

P.T.Raju's Philosophical Anthropology And Central Asian Thought: Toward An Intercultural Anthropology Of The Human Person

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ABSTRACT

The present article examines the philosophical anthropology of Poola Tirupati Raju (1904–1992) in comparative dialogue with the Central Asian intellectual tradition. Raju, a leading figure of twentieth-century comparative philosophy, developed three methodological principles — reciprocal illumination, anthropological centrality, and synthetic ambition — through which he sought to establish a comparative philosophy of the human being that drew upon both Eastern and Western traditions. The article argues that the Central Asian classical tradition, exemplified in the work of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Bīrūnī, Yusuf Khos Hojib, and Alisher Navoiy, articulates in its own distinctive vocabulary a sophisticated philosophical anthropology that converges with Raju's project in significant respects while preserving its own conceptual particularity. Engaging Raju with the Central Asian heritage opens a productive line of intercultural philosophy that does not reduce either tradition to the other but rather permits each to illuminate the other. This intercultural engagement is shown to possess direct relevance to the contemporary cultural and philosophical project of New Uzbekistan, particularly to the notion of a Third Renaissance that situates the recovery of the Central Asian heritage within global philosophical conversation. We argue that Raju's methodological framework provides resources for this project of cultural self-articulation in dialogue with the wider world.

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Poola Tirupati Raju (1904–1992) occupies a distinctive place in the history of twentieth-century comparative philosophy. His sustained engagement with the Indian and Western philosophical traditions over a career of more than five decades produced a body of work that established comparative philosophy as a recognised sub-discipline of philosophy [8;750]. At the centre of Raju's comparative project lay a substantive philosophical anthropology — an account of the human being as a unity of life, mind, and spirit — which he developed through careful examination of how the human person is conceived across the major philosophical traditions [3;23]. Raju's distinctive contribution, beyond the substantive doctrines he

advanced, lay in the articulation of methodological principles through which the comparative engagement of traditions could be productively conducted: the principle of reciprocal illumination, according to which each tradition brings out aspects of the others that monocultural analysis would not have disclosed; the principle of anthropological centrality, which makes the question of the human being the proper meeting-ground for comparative inquiry; and the principle of synthetic ambition, which aims at the constructive philosophical engagement of the questions each tradition addresses rather than the mere cataloguing of similarities and differences [1;294].

The present article undertakes the application of Raju's framework to a tradition with which he himself did not directly engage in his published work: the Central Asian intellectual tradition, exemplified in the philosophical contributions of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Bīrūnī, Yusuf Khos Hojib, and Alisher Navoiy. The article proceeds through three principal questions. First, what specific resonances obtain between Raju's anthropological commitments and the anthropological positions developed in the Central Asian classical tradition? Second, how does Raju's methodological framework illuminate, and how is it itself illuminated by, the philosophical resources of this tradition? Third, what implications does this comparative engagement carry for the contemporary cultural and philosophical project of New Uzbekistan, particularly for the notion of a Third Renaissance (Uchinchi Renessans) that has emerged as a principal organising idea of contemporary Uzbek intellectual life? Through the engagement of these questions, the article aims to demonstrate that Raju's comparative anthropology provides substantial resources for the philosophical work of contemporary Central Asia.

Scholarship on Raju's philosophical anthropology has developed along several distinct lines. Kenneth Inada's obituary essay in *Philosophy East and West* established the principal lines of Raju's intellectual biography and identified the major monographs through which his comparative project was advanced [8;749]. Wilhelm Halbfass's *India and Europe* (1988) places Raju within the broader history of Indo-European philosophical encounter and identifies the methodological refinements that subsequent hermeneutic work has undertaken with respect to Raju's pioneering articulation [7;392]. Ram Adhar Mall's *Intercultural Philosophy* (2000) extends Raju's comparative orientation into a more pluralistic framework that recognises the limitations of the bilateral East–West dialogue Raju primarily pursued [9;12]. Raimon Panikkar's *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (1999) draws upon Raju's methodological resources while developing a more existentially-inflected account of intercultural engagement [10;25].

Scholarship on the Central Asian philosophical heritage has likewise flourished, particularly since the recovery of cultural independence in the post-Soviet period. The translations and critical editions of al-Fārābī's *Perfect State* by Richard Walzer (1985), Ibn Sīnā's *Metaphysics of the Healing* by Michael Marmura (2005), al-Bīrūnī's *India* by Edward Sachau (1888), and Yusuf Khos Hojib's *Kutadgu Bilig* by Robert Dankoff (1983) have made the principal classical texts available to a global scholarly audience [4;229; 5;350; 6;5; 11;41]. Within Uzbekistan, the systematic recovery of the Central Asian intellectual heritage has been undertaken as a central component of state cultural policy, with institutional initiatives such as the Centre for Islamic Civilisation providing settings for sustained scholarly work on the tradition. Despite this developing scholarship, no sustained comparative engagement between Raju's philosophical anthropology and the Central Asian tradition has been undertaken in the literature. The present article aims to make an initial contribution to this comparative project.

The substantive engagement of Raju with the Central Asian tradition proceeds most productively from the question of the human being. Raju's characterisation of the human as a unity of life, mind, and spirit identifies three dimensions that any adequate anthropology must address: the biological-vital dimension of life; the cognitive-intellectual dimension of mind; and the spiritual-existential dimension of selfhood [3;23]. The principal Central Asian thinkers, in their distinct historical and conceptual contexts, articulate parallel multidimensional accounts of the human being.

Al-Fārābī (c. 870–950) developed in his *Perfect State* a philosophical anthropology centred upon the rational soul, conceived as the principle through which the human being actualises its capacities in the direction of intellectual perfection and participation in a virtuous political community [4;229]. The proper end of the human being, on al-Fārābī's account, is the actualisation of the active intellect through

philosophical reflection conducted in the setting of the virtuous city. The convergence with Raju's principle of anthropological centrality is striking: both thinkers locate the philosophical question of the human being at the centre of their respective projects, both insist upon the integration of intellectual and ethical dimensions, and both regard philosophical inquiry as inseparable from the practical question of human flourishing.

Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, c. 980–1037) developed in his *Metaphysics of the Healing* a more detailed account of the human soul as an immaterial substance with a destiny that transcends bodily existence [5;350]. The soul, on Ibn Sīnā's account, is capable of intellectual ascent through degrees of abstraction toward direct contact with the active intellect, and this ascent constitutes the proper philosophical itinerary of the human being. The resonance with Raju's account of the human spirit as the integrative dimension of human existence is unmistakable, even though the conceptual frameworks within which the two thinkers operate are distinct.

Al-Bīrūnī (973–1048) presents a different but equally significant resonance with Raju's project. His pioneering comparative study *India* — written after extensive personal engagement with Indian scholars and texts — constitutes one of the earliest sustained exercises in comparative philosophical inquiry [6;5]. Al-Bīrūnī's methodological commitments — patient philological labour, sympathetic engagement with the perspectives of those being studied, careful attention to the conceptual structures within which philosophical positions are formulated — anticipate by nearly a thousand years the methodological principles that Raju would later articulate as reciprocal illumination. The recognition of al-Bīrūnī as a forerunner of contemporary comparative philosophy is one of the principal gains of bringing Raju's framework into engagement with the Central Asian tradition.

Yusuf Khos Hojib's *Kutadgu Bilig* (1069) develops a philosophical anthropology in poetic-allegorical form through the four figures of Justice, Fortune, Intellect, and Restraint, presenting an integrated vision of the virtuous human being and the well-ordered society [11;41]. The work shares with Raju's comparative anthropology the conviction that the philosophical question of the human being cannot be separated from the practical questions of how human beings should live and how societies should be organised. Alisher Navoiy (1441–1501) extends this anthropological tradition in a sophisticated Sufi-humanist register, presenting the human being as a wayfarer toward spiritual realisation whose proper development requires the integration of intellectual, moral, and contemplative dimensions.

Engaging Raju with these Central Asian resources demonstrates the productive operation of the principle of reciprocal illumination. Raju's framework illuminates the Central Asian tradition by providing systematic methodological articulation of the comparative practice that al-Bīrūnī had pioneered, by offering an analytical vocabulary through which the multidimensional anthropologies of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and the later poetic-philosophical tradition can be brought into mutual conversation, and by situating the Central Asian heritage within the wider comparative project of contemporary global philosophy [1;294]. The Central Asian tradition reciprocally illuminates Raju's framework by providing additional historical resources for the comparative project beyond the Indian–Western bilateralism that characterised Raju's own work, by demonstrating that the methodological practices Raju articulated were independently anticipated in another classical tradition, and by offering specific philosophical resources — al-Bīrūnī's account of religious diversity, Ibn Sīnā's account of intellectual ascent, the *Kutadgu Bilig*'s integration of ethics and politics — that the comparative project Raju inaugurated can productively engage.

The comparative engagement of Raju's philosophical anthropology with the Central Asian intellectual tradition yields several conclusions of substantive philosophical significance. First, the engagement establishes that Raju's three methodological principles — reciprocal illumination, anthropological centrality, and synthetic ambition — possess applicability beyond the specific traditions Raju himself most directly engaged. The Central Asian tradition, with its distinct historical formation and conceptual vocabulary, can be productively brought into the kind of comparative engagement Raju's methodological work envisioned. This adaptability of the methodological framework is one of the principal indicators of its philosophical depth [2;145].

Second, the engagement demonstrates that the Central Asian classical tradition itself contains substantial resources for philosophical anthropology that have not yet been fully integrated into contemporary global philosophical conversation. Al-Fārābī's account of the virtuous city, Ibn Sīnā's analysis of the soul, al-Bīrūnī's pioneering comparative method, the Kutadgu Bilig's ethical-political anthropology, and Navoiy's Sufi-humanist articulation of the human wayfarer each represent distinctive contributions that the contemporary comparative project would benefit from engaging in sustained form. Raju's methodological framework provides one of the principal vehicles through which this integration can be undertaken.

Third, the engagement carries direct implications for the contemporary cultural and philosophical project of New Uzbekistan. The notion of a Third Renaissance, which has emerged as one of the principal organising ideas of contemporary Uzbek intellectual and political discourse, identifies the recovery of the Central Asian classical heritage in dialogue with global philosophical currents as a central task of present-day cultural work. Raju's methodological framework — particularly the principle of reciprocal illumination — provides resources for the responsible conduct of this hermeneutic project [12;12]. The classical heritage is recovered in conditions that include the experience of modernity and the present-day plurality of religious and philosophical viewpoints within Uzbek society itself; the engagement with this heritage therefore requires the kind of patient hermeneutic labour that Raju's methodological work theorised and that the Central Asian tradition itself, in al-Bīrūnī's pioneering example, had practised.

Finally, the engagement suggests the prospects of a wider comparative anthropology that includes the Central Asian tradition as a full participant alongside the Indian, Chinese, and Western traditions that have figured most prominently in twentieth-century comparative work. The conditions of contemporary global philosophy — the recognition that no single tradition exhausts the resources of philosophical reflection, the practical demand for intercultural understanding generated by globalisation, the renewed academic interest in classical traditions previously marginalised — make the present moment particularly propitious for the kind of comparative anthropology that Raju's framework, brought into productive dialogue with the Central Asian heritage, can sustain. The continuing development of this comparative project represents one of the principal philosophical tasks that contemporary Uzbek scholarship can undertake in dialogue with the wider world.

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