

Der Rezensent entgeht dem Dilemma dieser Rezension, indem er sie an dieser Stelle aufgibt.

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RASTELLI, Marion: *Philosophisch-theologische Grundanschauungen der Jayākhyasamhitā. Mit einer Darstellung des täglichen Rituals*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 1999. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 668. Band. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Nr. 33.) 433 pp. ISBN 3-7001-2854-1. 891 öS.

Readers will find more in this book than is promised by its main title. The presentation of the daily ritual mentioned in the subtitle, along with the chapter on Yoga which concludes the main text, cover 174 pages, which is more than the 169 pages covered by the remaining chapters. The chapters on the daily ritual and on Yoga are justified in the introduction with the argument that most of the Jayākhyasamhitā deals with ritual; moreover, ritual and Yoga cannot really be separated from the philosophical-theological ideas. This last argument contrasts strangely with the convincing claim, expressed in the same introduction and elsewhere, that the chapters dealing with philosophical-theological teachings (mainly chapters 3-5), were added later to a text which thus far was without "theoretical" teachings.

However this may be, scholars will have reason to be happy with the appearance of this book. Both the theoretical teachings and the daily ritual along with Yoga are presented in a clear and thorough manner which throughout remains close to the text. Numerous passages are carefully translated and analysed. This is most welcome, the more so since the Pāñcarātra tradition to which the Jayākhyasamhitā belongs has received relatively little attention from scholars apart from the well-known studies by F.O. Schrader and Sanjukta Gupta.

Some minor points of criticism may here be made. The present reviewer feels uncomfortable with the translation "Eigenschaft" (property, quality) for the term *guṇa* when referring to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These

three are clearly constituents of *prakṛti*, and the term *guṇa* is no doubt related to expressions such as *triguṇa* "triple". There is no need to postulate a "primitive" failure to distinguish between constituents and qualities.

On p. 55 the expression *bhūtayoni* ("die Ursprünge der Elemente") is interpreted as "die Reinstoffe (*tanmātra*) Ton, Berührung, Farbe, Geschmack und Geruch"; similarly on p. 58. The reference is to Jayākhya Sāṃhitā 3.2-8, which does not however use the expression *tanmātra* (cp. 3.7: *bhūtātmā bhūtayonīnām sraṣṭā viddhi sadaiva hi/ śabdasparsāu tathā nīparasagandhābhidhāyinaḥ/*). This superimposition of the term *tanmātra* may distort the picture. Sound, touch, colour, taste and smell might equally well be qualities (*guṇa*), which are also recognised in the Sāṃkhya system of thought. It is true that the term *tanmātra* occurs in other parts of the Jayākhya Sāṃhitā, but it is not excluded that it is never used in the three "theoretical" chapters, which may constitute a separate text, as we have seen. This, if true, would be very interesting and perhaps significant, because the role of the *tanmātras* in classical Sāṃkhya is obscure and ambiguous.

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WILKE, Annette: *Ein Sein – ein Erkennen. Meister Eckharts Christologie und Śaṃkaras Lehre vom Ātman. Zur (Un-)Vergleichbarkeit zweier Einheitslehren*. Bern etc.: Peter Lang. 1995. (Studia Religiosa Helvetica, Series Altera, 2.) ISBN 3-906755-61-4. 469 pp.

Religious studies are still predominantly carried out by people who are either religiously committed or pursue issues that are related to personal religious quests rather than to larger academic concerns. This field of study may in this way maintain a certain interest among believers and spiritual seekers, but one can legitimately raise the question whether it can in this manner be expected to make any contribution worth the name to the academic understanding of religion. The numerous comparisons between Eckhart and Śaṃkara that have been published in the recent past illustrate these remarks. There are a number of undeniable close similarities between these two thinkers. Wilke formulates them as follows (p. 297):

Zentrum von Eckharts Lehre ist es, die Gottesgeburt im Menschen mittels rationaler Argumentation darzulegen. Die Gottesgeburt versteht er als ein Geschehen, worin ein Mensch ist, was er von jeher war, wesentlich vernünftig, frei von Zeit, Raum und Körperlichkeit eins mit Gott. Die eigene Erfahrung zeugt davon. Zentrum von Śaṃkaras Denken ist die Lehre vom wahren Selbst, dem Ātman, der zeitlos, raumlos, körperlos und wesentlich vernünftig den Kern der individuellen Persönlichkeit ausmacht. In diesem Kern ist ein Mensch identisch mit dem Absoluten, mit Brahman. Auch Śaṃkara will diese Identität mittels rationaler Argumentation darlegen und auch nach ihm ist diese Einheit realiter erfahrbar.

And again (p. 441):

Eckhart will die Gottesgeburt im Menschen mittels rationaler Argumentation darlegen, Śaṃkara geht es um die Darlegung des wahren Selbst mittels rationaler Argumentation; sowohl das Sohn-Sein, als auch das Ātman-Sein, besteht darin, das sich ein Mensch erkennt, wie er von jeher war: wesentlich vernünftig, frei von Zeit, Raum und Körperlichkeit eins mit dem Höchsten; dieser Einsicht ist nach beiden Denkern realiter erfahrbar.

Practically all scholars who have taken these similarities seriously have concluded from them that fundamentally all religions say the same (p. 300: "Allen ... ist gemein, dass sie ausschliesslich die Gemeinsamkeiten betonen ... Es wird implizit eine Metareligion postuliert, in welcher es keine Unterschiede gibt, und nach welcher alle Religionen im Grunde dasselbe sagen."). Others have concentrated on the differences and, as in the case of Rudolf Otto, have arrived at the conviction that one, i.e. normally Christianity, is superior to the other. Conclusions like these are of course of the greatest interest to those who wish to gain clarity about, or propagate, their own religious convictions. It is much less clear what place they have in academic scholarship.

Wilke's book distinguishes itself from many of its predecessors by bringing in solid scholarship and the determination not to be apologetic for whatever position. More than half of it deals with Eckhart's christology, and the remaining portion testifies to the author's familiarity with Śaṃkara studies. This does not however change the fact that her approach is still

very much the same as that of her predecessors. This approach becomes clear when we consider the concluding paragraph of the book (p. 448):

Die Frage, ob Eckhart und Śaṅkara vergleichbar sind, habe ich sowohl mit 'ja', als auch mit 'nein' beantwortet – eine unbefriedigende Antwort und eher ein Offenlassen der Frage als eine Antwort darauf. Haben Eckhart und Śaṅkara in dem, was als 'echte' Gemeinsamkeit festgestellt wurde, nur unterschiedlich gewichtet oder ist auch diese Gemeinsamkeit illusorisch, eine *māyā*? Sogar wenn die Antwort auf der negativen Seite liegt, ist ein Vergleich sinnvoll, da er erhellt, wie unterschiedlich Einheitslehren verstanden werden. Ziel des Dialogs ist nicht Selbstbestätigung, sondern eine Klärung des Eigenen und Fremden.

It is clear from this paragraph that Wilke's book is part of a dialogue between two religions—Christianity and Hinduism, presumably—one of which is "own" (no doubt Christianity), the other "foreign". It is presumably written for Christians, or for those who somehow feel that Christianity is their "own".

I am deeply disturbed to find such a statement in an academic publication. Academic research is not primarily for Christians, nor for the adherents of any other religion for that matter. Travel accounts owe no doubt much of their popularity to the fact that they show how much "others" differ from "us"; academic research should not allow itself to become a glorified travelogue.

Apart from this general consideration, it is hard to see what could be the advantage or justification of considering Meister Eckhart, a man who lived some 700 years before the present, as one of "us". Indeed, what could it possibly mean? Does it mean that Wilke likes Eckhart better than Śaṅkara, or that she finds Latin easier to read than Sanskrit; does she perhaps wish to communicate that she agrees with him or that, as a European/Christian she has privileged access to his thought? All Indologists know what dangers some Indian scholars expose themselves to when assuming that they, as Indians, somehow understand better than others the thinkers of their past. European history, from around 1300 to the present, has gone through momentous upheavals and fundamental changes. It seems *a priori* advisable (at least in an academic study) to approach Eckhart and Śaṅkara in fundamentally the same manner: as historical figures that have

to be understood in their temporal and cultural contexts; neither of them belongs to "us", and neither of them belongs to "them". Curiously, Wilke would seem to agree with this when she expresses her conviction "dass es möglich ist, sich in beide Standpunkte gleichermaßen hineinversetzen zu können und mehrfache Loyalität auszuüben" (p. 316-317), yet she returns to the "us/them" opposition at several occasions.

The question as to what is to be compared in these two thinkers is, once again, determined by the "religious" approach. The questions asked are whether Eckhart and Śaṅkara, in spite of the numerous differences in their expositions, fundamentally taught and experienced the same thing (e.g. p. 15). These questions—and especially the second one—are no doubt of the greatest interest to believing Christians. For an academic reader, one who is not committed to any particular religious tradition, the question whether Eckhart and Śaṅkara had the same experience is completely theoretical and probably even in principle undecidable (at least on the basis of the textual evidence); even Wilke grants this when she says (p. 318): "Ob das 'ozeanische Gefühl', Eckharts 'Seelengrund' und Śaṅkaras 'selbstleuchtendes Geisteslicht' letztlich doch daselbe meinen, kann kein religionswissenschaftlicher Vergleich entscheiden, da es 'keinen methodologisch einwandfreien Zugang' gibt." And the question whether they taught the same thing can be answered without even looking at the texts: no two authors belonging to two different cultures (that are not in contact) ever teach the same thing, especially not if one takes contextual differences into account. Wilke is, once again, aware of this (p. 446: "Die bloße Feststellung von Unterschieden zweier Denker aus verschiedenen Kulturkreisen und unterschiedlichen Zeitperioden ist als solche natürlich banal und liegt auf der Hand"), but this awareness has no effect on her approach. It should be clear that the more philological labour one dedicates to the study of these two authors, the more differences will pop up. Wilke even turns this into an aim (p. 297): "Anhand von identischen oder ähnlichen Aussagen und gleichen Metaphern möchte ich zeigen, wie unterschiedlich sie jeweils verstanden wurden"; and again (p. 321): "Ich lege den Schwerpunkt auf die Unterschiede, was mir bei einer sorgfältigen Lektüre der Grundtexte unumgänglich erscheint". Perhaps so, but the outcome of the investigation will no longer be a surprise.

Does this mean that comparative studies can have no place in the academic study of religion? They certainly can. But a precondition for any kind of success may have to be that the division "us" versus "them" be abandoned, and that more than purely personal aims (such as the possibility "das Eigene als anderes kennenzulernen", p. 15) be pursued. In the study of language there is a growing consensus that an innate propensity is behind all human languages, a shared propensity (*not* a shared experience) that makes it possible for human beings to learn and use language. A detailed comparison of individual languages, however, may primarily bring to light differences between them. Conceivably, there is a shared propensity (which should not be confused with the same *experience*, "Erfahrung", which Wilke reflects upon as explanation on p. 446) that expresses itself in the works and ideas of Eckhart and Śaṃkara. Predictably, the detailed study of their writings in context will bring to light differences, ever more differences, and will practically guarantee that the shared propensity will be completely overlooked, even if it exists. The method makes sure that significant similarities will be buried in contextual debris.

The book under review does not show any awareness of these risks, and dutifully digs up enough material to make sure that the end result is sufficiently rich in data to allow of no conclusion whatsoever. This is not surprising, for the outcome is predetermined by the method. Wilke even finds it edifying to emphasise the differences: "Die Unterschiede hervorzuheben erscheint mir für einen Dialog der fruchtbarere Ansatz. ... Ich möchte ... vorschlagen, gerade in den Unterschieden die echte Bereicherung zu sehen. Ein Lernprozess wird in Gang gesetzt. Dazu gehören auch Irritation, Verunsicherung und gegenseitige Kritik; in erster Linie aber das Kennenlernen des eigenen anderen." Words like these may have a place in "religious dialogue"; one may have serious doubts about their appropriateness in an academic publication. Numerous books of this nature could be written, and will no doubt be written, but it is hard to see how they will ever be able to take religious studies forward, to greater understanding, not of the "other" or the "own", but of religion as a human phenomenon.

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