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Edited by

Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam

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EDITED BY

*BRIAN CARR*  
*and* *INDIRA MAHALINGAM*



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MARY BOYCE received her PhD in Oriental Studies from Cambridge University. She was appointed lecturer in Iranian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, in 1947 and became professor in 1963. She has specialized in Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism, her major publication being a history of Zoroastrianism, of which three volumes have appeared.

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BRIAN CARR studied at London University (Imperial, King's and Birkbeck Colleges) and lectured in philosophy at the University of Exeter until 1988 when he moved to a Senior Lectureship in Philosophy at the University of Nottingham. His previous published works include *Bertrand Russell* (1975), *Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (with D. J. O'Connor) (1982), *Metaphysics* (1987) and *Logical Foundations* edited with Indira Mahalingam (1991). In 1991 he and Indira Mahalingam co-founded the Carfax journal *Asian Philosophy*, and together they work as general editors of the *Curzon Studies in Asian Philosophy* series. He is the founder and co-ordinator of the European Society for Asian Philosophy, and director of the Research Centre for Asian Philosophy at the University of Nottingham. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1994.

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MICHAEL COMANS has had a long interest in the Vedānta traditions, especially the Advaita Vedānta. After graduating with an MA in Religious Studies from the University of Sydney he undertook a careful study over a number of years, first in the United States and later in India, of the Advaita Vedānta and Sanskrit. In 1986 he received his PhD at the Australian National University under the supervision of Professor J. W. de Jong. He intends to continue his research and teaching in Indian philosophy, religion and Sanskrit.

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FRANK J. HOFFMAN has taught at universities in Hawaii, England, Japan, West Germany and the United States and is currently in the Department of Philosophy at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He received a PhD in philosophy of religion from King's College, University of London. Recipient of teaching assistantships in Philosophy and in Asian Studies, an East–West Center grant and the Tutorial Studentship in philosophy of religion, he has directed five public humanities *colloquia*, and participated in five NEH Summer projects. His publications include *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism* (1987), a chapter in *Traditional Hermeneutics* (1990), *Pali Buddhism* co-edited with Bhikkhu Deegalle Mahinda (1996) as well as numerous journal articles and book reviews.

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## PREFACE

The idea of producing this work grew out of a conversation with Jonathan Price, then at Routledge, at the celebration of the launching of the Routledge *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* at Reading University in 1988. That work was edited by Professor G.H.R. Parkinson of Reading, and he made the point that his project had proved to be far bigger and much more time-consuming than he had ever imagined. We can duly report that his warning was very accurate indeed. Jonathan has since moved on to other publishing ventures, but we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for his support, encouragement and good-natured indulgence and appreciation of the complexities involved in working with fifty other writers from the four corners of the world.

The project then fell into the hands of Seth Denbo, and we could not have hoped for a better pair of hands to take over the project at Routledge. Seth also must be heartily thanked for his support throughout the remaining years it has taken to bring this encyclopedia to completion.

The spur to produce this work was the launching, by Carfax in Abingdon, Oxfordshire of the academic journal *Asian Philosophy* under our joint editorship. Roger Osborne King had the courage to invest in this publishing venture, and we remain extremely grateful for his support. Roger has also now moved on to found a new company, but Carfax did us very proud indeed by putting that journal into the hands of David Green. Under David's stewardship the journal has gone from strength to strength and looks set for a very long and very prosperous future. David has moreover played an important role in helping us to bring into existence the European Society for Asian Philosophy, a society which has so far organized two international conferences and is enthusiastically planning a third. The society's conferences have attracted delegates from many European countries, but also from very many other nations.

One final offshoot of this encyclopedia project (and of the journal) has been the recent creation, at the University of Nottingham, of a Research Centre for Asian

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Philosophy within the Philosophy Department. The role of this centre will be to encourage further growth in interest in this area among philosophers in Europe, and continue our collaboration with other philosophers world-wide.

B.C. and I.M., Exeter 1996

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This collection of some fifty essays on Asian philosophy is designed as a reference volume for students, scholars and others who require more than just a simple sketch of 'oriental' ideas. It has been compiled with the intention of doing justice to the arguments, ideas and presuppositions of philosophers working largely outside the confines of western philosophical traditions.

The volume engages in a unique project, that of bringing together scholars from institutions world-wide in an exploration of the great diversity of the philosophical traditions of Asia. These traditions are of quite widespread interest in the West, but their general appreciation falls far short of their vitality, their rigour and their immense contemporary relevance to the established practices of western philosophy. It is hoped that this volume will also prove useful to those working within any one of the Asian traditions who wish to acquire a foundation in other such traditions.

The choice of the title 'Asian philosophy' might give the misleading impression that the ideas discussed in this volume have a natural home only within a limited part of the globe. But the distinction between Asian and western philosophical traditions is a blurred one. Japanese philosophy, for example, has for a century or so had a very deep interest in the philosophers of Germany and of France; before that, Japanese philosophers had found their inspiration in systems of thought that had come from India and China. Chinese philosophy, as another example, is far from ignorant of and uninspired by the philosophers of Europe and of America. And contemporary Indian philosophers are just as at home with Russell, Frege, Wittgenstein and Quine as with Śāṅkara or Aurobindo. Even geographically the term 'Asian' is somewhat misleading, for though Islamic philosophers have the source of their tradition in the Middle East, they are as much involved with the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, and some of them have worked geographically as far west as Spain. The tradition of ancient Persian thought is, surprisingly to some, still alive and well among the Parsi thinkers of present-day Canada.

It cannot be denied that the philosophical styles of Asian philosophers are quite varied, though many of them bear more than a passing resemblance to the 'critical



analytic' style of Anglo-American philosophy. We have not tried to force upon our contributors a standard style of presentation. On the contrary, we have encouraged our writers to work within the styles which best suit them, since the volume then stands as a representative sample of the way philosophers work and have worked in China, in India, in Japan and so forth. Readers will find that the chapters are even so quite accessible and can be readily appreciated for their academic rigour. We have indeed included chapters written by philosophers within and outside the countries in which the Asian traditions have their roots, with the intention of providing a diversity of treatment of those traditions. There is, therefore, no attempt to suggest an 'orthodoxy' in the present perspective on their histories, or in the current practice of Asian philosophy.

The chapters have – again a little artificially – been gathered into six parts, under the headings Persian, Indian, Buddhist, Chinese, Japanese and Islamic. The artificiality is most pronounced in the case of Buddhist philosophy, since Buddhism as a religion and as a philosophical movement began in India, spreading north and south, then further east through China, Korea and Japan and even west through Europe and North America. The division between the Buddhist and the Indian, Chinese and Japanese parts of the collection may be excused, nevertheless, by the fact that Buddhism has seen such a variety of manifestations in different areas of the globe. On its journey outside India it has found renewed vigour from its meetings with other indigenous systems of thought – as they have from it in their turn.

Within each part some chapters are devoted to individual philosophers who have played a seminal role in that tradition. Such chapters are few, however, all the others having a wider focus on ideas and debates. Each part begins with a chapter devoted to the origins of the tradition in question, and ends with a chapter which sketches the contemporary philosophical preoccupations of the descendants of that tradition. These latter chapters bring out quite vividly the extent to which contemporary philosophers world-wide are ready and able to learn and absorb from, and to contribute afresh to, the discussions which have been taking place elsewhere.

The other chapters are focused on broad philosophical areas, grouped together as the philosophy of knowledge and reality, of language and logic, and of morals and society. There is, of course, again an appearance of artificiality in such divisions, since, for example, the nature of reality and the nature of moral values are hardly distinct questions. Nevertheless, marking out these areas under such headings is a well-established practice in western philosophical circles even though it is at the same time recognized that they are intimately interconnected. We do not think, therefore, that we are forcing an unnatural structure on to the Asian traditions themselves.

Each part of the encyclopedia begins with a very brief sketch of the relevant tradition, which we hope will provide some pointers to the most prominent features of the terrain. Such sketches are no more than simple and simplistic maps which make no claim to anything more than that; and an exploration of the chapters that follow