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Perspectivism and Criticism in Vidyānandin's  
*Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā* : Review article

Himal Trikha; *Perspektivismus und Kritik: Das pluralistische Erkenntnismodell der Jainas angesichts der Polemik gegen das Vaiśeṣika in Vidyānandins Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā*. Publications of the De Nobili Research Library 36. Vienna: Institut für Südasien-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde der Universität Wien, 2012. € 28.00, ISBN 3 900271 42 9.

Perspectivism comes with a price. If one accepts that one and the same object is revealed by various epistemic events, the disambiguation of valid and invalid perspectives becomes problematic. One could respond to this by accepting a theory of knowledge without criteria of truth but such a theory would be self-defeating and the philosopher who adheres to it cannot even refute obviously false perspectives. It is therefore a crucial challenge for the perspectivist to provide criteria of truth without leaving his perspectivist framework.

The philosophical tradition of the Jainas, which flourished between the 6th and the 17th centuries in India, propounded a form of perspectivism, named *anekāntavāda*. The author Vidyānandin (9th/10th century) was an important thinker in this tradition. He wrote a work titled *Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā* (hereafter SŚP), in which he investigates the truth of several philosophical systems. In line with the importance of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) in Jaina thought, scholars have often interpreted *anekāntavāda* as intellectual *ahiṃsā*, an extremely tolerant attitude towards rival schools. In *Perspektivismus und Kritik*, Himal Trikha examines the role of *anekāntavāda* in the discursive practice of Jaina philosophy. With a thorough study of Vidyānandin's criticism of the Vaiśeṣika system in the SŚP, Trikha makes clear that Jaina philosophy is not averse to criticism of rival theories and cannot consistently

be associated with intellectual *ahimsā*. Nevertheless, Trikha claims that a rational account of perspectivism requires the exclusion of single epistemic standpoints. He therefore argues that *anekāntavāda* and fierce criticism are not mutually exclusive and shows that both elements can be found in Vidyānandin's work.

The main question of Trikha's study is how the author of the SŚP uses the Jaina philosophical toolbox in his discussion of rival worldviews. The book consists of three parts that approach this question from a different perspective. The first part offers a historical and philosophical background of the passages from the SŚP that are translated in the third part. It introduces the key issues of Vidyānandin's criticism of the Vaiśeṣika. This section is aimed at readers with an interest in history of ideas and philosophy and abstains as far as possible from philological issues. The second part of the book contains an overview of the arguments in the mentioned passages and discusses several related questions from the perspective of history of literature and literary science. Main questions in this section concern the composition of the Vaiśeṣika chapter and the relation between text elements from the SŚP and other works. The third part forms the core element of the book. It contains the Sanskrit text of excerpts of the SŚP, provided with a lavishly annotated German translation. Vidyānandin's main target in these passages is the Vaiśeṣika notion of inherence (*samavāya*). He points out that the postulation of such a relation between substance and qualities leads to an infinite regress. Trikha's annotations in this section contain numerous passages from other classical and medieval Sanskrit texts. In addition, the book contains several useful appendices, containing glossaries, excerpts of other Sanskrit texts that are relevant for the understanding of the passages from the SŚP, and an uninterrupted version of the text that is translated in the third part.

The layout of the parts listed already reveals the multidisciplinary character of Trikha's approach. Since versatility is not an end in itself, the question rises how these perspectives contribute to the main goal of the study. Trikha explicitly mentions that his work serves two goals. The first is to contribute to the research into a part of the history of philosophy of South Asia, namely the history of Jaina philosophy. His second goal is to investigate whether the Jaina approach of rival schools can be an inspiring method for our current dealing with philosophical traditions of various geographical areas. This twofold goal is a remarkable feature of *Perspektivismus und Kritik*.

At the risk of simplifying, one can say that most studies in Indian philosophy can be classified in one of the following two categories. The first category consists of works that are dedicated to a historical understanding of Indian philosophical texts. The second category contains rational reconstructions of Indian philosophies, whereby the underlying goal is to contribute to contemporary philosophical debates. Trikha's study does not belong exclusively to one of these two categories. With his dual objective, he has committed himself to both areas.

Recent reviews by Jayandra Soni (Soni 2012) and Jeffery Long (Long 2013) have already confirmed the value of Trikha's publication with regard to his first goal. Soni has qualified Trikha's book as an 'excellent philological study' and an important contribution to the field of Jainism, in which reliable and textual studies are scarce (Soni 2012: 695-696). He also mentions that Trikha's study is one of the few sources that shed light on the link between the Jaina and Vaiśeṣika systems. In line with this review, Long qualifies *Perspektivismus und Kritik* as a 'carefully argued work' (Long 2013: 194). There is no reason to deviate from the views of these two reviewers. Trikha's philological work is characterised by thoroughness, completeness and attention to the way in which the Sanskrit text can be made intelligible to the reader. However, Long also stresses that Trikha's 'study is of tremendous value to all who would utilize *anekāntavāda* as a model of pluralism' (Long 2013: 194). This remark concerns Trikha's second goal, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Part IA of *Perspektivismus und Kritik* is titled 'Zum Umgang einer philosophischen Tradition mit der Pluralität konkurrierender Weltentwürfe'. The aim of this section is not only to contribute to the history of ideas or Jaina studies but also to appraise the value of Jaina perspectivism as a model for our present-day approach towards different worldviews. With this question, Trikha enters the domain of philosophy. We should therefore not only ask whether Trikha's study contributes to Jaina studies but also investigate the value of his work for the philosophically interested reader.

The part of Trikha's book that is explicitly aimed at the philosophically interested reader occupies 64 pages, which is less than a fifth of the entire publication. The section begins with an introduction of Jaina perspectivism. This part is valuable in shedding light on the meaning of *anekāntavāda* and its compatibility with the use of criteria of truth. Trikha highlights Vidyānandin's criterion of truth, according to which a doctrine can be said to be true if it is not opposed to perception and to that which is rationally

derived from perception. After this exploration of the relation between *anekāntavāda* and truth, Trikha discusses the Jaina criticism of the Vaiśeṣika school and Vidyānandin's deconstruction of the notion of inherence. A schematic analysis of this discussion is added in a separate section. The last section compares Vidyānandin's treatment of other systems with several forms of perspectivism. In this last part, Trikha makes extensive use of original diagrams. These diagrams enlighten the text, though their interpretation is not always clear at first sight. Probably with a view to this difficulty, all visual schemes and diagrams are explained in an appendix.

A strong point of the philosophical section of the book is its accessibility. The text presupposes little prior knowledge but does not lose its interest for specialised readers. All technical terms are displayed in both German and Sanskrit and the discussion is supported with many references to primary sources, under which Vidyānandin's works play a prominent role. The visual additions to the text are valuable tools to critically examine the text and the differences between slightly different perspectivist concepts. To sum up, Trikha succeeds in introducing *anekāntavāda* to the reader who is unfamiliar with Indian philosophy, clarifies the meaning of *anekāntavāda* for those who are well versed in Jaina thought, and inspires the philosophically interested reader to reconsider the plausibility of perspectivism. When this is added to the previously mentioned merit of Trikha's annotated translation, one cannot but conclude that *Perspektivismus und Kritik* is a significant contribution to the study of Indian philosophy.

Nevertheless, every book has its weaknesses. Trikha's book consists of many parts and subsections. Given that the different parts are aimed at readers with different interests, reading the whole document can be an arduous task, which asks for frequently flipping back and forth. For example, the first part discusses the strategy of Vidyānandin while the introduction of Vidyānandin and his work form the beginning of the second part. On the level of content, Trikha's sources are scarce when it comes to general works on perspectivism. Of his impressive bibliography, only one page is dedicated to general works. Although this is not unusual for studies in the history of Indian philosophy, it is not an obvious choice if one aims at contributing to a contemporary philosophical debate. A last point concerns the accessibility of the work. It is a commendable effort of Trikha to write for an audience that does not exclusively consist of scholars in Jaina studies or Indian philosophy. However, it is doubtful whether his book will be read by many readers who do not belong to this category. Since the main part of his book is only accessible for Sanskrit scholars, it is not obvious for a

general philosopher to take his publication in hand. Moreover, the choice for German can be seen as an unnecessary barrier which limits the size of the potential target audience.

Regarding the latter, it is relevant to remark that parts of Trikha's study have been published in English in the meantime. See: Trikha, Himal. "Competing World Views: Perspectivism and Polemics in the Satya-śāsana-parīkṣā and Other Jaina Works" (2012) and Trikha, Himal. "Composition Areas in Vidyānandin's Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā: The First Part of the uttarapakṣa in the Chapter on Vaiśeṣika" (2012).

Overall, Trikha's book is a thorough and valuable contribution to the study of Jaina philosophy. Instead of repeating existing ideas concerning *anekāntavāda*, he examines the actual attitude of Jaina philosophers and shows that their perspectivism is not just a slogan but an instrument for rational enquiry of rival philosophies. Moreover, his study bridges a gap between two fields in the study of Indian philosophy by showing that solid historical studies and contemporary philosophical relevance are not incompatible.

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## RÉSUMÉ

L'étude que livre Himal Trikha du chapitre consacré au Vaiśeṣika dans la *Satyāśāsanaparīkṣā* est une analyse approfondie de la critique de cette école par Vidyānandin. Le livre contient une traduction annotée de SŚP I (1-4) et SŚP II (1-41) et inclut une discussion philosophique de la méthode de Vidyānandin. Cette enquête montre que *anekāntavāda* et critique ne sont pas mutuellement exclusifs et que la méthode par laquelle Vidyānandin falsifie les alternatives épistémiques constitue une description rationnelle du perspectivisme.