



# WORLD PHILOSOPHIES

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NINIAN SMART

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London and New York

First published 1999  
by Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

First published in paperback 2000

**Reprinted 2001**

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

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Typeset in Perpetua by Keystroke, Jacaranda Lodge, Wolverhampton  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-415-22852-2

## WORLD PHILOSOPHIES

Now available in paperback for the first time, this remarkable book presents in one volume a superb introduction to all the world's major philosophical and religious traditions. Ninian Smart, the pre-eminent guide to the subject, offers a comprehensive and global philosophical and religious picture. This book is an encyclopedia of wonders, a treasure store complete with accounts of philosophy and religion from around the world.

Chapters cover:

South Asian Philosophies; Jewish Philosophy; Chinese Philosophy; European Philosophy; Korean Philosophy; North American Philosophy; Japanese Philosophy; Latin American Philosophy; Greece, Rome and the Near East; Modern Islam; Modern South and Southeast Asia; Modern China, Korea and Japan; Islamic Philosophy; African Philosophies.

## PREFACE

I wrote this work so that general readers could have a clear guide to the philosophies of the world. This is useful in helping to solidify a sense of global solidarity and diversity. I use 'philosophies' in the plural partly because a number of Western philosophers use the singular only to refer to a particular kind of Western philosophy.

Mine is a guide to intellectual thought from all parts of the world. I have limited its scope up to shortly after World War II, say the 1960s, and chiefly to the dead. This is partly because of limitations of my own knowledge and because of the desire for my descriptions to be confined to complete philosophers, namely dead ones. This has inevitably led to the underplaying of some recent movements, including feminism, environmentalism and postmodernism. It has led to the neglect of otherwise excellent philosophers, such as my brother.

I am indebted in launching and preparing the book to Laurence King of Calmann and King, Adrian Driscoll, Anna Gerber and Maria Stasiak of Routledge, and Ellen Posman and Marilyn Sarelas of the Department of Religious Studies of the University of California Santa Barbara. The latter helped to reconstruct the Bibliography. I should express my gratitude to numerous students who inspired my labors.

Ninian Smart  
Santa Barbara, California  
May 6, 1998

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# THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AND OUR PHILOSOPHICAL INHERITANCE

We are living through one of the most transformative times in world history. Indeed, ours is the age when histories have come together into a single process. This is because of a blend of world wars and singular inventions. By pitting colonial powers against each other, World War I raged over virtually the whole globe, from the Somme to East Africa and from Tientsin to the Atlantic. World War II even more dramatically and deeply enmeshed the globe, and burned from Glasgow to Hiroshima and from Papua New Guinea to Murmansk. Satellite communications, jet airliners and computers have helped to knit together the globe in meshes of more or less instantaneous exchanges and almost timefree travel. In older days it was arduous or impossible to travel from one of the main centers of civilization to another. It took years from Europe to East Asia, and hardly less from India. Great swathes of the world were unknown to the rest – the interior of Africa, large parts of South and North America, large stretches of Siberia and many islands of the Pacific. Regions were relatively discrete from one another, and so we are wont to think of countries' histories separately: we think of Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Tibetan, Persian, German, Italian history. But in our day, all these histories have flowed together to form, from now on, a single stream – world history. By the same token we are all (or virtually all) included in the processes of global economics, geopolitics and planetary ecology. From now on we are forced to think globally. And yet often our traditions of education and culture, especially in the West, because the West has not endured the impact of the West as a colonial power-source, lead us to think in terms merely of our own tradition.

Thus philosophy for many scholars and interested lay persons means Western philosophy, literature means Western literature, music means Western music and so on. In this book, I shall attempt to give a picture of the philosophies of all the world. It may be that from now on humans will speculate together in a global manner: but now more than ever it is vital to remember the diversities of the past. The varying centers of civilization and culture, together with their outlying peripheral civilizations, have contributed divergent themes to the sum of human thought. We need to be conscious of our ancestors of all races, religions and intellectual climates, who have helped to shape human living and human ideas. They can be our critics and can remain sources of ideas and new slants on things. Especially because we all belong to a crosscultural world, the plural past can be amazingly invigorating. We can exploit several kinds and sources of riches. But the shape of a project of thinking about the



world's philosophies depends on what we mean by 'philosophy' and its plural. The word, after all, is a Western word, and there is no guarantee that it has a clear equivalent outside of the West.

Actually, even in its home territory, the word is controversial and confusing, in part because of the changing nature, through history, of how the enterprise of philosophy has been conceived. Or rather, we should say 'enterprises'. For Plato it was a kind of critical wisdom about both the ultimate realities and this world. For Plotinus it was a religious worldview. For Aristotle it was systematic knowledge and indistinguishable from science. For Aquinas it was greatly implicated with theology. For the later Wittgenstein it was a method of examining language in ways which would dissolve previous metaphysical problems. All this is without considering the differing slants provided by, say, Chinese and Indian philosophy. Indeed, the nature (and the worth) of philosophy is itself a philosophical problem. As Aristotle succinctly observed, 'Whether or not one should do philosophy is itself a philosophical issue: so you have to philosophize.' Even so, we need to think through the main varieties of speculative and critical thinking to which, in the West, the term 'philosophy' has been attached. And in order to arrive at something of a global consensus we need to add meanings which come from other great centers. Let me then, before delineating the chief patterns of philosophy, sketch briefly the chief powerhouses of thought among the varied civilizations of the human race.

It is not a cause of disrespect to other fertile intellectual and spiritual areas of human culture to point to a 'great three' which have proved to be especially rich in human civilization: namely, China, South Asia (India, roughly) and the West. They have helped to procreate other regions of dynamic philosophy: China has fertilized Japan and Korea; South Asia has fertilized Tibet and South-east Asia; Europe has generated offspring in the Americas and the Islamic world. There are of course other wonderful areas of human culture whose creativity will no doubt tell us more in the future than it has in the past, such as Black Africa and the Caribbean. But we can simplify human intellectual history by saying that three great regions have particularly vivified it. And about them, we can ask: do the conceptions which we find in Chinese and Indian civilizations give a separate slant on what 'philosophy' is? Do they add something to the Western tradition about the nature of the enterprise?

Much emphasis is given in China to the role of the reflective sage and adviser, who thinks deeply about ethical and political problems, problems of human nature, and how to act in conformity with nature and, above that, Heaven. This stress upon practical wisdom is of course also not unknown to the West. But it looms much larger in the Chinese and its related traditions. In India, speculations tend to be more theoretical, but often they are tied to release or salvation. The bond between religion and philosophy is closer than in China or in the West; but the varieties of religion are greater. There is especially to be noted the mutually critical relations between the Buddhist and Hindu schools. To complicate our sketch, Buddhism migrated to almost all of South-east and East Asia, and particularly to China. It helped to fertilize the dialectical relations between Taoism and Confucianism, while it added a more individualistic and cerebral dimension to Chinese thought, and the three formed the three traditions of China, living in partial harmony and interplay, together with varieties of folk religion.

The sage and the guru, and their traditional critics, are not at all absent from Western thought and religion. But I mention them so that we are not mesmerized by the narrower confines of modern English-speaking professionals' account of what philosophy is. It comprises not only the more critical and technical kinds of thinking which have come to dominate Western academic philosophy, but also those more sagely and spiritual aspects of human thought that have often been prominent in China and India and their surrounding regions. It is wise to add, because of sensitivity on this matter, that philosophy outside the West and above all in India has had its rich vein of technical and epistemological writings which rival the intricacies of some modern Western writings in the field.

Because sometimes philosophy comes to be embedded thoroughly in a religious culture or civilization, it is useful to treat its manifestations in these ambiances. It is convenient therefore to speak of Jewish and Islamic thought (separate chapters indeed are devoted to these two). In addition, there are areas of human experience which have in classical times produced little that formally might be thought of as philosophy (as judged by the great trio of civilizations considered above), such as classical African cultures, which nevertheless contain important strands of the material of philosophy. There are traditional worldviews, including myths of origin and accounts of human nature in relation to the wider world, ethical values and proverbial lore. Such material may be called 'worldviews' for short. And the articulation of such worldviews, their critique and adaptation, may be fairly called philosophy.

People are of course sensitive about the achievements of their cultural regions and national identities. They can become upset to think that in singling out some areas and epochs of human history as being highly productive other countries are being downgraded. But the dignity of the human being is not related to the putative glories of her or his ancestors. Moreover, if we look at human life in a broader sweep, we see that the future is as vital as the past. Black Africa, for instance, whose past has not been as scintillating as that of ancient Greece or the T'ang dynasty of China will no doubt have a highly creative future with which to contribute to the glories of humanity. So while some cultures have not attained to richness in philosophical debate and articulation, there are future veins to be mined: and in any case, philosophy is not the only human activity by which to judge traditions. Spiritual power, musical achievement, painting, human welfare and a whole number of other yardsticks may be used.

### SOME HUMAN TYPES REPRESENTING PHILOSOPHY

One way of approaching the question of what philosophy is is by considering what the main human types are in diverse civilizations whose work is in some sense philosophical. For instance, the great historian of Chinese philosophy, Fung Yu-lan, prefers the phrase *che-hsüeh* (*zhexue*) as a translation of 'philosophy'. This derives from the term *che-ren* (*zheren*) or 'sage-man', or more briefly 'sage'. So philosophy is the 'learning of sages' or 'sage-learning'. Indeed, classically the idea of the philosopher as sage is by no means absent in the Western tradition. In ancient Greece, Pythagoras and Plotinus can be cited as sages – people who have a charismatic or mystical wisdom. The very term 'philosophy' does after all mean the

love of wisdom: and *sophia* might well be used for the kind of knowledge that a sage has attained. And so one type of philosopher might be thought of as the sage.

By contrast, there is often set forth a differing ideal – the philosopher as dialectician, the person who is clever at arguments. This arises partly because reason is often recognized as a vital component of the philosophical approach, and so the person who can conduct reasoning well is admired. In ancient Greece we have the figure of the sophist. As the name's history indicates, there were ambivalent feelings about reasoning power: it could be used in opposite directions, or unscrupulously. In China, one of the chief six recognized schools in ancient times was that of the *pien-che* (*bianzhe*) or Dialectical School, much concerned with logic and the relation of names to reality.

Another type is that of the spiritual analyst – that is, the analytical thinker who uses his powers to lay out a religious position. I am thinking here of some of the great *ācāryas* of the Hindu tradition, such as Śaṅkara; of St Thomas Aquinas in the Roman Catholic tradition; and such acute thinkers as Nāgārjuna and Buddhaghosa in the Buddhist religion. In fact, perhaps the greatest spiritual analyst of all is the Buddha himself. He perhaps combined the role of sage and spiritual analyst. All these people produced analytical ideas of spiritual importance. Thus St Thomas argued for the five ways of reasoning to God, and the all-important distinction between knowledge based on natural reasoning and that which is based on revelation.

The spiritual analyst – as I have called this type – is not always different from the theologian. But I have not used the latter term for two or three reasons. First, it is not quite comprehensive enough: it implies someone who reasons about God; but not all religions have a serious God (for instance Buddhism does not), and there are philosophies or ideologies such as Marxism which reject theology, though their intellectual articulators play roles very similar to those of theologians in God-centered religions. Second, the word 'theologian' should really contain a prefix to mark the tradition which he claims to expound (for typically theologians are recognized, and so authoritative, persons within a faith-tradition). Anyway, we may note that what I have called a spiritual analyst may be dubbed by others a theologian, though not – as I have spelled out – in all cases.

Another rather different ideal of the philosopher is as the super-scientist. In ancient times there were speculative cosmologists, such as the proponents of the yin-yang theory in China, or the Atomists in India and Greece, who claimed to possess a kind of key to all knowledge. Aristotle presented the ideal of a thinker whose immense scope sought to bring about a synthesis of all knowledge. So successful indeed was Aristotle that his articulated vision of science dominated Western thought to the Renaissance and beyond. In more recent times, history and social science have been drawn into the super-scientists' grasp, and we have such seminal figures as Marx and Popper who have sought to produce overarching theories to deal with human life as well as the natural sciences.

Not dissimilar is the ideal type of the metaphysician who claims to give a picture of ultimate realities which lie beyond the immediate scope of the natural or social sciences. In ancient China something of this flavor is caught in the idea of the *hsuan-hsüeh* (*xuanxue*) or 'learning of the mystery'. That which is mysteriously 'beyond' the world as it presents itself to us is what metaphysics is about (as is commonly thought). Not only the ancient Taoists but

also such modern Western figures as Hegel and Heidegger might be seen as metaphysicians in this sense.

Because of the prizing of dialectics, and the fact that ideally reasons have to be given for philosophical positions, there is another type which has proven important in different cultures: that of the skeptic. He or she is the person who finds the usual reasons for positions to be wanting. Absolute skepticism issues in silence, and that was the stance adopted in India by certain *munis* or silent sages, and in ancient Greece by Cratylus. But a skeptic does not need to be so extreme, using language for ordinary purposes and out of habit, while remaining skeptical about the ultimate justifications of what we take to be knowledge. Perhaps, though, we should see the skeptic as just one variety of a more important type: the questioner.

For another way in which we see the philosopher is as the questioner of what we claim to be true. The great paradigm was Socrates: but in more modern times we can think of philosophers who have called into question the commonly held assumptions of society – great critics, such as revolutionary writers like Tolstoy and Lu-Hsun, thinkers like Proudhon and Kropotkin, and poets like Lorca and Lucretius. The image of the questioner is akin to that of the critical reasoner, though more volcanic fires may burn beneath her or his challenges to social or intellectual convention. Of all modern Westerners perhaps the most important is Nietzsche, and who knows whence came the fierce flames of his bold challenge to Western tradition?

But in the last forty years a more conventional figure has come to prominence (in part because of the great expansion of universities in so many countries, and above all in the English-speaking world). That figure is the professional philosopher, usually conceived as technically very competent and therefore familiar with modern logic, and often too wedded to a particular ideology springing from the linguistic analysis and modern empiricist traditions; devoted mostly to a scientific worldview. She or he is a type derived from the Enlightenment, in so far as reason is claimed to be the chief determinant of opinion. As a professional, the philosopher is in danger of becoming tamed by the very institutions that have begotten him. The image of suit and briefcase flit through the mind, and hours completed at the knowledge-plant from nine till five.

As another type we can maybe nominate the modern, or mathematical, logician. Technical logic is used as a means of defining and elucidating philosophical problems. But with the separate development of the field, much of logic has taken off on its own or in close liaison with mathematics – much as psychology, once regarded as part of philosophy, has attained its separation and independence.

Finally, to revert to Confucius and Chinese philosophy, we may note that the sage is often perceived as the adviser: the person of sagacious intellect who surveys the scene and gives advice on values. In a party regime he may be the ideologist. The adviser is a public intellectual who can comment on affairs perceptively: and this is sometimes seen as the role of the philosopher – as with such figures as Confucius himself, Plato in Sicily, Aristotle as tutor of Alexander the Great, and various modern intellectuals prominent in public affairs and debate – Ortega y Gasset, Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Sartre, Croce, Radhakrishnan, Karl Popper, Lukács and so forth.

All these types are a mixed lot. They emerge as embodying, however, three main themes. First, there is the theme of wisdom, whether it be spiritual, political or ethical. Second, there is the theme of worldview, whether metaphysical, scientific or religious. Third, there is the theme of critic and questioner.

### A SKETCH OF THE WIDER MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY

From the foregoing discussion of types of philosopher, we can begin to delineate roughly speaking what the scope of philosophy is, given a wider and crosscultural view. It is useful to think, in this connection, who we would *not* count particularly as philosophers, and why.

Why, for instance, does it seem inappropriate to think of Jesus as a philosopher, though it is quite easy to consider the Buddha one? I believe it is because the Jesus of the Gospels is a poetic, mysterious figure, given to healing, to flashing images, to profound parables, to unexpected action: but he is not liable to produce analytic discourses or to dwell on eight theses or twelve thats, in the way of the Buddha. He does not deal in abstractions or metaphysical-sounding concepts, but rather with concrete metaphors and numinous similes. His task is not that of systematic instruction. He belongs to a different world. Maybe in some sense he has a philosophy of life: but he does not expound it in an articulated manner. It was for others to build upon his life and images – people such as Paul and Cyril and Augustine.

Nor do we think of Horace as a philosopher, though again he had a philosophy of life. But his chief task was to fashion lovely verses and to bend the Latin language to a sweet variety of metres. Nor is Li Po a philosopher; nor Charles Darwin; nor Turgenev; nor Murasaki Shikibu. These have all been ornaments of creative writing – but they did not primarily concern themselves with analysis, worldview-construction or political or ethical advice (even though no doubt from every great artist wise advice can be mined).

As we noted above, it is possible to extract a worldview from a person's thinking and living even when he or she is not mainly concerned with presenting a system. The same applies to societies and the world of traditional myth. For instance, Jesus looked upon God as his Daddy, Abba. We can if we wish elaborate on this whole image and construct a more abstract delineation of the divine Being as transcendent and personal (or having an analogy to a human person). Or we may take some tribal world and sketch out its worldview – as has been done by anthropologists and others in works on various groups such as the Dogon, the Kikuyu (by Jomo Kenyatta) and the Ndembu.

Such worldview-articulation is especially obvious in these latter days. For colonial impingement upon traditional small-scale societies, together with the impact of modern technology and bureaucratic arrangements, has challenged them to imitate the incoming forces by expressing an ideology or worldview which somehow plays in the same league. Sometimes the process works through a double development of a wider cultural merger and of an overall set of values. For instance, both classical African culture and Native American societies are moving in this direction. It is not uncommon now to hear of African ideas and Native American beliefs, as though they form unitary units. Sixty years ago such wide-ranging notions would not have occurred. Now there are many courses in colleges on African religion and Native American ideas. So there is a variety of responses that have come

about during these colonial and postcolonial days: the articulation of particular worldviews by anthropologists; and the modernizing of such worldviews through synthesis and greater abstraction. In these ways, relatively non-philosophical societies have grown philosophies. The whole process can be seen as one of worldview-articulation and worldview-adaptation.

I have used the word 'philosophies' in the plural just now. A philosophy can be said to be a product of philosophy. That is, philosophical thinking, whether it be in the service of articulating the old but inchoate, or critically replacing the old, serves to produce some system of ideas which broadly we have called a worldview, and which can also be called a philosophy. Philosophizing relates to method: philosophies are what comes out as a result of applying the method. As may be seen, to include the various kinds of philosophies in what we mean by philosophy we move far beyond what is technically and fairly narrowly deemed to be philosophy by modern professional philosophers. This more catholic purview helps to resolve some of the problems which are posed by the need to be crosscultural, since my project involves something necessarily plural, namely a history of the philosophical thinking of the whole world. It resolves those problems because a wider collection of philosophies will more easily embrace the difference in concepts exhibited in non-Western civilizations.

For instance, we have noted that Chinese ideas of sage-learning, and of the learning of the mystery, are analogous to Western ideas of philosophy and metaphysics. We could point also to the Indian notion of *darśana* or viewpoint (or vision: the word is based on a root meaning 'to see'), to describe the philosophical positions which occur in Indian thought. It is sometimes used as a translation of 'philosophy'. It fits very well with our idea of worldview. If we define one main activity of philosophy as being that of worldview-articulation and worldview-construction, then I think it readily embraces the slants which belong to Chinese and Indian civilizations.

[But in our review of the types of philosopher we meet those whose primary purpose is not so much worldview-construction as the questioning and criticism of received values. Even the adviser must be to some degree a questioner. Also it often happens that a deeper questioning leads to the framing of possible answers. In various ways the critical function of philosophy complements the constructive function. There is an interplay between worldviews and critical questions. The guru is undermined by the critic: but the sage perhaps is someone who has reflected enough to frame his or her own critiques of received values, and is then able to present a considered and revised worldview.

We may bring these differing points together to say that the process of philosophizing typically creates critical conclusions which articulate worldviews, usually of a relatively abstract kind. At one extreme lies the guru who reveals a worldview or set of values; at the other is the skeptic who falls into merited silence.

I use 'worldview' in a rather stretched way, for even where the aim of the critique of ordinary concepts is designed to present an 'empty' point of view, as may be encountered in certain forms of Buddhist philosophy, there is as it were the ghost of a worldview which is pointed to. The Buddhist dialectical thinker who believes that all our concepts fail to grasp pure experience would no doubt wish to deny that he is putting forward a positive worldview or philosophical position. He is positionless. Nevertheless there is a flavor to his



account which distinguishes it from other ways of viewing and acting upon the world. So I shall ascribe to him, however tenuously, a worldview. But broadly the term will be used for religious systems of ideas and political ideologies as well as more purely 'rational' systems. I shall return to this point in a short while.

But before that it is worth saying that we can make a rough distinction between philosophy as an activity, or even a way of life, and philosophies or worldviews. As we have noted, the latter are products, for the most part, of the activity. The latter follows some method or recognized perception of valid utterance. In recent times in the English-speaking world the method of analyzing language with a view to clarifying or even dissolving philosophical problems has been prominent: there is also the use of logic and rigorous argument, as with such writers as Bertrand Russell. Hegel claimed to follow a dialectical method. Even being a reflective sage, like Confucius, involves some kind of method – observing human behavior, classifying types of virtues, practicing different means of education, gaining experience in statecraft and so on. But there is no single philosophical method, because any position on how to do philosophy is itself debatable. The plural world of intellectual diversity is always liable to hit back at rigid orthodoxies (and how much the more so in a situation like the present, with its crosscultural meetings). Because of this, the concept of philosophy in the singular which roughly speaking refers to method will always be open-ended and plural.

### MYTH, METHOD AND CONTENT

If we can broadly distinguish between philosophy as method and the philosophies which it gives rise to, it is worth reflecting too on the question of style. Many of the world's cultures have well-developed myths or narratives and while these may contain, implicitly, sketches of the world and of the nature of living beings and humankind, they are not primarily thought of as philosophical creations. This is often because philosophy seems to belong to a reflective period in a society's evolution. But it is also because, relatively speaking, a culture's philosophy or set of philosophies typically has a relatively abstract form. It deals in the interplay of forces rather than the clashing of heroes, and in the delineation of ultimates rather than the depiction of old battles and amours.

This more abstract character is something shared often with religious doctrines. For instance, while the New Testament speaks of Jesus and God in highly personal ways, the doctrine of the Trinity as in due course evolved at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE contained the formula of 'three persons in one substance' or (putting the Greek into a better translation) 'three beings in one entity'. A great deal of subsequent, including modern, theology has had this dark and abstract character. In rather recent times, Tillich wrote about 'man's ultimate concern' as being the focus of religion. There is a story about Jesus' inquiring of his disciples as to who people say he is: on learning the deep abstractions of modern theologians he is profoundly puzzled: do we then classify philosophy and religious doctrine together? I think it will be useful to do this in this present narrative of the world's philosophies. Doctrines do have their reflective aspect. Admittedly they are often collective in character. The same applies often to political ideologies, especially as forced by modern

governments or defining a political party. But group doctrines do have their place in the evolution of human thought, and so I shall include them.

But myth represents a very different style. It is useful to explore briefly here the function of myth in human societies before depicting its relation to philosophy and philosophies. Myths, first of all, are narratives, and typically they involve accounts of gods or other significant forces in human life and creation. Myths often sketch the interaction between significant humans, such as the first man and woman, and divine beings. They may depict the saving acts of heroes and others – such as the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and the story of the Buddha's enlightenment. These stories (which may also of course be seen as historically true) give a vivid sense of powerful acts which mean something central to the human race. Some myths, because they are seen as taking place in a 'never-never' time at the beginning of history, are in modern times looked on as allegories or creative fictions – as with the story of the Garden of Eden, now looked on as no longer to be taken as literally true, though it may express something very vital in the relationship between God and human beings. The emphasis in modern times has shifted in two directions – towards the creation of fiction, which does not usually pretend to have taken place actually, though it may contain actualities of human nature and truths about the human condition; and towards the historical. The actual history of a nation's or an individual's past becomes important. Scientific history (but suitably selected) becomes the basis for establishing a people's claims to identity.

All this is part of a modernizing intellectual trend, in which a degree of abstraction has become the norm. For instance, in the last hundred years or so remarkable interest, and often enthusiasm, have been directed towards dialectical theories of history, notably that of Marx. Relative abstractions such as those of class, profit, exploitation, revolution, proletariat and so on are wielded in the context of unfolding events. Similar more 'scientific' abstractions are used in sociology and economics. It is all part of a turning away from more mythic formulations. Thus Christian theologians often write of human alienation from the divine Being, preferring such language, rather than the more direct talk of Adam's sin. Unvarnished myth is a good deal less credible today than it was once, and so we have a relative doctrinalization of the mythic. The metaphysical is brought in to give depth to stories. So myth has a tendency to turn into history, and the historical reaches out behind itself to the darker mysteries of philosophy, ideology and doctrine.

Something of this owes itself to the spread of Western-style higher education, which has produced world-wide a new intelligentsia. The spread was brought about substantially by the colonial epoch. As nations were subdued by Western powers, they began to contemplate measures to assert their independence, which became an especially vivid goal with the spread of the ideal of modern nationalism from the time of the French Revolution onwards. National resurgence needed to borrow some or many of the tools of the colonial powers – the West's weapons with which of course to combat the West. Main among these weapons was ideology: some philosophy with which to rebuild a nation, and something too which could stand up to the process of higher education (itself the key to more mundane values, such as Western literacy for bureaucratic purposes, science for engineering and so on). The various major countries groped around for doctrines which would give them the direction



and *élan* to combat rampaging colonialism. India devised its own form of democratic Neohinduism, under the inspiration of such figures as Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. Japan devised its own Westernized system, and grafted onto it the values of Shinto seen as an expression of national identity. China adapted its enemies' enemy, namely Marxism, in the guise of Mao Zedong thought, which was used successfully in overcoming both internal and external foes. (Whether such ideologies prove to be more effective in economic development is another matter.)

Small-scale societies have not been exempt from such exigences of ideology. Thus we see the gradual confluence of ideas and forces in Native American thought to form a new, nature-related and ecologically sensitive, ideology; and similar events are occurring among Australian Aborigines. Such notions have been formed as 'the Pacific Way' (among the inhabitants of the South Pacific) and 'Africanness' (among Black Africans).

In short, new identities and ideologies are being formed, which in some degree confer a certain abstractness on thinking about cultures. This is part of the trend towards moving away from pure myth or history towards a more philosophical and metaphysical stance. Even where myth is collected and prized, it is often seen under the rubrics of psychoanalysis (particularly Jung), as revealing deep patterns in human thinking and feeling.

We may see all this as part of a postcolonial globalization of thinking. Such a world perspective may in the long run reduce variety and tend towards the homogenization of cultures. Already we may note that most Western organizations (for instance, associations of philosophy and the like) are dominant. This is why the present book is urgently needed, to remind us all of the plural riches of the human race's reflective heritage.

### SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT WORLD PHILOSOPHY

As has been noted, we are here treating philosophy in the widest possible way — ~~to cover worldviews which are both collective and individual, traditional and critical, religious and ideological, affirmative and skeptical.~~ Such a wide embrace is important so that we may preserve some sense of the plural character of human thinking.

In what follows I shall attempt to sketch the evolution of human thinking on a regional basis. I shall treat separately such areas as South Asia, China, Korea and Japan, even though they obviously have a great deal of interplay. In particular, because Buddhism (so important both religiously and philosophically throughout Asia) spread from India to China and from there further afield, it is important to begin our Asian sequence with South Asia first. This already dictates one main sequence of chapters and treatments. Also I think it is salutary for Western readers in particular but really for all readers, to begin their reading of world thought outside of Europe. This will help them, and us, escape from being too confined in the strait-jacket of a conventional view of the history of the field. It will enable us to look with fresh eyes upon the patterns of the world.

Sometimes, because of the vitality of the religious ambience, it is useful to talk of developments not just by region but by spiritual culture. For this reason, after dealing with ancient and later Greek and Roman thought I shall move to Islamic and Jewish cultures, which had one of their main flowerings in the early medieval period. After dealing with