

EDITORIAL

This issue of *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* contains eight research papers. All the contributors of this issue have spent some time of their academic life at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, in various capacities. In this issue, five papers are directly related to the discipline of philosophy, while two are primarily concerned with politics and one tries to synthesize Islamic discourses, political theory and psychoanalysis. All essays have been anonymously reviewed. The first essay by Vrinda Dalmiya innovatively reads the *Mahābhārata* and brilliantly situates the nature of moral agency in care ethics. She does so by taking refuge in the academic works on feminist ethics. At the same time, she reminds us that the feminist agenda is not simply to focus on care in our *ethical* lives but to locate the domain of the 'political' as well. According to her, care agency based on the philosophical category of *dvaidha* ('double-ness' or 'forking') not only becomes foundational to ethical choice but can also ground a truly *ethico-political* agency in diverse ways.

The second essay by Varun Kumar Tripathi intends to examine certain aspects of Buddhism from the viewpoint of moral psychology in order to enquire as on what grounds moral evaluations of human conduct are possible. This is a paper that directly addresses the concerns of moral philosophy, a branch of philosophy which examines the 'value-world' in which some human acts and practices are recognized as morally 'commendable' or 'good' while others are regarded as 'reprehensible'. Since, there are different modalities and theories in moral philosophy to deal with the idea of 'good', Tripathi asks a fundamental question of whether one can meaningfully talk about virtues and vices at all. He further enquires whether 'Buddhist ethics' can be evaluated in terms of either cognitivism or non-cognitivism apart from dealing with the limits of such evaluations. He essentially tries to present some insight about how the question of 'ought' be dealt with from a Buddhist perspective.

The third essay by Balaganapathi Devarakonda problematizes the understanding of Indian philosophy as presented by two different prisms of western and Indian scholars. Analyzing the two genres of history writing of classical Indian philosophy, one

represented by the Orientalist and the other one by the Nationalist, he argues that Indian philosophy in a contemporary sense of the term, is a colonial construct. According to him, such 'contemporary conceptions of the classical' assumes that there is a specific body of knowledge called the Indian philosophy, which is an available monolithic structure and, therefore, it must be understood, interpreted and commented in its totality. Such simplified understanding of the so-called homogenous stream of classical Indian philosophy is marked by certain essential characteristics, which depicts an epistemic distinction between India and the West. In analyzing the roots of the 'contemporary conceptions of the classical', he traces the *history* of history-writing of the colonial period. He argues that since history in India has been mainly written during the modern period through the Western categories, and that the initial attempts of writing such histories, by and large, came from the Western scholars, it is indeed necessary to understand how India's past and 'Indian Philosophy' are being narrated. He also briefly points out the limitations of the early colonialists in comprehending and explaining the Indian philosophical tradition in a foreign language. Finally, he examines the two histories of Indian philosophy, one by Max Muller—representing the Orientalists and the other by Radhakrishnan—representing the Nationalists to demonstrate the dialectics between these two schools in producing the monolith called 'Indian Philosophy'.

The fourth and fifth essays of this volume take a flight from the terrain of Indian Philosophy to the works of a great western philosopher: Ludwig Wittgenstein. Priyambada Sarkar's essay highlights the analytical philosophy of early Wittgenstein. It asks an original question: how could Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, a treatise on the philosophy of logic is concerned about 'the mysticals', including his remarks on ethics and aesthetics? Through a detailed study of Wittgenstein's diaries, notebooks, letters and other manuscripts, Sarkar makes the case that Wittgenstein's remarks in the last few pages of *Tractatus* were as much important as those of earlier pages. In no circumstances, one can deliberately ignore such linkages as it would amount to neglect of the historical scholarship, which might lead us to a complete misunderstanding of the early work of one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century. She also makes an interesting move by attempting to interpret Wittgenstein's remarks on ethics in the light of the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, one of Wittgenstein's favourite poets.

In contrast to the early Wittgenstein, Enakshi Mitra's paper focuses on the works of later Wittgenstein, particularly that of *Philosophical Investigations*. However, like Sarkar's paper, which has twin anchors in Tagore and Wittgenstein, Mitra's joint anchors are Wittgenstein and Davidson. Her paper narrates parallel accounts of *actions* by Davidson and the later Wittgenstein. In trying to understand what Davidson and Wittgenstein had to say on 'actions', she tries to accentuate their points of concurrence as a strategy to extract their irreducible difference. Her contrastive exercise concentrates on the polemic about the causal theory versus the reason theory of actions, endorsed by Davidson and Wittgenstein, respectively, and seeks to integrate it with the semantic issue of reference and description. She tries to argue that Davidson's philosophical temperament is one of a conscientious investigator, noting the overwhelming variety and anomalies of the world and yet striving to rake up the hidden foundations with a fine-grained analysis. In contrast, Wittgenstein's project is flattened out with all hidden depths into an open expanse of uses, and is always indeterminate and incomplete. Her essay throws light on important philosophical categories like 'intention', 'nomological', 'semantic transparency and opacity', 'extension and intension', and 'anti-foundationalism'.

The next two essays of this issue are largely concerned with politics. While Harihar Bhattacharyya's article is primarily interested in the normative political idea(1) of *democracy*, Arnab Chatterjee's paper foregrounds the politics of everyday. Bhattacharyya's paper seeks to highlight a great lacuna in the scholarship on democracy with regard to 'democratic intention'. Bhattacharyya argues that the idea of democratic intention has remained neglected, if not ignored, in democratic institutional arrangements and practices. He treats the subject from comparative historical perspectives by taking recourse to the classical scholarship of the Greeks, the contending theoretical literature on the topic since the days of the European Enlightenment and with special reference to the post-colonial democratic experience in India. He asks a core question: why people doubt democracy even if they have consented to such a form of government? In other words, he tries to analyze the paradox between the great expectations of the people from democracy and its great failure at the operational level. He raises questions about deficient institutional designs and practices and argues that democratic intention has critically remained problematic. This is because an absence of democratic intention can be located even in

the activities of 'proud' democrats, who ostensibly and resolutely fight for democratic restoration. In tracing the gap between the representatives and the represented under conditions of representative democracy, Bhattacharyya suggests that popular pressures from below for more fuller and meaningful participation in the polity in and through the existing institutions, can radically recast the appropriate space of democratic intention in democracy. According to him, it is through such continuous popular participation that the democratic intention of democracies, institutionally speaking, can be defined and restored.

Arnab Chatterjee's penultimate essay of this volume deals with the 'politics of dirty hands and personal attacks' as part of everyday politics. He argues that although modernity appears with a burgeoning impersonality and a formal rationality spread to life-spheres—where the domain of the private and the public are separated along with the idealized forms of formal law—the 'politics of dirty hands and personal attacks' overwhelms such a disjunction and lands the modernity project into a peculiar crisis. This is because the personal agency in politics and the person(s) involved in formal politics can manipulate the private and the public zones with their (im)pure 'dirty politics'. In order to demonstrate such a theoretical argument, Chatterjee refers to the scandalous and often abusive, scathing 'personal attacks' with its Greek origins that reached its jocular heights in the 18th century political pornography as iconic examples that point towards the underbelly of objective events, ethics and their sane, symbolic dressing. Therefore, according to Chatterjee, the very existence of dirty tricks in politics at a very personal modus operandi are the first signs of a spillover of the person standing apart and standing out of the judicious separation of the public and the private. His article actually rehearses the extant, later and distinct intervals, of the 'utter jubilee' of everyday narrative experiences of lying, negative gossiping, backstabbing, favouritism, treachery, betrayal, machinations, deception, taking undue advantage, intrigue and malice into our conceptions about politics. He suggests that our limited understanding of politics should not be just contented with grand concepts of 'state', 'democracy', 'nation' and *almost* 'other' empty-formal, substantive issues but it must also take into account of such arrival of 'pure' politics of *dirty hands*.

Finally, the concern over private versus public is also being echoed in Maidul Islam's essay. He precisely tries to argue that the dimensions and boundaries of politics and religion seems to be a

fuzzy and artificial one as the western modernist enlightenment tried to bifurcate between church and the state/politics. He further points out that the very notion of organized religion in general and Islam in particular is essentially *political*. In other words, the possibilities and potentialities of 'political' are very much embedded within organized religion. He suggests that to ignore the political identity of religion and to distinguish between religion and politics by equating religion with the private sphere and politics with the public sphere is, therefore, a futile task and would be a continuation of the erroneous construct of the mainstream of the western Enlightenment. According to him, such a project of the European 'Enlightenment' that separates between religion and politics has in fact shown its limits with the return/re-turn of religion haunting the political spheres of even modern western countries and certainly in contemporary Muslim societies. So, if religion exists in society, then the possibilities of political challenge of religion also exist as well. To locate such political dimensions of Islam and the politics within Islamic traditions and history, his paper is primarily anchored by two theoretical frameworks: (a) psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan and (b) post-Marxist combination of Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek who are indebted to the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. At the same time, in analysing the metaphysics of Islam from a critical perspective, he also takes refuge in some Children's Stories from the *Quran* and writings on theology and history of Islam in order to deconstruct the (personal) faith based religion of Islam.