

## REVIEWS

Ramchandra Gandhi : *Presuppositions of Human Communication* Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1974. pp. 147. Rs. 25.

“Philosophy exhibits now no traces of fascination. Usually it combines slovenly composition with sterility of ornament; and custom has even moulded these deformities into a canon of criticism....I will endeavour to believe that Philosophy is not necessarily so frowning and sluggish a divinity as her ministers usually represent. Her limbs are masculine I admit, and her discourse is grave; but her language may be tasteful, and her decorations gay.”

Alexander Bryan Johnson *A Treatise on Language*.

The style of language in which contemporary analytical philosophy of language—of which Dr. Gandhi's contribution is a good example—is written, fascinates me as a linguist. The self-consciousness and rigour of such writing often manifests itself in syntactic structures of such complexity as would make even the most imaginative generative grammarian feel humble. Consider the following specimens<sup>1</sup> for their flavour :

“Now one of the facts about himself that S[peaker] intends A[udience] to attend to is precisely the fact that S intends A to attend to S, and so we can substitute the linguistic expression of this fact for ‘S’ in the last position in which this letter occurs in the above statement, and we get the following as the necessary and sufficient condition for S to address A : S should attract A's attention to be the fact that S intends A to attend to the fact that S intends A to attend to the fact that S intends A to attend to S.”

“If we allow that reasons are causes, we may say that S[peaker] intends r[esponse] to be produced in A[udience] by virtue (at least in part) of A's belief that S uttered x [a token] intending to produce r in A just in case S uttered x intending that A's belief that S uttered x intending to produce r in A be (at least) a necessary part of a sufficient cause of A's response r.”

“May we not” we may ask with Alexander Bryan Johnson, “catch some glimmer of a suspicion, that our words have lost their intelligence in these heights of speculation ?” Since Johnson is a relatively obscure philosopher whose brilliantly original *Treatise* written over a hundred years ago anticipates some of the crucial tenets of contemporary philosophy while exhibiting ample

traces of fascination, I cannot resist the temptation to quote at some length from the *Treatise*<sup>2</sup> :

“We are in danger of wasting time in verbal investigation....[even though] no knowledge is more important than a correct appreciation of language.

“Language possesses....an illimitable power of interrogation. Nothing is too sacred to escape its inquiries,—nothing too remote,—nothing too minute. We employ it, if not without suspicion that it contains any latent incapacity for unlimited inquisition, with certainly a very indefinite apprehension of its limitations :—hence the importance of defining the limits, (if it possesses any,) within which interrogatories are significant. I am prepared to show both that it possesses limited powers in these particulars, and to define the limits.

“Verbal discourse contains defects which have escaped detection.... significant verbal inquisition is not unlimited....I can offer no better guide to lead you ultimately to a correct understanding of the defects of language than to say, at a hazard, that I allude to no defects that you ever heard of or conceived. I also allude to none that can be obviated. The most that I hope to perform is to make them known; as we erect a beacon, to denote the presence of a shoal which we cannot remove.

“Language may be formed into propositions whose results, though incontrovertible by logick, are irreconcilable with our senses....may you not infer, that if such doctrines are incontestible by logick, the doctrines are more repugnant to reason, than the belief that some latent sophistry exists in the language by which the doctrines are expressed, or in the processes by which the doctrines are sustained?

“Language usurps...., to an astonishing extent, the dignity which truly belongs to creation. I know we usually say that words are signs of things. Practically, we make things the sign of words....we cannot, at present, discover the subordination which language bears to the realities of nature, but are continually....imputing to nature limitations, classifications, ambiguities, imperfections, and properties, of various kinds, which truly belong to language alone....but nature is no party to our philology....we transfer to nature a generalization which belongs to language....The diversity which we discover among natural objects, &c., that possess the same name, should teach us to correct the identity implied by their name; but we employ the verbal identity to excite wonder at the natural diversity....

“That language will eventually receive the construction for which I shall contend, I feel no doubt, though I may not possess the talent to introduce the reformation....I must warn you, that the perverted estimation of language is so habitual, that you will be constantly liable to misapprehend my remarks....No effort of mine can indoctrinate you with the knowledge of language on any easier conditions. I will labour intently to state my views as intelligibly as possible, and as concisely;.... I pause at these promises....

“When fame has produced for an individual an elevation to which all eyes are continually directed; when his opinions are impatiently expected, and rapidly disseminated;—when they are applauded in anticipation, and their adoption secured by prepossessions;—the labour of composition assimilates to... a progress whose labour is only the fatigue of pleasure, and whose dangers are merely the inebriation of success.

“Startled at the difference between such a writer and me, I have more than once cast aside my pen as an insidious enemy, that lures me from the substantial pursuits of life. Even the consolation of yielding an amusement to you cannot well be expected; and while I have been distracted in seeking a worthy motive for exertion, I have not been exempt from apprehension that I may, unconsciously be influenced by the demon who delights to revel in our infirmities: the demon who makes the taciturn exult at his own dulness, and the loquacious enamoured of his own frivolity; who makes ill-timed gravity increase its frown, and incessant levity augment its laughter...”

One notices a certain quality of innocence in the homespun language of the philosopher of yore. The lack of inhibition with which he wrote often adds an almost lyrical charm to his writing. The language in which he speculated about language was used with confidence if not abandon. This quality of language was among the first casualties after philosophers discovered the meaning of sin in the realization that since the use of language was a bit of conduct, a public performance or action not unlike a move in a game, what they were themselves doing in using language to theorize about language invited scrutiny. Suddenly language was no more something that could be taken for granted and wielded with impunity. It was seen afresh as an extremely powerful and dangerous tool to be used with the utmost caution.

With each ‘mopping up’ operation that followed the 20th century revolution in philosophy of language—Strawson’s distinction between a sentence, its use, and its utterance; Austin’s reminder that we do things in and by saying things, and the eventual blossoming of his illocutionary acts into Searle’s theory of speech acts, Grice’s account of the meaning of an utterance in terms of the effect the utterer intends to produce in his audience—the language of philosophy changed. Sentences became increasingly complex with more and more layers of embedding. They also got longer as main clauses were hedged round with other clauses seeking to eliminate ambiguity, vagueness, and sloppiness, sometimes to such an extent that the span of short-term memory in which the constituents of a sentence are stored while it is interpreted was

too small for some sentences. This latter was clearly a defect in the linguistic competence of the uninitiated because not only were sentences more complicated and longer but there were actually more of them as philosophy became a substantial pursuit of life for the constantly growing community of professional philosophers, who seemed to be as pleased by the addition of another clause to a sentence as ancient Indian grammarians were by the elimination of half a mora from a *sūtra*.

I should hasten to point out that I do not mean to imply that philosophical inquiries have necessarily become trivial and verbose. A linguophile's lament for the loss of linguistic innocence is not the same thing as a critique of contemporary philosophy of language. Much less is it a criticism of Dr. Gandhi's book. In fact *Pre-suppositions of Human Communication* is a cogently argued and lucidly written essay. It is both a good representative of, and a contribution to, a tradition of specialized and technical inquiry into the notion of human language. Precision and rigour are a hallmark of this tradition which makes it stand out sharply, in terms of style, from some earlier writings in the philosophy of language. Professionally biased reactions to this new style of doing philosophy should not detract from its value. Dr. Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of language is unquestionably valuable. In the Indian philosophical scene where 'who said approximately what when' often passes for scholarship, Dr. Gandhi's essay looks refreshingly original—not in the sense of being an entirely new departure, but in the sense of being an independent and thorough rethinking of problems.

The aim of Dr. Gandhi's essay is to give an account of typical indicative, imperative, and interrogative utterances in terms of an analysis of the concept of human communication, and to offer some remarks about the nature of language. His investigation is philosophical, not empirical. The account of 'typical' utterances he gives is not of a representative sample of attested utterances where a speaker conveyed certain information by a certain type of behaviour to his audience. He assumes that the sort of account we give in particular circumstances of the meaning of particular indicative and imperative utterances is a simpler matter than any general account of the meaning of imperative or indicative utterances. One may of course argue that the task of carefully

describing the information which a speaker conveys and the information he betrays in making a particular utterance is not therefore less interesting. However that would only be saying what is well known, that one man's food is another man's poison.

The question Dr. Gandhi asks and refuses to beg is : What is it to tell somebody something ? Most communicative actions are linguistic actions which have come to be thought of as being essentially rule-governed. Asking for an analysis of a communicative action is likely to get you the rules which govern the performance of some linguistic utterance or other by means of which the communicative action in question is conventionally performed. Any such rule which purports to be explanatory of the nature of a communicative utterance presupposes the notion of some communicative utterance or other. Thus Searle's hypothesis that speaking a language is performing acts according to constitutive rules is a misleading hypothesis, according to Dr. Gandhi. To say that performing a communicative action is to perform something under certain conditions and in appropriate circumstances that counts as —, is not elucidatory. The very possibility of the existence of institutional facts and their correlative institutions depends upon the ability of human beings to perform communicative acts of various kinds. It is a muddle to think then, that a communicative action itself is an institutional fact. Hence there can be no institutional *theory* of human communication, Dr. Gandhi concludes.

Can one then avoid getting caught in the other horn of the dilemma, viz. of conceding that a theory of human communication has to be 'perlocutionary', or 'stimulus-response' type theory ? This question is simply another way of asking what sort of an action an act of human communication is. This is the task to which Dr. Gandhi addresses himself. He wants to maintain that a communicative act *is* an act of telling someone something and that to tell some one something *is* to bring him to know, recognize, notice, etc. something, but not all acts of bringing someone to know something are acts of communication, nor is an act of telling someone that *p* necessarily an act of bringing him to know that *p*. He argues that it is a necessary and sufficient condition for somebody S to communicate something to somebody else A, not as opposed to communicating something else, but as opposed to failing to communicate absolutely anything at all, that S should

address A. Hence only that act of bringing an audience to know something, e.g. that  $p$  can be an act of communication which is also an act of bringing the audience to know that he is intended to know that he is intended to know that he is intended to know . . . . that  $p$ . This statement involving, as it does, an indefinite number of layers of embedding may be syntactically embarrassing, but it is necessary. All communication has to be 'open' in this sense, and has to involve cooperation, just as all claps have to be audible and have to involve two surfaces. That is why the schoolboyish prank of attracting someone's attention in a crowd ("He fatty zip your fly!") and then not sustaining an encounter by pretending not to have said it and pointedly engaging in another activity, does not conform to our idea of a proper communicative act. At least it is not a communicating act involving the butt as an addressee though it may be one involving the prankster's cronies. If however the prankster does not explicitly address his cronies by saying something like "Say look, I am going to pull that fatty's leg" and yet it is clearly understood that he is conveying a message to his cronies—something like "I'm a pretty jolly rascal, you know"—by "addressing" the butt, then one wonders if it is a necessary condition of an act of communication that the speaker address the audience. One can of course see the force of the arguments used by Strawson and Gandhi to point out the 'openness' of communication. But the unprejudiced observer is bound to find enough cases of a speaker properly communicating with an audience by supposedly or apparently addressing an altogether different party to have to concede that the complex intentions of speakers and their recognitions by audiences involve 'enormously complex tacit conventions'. Occassionally the task of characterizing what somebody is doing in a particular act of communication may turn out to be more complicated than giving a general account of communication.

Considering that Dr. Gandhi is a philosopher of language who wants to look at language in the context of a theory of action I am surprised that he has missed what I think is a particularly vulnerable spot in Searle's theory. Though I generally agree with Dr. Gandhi when he says that there can be no institutional theory of language and hence Searle's hypothesis is misleading, I at least feel that Searle's speech act hypothesis is valuable to the extent

that it articulates and 'pins down' one of the most crucial insights in later-Wittgensteinian philosophy. Searle has tried to spell out the significance of saying that speaking is like making a move in a game, even if the net result of doing so is to enable Dr. Gandhi to point out that it is not really so, that there is a crucial difference between speaking and making moves in a game in that the latter presuppose communication while the former *is* communication. There is however, in Searle's philosophy, a much more controversial hypothesis, viz. his 'principle of expressibility', which states that what can be meant can be said. Even if one means more (or less!) than what one actually says, it is always possible in principle, according to Searle, to say exactly what one means (and often, I suppose, to mean literally what one says). Thus, "for any meaning X and any speaker S whenever S means (intends to convey, wishes to communicate in an utterance, etc.) X then it is possible that there is some expression E such that E is an exact expression of or formulation of X".<sup>3</sup> Searle claims that any exception to this must be a contingent fact, not a necessary one. Since Dr. Gandhi specifically rejects the institutional view of language and it at least not obviously willing to embrace any perlocutionary view and since his account of communication starts with the idea of a speaker addressing an audience and getting them to recognize certain complex intentions of the speaker, of an *action* in other words, one wonders if he would really pass without challenge Searle's claim that one can equate rules for performing acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements because for any possible speech (read 'communicative'?) act there is a possible linguistic element the meaning of which (given the context of the utterance) is sufficient to determine that its literal utterance is a performance of precisely that speech (—communicative—) act. Do deeds speak louder than words because they are translations of words?

While Part I of Dr. Gandhi's book deals with the necessary and sufficient conditions of human communication and shows why not all acts of bringing someone to know something are acts of communication, Part II gives an analysis of speech acts of assertions, commands, questions, and the non-serious use of speech. Here he shows how telling someone that *p*, or asking someone to do X, is not necessarily an act of bringing him to know that *p*, or making him do X, i.e. how it is an act independent of any uptakes secured.

On the analogy of the philosophy of 'as if', one would like to call this part Dr. Gandhi's philosophy of 'not really'. His main point is that "only if S performed an action which communicatively drew A's attention to a piece of behaviour of his (S's) which was describable by A as an act of 'not really' trying to get A to believe *either* that *p* or that S believed that *p*, would his action amount to an act of asserting that *p*". Similarly, "for a speaker S to tell and audience A to do something, e.g. the action X, S must perform an action which should (a) be communicative in character, i.e. be an act of addressing A, (b) imply, that S wanted A to believe that S wanted A to do X, and (c) not imply, *prima facie*, that S was trying to get A to do X". For interrogative and non-serious acts of communication also Dr. Gandhi proposes a 'not really' analysis. A communicatively exhibited act of 'not really' doing D is an act which has the *form* of doing D but not the *force* of doing D. As a result of a certain sort of suspiciousness Dr. Gandhi shares with some other contemporary philosophers the idea of an insincere speech act plays a central part in his analysis of speech acts. His definition of the terms 'form' and 'force' is a result of this tendency. A speaker S's act of trying to get the audience A to believe that *p* has the *form* that it has in virtue of the fact that it is an act of confronting A with simulated evidence for the belief that *p*, and it has the *force* that it has in virtue of the fact it is an act of concealment, or attempted concealment, of the simulated character of this evidence. S's act of 'not really' trying to get A to believe that *p* would not carry a *prima facie* implication of deceitfulness, but it would imply, *prima facie*, that S wanted A to believe that *p*, without incontrovertibly implying that S wanted A to believe that *p*. For imperative utterances, S's action of trying to get A to do X has the form that it has because it warrants the inference that S wants A to do X, and it has the force that it has because it warrants the inference that S's action, considered by itself, *could* cause A to do X, or that S thinks that his action is capable of causing A to do X. Dr. Gandhi's argument is that for S to tell A to do X, S must perform an action which is communicative (i.e. S should address A), and which implies that S wants A to believe that S wants A to do X, and which does not imply that S is trying to get A to do X. From S's action A would be able to infer, *prima facie*, that S wanted A to do X, or that S



wanted A to believe that S wanted A to do X, but A would not be able to say that in performing his action S was trying to get A to do X, though S may perfectly well be doing so *by* performing his action.

In Part III Dr. Gandhi sketches a theory of language acquisition consonant with his analysis of communication. His theory makes use of the notion of a conditioned response but does not seek to explain the acquisition of language as the formation of conditioned responses. He is not concerned with the popular but often confused and sterile debate about whether language is innate or acquired. His point is that children are capable of realizing fairly early on that they are conditioned to respond to linguistic stimuli and this ought to lead to a weakening or extinction of their conditioning, so conditioned responses by themselves cannot explain the acquisition of language. He argues that the very failure of conditioning is exploited in teaching children to speak. They are conditioned to respond to linguistic action in various ways, then they are assisted in becoming aware that they have been conditioned. Now when they encounter linguistic actions they interpret these correctly as being acts of 'not really' trying to elicit conditioned responses from them, i.e. as being communicative actions. Everyone speaks happily ever after.

In the fourth and last part of the book Dr. Gandhi offers some remarks on Grice's analysis of meaning. In so doing he joins the long list of philosophers—Strawson, Searle, Ziff, Schiffer, Patton and Stampe, to name only a few—who have contributed to the tremendous influence of Grice's analysis of meaning. Neither Grice nor Gandhi accept as explanatory any notion of a linguistic rule, or convention, or institution. The difference between them is in terms of how the audience of a speech act may describe the speaker's action. Grice's addressee would describe an assertion or an imperative utterance as being, *prima facie*, an act of trying to get him to believe or do something; Gandhi's addressee, as we have seen, would describe it as an act of 'not really' trying to make him do so, for Dr. Gandhi the ability to perform and grasp the point of acts of 'not really' trying to bring about something or other is a necessary presupposition of human communication.

In spite of the 'difficult' style Dr. Gandhi's book makes rewarding reading. It is a book which should provoke serious discussion.

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**Kashyap Mankodi**

#### NOTES

1. The first example is from Dr. Gandhi's book. The second is from another recent essay in the philosophy of language, Stephen Schiffer *Meaning* Oxford. 1972.
2. *A Treatise on language* edited by David Rynin, University of California Press, 1947. First published in 1836.
3. *Speech Acts* Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 20.

## BOOK-REVIEWS

Chatterjee, Margaret : '*The Existentialist Outlook*' Orient Longman Ltd., 1973

Existentialism is one of the most challenging movements of thought in the present century. It shows deep concern for man-in-the world and its anthropocentric appeal comes as a breath of fresh air after the study of the abstract systems with which both Western and Indian Philosophy abound. Existentialism as a philosophy has had a big impact on the non-philosophical spheres as well, such as Theology, Arts and Literature. Though this movement originated in the West, it has widely spread over the whole world and has a universal appeal as it tries to deal with the Human Condition. Dr. Margaret Chatterjee is attracted to this challenge as it, like the Analytic movement, tries to find out something new for philosophy to do. Moreover, the author herself being a creative writer, seems to have deep sympathy for this new school. It is in the fitness of things, therefore, that she undertakes this task of examining the philosophical core of Existentialism.

This book consisting of 174 pages is divided into Ten chapters. In the first chapter of Introduction, the author has traced the history of Existentialism as a new school and has shown how it has grown as a reaction to speculative philosophy and has been deeply influenced by thinkers like Hegel, Darwin, Marx, Freud and Bergson. Chapters two to eight are devoted to the critical exposition of the seven prominent existentialists viz., Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Marcel, Camus, Jaspers and Heidegger. The ninth chapter deals with Existentialism in Literature and in the last Postscript, the author has recorded some of the genuine difficulties in the existentialist position such as their treatment of the Meaningless, their stress on the irrational element in man and his freedom, etc.

In this book, as the author clarifies in the preface, no attempt is made to give a thorough exposition of the whole existentialist movement. It only aims at examining the writings of seven representative existentialists so as to bring out the significance of their

philosophies in relation to the history of philosophical ideas. To synthesise the writings of the seven existentialists, so different from each other, is not an easy job. Firstly, because they belong to different decades and secondly because of their different theistic and atheistic concerns and commitments. The author is aware of these difficulties and hence she treats them separately by discussing the major issues raised by the respective thinkers. She cautiously avoids sweeping comparisons and bothers least about finding out common characteristics of these variegated thinkers labeled as existentialists.

The structure of the book reminds one of Blackham's book named 'Six Existentialist Thinkers'; but the reader, soon, finds the difference between the two. Firstly, the present book unlike that of Blackham, gives a more objective and critical account of the thinkers chosen and secondly it adds Albert Camus as the seventh major existentialist to the list of remaining six approved by the former. Of course, Camus was never an academic philosopher and though he is a powerful existentialist writer, whether he should be enlisted as a fullfledged existentialist philosopher is debatable.

Dr. Chatterjee has taken care to discuss the basic issues raised by each one of these thinkers and tries to evaluate them on their own. At places, her exposition has been very suggestive and illuminating. For instance, the subtle distinction that she makes between Catholic and Protestant types of existentialists is interesting. Again, she demarcates three states ( instead of the usual two ) in Sartre's Philosophy and rightly shows how his thinking moves from an individuality based project through semi-Kantian universal principles to the concept of Praxis. Again as most of the existentialist thinkers are themselves literary writers, the author has legitimately devoted one full chapter to Existentialism in literature. In this chapter she has taken a hurried survey of novelists, poets and dramatists in Germany, France, England, America etc., belonging to the last two centuries and has brought to light their existential contributions. She begins with Dostoevsky and tries to sketch, in brief, the work and services rendered by novelists like Kafka, Hesse, Gross and poets like Rilke, Holderlin in Germany and gives account of French an writers such as Sartre, Camus Anouilh, Beckett, Ionesco and

others. She also refers to contemporary writers such as Genet, Albee, Pinter, Murdock and others who are in quest of New Meanings. On this account, this book will be useful not only to those interested in philosophy but also to those who are concerned with literature.

The present book, though small in volume is, thus, rich in matter. The suggestive remarks interspersed in course of discussion and courteous and sympathetic treatment of the existential outlook deserve special applause. The selected bibliography at the end might also prove very beneficial to a serious student of Existentialism.

—Leela D. Gole

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Indian Philosophical Quarterly plans to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of Bhagwan Mahavir, founder of Jainism by publishing a few articles devoted to some important problems in Jaina logic and theory of knowledge. Contributions on the theme are most welcome and may be sent to the editor, Indian Philosophical Quarterly.

EDITOR

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Indian Philosophical Quarterly is planning to bring out a series of objective and serious articles or reviews concerned with the contributions of eminent contemporary Indian Philosophers, to be called "Introducing Contemporary Indian Philosophers." The series would provide a forum for a considered assessment of the thoughts and ideas of active philosophical thinkers in India today. We shall be happy to consider contributions from our readers dealing with the above theme.

EDITOR

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**Books received for Review**

- (1) The Liberal Theory of Justice  
Brian Barry  
Clarendon Press Oxford, 1973 pp 168  
£ 1.00
- (2) The Realm of Between  
K Satchidananda Murty  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1973  
pp 221 Rs. 25.00
- (3) The Secret of Yoga  
Gopi Krishna  
Macmillan Ltd. 1972 pp 207 Rs. 20/-
- (4) The Mysteries of God in the Universe  
H. S. Spencer  
H. P. Vaswani, Poona 1967 pp 184 Rs. 20/-
- (5) Sequel to the Mysteries of God in the Universe  
H. S. Spencer and Others  
H. P. Vaswani, Poona pp 181 Rs. 10/-
- (6) The Adyar Library Bulletin  
Vol. XXXVII, 1973  
(ed) V. Raghavan and Others  
The Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar,  
Madras pp 274
- (7) Metaphysics : An Introduction  
Archie J. Bahm  
Barnes of Noble Books N. Y. 1974 pp. 259 \$ 2.95
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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Indian Philosophical Quarterly will be grateful to its contributions and patrons for information regarding details of research work and other research activities in Philosophy undertaken by them or their institutes and departments. Such information may specify the area of work, date and duration of the work, whether the results have been published and if so, the name of the publisher and year of publication. Current research work in progress may also be kindly communicated to us. We hope to publish such data in our journal in the form of a serialized bibliography.

EDITOR

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August 31, 1974.

Dear Colleague,

We have great pleasure in announcing that we intend to publish all the four issues of Volume I of the "INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY" as a single bound volume. I am sure that you will agree that such a convenient volume would serve as a valuable collection of essays and articles which have so far appeared in our journal, and we hope you would honour us by placing your order with us for a copy. Further particulars regarding the price etc. may be had on writing to The Editor.

Editor,

Indian Philosophical Quarterly.

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