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Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters To Philosophy



Synopsis

This is a book for scholars of Western philosophy who wish to engage with Buddhist philosophy, or who simply want to extend their philosophical horizons. It is also a book for scholars of Buddhist studies who want to see how Buddhist theory articulates with contemporary philosophy. *Engaging Buddhism: Why it Matters to Philosophy* articulates the basic metaphysical framework common to Buddhist traditions. It then explores questions in metaphysics, the philosophy of mind, phenomenology, epistemology, the philosophy of language and ethics as they are raised and addressed in a variety of Asian Buddhist traditions. In each case the focus is on philosophical problems; in each case the connections between Buddhist and contemporary Western debates are addressed, as are the distinctive contributions that the Buddhist tradition can make to Western discussions. *Engaging Buddhism* is not an introduction to Buddhist philosophy, but an engagement with it, and an argument for the importance of that engagement. It does not pretend to comprehensiveness, but it does address a wide range of Buddhist traditions, emphasizing the heterogeneity and the richness of those traditions. The book concludes with methodological reflections on how to prosecute dialogue between Buddhist and Western traditions. "Garfield has a unique talent for rendering abstruse philosophical concepts in ways that make them easy to grasp. This is an important book, one that can profitably be read by scholars of Western and non-Western philosophy, including specialists in Buddhist philosophy. This is in my estimation the most important work on Buddhist philosophy in recent memory. It covers a wide range of topics and provides perhaps the clearest analysis of some core Buddhist ideas to date. This is landmark work. I think it's the best cross-cultural analysis of the relevance of Buddhist thought for contemporary philosophy in the present literature."-C. John Powers, Professor, School of Culture, History & Language, Australian National University

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Customer Reviews

Garfield has written a good introduction to basic Buddhist concepts such as suffering, primal confusion (ignorance), dependent origination (causation), emptiness and, last and foremost, the self. His brief survey of the history of Buddhist schools is handy knowledge. I much appreciate the tie-ins with western philosophers, who have in the past and are now considering many of the same questions that concern Buddhist philosophers past and present. Though I have not yet finished reading the text, I have been recommending it to my thoughtful and curious friends.. As a Zen practitioner, I am delighted to discover ancient sources in Buddhist thought that underlie Zen practice. As a non-philosopher (though the book casts an interesting shadow on this assertion), the discussion of philosophical concepts takes my focused attention and careful consideration to grasp its meaning. Well written, occasionally evoking smiles and chuckles, it is not a dry tome. Rather, I call it a passionate presentation of profound ideas.

This book is extraordinarily clear and valuable in the manner in which it brings Buddhist philosophy into encounter with Western philosophy, too often just known as "philosophy" as though it were the real deal and other approaches merely ethnic expressions. The manner in which Buddhist philosophy both meets and diverges from Western philosophy is fascinating and the outcome is a greatly enriched horizon. I recommend this book highly.

I am not sure what audience this is intended for. There is some interface with western philosophy, but it deals mainly with an overview of different subjects, such as epistemology, in Buddhism. I am enjoying this book, it is easy enough to read and it contains enough new information to stay interesting.

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