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Review

An Introduction to Indian Philosophy. By Christopher Bartley. London: Continuum, 2011. 245pp. ISBN: 978-1-84706-448-6 (hbk); 978-1-84706-449-3 (pbk). £60.00/£18.99.

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KEYWORD: Indian philosophy.

Writing a cogent introduction to Indian philosophy is no easy task, and it would be unreasonable to expect any such book to encompass the full range and history of this vast subject. After all, the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1970 onwards) currently runs to thirteen large volumes, with at least another sixteen volumes projected. Despite the overblown claim in the back cover blurb of Christopher Bartley's book—to be 'the definitive companion to the study of Indian philosophy'—the author does *not* try, unrealistically, to proffer a definitive guide. Rather, as he cautiously notes in the introductory chapter, the book could be described as 'a survey of some of the Indian traditions' (p. 2).

Bartley has made the sensible decision to limit his scope primarily to the classical Brahmanical and Buddhist philosophical schools from roughly the second through to the twelfth century CE. A final chapter devoted to Tantric philosophies of Kashmir Śaivism furnishes a touch of originality, given that this is an area of the subject typically overlooked by introductory texts on Indian philosophy. Nevertheless, it is a pity not to find any mention of Jainism whatsoever; for even if the decision to restrict the focus is understandable, it would have been courteous—both to readers and to Jains themselves—to acknowledge that the neglect of Jainism's important contribution to Indian thought constitutes a substantial lacuna. With this absence in mind, I can't help thinking that the title of Bartley's book requires a qualifying subtitle such as that of Richard King's *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

Although Bartley toes the familiar line of giving the most sustained attention to Vedānta philosophies, and to Advaita Vedānta in particular, he bucks the trend somewhat by placing five chapters on Buddhist philosophies in front of those on the Brahmanical schools. This structural decision pays off, affording opportunities later in the book to show how philosophers from the Brahmanical schools—including Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā, as well as Vedānta—were to some extent responding to Buddhist viewpoints. The book poignantly exhibits the vigorous engagement between competing philosophers and schools that has characterized the Indian milieu no less than philosophical traditions in other parts of the world. For example, the Sāṃkhya account of causation is contrasted with that of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (pp. 85–86); the dispute between Nyāya and Buddhist schools over the existence of a

permanent self is diligently dealt with (pp. 95–97); and the differences between the Buddhist Dignāga and the Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila concerning the conceptual content of perceptual experience are explicated (pp. 125–28). Moreover, the underlying soteriological impulse that drives both Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophies forward is not lost sight of.

Among the book's most impressive features is the abundance of primary textual material which has been translated by the author himself. I was surprised that more has not been made of this feature in the book's advertising, as, although this material is not translated here for the first time, it does transform the book from a mere introductory text into a resource for readers seeking a taste of the primary sources. On a more negative note, I should say that the excerpts from primary sources could in many instances have been better integrated with the surrounding discussion. In the chapters on Yogācāra Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta respectively, the quoted passages extend for more than four pages at a stretch. While some readers may see this as a sign of courageous willingness to allow the original texts to speak for themselves, others are apt to feel that they have been left at sea, struggling to work their way back to the dry land of elucidatory exegesis but not always finding it.

Plainly targeted at undergraduate courses (though also claiming to be suitable for postgraduate study), the book offers further reading suggestions at the end of each chapter along with a few 'Questions for discussion and investigation'. While both of these features are useful, I would have liked to see the study questions bear a more explicit relation to the contents of the chapter. Given that the book appears to be aimed at students with little or no previous acquaintance with Indian thought, it could also have benefited from a concise guide to the pronunciation of Sanskrit terms, and perhaps a glossary as well. Also useful—notwithstanding the notorious difficulties associated with dating early Indian sources—would have been a chronological diagram adumbrating at least the approximate relative dates of the principal authors discussed. Of course, with a tight word limit, such features would have eaten into the space allowed for actual philosophical exposition and discussion, but they need not have taken up more than half a dozen pages between them.

My most serious misgiving concerns the quality of the referencing. The problem is not with the lengthy translated passages; these are typically preceded by bold headings announcing the source text. But within the surrounding discussion the referencing is sparse. I can only assume that a deliberate decision was made to dispense with proper referencing for the purpose of saving space. This, in my view, was not a sacrifice worth making. Thus we find such things as paraphrases of the well-known dictum that it is 'better to do one's own *dharma* badly than that of another well' (pp. 3, 118) without any indication of locations where that dictum can be found; ideas are attributed to authors without identifying the text in which the idea is expressed—for example, 'The Buddha thought that all ritual performances were at heart self-interested' (p. 19); 'Udayana says that universals regulate causality' (p. 101)—and there are sporadic allusions to 'Later writers' (pp. 98, 114) or 'opponents' of some philosopher (pp. 83, 156), or claims that 'It is objected that...' (p. 164), without our being told *who* these writers, opponents, or objectors are. Vagueness of these sorts could have been avoided by some well-placed footnotes, thereby significantly enhancing the book's scholarly credibility.

A decent selection of western philosophers are mentioned in passing, thereby engendering a comparative element that may provide readers who have some grasp

of western thought with an entry point into the Indian debates. Such figures as Locke, Hume, Kant, Frege, William James, F. H. Bradley, and Michael Dummett are among them. This is certainly useful, though again it would have been *more* useful if accompanied by adequate referencing.

Despite the weaknesses I have highlighted—as well as a general need for better copy-editing or proofreading, or both—the book does fulfil the primary purpose of any introductory text, which is to present its subject matter in a way that is likely to stir further interest and an appetite for deeper inquiry. Taken on its own, the book is apt to leave many readers with more questions than answers, but that, of course, is no bad thing. The suggestions of further reading offer signposts for those who wish to pursue topics at greater length, and the author does an admirable job of marshalling a frankly bewildering array of material into a manageable and coherent work.