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## Recent Articles of Interest

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foreign and unlikely, were strongly present in Greek thought - a major source of European civilization. Rebirth ideas were also present in small societies around the world prior to their Greek and Indian manifestations. What especially characterizes the Indian and Greek forms is the strong ethical ideas associated with rebirth thinking - the idea that the good or bad one does in this life has a direct effect on one's afterlife and on the state into which one is reborn. Through his careful and detailed reading of these seemingly quite different societies, the author convincingly shows that rebirth beliefs link Greek philosophers to Indian (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain) and Amerindian thinkers. The book thus builds a stolid bridge between Western European intellectuals (who find notions of *karma* and rebirth to be outrageous) and Hindu and Buddhist thinkers. While the author's major focus on the Indian side is more oriented toward Buddhism, his analysis of the Upanisadic sources of *karma* and rebirth is detailed and well done - as is his study of the Greek writings of Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato.

In Hinduism the author finds no references to *karma* or rebirth in the Vedic Samhitas or Brahmanas, with the first significant mention appearing in the Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Unpaisads before the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. One hundred years later these same ideas appear in Jainism and Buddhism along with the notion of the "unsatisfactoriness of existence" or *dukkha*. In each of these traditions *karma* or ethical action is seen to fuel rebirth in heaven, hell, animal or plant forms. Since rebirth in these various forms is endless thus the need for salvation or release (*moksa* or *nirvana*) is necessitated. The author finds the same thought pattern to be present in Greek thought, especially in Plato's *Phaedo* along with the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*. Even the key role of desire in Plato's thought closely parallels the role of desire in Hindu and Buddhist *karma-samsara* theories. The strength of this book,

however, is not just in its comparative Greek-Indic analysis, but in the placing of *karma*-rebirth thinking in the larger worldwide context of small scale societies in Siberia, West Africa, the Northwest Amerindians, the South Pacific and Australia. Obeyesekere claims that while rebirth ideas are found in all of these small scale societies (and thus did not originate in India), the ethicalization of these ideas occurs only in Indic and Greek thinking. The question of influence between Greece and India in the axial period is touched on but not developed.

This well researched and clearly written book greatly added to my thinking around *karma* and rebirth theory—especially in widening my awareness of parallel forms in Greek philosophy and in aboriginal societies. Highly recommended.

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### *Recent Articles of Interest*

Francis X. Clooney, "A Charism for Dialogue: Advice from the Early Jesuit Missionaries in our World of Religious Pluralism," *Studies in Jesuit Spirituality* (March 2002, entire issue).

Francis X. Clooney, "God for Us: Multiple Religious Belonging as Spiritual Practice and Divine Response," *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), pp. 44-60.

Francis X. Clooney, "Theology and Sacred Scripture Reconsidered in the Light of a Hindu Text," *Theology and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Carol J. Dempsey, OP, and William Loewe (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), pp. 211-236.

72 Recent Articles of Interest

- Francis X. Clooney, "Restoring 'Hindu theology' as a category in Indian Intellectual Discourse," *The Blackwell Companion of Hinduism*, ed. Gavin Flood (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 447-477.
- Francis X. Clooney, "La prassi della teologia comparata: Con riferimento ad alcune recenti pubblicazioni," *Verso l'India Oltre l'India: Scritti e ricerche sulle tradizioni intellettuali sudasiatiche*, ed. Federico Squarcini (Milan: Mimesis, 2002), pp. 275-287.
- Sriya Iyer, "Religion and the Decision to Use contraception in India," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 4 (2002): 711-722.
- Anantanand Rambachan, "The Co-Existence of Violence and Non-Violence in Hinduism," *Current Dialogue* 39 (June 2002): 26-32.
- John Sheveland, "Interreligious Momentum in David Tracy's Postmodern Christian Theology," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12 (2002): 207-225.
- Scott Steinkorner, "In Support of Felix Wilfred: Some Implications of Wittgenstein's World-Pictures for Interreligious Dialogue," *New Blackfriars* 84 (2003): 133-147.
- Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 11 (Spring 2002), 12 articles on Tamal Krishna Goswami.