

Review Article

« Guy Bugault, *L'Inde pense-t-elle ?* »

At the 31st International Orientalists' Conference, *Deutscher Orientalistentag*, September 20th–24th, 2010, Philipp's University Marburg, Professor Konrad Klaus convincingly presented a paper on methodology, serving as a much needed corrective to the effect that in Buddhist studies (as well as in other disciplines) diachronic approaches alone are inadequate and are urgently in need of supplementary synchronic investigation. He even insisted, with reference to the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, that “Synchronie geht vor Diachronie”, i.e. synchronic investigation¹ is preferable to diachronic approaches. In the following review article on *L'Inde pense-t-elle?* it is shown that its author, indirectly anticipating Klaus' dictum, applies it even to the investigation of Indian thought as a whole vis-à-vis Western philosophy. Therefore, I hope it may be appropriate to contribute to the present Festschrift in honour of our esteemed colleague at the oldest department of Indology in Germany a review of Bugault's book with its provocative and thought-provoking title.

Guy Bugault, *L'Inde pense-t-elle?* Collection sciences modernités philosophies.
Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994. 351 pp. ISBN 2 13 046482 3.

¹ In dictionaries “synchronism” is defined as an occurrence of two or more events in time, “... se dit des phénomènes qui s'accomplissent en même temps”. For a clarification of the term in a methodological context cf., also with reference to *satipaṭṭhāna* in particular, Greschat 1988: 118ff., who explains that a phenomenalist's natural attitude is unprejudiced and “pre-theoretical” in relation to a phenomenon. The “accurate scientist” preferring diachronic approaches, concludes from what is “external” what something “within” is like, e.g. with regard to meditation. He does so by means of measuring the brainwaves, etc. of meditators. “Inaccurate researchers” favouring synchronic investigation, are ready to learn how to meditate and make use of practical experience in their research work, being phenomenological researchers in order to become “unengaged spectators” and know how one's consciousness can serve as a “research instrument”.

In the introduction to his book (hereafter abbr. IPE) Bugault (hereafter B) refers to its thought-provoking title, asking whether philosophy in India exists or not.² In order to redress “certains préjugés”, he refers to scientific activities of the Indians in the fields of grammar, linguistics, mathematics, medicine and, of course, to the objective of IPE, viz. to explore the extent of Indian philosophy.

As quondam professor of Indian and comparative philosophy, to be sure, in his work B also deals with diachronical periodisation ; already in his introduction to IPE, nonetheless, he alludes to aspects of synchronism, mentioning “la méthode d’observation-participation employé par les ethnologues” and “la dimension mentale d’une recherche anthropologique” (IPE, p. 14). On p. 15 he refers to an orientation towards “une phénoménologie non intentionnelle” as emphasized by Greschat ; cf. n. 1 above.

IPE falls into three parts, viz. part 1 on “philosophy and soteriology”, part 2 dealing with “aspects of Indian Buddhism”, part 3 with “comparative philosophy”. Part 1 is again divided into chapters I-IV on the topics (I) “To what extent and in which sense can one speak of Indian philosophy ?” – (II) “The Indian approach to suffering in the light of medicine and philosophy” ; (III) “The master-disciple relation in present-day Hinduism” ; (IV) “Myth and discourse : *Māyā*”. Part 2 comprises chapters V–VII. In chapter V the author presents “preliminary questions crowding into our Western mind”, “an outline of and some remarks on the life of the Buddha,” “the quasi-unalterable foundation of Buddhist doctrine/medicine”, “exercises and stages in Buddhist yoga”, “the evolution of Indian Buddhism”, adding his “conclusions” and a bibliography (both also appended to other following chapters). Chapter VI covers “Buddhist anthropology facing modern philosophy and contemporary neurophysiology” and chapter VII “the Œdipus complex” referred to in a quotation from the *Prajñaptiśāstra* given in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*. B also examines the impact of this concept on the Buddhist Tantra tradition. In this context another self-evident reference to the Œdipus complex in the well-known *Tibetan Book of the Dead* should also be mentioned.³ Part 3 includes chapters VIII–X which are, respectively, about “Nāgārjuna”, “logic and dialectic with Aristotle and Nāgārjuna”, and “emptiness and common sense”. IPE con-

² On the backcover of IPE it says that since Hegel the idea has been prevailing that the sphere of understanding or comprehension does not exist in India. However, I.M. Bochenski states in his *Formale Logik* (1956) that “deux pays au monde ont eu le souci d’établir les conditions formelles de la vérité d’une assertion : la Grèce et l’Inde.” (Bochenski’s statement is also given at IPE, p. 48, n. 19.) Cf., for instance, the 1st chapter in Störig 2002, on p. 33, where it reads : “Indien... das Ursprungsland der ältesten uns bekannten Zeugnisse des philosophierenden Menschengenüses...”

³ See, also with reference to IPE, chapter VII, Haas 2004: 23ff., who treats the topic *in extenso* in her book.

cludes with three indexes: names of authors, of schools and doctrines, and of technical terms (pp. 339–351).

Reading part 1 and 2, to some extent one is reminded of *Einführung in die Indologie*⁴ by a number of well-known indologists. B appositely summarizes a vast amount of literature, the beginnings of “la speculation indienne” up to the invention and usage of the “zero” resulting in special developments of philosophical thought, likewise the interaction between medicine and soteriology/philosophy, between *yoga* and “l’originalité de la réflexion philosophique” (p. 35).

In chapter I – “Existence et spécificité de la philosophie en Inde” –, regarding the author’s dealing with Buddhism, some remarks by the present reviewer seem called for. B defines Buddhism as being neither a religion nor a philosophy, but a psychosomatic discipline being comprised of morality, concentration and *prajñā*, which he translates as “discernement intellectuel” (p. 43), i.e. “intellectual discrimination” or as “intelligence” (p. 179). *Prajñā*, of course, also means “discrimination”, but generally in the Buddhist context “wisdom” should be preferred.⁵ In the following sentence then B rightly remarks that Buddhism neither is a moralism nor “un yoga sauvage”, nor intellectualism. Thus the rendering “discernement intellectuel” is applicable only in limited contexts, for example in passages on the “Five Bases of Deliverance” (5 *vimuttāyatana*)⁶ (cf. B’s adequate remarks *infra* on p. 119f.) or in the oft-quoted *Kālāmasutta*. Here just one passage from the *Nettipakaraṇa* may be cited bearing on “intellectual discrimination” vis-à-vis “wisdom based on insight-knowledge through meditation/spiritual practice” : “Intellectual discrimination means examination, deliberation, investigation and careful consideration ; ... wisdom based on spiritual practice - i.e. insight-knowledge that arises at the level of insight/meditation.”⁷ At IPE, p. 44, *bhāvanā* is translated as “la création mentale”, and again on p. 364 as “efficace de l’imagination” and

⁴ See Bechert, von Simson, 1979. In this publication (138ff.) Wilhelm Halbfass, in his contribution on Indian philosophy, basically agrees with what B writes in IPE. Halbfass states that a name and concept of what the Greeks called “philosophy”, understood by them as “an autonomous desire to know”, the Indians did not conceive of. The correspondence, however, in terms of contents and methods, between ancient Indian and Greek thought is so close that it is fully justified to speak of “Indian philosophy” in spite of some qualms on the part of historians of western philosophical traditions. Another particularly useful article by W. Halbfass (not referred to in IPE) is his “The Therapeutic Paradigm and the Search for Identity in Indian Thought” in Jha 1991: 23–34. To a great extent Halbfass examines the same subjects as B does.

⁵ In his index, p. 349, B actually translates *prajñāpāramitā* as “discernement ultime, perfection de la sagesse”.

⁶ Cf., e.g., Hardy 1897, 1958: 21ff.

⁷ Cf. Hardy 1902, 1961: 8. : *vīmaṃsā tulanā upaparikkhā manasānupekkhanā, ayaṃ cintāmayi paññā... yaṃ ñāṇaṃ uppajjati dassanabhūmiyaṃ vā bhāvanābhūmiyaṃ vā, ayaṃ bhāvanāmayi paññā.*

“entraînement contemplatif”. With this technical term, in particular, it can be illustrated how difficult it is, time and again, to adequately render a contextually specific Buddhist term into a Western language. Thus “création mentale” can be taken as corresponding to “mental development” or “meditation”; but it can also mean “mental production/work” or “invention”, being altogether inadequate in Buddhist contexts. The translation “entraînement contemplatif”, on the other hand, is to the point, whereas “efficace de l’imagination” does not agree with what is the Buddhist understanding of *bhāvanā*: In tranquillity meditation (*samatha*) contemplation devices are not invented, but are carefully chosen and contemplated upon, and “mental development” with regard to *vipassanā* and “stages of insight-knowledge” has nothing to do with “imagination”.⁸ On p. 44f. B refers to the term *vijñaptimātra* of the Vijñānavāda School, as “signifying without anything to signify”, overlooking that *mātra* means “only, nothing but, entirely” instead of “with-out”. Nagao explains that “the world as representation only (*vijñaptimātra*) is a phrase that describes one’s attitude in interacting with the world; it is not a phrase that intends to prove or to determine objectively an absolute and ultimate existence.”⁹ “*Vijñapti* literally means notification, designating the functioning of sensory perception and cognition.”¹⁰ Moreover, on p. 45 B stresses Asaṅga’s affirmation of “idéalisme”: “Ce qui est autre que la pensée n’est pas” which corresponds to *cittamātra* (“what is other than thought is not”); in the following, however, he has Asaṅga draw the conclusion that “la pensée elle-même n’est pas”, that mind/thought itself does not exist since “what is other than thought” is *grāhya*, “that which is to be perceived”; so, if *grāhya* does not exist, *grāhaka*, “a perceiver”, does not exist either. Consequently this idealism annihilates itself in emptiness (*sūnyatā*).¹¹ This conclusion, put with due deference, is the author’s, not Asaṅga’s.¹² Towards the end of chapter I the author felicitously compares specific features of Greek philosophy with those of Indian philosophy-cum-soteriology, refers to contemporary Indian philosophers best informed about Western philosophy, and in his conclusion says that after his attempts to show that Indian

⁸ Cf. again what has already been quoted elsewhere : de Jong stresses that a buddhologist should try his best to understand Buddhist mentalities and to have contact with practising Buddhists instead of simply relying on “sacred texts” as philological material; see J.W. de Jong, “The Study of Buddhism : Problems and Perspectives”, in: Schopen 1979: 28. Actually, in connection with Patañjali and *yoga*, B expresses the same concern raised by de Jong (IPE: 59f.), and he again does so on p. 108 re. “Le Bouddhisme indien”.

⁹ See Nagao, Kawamura 1991: 187.

¹⁰ See Weeraratne 2009: 806, n. 7.

¹¹ B: “L’autre que la pensée, c’est le connaissable ... Or, si le connaissable n’est pas, du même coup le connaisseur... n’est rien, lui non plus. Cet idéalisme, conséquent et dialectique, s’annule donc lui-même dans la vacuité ...”

¹² Cf. Malalasekera 1966: 133ff.: Walpola Rahula on “Asaṅga”.

philosophy does exist (he expressly mentions three schools of philosophy: Abhidharma, Madhyamaka and Vijñānavāda), he would like to let the reader find out for her-/himself to what extent Indian philosophy –”nuancée et complexe” – differs from that of the West or is something else.

In chapter II the author discusses “The Indian Approach to Suffering – Medicine and Philosophy”, underlining the fact that the Indians well before the Common Era excelled in a number of sciences among which medicine, *āyurveda*, “the science of longevity”, has always been a passion with them. Here the nicety of B’s presentation of brahmanic and shramanic approaches to deal with suffering by means of medicine and philosophy-cum-soteriology has to be duly recognized. The same appreciation applies to B’s treatment of “The master-disciple relationship in present-day Hinduism” in chapter III, and of “Myth and discourse: *Māyā*” in chapter IV in which he reviews Zimmer’s *Maya ou le rêve cosmique dans la mythologie hindoue* (1987).¹³ In section 4 of chapter V, B describes the exercises and steps of “yoga bouddhique” with a remark about the difficulties to correctly translate yogic terms as already mentioned above with reference to *bhāvanā* (IPE, p. 44). On p. 128ff. a good example is given of how a translation is put forward proving inept or at least inadequate literalism ; B translates *smṛtyupasthāna* as “aide-mémoire” which is a literal rendering in an altogether general sense, meaning “memory aid” or “handbook”. To bring home the importance of this compound in Buddhist thought, a “Buddha word” quoted in Yaśomitra’s *Abhidharma-kośayvākyā* may be cited here: *sarvadharmā iti bhikṣavaś caturṇām smṛtyupasthānānām etad adhivacanam iti* /¹⁴

“This designation, O monks, [applies to] all my teachings: the Four Foundations/Applications of Mindfulness.”

In part 3, as a specialist in comparative philosophy, B is at his best. Before setting out his examination of Nāgārjunian thought and comparative study of Aristotle’s and Nāgārjuna’s logic and dialectics, he touches on the reception of “Nāgārjuna as philosopher” in the West. Apart from the pioneering contributions of scholars, well-known only among indologists and buddhologists, he credits, first of all, Jaspers with having done away with the long-standing prejudice that only philosophy originated in the West could be considered as such.¹⁵ B, all the same, remarks that Jaspers is not entirely free of “projeter et surimposer certaines de nos catégories” pertaining to Western thought (IPE: 214). The same credit and critical remark, by-the-way, is applicable to Störig (cf. n. 2) who also discusses Indian phi-

¹³ I.e. the French trsl. of Zimmer 1936, 1978.

¹⁴ See Wogihara 1932–36, 1971: 529, l. 31.

¹⁵ See Jaspers 1957: 934–956.

losophy, some misunderstanding concerning Nāgārjuna included. Incidentally, Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, simultaneous with the coming out of IPE, appeared with entries on Nāgārjuna and the Madhyamaka school; according to Blackburn, Nāgārjuna's stance in some respects is similar to those of Parmenides, Bradley and Kant.¹⁶

On p. 216, B remarks that, referring to Ruegg, he prefers to stick to the generally accepted viewpoint of regarding Nāgārjuna "as one of the first and most important systematizers of Mahāyānist thought."¹⁷ B also mentions (216, n. 9) that in chapter 13 of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* (hereafter MMK), v. 8 "présuppose un texte du Mahāyāna, le *Kāśyapaparivarta*", which is certainly correct. The place, however, actually given by Ruegg (*op.cit.*, 6, n. 13) is MMK, chapter 15, v. 7, based on "the Kātyāyanāvavāda, a text of the Saṃyuktāgama (cf. Saṃyuttanikāya ii, p. 17)...". The *Kāśyapaparivarta* is, of course, one of the early Mahāyāna discourses in which, as in MMK, *loc.cit.*, the *Kātyāyanāvavāda* has been drawn upon, i.e. as an adaptation of a passage from a canonical Śrāvakayāna text. In this context Gómez' article "Proto-Mādhyamika in the Pāli Canon" should be mentioned¹⁸ and also Anālayo's *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal* according to Pāli sources and Āgama texts.¹⁹ Lastly, the publication of the contributions to an international conference on the origins and early history of Mahāyāna Buddhism in its formative period and with its having been influenced by Śrāvakayāna thought should not go unnoticed because the contributors make full use of fascinating new manuscript discoveries from Gandhāra, necessitating a thorough re-evaluation of the early Mahāyāna.²⁰

Having thrown light on Nāgārjuna's and his philosophical interlocutors' (Ābhidhārmikas, Naiyāyikas) "situation historique" B, before expatiating on the logic and dialectic in Nāgārjuna's MMK, circumspectly warns about thinking – inadvertently or intentionally – Nāgārjuna a nihilist or deconstructionist: "Well, reading Nāgārjuna is an exercise for us to question ourselves, to force us into an *emendatio intellectus* through which we will eventually see that it functions – for Nāgārjuna – as something propaedeutic, purgative and instrumental towards a sotériologie."²¹ Comprehensively surveying all the 27 chapters of MMK, B scrupu-

¹⁶ Blackburn 1994: 227f., 254.

¹⁷ Seyfort Ruegg 1981: 7.

¹⁸ Gómez 1976: 137–165.

¹⁹ Anālayo 2010.

²⁰ Harrison 2018.

²¹ IPE: 220: "Lire Nāgārjuna, c'est donc un exercice pour nous remettre nous-mêmes en question, nous astreindre à une *emendatio intellectus*, dont nous verrons plus loin qu'elle fonctionne – pour Nāgārjuna – comme une propédeutique, purgative et ablative, à une sotériologie."

lously examines Nāgārjuna's logic and dialectic in preparation, as it were, for his French translation with ample notes of Nāgārjuna's chef-d'œuvre (*Stances du milieu*) which appeared in 2002. In the present review B's translation of MMK is mentioned because in his notes he refers to IPE (pp. 187f., 223–225) with regard to MMK, vv. 8 and 9 of chapter 4, characterized by him as being "célebres et énigmatiques". Moreover, evaluating B's translating in his *Stances* is also applicable to that in IPE. In an article by Lindtner, entitled "Vigrahe Kṛte",²² the author refers to B's translation of MMK 4, v. 8–9, describing it as being "rather paraphrase". Lindtner casts doubt on B's proper understanding of the verses in question and on his doing justice to grammar and Nāgārjuna's understanding of the technical terms involved. To put in a nutshell Lindtner's critique with the help of an English translation of the said verses and by focussing on the disputed point, Siderits' and Katsura's masterful translation may be quoted here:

"8. There being a refutation based on emptiness, were someone to utter a confutation, for that person all becomes a question-begging nonconfutation
9. There being an explanation based on emptiness, were someone to utter a criticism, for that person all becomes a question-begging nonconfutation."²³

According to Lindtner *śūnyatayā* should be construed respectively with *parihāraṃ* / *upālabhaṃ vadet* (i.e. "were someone to utter a confutation / criticism based on emptiness"). B's French translation of the verses, after all, matches up with the quoted English translation, even though Lindtner's remark "rather paraphrase" also holds good. For clarity's sake and if justified, translated text should contain some material in square brackets. In spite of B's omitting square brackets in his translation of the said "problematic" verses (and also elsewhere), it is in accord with practically all known corresponding renderings in Western languages, even with those based on the Tibetan version of the text.²⁴ Lindtner's interpretation, of course, also makes sense but, as B remarks (*Stances*, p. 82), the former's interpretation does not follow the line of argument in Candrakīrti's commentary. MMK, chapter 24, v. 18, highlighted as "the most celebrated verse of the work",²⁵ has been translated at IPE, p. 232 (n. 23 gives the Sanskrit original), exemplifying a lack of square brackets on the one hand and "missing material", i.e. something left

²² See Lindtner 2001: 121–133.

²³ MMK 4, vv. 8, 9: *vigrahe yaḥ parihāraṃ kṛte śūnyatayā vadet / sarvaṃ tasyāparihṛtaṃ samaṃ sādhyena jāyate //8//*
vyākhyāne ya upālabhaṃ kṛte śūnyatayā vadet / sarvaṃ tasyānupālabdhaṃ samaṃ sādhyena jāyate //9//
quoted in Siderits, Katsura 2013: 56.

²⁴ Cf., for instance, Driessens, Gyatso 1995: 68.

²⁵ Siderits, Katsura 2013: 277. MMK 24, v. 18 : *yaḥ praṭīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe / sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā //*

untranslated, on the other : “ C’est la coproduction conditionnée que nous entendons [sous le nom de]²⁶ vacuité. C’est là une désignation métaphorique, ce n’est rien d’autre que la voie du milieu.” Siderits and Katsura translate : “ Dependent origination we declare to be emptiness. It [emptiness] is a dependent concept ; just that is the middle path.”²⁷ In B’s translation *upādāya* (“dependent”) is left untranslated. Apart from these quibbles, a few misprints in IPE may be pointed out ; p. 26, l. 26 : for “Bādarāyaṇa” read “Bādarāyaṇa” ; p. 129, n. 18 : for “Mohāyāna” read “Mahāyāna” ; p. 188, l. 21 : for “*saṃkhāra-puṇḍra*” read “...-*puṇḍra*”.

In conclusion, it may be observed that, notwithstanding the demanding subject-matter, IPE has been written in a lively and brilliant – not academically dry – style and also with a sense of gentle humour. Fairly long ago Verpoorten was the first to briefly review IPE in as elegant a style as that pertaining to the book reviewed by him.²⁸ Verpoorten, *inter alia*, sketches out B’s probing into “la doctrine logique d’Aristote” vis-à-vis “la logique de Nāgārjuna” for which reason this topic has not been touched upon in the present review. One can but fully agree with Verpoorten that IPE, thanks to its author’s “vaste culture philosophique” and his long-standing teaching experience, is extremely rich in content and makes fascinating reading.

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²⁶ Needed brackets inserted by the reviewer.

²⁷ *Loc. cit.*

²⁸ Verpoorten 1997, pp. 70–73.

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