

Philosophical Implication of Dhvani. Experience of Symbol Language in Indian Aesthetics. By Anand AMALADASS, S.J. *Publications of the De Nobili Research Library*, Vol. XI. Vienna, 1984. Pp. 240.

Fr Amaladass took a difficult area of the Indian tradition for his doctoral work in Madras. He presents here a revised version of his thesis on the *Dhvanyāloka* by Anandavardhana, a 9th century landmark in the development of the Indian philosophy of language and poetics. *Dhvani* is the power whereby (poetic) language enables the person attuned to beauty to enter into the aesthetic experience and—by extension—into the experience of transcendence. In often repeated metaphors, *dhvani* relates to the explicit language of a work of art as the soul to the body, or, more poetically, as beauty to the limbs of a lovely woman. *Dhvani* has been translated as evocation, allusion, suggestion. One could also think of more etymological translations like resonance or reverberation. Anandavardhana's namesake, Fr Anand, studies this text not merely from within the tradition of Indian aesthetics but also as a programme of hermeneutics and as a philosophy of language implying a particular metaphysical understanding of reality and leading to a mystical sense of union with transcendence. His study is therefore very personal and draws upon sources of thought from Western and Indian philosophy in his attempt to unearth the full potentialities of the thought of the Kashmiri author. But he comes back again and again to the text of the *Dhvanyāloka* to justify his explanations. Only occasionally does he refer also to Ananda's commentators, specially the great Abhinavagupta. Amaladass's extensive bibliography shows his wide reading in the traditions of this school.

I am not competent to evaluate this original work which has been published in a prestigious series. But the links the author establishes between the linguistic philosophy of Indian and Western studies specially in the areas of symbols and

hermeneutics are surely convincing or at least helpful. Probably under the influence of Dr Francis D'Sa, to whom the book is dedicated, A.A. often uses the concept of Significance or Meaningfulness as distinct from mere meaning. But the meaning (significance?) of this word is quite elastic, as it translates equally such technical terms as *artha*, *dhvani*, *vyangya*, *pratīyamāna*, *rasa*, *rasadhvani*, so that the concept that seemed very appropriate in the context of the Mīmāṃsaka philosophy might be ultimately less helpful in the more articulated views of the *alaṅkāraśāstrins*. As in any work of dialogue or synthesis between different traditions, the interpretation of one tradition in terms of another may not always convince everybody. In particular the translation of *advaita* as "duality-in-unity" (p. 141) would hardly be justified within the Indian tradition where this expression would rather translate *viśiṣṭādvaita* or, perhaps more accurately, *dvaitādvaita*. The application of what is somewhat oddly called the "dhvani method" to biblical themes seems to me to derive more from biblical criticism than from the *alaṅkāraśāstra*. But I may have missed the point here!

A.A. is a pioneer in a rather new field and the book will surely inspire more research in the rich Indian tradition of linguistics, a research that must not be satisfied with unearthing the past but must help us today to experience the Word of God as it "resonates" (*dhvani*) in the whole world. The essay presented here, is of course, technical in character and requires a good background in Indian philosophy. As a research work it is admirable and beautifully presented.

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October 1986, p 498