

PHILOSOPHY-TEA

MARCH 2002

VOL 1. ISSUE 2

Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of philosophy-tea. We thank all our readers for their encouragement and support. The last few attempts of conducting philosophical discussions have prompted us to think seriously about the nature of a philosophical discussion. The experience of attempting to bring together a diverse audience towards a philosophical discussion left us grappling with both conceptual questions as well as practical problems. What essentially is a philosophical discussion? For what is it that makes a philosophical discussion distinct from other kinds of discussion? Is there any specific method that a philosophical discussion follows and if there is how to integrate philosophy with other subjects. At the practical level the experience of experimenting with a speaker giving his/her viewpoint and letting the audience continue with the discussion was not altogether satisfactory. We felt that the speaker had a view which he/she had to get across and in the process would not let the discussion take its natural course. Then again, letting the discussion take its own course without any fixed subject ran its own problems. We had to deal with the discussion meandering into a varied number of subjects without any meaningful discussion emerging/evolving. We have come to realize that a fruitful discussion can only emerge by maintaining a balance between these two types of discourse. But how to maintain that balance is anybody's guess and still remains an open question.

In this issue, to keep the interdisciplinary nature of philosophy alive we have given space to contributors from non-philosophical streams. The only criterion being a sniff of philosophical flavor from their writings. We would like to mention that the editorial hand has been used sparingly and lightly.

We thank Prof. Amita Chaterjee (Jadavpur Univ.), Prof. Amitabha Gupta (IIT B), Dr. C.A. Tomy (IIT K) and Dr. K.S. Prasad (HCU) for their emotional encouragement.

We invite our readers to share their ideas and reflections in philosophy-tea- for no other reason but for their love of discussion.

Philosophy-tea events

Prof. Amita Chaterjee, Prof. Amitabha Gupta, Dr. Arindam Singh, Dr. C.A. Tomy participated in philosophy-tea. The discussion focused on "Why Philosophy".

Prof Satish Saberwal, an eminent sociologist met philosophy-tea and discussed the philosophy of social science. He shared with us the memories of his teacher Max Black.

Some members of philosophy-tea met **Justice Z.M. Yacoob**, Judge, Constitutional Court of South Africa. Justice Yacoob had an informal talk with them on violence and law.

Nation/nationalism - a concept / movement

Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It supplies a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own for the legitimate exercise of power by the state, and for the right organization of a society of states. The doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics, which can be ascertained, and the only legitimate type of government is national self-government. Not the least triumph of this doctrine is that such propositions have become accepted and are thought to be self-evident, that the very word nation has been endowed with a meaning and a resonance which until the end of eighteenth century it was far from having. These ideas have become firmly naturalized in the political rhetoric of the west, which has been taken over for the use by the whole world.

The field of nationalist phenomena includes the growth of nations and the national state, as well as ethnic identity and community. It spills into

number of cognate subjects: race and racism, fascism, language development, political religion, communalism, ethnic conflict, international law, protectionism, minorities, gender, immigration, genocide. The forms that nationalism takes have been kaleidoscopic: religious, conservative, liberal, fascist, communist, cultural, political, protectionist, integrationist, separatist, irredentist, Diaspora, pan etc. Although certain traits are common to all forms of nationalism, the social structure, the intellectual traditions, cultural history, and the geographic location of society in which nationalism asserts itself condition each form.

The concept of nation has been contested on two fronts: in terms of rival scholarly definitions, and as a form of identity that competes with other kinds of collective identity. While it is recognized that the concept of nation must be differentiated from other concepts of collective identity like class, region, gender, race and religious community, there is a little agreement about the role of ethnic, as opposed to political components of the nation; or about the balance between 'subjective' elements like will and memory, and more 'objective' elements like territory and language; or about the role of ethnicity in national identity. What is often conceded is the power, even primacy, of national, loyalties and identities over those of even class, gender and race. Perhaps only religious sentiments have rivaled national loyalties in their scope and fervor. At the same time national attachments can intermingle with, even slide into, other forms of collective identity, or alternate with them in terms of power.

There are important differences in ways of defining the concept of Nationalism, some equating it with 'national sentiment', others with nationalist ideology and language, others again with national movements. There is also a difference between those who stress the cultural rather than the political aspects of nationalism. Here it seems synthesis is possible, in that the ideology and movement incorporate political and cultural dimensions.

The spread of nationalism on a global scale is a result of the Europeanization and modernization of non-western and pre-modern societies. As a phenomenon of modern European history, the rise of nationalism is closely linked with the origins of popular sovereignty, the growth of secularism, the lessening of the older religions, tribal, feudal loyalties and the spread of

urbanization, industrialization and improved communications. Nationalism has undergone several transformations. It was an elite movement in the first century of its historical role, a "bourgeois" movement in the age of ascent of the middle classes. In its an ever-widening participation in the political, economic, social and second century it has become a mass movement in which the people at large demand a cultural life of the nation.

These are the fundamental issues regarding the ideas of nation and nationalism that are thrown up at the various stages of the trajectory of nation as a concept and nationalism as a movement.

- C. Bharath Kumar

Politics of being neglected

Philosophy is as old as Aristotle. Philosophy, as a special branch of knowledge, concerns itself with the anchoring virtues of mankind, which sustains life and living on this planet. Here comes the question of what philosophy has done for the well being of the society? Has it really done something? What are its utilities towards society? And if it has, how far has it contributed to the present day world where people are still dying of hunger and millions of children are yet to find their infancy? Another question can also be raised that what has philosophy achieved since Aristotle and Plato? Why is philosophy neglected? Some claim that there is no use of philosophy in this modern age - the age of technology. When people are dying of starvation then what is the use of philosophy? Let philosophy be there, as it is, at least for the time being. We should give more emphasis on technology, which can give us direct productivity. I claim, no matter what they say, situations of social problems do pull us to study philosophy. In the present situation, men are running after money as if money is the ultimate aim.

"Money money money

Brighter than sunshine

Sweeter than honey."

No place for philosophy here. For that matter not only philosophy, but there are also many subjects which are always neglected. I do not know whose fault this is - whether the present circumstances or us????

- Arabindo Sahoo. (A student of 2nd Semester Student of MA philosophy at HCU. His likes are logic and ethics)

My Indianness

*after nineteen sixty six
things are never as before.
up in the delicate HILLS,
demands plenteous at stake
while time travels in passé.*

*are we an ignorant lot?
where are our politicians?
who wept for our votes.*

*my home – in bottom hole
church bells and dusty streets
population increase at every stroke
unsolve demands kept increasing.
cleverly mixed, helplessness
at every nook and corner.*

*my Indianness, often challenged
outside North-East, a disease
sickening but unavoidable query.
a foreigner – me not understand?
as i am now – i am happy.*

*i am happy now – as i am
except for my chinky face,
"Nepali ?", "Thai ?", "Japanese ?"
"Chinese ?" hell even! "angrezi ?"
but never the question – "Indian ?".
i am an Indian, right?
i don't look like one
maybe, then whose fault ?
and my Indianness
remains firm and steady
but for how long?*

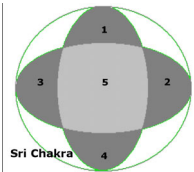
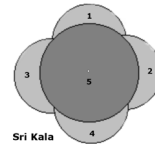
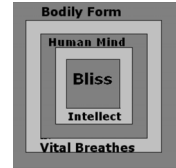
- C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau
(Presently research scholar in
Centre for Comparative
Literature, working for M.
Phil. in the area of modern
poetry from North East India
vis-à-vis modern Indian
English poetry.)

Reflections on Panch-Kosa

Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of five Kosas (sheaths) in which the Self manifests itself as the Ego. They are **Anna-maya** Kosa - physical body, **Prana-maya** Kosa of vital breath, **Mano-maya** Kosa, the mental manifestation, **Vijnana-maya** Kosa of intellect and understanding, and **Ananda-maya** Kosa of bliss. Further, each of these Kosas has five sub-divisions, the head, right & left wings, trunk and the tail of a bird with which the Kosa-organization has been compared. According to Sankara, the intention behind this characterization is to enable one to contemplate on the Kosas. This Analysis, of Self, is reflected in the shapes of altars. The Vedic sacrificial ritual Agni-Chayana lays down strict rules as how to construct the altar in a Hawk-like structure with a thickness of five brick layers. I found it quite convincing that the Pancha-Kosa concept is the chief inspiration for this **Bird-Altar**. My view draws support from the number of layers in the altar which yields the structure of five birds arranged one on another using perforated pebbles [Swayamatrna] in alternate layers so as to enable Hiranya Garbha [The Causative Force behind Universe], his idol being buried underneath, to get emancipated. The same idea is reflected in **Sri-Kala Yantra** (Graphic model of Brahman) which shows the Universe as expanding out of the infinitesimally small, conscious point (Bindu) which assumes the form of four intersecting circles whose centers are connected by another circle as shown in the figure. Here the Causative entity, Bindu, manifests itself in to a Five-Zoned geometric structure and still remains as the core element of the new. I believe that the five distinct Regions represent the five Kosas if this figure were considered as the Self as a whole and if the figure were considered to be any individual Kosa; they stand for the five sub-divisions of that Kosa. Even the two intersecting ellipses found in the basis of **Sri-Chakra**, (another graphic model of Brahman), though cannot be seen in a finished form of Chakra, stand for this Upanishadic over-view of Self. The reasoning for such a comparison is in their common Philosophical base and of course the similar symbolism.

In my opinion, the Five Sheath Organization of Self has influenced the symbolism and was highly celebrated among the circles of metaphysicists and mathematicians who strongly believed in Symbolic Expression of "the Reality". This in turn helped geometry and algebra to grow, though eclipsed by ritualistic dogma.

Chandramouli Rayaprolu (CMR is pursuing MCA at HCU. He loves Astronomy, Logic and Vedic Literature.)



Chalam and his aesthetics

"What is beauty?" is still a debatable matter. A number of philosophers have tried to define beauty. From Kant to Coleridge, valuable discourse came out. Kant says, "the beautiful is that which, apart from concept, pleases universally". In Kant's opinion, which gives pleasure to all that is beauty. In 'sense of beauty' George Santayana says, " beauty is value positive, intrinsic and objectified, or in less technical language, beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of things". "Beauty is the co-operation of pleasures."

So, pleasure is beauty, beauty is pleasure. Chalam, a great writer of Telugu literature looked in his life and in women's life for beauty. His heroines are rebels and serious excavators of beauty in their life. One can see Chalam's philosophy of beauty in his beautiful style. The sweet style he had transports you to a strange world.

An example of Chalam's philosophy of beauty is his controversial novel *Maidanam*. The story roams around Rajeswari, a character of a woman searching for pleasure. After eloping with Ameer, Rajeswari sees the beauty and new life. She explains the pleasure in living with him in *Maidanam*. She enjoys the moonlight baths in canal, playing in moonlight, chatting sweet nothings, enjoying the sweet cold wind. She rejects the criticism of their new life. She condemns the efforts of critics, who tried to create their love... pleasure as passion (kama). She tells that only with sex no one can live for a long time with someone. One needs to look for new pleasures. She talks of the pleasure which rejects comforts and joins Parmatma. The aesthetics here is that without matter one can see the beauty at higher level.

Chalam opposes the unsatisfied, beautiful life for women, which was robbed by patriarch society. In *Maidanam*, Rajeswari does not wear a blouse. Ameer and Rajeswari live as primitive human beings, without inequalities and taboos. They searched for pleasure in a free life. For that, they created for themselves an uncontaminated Maidanam. One can understand Chalam as a dreamer of beauty.

Jilukara Srinivas (Srinivas is a student of MA Telugu literature. His interests are poetry and aesthetics. He writes for *Prajashakti* and *Andhrabhumii*.)

Letters to the Editors

Thanks for sending me the newsletter. I look forward to the forthcoming issues and discussion. Best Wishes,

Sangeetha Menon
National Institute of Advance Studies, Bangalore.

It is a delight to see finally some "apna" philosophy page by Indian students in India. Keep it up. I have a small suggestion. Along with the news of the upcoming seminars and fellowships, perhaps major forthcoming publications (books, anthology) too can be highlighted for everyone's benefit. Most major publishing houses post this news and update it regularly.

Thanks.

Chhanda Chakraborti
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I very much enjoyed reading the first issue of PT, especially the editorial and "A Random thought". I shall look forward to more issues like the first. And you can look forward to a contribution (only financial, which is the only one I can make) in the mail.

with best wishes,

G.M. Kamath
Scientist, National Aerospace Laboratory,
Bangalore.
P.S: PT is a newsletter, clever and sanguine,
Talks of Language, Logic and Willard Quine.
It asks questions deep and old:
is reality red or or is it cold?
My philosophyT is I'm fine, you're fine!

I congratulate you and your team for the initiative taken for the Philosophy-tea. It shall really take a beautiful shape among the Philosophical Groups.

I have gone through the articles in this issue. A Random Thought is one I couldn't digest well. Could I request the author to correlate Science with mythology. I wish best of luck to you with your next issues.

With best Wishes
Roy, P.S. DEAN Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun.

Tea for Thought: Animal Rights

where are you off to?

to a talk on Animal Rights....care to join?

carry on... you know I am a biologist and I don't think there is anything wrong with the experiments on animals... look at the amount of benefits it has rendered to scientific research and to human beings... and let me add, to animal health too...

do you mean to say ends justify means?... and can't you see that animals have inherent moral rights... not only that... do you think the benefits to human beings outweigh burdens to animals... I feel animal researches cause more animal harm and distress than an equivalent degree of benefits to humans and animals...

hold on... hold on... without entering into the debate of ends justifying means let me answer your other arguments and it seems to me... the first one, is right based and the other is utilitarian oriented... as far as your first question is concerned, I think ascribing rights to animals is morally incoherent...

morally incoherent???... why do you say so... do you by any chance mean to say that there is a moral difference between animals and humans?... or something like that...

yes... not only that... it is not palatable that because animals have rights and therefore we as human beings should change our behavior toward animals... it is totally incoherent to me to say that humans have duties to animals because animals have rights... there is no basis for such rights...

aren't you undermining the virtues of human society by not being kind to animals?

let me complete... what you said about pain and all that utilitarian stuff... I have to say that even if we grant that animals can experience pain then by utilitarianism, my duty to minimize pain would apply to humans as well... and going by your position, I must infer that humans have duties to animals that can be powerful enough to override important duties to other humans... and besides that, if I make a simple utilitarian calculation such that my action maximizes the balance of

pleasure over pain or for that matter even if I take the complex forms of utilitarianism I land up in two problems... the first is that I have hardly any sense of animal pleasure other than imagining animals to be like other people, and I have no way of knowing how to equate different animals with one another or with humans. The second is if the duty is to maximize animal pleasure and minimize pain... I ought to be at war with the predators... and let me mention here that rejecting animal rights does not mean that we should not be kind to animals... animals certainly feel pain and we ought to act in a way so as to minimize the pain unless we have clear reasons to do otherwise...

suppose I buy your arguments... but then how are you going to justify forcible research on animals... like you stick to the position that there ought not be forcible research on human beings then why are you singling out the non-human animals for such researches and how would you react to Tom Regan's position on "indirect duties"... that is to say duty not to be kind to an animal, not to the animal itself, but to some human moral agent who may be its owner or someone who cares about it or you yourself...

yeah that's a point... I would surely love to argue on that but I don't think the editors would allow me to continue... I'll discuss the same in some other issue or maybe the readers may respond to it...

nice talking to you... but before you go why don't you ponder over these since you spoke about minimizing pain... say for example, public health and epidemiological research is far more important than animal research in improving public health and I am sure you would agree with me that better use of preventive medicines will eliminate need for animal research. Let me add clinical research has provided the key insights in advances in medical treatment and animal research has merely been employed to dramatize clinical findings. I am sure the development of alternatives will eliminate the need to use animals.

oh yeah sure... why not... ciao

- Aman Tripathi

Call for Papers/ Seminars/ workshops etc.

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. Special Issue of Hypatia. Deadline is April 1, 2002. Submission to: Hypatia, Center for the Study of Women in Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1201, USA.

GENDER AND MODERNISM BETWEEN THE WARS, 1918-1939. NWSA Journal Special Issue 2003. Abstract by April 1, 2002. Send to: Dr. Maggie McFadden, Editor, NWSA Journal, 109 IG Greer, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608 U.S.A. mcfaddenmh@appstate.edu.

ART, NATURE, AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE. A Special Issue of Ethics & the Environment. Send submissions of no more than 7,500 words by June 15, 2002, to: Chris Cuomo, Associate Professor of Philosophy, ML 374, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221. cjcuomo@email.uc.edu.

THE SOCIETY FOR PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES in conjunction with **The Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.** SPSHS Call for Papers 2002 Annual Conference, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois Thursday, October 10 - Saturday, October 12, 2002. Deadline: March 15, 2002. Philip Lewin Program Chair, SPSHS 865 Shalar Court Eugene, Oregon 97405. pmlewin@yahoo.com, www.towson.edu/sphs

Submissions

Philosophy-tea is published monthly. Short articles, letters, notes, discussions, provocations, reactions, half-baked ideas, reviews of papers/ articles/ books are welcomed. Please send in your articles to The Editors, Philosophy-tea. The articles may be submitted via email to

philosophytea@myrealbox.com

Please keep the submissions to no more than one typed, single space page. Editors need not agree with the authors on the issues. The responsibility of copyrights lies solely with the authors. The

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AlumniT

If you were a student of Philosophy Department, University of Hyderabad, please send us your name and address.

We, the editorial team

The philosophy of Philosophy-tea is to encourage learning and doing philosophy beyond class, lectures, examinations and textbooks. We started with an informal discussion forum and this newsletter is its natural extension so that a wider audience can be involved.

Aman Tripathi is founder editor of Philosophy-tea. His area of research is Epistemic Logics.

Bharath is looking after the publicity and is research coordinator of Philosophy-tea. His area of interest is Philosophy of Science and Social-political Philosophy.

Vegitha is the Chief Editor of this newsletter. She is working on non-monotonic autoepistemic logic.

Venusa is an MA student and he is interested in Cognitive Science and Music. He is the Assistant Editor of Philosophy-tea.

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