

Foreword



David Lawrence's work, like all the volumes in this series, is both constructively philosophical (it has an argument of its own to make) and deeply engaged with the texts of a non-Western philosophical tradition—in this case those of the monistic Śaivites of Kashmir. It is difficult to separate the constructive and exegetical parts of Lawrence's work. This is as it should be, for Lawrence wants both to restate and to argue in support of the central metaphysical claim of his Indian interlocutors, which is that it is impossible coherently to deny God's existence. This goal makes Lawrence's work perhaps the most strictly metaphysical of those so far published in this series.

Lawrence provides, we think, the most detailed, accurate, and philosophically acute restatement of the central metaphysical claims of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta (the two principal theorists of the monistic Kashmiri Śaiva school) yet available in any Western language. This is a great virtue because this school's theorists are the architects of a subtle, complex, and challenging metaphysical system. It is a system of great internal complexity, the full understanding of which requires mastery (or at least a very substantial knowledge) of almost every significant school of Indian philosophical thought. Abhinavagupta, especially, is remarkable for the range of his learning: in addition to the specifically philosophico-theological works that are the focus of this study, he composed works on linguistics, grammar, ritual, dance, literary theory—and more. Understanding his work sufficiently well to interpret it adequately therefore requires substantial learning of a strictly Sanskritic kind, and Lawrence uses his own erudition and Sanskrit learning effectively to elucidate the complex intellectual context of Abhinavagupta's thought.

Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's thought is hardly known as yet to those outside the charmed circle of Sanskritists and Indologists.

Its philosophical bite is even less well understood, but it is deep and of considerable interest to all philosophers concerned with the nature of transcendental argument. Since most of the interpretive work on Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta to date has dealt with historical and textual questions, or with the ritual context and implications of their thought, Lawrence's book is a vital step in making the more strictly philosophical aspects of this thought available to a readership without technical qualifications in Sanskrit or Indian studies.

Rediscovering God also comes at an opportune time so far as contemporary English-language philosophy is concerned. The last three decades have seen a renewed interest in transcendental argument, both in the philosophy of religion, which is, historically speaking, its place of origin and proper home, but also in metaphysics proper. In addition to the work of Alvin Plantinga (especially in *The Nature of Necessity*, 1974) and Charles Hartshorne (*Anselm's Discovery*, 1965), who were pioneers in this renaissance, there is an increasing flood of recent work, of which a representative sample is Graham Oppy's *Ontological Arguments* (1995). Lawrence's detailed and serious treatment of the topic from a basis of engagement with Indian materials should therefore find many points of contact in contemporary anglophone philosophy, and is likely to enrich that discussion significantly.

Rediscovering God is more than an exegetical work, however. Lawrence thinks that Abhinavagupta and Utpaladeva were right in at least one central point, which is that all arguments that fail to recognize God as a condition of the possibility of their framing must necessarily be incoherent. This means, he thinks, that Abhinavagupta and Utpaladeva provide essential tools for the decisive refutation of skepticism. It doesn't mean that these tools are found only in these particular Indian forms of thought; it is an additional strength of this book that Lawrence can and does indicate the points of congruence and difference between monistic Śaiva thought on these topics and some of the major trends in Western philosophical thinking, and that in the process of doing so he often sheds light on the thought of individuals who have probably never before been considered together. Both Abhinavagupta and Bernard Lonergan, for example, are illuminated in this book, and in ways that both would almost certainly approve of.

Lawrence's metaphysical emphasis scarcely needs an apology; it is part of the comparative philosophy of religions as we understand it to treat all elements of the philosophical enterprise, and metaphysics is among the more interesting of these. That it is also a mode of phi-

osophizing that requires the theses for which it argues to be necessarily true if they are true at all, and that among these theses is the existence of God, surely only adds to its interest.

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