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REVISED SECOND EDITION

Ninian Smart

Edited by Oliver Leaman

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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 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 generally 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 labours.

Ninian Smart
Santa Barbara, California
May 6, 1998

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

It was not easy to tackle a revision of Ninian Smart's book since we as a group had such respect for it, and did not like the idea of changing it. On the other hand, he did end his survey in the 1960s and we felt that it would be helpful to tweak his material to bring it more up to date and in line with current research in the many areas that he discussed. The revisers should not be assumed to agree with everything that Smart asserts in his volume, of course, and we have certainly not altered his opinions or his arguments. The grandeur of the original conception remains, and we hope that readers will find what we have done useful rather than obtrusive.

Let me outline what our revisers have done. Chris Bartley has worked on Indian philosophy (Chapters 2 and 13); David Bradshaw on Greek and classical philosophy (Chapter 6); Cynthia Gayman, North American philosophy (Chapter 10); Aaron Hughes, Jewish philosophy (Chapter 8); Muhammad Kamal, modern Islamic philosophy (Chapter 12); Gereon Kopf, Japanese philosophy (parts of Chapters 5 and 14); Safro Kwame, African philosophy (Chapter 15); Susana Nuccetelli, Latin American philosophy (Chapter 11); Sor-hoon Tan, Chinese Philosophy (parts of Chapters 3 and 14); Patrick O'Donnell, the bibliography; and Donald Wiebe wrote the introduction to the second edition. I looked after the chapters and sections on Korean philosophy, classical Islamic philosophy, European philosophy, and am responsible for editing the whole volume. Errors that remain should, and no doubt will, be laid at my door. I also added to the Bibliography, which is sizeable and we hope will be useful in helping readers orientate themselves in the area and pursue topics and thinkers who interest them.

Many people have contributed to this second edition, not just the authors who have set about revising Ninian Smart's material, but also at Routledge Gemma Dunn who was with the project when it started and Lesley Riddle who supported it throughout. The Ninian Smart Trust gave permission for the project as a whole. We are grateful to them all.

Oliver Leaman
October 2007

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

When first published, *World Philosophies* was widely appreciated. Reviewers described it variously as 'a masterpiece of lucid description, analysis, and interpretation', an 'insightful, incisive, and reliable' reference work, and 'an encyclopedia of wonders, a treasure store complete with accounts of philosophy and religion from around the world'. It is all of these things and more.

Although intended as a guide to the philosophies of the world for the general reader, as Smart asserts in the Preface, he clearly intends to do more than simply provide readers with a reference work crammed with information. His primary aim is to bring them to a consciousness of the interconnectedness of the world and to show how 'the varying centers of civilization and culture ... have contributed divergent themes to the sum of human thought', as he puts it in the introductory chapter to the book. His project, consequently, involves 'something necessarily plural' even though it is focused on 'the philosophical thinking of the whole world'; it is this dual focus, he suggests, that may make possible the emergence of a global, corporate philosophy.

Smart's interest in comparative philosophy long antedated the publication of *World Philosophies*. His earliest book, *Reasons and Faiths: An Investigation of Religious Discourse, Christian and Non-Christian* (1958) put into question the widely held assumption of the autonomy of philosophy – the Western view of philosophy as a unitary enterprise – and provided evidence that philosophy had much to gain from a historical and comparative analysis of philosophical problems as conceived in different cultural contexts. In an academic paper on 'The Analogy of Meaning and the Tasks of Comparative Philosophy' which he published thirty years later, Smart urged philosophers to recognize that not all cultures even have a word that univocally corresponds to 'philosophy', let alone that they operate with the assumption 'that somehow there is a clearly and well-defined place in [the] intellectual firmament for what is called philosophy'. Nevertheless, he points out that this does not constitute grounds for believing that thinkers in other cultures lack analytical insight or are in any other way intellectually inadequate. What Western thinkers need to appreciate, he maintains, is the dual contextual nature of much non-Western philosophical thought: that is, both its horizontal context (in which key concepts are embedded in different types of systematic structures of thought) and its vertical context (in which key concepts are

embedded in a different form of life, which is to say that they are tied to particular social and spiritual attitudes and behaviour). To acknowledge this, claims Smart, is to see that cross-cultural or comparative philosophy (and particularly so the philosophy of religion) is not easily distinguishable from what he calls worldview construction which encompasses a wide variety of styles of thought which he thinks deserve the label 'philosophy'. Consequently, readers will find that Smart's *World Philosophies* catches them up in a history of worldviews and in worldview analysis. And with much of the worldview construction in non-Western cultures being heavily influenced by the 'vertical context' as described by Smart, therefore, it should not surprise the reader that Smart takes seriously the role of religion in his consideration of the symbolic life of humanity as a whole.

The figure of the professional philosopher who holds a position in a modern university and who is primarily concerned with matters of science, logic, and analysis, does not, then, determine the framework of Smart's enterprise in *World Philosophies*. It is important, therefore, that the reader give special attention to Smart's delineation of the variety of possible 'philosophical styles of thought' to be found in other cultures. Indeed, it is part of his agenda to persuade the reader of a 'wider meaning of philosophy' exemplified in this account of the world's philosophies; to assist the reader to see elements of significance in the abstract and critical reflections on life by intellectuals in both Western and non-Western cultures. Though this may seem a daunting task given the ten different kinds of philosophers Smart describes in the introductory chapter, the complexity is tamed somewhat in that, according to him, only three motifs or themes can be seen to emerge from them which Smart describes as follows: '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.'

One element in Smart's motivation to write this book, then, is simply to recover intellectual traditions of thought that are in danger of being lost, or of being excluded from consideration because of the dominance of Western modes of discourse. But Smart's enterprise here is not simply that of a scholarly preservation project. Smart is of the conviction that humankind faces serious difficulties and is in need of a common worldview within which they can be discussed and debated. Moreover, he considered himself to be involved in just such a task of worldview construction. In his Gifford Lectures – *Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization* (1981) – he did more than merely review and analyse religions and ideologies; he attempted to contribute to the construction of a philosophical framework that would press 'differing cultures and political systems ... [into] continuing and intimate interplay' that could lead to the resolution of the problems of modern society. He was convinced then, as he is in the conclusions he draws in this book, that our multiple cultures must enter 'into the same global debate and dialogue'. And in his estimation, every culture, small-scale and large, has something to contribute to this dialogue, this 'reflective synthesis'; together they constitute 'a treasure house of resources'. As he puts it in his above-mentioned article on the tasks of comparative philosophy: 'If we look on the various philosophical heritages as resources, then we may hope that ideas drawn from them might help to resolve some of the major world-view problems of the new intellectual world taking shape through the meeting of cultures.' For him, it is a grounding

principle that we assume every cultural tradition to embody some value or an aspect of truth that enables each culture to contribute something distinctive to world culture. Thus in his judgment, everyone can participate in what he calls 'a general diffusion of human values on the world scene'.

This book was meant to be a contribution to achieving such a world culture. And in that, it expresses an enthusiastic idealism that is more characteristic of the mid-twentieth century than today. Nevertheless, there is something refreshing and stimulating in that unabashed idealism that may well prompt a rethinking of global values in the twenty-first century.

Donald Wiebe
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