by the standards of the translators’ and editors’ times too. They have, as mentioned above, not bothered to heed their own Church’s doctrinal refashioning leading up to and then enacted by Vatican Council II.

In chapter eleven titled ‘The Sixth Dwelling Places’, St Teresa of Avila speaks of the wounds of mystical love, agape. This whole aspect of union with Jesus Christ has been recently scurrilously attacked by Julia Kristeva in her deplorably erroneous sacrilege of a book, Teresa, My Love (See Julia Kristeva, Teresa, My Love: An Imagined Life of the Saint of Avila, trans. Lorna Scott Fox (New York: Columbia University, 2014)). Swami Narasimhananda had rebutted Kristeva and proved the enormity of Kristeva’s hubris in assassinating St Teresa of Avila’s character in his review of Kristeva’s book published in this journal (See ‘Reviews’, Prabuddha Bharata, 122/10 (October 2017), 721–2).

Again, this reviewer has to stress that while a Hindu Advaitin monk took the trouble to refute Kristeva’s erotic and psychoanalytically spurious charges against a Roman Catholic Doctor of the Church; hardly any Roman Catholics raise their voices against books like Vishnu on Freud’s Desk (See Vishnu on Freud’s Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism, eds T G Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J Kripal (New Delhi: Oxford University, 1999)).

St Teresa of Avila writes of an experience comparable to samadhi: ‘Two experiences, it seems to me, which lie on this spiritual path, put a person in danger of death: the one is this pain, for it truly is a danger, and no small one; the other is overwhelming joy and delight, which reaches so extraordinary a peak that indeed the soul, I think, swoons to the point that it is hardly kept from leaving the body—indeed, its happiness could not be considered small’ (377).

About this crucial passage on the mysterium tremendum et fascinans, the commentators have nothing specific to say. This is one of the worst study editions that this reviewer has come across. E Allison Peers’s translation is much better. But both the edition under review and the 2019 Peers and the Benedictines of Stanbrook Abbey’s editions do not engage fully with the Eastern influences on St Teresa of Avila. Even the Byzantine influences on her are just not glossed fully in the 2019 edition, leave alone Hindu references. In short, we await better editions and commentaries in the future on this critical work. It is for another day and some other scholar to show how St Teresa of Avila inaugurated early modern feminism and brought in the phenomenological turn in European thought.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Are We Bodies or Souls?
Richard Swinburne

I was intrigued by the title of this book. Finally, I thought, the Western academia has come to terms with the incorporeality of the individual soul as presented in Indian philosophy. Richard Swinburne’s introduction dispelled my delusions. He proposes that individuals are not bodies but are souls and implies that these souls have properties and that is where the incorporeality part is lost. To an Indian philosopher, anything that has properties is matter and anything that is material is corporeal. The corporeality itself could be subtle or gross. According to Advaita Vedanta, every living being has three bodies—the gross, the subtle, and the causal. The physical body is obviously the gross body. The subtle body is a conglomeration of the manas—not to be confused with the broad Anglophone term ‘mind’—chitta, ahamkara, and buddhi—again not to be confused with the broad Anglophone term ‘intellect’. Lastly, the causal body is ignorance of one’s true nature, which is Atman that is beyond all names and forms, beyond all ideas, constructs, and properties.

Swinburne’s proposition that human beings are not bodies but souls does not have parallels with the concept of Atman, which is truly bodiless. Swinburne’s soul is the subtle body of Advaita Vedanta, René Descartes’s concept
of soul, where ‘mental events ... are events in ... souls’ (9). While Advaita Vedanta situates consciousness and one’s true nature beyond thought, Swinburne positions consciousness as thought in a soul, much like the conglomeration of manas, chitta, abamkara, and buddhi.

While Swinburne analyses different theories of personal identity, he does not refer to any Eastern theory of personality. For a book focusing on the question whether we are bodies or souls, essentially the question of our true nature, it is indeed a great limitation that millennia-old ruminations on this topic by Eastern thinkers has been completely avoided. This kind of avoidance severely affects one’s understanding and the conclusions that one draws. For instance, Swinburne concludes that our ‘brains are the immediate cause of our conscious states’ (46). Indian thinkers would argue against that and would conclude that consciousness alone is the immediate cause of our being conscious. That is because, brains themselves are inert organs made up of matter. If it were not so, why do not brains in dead people act as conscious beings? And, if we conclude that brains are indeed inert matter, how could inert matter be the cause of consciousness?

Further, in the deep sleep state, we lose our connection with the brains and are unable to do anything using our brains. Though the brain continues to function in the deep sleep state, we are unable to process any sensory input in that state. If the brain is the immediate cause of our being conscious, why should it not function properly in its full capacity, when we are in the deep sleep state?

Continuing his argument that the existence of human beings depends on thought, Swinburne quotes Descartes, who says, ‘I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think’ (71). According to Advaita Vedanta, all thought is matter and the essence of any living being is not thought but that which causes one to think as explained in the Kena Upanishad. Descartes’s soul comprises matter in the form of thought. It is subtle, but it is still matter. Answering the objection that a person does not think in dreamless sleep but continues to exist, Swinburne modifies Descartes’s conclusion and says, ‘I am a substance, a soul, whose only essential property is the capacity for thought’ (75). Therefore, according to Swinburne, all humans are souls and while souls might not think all the time, their existence is derived because of their ability to think. Hence, the ability to think is the determining characteristic of the soul.

Contrast this with the understanding of Advaita Vedanta, where Atman exists because that is the only entity that exists and thoughts are caused when because of ignorance one forgets one’s true nature of being the Atman. Hence, in Advaita Vedanta the determining characteristic of Atman is existence itself. Thought is what hides the understanding of Atman. Though Swinburne ‘amends’ Descartes, he fails to engage with philosophical standpoints that place the existence of a living being above thought.

It is surprising that in an age of research into the Higgs boson particle, philosophers do not consider the presence of subtle bodies of living beings. When a person’s gross body is destroyed, one’s subtle body remains. It is this subtle body that carries thoughts. Swinburne is silent on the question of rebirth. Most Eastern philosophies believe that a person’s subtle body travels across lifetimes and takes another gross body on rebirth. When a person dies, only the gross body is destroyed and the part of the person that was thinking, that is the subtle body, remains intact. It is only upon realising one’s true nature that the subtle and causal bodies get destroyed, but the real identity of a person, being Atman, does not change.

Swinburne also offers the argument of humans being souls because of their being able to point out a soul ‘different from any other actual or possible soul but not different because it has a different property or properties from those of other souls’ (112). The Atman of Advaita Vedanta is of the nature of non-difference. I understand my true nature of Atman only when I stop perceiving difference or distinctions. It is true that we are not bodies, but we are not thoughts or ignorance, we are the ever-existing consciousness that is of the nature of joy.

This book is another example of how Indian philosophy is ignored by the academia even in discussions pertaining to some of the core questions
of Indian philosophy. It also emphasises the urgency to engage with Eastern schools of thought and break free of the lopsided emphasis on Anglophone and Eurocentric philosophising.

Swami Narasimhananda
Editor, Prabuddha Bharata

Philosophers of Our Times
Edited by Ted Honderich

Reviewing Ted Honderich’s anthology one understands why some of the Russell Group of universities had annihilated their philosophy departments. Honderich’s book is an excellent place to begin understanding how stale and iterative most contemporary Western philosophers have become. This, notwithstanding Honderich’s claim in his ‘Introduction’ (1–3): ‘Philosophy in my [Honderich’s] view is a greater concentration than that of science on the logic of ordinary intelligence—on clarity, consistency and validity, completeness, and generality’ (2).

Accordingly, they can be understood by anyone interested in the hard questions of life: ‘How is it that it is like to be a bat related to the bat? [Obviously referring to Thomas Nagel’s What Is It Like to Be a Bat? (1974)] ... Where did mind begin? With spiders? ... Is the problem of free will a solved problem of consciousness but a remaining problem for neurobiology? Are you a human being?’ (1).

With these and other questions which are weird in the sense that S T Joshi (b. 1958) uses in another context, we begin a book meant to represent the best minds of our times. It is essential to mention the literary critic Joshi since bats, spiders, and being human are all dealt with by Joshi in his work on bats, spiders, and being human. Moreover, Honderich disdains literature. Thus the need to bring in Joshi’s concept of the weird. In the name of clarity, we have Honderich mouthing unbeknownst to Honderich, strangely tricky questions. Honderich should have begun his book by quoting the first scene of Macbeth.

Another problem with this book is that it has no lecture by any Indian philosopher or for that matter, by any Asian philosopher. Perhaps this is unconscious colonial erasure, or perhaps, even now, Indian philosophy is erroneously conflated with Indic religious studies. For instance, the work now being done by Jonardon Ganeri on medieval Indian logic and epistemology is paradigm-shifting, and Ganeri revises the domain of logic within philosophy. Despite this, Ganeri finds no mention in this book which asserts that ‘If reading main-line philosophy is never like reading a novel, it is something you can be prepared for’ (2). In his hurry to tutor us in the methods of reading ‘main-line philosophy’, Honderich demonstrates a lack of understanding of the rationality aimed at by philosophers by ignoring Asian philosophers and especially contemporary philosophers who are refashioning Hindu thought.

Philosophers included in this anthology range from Thomas Nagel, Simon Blackburn to Noam Chomsky. It is in passing that we should note that no foil to Western empiricism is possible through philosophy unless one brings Nyaya and Navya Nyaya into play. Honderich and his philosophers miss this focus on Nyaya and Navya Nyaya entirely and thus, Honderich’s anthology cannot really claim to be representative of the state of either philosophy or philosophers now.

While rambling about philosophy in his ‘Introduction’, Honderich suddenly attacks the genre of the novel again: ‘Reading all the lectures is reading mainstream philosophy, which is indeed unlike reading a novel or anything else. ... They demonstrate the falsehood, perhaps the hopeful falsehood, of the [anecdotal] utterance of a noted scientist that philosophy is dead, a scientist unaware of the truth among others that the subject has always buried its undertakers’ (3).

Honderich’s disparagement of the novel shows that he has not read anyone from Fyodor Dostoevsky to Iris Murdoch. Otherwise, he would not have made these weird comments regarding the novel-form. As will be seen, Honderich and his philosophers have become the undertakers