

## Editorial

### Philosophy and Contemporary Living

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The ancient is often seen as distant. It takes scholarly work and painstaking research into the past to highlight the contemporaneity of the concerns that triggered the imagination and provided meaning to our fore fathers and mothers. This issue of the Journal on Philosophy and its Contemporaneity is approached from three angles: first from the perspective of the past as offering a vision for the present; second, the past as not unitary, seen especially from the diverse cultural perspectives and therefore calling for an intercultural approach to the question of contemporary relevance of any philosophy; and third, the present as constantly requiring a reworking based on the critical reevaluation of the past, whether immediate or remote. The works of Christian Göbel and Thomas Cattoi return to the ancient and medieval past to highlight the issue in the former mould and that of Tomy and Raghunath from the latter. Julien Jackers and Pius Thomas attempt reworking of the present day concerns relying on the impetus given by contemporary philosophers. Therefore this issue of the journal delving into the philosophical past of western tradition on the one hand and that of the Indian on the other offers insights to revisit the notion of perenniality of wisdom and its contemporaneity with the thoughts that probably criss-crossed the ancient worlds of Greece and India as it does even today.

Christian Göbel gives a take on the minor Socratic schools and their understanding of tolerance as a premise for ecumenism and dialogical encounter with 'the other' even in our times. He makes a case on the moral injunction as having introduced the exclusivity dimension into religion and as a contrast to the true original Christian perception of which the sources are more akin to the Cyrenaic Aristippus' conception of unconditionality in contending differences and that it has had a perennial journey. The post-Socratic Megarian attempts highlighted by Göbel offers a critique to Christian interpretation taking on the Stoics of the time and their conception of good and thus offers a way forward amidst contemporary concerns of interculturality and dialogue.

Thomas Cattoi in his comparative study of the approaches to the imaginative usage of images in the iconography of early medieval Christendom and that of Tibetan Buddhist School focus on the role of experience in achieving the goal of spiritual enlightenment in both the religions. While on the one hand the realization should transcend all reliance on signs and representations and manifestations, it nonetheless embellishes the character of the union with the divine sought after. Therefore the role of the physical, visual, sensual appeal of the image and its purported goal of having accessibility to the divine through mediation of the human elements such as artistic representations cannot be ignored.

Julien Jackers' Verzotto Memorial Lecture 2009 delivered at Salesian College and North Bengal University looks into the core issues of ethics and foundations of spirituality as whether compatible or not with Business empires as they loom large on contemporary horizon making inroads into the lives of people in the slums and tribal hinterlands. The recovery of genuine concern for 'the other' founds the ethics and the possibility of a spirituality is what he argues going along with Emmanuel Levinas.

Pius Thomas in his paper offers a quick summing up of the redeeming act by the contemporary philosopher Jurgen Habermas of resuscitating the validation of critical reason by skirting the post structural deconstructions of the meta-narratives of reason. The intersubjective dialogical project of reclaiming authenticity as responsibility for the other as a theme that resonates in many a contemporary scheme on the significance of 'life experience' as they unveil before the individual and collective humanity in the twenty first century is what Pius attempts to highlight.

Raghunath Ghosh attempts with his expertise in sanskritic tradition to unveil the epistemological tangle associated with the three classical Indian philosophical schools - Carvaka, Nyaya and Buddhism - in order to highlight the nuanced reading of 'vyapti' as underlying all inferential argumentation. The contemporary relevance of this discourse lies in the fact that the recovery of reason as the guidepost to cohesive and harmonious living in a divergent society such as India is thereby reiterated.

Tomy Augustine delves into the intricacies of Buddhist tantric texts in order to redeem Mahayana's theoretical overdose and shows how an apparently hidden and misjudged system of thought and praxis can be of immense benefit at a time when deconstructing the mental and metaphysical certainties is the prevailing trend in philosophy. The centrality of body-mind continuum with its analyzable and verifiable experiences as the fullness of discernment from the wisdom perspective comes as fresh lease of life for the once discounted medieval Tantrism and its tenets.

The thread that strings all the articles of this issue of the Journal is "Experience" or Anubhava. It is the core of life world or that which constitutes the life world of a perceptive individual. How the world impacts itself on the life of an individual or community is that which generates 'experience' or anubhava. The awareness of this

'experience' has layers or degrees or varying intensities. One or the other dimension of its constitutiveness is grappled with, referred to, and taken up for deeper analysis in one or the other of the essays of this issue: Göbel in reinstating the intense perceptual clarity the Megairan thinker Aristuppus of Cyrene had as part of the perennial wisdom of 'living in the now'; thus opening up the doors for an ecumenical philosophy in dire need for a world searching for ever new ways of peaceful and creative co-living; Cattoi in comparing and contrasting the role of imagination in spiritualizing experience in and through the mediation of the icons in Christian tradition and that of deity visualization in Tibetan Buddhism; Jackers in his contention that spirituality and ethics can have a worthwhile impact on Business only if the 'face of the other' is taken seriously as Levinas has argued and elaborated on the content of a life worthily lived or experienced; Thomas in searching for the norm of authenticity in contemporary philosophy with the guidelines offered by Habermas and grounds his proposals in responsibility and freedom measured in each one's life experiences as the decisive factor in making oneself authentic; Ghosh in taking us to the intricacies of traditional Indian logic and argumentation revolving around the inferential norm setter, *vyapti*, by analyzing epistemologically one's 'experience' out of which the fundamental awareness of causation emerges; and Augustine in making a case for the Vajrayana Tantrism as a legitimate metaphysical foundation for an emotionally balanced approach to the life experiences which constantly fluctuate, if only one is willing to seriously consider what the tradition holds as sacred.