

Philosophy of Religion. An Almanac. Volumes I & II. Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2007 & 2010.

This almanac is published by the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Its editor in chief, Vladimir K. Shokhin, is in charge of the division of Philosophy of Religion at the Institute. The Institute was originally founded by the prominent Russian phenomenologist Gustav Spet in 1921 (then it was called the Institute of Scientific Philosophy). The communist authorities wanted it to diffuse the ideology of dialectical materialism, and yet it defended the liberty of philosophical discourse; as a result many of its members were subjected to repression under Stalin. Since the second half of the 20th century the Institute has become a big center of philosophical research. The Institute publishes 13 reviews (including the Philosophical Journal) and three almanacs.

The Almanac of Philosophy of Religion has so far been published in two volumes comprising 2006-2007 and 2008-2009. It is hard to overestimate the importance of such an edition in the Russian philosophical horizon. This branch of philosophy was the first to suffer from the abovementioned attempts to impose dialectical materialism in the soviet epoch. The Marxist "philosophy" of religion was reduced to understanding religion as the opium of the people (or, in Lenin's even more simplifying formulation, opium *for* the people). Marx regarded religion as a false consciousness – and there can certainly be no philosophy of false consciousness. Marx considered abolishing religion, which is the illusory happiness of the people, as a step towards their real happiness. Besides, religion was meant to express the interests of the bourgeois ruling classes, being a dominant ideology called to legitimate exploitation. According to Marx and Engels, communism abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis.

Most of the Russian religious thinkers such as Georges Florovsky or Nikolai Berdyaev had to move abroad and the greatest Russian orthodox theologians wrote in exile (such as Alexander Schmemmann, for example).

In the second half of the 20th century some thinkers in the Soviet Union did research in the domain of theology, both biblical and natural (the most prominent was Father Alexander Men), and in the history of Christian culture (like Sergey Averintsev); there were also good specialists in Chinese, Indian, Arab cultures etc. who had to face the religious problematic in their work, but philosophy of religion as such remained taboo.

After the fall of the communist system the taboo on religion was lifted. The Orthodox church as well as other confessions and religions began their expansion. Many people in today's Russia identify themselves as believers even if sometimes the level of religious education leaves something to be desired. No doubt faith (Christian faith anyway) needs the assistance of reason, and the philosophy of religion can be of great importance here. Besides that, the almanac is called to restore in Russia the continuity of philosophy of religion (which is one of the most

popular and developed branches of philosophy in the west and yet hardly known in today's Russia), the continuity of which was broken in the communist era.

It is perhaps not fortuitous that the almanac comes into being as late as 15 years after the fall of the communist ideology; indeed, philosophy needs time to reflect on past events and processes and to grasp their sense, and haste is out of place when reflection is concerned. The situation today in the religious sphere in Russia necessitates philosophical reflection, but it also makes such a reflection possible, which was not quite the case a couple of years ago when this situation was still in the making. This makes the publication of the almanac in Russia very timely.

The almanac is conceived as an international periodical and it is edited with the participation of the Society of Christian Philosophers. It is also an interdisciplinary edition; besides philosophers and specialists in religious studies the Institute collaborates also with theologians. Philosophy of religion is supposed to play a coordinating role in these interdisciplinary studies of religion. The structure of the almanac (in its first issue) is as follows: the first section is devoted to meta-philosophical reflection on the identity of philosophy of religion, on its subject-matter. As V. Shokhin, the editor-in-chief, remarks, the discussion of this topic is needed because of the existence of different conceptions on this issue; the problem of the proper area of philosophy of religion does not seem to be unequivocally resolved. The second section deals with particular problems and it is supposed to have some thematic unity: for example, in the first issue it outlines contemporary theism. The third section is historical (in the first issue it considers the history of natural theology). The fourth section contains translations of classical texts in philosophical theology as well as works of Russian philosophers and theologians. The last section consists of book reviews.

The first volume of the Almanac contains 497 pages; it is particularly noteworthy that the second section contains articles by leading analytical philosophers of religion such as R. Swinburne's comprehensive article on the Anglo-American philosophy of religion (a theme of particular interest for the Russian reader), Robert Adams' *Divine Necessity*, E. Wielenberg's *Omnipotence Again* and N. Wolterstorff's *God is Everlasting*. The third section, as already mentioned, is devoted to the history of Natural Theology from antiquity to the Middle Ages.

I would like to present briefly V. K. Shokhin's long (about seventy pages) introductory article *On the Genesis of Philosophy of Religion: the Problem and Its Most Plausible Solution* as an example of successful application of the historical approach to a (meta)theoretical problem. The article aims at defining the very identity of philosophy of religion by more precisely defining its subject-matter. This goal is absolutely legitimate given that philosophy by definition includes a more significant amount of self-reflection than any other discipline; it is called to constantly define and redefine itself, its own role and scope. Philosophy of religion is no exception, and V. K. Shokhin undertakes a convincing attempt to delimit its proper sphere of studies by having recourse to the history of reflection on the philosophy of religion. Here we deal with an attempt to give a historically grounded solution to a (meta) theoretical problem. The validity of this method becomes

clear when we realize how much our conception of philosophy of religion changes depending on whether we set its beginnings as early as in the time of Xenophanes or the Upanishads or as late as in Kant's and Hegel's epoch. Therefore, writing a history of philosophy of religion correlates with defining its subject matter. (We may be tempted to suppose a kind of hermeneutical circle between the two, but this is not what the author explicitly states). Besides, the history of philosophical reflection and self-reflection sheds more light on theoretical problems than history normally does in other disciplines; it is due to the fact that most philosophical problems do not imply final solutions and so we can make a theoretical use even of the very first philosophic approaches to religion.

After this introduction the author proceeds to a critical review of some conceptions of the history of philosophy of religion and correspondingly to a review of definitions of this branch of philosophy. We will consider briefly those of them which clearly help define the author's own conception.

For example, the contemporary Russian philosopher Yu. A. Kimelev, in his book on philosophy of religion, distinguishes between two meanings of the term; he speaks about *philosophy of religion* in the broad and in the narrow senses of the word. If we take it broadly it will refer to a set of philosophical attitudes towards religion as well as with philosophical ways of confirming the existence of God, considering His nature and His relation to the world and to man. This relation between philosophy and religion has existed as long as philosophy itself. In the narrow sense philosophy of religion is an explicit and autonomous philosophical discourse about God and about religion. It becomes possible during Modernity when religion separates from other human activities and philosophy in its turn becomes independent from religion.

The definition of philosophy of religion as discourse on both religion and God leads Kimelev to its subdivision into the philosophical science of religion and philosophical theology coextensive with natural theology. V. K. Shokhin's criticism of this vision helps to highlight his own conception. In Kimelev's opinion philosophy of religion as the philosophical science of religion *studies* "religious knowledge"; as philosophical theology it helps *produce* the said knowledge. V. K. Shokhin shows that in this case we are confronted with a confusion of object-language and meta-language: either philosophy of religion is religiology, or it is theology; it cannot be both or otherwise we would be equally entitled to treat literary criticism and the writing of novels as the same kind of activity. The distinction will become clearer below.

The author then proceeds to a review of western conceptions of philosophy of religion. For reasons of space we have to limit ourselves to the theoretical frame of the discussion. V. K. Shokhin divides all the conceptions of the history of philosophy of religion into three categories. 1) The first category comprises those thinkers who understand philosophy of religion only in the broad sense without distinguishing the genesis of philosophy of religion from that of philosophy *tout court*. In their view philosophy of religion is identical with any philosophical connections with religion. 2) The second category is represented by those who under-

stand philosophy of religion both in the broad and in the narrow senses of the term. For them philosophy of religion originally existed as any relationship between philosophy and religion but since Modernity it has been transformed into a specialized philosophical discipline. 3) Finally, the third category includes those who accept only the narrow sense of the term *philosophy of religion*. This trilemma can be put in historical terms so that the question of the identity of philosophy of religion becomes related to the question whether philosophy of religion a) does not have any history other than that of philosophy itself, b) both has (in one respect) and does not have (in another respect) such a history, c) has its own history separate from that of philosophy as a whole.

V. K. Shokhin then enumerates and discusses the views of historians of philosophy of religion that represent each of the three categories and proceeds to a criticism of their respective attitudes.

The edge of the criticism is directed towards the first category as completely erroneous in the author's view. The attitude of this category of thinkers is expressed in the long title of a book written by I. Berger, the first historian of religion (published in 1800); he understands philosophy of religion as the "Teachings of the Most Original Thinkers of All Times on God *and* Religion". The problem with this formulation is the same as in Kimelev's case mentioned above: here we deal with a confusion of *philosophy in religion* (religious ideas expressed in philosophical terms) and *philosophy of religion* as a philosophical discourse on religion; a confusion, in other words, of theology and religiology, both being supposed to be the object of study of one and the same discipline. This mistake seems to me to result from confusing an object-language (religious language in its occurrence) with metalanguage (correspondingly, a discourse on religious language).

We find an example of such a confusion of levels of language in the view according to which the sages of India, China and Greece made the first steps in the philosophical comprehension of religion when they posed the problem of the One (cf. e.g. H. D. Lewis *Philosophy of Religion*, *Encyclopedia of the History of Philosophy*, v. VI New York 1967). According to this view, philosophy of religion is not distinguished from religious philosophy; for V. K. Shokhin this is similar to considering the first studies of the development of the Indo-European *language* as a stage of comparative *linguistics*.

This broad understanding of philosophy of religion results from unconscious confusion based on false evidence; but there are also philosophers who consciously identify this branch of philosophy with philosophical theology which is none other than natural theology. Yet historically, argues V. K. Shokhin, natural theology always presupposed revealed theology and the reading of the book of nature was not absolutely independent from reading Scriptures; in fact they were parts of one whole. Extra-confessional theology is hardly possible, and even one of the main questions of natural theology – whether we can know God on the basis of the reasonably designed world – is answered differently by, for example Thomists and Calvinists. Besides, when identifying philosophy of religion with philosophical theology we still confuse philosophy-in-religion with philosophy of religion,

putting on the same level proofs of God's existence, the problem of His attributes *and* religious language and epistemology. This and some other considerations lead V. K. Shokhin to accept (after a criticism of the other two attitudes) the narrow understanding of philosophy of religion as the only plausible one.

He considers as philosophy of religion any philosophical discourse that has at least some elements of a theoretical treatment of religion oriented towards understanding and not towards control, according to Plantinga's formula. It concerns the origin, essence and significance of religion both taken in itself and related to other aspects of human spiritual life, as well as comprehension of basic religious categories and religious language.

V. K. Shokhin then distinguishes the prehistory of philosophy of religion from its initial history that begins in the 18th century; he proposes his own vision of its prehistory which may start, according to him, with Plato's *Euthyphro* which poses thematically the problem of piety; it continues with Cicero's "The nature of the Gods", then with Lactantius; Aquinas' contribution is also underlined as well as that of Nicholas of Cues, Herbert of Cherbury, Thomas Hobbes and Spinoza.

V. K. Shokhin's article is introductory to a series of articles on the same subject. Philosophy of religion, which is still in the making in Russia, needs to clearly define its own frontiers. But his objective is to make more precise the definition of philosophy of religion as such and not only Russian philosophy of religion. He seems to proceed from the assumption of the unity of philosophical activity. This assumption, worthy of a philosopher as it is, remains however at present a kind of Kantian regulative idea. Given the partition of philosophy roughly into analytical and "continental" (which is not the only partition that exists), this unity becomes a horizon to which we can more or less approach, but not a reality we can grasp. V. K. Shokhin's conception of philosophy of religion seems to me personally to be both logically and historically right, and yet we have to count with a plurality of particular philosophical traditions, including the one that embraces also natural theology as part of philosophy of religion (and that produces fruitful ideas). Besides that, many analytical authors reflect on the methodology of natural theology, taking its language as their object of study, and that meta-theoretical attitude is quite consistent with V. K. Shokhin's conception of philosophy of religion. However, V. K. Shokhin's attention to the history of philosophy of religion and his deep understanding of its relation to the present may contribute significantly to the philosophical discussion on religion.

The second volume of the Almanac (2008-2009) amounts to 524 pages. Some new sections are added: the section of Russian publications and archives is separated from that of classical authors. A section devoted to current events in the area of religious studies is introduced. The section on meta-philosophy of religion is represented by an article by V. K. Shokhin as well as by articles by Richard Shaeffler and Bernhard Kasper. The second section contains not only articles by English and American philosophers (such as R. Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga and others) but also those by Russian philosophers. This issue of the Almanac involves

analytical as well as “continental” thinkers. The section of classical texts includes those by Hugh of St. Victor and F.W.J. Schelling.

Below I will present three articles written by Russian authors.

V. K. Shokhin’s article “*Philosophy of Religion*”: *the Beginning of Self-Reflection* continues the author’s historical and meta-philosophical reflections from the previous volume. Here he retraces the history of philosophy of religion in the 18th century – the time of its birth. He remarks that these historical considerations are of primary importance for understanding the actual situation of philosophy of religion.

The first author of a “Philosophy of Religion” was an Austrian Jesuit, S. von Storchenau, who pursued apologetical tasks in his book. Philosophy of religion was understood as a philosophical defense of the main religious beliefs. He was followed by another Jesuit, *François Para du Phanjas*, the author of “*Les principes de la saine philosophie conciliés avec ceux de la religion, ou La philosophie de la religion*”, who was called to justify a consensus or a synthesis between the true philosophy and the true religion as well as to clarify the world-view of the Christian religion as a unity of rational and revealed theologies. This work was also meant to refute all the refutations of Christian religious principles.

The first attempt to introduce philosophy of religion into the academic milieu was made by C. L. Reinhold in his “Letters on the Kantian philosophy”. He explicitly considers philosophy of religion as a separate branch of philosophy and calls for a reformation of it. Philosophy of religion is ascribed theological tasks (a teaching about God and about the future life) but it is meant to construct the very principles of religion in this area on the basis of practical reason, according to the Kantian model.

J. F. Kleuker, in a book published in 1789, criticizes this application of Kantian philosophy to a science of religious principles. According to him, philosophy of religion would have the right to justify the teaching about God’s being and the immortal soul if there were no true “positive” religion that already contains such a justification; since such a religion exists and is known as Christianity, the Kantian enterprise is neither necessary, nor sufficient. Kleuker himself postulates a comparative approach to religions on the basis of the categories true/false, sufficient/insufficient, aimed at evaluation of religions with regard to the ideal.

Kant’s own influence on the formation of philosophy of religion seems to be ambiguous. On the one hand, in the 1780’s he did not intend to develop a philosophy of religion, considering it as part of ethics and not as a separate part of his philosophy. Only in the first edition of “Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone” (1793) does he identify the philosophical study of religion as philosophical theology (as opposed to biblical theology) and try to find an autonomous niche for this study. In the second edition of the treatise he calls his research in the religious domain Religionslehre. In the “Contest of Faculties” (1798) he sets the borders between philosophical and theological studies of religion and outlines the principles of the philosophical hermeneutics of the Scriptures. So, on the one hand, Kant introduced a special term “Philosophische Religionslehre”; on the other hand, he

most probably did not conceive of philosophy of religion as a philosophical discipline in its own right.

Yet it is under the influence of his work that philosophy of religion is understood more and more as a separate area of study. Philosophy of religion is considered, for example already by the young Schelling, as a separate philosophical trend of a Kantian orientation.

Fichte treats Religionslehre as a particular application of the general philosophical system of Wissenschaftslehre. He speaks about three levels of consciousness concerning religion: 1) the religious sense itself 2) Religionslehre 3) philosophy of religion called to critically remove false ideas about God, to foster religious education and to clarify the origin and formation of the religious sense as well as to define the very notion of religion. Religionslehre is meant to clarify the relation of God to finite reasonable subjects, unlike theology which studies the Divinity in itself. Philosophy of religion becomes a theory of religion which is placed on a different level from that of religious sense; a philosopher of religion works not so much with religion itself or with its concepts as with “concepts about those concepts”.

Finally, the first history of the philosophy of religion (*Geschichte der Religionsphilosophie*) was published in 1800 by Immanuel Berger. Although his vision of the history of the philosophy of religion was too broad (it seems to have been coextensive with history of theology), the very fact of the publication of a history of philosophy of religion witnesses to the fact that by that time it was already a widely recognized and significant cultural and philosophical phenomenon.

The variety of attitudes towards philosophy of religion in the 18th century before Fichte had, in spite of numerous distinctions, one common feature: it was considered rather as a philosophical trend than as a discipline in its own right (with the exception of Kant’s ambiguous attitude). By the end of the 18th century it was taken for granted as a philosophical phenomenon, and work on its clarification and identification was not undertaken.

The nowadays widespread broad understanding of the subject-matter of philosophy of religion (as any intersection of philosophy and religion) recalls the situation at the end of the 18th century – another witness of philosophical eternal return.

Fichte seems to have been the only philosopher who understood religiology as a non-theological discourse. His three-level hierarchy of discourses seems to comprise the phenomenology of religious sense, the ontology of the relation between God and finite subjects and the philosophy of religion proper called to study manifestations of the religious and to define the concept of religion. In other words, philosophy of religion is a hierarchy of the phenomenological, ontological and categorial or conceptual dimensions of the religious – a definition that could be claimed in our time. Besides, Fichte clearly distinguishes philosophy of religion from philosophy in religion, the confusion of which, according to V. K. Shokhin, hinders one from clearly identifying the tasks and the subject-matter of the former.

In his article “*Is Hume’s Law Correct*” M. O. Shakhov poses the question of the validity of Hume’s Guillotine, asking whether values can be inferred from our knowledge about the world; to put it in other terms – whether evaluative or prescriptive statements (the distinction is not essential to the author’s goal) can be deduced from descriptive ones. The main objective of the article is to examine the well-known Humean solution of the *is-ought* problem.

That the contrary often takes place, when rational discourse is called to justify norms or values already preconceived, is quite obvious but this is not the point of this article. The author distinguishes three answers to his question: in the positive, in the negative and strictly or extremely negative. The first solution belongs to Platonism, as well as any objective idealism and to traditional Christian theology. The second solution is given by David Hume, and the third one comes from the postmodernist milieu.

In Plato knowledge about the immortality of the soul (descriptive statements) and postmortem retribution founds the necessity of observing moral norms. As a matter of fact, in Plato knowledge of the “ought” is not properly inferred from neutral judgments about what is; “ought” itself exists as an entity, as for example ideas of good or justice, that we can get to know. Philosophies that admit an objective world of values (like G. E. Moore’s) do not distinguish specifically normative judgments. Moral judgments for example are treated as representing knowledge of what is good; so there is no distinction between descriptive and evaluative.

In Christianity knowledge about the immortal soul and retribution is expressed in corresponding descriptive (even though unverifiable) propositions, but it needs to be completed by evaluative and prescriptive propositions. These are contained in biblical commandments that are instituted by God Himself. Formulated by God Himself and thus objective, they not only prescribe, but also describe the objectively existing law, and so are descriptive-evaluative by nature.

M. O. Shakhov then formulates the general rule which says that if one admits the objective existence of absolute values that are the same for everybody, these values are expressed in descriptive-evaluative propositions and there is no inferred transition from description to evaluation.

Indeed, in Christianity, for example, knowledge about God based on knowledge about the world implies not only descriptive information but a prescription as well, such knowledge becoming a duty to those who believe; therefore there is no gap between “ought” and “is”.

The Christian conception of Natural Law is correlated to a vision of Nature as created by God. In its turn, the laicized version of Natural Law derives normative judgments from human nature by itself, but in fact the evaluative and prescriptive statements of the Declaration of Human Rights have no justification in factual statements. Therefore, Hume’s law is confirmed as far as human rights and natural law conceptions are concerned: in a godless *weltanschauung* it is impossible to infer evaluative judgments from descriptive judgments about man and Nature, such that the results are convincing for everybody.

Marxism claimed the logical deducibility of its value system from its worldview, which was supposed by Marxists to be “truly scientific” and to generate knowledge about what the world ought to be like. Contrary to the Humean principle Marxism is an example of a teaching that claims adequate knowledge of reality and makes a transition from “is” propositions to “ought” propositions. And yet such refutation of the Humean principle in the case of Marxism is only partial. Marxism justifies the prescription of transforming the world by having recourse to ideals and norms derived from an adequate description of the world; yet it takes for granted the maxim that demands, once we know the objective laws of development, that we follow them in order to improve human life and do not oppose them. However this maxim is not deducible from any descriptive knowledge, strictly speaking there is no logically irreproachable transition from “is” to “ought”. Even supposing that we can adequately know the world and its laws, it does not immediately follow that we should observe or implement them.

Here is the difference between Marxism and Christianity as far as this Humean principle is concerned: in Christianity the notions of what is just and morally good have their own ontological status because they express God’s will. Norms and prescriptions being divinely instituted, the demand for their implementation is itself founded (for example, but not only, by the idea of retribution). On the contrary, non-theological conceptions of morality have either to implicitly or explicitly confer substantial character to values themselves or to relativise them to a given society or epoch. Besides that, the idea of objective knowledge has been discredited in correlation to the relativisation of ethics; Plato’s insight is confirmed according to which knowledge about the immortal soul and retribution founds ethics.

The author concludes that the answer to the question whether Hume’s Guillotine is correct should be nuanced: for Christianity and Platonism this principle is incorrectly formulated rather than simply wrong since there is no conclusion from “is” to “ought”, values being objective and existing as entities. As for worldviews that deny objective values, this principle is quite correct and entails the impossibility of a logically irreproachable grounding of ethics.

To my mind, the article shows well why Hume’s law does not apply to Platonism or Christianity (in the view of those who believe) but it does not really prove its applicability to the human rights conception and to other non-theist moral conceptions. If we take is-statements or descriptive statements to be statements about facts (and prescriptive statements would relate to values), we have to admit that the very concept of “fact” is problematic and at least for some facts the distinction between fact and value is not sharp. Besides the so-called institutional facts (for example regarding a piece of paper as money) we can ask whether there exist any value-free brute facts that would not be trivial (like “it is raining”). Certainly, this does not refute the fact-value distinction, it only attenuates the dichotomy. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Shakhov’s view on Marxism’s relation to Hume’s Law may suggest a way if not to refute, at least to make more nuanced the affirmation of the impossibility of deriving “ought” from “is” statements. Indeed, from the (descriptive) statement that the advent of communism is inevitable it does not

follow that (prescriptive statement) we should strive for its coming unless we accept another prescriptive statement, for example, that once we know the objective historical laws we should help them come true. Analogically speaking, from the statement that killing is painful or that it does irreversible harm to another person it does not immediately follow that you should not kill unless we admit another value-judgment e.g. that you should not do to another what you would not like to have done to you (of course we have to presuppose another descriptive statement, namely that nobody normally wants to be irreversibly harmed). Cannot it be that a prescriptive statement is justified by a descriptive statement in conjunction with another prescriptive statement? Strictly speaking, this does not demonstrate that prescriptive statements can be deduced from descriptive ones; rather it shows that a descriptive statement can be an argument in favor of following a prescription, an argument that has rather an action-guiding than a purely logical force. Anyway, the problem is too complex and the space is too limited to try any real solution.

In the article *Theism, Postmodernist Burial of Metaphysics and Indian Ātmavadā*, Vladimir K. Schokhin speaks about psychophysical dualism as part of the philosophical foundation of theism. Indeed, the author states that negation of psychophysical dualism deprives theism of its sufficient reason. In this case either the soul is supposed to be destroyed with the death of the body (according to naturalist reductionism) or it is considered to be just a bundle of sensations and cogitations.

For some postmodernist authors both theism and psychophysical dualism are relics of the obsolete euro-centric rationality related to logocentrism. For them (mono)theism, as well as metaphysics claiming universality, are enemies of pluralism and should be overcome together with western rationalism as a whole. In this view psychophysical dualism is to be rejected as part of the tradition of western rationality. It is precisely the last thesis (that says that psychophysical dualism is a purely occidental conception) that V. K. Schokhin intends to refute by having recourse to the Indian philosophical tradition. He briefly mentions a general logical argument against postmodern relativism (any denial of universality itself subreptively claims universality), but the edge of his criticism is directed against the historical groundlessness of discarding mind-body dualism as a phenomenon relative only to the occidental tradition. In fact this form of dualism does not occur only in the western tradition and therefore does not belong exclusively to western logocentrism.

The author outlines the history of the debate between Indian dualists (that is thinkers professing ātmavadā, a teaching about Ātman as spiritual principle) and materialists. So, for example, in the Chandogya Upanishad (VIII-VII cc. BC) it is said that those who consider Ātman as body are non-believers. So, at the dawn of Indian thought it was realized that reducing soul to body was incompatible with religious faith. During the Śramana period the problem of the body-mind relation was one of the main subjects of discussion. In the period that follows (IVc. BC-III c. AD) the main argument of materialists was that soul and its actions were unobservable whereas dualists affirmed that not all existing entities need to be

observed. Then, in the Mahabharata, materialists are said to maintain that all the causal relations work only in the material world (like, for example, a seed and a tree, or a magnet etc.); besides, the only reliable source of knowledge is sense-perception and it does not permit one to affirm any permanent principles. The dualists' response was that separation of soul and body after death does not imply the former's destruction; on the contrary, the idea that the body is the source of life is discredited by the fact that action stops after death.

Dualists of the Samkhya school argued that all the composite bodies were intended for an ontologically different principle; they cannot be conscious by themselves and need to be guided by this principle, they cannot be the subject of self-perception, and since they are perceived, they imply such a principle. Ātman is understood as the subject of predicates needed to constitute experience.

Representatives of the Nyaya school explicitly argue with materialists finding points of contradiction in their teaching.

However, the most elaborate refutation of psychophysical monism was undertaken by Śankara, the founder of the Advaita Vedanta school. It is worth presenting briefly some of his arguments: 1) Thought and memory, unlike other bodily properties, are unperceivable. 2) Understanding consciousness as an attribute of the body is absurd: it is as if fire could burn itself. 3) Unlike permanently changing bodily properties, the subject of knowledge is continual and self-identical. 4) That there is consciousness when there is body does not entail that the former is a property of the latter. According to Śankara, the main properties of the spiritual principle have nothing in common with bodily properties and the latter depend on the former more often than the contrary.

V. K. Shokhin remarks that some of the arguments of Indian thinkers in favor of dualism still retain their validity – for example, understanding the subject of experience as ontologically different from its objects and everything it can objectify, including its own bodily state; this ontological gap constitutes a condition of the possibility of experience. The argument from the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity as well as the argument from the difference between composite and simple things, and some of Śankara's arguments, can be retained in the contemporary discussion, according to V. K. Shokhin.

It becomes obvious that the labeling of metaphysics by postmodernists as a purely occidental phenomenon is not consistent with historical testimonies. Moreover, the reproach of anti-pluralism is also inconsistent: the various versions of Indian body-mind dualism represent *different* types of metaphysical mentality. Besides, V. K. Shokhin remarks that the understanding that the reduction of Ātman to the body is incompatible with religion corresponds to the theist world-view, even if the Indian thinkers did not know of the idea of a created soul.

V. K. Shokhin's article is another example of a historical approach to a theoretical problem; it postulates a close connection between mind-body dualism and religious faith. However we can ask whether psychophysical dualism is necessary for someone to be a Christian (we will not consider other religions) – given the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. Generally speaking can't we rather

say that Christian faith or rather Christian doctrine is over-determined with regard to metaphysical theories; that is, it cannot be based on or identified with just one particular theory (Aquinas' philosophy is of course no exception) or even a certain type of theory. Besides, since we do not know well enough all the properties of matter, we cannot treat beforehand any materialism as hostile to religion – in fact only vulgar forms of materialism are. Our contemporary scientific conception of matter is much more complex than it was in ancient times. Does this mean that addressing ourselves to ancient philosophical discussions gives no epistemic gain? To my mind, not at all; indeed, Vladimir Shokhin's article shows the validity of this approach. One might be tempted to ask whether it is legitimate to consider arguments of Indian thinkers out of their proper context (which is quite different from ours; it also being the case that many of their questions are not our questions) and to employ them in contemporary discussions. And yet according to a saying of A. Gurevich, an outstanding Russian medievalist, any historical knowledge is also self-knowledge; we cannot understand ancient argumentation while abstracting from our own horizon of understanding; even if we are not entitled to impose our own categories on the ancient authors (cf. A.J. Gurevich: *Categories of Medieval Culture*. Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985). V. K. Shokhin seems intelligently to maneuver between these extremes and he shows that history can be of use for current debates and that forgetting arguments put forward by philosophers of the past can impoverish contemporary thought.

One of the most important tasks of philosophy of religion is to clarify religious concepts, to analyze religious statements. This is particularly necessary in today's Russia where interest in religion is increasing, as is the need to understand it. In this context the appearance of a periodical presenting articles of both Russian and western philosophers and specialists in religious studies cannot but be welcomed. It suggests hope that Russian and western philosophers will further collaborate in this field, thus realizing the unity of the philosophical project two and a half thousand year old.

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