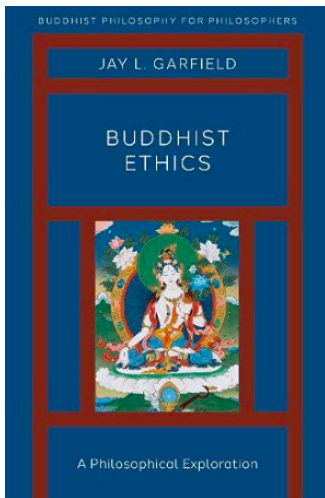


Garfield, Jay L., *Buddhist Ethics: A Philosophical Exploration*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022, 248 p., hardback, £64, ISBN: 9780190907631

Reviewed by John J. Holder



In this highly readable book, Jay Garfield makes a strong case that Buddhist ethics offers distinctively significant contributions to ethical theory and, as such, deserves the attention of ethical theorists working in any philosophical tradition. Drawing mainly from Indian and Tibetan sources, Garfield aims to provide “an outline of the understanding of ethics shared among the Buddhist traditions, and an understanding of how that vision can inform contemporary ethical discourse” (p. 28). As an outline or “rational reconstruction” of Buddhist ethics, the book neither attempts a defence nor claims to be a comprehensive account of Buddhist ethics. Throughout the thirteen

chapters of the book, Garfield emphasises the distinctiveness of Buddhist ethics in relation to Western ethical theories. In particular, he gives an account of Buddhist ethics that does not focus on personal agency/responsibility, avoids metaethical theories, aligns with particularism rather than universalism in regard to ethical theory, and coheres with scientific naturalism in ways that most ethical theories in Western traditions do not.

Despite Garfield's intention to frame a Buddhist ethical theory that is shared by the various Buddhist traditions, the ethical theory outlined in the book is informed predominantly by the Indian Mahayana tradition (with some ancillary consideration of Theravada scholasticism). The justification for this evaluation of the book is developed below in the discussion of specific elements of Garfield's reconstruction of Buddhist ethics. Suffice it to say at this point that the main philosophical guide to Garfield's reconstruction is the 8th century Mahayana philosopher Śāntideva. Śāntideva's contributions to Buddhist ethics in such seminal texts as *How to Live an Awakened Life* (*Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*) are quoted numerous times and at length by Garfield as illustrative of Buddhist ethics generally. Nāgārjuna's *Precious Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*) also figures prominently in Garfield's reconstruction.

The fact that the book develops a predominantly Mahayana approach to Buddhist ethics does not undermine Garfield's central claim that his book identifies aspects of Buddhist ethics that offer important contributions to ethical theory; however, it does beg for an important qualification that Garfield fails to make in claiming that his reconstruction is shared by Buddhist traditions generally. This shortcoming of the book leaves Garfield's claim open to counterarguments based on the conceptions of ethics in non-Mahayana traditions (notably, ethics found in the Pali texts or Nikāyas) that do not share key elements of Garfield's reconstruction of Buddhist ethics. In fact, Garfield's attempt to offer a pan-Buddhist reconstruction could have the unintended consequence of showing that the diversity in the approaches to ethics among the various forms of Buddhism simply does not permit consolidation into a single shared framework.

In the introduction to the book, Garfield eschews the comparative approach to Buddhist ethics that is commonly used to present it to Western readers. Many, if not most, studies of Buddhist ethics attempt to fit the Buddhist approach to ethics into traditional ethical theories developed in Western philosophy. Some scholars explain Buddhist ethics as deontology (focused on intentions), while others see it as consequentialism, and still others present it as a virtue ethics (where the focus is on training moral habits). Although Garfield agrees that there are some important connections between Buddhist ethics and these Western ethical theories, he believes that it does not fit any of these ethical models. Instead, he maintains that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a "moral phenomenology" and, as such, Buddhism contains an

approach to ethics not represented in contemporary ethical discourse. What it means to call Buddhist ethics a “moral phenomenology” will be discussed in detail below.

In Chapter 1, Garfield offers a helpful overview of the book by surveying the main ideas of Buddhist ethics from the problematic of suffering that motivates Buddhist ethical thought to an analysis of the causes of suffering, and, finally, to Buddhism’s proposed cure for suffering by means of knowledge of the Buddhist metaphysical doctrines of dependent origination (Skt., *pratītyasamutpāda*; P., *paṭiccasamuppāda*) and no-self (Skt., *anātman*; P., *anattā*). Garfield explains that such metaphysical knowledge has an ethical significance, because it provides a “salutary ethical perception of the world” that is expressed in moral behaviour as non-egocentricity. By surveying Buddhist ethics in broad strokes, the first chapter provides a useful roadmap to the central ideas that are developed in detail in the later chapters of the book. Such a high-level preview is especially helpful to readers who are new to Buddhist philosophy.

In Chapter 3, Garfield begins building his case that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a “moral phenomenology”. The argument for this claim is a thread that weaves together the ten remaining chapters of the book. A moral phenomenology, as Garfield explains it, is “an approach to ethics in which the goal is the the cultivation of a distinct way of experiencing oneself and others in the world, or a mode of comportment toward the world” (p. 21, n. 6). The aim of ethics as phenomenology, according to Garfield, is a transformation of the person that manifests itself as new modes of perception which fundamentally reframe how we evaluate both ourselves and the phenomena we experience in the world around us. By contrast to other traditions of ethics, a moral phenomenology is not primarily about rules of conduct or even the cultivation of one’s personality, rather, it is a matter of developing a correct understanding of certain metaphysical truths that produce in the person a radically new “way of being in the world” (p. 91). This new way of being in the world makes ethical behaviour effortless and natural. Thus, in a moral phenomenology, morally good/bad actions are not the focus of ethical theory. Moral actions are secondary by-products that flow naturally from a person’s mode of being or comportment toward the world.

Garfield claims inspiration for his conception of phenomenology from philosophers like Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger in that he sees “perceptual

experience as deeply implicated with embodiment, attention, desire, and intention” (p. 27). But, unlike Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the way that Garfield applies his conception of phenomenology to Buddhist ethics emphasises the cognitive aspects of the mind and downplays the roles of affective and conative mental factors. As discussed in more detail below, Garfield holds that in Buddhism the problem of suffering is ultimately grounded on the fact that we do not have a correct understanding of the way the world really is and that the transformation of perception eliminates suffering as the result of knowing Buddhism’s central metaphysical doctrines. Thus, in Garfield’s reconstruction of Buddhist ethics, both the problem of suffering and its solution are fundamentally matters of cognition.

Philosophical and religious traditions that offer ethical teachings typically give specific guidance about morally good and morally bad behaviour, what philosophers refer to as “substantive ethics”. However, Garfield claims that Buddhist ethics is not focused on substantive ethical guidance, because it does not specify “the kinds of actions we ought to perform”(p. 199). This is a puzzling claim given that many Buddhist texts clearly contain substantive ethics in the forms of precepts for lay persons and monastics (e.g., refrain from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, taking intoxicants, etc.) as well as rules of conduct for Buddhist monastics known as the *prātimokṣa* or *pātimokkha*. If Garfield is correct about downplaying the importance of substantive ethics in Buddhism, it raises the question why early Buddhist texts in Pali focus so much on substantive ethics. In the *Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīghanikāya)*, the first two discourses (the *Brahmajālasutta* and the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*) have long sections that describe specific moral practices that are important steps on the path to awakening.¹ Moreover, substantive ethics in the Pali Nikāyas is not addressed only to monastics. The Buddha gave very specific moral advice to laypersons in the *Sigālovādasutta* regarding such things as the value of friendship and a person’s duties to family and teachers. This emphasis on substantive ethics is so well-known to anyone familiar with Buddhism as to hardly need mentioning. So, of course, Garfield is aware that substantive ethics is evident in Buddhism, and yet he downplays substantive ethics in his reconstruction because he thinks Buddhist ethics is more fundamentally located in the cognitive transformation that happens

¹ The passages that contain specific guidance on morality are D I 43–11 and D I 63–69 (here and elsewhere, I refer to the volume and page numbers of the Pali Text Society editions).

when a person fully realises the central metaphysical doctrines of Buddhism. Garfield also attempts to justify the lack of focus on substantive ethics in his reconstruction by pointing out that specific ethical rules handicap a person's ability to respond flexibly to the challenges of a particular ethical situation. Garfield seems to be suggesting that since the cause and the solution to suffering are mainly matters of how a person cognises the world (incorrectly or correctly), a person can navigate moral situations more effectively and sensitively by relying on metaphysical realisation than by following specific moral rules.

One might wonder, however, whether or not Garfield, in shifting the focus to his moral phenomenology, has given Buddhist substantive ethics its due. The Buddha claims in the Pali Nikāyas that the fruit of ethical action is evident both in achieving tangible benefits in our worldly lives but also (and more importantly) in the karmic ramifications whereby such actions transform and/or reinforce a person's moral psychology. The karmic ramifications of moral action are used to justify the traditional moral precepts that are undertaken by laypersons and monastics. Moreover, three of the eight elements of the Eightfold Path are constituted by substantive ethical guidance: right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Here the Buddha tells us that we should refrain from such things as lying, stealing, and selling weapons. Traditionally, these three elements of the Eightfold Path are categorised as "moral conduct" (*sīla*). Moral conduct, more generally, is the first stage of the threefold training, also consisting of mental culture (*samādhi*) and wisdom/insight (*paññā*). The Pali Nikāyas and the Theravada tradition emphasise that such training is sequential and cumulative with wisdom/insight (including knowledge of dependent origination and no-self) depending on the cultivation of moral conduct and mental culture as prerequisites. One might wonder, then, how Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics that downplays substantive ethics can account for the threefold training. Even more puzzling is the fact that Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a moral phenomenology appears to reverse the order of the training when he claims that "the Buddhist approach to moral cultivation begins with the correction of our view of the world" (p. 81). It is true that Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics has textual support in Mahayana sources like Śāntideva, Nāgārjuna, and certain Tibetan philosophers, but the primacy of moral conduct in the threefold training emphasised in other Buddhist traditions suggests that Buddhist ethics in these traditions does not fit Garfield's phenomenological model of ethics.

No doubt, wisdom/insight as the right understanding of dependent origination and no-self is crucial to becoming a fully awakened person according to all Buddhist traditions. But for some, realising these metaphysical insights is predicated on the reshaping of the mind in all of its psychological complexity. That complexity includes irreducibly the affective and conative functions of the mind as well as cognitive mental functions. This difference among Buddhist traditions is evident in how they conceive “purification of the mind”. Although all Buddhist traditions agree that purifying the mind is the central ethical/soteriological issue; some (including the Pali Nikāyas) give an important and essential role to moral and meditative activities that eliminate affective and conative corruptions of the mind (such as anger, hatred, grasping, attachment, etc.). Based on this more complex view of the mind and the strategies for purifying it, some Buddhist traditions envisage a “gradualist” path to enlightenment along the lines of the threefold training (as discussed above) that focuses first on moral conduct as a therapy for transforming/purifying the mind in terms of its affective and conative functions. Whether or not the affective and the conative pathologies of the mind ultimately derive from cognitive pathologies is precisely an area of disagreement among Buddhist traditions.

In Chapter 6, Garfield offers a detailed study of the Four Truths as the distilled essence of Buddhist ethics. In regard to the First Truth—the fact of suffering (Skt., *duḥkha*; P., *dukkha*)—Garfield explains that suffering pervades human experience in a wide variety of ways: via physical pain, psychological distress, and existential anxieties over such things as unavoidable death. Suffering is clearly the problematic that motivates Buddhist ethics. Garfield explicates with clarity and insight the Buddhist understanding of suffering through a number of illustrative metaphors and stories—some his own and others drawn from Buddhist texts. No doubt, Garfield is on firm ground in his view that Buddhist ethics is fundamentally a response to suffering and the attempt to replace it with a way of faring well in the world. In regard to the Second Truth—that suffering is caused by craving (*taṇhā*)²—Garfield points out that such suffering is not caused primarily by external phenomena, but by our psychological attitudes toward them. At this level of generality, Garfield’s account of the Second Truth suits all forms of Buddhism. But a more contentious aspect of Garfield’s discussion of suffering is the way he views it

² See, for example, M I 48.

through the lens of his cognitivist/metaphysical approach to Buddhist ethics. Garfield agrees that the proximate cause of suffering is craving and unfulfilled desires, but he carries the analysis further by claiming that suffering derives ultimately, or more fundamentally, from an epistemic failure. In Garfield's account of Buddhism, "the root cause of suffering is an incorrect view of the world" (p. 82). More specifically, "suffering arises from a way of seeing ourselves and the world" (p. 80), and it involves "a misunderstanding of our own nature" (p. 79). Thus, the cause of suffering (in Garfield's interpretation of Buddhism) is ultimately a cognitive problem. As such Garfield's account of suffering raises the question whether the ultimate root of suffering is to be found mainly in the cognitive/perceptual aspects of human psychology or whether non-cognitive/affective/conative structures of the mind are also significant (and irreducible) factors. This question is answered differently by different Buddhist traditions.

Based on his reading of certain Mahayana scholastics like Śāntideva, Garfield holds that Buddhism sees suffering as grounded on a particular corruption of the mind, namely, "primal confusion" (Garfield's translation of *moha*, a term more commonly translated as "delusion").³ According to Garfield's account of Buddhism, we suffer from primal confusion because we do not see the world as dependently arisen (as a nexus of changing, causally interdependent and impermanent phenomena) and such ignorance grounds our false belief in a permanently real self. Traditionally, primal confusion is presented in the early Buddhist texts in Pali as one element among the three fundamental corruptions of the mind (*lobha*: greed/attraction, *dosa*:

³ Garfield introduces a number of novel translations for Pali and Sanskrit terms in the book. Other newly minted translations include "friendliness" for *mettā* (instead of "loving kindness"), "care" for *karunā* (instead of "compassion") and "impartiality" for *upekkhā* (instead of "equanimity"). These new translations sometimes seem appropriate (as in the case of "impartiality" for *upekkhā*, and "primal confusion" for *moha*, on which see also Peter Masefield, "A brief note on the Meaning of *Moha*", *Mahachulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 2010, Vol. 3, pp. 5–12), or merely a matter of preference, but others are questionable, such as translating *mettā* as "friendliness". Regarding the latter, it is true, as Garfield mentions, that *mettā* shares an etymology with the word for "friend". Yet the *locus classicus* of the term is the *Mettāsutta* in which the boundless, self-sacrificing love that a mother has for her child is the main image. Such a relationship between mother and child is surely better captured as "loving kindness" rather than "friendliness". It is worth noting that the *Mettāsutta*—among the most revered text on ethics among practitioners of all forms of Buddhism—is not discussed in the book.

hatred/aversion, and *moha*: delusion/primal confusion). In the early texts, these corruptions are taken as on a par with one another—the three are specifically listed as the proximate causes of the “unwholesome” (*akusala*) in human experience.⁴ Yet Garfield sees primal confusion as the underlying cause of the other two. He writes:

Attraction and aversion—the two faces of craving or insatiable thirst for what we can never attain—are ethically problematic because they are the causes of suffering. But because primal confusion is the root cause of these two morally problematic attitudes, that primal confusion is ethically problematic as well (p. 81).

However, there does not appear to be any justification in other (non-Mahayana) Buddhist traditions for making primal confusion the underlying cause of attraction and aversion. Garfield’s claim that primal confusion has an ultimate or more fundamental function as the cause of suffering seems tailored to accord with his cognitivist interpretation of Buddhist ethics that is borrowed largely from Mahayana sources. Consistent with this cognitivist interpretation of the cause of suffering, Garfield sees the Third Truth (the elimination of the cause of suffering) as essentially a matter of transforming a person’s conception of the self and the world. Given the fact that we cannot transform the world so much as we can transform our minds, the Buddhist solution to suffering focuses on controlling and/or eliminating certain mental factors that give rise to suffering. As Garfield sees it, “in order to eliminate suffering, all one needs to do is to eliminate the pathologies of attraction and aversion, and that to eliminate these, it is *necessary and sufficient* to eliminate the pathological reification of self and of the distinction between self and world” (p. 81; italics added). Taking his cue from Śāntideva, Garfield remarks that Buddhist ethics is therefore not “governed by a concern for developing dispositions to act in particular ways” (thus deviating from the interpretation of ethics affirmed in other forms of Buddhism); it is, rather, fundamentally about the knowledge of reality that removes primal confusion because by removing it a person trains one’s moral perception to properly assess the moral value of phenomena within the field of experience and action. Again, Garfield appears to be offering a specifically cognitivist interpretation of one of the Four Truths. Although Garfield is correct

⁴ See, for example, M I 47 where the three corruptions are on a par with one another.

to say that craving partakes in misconceptions about the nature of the world and the self, craving itself is not simply a cognitive function. For that reason, the therapy for the elimination of craving is not simply a cognitive therapy, as Garfield claims; the way to eliminate it is not just “right understanding”. In fact, the Buddha said that the therapy for the elimination of craving is the wide range of transformative activities described as the Eightfold Path.

Chapter 7 offers an interesting study of the “path” metaphor in Buddhist ethics. Garfield mentions several times in the book that Buddhist ethical thought is not a grand ethical system laid out in terms of moral principles that are meant to give guidance to human actors. Garfield correctly points out that Buddhist ethics contains little, if any, metaethical theory (theorising about whether duties or consequences provide the basis for morality). He explains that one reason for this is that the problem of suffering is extremely complex, too multi-dimensional, too tied to particular situations to allow a simple metaethical theory. Garfield offers an even better reason why Buddhism offers little in the way of metaethics when he says that Buddhist ethics “is more concerned with how to become good than what it is to be good” (p. 108). For this reason, Buddhist ethics emphasises human ethical development as a path where Buddhist practice is guided by narratives that serve as ethical paradigms rather than as general moral rules.

Garfield draws an important philosophical implication from the path/narrative metaphor by suggesting that this aligns Buddhist ethics with “particularism” rather than “universalism” as regards ethical theory. According to ethical particularism, when we make moral choices we do so situationally or contextually, not guided by general moral principles, but by using specific paradigm cases as precedents that become habits of action. More specifically, paradigm cases inform our perceptual skills and these perceptual skills in turn have a conative function by assigning values to the phenomena in our experience that determine our moral choices. Garfield sees such ethical particularism as a great advantage for Buddhist ethics over rule-focused ethical systems because particularist ethics “allows flexibility and openness to special circumstances” and makes moral conduct “improvisational”.

A highlight of the book is Garfield’s exploration of the crucially important role of the no-self doctrine in Buddhist ethics. In the context of the no-self theory, Garfield’s moral phenomenology offers important insights into Buddhist ethics that are widely shared by the various Buddhist traditions. Garfield points

out that most Western ethical theories assume that human beings are (have) selves and that moral responsibility depends on the freedom/autonomy of the self. And yet, Buddhism rejects the existence of an independently existing, autonomous self—that is the basic idea of the no-self theory. Given this Buddhist conception of human nature, Western ethicists might wonder whether Buddhism can have an ethics at all if the possibility of ethical evaluation depends on a human being possessing an autonomous self. But Garfield argues that Buddhism offers a coherent ethics without postulating an autonomous self, because Buddhist ethics is not focused on evaluating the moral responsibility of a moral agent, but recasts ethics as a path to spiritual fulfilment that reduces suffering and enhances well-being (both of the person who acts as well as those who are impacted by moral actions). Furthermore, because of the no-self theory, Buddhist ethics has a distinct advantage over ethical systems that assume an autonomous moral agent, for the reason that the no-self theory accords with our understanding of the human person via modern science.⁵ Garfield claims that modern science commits us to a form of causal determinism that, much like Buddhism’s theory of dependent origination, is incompatible with the belief in a genuinely free/autonomous self.

Garfield’s discussion of the no-self theory relates a number of other ways that this theory has ethical significance. As Garfield explains in very clear terms, a crucial source of suffering is the delusion “manifest in grasping oneself as an agent, as an I, as a mine” (p. 43). This grasping after “self” has the negative ethical significance of “privileging” oneself both in terms encouraging selfish pursuit of a person’s interests to the detriment of others, but also because it frames a view of the universe where everything and everyone is cast in relation to oneself. But Buddhism posits that because we exist as persons within a matrix of causal interactions there can be “no morally significant distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding actions” (p. 17). In this way, the no-self doctrine grounds the “non-egocentrism” that permeates the specific practices of Buddhist ethics. Ethical practice is reciprocally related to realisation of Buddhism’s central metaphysical insights, explains Garfield, because ethical practice derives from a deep knowledge of dependent origination and no-self, but the ethical actions themselves replace corrupt, egoistic experience with

⁵ In Chapter 11, Garfield explores his claim that Buddhist ethics offers ethical resources that are more coherent in relation to a modern scientific worldview than those offered in the non-naturalistic forms of ethics that are common to Western philosophy.

non-egocentric experience that reinforces the knowledge that we are each a part of a causally interdependent world.

One further implication of Buddhism's no-self doctrine is that it sidesteps a central question in Western ethics: "Why be good?". Western ethics makes such a question the *sine qua non* of ethical theory because these theories presume an independent moral agent who needs to rationalise the value of ethical action in terms of the benefit to the agent. But if there is no fundamental self, then there is no agent-specific good; there is just good defined as the easing of suffering or faring well no matter to whom (or what) the experience belongs. Garfield explains in his interpretation of Buddhist ethics that one starts from the recognition that there is suffering and a need for a path to alleviate that suffering (i.e., Buddhist ethics). There is simply no need to rationalise why the individual person should be moral as if morality comes down to a matter of personal (agent-specific) expediency. Here is another significant way that Garfield's account of Buddhist ethics makes a plausible case for his general thesis that it offers an important and distinctive approach to ethics.

In Chapter 9, Garfield gives an unusual twist to the interpretation of the *brahmavihāras* or "divine abodes" that comprise the four cardinal virtues of Buddhism, namely, "friendliness, care, joy in the success of others, and impartiality".⁶ The novelty in Garfield's account of the *brahmavihāras* stems from his attempt to locate them within his moral phenomenology. According to Garfield, the *brahmavihāras* should be considered as "modes of comportment" that result from the realisation of dependent origination and the no-self doctrine. They are fundamentally ways of seeing or perceiving correctly, not ways of acting or moral ideals (except in a secondary sense). Morally ideal actions arise "spontaneously" when one has completed the cognitive transformation of correcting perception. Thus, Garfield interprets the *brahmavihāras* as the transformation of one's being based on something like noesis (e.g., "kindness based on insight"). This interpretation runs counter to the widely held view that the *brahmavihāras* are ideal ethical practices that reinforce Buddhism's non-egocentric psychology and are only indirectly related to Buddhism's metaphysics. It is hard not to conclude that Garfield's interpretation of the *brahmavihāras* is tailored to fit his cognitivist moral phenomenology at the expense of a more credible understanding of the *brahmavihāras*—that they are, as Buddhist tradition has long taken them to be,

⁶ More commonly translated as loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

namely, the ultimate *moral* ideals of human behaviour, rather than epistemic/metaphysical concepts.

In Chapter 12, Garfield explores the contemporary application of Buddhist ethics known as “engaged Buddhism”. He discusses the emergence of engaged Buddhism as a “global river” of movements that puts Buddhist ethics into action. Garfield recognises “engaged Buddhism” as “a distinctively modern Buddhist development evolving in conversation with Western ethical and political theory” (p. 195). As such, engaged Buddhism tells us a lot about what Buddhist ethics looks like today. In his assessment of socially engaged Buddhism, Garfield rejects any firm distinction between “traditionist” and “modernist” readings of Buddhism that is sometimes used to question the authenticity of engaged Buddhism (where it might appear to depart from the Buddhism of historical texts). Buddhism, in Garfield’s view, remains a living tradition that has always been applied to social issues of a particular time. So, judging engaged Buddhism by strict historical standards is a non-starter. Buddhist ethics, Garfield writes, “goes beyond the trope of authenticity that only historical ideas count as real/pure Buddhism—Buddhism is a living, progressive tradition” (p. 197). Garfield offers several illustrations of engaged Buddhism via short summaries of the activities of its most prominent proponents, such as Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022), Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), and the Dalai Lama (b. 1935), with only short references to larger Buddhist movements like Soka Gakkai in Japan and eco-Buddhism in Thailand. Garfield leaves no doubt that he approves of such applications of the Buddha’s teachings. “The Engaged Buddhist movement”, he concludes, “shows that the voice of the Buddha is a voice that deserves to be heard: these ideas are not only of contemporary as well as historical interest; they are compelling, and call upon us to experience ourselves, our fellows, and the world we inhabit together in a different and perhaps more salutary way” (p. 198).

In summary, Garfield’s book makes a number of important contributions to our understanding of Buddhist ethics and provides a clearly written and well-organised introduction for those interested in Buddhist ethics in the Indian Mahayana tradition. Garfield deserves much credit for delivering a book that enlivens Buddhist ethical thought by connecting Buddhist ideas to the mindset of a modern reader. His philosophical interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a moral phenomenology is a bold and insightful contribution to scholarship in Buddhist philosophy—even if it represents mainly the perspective of Indian Mahayana Buddhism rather than Buddhism generally—because this conceptualisation of

Buddhist ethics achieves one of the central aims of the book, namely, giving Buddhist ethics a voice in the contemporary conversation on ethical theory.

Lastly, a few comments on the book for academic instructors who might consider using it in university-level classes. Garfield's volume would serve well as a textbook for upper-level undergraduate or graduate-level classes that focus on Mahayana Buddhist ethics. Otherwise, in courses where Buddhist ethics is covered more generally, the book would be useful to students as a secondary (research) source. The author's call to philosophers to take Buddhist ethics seriously should be heeded. Thus, any instructor of a course in ethics that attempts to offer more than traditional Western ethical theories by including a Buddhist perspective should consider including key chapters of this book as reading material.