

recommend especially chapters V ("Materio-Idealism"), VI ("Human, All-Too-Human"), and IX ("A Force-Point World").

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The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies by Thomas McEvilley. Allworth Press, 2002. 731 pp. \$35.00 (hardcover). ISBN 1-58115-203-5.

In the introduction to his Sourcebook on Indian Philosophy, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan wrote that there is no instance of Western philosophy that does not find its counterpart in Indian thought. He then compiled his fine reference work to Indian philosophy, but it was not his objective to point out parallels and equivalences to Western philosophical views. It is this lack that Thomas McEvilley's thorough and erudite work *The Shape of Ancient Thought* fills, at least as far as ancient philosophy is concerned. Previously, if a reader of Radhakrishnan was thoroughly familiar with the Western intellectual tradition, he was bound to recognize similarities in the two traditions, but even in that case, because the technical languages of the two traditions differ, it might have escaped even the "expert" reader's attention how the Western and Eastern corpus of thought converged.

Thomas McEvilley's substantial volume, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, is a remarkable and thorough confirmation of Radhakrishnan's claim. McEvilley starts off by recognizing the naive modern Western belief that asserts that philosophy began with the Greeks, a view that has unfortunately contributed to a supremacist, racist Eurocentric intellectual perspective. It was often asserted, especially after the Enlightenment, that the Greeks were rational and forerunners of modern science and technology, while the Easterners were irrational mystics, superstitious and primitive. Such notions helped to justify Imperialism, letting the colonialist powers exploit the colonies, all the while asserting that they bring civilization to the heathen savages.

The realization that Sanskrit is an ancient and sophisticated Indo-European language, preceding in time the rise of Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy, gave a brief jolt to the view that civilization belongs to the white-skinned Europeans. McEvilley points out that nowadays both Indian and Western scholars have come to believe that perhaps there was an ideological agenda behind the claim that Sanskrit was introduced into India by an Aryan invasion of light-skinned nomads who conquered and shoved the indigenous Dravidians southward. This may well not be a historical fact, but rather an ideological attempt to preserve

the notion of northern supremacy. The claim of an Aryan invasion did not need adequate evidential support to gain acceptance. McEvelley points out there is no evidence of a Proto-Aryan language that spawned Sanskrit as well as Greek, Latin and German. Further, recent Indian scholars, convinced of the fact that Vedic and Upanishadic thought is autonomous to India and not an import by invaders, are rejecting, or at least questioning, the notion of "Aryan Invasion", and they seek to show that the Battle of Kurukshetra is undateable and is a fulcrum or source of Indian culture. They favor the notion that the Indus Valley is the matrix of all civilizations.

Complicating this matter is the view, gaining acceptance after the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1821, that Egypt is the source of civilizations. After carefully and critically presenting all these conflicting views, each supported by some evidence but much ideology, McEvelley champions none of them, but proceeds to show that the ancient world did not have sealed and fixed boundaries and that the ancient peoples were not "nationalists" in a narrow, racist way. There was lively interaction among the various kingdoms and nations, and exchanges and influences flowed in many directions. Greeks moved to and settled in the Middle East and were sought after by various ancient courts, perhaps most notably the Persian Empire. Goods were imported to the courts from the East: gold, timber, ivory and spices. Ideas and rites were also introduced. As reliable dating of such documents as the Vedas and the Upanishads is controversial; when one finds parallels among Greek, Indian and Mesopotamian thought, it is not useful to assert that one came from the other. What is demonstrable is that very similar and parallel ideas, both of the abstract, theoretical sort and of the imaginative, lyric-mythological variety, appeared more or less simultaneously in a number of ancient cultures. In the case of Thales of Miletus, usually recognized as the earliest of the Greek Pre-Socratics, this famous individual turns out to be a relatively recent settler in Greece and has Phoenecian forebears. It is believed that he served in the court of Croesus, king of Lydia, and that he spent two years in Egypt. Thus, he is a good exemplar of the probability of many culturally distinct notions contributing to the formation of insights. Without claiming any "borrowing" of ideas in any direction, McEvelley points out that ideas almost exactly the same as those Thales is known for can be found both in the Rg Veda, and the Chandogya Upanishad. If not both, the former certainly predates Thales.

Even prior to the emergence of the philosophers known by their name, McEvelley points out that many notions exist in parallel among the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Greeks and Indians. Some parallels are weak and speculative, such as the claim that both the Indian epic *The Ramayana* and the Greek *Iliad* are centered around the abduction and recovery of a royal female, Sita and Helen, respectively. But others are narrowly specific and concrete, such as the Indian parallels of each of the major Pre-Socratics. Thus, the book enables us to see that our conventions concerning our characterizations of cultural differences (the Greeks are rational; the Indians, mystics) are a prejudice that needs to be abandoned. There was remarkable trans-cultural traffic in the ancient world,

including the exchange of ideas. This made their time also a kind of "global village", even if we now tend to think that it is modern technology that makes such a notion valid. The many ethnicities had opportunities to translate each others' languages and exchange each others' ideas, of course leading to their respective developments, often in diverse directions. The breadth and wealth of McEvilley's scholarship, his ease of interrelating ideas expressed in a variety of idioms, and his lucid, intelligible style are impressive and instructive. This book should have a considerable impact on academic intellectual historians, which, in turn, will shape everyday attitudes as these scholars educate their students. The impact of the book should moderate our notions of a radically separate Eastern and Western tradition. Both the Greeks, with their Orphic and Dionysian practices, and the Indians, with their Tantric lore, have non- and trans-rational elements; but both have a logical, rational tradition as well. It is we who tend to see and prefer one over the other, depending on our own cultural and individual inclinations and selecting what is importantly present in which tradition. The truth is that thought, and in this instance, ancient thought, is cross-cultural, multi-ethnic and incredibly rich.

We will conclude by disagreeing slightly with Radhakrishnan, claiming that Eastern philosophers are not merely parallel to Western ones, but rather that they include a vast variety of details and nuances which are specific to them. McEvilley's thorough and detailed presentation of Indian and Buddhist traditions gives ample evidence to support this claim. Were Radhakrishnan really right, we should not be obligated to study the heritage from the East as our own, since these would already be incorporated in the Western corpus. But in reality, our exposure should be to the whole global intellectual heritage, since we are essentially human beings rather than merely Westerners or moderns.

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The Rebirth of Cold Fusion: Real Science, Real Hope, Real Energy by Steve B. Krivit and Nadine Winocur. Pacific Oaks Press, 2004. xxii + 298 pp. \$25.95 (paper). ISBN 0-9760545-8-2.

A great deal of misunderstanding about the New Science of Condensed Matter Nuclear Reactions has been caused by the early—and partly erroneous—name: Cold Fusion. It is true that the phenomenon upon which so much attention has been placed—heat produced in a system in which deuterium is transmuted