotle, do not come to any agreement on the nature of persistent identity, do they?

No. Theodore Sider and Derek Parfit convey chronological superiority. They think their simplistic notions are greater than ancient ones which serve as the foundations of their own thought.

Plato was not just a great in philosophy but a great storyteller, as were other philosophical writers like Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Sartre. What part do you think creativity plays in producing good philosophy?

I think creativity is essential to good philosophy. Indeed, I think understanding the past by uniting it with the present is an act of creative 'recollection'. Plato was a playwright who reorganised Homer and Greek drama according to the concepts that were recently emerging. I think every philosopher (and every person in general) would benefit greatly from learning music comprehensively. To understand the 'movement' of the universe means more than physics. It comes through familiarity with creative themes and harmonies. For Whitehead, philosophy and the human intelligence advances by acts of creative novelty that harmonise the universe such that good prevails and reshapes evil. Nietzsche and many existentialists believe that life is justified only as an aesthetic project.

Aristotle suggests in his *Poetics* that ethics can only be fully understood when human action and history are conceived of as on a stage (poetry is more philosophical than history). Intellect, when utilised

as a harvester of data, is only half realised. When different forms of data are creatively compared, the categories by which we understand the self and ‘the other’ arise. When we understand that the feather of a bird is the scale of a fish, we are able to understand Aristotle’s Category of ‘shod’. They all work like that, which is why Kant’s schematism arises from the ‘analogies of experience’. To develop a metaphor, Aristotle says, is the greatest form of genius.

For this very reason, I think your journal, *Synkrētic*, is so important. It underscores the importance of not elevating one ideology over another. It understands that thought and philosophy are dialectical. Karl Jaspers thought this was the most important step in reshaping civilisation after World War II. It is the art of living in harmony. I think he is right and that what you are doing is bolstering that effort. Thanks for the interview and good luck!

Notes

- 1 Aaron Ortner, ‘Time Travels to Greece: On Persistent Identity’, *Academia.edu*, available at: <https://www.academia.edu/33086710/Time_Travels_to_Greece_On_Persistent_Identity>.

The problem of evil in Hindu thought

*Akshay Gupta**

Your recent article in *Philosophy East and West*¹ discusses the age-old problem of evil in theology. What attracted you to this particular question?

I've been interested in questions related to human suffering since my undergraduate years. As I began to think of a topic to pursue for my doctorate, the topic of suffering was a natural choice. Initially, I was interested in the idea that God causes instances of suffering for God's devotees in order to bring them closer to God—this is an idea found throughout the *Bhagavata Purana*. This naturally led me to focus on the problem of evil and how it has been formulated and advanced in contemporary philosophy.

Which version of the problem are you responding to?

I primarily respond to the evidential problem of evil.

In the Middle Ages, Catholic theologians, among others in different traditions before and after them, developed theodicies to reconcile the existence of suffering with God's existence. How much has the debate in the modern literature moved on from these classical formulations?

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To a certain extent, many of the ideas of these theologians are still found in the modern literature. Eleonore Stump wrote a relatively recent book defending Thomas Aquinas' views on the problem of evil for example.² Free will continues to play an important role in most current theodicies, and has done for centuries. What's different about the modern literature is how it incorporates many of the tools of analytic philosophy, but you can still see the many intellectual inheritances from earlier times.

One old argument is that God gave people free will, such that evil, especially man-made evil like wars and economic inequalities, are not divinely ordained but are perhaps permitted because we were made free. How does the free will view in the contemporary literature differ from this?

You can still find this view in the literature, but generally there is more of an attempt to identify additional goods that result from evils. One common line of thinking is to say that evils and suffering lead to soul-making and help individuals develop a better moral character. Other responses might say that suffering helps individuals grow closer to God by deepening their devotion to God.

Your article explores Hindu responses to the problem of evil with a focus on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. What should readers know about this text to better understand your argument?

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is one of the most important Hindu sacred texts, and it largely focuses on the deity Krishna, who can plausibly be conceived of as an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God.

Also all-powerful, Krishna is the complete sovereign of the world. Is he a God comparable to the God of the Abrahamic religions?

With respect to these divine attributes, I would say yes. There are differences in other areas. For example, Krishna has a divine, spiritual body, whereas God is not considered to be embodied in the Abrahamic traditions.

What are some of the reasons that such a God would produce suffering in his followers?

One reason is to deepen the devotion of God’s devotees. In times of crisis, individuals often pray to God more fervently and sincerely, and on the whole this intensification of devotion is a valuable good in the context of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, as the ultimate aim in this text is for individuals to develop a loving relationship with God, which requires a certain purity to an individual’s devotion.

Another reason for suffering is that it can teach individuals certain moral lessons that shape their character. For instance, by experiencing pain, you can develop a greater sensitivity to others by reference to your own pain.

An additional reason for suffering is that it can enable one to develop a dispassionate outlook toward the world. This is important within a Hindu context, because attaining liberation from the world and love for God requires that one devote oneself wholeheartedly to God—and worldly attachments can sometimes impede the development of this devotion.

You mention a story in the *Mahābhārata* that is about forgiving even an act of horrific suffering. Does this mean that even such suffering can be reformatory and develop us morally?

Yes, even intense moments of suffering can be reformatory—even if not immediately. In a Hindu context, experiences of suffering leave “impressions” that persist in an individual’s “subtle body”—a mental body that individuals remain associated with as they reincarnate across various physical bodies. An experience of suffering can leave a strong impression, which can mould an individual’s psychology in a beneficial way, even if the effects of this are not immediate. For instance, a painful car crash may give a strong impression of pain. Initially, there may be some trauma, but once this has been processed, an individual may be, for example, more sensitive to the pain of others and more aware of the harsh realities of the world—which is a realisation that can propel them on a path

toward God. This formation of moral character can also persist as an individual reincarnates.

We are not always best qualified to measure the real significance of events that may seem evil to us, and which from a God's-eye view may look quite different. What do you think are this argument's implications for ethics?

That is an interesting question. I think that as far as ethics goes, individuals should try to do their best according to what they deem moral (for Hindus, this will involve consulting Hindu scriptural texts on certain issues). While it is true that individuals don't have a full God's-eye picture of everything, it is also true that it is not an individual's duty to try to fulfill God's ultimate plan. All one can do is try one's best and act in accordance with God's will (which, for theists, involves acting ethically according to injunctions of scripture), and God can sort out the rest.

What other texts in the Hindu tradition are or should be read as companions to contemporary debates in the philosophy of religion?

There's not a whole lot of work out yet. There's an exchange on karma in *Philosophy East and West* involving Whitley Kaufman, Monima Chadha, and Nick Trakakis.³ That's worth checking out. There is an upcoming volume on Vaishnavism, to be published with Routledge and to be edited by Ricardo Silvestre and Alan Herbert. The *International Journal for Hindu Studies* had a recent issue on theodicy as well.⁴

Notes

- 1 Akshay Gupta, 'The *Bhāgavata Purāna* and the Problem of Evil', in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2023): 66-81.
- 2 Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

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- 3 Whitley R. P. Kaufman, 'Karma, Rebirth, and the Problem of Evil', in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 55, Issue 1 (2005): 15-32; Monima Chadha and Nick Trakakis, 'Karma and the Problem of Evil: A Response to Kaufman', in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October 2007): 533-556.
- 4 Swami Medhananda (ed.), *International Journal for Hindu Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 3 (December 2021), Special Issue on Vedantic Theodicies.

The Eastern wisdom of ancient India

*Krishna Pathak**

Professor Pathak, you are the editor of a 2021 collection on mysticism in both East and West.¹ Does this work explore any direct or indirect connections between Hindu and Western philosophical traditions?

Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity to discuss my works and philosophical thoughts with *Synkrētic*. Yes, the book does explore the connection. I have a major chapter of my own in this book which is a brief comparative study of the philosophical aspects of both Vedic mysticism and Christian mysticism.² A dedicated section of the chapter argues that the source of cosmic origin in the Vedas appears to be ontologically and epistemologically ‘more mysterious than God in Christianity’.³ In fact, one of the main features of the book is that it contains research papers not only on Vedic philosophy and Christian theology, but also on Buddhism, Jainism, Advaitism, ancient Greek philosophy, and medieval and modern European philosophy. So, from the discussion of the book, the readers can definitely draw some sets of direct and indirect parallels between Hindu and Western philosophical traditions. I am pretty sure that the research material and the erudite

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inputs of this book will prove to be a very important reference source for any inquisitive mind.

You have been a member of the Kant society and wrote your PhD on the universalisability of Kant's categorical imperative. In your research, have you come across any similarities between Kantian and Hindu ethics?

It is true that I was a member of the Kant Society and even today I am associated with the society in one way or the other. Since the fundamentality of Kant's universalism theory and its indispensability in building an ethical society is similar to the concepts of Niṣkāma Karma and Svadharma given in the Hindu classical scripture the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, I realised that a worthwhile justification for writing a PhD would be the topic of 'The Universalizability of the Categorical Imperative: Re-examining Kant's Maxim of Duty', and thankfully I successfully did it. Although the thesis is primarily an analysis of Kant's moral philosophy and a defensive effort in favour of Kant's universalism against the communitarianism and neo-Aristotelianism of the American philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, and since there are some ethical similarities between the *Gita's* philosophy and Kant's philosophy, adding an appendix to the thesis on their ethical affinities was much more demanding. So, I added a fresh chapter to the thesis titled 'Nishkama Karma and the Categorical Imperative: A Philosophical Reflection on the Bhagavad-Gita'.⁴ If you allow me, I would like to briefly highlight two close similarities for the readers. Firstly, the doer or agency in both the *Gita* and Kant substantively has a moral character with the knowledge of good and bad, but due to internal and external factors, the agency fails to make the correct moral decisions. Secondly, both the *Gita* and Kant are non-consequentialists as they both speak about duty for duty's sake or *karma for karma's sake*.

In one article, you compare Kant's epistemology to the work of Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. Are their concepts similar in any way?

I must say that as far as I know this was the first paper of its kind as I have not seen or read any other research paper on Kant and Krishnamurti till now.⁵ To your specific question about the conceptual similarities in their philosophies, I would say that their ways of thinking are quite different and so are their philosophical thoughts. For example, Kant speaks of the conditioned (human) mind which has twelve pure concepts as its own categories of understanding, *apriorily* applicable to all objects of possible cognition. That means, knowledge is impossible if these concepts are not applied by the mind. Krishnamurti, in an epistemological contrast to Kant, speaks of the unconditioned mind which gets knowledge of truth and reality directly. He calls it intuitive knowledge or highest intelligence, which can happen 'when the mind is unconditioned or free from all concepts and sensuous representations'.⁶ For him, the conditioned mind 'keeps us away from the truth and reality.' However, two similarities in their philosophical positions can be mentioned: a) They both believe that the human mind is rational and can reach the highest point of intellect, and b) some mental representations involve *spontaneity*, particularly in case of *intellectual* intuition.

You have also written about the pessimist philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's reading of Upanishadic wisdom. Few Westerners had studied Hinduism in his day. Was Schopenhauer's reading well-informed?

This is an interesting question. Let me respond to your question with reference to my comments on this in an earlier paper.⁷ See, Schopenhauer was a German by birth but was very much Indian by thinking. This must have been the sole reason, I believe, that he preferred the Indian idealism of the Upaniṣads' monistic philosophy over German idealism. And since the Upaniṣads don't talk of pessimism, I find it very difficult to call Schopenhauer a pessimist

philosopher. Maybe that is a German way of understanding him. Nonetheless, you are right when you say that few Westerners also studied Hinduism in his day. For example, German Indologists like Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829), Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), Max Müller (1823–1900) and a few others who were contemporary to Schopenhauer did study Indian Sanskrit texts including the Upaniṣads. But I am not sure, as I have no textual proof, of whether they were well-informed about Schopenhauer’s reading of Hinduism. I can only assume with reasons that it is quite unlikely that Schopenhauer’s life and works were unexplored by his contemporaries and successors.

Has Schopenhauer cut through in *Indian* thought in light of the attention he paid to its key texts? Is he read, quoted, debated by Indian philosophers?

Yes, Schopenhauer has been one of the many German philosophers who has the most cut through with Indian scholars, but as App indicates, possibly his ‘encounter with Indian thought is a historical sequence of events’.⁸ However, it is true that Schopenhauer is a figure who is widely known, read, quoted, and debated by Indian philosophers. In fact, Schopenhauer’s love for Indian wisdom fascinates Indian researchers, particularly those who work on the Indo-German relationship or the East-West connection and the vital role played by the shared intellectual histories of the two countries. Likewise, it would not be an exaggeration to say that philosopher Schopenhauer’s intellectual passion for Indian philosophy ignited many German and other European minds to study Indian philosophical texts. And now an enthusiastic trend to study Indian philosophy and the Sanskrit language is rapidly growing in Germany.

You have written in defence of vegetarianism. What moral duties do we have towards animals and do you think some animals have a moral sense?

You have asked a very pertinent question. Since I am known to be frank and loud in speaking my mind on animal issues, I always argue that vegetarianism is one of the issues which is directly linked with our moral duties and behaviour towards animals. What duties, you ask? Don't we know that life *in itself* and in all forms is valuable, and that this is what determines the value of human life? So, we humans have no right to kill animals, if animals don't accept such a human *right to kill* and give us their consent. And I am not convinced by the argument that animals have no moral sense. Some of them do have a moral sense, even better than that of humans. Don't you think that unharmed animals are better than harmful humans? I think we should have fair reasons, though I know many of us don't have, to support the claim that animal killing that serves the purpose of non-vegetarianism is justified. In fact, it is very irritating to argue with those who project animals as inferior beings and defend their sickness to human superiority. I hope you don't get me wrong. Even if you do, I must submit a loud claim that we all have categorical duties towards animals, for example not to harm their lives (that means not to kill them, no matter whatever compelling reasons one has), to provide them with a favourable ecosystem, and to stop encroaching on them and exploiting their life.

The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras is said to have taught vegetarianism, which some even think he picked up sojourning in India. How much stock do you put in the theory of early Greek-Indian exchanges?

I am happy that you have mentioned Pythagoras, who is believed to have been greatly influenced by ancient cardinal virtues like *ahimsā* (nonviolence) and vegetarianism. But if you ask me to prove this belief by producing a textual reference, I would say I have a very little stock to put in the theory of early Greek-Indian exchanges. For instance, I can cite the Roman philosopher Lucius Apuleius (124-170 AD) and the Irish William Drummond (*The Rights of Animals*, 1838) who were of the opinion that Pythagoras visited India and learnt a lot from this land.⁹ That precisely answers your ques-

tion. However, even if there is no proof for whether or not Pythagoras picked up the idea of vegetarianism from India, I do believe that being a vegetarian is the best way to vitalise the human-animal relationship from the animal perspective, because animals are a human obligation, not a human prey.

There's growing interest in non-Western philosophy in Western universities. What are some of the debates in contemporary philosophy in which you'd like to see more comparative engagement with Indian and Hindu thought?

This is true that non-Western philosophy is now in greater demand among the students at Western universities, also among the students at Eastern universities of Japan, Korea, Thailand, and several others. The reason that I can see is that the world has now realised that the Eastern wisdom of classical, ancient India has much more to enhance their thinking, their knowledge and their worldviews. This is why in my recent interviews published by the American Philosophical Association I suggested that Indian philosophy, be it Hinduism or Buddhism or Jainism, must be taught at Western universities.¹⁰ But as far as your specific question is concerned, I would say that I would like to see more comparative engagement with Indian and Hindu thought on the issues of the origin and function of language, cognitive patterns of intuitive knowledge, mystical orientation, divinisation of the environment, Vedic mathematics, metaphysics of rituals, metaphysics of silence, and Hindu cosmology, *etc.* if I am to list them.

Who is the one Indian thinker you wish every undergraduate philosophy student outside India knew and why?

Although every Indian philosopher and founders of various philosophical schools, particularly of the classical period, should be known and read by the students of philosophy, if you are asking me to pick one philosopher then I would say that it is Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, who had a very short span of life but his original Sanskrit writings and commentaries on the classical Hindu texts have treasured most

of the ancient Indian wisdom. So, I would wish for students outside India to read Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and his philosophy, as I believe he presents deeper philosophical insights about life and the world than other philosophers do.

Conversely, which non-Indian thinkers do you think should be more widely read in the Indian academy and in philosophy schools in particular?

I will name Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the 18th century German philosopher whose profound philosophical thinking has revolutionised the human quest and efforts for knowledge and truth. His theories offer deeper cognitive reflections to a rational mind. So, I think Kant should be more widely read in the Indian academy, particularly in philosophy schools.

Notes

- 1 Krishna Mani Pathak (ed.), *Quietism, Agnosticism and Mysticism: Mapping the Philosophical Discourse of the East and the West* (Singapore: Springer, 2021).
- 2 Pathak, *Quietism, Agnosticism and Mysticism*, 229-248.
- 3 Pathak, *Quietism, Agnosticism and Mysticism*, 238-243.
- 4 This appendix was later published in the *International Journal of Applied Ethics*, Vol. 2 (2013-14), 119-140.
- 5 Pathak, 'Intuition as a Blend of Cognition and Consciousness: An Examination in the Philosophies of Kant and Krishnamurti', in Steve Palmquist (ed.), *Kant on Intuition: Western and Asian Perspectives on Transcendental Idealism* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 200-215.
- 6 Pathak, 'Intuition as a Blend of Cognition and Consciousness', 208.
- 7 Pathak, 'The Quintessence of the Upanishadic Wisdom and the Solace of Schopenhauer's Life', in Arati Barua (ed.), *Schopenhauer on Self, World, and Morality: Vedantic and Non-Vedantic Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 59-68.
- 8 Urs App, 'Schopenhauer's Initial Encounter with Indian Thought', in *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch*, Vol. 87 (2006), 35-76.
- 9 See also Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (Vancouver: UBC, 2008).

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- 10 The interview was published in two parts. The first part was published on 5 September 2022 and the second was published on 3 October 2022. See ‘Reports from Abroad: Dr. Krishna Mani Pathak’, *Blog of the American Philosophical Association*, available at: <<https://blog.apaonline.org/?s=krishna+pathak>>.