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ARE DIALOGUES ANTIDOTES TO
VIOLENCE? TWO RECENT EXAMPLES FROM
HINDUISM STUDIES

Abstract: One of the convictions in religious studies and elsewhere is about the role dialogues play: by fulfilling the need for understanding, dialogues reduce violence. In this paper, we analyze two examples from Hinduism studies to show that precisely the opposite is true: dialogue about Hinduism has become the harbinger of violence. This is not because ‘outsiders’ have studied Hinduism or because the Hindu participants are religious ‘fundamentalists’ but because of the logical requirements of such a dialogue. Generalizing the structure of this situation, we argue that, in certain dialogical situations, the requirements of reason conflict with the requirements of morality.

Our answer to the title of the article, which also constitutes the central thesis we will argue for, is this: no, they are not; in certain kinds of encounters, dialogues breed violence. We take two recent instances from Hinduism studies merely as illustrations of the kind of encounters we want to talk about; our thesis will appeal to a neutral notion of dialogue and a generic conception of violence. Because we are primarily interested in exploring the extent to which the *formal* nature of a dialogue contributes to generating violence, we will not look at the other issues involved in a dialogical situation. While such a narrow focus forces us to neglect certain kinds of nuances, it is our hope that this discussion adds an important dimension to the debate about the relation between dialogue and the cessation of violence.

The Contexts of the Article

In the past three years or so, a heated dispute has erupted in the American society. The dispute flared up when two books, both authored by professors at the American universities, became issues of contention among some Hindu groups in the United States. The first book is by Paul Courtright on Ganesa, the elephant-headed Hindu god; the second is by Jeffrey Kripal on the Bengali Saint, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. A few Hindu groups called for public apologies, withdrawal of their books and their dismissal.¹ Some individuals even threatened the authors with

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physical violence.² These events have become catalysts for a wider critique of the western portrayal of the Indian culture.

This social context raises explanatory questions about these reactions.³ The standard answer is about the propagandist role played by the right-wing Hindu organization, the *Hindutva* movement, in the United States and elsewhere. This answer points out to the fact that the responses of the Hindus in the United States were neither monolithic nor uniform and that not all of them were incensed by these scholars and their explanations. Consequently, they see the hand of the right wing *Hindutva* behind many such angry responses. While such allegations are mostly true, one major issue has gone largely unnoticed. It concerns the ability of the *Hindutva* to find echoes in the largely politically unaffiliated Hindus in the American society and elsewhere. *Into what kind of experience is Hindutva tapping?* In the course of this article, we will formulate one aspect of what is perhaps a multi-dimensional answer, as it relates to the nature of the dialogical encounter.

There is something more. *Assuming* the need for people of different religious persuasions to live together peacefully, what should they do when they disagree and want to solve their disagreement? The famous philosopher of science, Sir Karl Popper, once formulated the *aporia* confronting the ‘humankind’ and his solution to it in the following terms: “If the method of rational critical discussion should establish itself, then this should make the use of violence obsolete: *critical reason is the only alternative to violence so far discovered.*”⁴ If people want to solve their disagreements, it seems as though there are only two choices: either people kill each other or they sit down, discuss with each other and let ideas die in their stead. “In the face of argument of such quality,” writes Gellner – himself a Popperian – “one can only feel embarrassment.”⁵ In the course of this article, we will also discover what the embarrassment is about.

According to Popper’s meta-theory of science, his bold claim can be temporarily accepted only if it cannot be refuted. We will refute the claim by arguing that, in some kinds of encounters, the kind of discussion that Popper has in mind generates violence. If our arguments hold muster, they establish two things: one is that the alternative between ‘reason and violence’ will not work; the second is that it refutes the assumption that a dialogue, in all cases and in all circumstances, reduces the chance of violence between disagreeing human communities. This assumption is often implicit in the calls for a dialogue between different religions, different cultures and different nations today.

This call about the need for “dialogue” appears to overlook the *prima facie* evidence from our domain, which suggests the contrary: *an intense religious dialogue has often gone hand-in-hand with a great deal of violence.* This evidence for violence and the simultaneous occurrence of dialogue is in the history of Ancient Christianity in its struggle with the Roman *religio*, the

religious wars, the periods of reformation and contra-reformation in Europe and so on. Is this a mere contingent correlation? Or is it because these dialogues were either inter- or intra-religious in nature? Or is it because a dialogue with religions is simply impossible? Consequently, do we need “more dialogue” with and between religions, or “less” of it or “none” of it or a “different kind” of dialogue altogether?

The Structure of the Article

Even though we believe that the substantial thesis of this article is not dependent on an idiosyncratic use of language, we will take care to define our notions in the first section. From there on, we will use the word ‘argumentation’ instead of the word ‘dialogue’, and maintain this usage consistently throughout. In this task, we draw upon what we consider to be the best theory of argumentation today.⁶ This substitution of words is also intended to suggest a very minimal claim: argumentation is at least a subset of dialogue.

In the second section, we look at two examples from Hinduism studies. Here, we focus upon some passages from the works of Courtright and Kripal to merely show that some of their arguments *could* provide a ground for a serious disagreement.⁷ At that point, we will notice two facts: one is that some Hindus threaten the two scholars with physical violence;⁸ the second is the quasi-total absence of attempts by the incensed Hindu groups to engage critically with Courtright and Kripal.⁹

At first sight, these two facts appear to lend credence to the ‘reason or violence’ hypothesis. There are no attempts by these groups to argue with the two authors and there is the threat of physical violence. In the presence of disagreements and the felt need to solve them, the ‘reason or violence’ hypothesis suggests a cause-effect relationship between these two events. Furthermore, we need other explanatory accounts of their existence. For our purposes, it does not matter what form such explanations take; but it does matter that one introduces them *ad hoc*. Instead of going down this route, we formulate a simpler hypothesis that not only explains the relationship between the above two events but also accounts for their existence. Our hypothesis merely construes the books of Courtright and Kripal as argumentative moves. This is done in the third section.

In the fourth section, we analyze the nature of violence *in* the argumentative situation. Here, we outline the structure of Hindu experience that the *Hindutva* movement is tapping into. In this way, our hypothesis also goes some way (though not all the way) in explaining the success of *Hindutva*.

In the fifth section, we demonstrate a skew in the argumentative situation and exhibit some of the logical compulsions responsible for that skew. This skew consists of putting an asymmetrical burden of proof on the

participants in an argumentative discourse. We argue that any workable theory of argumentation has to make both substantive and formal assumptions to get off the ground and that it is epistemically impossible to localize the cause(s) of the skew in all cases. In other words, it is *not possible* to defend the claim that, in the argumentation between the Hindus and the western scholars, one could trace the skew to 'defective' theories or to the 'unreasonableness' of either of the two parties.

In the sixth section, we take up an allegedly 'methodological' question about studying the 'Other' and show why it is not methodological at all. In the process, we notice the presence of several other asymmetries in what should ideally be a symmetric dialogical situation. Here, we tie up some loose ends and conclude on some general reflections that might help in understanding the spirit and intent of this article better.

1. Terminological Clarifications

The field of logic (both formal and informal) has generated the most interesting theories of argumentation in the course of the last three decades. The *Erlangenschule*¹⁰ has successfully conceptualized the truth-functional propositional calculus as dialogical logic;¹¹ the pragma-dialectical approach of Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst¹² is the most comprehensive in the field of argumentation from which we borrow our definition.

"An argumentation is a phenomenon of verbal communication which should be studied as a specific mode of discourse, characterized by the use of language for resolving a difference of opinion."¹³ If 'verbal' is seen as a synonym of 'oral', then the definition is too narrow because it speaks only of oral communication. All argumentations need not be face-to-face; e-mails, internet chats and discussions on electronic forums are equally 'face-to-face' in today's world. Therefore, we shall drop this restriction. Instead, we will adopt the above definition with the proviso that 'verbal' includes both 'oral' and 'written' modes of discourse. When is there an argumentation between two or more people? Whenever there is a conflict of avowed opinions. Of course, this situation alone does not suffice for an argumentation to take place: both parties should want to resolve the difference of opinion and do so through a process of critical discussion.

Under these conditions, the parties engage in argumentative discourse and arrive at a consensus based on certain *rules* binding upon them. Such rules emphasize the necessity of drawing inferences and incorporate some minimal pragmatic considerations, and some minimal conditions for verbal communication. Consequently, any argumentation will have to accept some or another set of rules.¹⁴

An argumentation consists of verbal utterances or sentences from natural languages. The structure of an argumentative discourse, then, consists of the relationship between such utterances or sentences.

Henceforth, we use the word ‘belief’ to speak of the sentences or utterances involved in an argumentation without, however, making any assumptions about the status and nature of beliefs. Since either criticism or justification of beliefs is at issue in an argumentation, they must be related to each other either logically or semantically. That is, between such beliefs, some kind of a *deductive relation* must hold.¹⁵

This ‘deductive relation’ is *neutral* and could belong to any of the following: the classical predicate calculus, intuitionist logic, para-consistent logics, non-monotonic logics, deviant logics, non-standard logics, dialectical logics, adaptive logics, etc. Each of these logics has its own meta-logical notions of deduction and validity, soundness and proof, and so on. An argumentation theory is neutral with respect to the choice of logics; it merely proposes that once a suitable logic is chosen, the participants follow its rules of inference.

Unless qualified otherwise, we use the word ‘violence’ in a generic sense: “injury by or as if by distortion, infringement, or profanation.”¹⁶ The same dictionary defines ‘injury’ as “an act that damages or hurts”. Both words could refer to physical or psychic events; this is how we use the word ‘violence’. The context of the use of these words clarifies any additional meanings as and when they accrue.

2. India through the American Eyes

During the past five years, two books, both authored by American professors, have generated strong feelings among the Hindu Diaspora living in the United States. One is by Paul Courtright, Professor of Indian religions at Emory University. It is about the elephant-headed Indian deity called Ganesa. He is the son of Siva, who is the lord of destruction among other things. Following an Indian reprint of this book in 2001, a huge controversy erupted. An internet petition signed by hundreds of Indians circulated on the web before it was withdrawn: some of the signatories had called for the death of the author. The famous Indological publisher, Motilal Banarsidass, withdrew this book after its re-publication because of the furore the book and the cover photo caused. Many academics issued a call to withdraw their books from the publisher because they felt that academic freedom was threatened by mob violence. Concerned Hindu communities in North America formed groups, circulated petitions, met with the Emory university authorities demanding that Paul Courtright be dismissed from service, his book withdrawn from the shelves of the library and that his lessons are not allowed to go on. The story even made it to *The Washington Post*.¹⁷

The second book is by Jeffrey Kripal, currently professor at Rice University. The subject of his investigation is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the teacher of the more famous Swami Vivekananda (who established *The Ramakrishna Mission* in India and abroad). The mentor of

Kripal is the well-known Indologist at the University of Chicago, Wendy Doniger. Having received an award from the *American Academy of Religion* for the best first book of the year, it has been dogged by controversy ever since its initial publication in 1995.

In both cases, the authors in question and their supporters argue that they treat their subject matter with sympathy and respect. They also insist that the way to knowledge is fraught with disenchantments and that one should be prepared to embrace unpleasant truths, if one seeks knowledge. Consequently, it is only reasonable that they treat the protagonists with a degree of suspicion: either they do not respect academic freedom or they are Hindu fundamentalists or both.

These claims do not convince the incensed Hindu groups and individuals; nor are all of them Hindu fundamentalists. In fact, in any discussion about these books, an undercurrent of rage, a sense of fury, and the feeling of being *violated* are present among them. Why? To answer this question, we first need to take notice of what Courtright and Kripal do.

Courtright's Ganesa

Let us focus *only* upon those passages that have generated the greatest outrage in the Hindu Diaspora. Ganesa, he writes, “remains celibate so as not to compete erotically with his father, a notorious womanizer, either incestuously for his mother or for any other woman for that matter.”¹⁸ Moreover:

Although there seem to be no myths or folktales in which Ganesa explicitly performs oral sex, his insatiable appetite for sweets may be interpreted as an effort to satisfy a hunger that seems inappropriate in an otherwise ascetic disposition, a hunger having clear erotic overtones. Ganesa's broken tusk, his guardian staff, and displaced head can be interpreted as symbols of castration...This combination of child-ascetic-eunuch in the symbolism of Ganesa – each an explicit denial of adult male sexuality – appears to embody a primal Indian male longing: to remain close to the mother and to do so in a way that will both protect her and yet be acceptable to the father. This means that the son must retain access to the mother but not attempt to possess her sexually.¹⁹

This is also taken to explain why Ganesa is an *elephant-headed* deity:

An important element in the symbolism of the elephant head is displacement or, better disguise. The myth wants to make it appear that the elephant head was not a deliberate choice but merely the

nearest available head in an auspicious direction or the head of one of Siva's opponents to whom he had already granted salvation. From a psychoanalytic perspective, there is meaning in the selection of the elephant head. Its trunk is the displaced phallus, a caricature of Siva's *linga*. It poses no threat because it is too large, flaccid, and in the wrong place to be useful for sexual purposes...So Ganesa takes on the attributes of his father but in an inverted form, with an exaggerated limp phallus – ascetic and benign – whereas Siva is hard, erotic, and destructive.²⁰

Ganesa, then, is an attempt of the Indian psyche to transform the incestuous hunger that a son feels for his mother. The cognitive status neither of psychoanalysis nor of this particular reading of Freud (or psychoanalysis) is at issue. Let us assume that one could use Freudian theories to understand cultures and that Courtright provides us with a justifiable interpretation of Freud and/or psychoanalysis. Such interpretations transform Ganesa and Siva into symbols. To whom are these figures symbols? Whose psyche expresses the elephant trunk psychoanalytically, or represents Siva symbolically? There are three logical possibilities here: either these express the psyche of those individual scholars who indulge in such interpretations or why some unknown author conceived of Siva and Ganesa this way. Alternatively, and this is the third possibility, they are claims about the psyche of the Indians who do *puja* to Ganesa and Siva in these forms.

Courtright does not claim that he is expressing his psyche in writing the book he has written. Nor does he suggest that he is psychoanalyzing the unknown 'authors' of these stories. If we take these into account, we are left with the third possibility, namely, here, a particular *interpretation* of psychoanalysis functions as *an explanation* of the Indian psyche: Indians do *puja* to Siva's *linga* because '...'; Indians cook sweets while doing *puja* to Ganesa because the desire for sweets is an expression of '...'; and so on. (The ellipsis can be filled in by a suitable interpretation of psychoanalysis.) In other words, a particular reading of Freudian psychoanalysis functions as an explanation of the psyche of a people. This move which makes an interpretation of a text or a theory *into* an explanation of a situation is *logically necessary* because psychoanalysis is an explanation of the psychology of individuals. One does not have the freedom to choose a psychoanalytical explanation of the psyche and deny that one is providing an explanation of a psyche. About which Indians is this claim made? All Hindus who were, are, and will be: that is, all those who did, do and will do *puja* to the *linga* and to Ganesa. Such an explanation of the Indian psyche, in that case, requires compelling *evidence* before it can be considered true. The author, of course, does not provide this because he thinks he is advancing a psychoanalytical 'interpretation' of Ganesa.

Kripal's Ramakrishna

Consider now Jeffrey Kripal's attempts to understand a Bengali saint, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the teacher of the more famous Swami Vivekananda.

...[T]he literature on sexual trauma suggests that individuals who have experienced abuse often become adept at altering their state of consciousness, "split" their identities to separate themselves from the traumatic event, lose control of their bodily, and especially gastrointestinal, functions, experience visions and states of possession, become hypersensitive to idiosyncratic stimuli (like latrines), symbolically react to traumatic events, live in a state of hyperarousal, regress to earlier stages of psychosocial development, develop various types of somatic symptoms (including eating disorders and chronic insomnia), become hypersexual in their language or behavior, develop hostile feelings towards mother figures, fear adult sexuality, and often attempt suicide. *The list reads like a summary of Ramakrishna's religious life.* Certainly it is not a matter of the saint manifesting one or two such symptoms, as is often the case with traumatized children and adults. Perhaps we could overlook that. But *Ramakrishna manifests virtually all of them and displays them with an intensity that even the experienced psychiatrist might find alarming.*²¹

Ramakrishna's religious life, then, can be described in terms of a cluster of pathological symptoms. Under the terms of this description, the saint is pathological – his pathology arising from the trauma of sexual abuse. While one might grant the claim that the saint was pathological, the issue is this: how does this pathology explain the religious life of Ramakrishna? Kripal answers that "the homoerotic energies themselves, freed from the usual socialized routes by the 'shameful' nature of their unacceptable objects, were able to transform themselves, *almost alchemically*, until their dark natures began to glitter with the gold of the mystical."²² These energies were "able to transform themselves". How? "Almost alchemically". In other words, 'somehow'. Not only do these energies 'alchemically' transform themselves but they also 'somehow' continue with this transformation until they reach a certain stage, where they begin to "glitter with the gold of the mystical". 'Somehow'? 'Almost alchemically'?

One might want to say that we are not clear about the mechanisms. And that the ‘somehow’ and ‘almost alchemically’ merely function as placeholders for a currently non-existent but a possible future explanation. And that this is merely a hypothesis one is putting forward. However, such a defence renders the explanation both trivial and *ad hoc*. To appreciate the charge of triviality, consider the following: Ramakrishna’s neural structure ‘somehow’ generated his religious life; Ramakrishna’s genes ‘somehow’ interacted with his environment to enable his religious life... and so on. Do such claims advance our knowledge of anything? They do not. They are trivially true: all things happen ‘somehow’. Only knowledge tells us which things do not happen ‘almost alchemically’, as it were.

However, considered as explanations, they are *ad hoc* in the sense that one literally sucks explanations out of one’s thumb to explain Ramakrishna’s ‘symptoms’. Apart from Kripal’s story, here are a few more: Ramakrishna had a currently unidentified rare disease, which caused his religious trances; Ramakrishna had a currently unknown brain affliction (a tumour growth), which caused the symptoms he had; Ramakrishna exhibited a currently unidentified behavioural syndrome... With just a little patience and a bit more inventiveness, one could conjure up many more explanations, which satisfy the ‘facts’. Each is as bad as the other is. Unless one specifies the mechanisms involved in the ‘transformation’, the explanation is both trivial and *ad hoc*.

In this sense, there are *prima facie* reasons for discussing with Kripal and Courtright. Yet, hardly any of the incensed Hindus have critically engaged with either. In fact, most of the Hindu practitioners have not read either Courtright or Kripal with the care their books deserve. Many have read only some passages from Courtright (those we have cited) and almost all of them have heard that “Kripal calls Ramakrishna a homosexual paedophile.” These have sufficed for their actions – including the suggestions of physical violence.

Using the ‘reason or violence’ hypothesis, it is easy to postulate a ‘causal’ connection between the following two facts: unwillingness (or incapability) to discuss, and expressions of hostility and aggression. It is the burden of this article to provide a rival hypothesis that links these two facts differently. Furthermore, the ‘reason or violence’ idea does not, on its own, explain the facts: it does not tell us why there is an ‘unwillingness’ to discuss or why the Hindus resort to violence instead of, say, simply keeping quiet. In this sense, these facts force us to seek other explanations for their existence. We will propose an alternative that captures in its explanatory net both the relationship between the two facts and their existence. We suggest it is preferable to accept a single hypothesis that explains all these than take recourse to multiple hypotheses that account for them severally.

3. Argumentation as the Framework

There are two ways of looking at this situation. The first follows the above sketch: two respected scholars have used some or another version of Freudian psychoanalysis in order to understand Hinduism. Surely, it is in the very nature of an intellectual enterprise to try to understand phenomena by using whichever theories one thinks are adequate for the job. To deny intellectuals this freedom is to threaten the very process of knowledge acquisition.

In that case, the response of the scholars, whether western or Indian, and the reactions of some of the Hindus follow a well-prepared course. The second group would challenge the status of psychoanalysis or its ability to understand Hinduism; the first would argue that scholars have used psychoanalysis in understanding other religions, including Christianity. Some challenge the mastery of these scholars in the relevant languages and/or of the primary sources; the others reply that these writings have passed academic muster on that score. And so on. In between, most scholars indulge in very loud table thumping (the echoes of these have still not died down on the RISA-List), equally vigorous political hand waving and massively signed petitions to protect the virtues of 'academic freedom' from 'mob violence'. And when asked to explain the violent reactions of the Hindus, almost every scholar will appeal to the favourite bogey-man: the 'Hindu fundamentalism'. So, one is supposed to believe that all the incensed Hindus are brainwashed by the *Hindutva* movement, too stupid to understand the virtues of academic freedom and, of course, delivered to the mercy of base emotions.

Even if the *Hindutva* movement has played a role in mobilizing the rage of the Hindus, none of the scholars we have either personally met or read seems to realize that they have a huge explanatory problem on their hands. *Why are the Hindus incensed?* Even though each scholar has his or her own story to tell, all take to the moral high-ground: the blemish has to be sought on the side of the Hindus.

There is, however, a second possible description of the situation. We hypothesize that Kripal and Courtright make an argumentative move by writing their books. They have not merely studied Hinduism the way a physicist studies the refraction of light through a prism but are also communicating the results of their research to an audience that *also* comprises of Hindus. They are explaining the nature and structure of Hindu practices, whether it is doing *puja* to Ganesa or listening to the teachings of Ramakrishna. By creating an argumentative situation, we do not suggest that either of the authors intended an argumentation. But we do claim that, by enabling a 'small' transformation, this hypothesis suffices to explain the violence *in* the situation without appealing to any other hypotheses.

This transformation requires making a deliberate abstraction from the concrete social and political processes in which both the parties are rooted. This is deliberate because only in this manner would one be able to show the *structural results* of an argumentation. In some senses, it is like creating the ‘laboratory conditions’ for an experiment. We look at the argumentation as though both parties are sitting in a virtual seminar-class together, doing nothing other than engaging in this process. We need to follow the steps in the argumentative discourse without any “disturbing conditions” and observe their impact.

To facilitate this, consider the following fragment of a verbal exchange between a hypothetical ‘scholar’, and an equally hypothetical ‘Hindu’. Both the dialogue and its individual participants are our constructions meant merely to illustrate the problem. Even though one could distil such imaginary argumentations from the books written on Hinduism, our aim is more modest: outline the possible flow of one kind of argumentative discourse.

Scholar: What are you doing?

Hindu: Doing ‘*puja*’ (translated as ‘worship’) to Ganesa (‘*Namaskara*’ to Ramakrishna).

Scholar: Why are you doing it?

Hindu: Ganesa is a ‘*deva*’ (translated as ‘god’) (Ramakrishna is an enlightened guru).

Scholar: What explains his status?

Hindu: Ganesa is the son of Shiva (Kali revealed herself to him).

Scholar: Why does Ganesa have an elephant head? (How did Ramakrishna become enlightened?)

Hindu: It is Shiva’s doing. [Here, the story of Ganesa is recounted.]

Hindu: It is due to Ramakrishna’s ‘*tapas*’ (translated as ‘penance’). [Here, the story of Ramakrishna is recounted.]

Scholar: Yes, I know the story too. But you misunderstood my question.

Hindu: What is your question then?

Scholar: Explain Ganesa’s head (Explain Ramakrishna’s enlightenment).

Hindu: I told you that already (refers to the story).

Scholar: Your story merely narrates and claims to tell us *what* occurred. My question is about the *why*.

Hindu: I do not understand you.

Scholar: Why was it an elephant head and not a human one? (Why did Ramakrishna do 'penance'?)

Hindu: I do not know.

Scholar: Here is the explanation why Ganesa has an elephant head and Ramakrishna did 'tapas'. (Now the Freudian explanations are presented.)

Hindu: *Silence.*

4. The Structure of Violence

The first striking thing about these purported explanations (of Kripal and Courtright) is that they *trivialize the experiences* of the Hindus. When they discover that their mothers, sisters, all women and all men, *merely worship the penis* or follow a *paedophile*, the import of this 'discovery' are the following: (a) hitherto, all one did was to 'worship' the penis or revere a paedophile as a 'saint'; (b) one is a 'fool' to think that one was doing something else. Such a 'discovery' not only makes all earlier acts of 'worship' look foolish, it also insists that one is doubly foolish by not knowing this. The same consideration holds good when one realizes that Ganesa's love for sweets expresses his appetite for oral sex or that his trunk is a limp penis. How foolish it must be to cook all those many, many sweet dishes during the festival of '*Ganesa Chaturthi*'!

By virtue of this, experiences are *transformed*. What does the transformation consist of? Such alleged explanations *re-describe* experiences by twisting or distorting them. The act of doing *pūja* to the *Siva linga* raises the question: how did one reverently worship a penis? Before reading Kripal, people thought that Ramakrishna's attitude to women (say) was an expression of the saint's enlightenment. However, when they discover what such an attitude actually is, viz., a development of "hostile feelings towards mother figures, and a fear of adult sexuality" arising from the trauma of sexual abuse, one does not recognize that attitude anymore for what it once was.

Of course, it is the case that *scientific theories* 'correct' experiences too: we see a stick appearing bent when immersed in water and see the movement of the sun across the horizon. Our scientific theories tell us that neither is true. In such cases, it is important to note that they *preserve* our experiences the way they are (as the ancient Greeks phrased it: *sozein ta phainomena*). That is, such scientific theories do not deny our perception of either the bent stick or the movement of the sun; they explain the *necessity* of such appearances.²³ Scientific theories do not distort much less deny experiences.

However, these explanations do precisely that: *deny* experiences. The worship of the *linga* is in reality not a worship of *Siva* at all, but a 'subconscious acknowledgement' of some 'repressed' desire. The 'religious trances' of Ramakrishna were, in reality, a way of coming to grips with his

attempt to deal with the sexual urges he felt for young boys. Or, this is how he 'transformed' the experience of a possible sexual abuse.

What happens when the experiences are trivialized, distorted, and then denied? If the Hindu 'accepts' the story of penis, both erect and limp, can he feel the same sense of reverence (or whatever else is appropriate) that he had, remember it too, without feeling a perfect ass? Could one remember the earlier 'enlightened smile' of Ramakrishna, when one sees in the portraits of the saint merely the lecherous grin of a paedophile? One cannot. That is, these purported explanations also deny access to one's own experiences.

Who or what is denying such an access? True, it is a theory but it theorizes someone else's experience of the world. Much before Freud, Courtright and Kripal wrote whatever they did about the religions of India, people from other religions (first from Islam and then from Christianity) had said the same thing: the Indians worship the cow, the monkey, the penis, the stone idol and the naked fakir. This is how these people experienced India and her culture. Their theologies had prepared them for such an experience much before they came to India and they 'saw' only what they expected to see. The interpretations of the Muslim kings, the descriptions of the Christian missionaries, the reports of the Christian explorers and merchants, the developments within Christian theology, etc. are the 'facts' that the psychoanalytical scholars of religion seek to understand. They 'theorize' the European experiences of India. Consequently, what is denying the access to one's experience is the experience of another culture, or the theorizing of such an experience. *One's experiences are trivialized, denied, distorted and made inaccessible by someone else's experience of the world.*

Even this does not complete the story. The Hindu is also normatively compelled to accept that the experience of another culture is also his own experience of the world, whether or not this happens to be the case. In order to go about with the western culture, other cultures are obliged to deny their own experiences. Not only does one culture foist its ways of going about the world on others. The others also have to accept it voluntarily and actively cooperate. Such cooperation is morally obligatory on them. They are compelled to become volunteers in the process of denying their experiences of the world to themselves.

If none of the above is violence, what else is?

The method of rational, critical discussion, *contra* Sir Popper, is not "the only alternative to violence so far discovered." In fact, it *engenders violence in some intercultural argumentative situations*. Reasonableness, it appears, is not an antidote to violence; in certain kinds of encounters, it *breeds violence*.

We would suggest that the *Hindutva* movement is tapping into this experience. The recruiting base of the *Hindutva* in the United States and elsewhere is broad: it consists of people who are hardly 'right wing' in their

political leanings. Nor are such people prone to fall prey to the propaganda of some fundamentalist religious movement. But the issue of 'representation of Hinduism' is a lightning rod that draws well-educated Hindus into the folds of *Hindutva* because it is able to link itself to this sense of violation. If this is the case, the situation raises the even more troubling but fascinating issue of the growth of *Hindutva* in India itself. It would suggest that one of the sources for the growth of *Hindutva* has to be sought in the most unlikely of places: the Indian 'secularism'. Indeed, it appears that the post-independent Nehruvian secularism has been one of the harbingers of *Hindutva* and religious violence in India.²⁴ If this is true, more of 'secularism' in India is not the antidote to the *Hindutva* and religious violence; such thoughtless remedies merely strengthen the growth of both.

One aspect of the situation involving violence is now obvious: the attempts like those of Courtright and Kripal inflict violence by denying the experience of people whose religions they talk about. Even though we have focused only on these two authors, this observation is true for many, many more works in the West that study Hinduism, and Hinduism is mainly studied in the West. This is also the reason why, increasingly in the Hindu Diaspora, the western intellectuals studying Hinduism are looked upon with suspicion.

However, this situation also raises two questions. The first is about the individual motivations of writers like these: are we to say they are inauthentic and are out to inflict pain on their fellow human beings? Even if we accept the logical possibility that some among them do have such psychologies, it is ridiculous to use it as an explanation for this state of affairs. So, we need to dig deeper. The second question is about the validity of the increasingly vociferous stance that only 'the insiders' should study Hinduism precisely in order to prevent such violence. If a practicing 'Hindu' studies Hinduism, would such problems never come to the fore?

In the following section, we will show that the answer is fairly complex. We shall suggest that it is intrinsic to the nature of the argumentative situation to bring forth violence. Such is the nature of the discussion that it engenders violence because of the *structure of the argumentation* itself. We will show that in such discussions, (a) the dialogue gets *skewed in favour* of one of the participants and (b) this skew *compels* him to commit violence.

5. The Skew in the Dialogues

In this section, we want to build a generalized argument that goes beyond the case of Hinduism studies which we have examined so far. To do so, however, we make use of the same strategy: in order to facilitate the process of comprehension and also signal the generality of the argument, we will continue to call the two hypothetical, individual participants in the dialogue as the 'scholar' and the 'Hindu' respectively. This baptism is one

of convenience: we could identify them equally well with variables (as 'A' and 'B') or as the protagonist and the antagonist (using their technical meanings from argumentation theory). However, purely for the sake of readability, we have chosen recognizable names.

We now want to argue that in *all* such encounters, any further argumentation becomes *tilted or loaded in favour* of the scholar because the structure of argumentation *compels* him to indulge in a series of inter-related cognitive moves. They are: (1) the scholar attributes some implicit premises to the Hindu; (2) these premises appear to explain the Hindu practices; (3) these explanations presuppose the truth of a specific psychological theory; (4) this theory structures the nature of the phenomena requiring explanation; (5) the Hindu is logically compelled to defend the moves of the scholar. Even though each of these moves appears intuitively obvious, their combined effect *skews* the argumentation as a whole. And this skew stakes the deck against the Hindu.

The Cognitive Moves

To begin with, there is the *first* move of attribution of *implicit premises* to the Hindu. If the wish is to have any further argumentation, one can have it *only* by attributing some specific premises to the Hindus. In the case of Courtright, one can continue the argumentation about justifying *puja* either to the Siva *linga* or to the 'displaced phallus' of Ganesa only by making assumptions about the 'subconscious' of the Indian psyche. To deny these premises is to deny the justificatory/explanatory challenge that Courtright issues. To do so is to refuse further argumentation. In the case of Ramakrishna, to deny the occurrence of sexual trauma of the saint is to deny participation in the argumentation. That is why, in the sequence we sketched in an earlier section, we made the Hindu fall silent. To appreciate this point better, consider two further developments in the argumentation. The first one:

Scholar: Here is the explanation why Ganesa has an elephant head and Ramakrishna did '*tapas*' (Now the Freudian explanations are presented.)

Hindu: I do not buy it.

Scholar: Ok. Do you have any explanation *at all* for the story?

Hindu: No. (*After some silence.*)

Scholar: Your story does not explain Ganesa's head and hence justify your '*puja*'. Neither does it explain the 'penance' of Ramakrishna. My theory explains both. Even if this explanation is incomplete or defective, you have no other explanation. So, if you want to be rational then you will either accept this explanation or come up with a better one.

Hindu: *Silence.*

Let us now look in the second possible direction:

Scholar: Here is the explanation why Ganesa has an elephant head and Ramakrishna did '*tapas*' (Now the Freudian explanations are presented.)

Hindu: I do not buy the Freudian explanations.

Scholar: Fair enough. There are many who also have problems with Freud and psychoanalytical explanations. However, I consider them illuminating. Therefore, I will continue to use this framework to make sense of Ganesa and Ramakrishna. Either you agree with me or let us agree to disagree. If you disagree, remember that we can only have a meaningful discussion when you come up with a different, alternative explanation.

How can the Hindu keep the argumentation alive now? See how Courtright formulates the two kinds of responses open to the Hindus:

... how do we do our work when some of the Others say, "you got it right, that's what *I mean*," or, "*I hadn't thought of it that way before*, but, yes, that *makes sense*," whereas other Others say, "your interpretation is offensive to me, and to all Hindus. Your book should be banned?"²⁵

The Hindu either agrees with Courtright that the latter's explanation makes sense or wants the books banned. These are not just factual alternatives; these are the only possible responses that the Hindus have in such situations.

Could there be an argumentation without the scholar attributing such premises? No. The disagreements arise due to the attribution of such premises. In its absence, there is nothing to disagree about and hence there is no argumentation. There is a logical compulsion to impute such premises because the scholar disagrees not with the Hindu doing '*puja*' but with the beliefs that underlie this practice.

The *second* move transforms the attributed premises into *explanatory schemes*. That is, these explain the practices (or behaviours) of the Hindu.

(a) "Because religion and religious worship express repressed libido, the figurative representation of the deities provides clues about repressed urges."

(b) "In effect, Ramakrishna *took* the "anxious energies" of his early sexual crisis for which he almost killed himself, and "*turned them* around the corner," where they revealed their essentially mystical natures...he *took* what were regressive symptoms and, through Kali and her Tantric world, *converted* them into genuine experiences of a sacred, mystical realm."²⁶

In the *third* move, because the scholar assumes the truth of the explanatory schemes, he is also obliged to accept the truth of *one specific psychology*. In the cases presented above, it is important to note that the real object of discussion is some or another human practice. However, the argumentation is not about these practices but about the Hindu

practitioner's beliefs about these practices. This shift at the object level is defensible only if we assume that discussing human practices is identical to discussing the beliefs of the actors about such practices. Better put: if human practices express the beliefs of the actors about these practices, then a discussion of practices is the same as discussing the beliefs the actors hold about such practices. When formulated so explicitly, we recognize the above claim as a part of one specific psychological theory—commonly called the *intentional psychology*.²⁷ The scholar assumes that such an intentional psychology is true and, therefore, valid for all human beings. In fact, in his hands, this intentional psychology is also a philosophical theory about human beings.

To understand the *fourth* move, let us notice that these explanations provide a structure to phenomena: Ganesa is one of the many Indian *gods*; doing *puja* is to *worship* Ganesa; stories about Ganesa incorporate *religious beliefs*; the depiction of Siva and Ganesa are *religious symbols*; and so on. Thus, these explanations specify not only what requires explaining but also *how* such an explanation should look like. Such an explanation must assume *as true* that (a) Hinduism exists; (b) it is a religion; (c) gods are its objects of worship; (d) Siva is a god; (e) he is worshipped as a *linga*; (g) *linga* is a phallic object; (h) Ganesa is also a god; (i) Ganesa's trunk is a limp phallus; and so on and so forth. Having assumed the truth of these assumptions, one has to explain these either individually or collectively.

The *fifth* move involves a logical compulsion, an obligation on the Hindu to defend the moves of the scholar. The Hindu is *compelled* to defend the moves of the scholar because these moves are *logical* and *not psychological* in nature. Because the scholar claims to identify the implicit logical premises of the Hindu, the latter has no choice but to defend them. The scholar imputes these premises thus making them implicit; they are true only on condition that the implicit psychological theory is also that of the Hindu; these are issues that never become a part of the argumentation: they become its presuppositions.

What kind of presuppositions are they? Some are explicit; some are identifiable implicit premises and some others function the way the *ceteris paribus* clause (the clause that says “everything else remaining the same”) functions in the formulation of a scientific law. No amount of digging will ever allow us to explicate the *ceteris paribus* clause: in fact, its presence signals that one *cannot* enumerate²⁸ what “all the things” are that must “remain the same.” Differently put, the argumentation becomes skewed because the party which makes the maximum number of unproven assumptions does not have to demonstrate their truth. The Hindu cannot ask the proof of this truth because he is unaware of all the assumptions: most are hidden in the *ceteris paribus* clause. Therefore, even when guided by explicit and *prima facie* non-partisan rules,²⁹ all one can say about the argumentation is that it gets skewed even when one does not *want* or *intend* a skew.

Because of the above considerations, one might want to argue that the problem is with the nature of the additional premises and thus their semantic content. That is to say, the temptation is great to attribute the skew either to the use of some theory (the Freudian psychoanalysis in our case) or to some alleged defect in the argumentation. Apart from forcing us to come up with *ad hoc* explanations to explain the skew, this impression is also misleading: we cannot make such a claim *on reasonable grounds*. Epistemically speaking, such a claim has no warrant and is unjustifiable.

Given the formal nature of the rules of argumentation, nothing of substantial interest follows from them unless one adds empirical and theoretical statements with a rich semantic content. All real-world discussions are about such statements and if an argumentation has to help us anywhere then it is in the actual world that its efficacy is tested. Consequently, to blame the semantic content (the Freudian theory) for the skew is equivalent to saying that a reasonable discussion is not possible in the real and actual world about the substantial issues, where differences of opinion exist. Furthermore, it is not possible to localize the specific premise that brings about the skew because of the *ceteris paribus* clause. All we can say is that the dialogue becomes skewed. We cannot proceed any further. Therefore, we cannot show that the skew arises from the use of Freudian theory to explain the Hindu practices; that is, we cannot show that its semantic content generates the skew. Nor can we show that the rules of argumentation are not the source of the skew. This confirms the result that philosophers of science have called the 'Duhem-Quine thesis'.³⁰

What would happen if the Hindu refuses to accept that he assumes the truth of any of the premises the antagonist attributes? He will have to do more than merely say that he does not entertain the premises imputed to him; he will have to provide an alternative assumption that justifies the standpoint he has advanced. For instance, if the Hindus are not willing to accept the assumptions imputed to them, they have to come up with alternate assumptions that justify their beliefs. Such an *alternative* explanation will have to be about what 'religion' is, what the relation is between beliefs and human practices, what it means to do *puja* to the Hindu deities, how this is a justifiable explanation and so on and so forth. In other words, they have to be intellectual experts, who have explanations about many, many facets of their culture. The Hindu must not only have explanations for cultural phenomena but he must also accept that such explanations constitute the implicit premises of his argumentation.

It is here that we see the skew in the dialogue in its sharpest form: *the onus of proof is distributed unevenly between the participants in the dialogue*. The scholar makes a series of cognitive moves and his defence is that they are logically necessary, if one wants a rational, critical discussion. The Hindu, for his part, has to have *explicit alternatives*, if he disagrees with the implied (or implicit) moves.

Let us also see where this has brought us. Firstly, it is obvious that one cannot accuse scholars like Kripal and Courtright of bad faith; nor could one hold their ‘psychologies’ accountable for their portrayal of Hinduism. Their use of psychoanalysis cannot be localized in their desire to ‘demean’ Hinduism; nor can one ‘explain’ their writings as a part of some nefarious anti-Hindu plot and propaganda. Secondly, by the same token, if ‘insiders’ do research and teach Hinduism, our problems do not get solved. *They too would face the same set of issues.* Given this, it is obvious that the so-called ‘insider/outsider’ problem is barren as far as this situation is concerned.

Violence is involved *in* the argumentative situation not because Kripal and Courtright are ‘outsiders’. We have hopefully appreciated the logical compulsion in the argumentation that forces them into making some cognitive moves. These moves, in turn, inflict violence on the experiential world of the Hindus. The latter, for their part, react violently because they are violated. Of course, this situation does not justify violence but it teaches us not to go around apportioning moral blame on the participants with nonchalance.

6. When ‘They’ Speak Back..

In our analysis thus far, we have deliberately ignored the many discussions on this topic. Many before us have said much about effacing the ‘Other’, the scholarly responsibility of allowing the ‘Other’ to speak, the ‘right’ to speak about a religion, the nature of scholarly representation, and so on. It is often suggested that these are ‘methodological’ questions or issues of ‘normative’ epistemology. We will now argue that they are neither.

In a recent article, Russell T. McCutcheon notices three facts about the scholar of religion in the study of the ‘Other’, especially from within the ‘liberal humanistic tradition’.³¹

1. The scholar indulges in a remarkable role switching: while he wants to give a voice to the ‘Other’ as a liberal humanist, he also speaks in place of the ‘Other’.³²

2. In the case of someone like Courtright, he notices a change from the early Courtright who wanted to efface himself as a scholar to the new Courtright who chooses to affirm himself by effacing the ‘Other’.³³

3. The inability of the scholar to digest dissent when the ‘Other’ speaks back.³⁴

While one can resonate to the issues that McCutcheon raises, one cannot accept either his diagnosis of the situation or the remedy he proposes. To our mind, his diagnosis makes the scholars inauthentic: they employ a different set of tools when they focus on the ‘Other’ for whom “they feel little affinity” as against, what he calls, the “no cost Others”. If ‘feeling affinity’ is why someone chooses one set of intellectual tools and not another, then Kripal and Courtright are no scholars but charlatans

instead. If true, they do not desire to produce knowledge. However, such condemnations require more proof and evidence than produced by anyone so far. In the space available, we cannot take up a discussion of his remedy, but we will shed a different light on the three issues he raises.

Reconsider what Courtright and Kripal claim they do: they indulge in ‘interpretations’. Let us leave aside what they are ‘interpreting’ but merely focus upon how they can be challenged. The Hindu can challenge *the explanatory adequacy* of the psychoanalytical theories: does Courtright’s use of psychoanalysis explain why Indians do *puja* to Ganesa? Does Kripal explain Ramakrishna’s religious life or not? The Hindu cites a story about Ganesa’s elephant head; Courtright explains both the meaning of the story and the “*meaning in the selection of the elephant head*”. Clearly, Courtright wins because a puranic story is not an alternative to a Freudian *explanation* of the “meanings” of that story. Even though Courtright claims to assume an ‘interpretative’ stance, his use of theories puts an *explanatory burden* on the Hindu. To challenge either Courtright or Kripal is to challenge either their use or the theory of psychoanalysis. That is, one can only challenge the explanatory power of these theories and, as we have seen, the Hindu cannot do that unless armed with an alternate explanatory theory. The scholar, by contrast, can challenge the ‘interpretation’ of the Hindu by dismissing it as mere minority opinion or as the ravings of the Hindu Fundamentalist or by assuming an *explanatory stance*.

That is to say, there is an *asymmetric division* of argumentative roles. The scholar can switch between interpretative and explanatory stances, whereas the Hindu can only assume an explanatory stance. This asymmetric relationship is cognitive in nature: even though Courtright or Kripal use explanatory theories, only their ‘interpretation’ is the subject matter of the argumentation. Moreover, their interpretations acquire the status of unchallengeable opinions. To challenge their interpretations, one has to challenge the status of psychoanalytical explanation; doing the latter, however, enables these scholars to defend it *as their opinion*: “I find that psychoanalysis illumines dreams, stories and cultures. You do not. So let us agree to disagree.” The reason for this is not difficult to seek: the explanatory theories they base their interpretative stance upon is a presupposition of the argumentation and not its subject matter.

Finally, something even more remarkable happens. Because the Hindu can challenge the explanatory adequacy of the theory only if he has an alternative, he is excluded from the argumentation until that stage. The scholar ends up talking to a ‘surreal’ Hindu; the Hindu is banished from the argumentative discourse and plays merely a pre-argumentative role. The scholar becomes a ventriloquist.

In other words, additional asymmetries in a ‘symmetric situation’ come into focus: the Hindu is saddled with an explicit explanatory burden and is forced to assume a pre-argumentative role, whereas the scholar has the ‘choice’ of (or the “freedom to choose” between) being interpretative

or explanatory. Concomitant to this asymmetric cognitive burden, there is a corresponding asymmetry in their argumentative roles.

We can now see why the role switching comes about: the scholar has an ‘interpretation’ and an explanation. The alleged ‘inconsistency’ of Courtright has to do with the nature of the situation and is not due to his inauthenticity or ‘lack of affinity’. The scholars do not employ different set of tools depending on their affinities; the explanatory theories they use become the presuppositions of the argumentation. Our problem, in short, has to do with *what happens to an argumentation in certain kinds of encounters*.

Having taken a neutral conception of argumentation, we have construed two writings on Hinduism as an argumentation *about a religion*. This has enabled us not only to exhibit the violence involved in the situation but also to identify its two different sources: one is the requirement of reason; the other is a reaction to the inflicted violence. Even a limited analyses of the situation (much more can be said than what we have in this article) raises important and disturbing questions: about the relation between reason and violence, the need for argumentation, the morality of reason as it is embodied in such a discourse, and so on. If we think deeper and dig further, we encounter different kinds of argumentation in the history of religion: those between religions, within a religion, between atheists and believers etc. What other lessons do they hold in store for us? Whatever they might be, we hope we have succeeded in the one aim we had in this article: as students of religion, we should not simply go around issuing clarion calls for “more dialogue” with and between religions which is what the commonsense, the media and the politicians also advocate, as though that suffices to reduce the violence we hear and read about everyday. Assuming that argumentation is a subset of dialogue, we suggest that, at the minimum, *some of these “dialogues” exacerbate violence; they do not reduce it*. We are not suggesting the absence of dialogue as “the” remedy for violence. In fact, we have no remedy of any kind. But we submit that we would do well to study the history of religion, our academic specialization, in a way that has been rarely attempted so far.

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Notes:

¹ For instance, one such group, a committee of concerned Indians, was formed in Atlanta, Georgia in 2004. They met with the Emory University authorities and put across several such demands.

² Most of these threats were uttered anonymously and mainly on the internet.

³ Kripal's book, published in 1995, did generate controversy immediately; the initial publication of Courtright's book, some two decades ago, did no such thing. The problem came to the fore when the book was reprinted in 2001.

⁴ K. Popper, "Reason or Revolution?," in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), 292.

⁵ E. Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 43.

⁶ Called the 'pragma-dialectical' school, this international group of scholars is influenced by the writings of its founding members: Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst from the University of Amsterdam.

⁷ We do not undertake an exhaustive review of their writings because it is irrelevant to our enterprise.

⁸ Many such were found in an internet petition that was rapidly withdrawn from the Web.

⁹ A few individuals have done so. Some of their writings can be found on www.sulekha.com. Swami Tyagananda and Vrajaprana of the Ramakrishna Mission in the United States are editing a volume on Kripal's Ramakrishna. Swami Tyagananda was also one of the first in the United States to engage critically with Kripal, especially regarding the latter's exegesis of the texts about the saint.

¹⁰ P. Lorenzen and K. Lorenz, *Dialogische Logik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

¹¹ See also E.M. Barth and E.C.W. Krabbe, *From Axiom to Dialogue: A Philosophical Study of Logics and Argumentation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982).

¹² See their works: Frans H. van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst, *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies: A Pragma-dialectical Perspective* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992). And: Frans H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, R. Jackson, and S. Jacobs, *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse* (London: The University of Alabama Press, 1993).

¹³ Frans H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, F.S. Henkemans et al., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 275.

¹⁴ Both the harmlessness and the necessity for having rules to guide the argumentation, and a defense of one set of such rules are found in van Eemeren et al., "Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory." See also van Eemeren and Grootendorst, "Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies" and van Eemeren et al., "Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse."

¹⁵ "... (A)n argument can lead to a resolution of a difference of opinion only if the reasoning underlying the protagonist's argumentation is *valid*. When the reasoning is valid, the defended standpoint *follows logically* from the premises which are used, explicitly or implicitly, in the protagonist's argumentation" (van Eemeren et al., "Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory," 285, italics ours). The 'protagonist' is the party which defends a standpoint against the challenges mounted by the 'antagonist'.

¹⁶ *Violence* in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/violence>.

¹⁷ Shankar Vedantam, "Wrath Over a Hindu God; U.S. Scholars' Writings Draw Threats From Faithful," *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2004.

¹⁸ Paul B. Courtright, *Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 110.

¹⁹ Courtright, "Ganesa," 111.

²⁰ Courtright, "Ganesa," 120.

²¹ Jeffrey Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna*. Reprint. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 298-299, italics ours.

²² Kripal, "Kali's Child", 322, italics ours.

²³ The geocentric explanation is not a scientific theory. We are making the claim that scientific theories preserve our experiences and not that all theories preserve our experiences.

²⁴ This case is argued in S.N. Balagangadhara and Jakob De Roover, "The Secular State & Religious Conflict: Liberal Neutrality & the Indian Case of Pluralism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 (2007): 67-92.

²⁵ Paul B. Courtright, "The Self-Serving Humility of Disciplining Liberal Humanist Scholars: A Response to Russell McCutcheon," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 753, italics ours.

²⁶ Kripal, "Kali's Child", 324, italics ours.

²⁷ There is no *prima facie* contradiction between the use of psychoanalysis and subscribing to intentional psychology. Neither Freud nor the authors under consideration reject this psychology: in fact, Freud also wants to explain the formation of beliefs that guide an agent's practice. In the case of our authors, this commitment is more transparent: they want to explain why the Hindus believe what they believe in, i.e. why, for example, they believe that Ganesa is elephant-headed.

²⁸ We cannot ask which of the *cetera* have to remain *paria*. For the debate about *ceteris paribus* clauses in the domain of philosophy of science and the impossibility to explicate them, see John Earman and John Roberts, "*Ceteris Paribus*, There Are No Provisos," *Synthese* 118 (1999): 438-479; Jerry A. Fodor, "You Can Fool Some of the People All of the Time, Everything Else Being Equal: Hedged Laws and Psychological Explanations," *Mind* 100 (1991): 19-34; Paul Pietroski and Georges Rey, "When Other Things Aren't Equal: Saving *Ceteris Paribus* Laws from Vacuity," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 46 (1995): 81-110; A. Rosenberg, "Laws, Damn Laws, and *Ceteris Paribus* Clauses," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1995): 183-204; Stephen Schiffer, "*Ceteris Paribus* Laws," *Mind* 100 (1991): 1-17.

²⁹ See, for example, the ten rules of dialogue in van Eemeren, "Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory," 283-284.

³⁰ A good introduction to this issue is Sandra G. Harding, ed., *Can Theories Be Refuted? Essays on the Duhem-Quine Thesis*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1976).

³¹ Russell T. McCutcheon, "'It's a Lie. There's No Truth in It! It's a Sin!'" On the Limits of the Humanistic Study of Religion and the Costs of Saving Others from Themselves," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 720-750.

³² McCutcheon, 741.

³³ McCutcheon, 728.

³⁴ McCutcheon, 746.