

A Commentary on Ambedkar’s Posthumously Published “Philosophy of Hinduism”

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Abstract

This paper attempts a critical commentary of Ambedkar’s posthumously published, incomplete manuscript, “Philosophy of Hinduism,” which was discovered shortly after his death. Initially we look at how Ambedkar lays down certain conditions to think about the relation between philosophy and religion, let alone what a ‘philosophy of religion’ even means. We follow Ambedkar’s thinking on why philosophy serves an important function when it enables critical judgement on what constitutes a religion. Ultimately, Ambedkar argues for the criteria of ‘utility’ and ‘justice’ to inform such a judgement after canvassing the history of religion itself. He concludes with a negative judgement: that in so far as the ‘philosophy of Hinduism’ continues to promote and perpetuate the seemingly indestructible social order of caste, or descent-based hierarchy in the Indian context, it fails to meet those two criteria. Therefore, Hinduism is not a religion in the way Ambedkar understands the process of world history and the discontinuous evolution of the concept of religion itself. From a standpoint of social justice, this paper attempts to draw out the profound implications of one of Ambedkar’s last studies prior to his death, and argues for the centrality of both philosophy and the philosophy of religion in Ambedkar studies in general.

Introduction

In 2014, The Dr. Ambedkar Foundation within the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India reprinted Vol. 3 in the collected works titled *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*.¹ At the time of his death in 1956, numerous unpublished papers of Ambedkar were transferred to the High Court of Delhi and then given to the Administrator General of the State of Maharashtra and have been held under their guardianship since.² Vol. 3

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contains a number of important writings that focus specifically on the philosophy and history of religion in Ambedkar's vast, polymath corpus.³ These collected volumes are an incredible testament to his genius in that Ambedkar was able to cover so many different fields spanning law to economics to political and social theory. To imagine the vigor, energy, and dynamism of this unique social leader who laid the constitutional foundations for the post-colonial Independent secular democratic India would be difficult. Asking how so much could be accomplished in a single lifetime is one thing; asking how one person could contribute to so much across so many different scholarly fields while being one of the greatest social movement leaders of the twentieth century is another. Both are staggering facts that are seemingly impossible to fathom, even in contrast to other great social leaders of his time, and not just in the South Asian context. Perhaps more astonishing is that his incredible insights on his historical context of the early to the mid-twentieth century contain enormous value that surpasses his time and affects our historical present. In short the legacy of Ambedkar continues, and perhaps his unfinished project of the reformation of Indian society bereft of the caste system is something still to come.

Having acknowledged his influence in the fields of law, economics, politics, history, and sociology in his South Asian context, perhaps what is most interesting, however, is that worldwide Ambedkar scholarship has a great opportunity to probe the depths of his life-long study of philosophy and the philosophy of religion in particular.⁴ It is there we can probe what his deepest concerns may have been in his own lived struggle and existential quest. We know that for Ambedkar, life and thought fused in complex ways informing what both meant for his enduring and indomitable will to reform the Hindu social order based on the democratic principles of 'equality, liberty, and fraternity.'⁵

In this paper we pay brief homage to Ambedkar's contributions to not only philosophy but the specific sub-field of the 'philosophy of religion.' The philosophy of religion is not just a sub-field of philosophy, nor one of many fields within the multi- and interdisciplinary field of religious studies. Rather, one of our assumptions is that the very *relation* between philosophy and religion has to be investigated. We can do so through Ambedkar's writings on Hinduism. Our aim is to explore his critical and evaluative approach as to whether Hinduism even constitutes a 'religion'; that is if the presupposition of most world religions in general is a minimum commitment to justice, mercy, compassion, in order to inform the values of underpinning secular democratic principles of 'equality, liberty, and fraternity.' It is possible that some religions do not have a specific rootedness in explicit principles of justice but aim for detachment from all worldly and human presuppositions. But Ambedkar does not probe other worldly religions. Rather, he puts Hinduism to the test in that regard while he probes what a 'philosophy of religion' is as an academic field; but his ultimate aim is to critique caste as the basis of the Hindu social system and therefore imagine an alternative to that core structure that could actually realize true equality, liberty, justice, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence.

In the spirit of the inaugural volume of *Caste: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion* launched by the Center for Global Development and Sustainability at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and published by the Brandeis University Library, we want to be mindful of its theme on the 'Persistence of Caste.' We stand firm in our conviction that beyond philosophy in general on the one hand and religious studies on the other that rely on a number of other disciplines outside of

philosophy, say literature, classical languages, history, sociology, and anthropology, there lies an enigmatic, seemingly unnoticeable space called the 'philosophy of religion.' Unlike most scholarly discourse and knowledge production, it does not seem visible or accessible to most human perception or intuition, be they scholars or the non-academically curious. In other words, one has to go deep.

Something about the philosophy of religion raises key ethical questions about the validity of both philosophy and religion, their interrelations, and ultimately the philosophical-critical judgement of religion in so far as the "idea of society is the soul of religion" as Durkheim once said.⁶ The Durkheimian statement is quite uncanny because our automatic intuition suggests that normally we would think religion as presenting the aspirational 'soul' or essence of a just society. But not the other way around. However, in the context of Ambedkar's long-standing critique of the Hindu social order of caste, the opposite is at stake: religion is indeed the soul of a society but one that is demonic. In short, we are intrigued by Ambedkar's initial explorations and puzzlement as to what the 'philosophy of religion' even means and what its purpose is when he focuses on Hinduism.

As we shall see in this commentary, he quickly realizes that by unpacking the very nature of what a 'philosophy of religion' is and what it should do relates to an unrelenting critical judgement of whether a religion must and should provide a moral basis for any society. And finally whether the world religion known as 'Hinduism' fulfills that criteria to be labeled a religion must become a question. We can say that at the outset of this commentary on Ambedkar studies of caste and social exclusion, for Ambedkar, it does not.⁷ In asking what makes caste a self-perpetuating, malignant form of social exclusion, stratification, inequality, and injustice that persists within society through religion, we must embark on a journey into Ambedkar's investigations on the 'philosophy of religion.' His reflections show the traditional depth of Ambedkar's self-reflective attitude towards the fields and disciplines he discusses and situates himself within.⁸

This contribution to *Caste: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion* is organized in the following manner. First we will summarize key points from Ambedkar's extremely rich text – "Philosophy of Hinduism" -- which contain so many seeds ripe for further expansion. As the manuscript remained unfinished, perhaps a future paper can attempt a continuation of the project began in that essay.⁹ In the commentary, we will attempt to expand on certain philosophical insights and deductions in Ambedkar's compelling study while leveraging resources in nineteenth and twentieth continental European philosophy, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century to which Ambedkar did not have access. Lastly, we will conclude with certain reflections on how the project begun by Ambedkar could be extended in the future. That would require a reckoning of our twenty-first century historical present.

In the opening moments of the "Philosophy of Hinduism," Ambedkar asks some key questions about philosophy and religion in general before he even gets to his analysis of the philosophy of the particular world religion known as Hinduism. At the onset of the analysis, Ambedkar says that it is impossible to know about a religion's 'content, aim, focus,' and original claims, for example the religion of Hinduism, if we do not ask what that religion is. The way philosophy can help is to inquire into what something is or what its nature or essence is.¹⁰ At least in terms of some kind of Platonic distinction, we can formulate the following: we need to inquire into what the most essential thing is within the essence of a thing, and not any phenomenal

appearance or manifestation of what a thing appears to be, even the phenomenality or materiality of a presupposed essence. In other words, we have to keep searching. He also admits to the fact that he doesn't know if the philosophy of Hinduism and philosophy of religion are of the 'same nature.'¹¹ This is because he first has to ask about what a philosophy of religion is in general, which means defining first what he thinks philosophy is and religion is, let alone their relation. What he arrives at is an initial, even hostile, contrast between philosophy and religion.¹²

For Ambedkar, the two fields seem to be "adversaries" and "antagonists"¹³ whereby theologians of religion accuse philosophers of being 'blind in searching for something that does not exist' (perhaps the truth of being or the meaning of life or the nature of truth itself). And then the philosopher rebuts by reprimanding the theologian of religion for doing the same thing: a blind act groping for something that does not exist but then dogmatically claiming that it does exist (perhaps that would be an invisible God or a universal, albeit unprovable, answer as to why we exist and suffer and what happens after we die). The asymmetry in the accusations of one to the other is quite revealing because it points to the differing intentionalities of both fields. Philosophy one can say is willing to live with the uncertainty of its own ground or reason to exist, which then becomes the very mystery as to why it occurs at all, say from an initial primordial doubt as Descartes experienced. This groundless ground, which leads to wonder then impassions us to question the nature of everything. Thereby yielding philosophical content that does not simply name truth, the truth of being or all that is (including the human inquiry to all that is) but also the being of truth—asking what truth is without arriving at a simple answer.¹⁴ Philosophy in that case would be both the posing of a question about itself, its own nature, and suspending any simple answer about that question precisely as it activates itself in whatever it pursues, i.e. truth, being, meaning. Philosophy can live with its own abyssal nature, but that says something about the nature of everything in general. However for the theologian this could be futile because it is not just searching for something that doesn't exist but raises the question why one would even embark on such a journey knowing that is in fact what one is doing: pursuing something by assuming it exists without knowing if in fact one will ever find it, i.e. a holy grail.

Yet the philosopher's response to the theologian also raises certain questions about religion. The philosopher claims that the theologian is duplicating the very same effort of the philosopher, say the search for truth or meaning of everything or Being in general; but then the philosopher also claims that the theologian asserts dogmatically the existence of an entity that could provide an answer, say God, without being able to prove that such an entity exists. For a philosopher could ask 'what does that say about religion's ground?' Perhaps religion is willing to live with the uncertainty of the proof of the answer to the question of truth and meaning of everything because the answer (say God) provides solace, comfort, and peace through some kind of faith; this thereby takes the edge off the opacity of the question or pursuit by transferring the indefinite nature of existing without meaning to the certitude of a commitment to at least the proxy of answer that can provide definition and certitude: 'I exist because of God's will that I exist and do good.'

For Ambedkar, the issue at hand in this particular unpublished manuscript is not to resolve this fundamental difference or tension between religion and philosophy. Ultimately, he says if this tension exists, then certainly what does that say about any attempt to bring them into relation for example when we speak of a 'philosophy of

religion.' It could be this very "antagonism" between the two fields of philosophy and religion that makes the field known as the philosophy of religion exist in its "confusion" with regard to its exact definition and nature.¹⁵ Ambedkar does not set out to solve this dilemma, which one can argue date back to both the origins of philosophy and religion around the world, West and East, in antiquity and the medieval periods of chronological historical time.

Instead, he decides to intervene in what a philosophy of religion must perform as a kind of duty, and that is to critically judge the moral viability of a religion to continue to justify its value for human existence. Philosophy can perform that task of critical judgement.¹⁶ Throughout his scholarly and activist life, Ambedkar, obviously, had a core concern for social justice and liberation. More than a concern, he tried to enact a total social recreation. The philosophy of religion cannot just be "descriptive" or what something is but rather "normative" or what something should be.¹⁷ This is not to say that even an attempt at an objective or factual description of what is, which the social sciences for example (sociology, anthropology, empirical history) may aspire to provide, or law for that matter in executing what justice is, does not mean that there are not normative implications even in the objective description of the nature of something. One can intend to describe the fact of something; but then its effect could be to induce in the very description a normative demand for justice and change.¹⁸

In any case, this move from the "descriptive" to the "normative" allows Ambedkar to get to his main concern, which is an interrogation of the "Philosophy of Hinduism," but not just for its own sake or idle speculation. Rather, he will embark on a critical judgement of what it fails to achieve, namely an Indian social order founded on justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity, one unburdened from its recent colonial past and distant pre-colonial origins. Before he gets to that ultimate judgement, he says "To be explicit I shall be putting Hinduism on its trial to assess its worth as a way of life."¹⁹

It is interesting to note that Ambedkar's critical endeavor at this juncture is not what one would normally think when it comes to assessing the moral value of most religions. Most attempts at moral philosophy and ethics try to probe what is good about a religion in so far as it examines the doctrines, precepts, texts, and heritage of a religion that speak about justice, mercy, compassion, how to live a good and decent life and how to treat others whether or not a particular religion promises salvation, redemption or continuation of life after death.²⁰ Studying religion means studying its moral validity to commit to justice. But this will not be the case for Ambedkar.²¹

Rather, he will introduce "three dimensions" to lay the 'ground' work in his philosophical analysis of Hinduism precisely to examine the social order it gave rise to, namely the indefatigable, seemingly eternal caste system. This historically contingent reality is founded on a profoundly unjust, unequal, hierarchically stratified social system, not only apathetic to human suffering but actively promotes antipathy to a common, universal, human fellowship.²²

The first dimension is the very 'phenomenon' of religion even though it has always been unclear across time and history as to what it is.²³ This is so because no one world religion (although it may aspire to claim universal validity of its truth and therefore exclusion to all other religions' claims to their universal truths) can in fact speak to what 'religion' in general is as a philosophical object. For Ambedkar, there are 'natural' and 'revealed religions'. But he is not concerned with the content of religion and whether its claim to truth is valid on philosophical or theological grounds within any given religion.²⁴ That would be the work of a theologian, and even comparative

theologies and religions. But in utilizing the phrase, a ‘philosophy of religion’ (and therefore not just philosophy in general independent of any religion), Ambedkar is laser-focused on his primary task, namely exposing the inner-workings of Hinduism that allows it to substantiate, perpetuate, and concatenate an unjust and immoral scheme for society. Hence he needs to bring in a second dimension.

He calls that dimension “the ideal scheme for which a religion stands.”²⁵ Many extant religions not only imagine a perfect or ideal world beyond this human earthly realm with all of its sin, suffering, finitude, death and catastrophe, say a heavenly abode beyond death or after the end of human history where the whole world will be redeemed and saved. But this apocalyptic closure to the long mystery as to why human beings came into existence is not what Ambedkar will set out to ask of the Hindu religion. Instead, religions, in their wishes to describe metaphysical realities beyond physical nature or this life in its time, end up producing assumptions that cohere into aspirational values of what *this world or life should be*. It is about this ‘inner-worldly’ realm to use a Weberian term that Ambedkar does not invoke that is at stake.²⁶

The ‘ideal scheme’ one can say is how a religion’s blind spot, say its propositions about transcendence to another world, surreptitiously shapes its ethical assumptions about what it means to exist in this world. The outer becomes not only the inner-expression of the outer but the essence of the inner itself in material form. Hinduism may have archaic roots in some supersensory ancient past. For example what people may speculate about regarding the distant, hallucinogenic Vedic origins and propositions about cosmic cycles of time, creation, and destruction in an unforeseen future that defy the laws of modern scientific physics. But for Ambedkar, the ‘ideal scheme,’ in the case of Hinduism, is what he thinks is a self-conscious heritage that is far more recent than that, namely the Manu Smirti. Those divine law codes tried to engineer, in the name of Hinduism’s fundamental truths, a social order that is highly stratified, unequal, and supremely unfair. And they succeeded in doing so.

This legal-‘ethical’-system that ascribes roles and duties forms what is more ‘permanent, fixed and enduring’ in the real historical, social and material realms. For Ambedkar, this “ideal scheme of divine governance”²⁷ ultimately shapes society down to its core to the point of installing something permanent. For the purpose of critical judgement, Ambedkar needs to get to what is most ‘essential’ about not only a religion’s nature or ‘phenomenon,’ but the task at hand—what does it actually do and how does it impact real life. In that regard, the how the Manu Smriti, or law codes, informs the conduct of all Hindu life is paramount and serves as the ‘ideal scheme.’ He states in describing its essence, he states:

A divine Code which lays down the rules which govern the religious, ritualistic and social life of the Hindus in minute detail and which must be regarded as the Bible of the Hindus and containing the philosophy of Hinduism.²⁸

Although the text of Ambedkar’s “Philosophy of Hinduism” provides in great detail many passages from various Hindu epics and texts throughout Indian history, the bulk of its critique is focused and concentrated on the ‘divine code’ that Ambedkar calls the ‘Bible’ of the Hindus and that which contains its ‘philosophy’ of Hinduism. One can say that ideal scheme is not just what a society strives to be in terms of its highest ethical conduct and the deep philosophical reasons that define why such virtuous action is necessary. Rather, it is an admixture of divine justification for repeated

ritualistic conduct, which then forms the very fabric and essence of social life. It is whereby the very distinction between an individual life from birth to death is absorbed in a paranoid sequence of repeated actions enacting a divine code. The code if you will literally brings the motive force alive in the string of moments where each moment takes on life of hysterical ritualistic worship. This may sound interesting to outsiders who do not know what it means to live in Indian society, past or present. But the real enigma here is how the divine code literally traces the entire historical and social existence of a people down to the imperceptibly 'minute details' whereby life itself becomes a perpetual ritual.

What justifies this primordial intentionality of the distention of all human life being programmed so to speak by the divine code, however, is a stratified system of inequality and perpetuation of mistrust, envy, and hate in different directions from some groups to others. The 'Bible' of this system, which contains its essential 'philosophy,' that gives meaning to this type of existence and guarantees it from external threat, say atheism or other world religions, is really a total system for governance and hegemony over every aspect of life to death in the minutiae of ritualistic infinitude.²⁹ And this has nothing to do with the separation of the secular and religious in most constitutional, legal democracies, including post-British colonial India.

Although there is more to theorize about the relation between the 'ideal scheme, divine governance' and the amoral and immoral processes of ritualistic self-discipline and discipline of others' bodies and spaces in contrast to other types of mythological formations and their power effects on societies, we have to move on.³⁰ The culminating third dimension that will *ground* Ambedkar's philosophical analysis of religion is the most difficult to determine. That is the question of what philosophical criteria we can use to judge a religion, which means questioning the value of an 'ideal scheme of governance,' as Nietzsche would do to Christianity; that is put the value of its religious values into question and be the first to do so.³¹ Once again Ambedkar invokes the notion of a "trial."³² The difficulty is not one of moral justification as to the task of such a trial; as to why Ambedkar would take it upon himself like others did in history with regard to other religions, Nietzsche or the French Enlightenment for example on Christianity and its life-denying myths that stymie the liberatory potential of human beings to create new values. Rather, the question, for Ambedkar, is methodological—what justifies the criteria of philosophical judgement.

He answers this question on method by resolving himself to go back to the history of religion in general to see what 'revolutions' it underwent.³³ He also affirms that there is no universal philosophy of a religion because each religion has its own philosophy.³⁴ One can deduce that this may be due to a logical impossibility: for there is no one universal world religion with one universal world philosophy, despite religiously and morally informed transversal instruments such as the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed that great bedrock for humanity drew from several religions, cultures, and civilizations. Or it could be due to the respect of each religion's boundary in peaceful coexistence with right of other religions to exist on an international scale: no religion should encroach upon another to judge its content or validity or use its truth claim of revelation or divinity to supplant that of another. It is like a principle of spiritual non-interference in the international realm of cosmic-religious relations. Ambedkar wants to respect these boundaries, but he is also searching for extra-religious philosophical criteria through the history of religions generally speaking so he can judge one and only one particular religion from which he emerged, and not all

others. And that is Hinduism. It will turn out that two major revolutions in the history of religion in general will finally deliver the criteria Ambedkar will need to perform his radical, and for him novel, critique of one single religion, namely Hinduism and its philosophy.

We will conclude the first part of our commentary on Ambedkar's "The Philosophy of Hinduism" by exploring his discussions on method that will underpin his actual analysis of the philosophy of Hinduism, which commences in the second part of his text. Ambedkar himself said that a "long detour" was necessary before he could begin an actual examination of the contents of Hinduism and its most sacred texts.³⁵ We too feel justified in spending a careful amount of time in the first section of his short but bountifully wise, the "Philosophy of Hinduism," to really open up problems on the philosophy of religion as a phenomenon and its methodological self-justification. This way we can gain better insights into Ambedkar's deepest motivations to undertake his life-long critique and activism against the Hindu social order of caste and what he argued regarding its fundamental injustice and inequality. In a future second part to our commentary, we will slowly read the second section of Ambedkar's text to deploy certain resources in modern continental European philosophy and the philosophy of religion in particular.³⁶

Let us turn to Ambedkar's theories on 'revolution' in the history of religions and why that relates to the imperative for radical social change and reformation in the pursuit of a universally, inclusive social justice. It would appear that at this moment in Ambedkar's text, an extremely important and interesting intervention is being made in problems in the philosophy of history, or the nature of epochal change and shifts of historical time, and even the nature of historical time itself. But it's not just an inquiry for the self-enclosed worlds of history, historiography, historical reason, etc. in light of problems in the philosophy of history, i.e. for empirically-motivated historians and archaeologists working with datable, chronological time. Rather, as part of this 'detour,' the philosophy of history opens up certain problems specific to the history of religions in general. And this will allow Ambedkar to justify his methodological approach to the philosophical criteria he will eventually use to judge a very specific religion, namely Hinduism, and its core philosophy encoded in a divine text.

Such a text has a supersensory relation paradoxically to the inner-core of what propels history but maintains a substratum: one that only perpetuates a type of malignancy that should otherwise pass with the vicissitudes of historical time, like everything else seems to have done in other civilizations' histories and world history in general. In other civilizations and their histories, nothing remains of the barbarism of past paganist religions that supported the draconian empires of antiquity, at least for Hegel when he thinks of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia for example.³⁷ Regardless of Hegel's views, the point is nothing of ancient pagan mass slavery for example and god-like imperial power exists in today's world religions. At least as far as we can tell.

But with India and its unique invention of Hinduism it is different. The substrate from millennia ago that continues to govern a system of enormous, unfathomable, yet undetectable (at least for those outside it) oppression, cruelty, and inequality, namely the caste system, persists. Furthermore, it's the nature of this persistence that befuddles the philosopher of history as much as the content of Hinduism the religion perplexes

the philosopher of religion, namely Ambedkar. It will turn out that in the second part of Ambedkar's essay, the two criteria he will arrive at for his judgement are 'utility' and 'justice' and how Hinduism fails to achieve the latter.³⁸

At this juncture of our commentary the issue is not what justice and utility mean in terms of their philosophical complexity; although that will be important down the road in future investigations. Rather, the questions that appear here have to do with the philosophy of history in relation to the history of religion and therefore the philosophical criteria to judge a religion by way of revolutions. Then we can better understand the thought processes and deductions that allow Ambedkar to arrive at his criteria of 'utility and justice'. For those criteria enable his philosophical judgement about Hinduism in general and why he will ultimately conclude that in fact it is not a religion at all. It is something entirely other.

References

- Narake, Hari, ed. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3. 2nd Edition. New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundations, 2014.
- Thorat, Sukhadeo and Kumar, Narender eds. *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Endnotes

1. The First Edition was published by the Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra: 14 April, 1987. See *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, ed. Hari Narake, 2nd Edition (New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundations, 2014).
2. *Ibid.*, xi.
3. *Ibid.* In addition to the "Philosophy of Hinduism," Vol. 3 contains the short and enigmatic text that Ambedkar was working on at the time of his death, namely "Buddha or Karl Marx," to which we will turn our attention to in a future paper, particularly on the theory of social revolution within a global South context like India while leveraging Western continental European philosophical theories.
4. For Ambedkar's impact on law and the social sciences, see Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar, eds., *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). On law specifically, see Mohammad Shabir, *Ambedkar on Law, Constitution, and Social Justice* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005). On economics and politics, see Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryarma, eds., *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on Economics, Politics, and Society* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007). Finally on history, see Narayan Das, *Ambedkar on Indian History* (New Delhi: Centrum Press, 2017).
5. *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, xi.
6. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swann (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 466.
7. In the concluding sentences to the "Philosophy of Hinduism" Ambedkar states: "The only answer is that Hinduism is overwhelmed with the fear of pollution. It has not got the power to purify. It has not the impulse to serve and that is because

by its very nature it is unhuman and unmoral. It is a misnomer to call it religion. Its philosophy is opposed to very thing for which religion stands.” See *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 92.

8. See Thorat and Kumar’s introduction to *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies*.
9. The editors of Vol. 3 state that at the time of its discovery, the text was a self-contained chapter of a much larger work that was incomplete. See *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3., 1. This only points to the need for worldwide scholarship to continue to build out a global research platform that can fructify works on Ambedkar’s thought, philosophy and religion, and the philosophy of religion. Works such as “Riddles of Hinduism” in volume IV, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (a last major work that was also published posthumously), and “Buddha or Karl Marx” in Vol. 3 are central for that endeavor. See Aakash Singh Rathore and Ajay Verma, eds., *B.R. Ambedkar: The Buddha and His Dhamma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
10. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3., 3.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.* parentheses are my additions.
14. Any historian of Western philosophy knows that this very impulse has driven the greatest minds of antiquity starting with Plato and Aristotle to pre-modernity and the birth of reason and rationality in Hobbes, Locke, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz to Hume, Kant, and Hegel to the last two great critics of the Western philosophical tradition, Nietzsche and Heidegger.
15. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3., 1
16. *Ibid.*, 5. At some point it would be interesting to bring Ambedkar in to dialogue with Kant’s corpus as a whole but particularly what he says philosophy is in relation to morality and duty with regard to its own exercise. What is known as the second critique or the *Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Morals* come to mind. We defer this to future research.
17. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3., 1
18. Marx intended to produce a purely ‘scientific’ (albeit with his novel notions of historical and dialectical materialism) exposition of the nature of capitalism that previous classical political-economists (Smith, Ricardo) failed to do. So one can say Marx was really trying to discover the truth of what capitalism is (by defining all its categories such as ‘value, use-value, exchange value, commodity, labor, labor power, labor time, relative and equivalent value, money, price, surplus labor value, production, capital’ etc.), which means how capitalism functions based on a series of bewildering contradictions and multiplication of mobile relations between intertwining terms. Given his complication of the dialectical method, there is no static or isolated atomistic term existing in a vacuum, but always in an ever increasing multiplication of relations of identities and differences between and within terms. Hegel’s influence was indeed profound. But even the beginner of *Capital*, Vol. 1 can see the satirical tone, the disgust and anger, the wit and literary flair in Marx’s genius. The rest is history. Marx was not an indifferent thinker but a revolutionary whose ideas would only come to fruition later in the communist revolutions of the twentieth century that tried to destroy capitalism

- and replace it with another social and economic order. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Classics, 1990).
19. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 5.
 20. It is uncontroversial as a fact that all extant world religions- Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism to name the most well-known- make that claim about themselves.
 21. Later in his text, Ambedkar attempts a critique of Nietzsche's valorization of the Manu Smritis, or law codes, that laid down and continue to validate the hierarchical caste system even though we all know Nietzsche as one of the first great critics of the immoral nature of historical and institutional Christianity. But that's a separate matter as Ambedkar is not interested in Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. He is interested in a critical evaluation of Hinduism in its failure to meet even the minimal standards to even be called a 'religion.' A future work could compare Nietzsche's critique of Christianity with Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism. See Rajesh Sampath, "Developing a Nietzschean Genealogical Critique of the Metaphysical and Moral Underpinnings of the Hindu Caste System," *Spec. Issue of Indian Philosophical Quarterly: Rethinking Ambedkar in the 21st Century* 42, no. 1-4 (2015): 81-108.
 22. See B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, ed. S. Anand (London: Verso Press, 2014).
 23. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 6.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *Ibid.*
 26. A future work could compare Ambedkar's writings with Weber's writings and not only from his famous *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) that examines Protestant Christianity in particular; but also his general writings in the sociology of religion, the sections on religion in his incomplete treatise *Economy and Society*, Two Volumes, and his specific works on specific religions, including a work on the sociology of Hinduism. See in particular his *The Religion of India*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharal Publishers, 2000). We will defer that research to a future work.
 27. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 6.
 28. *Ibid.*, 7.
 29. One could examine the Hindu social order and its emanation in religious life, not only through great past figures that founded sociology like Weber and Durkheim. But closer to our historical present, the works of the later Michel Foucault on knowledge, power, 'disciplinary technologies of the body,' and 'governmentality' exceed the space of the juridical, the state, and the political. They relate to processes of the normalization of existence, the body, and self-governance through extremely complex, finite, and non-dialectical relations of knowledge and power and their positive effects on constituting subjects and social life. His works can be very useful to unpack some of Ambedkar's insights about the philosophy of religion and governance that surpass anything in Western political history from Hobbes to the present that try to justify law, sovereignty, and the social contract. For more on Foucault, see Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
 30. A very interesting project would be to explore the works of the philosopher of history, Hans Blumenberg, on various epochal shifts on the Copernican

- revolution, the nature of myth, and the birth of modern Western rationality, with the Ambedkarite context on the mystery of Hindu myth and its real effects of power on the social body that is caste. See in particular Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).
31. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).
 32. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 8.
 33. *Ibid.* 8.
 34. *Ibid.*, 8.
 35. *Ibid.*, 22.
 36. Our goal is to publish that second part in a subsequent issue of volume 1 of the journal.
 37. See G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, trans. J.B. Sibree (The Colonial Press, 1899). One must put Hegel back in to his early nineteenth century historical context to expose his narrow Eurocentricism. From today's vantage point, one could easily see Hegel's condescending attitude towards anything he thought was non-Western (meaning non-Greco-Roman), for example Egypt, Babylon, and Persia but also Africa, China, and India. In fact he labeled those civilizations as part of 'pre-history.' Today scholars would question both the temporal and geographically boundaries of what constitute the 'origins' of ancient Western Europe to include what Hegel in his time might have seen as part of the non-West; that in fact Greece and Rome may have been derivative of something deeper than the self-justifying Western historical record reveals. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Vol. 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2020); M.L. West, *The East Fast of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999); Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution; Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). And needless to say since the birth of primordial Christianity in Greece and parts of what would constitute today's Turkey, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, and Syria, Orthodox Christianity in its Greek foundations are more aligned with Eastern Orthodoxy extending to Russia, then they would with 'Western' Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. See Stephen Morris, *The Early Eastern Orthodox Church: A History, AD 60-1453* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018).
 38. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 22. In a future work, it would be very interesting to explore how Ambedkar arrives at these two criteria of 'utility and justice' and compare and contrast his ideas with the enormously influential philosophy of justice in the Anglo-American world, namely that of John Rawls. Bringing in the Rawlsian framework into the study of the philosophy of religion in a non-Western, colonial and decolonial context, such as Ambedkar's Hindu-dominated India of the early to mid-twentieth century, raises tantalizing possibilities for future scholarship. For a summary of John Rawls's life-long quest to philosophize about justice, see his *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).