

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach*. By Steven M. Emmanuel. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017. xiii + 263 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-1-119-06841-9.

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In the past twenty years, Buddhist philosophy has been increasingly accepted as a discipline in anglophone academia. In 2001, the International Society for Buddhist Philosophy was founded, shortly after the American Academy of Religion included a program unit on Buddhist Philosophy, and in 2015, the first issue of the *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* was published by SUNY Press. Steven Emmanuel's volume is, thus, necessary as well as timely, and makes a significant contribution to the field. Emmanuel was able to solicit contributions from some of the leading scholars in the field: seventeen original essays as well as a reprint of the trailblazing "From the Five Aggregates to Phenomenal Consciousness: Toward a Cross-Cultural Cognitive Science" by Jake H. Davis and Evan Thompson, which was originally published in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), also edited by Emmanuel.

In his passionate introduction, Emmanuel sets the bar high for this volume. Drawing on multiple theorists and philosophers, he strives to do justice to the "global character' of philosophy" (p. 2), critiques the harmful "conceit" that "Western philosophy" is "coexistent with the history of the subject" (p. 2), suggests that "globalization was already creating vibrant and diverse cultures throughout the pre-modern world" such as "Greco-Buddhist" civilization (p. 3), rejects what Stuhr has termed a "pluralism by partition" (p. 5), and instead envisions Peter Herschock's "distinctive and achieved quality of interaction" (p. 5). He also rightly cautions against treating Buddhist philosophy as a monolith. His goal seems to be a dialogue between Buddhist and "Western" philosophies to advance a "global philosophy" that includes and employs the languages of both. This is an ambitious but necessary agenda that advances us on the way towards a global philosophy without which humanity might not be able to solve the immediate problems that we face. Judging from their past work, the authors he assembled are definitely up to this challenging task.

In chapter 1, Christopher W. Gowans employs "Hadot's account in interpreting Tsongkhapa" (p. 12). The French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922–2010) suggests

that Greco-Roman philosophy has to be understood as “way of life” (p. 11) and that its goal is a “radical transformation” through “a set of spiritual exercises” (p. 12). The purpose of philosophy is mediation and remembrance. Gowan presents two paths of Hadot’s “philosophy as a way of life” (p. 11): The Stoic focus on the moral choice and the Epicurean focus on the “pleasure of existing” (p. 15). Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), a Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist, maps out the Buddhist path in three stages, the persons of “small, medium, and great capacity” (p. 17): the *śrāvaka*, the *pratyeka-buddha*, and the bodhisattva. The main practice is the six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*). Gowan concludes that Tsongkhapa proposes a “philosophy as a way of life” in Hadot’s sense in that both focus on suffering and strive to “bring about this transformation” (p. 23) through practices that include philosophical reflection despite the differences in their cosmologies and epistemologies.

In “The Other Side of Realism: Panpsychism and Yogācāra,” Douglas Duckworth employs the distinction between a “subjective idealism” à la George Berkeley (1685–1753) and an “absolute idealism” understood as pantheism as envisioned by Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924) and, to some degree, by Peter Frederick Strawson (1919–2006) to read the philosophy of the Yogācāra thinkers Vasubandhu (fl. ca. fourth or fifth century CE), Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–667), Dignāga (ca. 480–ca. 540), and Śākya Chogden (1428–1507). Interpreting central Yogācāra doctrines such as “mind-only” (Skt. *citta-mātra*) and the “three natures” (Skt. *trisvabhāva*), Duckworth comes to the conclusion that “Yogācāra may better be described in the more neutral terms of panpsychism rather than the subjective idealism of ‘mind only’” (p. 38). Duckworth raises fascinating concepts such as Strawson’s distinction between “physicalism” and “physicism” (p. 34) and the Yogācāra adage that our conception of matter is observer-relative that potentially have far-reaching implications for the discussions on pantheism in contemporary philosophy of mind.

On the one hand, chapter 3, John J. Holder’s “Emergentist Naturalism in Early Buddhism and Deweyan Pragmatism,” not only continues Duckworth’s discussion of pantheism but also integrates Gowan’s “philosophy as a way of life” in this discussion; on the other, it brandishes a different vision of global philosophy that is more intercultural than comparative. Holder does not argue that text B reflects concepts developed in text A, nor does he use concepts developed by text A to interpret text B, but rather uses two philosophical systems, Dewey and “early Buddhism,” to outline an exciting player in “contemporary metaphysics” (p. 45), namely “emergentism.” He introduces this philosophical system, which holds “that higher order processes (such as mental phenomena or aesthetic meanings) emerge from, but are not reducible to, lower order processes” (p. 48) as the “middle way” alternative (pp. 45–46) to the two problematic extremes of dualism and reductionist physicalism. Holder then draws equally from Dewey and early Buddhism to map out an emergentism that is based on a “metaphysic

of causality" (p. 49) and is regulated by the "principle of continuity" (p. 51). Such an emergentism suggests that "higher order operations grow from lower order operations" and "denies that explanations must appeal to non-natural realities" (p. 51). According to Holder, "for both Dewey and the Buddha emergentist naturalism applies to human nature itself" (p. 53) and accounts for moral agency and religious meaning.

The transition to chapter 4, Ricki Bliss's and Graham Priest's "Metaphysical Dependence, East and West," marks another break. In this chapter, the authors introduce a third method of doing comparative philosophy. They propose applying an independent taxonomy (pp. 64–76) to "Eastern philosophy" (pp. 67–72), particularly Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, and Huayan 華嚴 philosophy, and "Western philosophy" (pp. 73–80) with a special focus on Aristotle, Leibniz, and "contemporary orthodoxy" (p. 77). The authors introduce four different kind of relations, "antireflexivity," "antisymmetry," "transitivity," and "extendability" (p. 64), and advance sixteen different categories (pp. 65–67). They conclude that in Abhidharma, relations disclose "antisymmetry" and "antireflexivity" (p. 70), in Madhayamaka, "extendability" and "infinity" (p. 71), in Huayan, "coherentism" (p. 72), in Aristotle, "antisymmetry" and "transitivity" (p. 75), in Leibniz, "antisymmetry" and "God" (p. 77), and in "contemporary orthodoxy," "five different ways" of "foundationalism" (p. 78). In their final assessment, the authors observe that "Western traditions have been largely foundationalist" whilst "Buddhist traditions have been largely anti-foundationalist" (p. 80). This anti-foundationalism "can remove the myopia of the Western foundationalist view" (p. 80).

In chapter 5, "Metaphysics and Metametaphysics with Buddhism: The Lay of the Land," Tom J. F. Tillemans reads Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka Buddhism as analytical philosophy. He commences his essay with the observation that both analytical and Buddhist philosophy are interested and engage in "metametaphysics," that is, the inquiry into "the foundations of metaphysics as a whole." His method contains only an implied comparison of Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–ca. 250), Candrakīrti (ca. 600–ca. 650), and Tsongkhapa with Frank Jackson, Kit Fine, and Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000) whereby the latter three provide the terminology for the inquiry rather than function as conversation partners for the former three. Tillemans focuses almost exclusively on the philosophical position of the Madhyamaka. Investigating the "unqualified" negative argumentation—"F does not exist . . . because it is not A nor B"—of Nāgārjuna as well as the "qualified" negative argumentation—"F does not REALLY exist . . . because it is not REALLY A nor REALLY B" (pp. 87–88)—of Tsongkhapa, Tillemans rejects the interpretations of "quietism and panfictionalism" (p. 95) and suggests that "what the Madhyamika would be doing . . . is a refusal of ontology across the board" (p. 98), and that "it would part ways with contemporary analytical metaphysics and would resemble . . . the latter philosophy of Wittgenstein" (p. 99).

Chapter 6, Christian Coseru's "Are Reasons Causally Relevant for Action: Dharmakīrti and the Embodied Cognition Paradigm," continues what Holder had started in chapter 3: a naturalist account of consciousness in Buddhist philosophy. While Holder was interested in emergentism in general, Coseru tackles the question of "whether or not Dharmakīrti shares a common concern with current practitioners of naturalized epistemology" (p. 109). In other words, Coseru, like Tillemans, probes whether specific Buddhist texts can contribute to particular discourses in current philosophy. This constitutes the fourth model of comparative philosophy introduced in this volume. Coseru borrows the notion of "embodied cognition" from the pioneering "embodied mind" by Francisco Varela, Eleanor Rosch, and Evan Thompson. Coseru begins his argument by countering two possible objections to his project, which claim "that the reductionist models of cognitive science differ . . . from those of" Buddhism and evoke "the causal closure of the physical domain" (p. 111). Coseru responds to these objections by demonstrating that Dharmakīrti's epistemology can be understood as a "phenomenological naturalism" (p. 112) that "closely aligns with the so-called 4E (embodied, enactive, embedded, and extended) approach" (p. 110). He also argues that "empirical evidence" and "a theoretically robust account of how intentional content, as the subjective basis for reasoning, can in turn play a causal role" (p. 117). Thus, according to Coseru, both objections do not apply to Dharmakīrti.

Chapter 7 marks a twofold shift in the tone of this volume, as Bret W. Davis evokes East Asian Buddhism and continental philosophy in his "Zen's Nonegocentric Perspectivism." This engaging essay employs a fifth model of comparative philosophy. In spite of its title, its thesis statement ("The epistemology implied in Zen [禪] is a kind of perspectivism, and yet it differs significantly from the egocentric varieties of perspectivism that are prevalent in the Western tradition" [p. 124]), and its method (to approach "Zen, in part, from the Western discourses on perspectivism" [p. 124]), this essay neither presents one "Zen perspective" nor engages in any kind of comparison. Rather, and to my mind this is much more valuable, Davis develops creatively as well as poetically a "nonegocentric perspectivism" from multiple sources including, but not limited to, Zen and "Western" philosophy. Piecing together sources from multiple authors and traditions, Davis creates a prototype of the global philosophy Emmanuel envisioned in his introduction. Interrogating conceptions of perspectivism, omniscience, multiverses, and, most of all, nonegocentricism, Davis's discussion reaches its crescendo in the image of the Zen adept: "Having emptied herself of attachment to any particular perspective . . . she would release an innate ability to kenotically emphasize with the widest variety of perspectives, balancing their claims and emphasizing each in its proper time and place" (p. 138).

In chapter 8, Steven Heine continues this conversation between continental and East Asian philosophy. Even though his essay is titled "Rhetoric of Uncertainty in Zen

Buddhism and Western Literary Modernism,” Heine receives most impulses for his conception of “uncertainty” from Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) *gongan* 公案 (Jp. *kōan*) commentaries and uses the writings of James Joyce (1882–1941) and Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) mostly to illustrate its cross-cultural appeal and application. He thus employs a sixth model of comparative philosophy: Using text B to illustrate the ideology of text A. In other words, Heine advances a genuinely Zen (Ch. Chan) theory of uncertainty. In this essay, he proposes that the process to self-knowledge introduced in narratives of the *gongan* and the commentary thereon “involved undergoing a profound experience of doubt and anxiety leading to . . . ‘Zen illness’. . . . The goal was reached by seizing opportune moments. . . . There was no specific religio-literary destination . . . required. . . . The result was an ambiguous and inconclusive state of mind . . . Adepts were expected to persuade others . . . while admitting that . . . expression is a matter of the scattering of sand into the eyes of the reader” (p. 155). Heine concludes that uncertainty was not only characteristic of the “pre-satori” but also the “post-satori experience” and reveals that “I am uncertain about uncertainty” (p. 160).

Chapter 9 by Jake H. Davis and Evan Thompson, “From the Five Aggregates to Phenomenal Consciousness: Toward a Cross-Cultural Cognitive Science,” returns to the topic of consciousness explored by Duckworth in chapter 2 and Coseru in chapter 6. However, the authors of chapter 9 adopt the model Holder employed in chapter 3: developing a new theory out of two sets of sources. While Thompson and Davis consult a multiplicity of sources, they classify them into the “first-person practices” of Buddhism and the “third-person observation of the brain and behavior” in cognitive science (p. 165). The purpose of their “cross-cultural project” is “to bring the theoretical framework of cognitive science into conversation with one traditional and foundational Buddhist model of the mind” (p. 166). In the current essay, they discuss three topics: mindfulness, the five *skandhas*, and “attention and consciousness” (p. 176). Following the ideal of neurophenomenology suggested by Varela, the authors engage with a variety of thinkers, including the founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, Jon Kabat-Zinn, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, and the philosopher Jesse Prinz, as well as with the scriptures of the Pali canon, in their discussion of each of these three topics. They conclude that “advanced mindfulness practitioners are able to disrupt habitual emotional activity” (p. 180) and “to reduce elaborative cognitive processing and thereby allow for increased phenomenal consciousness of current stimuli” (p. 181).

Erin McCarthy shifts the topic of discussion to the notion of gender in Buddhism. In chapter 10, “Embodying Change: Buddhism and Feminist Philosophy,” she follows in the footsteps of Rita Gross to “revalorize” Buddhism (p. 190). To accomplish this goal, she adopts the model of comparative philosophy applied in the first two chapters: particularly, she applies the feminist lens of gender analysis to a set of mostly premodern

texts such as the scriptures cited by Diana Paul and Alan Sponberg, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, and the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 of Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253). In those texts, she discovers not only traces of what Sponberg calls “institutional androcentrism” (p. 190) and “ascetic misogyny” (p. 192) but also visions of androgyny and equality. These ideals are supported by the philosophies of emptiness and non-dualism as well as Dōgen’s work. Following the work of Reiko Ohnuma, McCarthy finds a scriptural basis that envisions “revalorizing the maternal body” (p. 197). It is her conviction that “although feminism has a good deal to teach Buddhism, the opposite is also true—that they are congenial, rather than antithetical” (p. 190) and “if we bring together the *ensō* [empty circle] with feminist philosophical thought and with the revalorizing of women’s bodies and the maternal in Buddhism . . . we can begin to revalorize women’s bodies in the tradition in a way that is liberatory” (p. 201).

While chapters 9 and 10 seek solutions to contemporary problems in classical texts, David Cummiskey compares Buddhist and European modernism in chapter 11. In “Buddhist Modernism and Kant on Enlightenment,” Cummiskey introduces a seventh model of comparative philosophy and suggests a parallel reading of sources for Buddhist modernism and European enlightenment. Interrogating engaged Buddhism in Vietnam, Tibet, and Thailand, Cummiskey proposes six features of Buddhist modernism: a central focus on the “release from suffering,” “moral psychology” (p. 208), “Buddhism as philosophy,” “the four immeasurables” (p. 209), “human rights” (p. 210), and the claim that “Buddhist teachings are a system of testable beliefs” (p. 211). Similarly, Kant emphasized “religious freedom,” “morality” (p. 212), “philosophical reflection and meditation” (p. 213), “cultivation” (p. 214), and “discipline” (p. 214). Cummiskey suggests that the Scottish enlightenment thinker David Hume (1711–1776) even conceives of the self, not unlike Buddhist thinkers, as “a bundle of interacting cognitive functions” (p. 217). The fundamental difference between Buddhist modernity and European enlightenment is, according to Cummiskey, that “for Buddhists . . . the key to awakening is the realization of the fundamental . . . interconnectedness of human beings” (p. 218).

In the final chapter of this volume, “Compassion and Rebirth: Some Ethical Implications,” John Powers engages contemporary Western Buddhism. In particular, Powers probes the claim of contemporary Buddhists such as Stephen Batchelor and Buddhādāsa (1906–1993), and Buddhist philosophers such as Jay Garfield, that the concept of rebirth is not central to Buddhism. This, as Cummiskey showed in chapter 11, is part of a project in the modern period to imagine Buddhism as “rational philosophy.” Batchelor “conceives of Buddha as someone who rejected beliefs that were common during his time, used reason and direct perception to figure out how the world works and shared his ideas with others” (p. 222). Buddhādāsa argued that Buddha denied “any substantial, ongoing entity or soul” (p. 225), and “Garfield proposes a

radically new model, according to which a community of practitioners pools its efforts over generations, gradually improving in generosity, ethics . . . and other virtues" (p. 231). Powers advances two arguments against this rejection of the doctrine of rebirth. First, he argues with Bhikku Bodhi, based on the scriptures, that the belief in rebirth is central to Buddhist doctrine. Second, using the ethical thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and Steven Pinker, he argues that the rejection of the notion of rebirth is not tenable on moral grounds. Powers concludes our journey through Buddhist philosophy by addressing a current philosophical argument within the Buddhist tradition.

Not of grave importance, but at times confusing, are a few editorial idiosyncrasies. Individual chapters use different forms of citation; some writers such as Thomas Kirchner (chapter 8) and Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960; chapter 10) are cited by their given names; and chapter 4 refers to numbered sections even though no numbers are included in the headings and subheadings of the chapter. But those minor distractions do not obstruct the rich tapestry of Buddhist philosophers being compared to, and in dialogue with, their European and North American counterparts presented in these chapters.

I have to admit that I am ambivalent about volumes like this one. This is not a criticism of the quality of the individual essays or of the book as a whole. To be clear, I think this volume is valuable to anyone interested not only in Buddhist and global philosophies but also in philosophy in general. This volume introduces the diversity of Buddhist philosophy and important links and comparisons between individual Buddhist and "Western" philosophers. In some sense, however, the title *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach* might be misleading, and a title along the lines of *Comparative Philosophy: Engaging Buddhism* could be more appropriate. Be that as it may, the individual chapters are carefully researched, envisioned, and developed. The value, accessibility, and quality of this volume are not in doubt. The questions that this volume raises are not unique to this particular project but rather apply to quite a few works in comparative and global philosophy, including ones that I have been involved with myself as contributor or editor. They concern the very foundation and method of comparative, as well as global, philosophy, and philosophy in a globalized age in general. I agree with Emmanuel that it is necessary to move away from Eurocentric approaches and that we need more projects in global philosophy. However, the key question is how do we lay the foundation for such a global philosophy.

And this brings me to some questions: first, while generally accepted in our discipline, the term "Western" (and, equally, "Eastern") "philosophy" is highly problematic for numerous reasons. Most of all, it excludes traditions that do not fit nicely into the analytical-continental divide, as well as the French-German narrative of continental philosophy, and constructs a counter-factual dichotomy between the "self" of "Western" and the "other" that is "Eastern" philosophy. Where does, for example,

“Western” Buddhism fit into this picture? As mentioned above, Emmanuel points out the difficulty of these kinds of narratives in his introduction. Second, how can we include “Buddhist philosophy on its own terms” into global philosophy and use it to transform the very foundations of academic philosophy itself? Third, how do exercises in comparative philosophy help us transform the way we do philosophy? How does comparing individual Buddhist and “Western” philosophers assist in developing a language and method for a global philosophy? Introducing Buddhist thinkers to readers familiar with the practice of European philosophy is a valuable and laudable project, but do comparative and global philosophy not invite us to turn the table and examine European and American philosophies using the language of Buddhist philosophy as well and to finally find a new terminology that allows us to conduct philosophy in a truly global way? Another question is whether authors engaging in comparative philosophy need to be able to access their main sources in the original language or to assess the strengths and weaknesses of translations. Last but not least, recent discussions have brought the overall demographics of the contributors to, and the proponents of, visions of comparative and global philosophy into focus. I think this is an important topic to keep in mind as we strive to globalize philosophy and make academia more inclusive.

Again, these questions are not unique to this volume but are inevitably raised by it. Given the framework of how we currently do philosophy, Emmanuel’s collection constitutes a worthwhile and formidable contribution. But I cannot help wondering what lessons we might learn from these insightful essays and the philosophers they engage to subvert our current framework of doing philosophy so that our field inches closer to the wonderful ideals Emmanuel outlines in his introduction.

*Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan.* By Levi McLaughlin. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019. xiv + 219 pages. Hardback: ISBN-13: 978-0-8248-7542-8.

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Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (lit. Value Creation Study Association; hereafter Soka Gakkai) is a lay Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhist organization which began as a small group of educators in the 1930s and became a highly influential religious movement in postwar Japan. It now claims over eight million households in Japan and close to two million members in one hundred ninety-two countries around the world under the organizational structure of Soka Gakkai International (SGI).