

Čedomil Veljačić

An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Indian and European Philosophy

Abstract

This text is the introduction to Čedomil Veljačić's (1915–1997) doctoral thesis defended at the University of Zagreb in 1962 under the title Komparativno proučavanje indijske i evropske filozofije (Comparative Investigation of Indian and European Philosophy), which was never published. The author, who was a pioneer of comparative philosophical research in the region of Southeast Europe, assesses three separate fields connected with conducting comparative philosophy: archaeology, language studies, and philosophy, whilst concentrating on methodology (methodological criteria for the comparative approach and doxographic methods). He argues towards a general revision of the criteria posited for the study of the history of philosophy, but the sine qua non within the stimuli will still be the discovery of immediate and initial values that comparative philosophizing and an applied comparative method can offer through the doxographic method, so that the author's study remains within the frame of a preliminary critical work meant to encourage a systematic discussion on comparative philosophy seen as a specific discipline in keeping with Paul Masson-Oursel. The issue of the comparative method in his previously unpublished study was applied to the study of European philosophy in relation to Eastern traditions of thought.

Keywords

comparative philosophy and methodology, criteria for the comparative approach and doxographic methods, comparative philosophical standards

The expansion of archeological studies that took place in recent centuries challenged Hellenic culture and the aristocratically autochthonous position it held in the eyes of European scholars. Archeology enabled us to reevaluate tenets of objective research and increase our clarity. Initially, the operating hypotheses for a reconstruction of antiquity were restricted by the need for historical authentication of gathered fragmentary texts. The method was based only on data that were connected to their origins both in time and space. But, the turn of the century inaugurated a shift, and the German philosopher E. Zeller became its most prominent representative. He emerged within a field still delineated by the objective values that European cultural history had assigned to the classics. From such a standpoint it was almost impossible to conduct an adequate research of a world that extends beyond the borders of Greece. Nonetheless, sources were available, gathered and even organized, the most significant being those that stem from the days of Alexander the Great and his immediate successors. A bibliography here presented as attachment provides ample proof.¹ For the purpose of this study, however, these

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Editor's note: Bibliography is not attached to this text.

sources are offered in a somewhat perfunctory manner, translations are free and often abridged. The entry on “India” in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie*, XI, 2, provides the thorough documentation.

Schliemann’s nineteenth century archeological findings and his discovery of Troy had an immediate influence opening new horizons. By the end of the century the German philosopher Th. Gomperz was able to expound on a philosophy of historiography as the discovery of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa further contributed to such efforts. Thus the need for a methodological approach to classical texts gained complexity.

On the Indian side, the importance of ancient texts and the task of connecting and familiarizing oneself with their content in spite of the hardships involved was not so easily ignored, although difficulties in regard to their authenticity were acknowledged. “Stunning analogies” recorded by the early Enlightenment and Romanticism of Europe were hurried attempts to directly connect East to West without offering a critical thinking approach to the matter. Today these attempts are gaining relevance by stepping into our focus without anyone even trying to give them structure or their form a frame. An enlarged platform from where we could observe such issues has not yet reached a balanced state conducive for serious research. As much as one can discuss prerequisites for such an endeavor, we can now assess that three separate fields are in play: archeology, language and philosophy. Until recently it was the philologists who found themselves obligated to do the heavy lifting (see: W. Ruben, *Die Philosophen der Upanishaden*, Bern, 1947).

Due to the inevitable expanse of philosophical problematics, I attempted to include in this study the necessary assumptions that are posed by general history and are relevant to our major theme – the tradition of the cult of Dionysius and Heracles, here presented as a universal source and taken as a protohistorical marker, a place from where philosophically relevant positions converge and diverge.

For the purpose of a research not satisfied with superficial shuffles and a lack of systematic goals that the broader approach inevitably requires, one that would be greater than the particulars and independent of the issues under consideration, it is necessary to concentrate on methodology. It is noteworthy to point out that difficulties that arose from studies of Indian philosophy were due to a lack of basic criteria. These criteria, even when only implicit, do remain clear. They usually arose from emphatic opposing views of individual scholars. Today’s cultural, social and political atmosphere forces us to encompass a wider logical scope when focusing on contemporary cultural studies and its traditions. The field was already delineated thanks to the “Oriental Enlightenment” that sprung in relation to Western Enlightenment and Romanticism. It is still casting a shadow over recent philosophical history. Today it is possible to assume that a useful and direct introductory research could provide the immediate example needed for focusing a thematic approach, albeit not extensive and still too superficial for the purpose of expressing ensuing concepts and producing extensive surveys. Such research assumes a collection of data gathered from three separate fields – archeology, language studies and philosophy.

Specific problems appropriate for the comparative approach and more specific to a philosophical standpoint are discussed in the third and fourth part of this study.² They are presented in a formal manner with no need for references to meanings taken from the whole of a specific historical period, nor to an *ad hoc* gathered fragment, as was customary when presenting doxographic

analogies. Neither did I intend to use these analogies for exemplifying an overall history of philosophy in Hegel's or Spengler's sense. The scope of a research not satisfied with the nitpicking of systematic analysis, nor with the application of an independent system that is wider than the specific issue, commands that we focus attention on methodology. Today, when considering Indian philosophy, we can no longer claim that a lack of basic criteria constitutes problems. The third part of this study discusses the fact that these criteria, even when implicit, are usually clearly expressed and emerge out of the different opinions that authors stress. All this made it necessary to touch upon the somewhat broader logical outlook of our contemporary cultural sciences.

Historically speaking, the attitude toward the field of comparative studies, the theme of this study, as it evolved in the last 150 years, can be divided into three well balanced phases: during the first phase there was a tendency toward the romantic outlook, typical for the romantic enthusiasm of that period. This was somewhat hastily brushed aside and introduced through a backdoor as it were as mere eyewitness stories of interactions recorded as representatives of the Hellenic and Indic age of antiquity. Such eyewitness documentation was not critically examined, although their authenticity was in great measure anticipated and often derived from secondary sources. Conclusions drawn from doxographic analogies were based on idealist, as well as realistic chronological underpinnings. Even Schopenhauer, as we shall see in this study, represented an extremely uncritical position. His successor Paul Deussen, when judged according to methodological criteria, represents the other extreme. In the meantime, in the mid-nineteenth century, classical studies began creating a critical tool for the research of antiquity's historiography. On that score, Zeller's valuable input to the field of philosophical history is noteworthy. Deussen, heavily influenced by Zeller's authority, highly praised Indian philosophy, raising it almost in a physical sense to high heavens. His wish to save the philosophical value of doxographic analogies was based on the assumption that the development of Indian and Hellenic thought should be observed as if coming from two "different planets". This kind of stress on philosophical analogy was very convincing. It created the impression that the development of comparative philosophy could have great potential when viewed from the standpoint of European idealist philosophical awareness, particularly in the Germany of that time, and of neo-Hinduist aspirations that simultaneously flourished in India. However, on the European side, such a materialistic restriction imposed on comparative philosophy and encouraged by the decadent mood of the turn of the century, soon began losing value. Yearnings for fresh directions were pushed aside and the goal of a universal integration of Indian philosophy was not achieved. Nonetheless, we have seen that even as early as at the end of the nineteenth century, archeology unearthed new historical sources igniting the field with a revolutionary fervor relevant for our thesis. This turn, however, did not apply directly to philosophy, rather, it was founded on philological research that demanded a further development of archeology. Undoubtedly more conducive circumstances for the study of the comparative themes present in the expanses of cultural history entered the work of Th. Gomperz (under the influence of Rhode). Thus it gained some momentum on the German side in the twenties. For this we can thank the works of Jaeger. In

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Editor's note: The author points to the chapters of his doctoral thesis, while we publish only its introduction.

the last fifty years, however, specialized cultural historical studies remained active mostly in France, gradually breaking ground with ever more expressive comparative themes that focus on Iranistics and Indology. Among those rare authors who approached this thematic whole during the two decades sandwiched between the two world wars would figure P. Masson-Oursel and S. Radhakrishnan. Their work can be divided into two distinct phases, whereby they started out in the twenties by assuming that doxographic methods, if they were to be considered as more or less pure, should abstract from problems of direct influences and indirect connections. Both were deemed to be necessary documentation recorded in chronological order. In the thirties, however, the concentration falls on the less direct influences.

In this manner two different methodological possibilities crystalized. They developed successively and separate from each other, and gradually gained an even and objective status. A confrontational attitude based on extreme opposites can no longer be the question, rather both sides need to take their legitimate place that is systematically accorded to them within a comparative analysis of philosophical problematics. Today it is necessary to balance the input of given authors on such convergent aspects also within the framework of their life's work. It is clear that although the *method of chronological documentation* has gained importance, it still remains a tool if observed within the actual interest of comparative *philosophy*. The stimulation that it provides today both in the East and the West, aims towards a general revision of the criteria posited for the study of the history of philosophy, but the *sine qua non* within the stimuli will still be the discovery of immediate and initial values that comparative philosophizing can offer through the *doxographic method*.

It should be stressed that the thematic material discussed in the fourth part of this study required that my selection of texts not be complete nor an exhaustive. Solutions arrived at through this applied comparative method, served this author only for schematizing and fulfilling formal obligations. The texts are mere examples illustrating how methodological criteria can be applied and derived from historical analysis.

Due to the importance placed on methodological problems, the conclusion of this study consists of a summary of the methodological criteria that arose from the critique of previous developmental positions. Again, my aim was not to expound on a systematical methodology. In that sense this study remains within the frame of a preliminary critical work meant to encourage a systematic discussion on comparative philosophy seen as a specific discipline, the possibilities and needs of which were initially pointed out by Masson-Oursel.

Conclusion: On the problem of a comparative method

The problem of a comparative method applied to the study of ancient European philosophy in relation to Eastern thought traditions, arose toward the end of the nineteenth century in opposition to two well-known criteria that had already gained a sound standing:

1. *chronological documentation* – its aim being to check a possibility for documenting thought analogies within the development of cognition and link the two with historically direct and indirect ties;
2. *doxographic interpretation* – its aim being to find an analogy that need not recognize the possibility of historical influences.

Logical assumptions do not exclude the possibility that the two criteria can join to form a single methodological unit. Limiting philosophical interest to doxographic content need not exclude the importance of chronological data connected to the circumstances of their development. In concrete situations, however, such issues can be overwhelmed by historical and technical difficulties. Therefore, it is inevitable to take into account the factual existence of the two methods, whereby the tendency of exclusion can gradually diminish, even though the tendency for connectivity is not yet sufficiently visible. It remains then as an implicit problem and its existence is testified through the critical analysis performed by individual authors.

It is in view of the achieved results that I brought forth this problem as an issue primarily in the work of Masson-Oursel, and less so in Radhakrishnan. The author would discuss a comparative issue from one aspect and then from the other without explaining the relation between the methodological criteria, nor warning about the different results that this could produce. It is obvious that such standpoints were not intentional, nor systematic. They arose due to the different material conditions that manifested thanks to a sudden expansion of documentary material within the historical field. This growth of general cultural-historical evidence simply overshadowed other criteria that seemed more prominent and better suited for research even as late as in the twenties.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the critique of Deussen's comparative philosophy, the exclusivism that doxographic materials encountered at the time, when methodologically viewed, created an imminent crisis due to the fact that comparative problematics became restricted by some materialist assumptions brought forth by specific philosophical currents. Deussen maintained that these currents of the new philosophy of consciousness coincide in great measure with their Indian analogies and are of central historical importance. European philosophy did not succeed in maintaining that position. *Perennial philosophy* was thus applied to our contemporary thought processes, their possibilities and interests, but it did not blossom as hoped, although it was an inevitable reflection of general interest in the comparative problems that the doxographic method had initially embraced.

The major difficulty for a conducive and balanced development of a comparative method seems also linked to the accidentality of historical development. Data collection spread unexpectedly over three random fields – archeology, linguistics and philosophy. The first of these will remain a major shelter and hideout for unknown facts. For Deussen it did not even exist. Within the history of philosophy the problem of separating fictitious philosophical from pre-philosophical thought was limited to the narrow peripheries of the Ionian shores.

It is not unusual that methodological criteria of a new discipline in their initial developmental phase rely on the empirical circumstances of heterogeneous fields. Even methodologically established areas have to account for the revolutionizing problematics brought forth through changes that lead to an unexpected expansion of knowledge. Today these are the heterogeneous technical means, scientific discipline and the initially intended service.

Still, the principles of philosophical research and the philosophical aspects of its interests do form a specific thematic unit. This unit is subjected to chance and empirical change in the same manner as the peripheral disciplines. The merits of positivism, particularly its French school, lie in the fact that it takes technical development into maximal consideration. It attempts to place technology at the center of its philosophy in the hope of confirming the specifics

of philosophical interests and elicit the impossibility of reducing them to the mere recording of historical facts. Positivism underscores the need to develop rational methods applicable to the extensive empirical material, while sheltering them from the process of identification and from the possibility of being confused with historiographical methods. The major merit of French positivist rationalism of the twentieth century then, is the identifying of the dangers posed by such equivocations.

In the same fashion we can attest that the doxographic method when applied throughout our territories will inevitably remain philosophical in its narrow scope, while a chronological documentation will remain as a tool that gained unique importance in the last thirty to forty years when it was used as a means for accruing data. It is a tool that attempts to conform to specific philosophical interests. Historical and linguistic disciplines that start from archeological data cannot be used for direct philosophical purposes without adjusting methodological criteria in a way that points at the relation between the critique of known methods and the logical development of cultural sciences. From that aspect, the well-intentioned works of orientalists pose an ever growing danger for confusion, and the danger of burying authentic philosophical problems under a barrage of heterogeneous facts unearthed by the archeological finds of hitherto unknown cultures. Various cultural-historical and sociologically interesting conclusions, often construed from secondary documents, can both cast a dark shadow as well as illuminate adequate philosophical problems. An even greater danger can be foreseen if these problems remain discontinued, abandoned on the garbage heaps of classifying logic. Torn to pieces, they would hinder instead of aid the interconnectedness of important elements relevant to historical or linguistic documentation.

In order to clarify these issues it may be useful to summarize a specific example as earlier discussed. From a doxographic perspective, even from a homologous development of concrete philosophical studies or disciplines, a chronological sequence has minimal importance. If we designate a historic basis within the limits of a specific circumstance for two analogous directions, such as Indian and European skepticism, nominalism and the science of *epoché*, or the attempt to “plagiarize” one side according to historical precedence, this could easily lead to *a priori* falsification. This is a serious danger that doxographic integration poses. Its immediate opposite doxographic differentiation, however, is worse. From one aspect it is important to consider that elements of doxographic integration are not primarily chronological facts, although liminal circumstances of their chronological givens may well help in determining the existentially specific breadth of the area where their doxographic direction aims. On the other hand, even the circumstances of doxographic differentiation within the chronological development cannot be taken as a proof for a groundless existential analogy. The fact that Philo of Alexandria had already used skeptical argumentation to ground the apologetics of his mystical views did not present an obstacle for Zeller in his comparative determining process for finding a common *source*. An analogy can be provided by taking into consideration the existential connection of the ethical *meaning* of Buddha’s and Pyrrhon’s *epoché*. In both cases the determining of a chronological sequence of historical examples remains outside the pale of existential relations of an analogical method, and, therefore, we cannot conclude that factual coincidences do not give us the right to come up with some adequate answer, particularly when viewed within the limits of authenticity. If we acquaint ourselves with the coincidences, or learn about them later, their abstractions can no longer be considered. And therein lies the stimulative value of compara-

tive philosophy, the value of not validating an exclusive search that is limited only by integrative or differential methods. Analogous analysis in its existential sense, when applied to philosophical tenets, is not limited, in principle, to their delving within pre-established systematic limitations; it can unearth some unexpected register within the thought modification process that possibly took place in some distant past in quantitative measures which for us could remain irrelevant.

Here the problem of a *comparative method* brings us to the wider issues of *comparative philosophy*. As long as the *tertium comparationis* is limited to Hellenic philosophy the problems remain implicit. However, even the narrowed down problem of a comparative method becomes impossible to discuss as a single whole without stepping over the boundary of the historical period of our specific example. Apart from this, we also saw that Masson-Oursel already in the title of his main opus identified the problem of methodology with the problem of a philosophical discipline that does not remain only methodological, but foresees a *sui generis* system of material insights. For neo-Hinduism the problem of method is implicit analogous to Masson-Oursel who did not treat it separately, but used various methodological *ad hoc* tools. Finally, even Deussen's research expounds on the problematics of a comparative method that gained integrative value by becoming one of the basic theses of neo-Hinduist universalism.

Taking all this into consideration, it is necessary to cast a final glance at our problematics of comparative philosophy. It is clear that it cannot be limited to the constituent question of a positivistic discipline, as it may seem when viewed from the point of a study which has hitherto been directed explicitly to such issues from the methodological aspect. Concurrently it is imperative to pay special attention to conscious universalist inclinations of a contemporary open-ended European philosophy. Neither the Western nor the neo-Hinduist universalism of today is exposed to the dangers of falsification. From the methodological point of view, it is characteristic for comparative philosophy, if considered as an independent discipline, to gain special value as it searches for "foreseen registers" both in the quantitative sense and in the historical. What poses the main danger is a lack of adequate critique both of the expounding as of the applying of methods. This could lead into syncretic historicity. A comparative universalism may, to a great extent, avoid such a danger by carefully testing the stimulative values of a research that centers on existential areas and allows chronology to take a secondary position. Under such scrutiny a tendency, be it major or minor, along with a critical sense for doxographic or chronological research of individual problematics could bring forth the necessary formal differentiation of comparative philosophical standards. From the materialist side, we may assume that a development of such a comparative discipline may enrich the possibilities of finding the sources of systematic thinking while developing a scholarly method that eases our initial cognitive discernment.

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Uvod u komparativno proučavanje indijske i europske filozofije

Sažetak

Ovaj je tekst uvod u doktorsku disertaciju Čedomila Veljačića (1915.–1997.), koja je obranjena na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu 1962. godine pod naslovom Komparativno proučavanje indijske i evropske filozofije i nikad nije objavljena. Autor, koji je bio pionir komparativnog filozofskog istraživanja u području Jugoistočne Europe, pristupa trima zasebnim poljima koja su povezana s bavljenjem komparativnom filozofijom: arheologiji, jezičnim studijima i filozofiji, usredotočujući se na metodologiju (metodološki kriteriji za usporedno proučavanje i doksoografske metode). On zagovara opću reviziju kriterija koji su postulirani za proučavanje historije filozofije, međutim, sine qua non unutar poticaja još uvijek će biti otkriće izravnih i inicijalnih vrijednosti koje komparativna filozofija i primijenjena komparativna metoda mogu ponuditi kroz doksoografsku metodu, tako da autorova studija ostaje unutar okvira uvodnog kritičkog djela čija je namjera bila da potakne sustavnu raspravu o komparativnoj filozofiji kao specifičnoj disciplini na tragu Paula Masson-Oursela. Problem komparativne metode u ovoj je njegovoj ranije neobjavljenoj studiji primijenjen na proučavanje europske filozofije u odnosu na istočnjačke misaone tradicije.

Ključne riječi

komparativna filozofija i metodologija, kriteriji za komparativni pristup i doksoografske metode, komparativni filozofski standardi

Čedomil Veljačić

Einführung in die komparative Erforschung
der indischen und europäischen Philosophie

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Text ist eine Einführung in die Dissertation von Čedomil Veljačić (1915–1997), die an der Universität in Zagreb im Jahre 1962 unter dem Titel Komparativno proučavanje indijske i evropske filozofije (Komparative Erforschung der indischen und europäischen Philosophie) verteidigt und niemals veröffentlicht wurde. Der Autor, ein Pionier der komparativen philosophischen Forschung in der Region Südosteuropa, betrachtet drei verschiedene Bereiche, die mit der Beschäftigung mit der komparativen Philosophie in Verbindung stehen – Archäologie, Sprachstudien und Philosophie – indem er sich auf die Methodologie konzentriert (methodologische Kriterien für den Vergleichsansatz und die doxografischen Methoden). Er diskutiert Ziele zu einer allgemeinen Revision der Kriterien, welche für die Erforschung der Geschichte der Philosophie postuliert sind, jedoch wird die conditio sine qua non innerhalb der Stimuli immer noch die Entdeckung der unmittelbaren und initialen Werte sein, welche das komparative Philosophieren und die angewandte Vergleichsmethode durch die doxografische Methode bieten können. So verbleibt die Studie des Autors im Rahmen eines einleitenden kritischen Werks mit der Intention, systematische Diskussion über die komparative Philosophie zu fördern, die als eine spezifische Disziplin auf den Spuren von Paul Masson-Oursel angesehen wird. Die Frage der komparativen Methode in seiner vorher unveröffentlichten Studie wurde auf die Erforschung der europäischen Philosophie in Bezug auf die östlichen Traditionen des Denkens angewendet.

Schlüsselwörter

komparative Philosophie und Methodologie, Kriterien für den Vergleichsansatz und die doxografischen Methoden, komparative philosophische Standards

Čedomil Veljačić

Introduction à l'étude comparée entre philosophie indienne et européenne

Résumé

Ce texte constitue une introduction à la dissertation de doctorat de Čedomil Veljačić (1915–1997), défendue à l'Université de Zagreb en 1962 sous le titre de Komparativno proučavanje indijske i evropske filozofije (Une étude comparée entre philosophie indienne et européenne), et jamais publiée. L'auteur, pionnier dans la recherche en philosophie comparée dans la région d'Europe du Sud-Est, traite de trois champs distincts reliés entre eux par leur activité philosophique comparée – l'archéologie, les études de langues, la philosophie – et se concentre sur la méthodologie (critères méthodologiques pour une approche comparée et une méthode doxographique). Il défend une révision général des critères qui ont été postulés pour l'étude de l'histoire de la philosophie. Toutefois, le sine qua non à l'intérieur de cette entreprise reste la recherche des valeurs immédiates et initiales que la philosophie comparée et la méthode comparative appliquée peuvent offrir à l'aide de la méthode doxographique. C'est pourquoi, l'étude de l'auteur se situe dans le cadre d'un travail critique préliminaire et a pour dessein d'encourager une discussion systématique sur la philosophie comparée, qui, en marchant sur les pas de Paul Masson-Oursel, est considérée comme discipline à part entière. Le problème de la méthode comparative dans cette étude antérieure non publiée est appliqué à l'étude de la philosophie européenne dans son rapport à la tradition de pensée orientale.

Mots-clés

philosophie comparée et méthodologie comparée, critères pour une approche comparée et une méthode doxographique, standards philosophiques comparés