



Editorial

The July 2024 issue of *Tattva – Journal of Philosophy* contains five articles from a wide range of philosophical disciplines, namely philosophy of culture, history of philosophy, philosophy of gender, moral philosophy, and philosophy of religion. Several of the contributions deal with issues that originate in Indian culture, such as the paper on the misrepresentation of gender fluidity in the retellings and adaptations of Krishna’s lore, and the article on the life and philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. Others focus on important issues in Western philosophy, such as Descartes’ views on God’s existence, Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, and moral naturalism in contemporary analytic philosophy. This diversity demonstrates *Tattva*’s success in attracting scholars from different philosophical and sociocultural traditions, whose papers keep its readers abreast of the latest developments in philosophical research.

Thoibisana Akoijam’s paper, “Descartes and the Question of God’s Existence,” analyzes Descartes’ famous assertion that the idea of God is an immediate, clear, and distinct perception, whose objective existence cannot be doubted. This is because the idea of God is unique, in the sense that only this idea represents an infinite being that cannot be caused by a finite being, but only by an objective, infinite reality. This argument raises the fundamental question of the role of the idea of God in Descartes’ philosophy. The author shows that, according to Descartes, God is the only true, i.e. independent, substance that is the ultimate cause of all existence in space and time. Moreover, because God possesses all the attributes of infinite perfection, He is also an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being. Therefore, the author concludes, God’s objective reality is for Descartes the foundation of all scientific knowledge.

The second article, by Muhammed Shafi S., “The Queerness of Art and the Foucauldian Origins of Judith Butler’s Notion of Performativity”, seeks to understand the possibility of the concept of queerness beyond the field of gender studies, namely by interpreting the notion of performativity in the field of aesthetic

experience as a way to transcend the traditional boundaries of identity. The author analyzes how Judith Butler explores the ontological validity of subjectivity through Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinarity. She interprets disciplinarity as an example of power relations and links it to performativity. In Butler's view, the discourse of art produces the subjectivity of the artist in much the same way that the discourse of gender is responsible for the production of gender identity. Both gender and art result from a ritual performance, showing that the notion of performativity can be used to inquire into the queerness or the underlying plurality of what is called art and what is hidden beneath the naturalized façade of artistic identity.

In "Queer Politics in Hindu Mythology: Locating Misrepresentation of Gender Fluidity in *Amar Chitra Katha's* 'Krishna' and other Titles," Sreyoshi Dhar and Moushumi Kandali also use the concept of queerness, this time to critique representations of Krishna in children's literature such as the *Amar Chitra Katha*. The authors show that even in the *Vedas* there is talk of queerness, of gods transforming into goddesses, and of third-gendered gods. Through his cross-dressing and mannerisms such as dancing and singing, Krishna shows signs of de-gendering, gender blending, and gender-bending. However, many contemporary retellings and adaptations of Krishna's lore depict him with an exclusively masculine identity, thus suppressing and ignoring the gender-fluid aspects of his character. The children's picture books launched by Anant Pai in 1967 are a striking example of this misrepresentation. In this article, the authors provide a detailed analysis of how the language, narrative, and illustrations of two influential children's picture books are manipulated, distorted, or omitted to present an exclusively heteronormative narrative, particularly by focusing on the heroic and warrior side of Krishna.

The article "Referring to Moral Terms: A Defense of Moral Naturalism" by Hossein Khodadadi analyzes recent developments in realist moral naturalism. According to this theory, which is part of the broader project of metaphysical naturalism, there are objective

moral facts and properties that are natural. Thus, this theory holds that ordinary commonsense assumptions about moral claims are cognitively truth-apt, while rejecting the possibility of non-natural entities unless they are introduced by natural science. The problem with this theory, however, is that it collapses as a result of the natural fallacy critique, as G.E. Moore has argued. As a solution, the author introduces Richard Boyd's new version of realist moral naturalism, thereby appealing to the causal semantic theory developed by Saul Kripke and Hilary Putnam. The author shows that Boyd's theory withstands the criticisms of Terrence Horgan and Mark Timmons, thus helping to apply the causal semantic theory to moral terms.

The final article in this issue, "Life and Philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa: The Chronicler of the Mahābhārata," by Joyati Bhattacharya, gives a comprehensive sketch of the life and work of Veda Vyāsa, as he is commonly known. He lived around the 3rd millennium BCE, and contributed significantly to the compilation of numerous other authoritative religious texts of ancient India. In an attempt to separate myth from reality, the author shows that the works attributed to Vyāsa are in fact texts composed over time by different individuals; thus, his authorship is only symbolic. Nevertheless, as one of its compilers (the name Vyāsa literally means 'compiler'), he made a substantial contribution to Vedic literature. The name of Veda Vyāsa is most prominently associated with the authorship of the Mahābhārata but even in this case it is more likely that Veda Vyāsa was its composer. Moreover, he is an important character in this epic, playing the role of the grandfather of the main protagonist of the Mahābhārata. In terms of content, this epic is an effort to find a kingdom that is protected by the laws of religion and morality, which explains why it includes conversations about the justification of war and the importance of living a life that is not just focused on personal gain but also benefits society as a whole. In sum, Vyāsa's philosophy is an evolving concept that adapts to changing circumstances while maintaining its fundamental principle of the ultimate liberation of man.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I wish you much intellectual pleasure in reading the articles in this issue and hope they will stimulate your thinking about important philosophical issues that are from different philosophical and cultural traditions.

Peter Jonkers

Editor-in-chief