

Westerhoff, Jan (2018), *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by Rafal Stepień

When the time comes, in some hopefully not too distant age, to write the history of the incorporation of non-Western philosophies into the curriculum and canon of philosophy as a whole, Jan Westerhoff's *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* will stand as one of the landmark monographs in the chapter charting the trajectory of Indian Buddhist philosophy. Somehow, the book manages to combine throughout what can only be described as mastery of the source material with astute theoretical and methodological meta-discourse, and to do so with rhetorical elegance and philosophical ingenuity. It is divided into four main chapters dealing respectively with Abhidharma (35-83), Madhyamaka (84-146), Yogācāra (147-216), and The School of Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti (217-281). Preceding these are two Diagrams of Schools and Thinkers (xxiv-xxv, of The Main Schools of Indian Buddhism and of Major Indian Buddhist Philosophers and Texts) and an Introduction (1-34), while following them are some Concluding Remarks (282-285), a Bibliography (287-307), and an Index (308-326). In what follows, I will provide a summary of the book's contents liberally interspersed with evaluative comments, and then proffer in the final paragraphs some general observations on its approach overall.

The Introduction is divided into six sections. The first briefly adopts the canonical Buddhist metaphor of a wheel to describe both the static and dynamic aspects of the story that is to unfold (2), while the subsequent five propose to heuristically conceive Indian Buddhist philosophy in terms of a game. Westerhoff distinguishes four factors that shape the dynamics of philosophical developments: "*arguments, texts, meditative practices, and historical background*" (2), and notes that he will treat the last of these but

occasionally, on the grounds both that the social, political, and economic contexts in which philosophers live exert uncertain influences on their philosophies and that relevant reliable historical contextual sources are in this case exceedingly rare. Westerhoff specifies that he is:

not attempting to cover the whole development of Buddhist thought from the historical Buddha up to the present through all Buddhist cultures, but focus on a specific, seminal place and period: the golden age of Buddhist philosophy in India, from the composition of the Abhidharma texts (about the beginning of the first millennium CE) up to the time of Dharmakīrti (sixth or seventh century CE). (5)

In structuring his material, Westerhoff pursues what he calls “a hybrid approach” according to which the four major schools are treated “according to the traditional and plausible historical sequence Abhidharma–Madhyamaka–Yogācāra–Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti, while paying attention to their mutual interrelations, and discuss[ing] the difficulties in clearly differentiating between them” (10). This approach allows considerable flexibility, which Westerhoff uses to advantage throughout the book in charting the roughly chronological sequence of Indian Buddhist philosophers and texts as well as mapping the development of key concepts and arguments across chronological and doxographical lines.

The Sources of the Game (11-24) are then listed in terms of the discourses of the historical Buddha and the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *tantras* succeeding them; the debates in which historical Indian Buddhist philosophers were expected to take part and which played no small role in structuring their texts; the various forms of commentaries, sub-commentaries, and auto-commentaries on base texts; and the doxographies used by Buddhist philosophers themselves to organize their own and others’ teachings. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that although Westerhoff makes a point of distinguishing between several types of commentary – such as *vivṛti*, *bhāṣya*, and *vārttika* – and discusses the development of the *sūtra*-style elliptical *kārikā* genre of text in some detail, no space is allotted here to investigation of the role the *śāstra* form – as the pan-Indian prose genre of intellectual discourse – played in informing the compositional style of much Buddhist philosophical rhetoric.

In any case, Westerhoff concludes his Introduction by clarifying and justifying his methodological approach to ancient Indian philosophical sources. In doing so, he suggests an approach to those aspects of traditional Buddhist accounts that sit uneasily with the accepted parameters of history, philosophy, and history of philosophy as practised in the 21st century West; he seeks neither to dispense with all assumptions (as if that were possible) nor to force the material into the fixed mould of the exegete's etic (as is witnessed all too often). Instead, Westerhoff proposes that, in order to do full justice to the hermeneutical maxim of charity, the "departure from a historical realist stance" (31) embodied in many a historical source of Buddhist philosophical insight needs to be provisionally accepted by "momentarily bracketing some of the naturalist assumptions we hold" (32). Such willingness to accept those premises of Buddhist philosophical stances altogether alien to contemporary philosophical discourse is a sustained, and welcome, feature of the book as a whole. In contradistinction to those among his various prior publications that seek more or less explicitly to justify Buddhist philosophy as 'philosophy' proper in accordance with the norms of the contemporary Anglo-American analytic tradition, Westerhoff here self-consciously adopts the position of the *historian* of philosophy who accepts that there may well be quite some intellectual distance to travel for the contemporary reader to arrive at an understanding of the classical source material in its own terms, and who furthermore undertakes to convey that material as faithfully as possible in the knowledge that the journey toward such understanding will bear philosophical fruit.

Chapter 1 conceptualizes the Abhidharma texts it treats as "fundamentally an attempt to systematize, and systematically expand, the Buddha's teachings as they are recorded in his discourses" (35-36). On this basis, Westerhoff initially outlines "three possible motivations for the composition of the Abhidharma: to provide an expansion of matrices (*mātrkā*); to expand texts composed in a question-and-answer format; and to develop a comprehensive ontological theory" (36). Following a brief foray into the question of the authenticity of the Abhidharma "as the authentic word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*)" (41), Westerhoff spends the bulk of the chapter surveying the philosophical positions of five of the accepted eighteen schools of Abhidharma: the Mahāsaṃghika and four subgroups of Sthaviranikāya: the Theravāda, Pudgalavāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Sautrāntika. No explicit justification is given for limiting discussion to these, but given the relatively parlous state of our knowledge as to the contents of and differentiations among the various schools of thought generally, though

not unproblematically, classed together as Abhidharma, some such delimitation was always going to be needful for a general history such as this, and Westerhoff does as well as anyone reasonably could in the space permitted to disentangle the myriad threads comprising the Abhidharmic corpus.

Discussion of the Mahāsaṃghika focuses on those aspects of its thought recognizable as precursors to Mahāyāna developments. Especial emphasis is placed on the Mahāsaṃghikas' expansion of the range of the notion of emptiness to cover not only the emptiness of persons (*pudgalanairātmya*) but of dharmas (*dharmanairātmya*) too (47). This Westerhoff glosses as a point of conceptual contact between Mahāsaṃghika and Madhyamaka. He interprets their acceptance of a notion of foundational consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*) as one of their "various conceptual seeds that can be considered to fully flourish in later Yogācāra theories" (48). Discussion of the Theravāda largely limits itself to the *Kathāvatthu*, traditionally ascribed to Moggaliputtatissa (whose name is more often rendered as Moggaliputta Tissa), and what Westerhoff describes as "its presentation of a rich variety of different positions *in nuce*, many of which can be seen to germinate into elaborate philosophical theories in later times" (52). The Pudgalavādins' views are given more extended discussion. Their notion of the *pudgala* or person is first juxtaposed with the mereological reductionism regarding selfhood characteristic of early Buddhist teachings. Westerhoff then outlines several overlapping ways in which to understand the *pudgala* in a philosophically coherent manner without lapsing into substantialism as to the self, before touching upon the conceptual points of correspondence between the *pudgala*, *ālayavijñāna*, and *tathāgatagarbha* Buddhist doctrines, all suspected by opponents of "introducing entities that at least *prima facie* look rather self-like" (60).

The longest discussion of any Abhidharma school is reserved for the Sarvāstivāda. After enumerating the major textual sources, Westerhoff summarizes the well-known Sarvāstivāda position that "past, present, and future all exist" (61), sets out four arguments in support of the basic position, proposes possible responses, and then charts the four interpretations of the doctrine propounded by Dharmatrāta, Ghoṣaka, Vasumitra, and Buddhadeva. In line with the general methodology adopted throughout the book, Westerhoff is not content merely to display the philosophical position under study, but undertakes the far more difficult task of working through its premises and implications, as well as the arguments underpinning them, to arrive at a global evaluation of its merits as a philosophical position. His treatment of

Sarvāstivāda thus manages to include philosophically astute critical discussion of topics as disparate as ontological substantialism, causation and simultaneity, momentariness and its relation to epistemological representationalism, direct perception and self-cognition, and the Abhidharma notion of *dharma* in terms of mereological and/or conceptual independence.

In the final section of the chapter on Abhidharma Westerhoff turns his attention to the Sautrāntika school (that is, assuming we are justified in terming Sautrāntika a form of Abhidharma at all, given its rejection of the authoritativeness of Abhidharma treatises). Westerhoff concentrates on the rejection by the Sautrāntika, and most specifically by the Vasubandhu of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, of the signature Sarvāstivāda espousal of the existence of the three times. This naturally leads to discussion of Vasubandhu's argument in support of the theory of momentariness, which Westerhoff calls the "argument from the *spontaneity of destruction*" (77).¹ The philosophical problems entailed by the posited momentariness of objects for perception of them, and the Sautrāntikas' responses to those problems in terms of their denial of the need for a separate object-condition supporting perception, are treated next, followed by their more general views as to mental continuity and *karma*. The chapter closes by assessing the similarities between Sautrāntika and Yogācāra, and more generally by considering Sautrāntika as a bridge between Abhidharma and Mahāyāna.

Thus we arrive at Chapter 2, on Madhyamaka. To signal the transition from Abhidharma to the various developments of Mahāyāna that will take up the remainder of the book, Westerhoff initially outlines the rise of the Mahāyāna movement as a whole and assesses its relation to Buddhist philosophy in general. Particular attention is given to the connections between Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and the overall Mahāyāna worldview, as well as to specifically Mahāyāna philosophical innovations concerning the bodhisattva, what Westerhoff calls the "de-ontologizing of reality" (87), and illusionism regarding the world.

There then follow two sections nominally devoted to the Madhyamaka School (89-99) and the Teachings of the Perfection of Wisdom (99-107). I say 'nominally' because this is one of the rare instances in the book where the arrangement of materials appears disjointed. Firstly, the section on Madhyamaka includes

¹ Two other Buddhist arguments for momentariness, those "from the *momentariness of cognition*" and "from *change*," are discussed in the context of Vasubandhu's and Asaṅga's Yogācāra works on 166-167 and 167-168 respectively.

extended discussion of Prajñāpāramitā texts and ideas, while the following section on the Perfection of Wisdom harkens back directly to the discussions of the Abhidharma project and of Mahāyāna illusionism preceding Westerhoff's introduction to Madhyamaka. More substantively, the fact that the section on Madhyamaka precedes that on Prajñāpāramitā may lead to confusion, given that Westerhoff himself understands the Madhyamaka founder Nāgārjuna to be “[t]he first Buddhist philosopher to develop the philosophical position of the Perfection of Wisdom texts in a systematic manner” (105). Indeed, Westerhoff claims no less than that “the Perfection of Wisdom texts are of universal significance for the interpretation of any post-Abhidharma school of Buddhist thought in India” (95). Given all this, disentangling the overlaps between these sections and placing the section on Prajñāpāramitā before that introducing Madhyamaka – in accordance with Westerhoff's own assessment of Prajñāpāramitā as a watershed for all subsequent Indian Buddhist philosophical thought – would perhaps make for smoother transitions between moves in this particular state of the game.

In any case, the chapter continues by outlining the Key Themes of Nāgārjuna's Thought (107-120). This initially focuses on Nāgārjuna's criticism of the Abhidharma and the significant differences between Abhidharma and Madhyamaka ushered in by Nāgārjuna's thoroughgoing rejection of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). Despite clearly delineating the distinct positions regarding *svabhāva* characteristic of the Abhidharma and Madhyamaka schools, Westerhoff pauses to note Nāgārjuna's acceptance of certain Abhidharma paradigms, and proposes that “Nāgārjuna's attitude is therefore very far from a wholesale rejection of the teachings of the Abhidharma” (108). Westerhoff goes on to discuss competing Abhidharma and Madhyamaka understandings of *svabhāva*, causation, and conceptualization in some detail, and on the basis of this discussion interestingly suggests that “It seems as if the Abhidharma and Nāgārjuna meant quite different things when they spoke of *svabhāva*” (110). In concluding his survey of the philosophy of Nāgārjuna, Westerhoff treats the topics of illusionism and the charges of ontological and moral nihilism it has entailed, and the (apparent) contradictions embodied in Nāgārjuna's use of the tetralemma (*catuṣkoṭi*). In line with his previous work on this topic,² Westerhoff proposes that the contradictions here should be explicated via the doctrine of the two truths so as to turn out “as merely apparent, but not as actual contradictions” (118).

² See for example Westerhoff (2006) and (2009, Chapter 4).

Having assessed the philosophical positions and arguments of Nāgārjuna, Westerhoff next turns his attention to the Commentators (120-138), by which he refers to Buddhapālita, Bhāviveka and Candrakīrti, and the Great Synthesizers: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla (139-142). Buddhapālita is initially treated but briefly, and chiefly in terms of his commentary on the early Madhyamaka exegetical text known as the *Akutoḥbhayā*. He will crop up repeatedly again, however, as a foil to the positions of his near-contemporary Bhāviveka, whose philosophy is principally engaged with in succeeding pages through his *Prajñāpradīpa*. Westerhoff concentrates on Bhāviveka's innovations to *prasaṅga* methodology through his introduction of the syllogism and distinction between implicative and non-implicative negation. Candrakīrti's criticisms of Bhāviveka's approach follow, in which we find a particularly insightful discussion of the ontological entailments of methodological commitments in philosophical debates, and the emergence of what subsequently came to be known as the Prāsaṅgika-Svātantrika distinction. As for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, these key thinkers of later Madhyamaka are introduced primarily in terms of their significance for the transmission of philosophical Madhyamaka from India to Tibet, with especial emphasis on the victory in debate of Kamalaśīla over the Chinese Heshang Moheyan, and the adoption therefore of the 'gradual' over the 'sudden' model of enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism. The chapter on Madhyamaka concludes with a discussion of its relations to and disagreements with the non-Buddhist school of Nyāya.

Westerhoff's chapter on Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy begins with a chronological outline of what he identifies as the Five Stages of Yogācāra's Development (147-161): the early Yogācāra sūtras such as the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*, the works attributed to Maitreya and Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and the later Yogācāra of Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti, both of whom will be dealt with far more extensively in the succeeding chapter. Yogācāra Proofs of Buddhist Doctrines (161-168) follow, the need for which Westerhoff sees as evidence of "a phase of increased debate and argumentative interactions with non-Buddhist schools" (161). Specific attention is given here to three doctrines: rebirth is treated with reference to Dharmakīrti's arguments in the *Pramāṇavārttika* for taking the Buddha as an epistemic authority on the basis of his infinite compassion, and for "the non-material nature of the mental, that is, the establishment of a form of interactionist dualism" (161). The existence of other minds is treated

with reference to Dharmakīrti's inferential argument for other minds in the *Santānāntarasiddhi* and Ratnakīrti's apparent counter-defence of solipsism in the *Santānāntaradūṣaṇa*. Finally, momentariness is treated with reference to the previously mentioned arguments from the momentariness of cognition as per Vasubandhu's *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya*, and that from change as per Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi* and Ratnakīrti's *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi*.

Having surveyed Yogācāra arguments for more broadly Buddhist positions, Westerhoff now turns his attention to specifically Yogācāra concepts: *cittamātra*, *ālayavijñāna* and the eight types of consciousness, *trīsvabhāva*, *svasaṃvedana*, the three 'turnings of the wheel of the doctrine' (*dharmacakra-pravartana*), and *tathāgatagarbha*, with the first three ("the idea that everything is wholly mental (*cittamātra*), the notion of a foundational consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), and the doctrine of the three natures (*trīsvabhāva*)" understood as "constituting the conceptual core of Yogācāra thought" (168). This is the heart of the chapter, and Westerhoff does an admirable job of mustering relevant sources, outlining clearly yet in detail the various Yogācāra positions and arguments in support thereof, and evaluating these on the basis of historical and potential criticisms. More than that, however, Westerhoff seamlessly weaves several pertinent meta-level observations on the study of the history of Yogācāra philosophy into his historical account of that philosophy. Thus, for example, in assessing the non-idealist interpretations of Yogācāra "so popular in contemporary Western discussions of Yogācāra" (177), Westerhoff justifiably posits that "It would be very peculiar if the fact that contemporary philosophy is not particularly interested in idealism should have any bearing on what we think specific Indian authors wanted to establish when they composed their texts." (178) Such insights regarding the study of Buddhist philosophy as currently practised in the (Western) scholarly community succeed in augmenting the highly informative historical content of the book with theoretical and methodological principles for its historically informed study.

Chief among such principles is the desire to comprehend Buddhist philosophy on its own terms. A particularly clear example of Westerhoff's understanding of and generosity toward the premises and mandates of the Indian Buddhist philosophical traditions under study lies in the manifold references he makes throughout the book to the role meditative practice played in constructing the vast edifice of classical Indian Buddhist philosophy. The importance of meditative practice to the philosophical systems of every major school of Buddhist thought is underlined in

every chapter,³ but it is perhaps in connection with the aforementioned competing interpretations of Yogācāra as idealist or not that Westerhoff composes his most sustained defence of the philosophical role such embodied practices have held:

True philosophical insight, the Buddhist philosophers hold, does not come from studying a philosophical treatise, understanding its arguments, refuting objections, and assenting to its conclusions. What is at issue is the transformation of the way the world appears to us in our experience, not just of the way in which we think about the world that appears to us. Once again it has become clear that, in trying to understand Buddhist philosophy in India, we cannot just focus on the arguments and the doctrinal texts containing ideas that the arguments support and develop. We also have to take into account the dimension of meditative practice that such arguments and the views they defend are connected to. Only by being aware of this additional, extra-argumentative factor influencing Buddhist thought can we hope to develop a nuanced understanding of the positions the texts themselves defend. (179)

³ In addition to the consideration of meditative practices as one of the “three key factors” (5) underpinning Buddhist philosophy as a whole, and the reiteration of the central importance of such practices in the Concluding Remarks (383), see e.g. 39-41 in relation to Abhidharma, and especially the statement: “The Abhidharma (like all Buddhist thought) should therefore not be conceived simply as argument-driven philosophy, but as a conceptual enterprise that is to be located within the coordinates of the Buddha’s teachings, and takes account of the meditative experiences resulting from techniques that are part of this teaching” (41); 102-103 in relation to Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka, and especially the statement “One way of understanding the illusionism of the Perfection of Wisdom texts (as well as other instances where meditative practices appear to be a factor in shaping Buddhist philosophy) is as an ontologizing of meditative phenomenology” (102); 194-199 in relation to Yogācāra, and especially the statement “Without denying that argumentative dynamics or the responses to specific texts were essential for the development of Yogācāra, it will be useful to spend some time discussing the specific interrelation between philosophical development and meditative practice in Yogācāra, as the latter is a factor that is often not sufficiently accounted for when discussing the history of Buddhist philosophy” (194); and 247-250 in relation to the school of Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti, and especially the discussion of the role and validity of yogic perception there as rationale for “the fact that Buddhist philosophy formed part of a larger enterprise of meditative training that was ultimately intended to lead to liberation from cyclic existence” (238).

I will return to consider Westerhoff's fine balancing of emic and etic exigencies below, but I cite this passage here as an especially lucid exemplar of how philosophically astute exposition of systematic thought built upon presuppositional frameworks alien to those of the exegete's own intellectual culture may transculturally transmit such thought in a manner that simultaneously retains the distinctive features of the source materials and facilitates argumentatively justified engagement with them on the part of audience members unfamiliar with or even antagonistic toward them.

In the subsequent, and final, three sections of the chapter on Yogācāra, Westerhoff traces the Factors That Shaped Yogācāra Philosophy (193-199), the relations between Yogācāra and Other Schools of Buddhist Philosophy (200-212), and the relations between Yogācāra and Vedānta (212-216). I have just mentioned Westerhoff's insistence on the importance of meditative factors in the construction of and justifications of Yogācāra (and more broadly Buddhist) philosophical thought. In addition to these, Westerhoff discusses argumentative and textual factors. His exposition of intra-Buddhist relations centres on Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, and draws upon thinkers as remote from one another in spatio-temporal location and/or intellectual orientation as Bhāviveka, Śāntarakṣita, Ratnākaraśanti, and Kamalaśīla to delineate both some of the well-charted differences in philosophical outlook between these 'rival' schools and some of the intriguing overlaps between them as Buddhist 'allies'.⁴ It is fitting, therefore, that the chapter should conclude with discussion of Vedānta: a school of thought unambiguously rival to Yogācāra despite their sharing "a certain surface familiarity... as forms of idealism" (212). Westerhoff here concentrates on the criticisms of Yogācāra's mind-only idealism and doctrine of momentariness on the part of canonical Vedāntins such as Śāṅkara and Madhva.

The fourth and final chapter of the book deals with the school of Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti often referred to as "logico-epistemological" (250). Within the opening section introducing the lives and major texts of Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti, Westerhoff helps make sense of the focus on logic and epistemology characteristic of their output by suggesting that this may be attributable to the increased importance of debate with non-Buddhist philosophers during their time, and thus to the increased need for the formulation of modes of argument

⁴ In referring to Yogācāra and Madhyamaka as both 'rivals' and 'allies', I am drawing on the analyses included within the book on *Yogācāra and Madhyamaka: Allies or Rivals?* co-edited by Westerhoff and Jay Garfield (Garfield & Westerhoff 2015)

(logic) and sources of knowledge (epistemology) acceptable to philosophers across systems of thought highly divergent in terms of propositional content and authoritative lineages.

The bulk of the remainder of the chapter is devoted to discussion of this school's contributions to Epistemology (220-225), Inference (225-231), Metaphysics (231-235), Language (235-238), and Scriptural Authority and Yogic perception (238-250). The discussion of epistemology focuses on the role of perception in founding epistemic certainty, and includes an intriguing resolution of the problem of how perception, on Diñnāga's or Dharmakīrti's account, can access the impartite non-conceptual by suggesting that "the school's final view" as to the objects of perception is not external realist but "an idealistic ontology on Yogācāra lines" (222). The second accepted epistemic instrument, inference, is then discussed, chiefly in terms of Diñnāga's formulation of the 'triple mark' (*trairūpya*) as characterizing acceptable instances of inferential knowledge. Discussion of specifically metaphysical issues focuses on "Dharmakīrti's identification of the real, the causally efficacious, and the momentary" (233), and Westerhoff neatly segues here from the school's argued rejection of permanent entities in general to their rejection of a soul, a creator god, and caste. As is to be expected, the discussion of Diñnāga's and Dharmakīrti's philosophy of language revolves around the *apoha* or exclusion theory, which Westerhoff treats in relation to the two kinds of negation (implicative/*paryudāsa-pratiṣedha* and non-implicative/*prasajya-pratiṣedha*), causation and its relation to desire, and conceptualization. Finally, the section on scriptural authority and yogic perception deals with this school's arguments for, and the problems with, treating the Buddha and Buddhist texts as well as acts of perception occurring within or based upon meditative practice as epistemically authoritative. Westerhoff here usefully supplements his discussion of Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti with reference to both earlier and later work on related topics by Āryadeva, Vasubandhu, Karṇakagomin, Śākyabuddhi, and Jinendrabuddhi.

Having thus critically surveyed the principal philosophical positions of the school, Westerhoff broaches the topic of How to Classify Diñnāga's and Dharmakīrti's Philosophy (250-259). The question of classification of source material is a valid and necessary one in any history of philosophy, but Westerhoff makes the point that it is all the more so in the case of the material at hand here, on the basis that:

the division of Indian Buddhist philosophy into schools is at best to be understood as a hermeneutic device that allows us to dig some conceptual trenches through a complex field of arguments, and not as a system of doctrinal allegiance the Indian thinkers would themselves have adhered to in any straightforward manner. (250)

Thus, in addition to investigating the meaningful overlaps between Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti on the one hand and their Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra Buddhist brethren on the other, Westerhoff draws on the notion of the “sliding scales of analysis” first introduced by Sara McClintock to grade Buddhist teachings (and specifically here those of Dharmakīrti) in levels of sophistication which differ in accordance with the target audience. “The key idea is that for Buddhist philosophers theories can (and frequently do) diverge in terms of philosophical accuracy and soteriological efficacy” (252).

Westerhoff next devotes a section to the school of Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti and its relation to Mīmāṃsā (259-270). Although non-Buddhist interlocutors have already appeared at many occasions throughout the book (most prominently in the sections on Madhyamaka and Nyāya and Yogācāra and Vedānta noted above), this is the single most sustained treatment of Buddhist/non-Buddhist philosophical interaction and cross-pollination. Regardless of one’s views as to the historicity of purported debates between luminaries such as Dharmakīrti and Kumāriḷa, the fact remains that the extant texts of not only Dharmakīrti but also Dīnnāga and Śāntarakṣita on the Buddhist side and Kumāriḷa on the Mīmāṃsā attest explicit engagement with one another, not least on account of the fact that, as Westerhoff puts it, the approaches of these two schools are located “at two different ends of the philosophical spectrum” (267). Westerhoff ably surveys the centuries’ long arguments in terms of epistemology, philosophy of language, and historiography, which latter topic allows him to generalize more broadly regarding the relationships between the vastly divergent philosophical positions of these schools and the intellectual and social backgrounds and implications thereof.

Having thus reached the end of his survey of Indian Buddhist philosophy in its ‘golden age’, Westerhoff devotes one final section to The End of Buddhist Philosophy in India (270-281). Here we find a sketch of Buddhist philosophy in India during the five centuries following the death of Dharmakīrti until the destruction of the great monastic universities of Nālandā and Vikramaśilā in around 1200. Contra Tāranātha’s dour evaluation of this period, Westerhoff

maintains that these final centuries produced much philosophically sophisticated work, though he acknowledges that no new major school of Buddhist philosophy in India was to emerge during this period. Since the thought of latter-day philosophers such as Śāntarakṣita, Kamaśīla, Ratākaraśanti, and Ratnakīrti has already been treated at relevant points earlier in the book, Westerhoff's account limits itself here to Śāntideva and Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna. Śāntideva is primarily introduced through his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and its relation to Nālandā, while Atiśa's tale is principally told through the importance for the subsequent history of Buddhist philosophy of his long sojourn in Suvarṇadvīpa (current Sumatra and Java), leadership role at Vikramaśīlā, and voyage to Tibet, where he was instrumental in what came to be known as the "later dissemination" (278) of the *dharma* there.

The book concludes with some reflections on the history and the study of Buddhist philosophy in India. Westerhoff sets forth "three main conclusions about the Buddhist philosophical enterprise" (282). First, he advocates "a 'germination' model according to which a variety of conceptual seeds was present in Buddhism's earliest teachings, arguing that the different philosophical systems of Buddhist philosophy then arose from a selective emphasis on some of these seeds over others" (282).⁵ Second, and as related above, Westerhoff reiterates the importance of taking into consideration meditative practices he considers ineliminable for full comprehension of Buddhist philosophy, and therefore constitutive of an important point of difference between the Buddhist and Western philosophical enterprises broadly construed. It is important to distinguish here between the self-perception of these over-arching traditions – that is, their avowed mandates – from the ways in which they have actually been practiced. For although we may agree that Western philosophy, though not Buddhist philosophy, has conceived of itself "as primarily providing answers to puzzles about specific fundamental features of reality, an exercise of reason for its own sake, independent of the authority of specific texts or traditions" (283), this is far indeed from actually having been implemented

⁵ See also in this light Westerhoff's statement when introducing the Abhidharma schools that:

the development of Buddhist philosophy is not characterized by single-handed innovations of autonomous thinkers, but by gradual shifts in emphasis on particular concepts, shifts which, in the fullness of time, can lead to very distinct philosophical positions, but which proceed by never losing sight of anchoring their innovations in the continuity of the Buddhist tradition, thereby attempting to underline their authoritativeness as the genuine word of the Buddha. (49)

when we look at the history of Western philosophy, saturated as it has been with unargued presuppositions, unquestioned assumptions, and uncontested authorities. Nevertheless, the point Westerhoff is making here (as I understand him) concerns not the actual practices but the avowed mandates of the Western and Buddhist philosophical projects, and he is justified in noting this definitive discrepancy. Thirdly and finally, Westerhoff stresses the importance of not merely describing but of “*doing philosophy* with ancient texts” (284) such as the Buddhist ones which occupy the entire monograph. Indeed, Westerhoff makes a persuasive case for the necessity of “thinking through a philosophical question against the horizon of the given ancient text or tradition” (284) in the Indian Buddhist case in particular given the relatively incomplete nature of the positions and arguments preserved in the extant literature. Indeed, his book constitutes a robust embodiment of this principle, as for example in its overall refusal to merely rehearse the positions and the arguments of a given Buddhist philosopher in favour of additionally adducing potential problems with or criticisms of those positions and arguments as well as constructing potential philosophically cogent responses to them coherent with the view being discussed.

Several overall features of *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* stand out as particularly worthy of emphasis. Given the point raised just now about the differing ends of the Buddhist and Western philosophical enterprises, it merits mentioning that Westerhoff’s detailed knowledge of the major issues animating contemporary Western philosophy enables him to regularly point out relevant correspondences between contemporary Western and classical Indian conceptions of a given topic, or to describe the Buddhist position under discussion in terms current in contemporary philosophical discourse. Thus, among many possible examples, he summarizes Diñnāga’s Yogācāra position as to internal representations as causes of perception as “a transcendental argument for idealism” (161) – a use of Kantian terminology apt at conveying the purport of the Yogācāra position in a manner recognizable to students and scholars of Western thought. Of course, Westerhoff also occasionally draws directly on figures familiar from the history of Western philosophy to differentiate between Western and Buddhist positions, as for example when he states forthrightly a little later that, although Yogācāra may well be interpreted as a form of idealism, nevertheless “Yogācāra certainly shows little more than superficial similarity with an idealism of the type Berkeley defended, and has even less in common with idealism of the Hegelian variety” (176).

Relatedly, Westerhoff is careful at numerous points throughout the book to distinguish the presuppositions taken for granted by contemporary Western philosophy from those of the Indian philosophical traditions he is concerned to explicate. Thus, for example, in discussing the historicity of Maitreya and the authorship of works traditionally attributed to him, Westerhoff makes the impeccable point that “It is only if we assume that bodhisattvas without physical bodies cannot author texts that we might feel ourselves pushed to the theory that Asaṅga composed all these texts under a pseudonym” (154). In bracketing frameworks and criteria alien to Indian Buddhist philosophers in such a manner, Westerhoff evinces a careful attunement to the requirements of emic exposition. This is all the more laudable given that the Buddhist philosophical traditions of India routinely accepted as factual or plausible phenomena or explanations considered neither by the typical philosopher of today. In accepting the traditional accounts at face value, and moreover in forging interpretations of their positions that cogently demonstrate the philosophical insights they manifest, Westerhoff succeeds in conveying a philosophical system (or inter-related series of systems) far removed geographically and temporally from our own both in terms common between it and contemporary philosophy (and therefore recognizable to the latter, even acceptable by the latter as philosophy ‘proper’) and also in terms foreign to contemporary philosophy (and therefore unrecognizable to the latter, even warranting the latter to dismiss Indian Buddhist ‘philosophy’ as not philosophy at all) but philosophically justifiable and productive in the Buddhist tradition.

Westerhoff’s efforts to work across commonly accepted disciplinary and doxographic demarcations finds further elaboration in his linking of concepts typically interpreted as characteristic of a particular school of Buddhist philosophy with their conceptual antecedents and descendants in other schools. Thus, for example, despite the fact that “Abhidharma and Yogācāra could be seen as fundamentally contradictory enterprises” (200), Westerhoff nevertheless charts several underappreciated rapports between Yogācāra ideas such as mind-only (*cittamātra*, *vijñāptimātratā*) and foundational consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) and respective Abhidharma precursors such as the Sautrāntika’s notions of representational form (*ākāra*) and karmic potentialities or seeds (*anudhātu*, *bīja*) (200-202). In so doing, Westerhoff both nuances our understanding of the historical interplays among Buddhist philosophers working in distinct periods, and softens the sectarian borders between what thus emerge more as complementary emphases within the overall Buddhist fold than as

rival, mutually distinct schools, in this case even across the conventional divide between ‘Hīnayāna’ and ‘Mahāyāna’.⁶

It is customary for reviewers to express some gripes with the work they are reviewing. Although some of my own published and forthcoming work engages rather critically with Westerhoff’s treatments of and approaches to Madhyamaka philosophy in particular,⁷ I found this history of *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* to be quite simply a faultless exemplar of its genre. Could it have been expanded? Of course, almost infinitely. Does it skim over some seriously deep waters of complex debate? Of course, by necessity. But Westerhoff is well aware of these shortcomings (e.g. 9-11, 282), if they are to be considered such, and in fact manages throughout to simultaneously do justice to much of the rich detail of argument and response characteristic of the various traditions he considers while never losing sight of the shared assumptions and goals informing the enterprise of Indian Buddhist philosophy as a whole. Perhaps the sole source of dissatisfaction in reading the book lies in its copy-editing, which leaves much to be desired.⁸ Nevertheless, this is a small price to pay for a gem of a book, one which I am certain will become a favoured reference source for many established specialists of Buddhist philosophy, fascinate coming generations of students engaged in the task of comprehending Buddhist philosophical ideas in their complex internal and inter-related historical trajectories, and introduce the history of Buddhist philosophy to countless general readers eager to expand their horizons.

Bibliography

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Stepien, Rafal K (2018). ‘Orienting Reason: A Religious Critique of Philosophizing Nāgārjuna’. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 86, No. 4. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶ See also in this connection Westerhoff’s mention of the fact that “Doxographers sometimes classify these thinkers [here Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti] by the curious epithet ‘Yogācāra-Sautrāntika’” (250).

⁷ See Stepien (2018), (2019), and (forthcoming).

⁸ I counted over seventy editorial errors of various kinds in the book without even particularly looking for them, and without cross-checking most of the transliterated textual citations, so I can only hope that Oxford University Press can rectify these when the time comes to issue a second edition.

BOOK REVIEW

- Stepien, Rafal K (2019). 'Abandoning All views: A Buddhist Critique of Belief'. *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 99, No. 4, October. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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