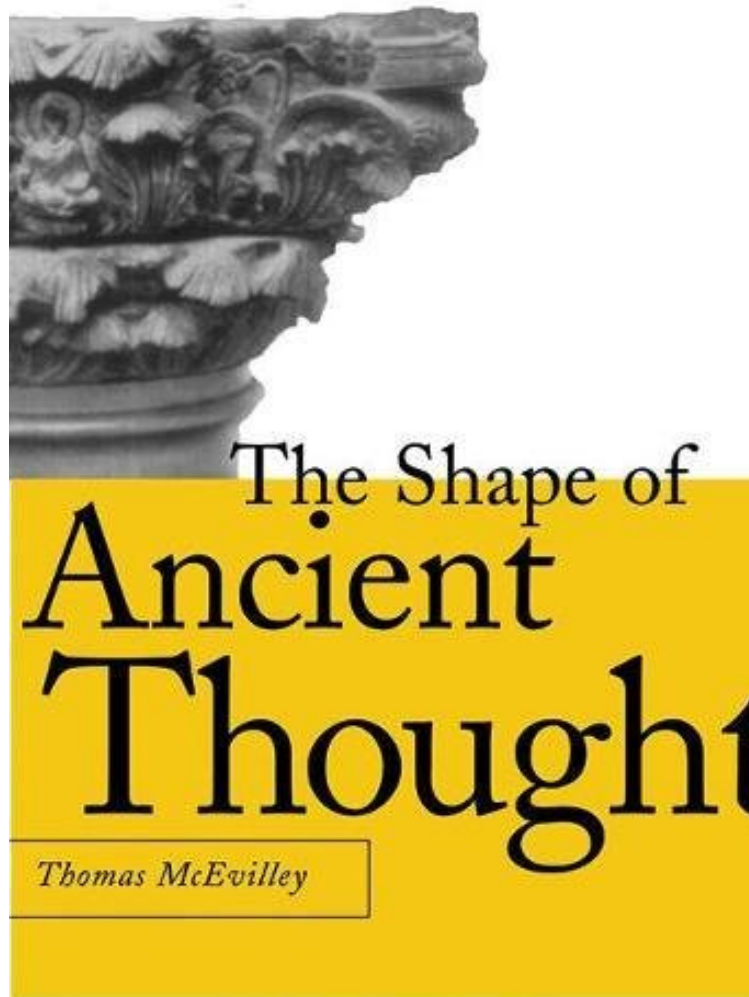


# The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies

*Thomas C. McEvilley*

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**Thomas C. McEvilley : The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. What a great bookBy Norcal UserWhat a great book. Its arguments reveal much about the real history of early western thought and it calls for a paradigm shift in how important aspects of intellectual and spiritual history must be viewed. Aside from the wealth of fascinating comparative analysis it

offers, it lays bare our deeply rooted prejudices. This book sheds a great light on some key currents of human thought and culture.<sup>8</sup> of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and deep insights into the cultural diffusion of philosophical ideas  
By Shopper  
Thomas McEvelley has spent the better part of a very full and fruitful lifetime developing and nurturing the ideas that are so beautifully presented in this amazing book. Trained as a Greek philologist, Dr. McEvelley (that's what I always called him when he was one of my favorite professors as an undergraduate at Rice University) is steeped in the roots of ancient Greek philosophy. He has also deeply imbibed from the ancient philosophical traditions of India. *The Shape of Ancient Thought* traces in exquisite detail the intricate cross-fertilizations of ancient Greek and ancient Indian philosophical schools of thought. The case is persuasively made that there were surprising and undeniable influences flowing in both directions at different times. Dr. McEvelley is perhaps the only scholar alive today competent enough and talented enough to present these insights. Without a doubt, *The Shape of Ancient Thought* is one of the most important and interesting books ever written. A pure joy and delight to read, with copious footnotes, to boot!<sup>5</sup> of 6 people found the following review helpful. which is fine. I hope the author will consider making it ...  
By Thinker  
thinker  
Fascinating! Left me wanting more. The book was somewhat academic, which is fine. I hope the author will consider making it more accessible to the lay-person because the subject is truly so interesting, not anything most of us grew up learning about in school, and so absolutely relevant to understanding of our origins in the West and to the development of Christianity which has shaped our world so much.

Spanning thirty years of intensive research, this book proves what many scholars could not explain: that today's Western world must be considered the product of both Greek and Indian thought  
Western and Eastern philosophies.  
Thomas McEvelley explores how trade, imperialism, and migration currents allowed cultural philosophies to intermingle freely throughout India, Egypt, Greece, and the ancient Near East. This groundbreaking reference will stir relentless debate among philosophers, art historians, and students.

From the Publisher  
Two Worlds, One Philosophical Cradle: Scholar Explores Hidden Kinship Between Eastern and Western Culture in Revolutionary Study; In the Early Days, Ideas Traveled Freely Between India and Greece  
A revolutionary study by the classical philologist and art historian Thomas McEvelley is about to challenge much of academia. In *THE SHAPE OF ANCIENT THOUGHT*, an empirical study of the roots of Western culture, the author argues that Eastern and Western civilizations have not always had separate, autonomous metaphysical schemes, but have mutually influenced each other over a long period of time. Examining ancient trade routes, imperialist movements, and migration currents, he shows how some of today's key philosophical ideas circulated and intermingled freely in the triangle between Greece, India, and Persia, leading to an intense metaphysical interchange between Greek and Indian cultures. As the author explains it, "The records of caravan routes are like the philosophical stemmata of history, the trails of oral discourses moving through communities, of texts copied from texts. . . . What they reveal is not a structure of parallel straight lines one labeled Greece, another Persia, another India but a tangled web in which an element in one culture often leads to elements in others." While scholars have sensed a philosophical kinship between Eastern and Western cultures for many decades, *THE SHAPE OF ANCIENT THOUGHT* is the first study to provide the empirical evidence. Covering a period ranging from 600 B.C. until the era of Neoplatonism and a geographical expanse reaching across the ancient world, McEvelley explores the key philosophical paradigms of these cultures, such as Monism, the doctrine of reincarnation in India and Egypt, and early Pluralism in Greece and India, to reveal striking similarities between the two metaphysical systems. Based on 30 years of intense intellectual inquiry and research and on hundreds of early historical, philosophical, spiritual, and Buddhist texts, the study offers a scope and an interdisciplinary perspective that has no equal in the scholarly world. With a study like *THE SHAPE OF ANCIENT THOUGHT*, students and scholars of history, philosophy, cultural studies, and classics will find that their field has been put on entirely new footing. Yet as editor Bill Beckley points out, the merits of this work reach into a broader social context: "More recently, events have lent an unexpected urgency to the [book] by focusing the world's attention on Afghanistan (ancient Bactria), where much of the story unfolds in this volume, and where the difficult karma of cross-cultural contacts is still alive."  
From the Inside Flap". . . one of the great works of scholarship of our time.  
McEvelley has brought together complex and diverse data to weave a tightly organized, panoramic account. (. . .) I should think that [the book] will become indispensable for any and all specialists on antiquity." Professor Katherine Harper, Indologist and art historian, author of *The Roots of Tantra* "This is a wonderful book. The author has assembled material from the ancient Greek world and the world of ancient India and systematically demonstrated the interchange of ideas and mutual influence. . ." Professor Christopher Chapple, Indologist, author of *Karma and Creativity* "Reading it is like reading a novel. Thomas McEvelley has given us the novelistic anthropology of our time." David Shapiro, Poet  
About the Author  
Thomas McEvelley is Distinguished Lecturer in Art History at Rice University, where he has been on the faculty since 1969. The author holds a Ph.D. in classical philology. In addition to Greek and Latin, he has studied Sanskrit and has taught numerous courses in Greek and Indian culture, history of religion and philosophy, and art. He has published countless scholarly monographs and articles in various journals on early Greek poetry, philosophy, and religion as well as on contemporary art and culture. He has been a visiting

professor at Yale University and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, among others. He was the recipient of a Fulbright Grant in 1993 and has been awarded an NEA critics grant and the Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism by the College Art Association. His other books include *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt* (Allworth Press). He lives in New York City.