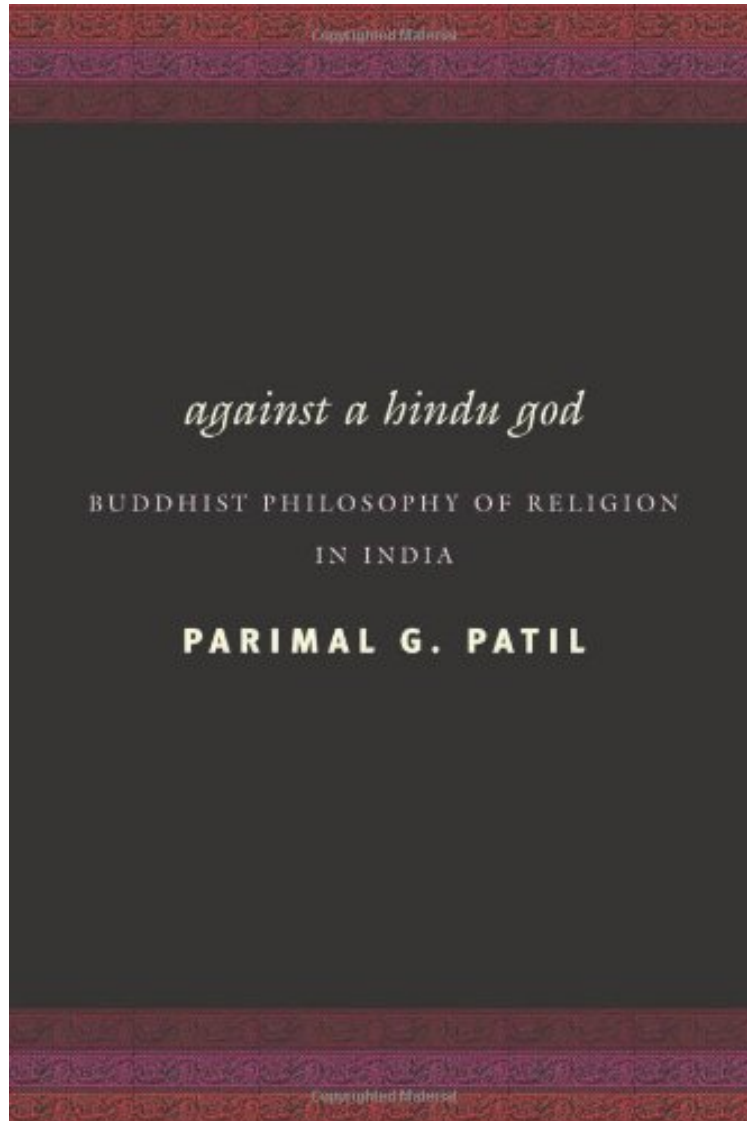


[Download pdf] Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India

Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India

Parimal Patil

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Parimal Patil : Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India:

6 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Dense. By Jonathan Homrighausen Patil, a Harvard professor of religious studies, documents the philosophical debates between Buddhist thinker Ratnakirti and his Hindu adversaries, the Nyaya school, over the existence of a Creator deity named Isvara. Patil expands this issue into a broader discussion

of Buddhist epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language. Much of this book was highly inaccessible and technical, and I skimmed much of it. But what I skimmed was illuminating. The Nyayas' argument for the existence of a Creator should be familiar to anyone read in Western religion. In effect, it is a blending of the argument from design and the cosmological argument. Every effect has a cause, and for a complex object/effect, that cause must be intelligent. Just as a pot (a la William Paley's watch) has a cause, so must the earth, and that cause must be intelligent. Just as the argument parallels Western critiques, so do the objections. The design argument only proves a deity who is a creator, not an all-knowing or all-powerful one. Its analogy between a universe and a pot fails; we have seen pots created so we can infer that any pot we encounter is created, but we have not seen a universe created. This analogy - the inference from "universe" to "creator" - leads into broader issues of mind, language, and knowledge, the debate Patil spends his book reconstructing. The final chapter was the most interesting. Here Patil reflects on the value of philosophy for Buddhism. Many Buddhists eschew philosophy, citing a story from the Pali Canon (the earliest Buddhist scriptures) in which the Buddha compares abstract metaphysical questions to a man shot by a poisoned arrow (suffering/dukkha). This man refuses to have the arrow removed and poison remedy applied until he finds the name and clan of the man who shot the arrow, the type of poison on the arrow, the manufacturer of the arrow, etc. While this story is often used to demonstrate the priority of practice over detached rational reflection, Buddhists have not always seen it so. Ratnakirti sees philosophy not as an end in itself, but as a foundation for the dharma. If one is afflicted with wrong views on the nature of mind and reality, such as the view that we have eternal souls, the dharma cannot be heard. Philosophical argument can convince us of the reality of agelessness, a reality which we can then internalize and embody through practice. Philosophy leads us to the dharma but does not replace it. This is similar to the traditional Thomistic conception of philosophy, or natural theology. Once we become aware of the truth of God's existence, revealed theology or faith can step in. Still, from a historical perspective, I can't help but think that Buddhist philosophy emerged as a form of competition. Hindus had elaborate schools of philosophy. Perhaps Buddhists looked unintelligent without any. Hence Buddhist philosophy. Patil is immensely learned, but skimming the first and last chapter of this book gave me all I need. But then again, I'm not versed in Sanskrit or Indian philosophy.

Philosophical arguments for and against the existence of God have been crucial to Euro-American and South Asian philosophers for over a millennium. Critical to the history of philosophy in India, were the centuries-long arguments between Buddhist and Hindu philosophers about the existence of a God-like being called Isvara and the religious epistemology used to support them. By focusing on the work of Ratnakirti, one of the last great Buddhist philosophers of India, and his arguments against his Hindu opponents, Parimal G. Patil illuminates South Asian intellectual practices and the nature of philosophy during the final phase of Buddhism in India. Based at the famous university of Vikramasila, Ratnakirti brought the full range of Buddhist philosophical resources to bear on his critique of his Hindu opponents' cosmological/design argument. At stake in his critique was nothing less than the nature of inferential reasoning, the metaphysics of epistemology, and the relevance of philosophy to the practice of religion. In developing a proper comparative approach to the philosophy of religion, Patil transcends the disciplinary boundaries of religious studies, philosophy, and South Asian studies and applies the remarkable work of philosophers like Ratnakirti to contemporary issues in philosophy and religion.

" Against a Hindu God is a book about the late Indian critiques of Brahmanical conceptions of God. But more than just a study of Buddhist philosophers like Ratnakirti, Parimal G. Patil is interested in what late medieval Indian philosophers have to say to the disciplines of philosophy, theology, religious studies, and South Asian studies. Utilizing the concepts and vocabulary of Sanskrit grammatical theory, Patil constructs a trans-disciplinary space for the comparative philosophy of religion, a vision of the discipline that is both creative and compelling. Scholars routinely note that Buddhist logical and epistemological theories exist in the service of a religious agenda, but few have explained the soteriological dimensions of Buddhist philosophy as clearly as Patil does in this work. A major contribution to the fields of Buddhist and comparative philosophy." -- (Jose Ignacio Cabezon, University of California at Santa Barbara) A penetrating study. (Stephen Phillips H-Buddhism)...an inviting introduction to the central concerns of Indian forms of logic and to some of its most excellent epistemology, (Patrick McAllister Journal of Hindu Studies) This is a brilliant, erudite, formidable, and intricately argued first book, which shows the arrival of an outstanding Indologist and philosopher. The book calls for concentration and an eye for detail, but it amply rewards the reader. (Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad Philosophy East and West)...a fascinating and important book... (Michael D. Nichols Journal of Buddhist Ethics) Patil sets a high standard for comparative philosophy. In addition, the work provides a compelling, new interpretation of the place of philosophy on the Buddhist path to liberation. (Jonathan C. Gold International Journal of Hindu Studies) About the Author Parimal G. Patil is John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University.