Notes

1 – Jiang says that Confucianism does embrace a healthy kind of pluralism (or at least tolerance), so long as the non-leading values each acknowledge their subsidiary and private role, vis-à-vis the leading, official role of Confucianism. He finds evidence for this in the general acceptance in contemporary China of the erection of statues of Confucius on university campuses: "the reason is because in China the non-Confucians are very clear in their minds that Confucianism is a public value with political significance" (p. 170).

2 – Thomas Metzger, *A Cloud Across the Pacific* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2005), p. 18. Note that Metzger uses "rational" very broadly, consciously intending it to encompass Confucian epistemologies, though Jiang might still object. Metzger argues that Chinese political thinking of all political camps over the last century has exhibited striking continuity with basic orientations of earlier Chinese thinking, and that all join in rejecting what he calls the "Great Modern Western Epistemological Revolution," according to which there are deep limits to the kinds of knowledge available to us.

3 – This idea is found in chapter 44 of the *Chunqiu fanlu.*

4 – Notwithstanding the fascinating if abstract sources for a kind of anthropocentric environmentalism found in a range of Confucian texts, historical Confucians completely failed to articulate any kind of systematic pro-environment policies, as can be seen in Mark Elvin's important book, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

5 – See p. 64 n. 40. For Mawdūdī, see his *Human Rights in Islam* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1976).

6 – See Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 35–36.

Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy. By Christian Coseru. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. vii + 356. ISBN 978-0-19-984338-1.

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In *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy,* Christian Coseru makes the innovative and ambitious argument that the project of Indian Buddhist epistemology, as represented by thinkers in the Yogācāra tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, is continuous in many of its methods and conclusions with the phenomenological theories of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as with recent naturalistic approaches in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. In Coseru's reading, Buddhism shares with phenomenology the attitude that metaphysical and epistemological questions cannot be treated in isolation from questions concerning the nature of conscious awareness and the

manner in which objects are experientially disclosed. As for naturalism, Coseru claims that Buddhist epistemology is amenable to the view that a proper account of the acquisition and justification of knowledge must rest on a scientifically informed understanding of the causal processes involved in generating cognitions. Thus, the aim of this book is threefold: to elaborate the central tenets of Buddhist epistemology as a form of "phenomenological naturalism," to show that Buddhist theories of perception and self-awareness resolve certain dilemmas in epistemology and philosophy of mind, and ultimately to suggest ways in which Buddhist insights can be integrated into the contemporary study of cognition and consciousness.

After introducing the broad outlines of phenomenological naturalism in the first chapter, Coseru uses the second chapter to give a wide-ranging introduction to classical Indian methods of philosophical reasoning, addressing metatheoretical issues of translation and interpretation that lie in the background of his comparative project. In arguing that the relevance of Buddhist philosophical concerns can be extended beyond their historical and soteriological context, Coseru briefly addresses ways in which Buddhist theories of inference, concepts, and meditative insight can all be aligned with empirically informed psychological accounts. These parallels are developed in later chapters: a "psychologistic" account of the Buddhist theory of inference is suggested in chapter 4; in chapters 6 and 7, Coseru mentions how the Buddhist *apoha* theory of concept formation resonates with empirical research on the role of prototypes and imagery in conceptual thought; and in chapters 8 and 9, he proposes that the Buddhist theory of perception in some way follows from a phenomenology of non-ordinary meditative states.

In chapter 3, Coseru argues that the complex analysis of mental states in the Pāli Nikāyas and early Abhidharma texts anticipates later Yogācāra's phenomenalism and rejection of external realism, showing how early Buddhists understood the qualities of perceived objects to be constituted by the activity of our sensory and cognitive systems—including the activity of attention *(āvartana)*—rather than by external objects themselves. In the fourth and sixth chapters, Coseru examines how the Yogācāra Buddhist epistemologists, unlike their Abhidharma predecessors, analyze states of conscious awareness in order to identify whether they are veridical and produced by warranted sources of knowledge *(pramāṇa)*. These chapters focus specifically on the arguments presented in Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṃgraha* and Kamalaśīla's *Pañjikā* commentary, which ground the epistemic validity of perception on its non-conceptual and reflexively self-aware nature. (The fifth chapter of Coseru's book gives a more general overview of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and its contents.)

Coseru places special emphasis on the notion of *ākāra,* or "phenomenal aspect," and the role it plays in the Buddhists' account of self-awareness. Every awareness episode has two aspects, one objective *(grāhyākāra)* and the other subjective *(grāhakākāra)*. The objective aspect presents the object toward which a perceptual or conceptual awareness is directed, while the subjective aspect presents the conscious, qualitative manner in which one is aware of that object from one's own perspective. Coseru refers to these two aspects as the phenomenal content and the phenomenal

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character of experience, respectively, and claims that the Buddhist theory of aspects is here aligned with Husserl's understanding of noematic content, which views an object of intentional awareness as constituted by its manner of conscious presentation, regardless of whether the awareness is veridical or not. Interpreting the dual aspects of awareness as phenomenal content and character thereby suggests two interrelated theses on behalf of the Buddhists. First, intentionality cannot be understood apart from phenomenality; any apprehension of an object must necessarily appear in consciousness in order to count as a cognitive knowledge-episode. Second, the Buddhist idea of *svasaṃvedana,* or reflexive self-awareness, is "meant to capture both the [phenomenal] content and character of mental events" (p. 259). Because all awareness is intentional and hence possesses conscious phenomenal qualities, awareness is aware of itself in the sense that a single awareness-event manifests its own phenomenal character in manifesting the phenomenal qualities of its intentional object.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 trace the implications of the Buddhists' phenomenological understanding of perception and self-awareness. In chapter 7, Coseru addresses the charge that Buddhist epistemology falls prey to the "Myth of the Given," or the fallacy that our knowledge is founded on a self-justifying acquaintance with non-conceptual sensations. Coseru responds by first pointing out that the Buddhists generally did not take the epistemic justification of perception to be always intrinsically ascertained *(svataḥ prāmāṇya)*—perceptions generally do not show through their mere occurrence that they correspond with reality and are non-deceptive *(avisamvādaka),* but are confirmed as knowledge episodes only after they have led to the attainment of the objects they present. Perceptions can be intrinsically ascertained by virtue of being reflexively self-aware, but this sort of intrinsic ascertainment logically addresses the infinite regress looming if a cognition needs another cognition in order to be consciously manifested and known. Intrinsically reflexive self-awareness on its own, though, does not determine the reliability of perception as a source of knowledge about the world.

In fact, Coseru thinks that the question of whether the Buddhists are committed to the Myth of the Given is beside the point. Coseru admits that insofar as knowledge is grounded in non-conceptual perceptions that are intrinsically self-aware, the Buddhist epistemological model is indeed foundationalist and thus committed to the Myth of the Given. But, the phenomenological orientation of the Buddhist epistemologists means that they are not foundationalists in the way that other sorts of empiricists are. That is because the contents of perceptual awareness, when viewed under phenomenological reflection, are not "factual qua objects extrinsic to awareness" (p. 199)—in other words, perception for the Buddhists does not represent predicatively structured facts or states of affairs in the external world. For the Buddhists, the unique particulars given in perceptual awareness are instead structureless unitary wholes, or indivisible and momentary phenomenal qualities. Ultimately, perception only presents these unique particulars as they are perceived, and not as they exist outside our reflexive self-awareness. Hence, Coseru writes,

> Given immediate acquaintance with our own mental states, the nonconceptual noema of a pure act of intending is truly the only warranted type of perception. The only indubitable cognitions we have, whatever the status of the particulars they intend, are those nonconceptual, non-inferential cognitions that define direct, non-mediated perception. (p. 233)

Like Husserl, the Buddhists think that perception presents objects as they are intended, that is, as they manifest in phenomenal awareness, and, given that such awareness is self-aware, we can never be mistaken about the phenomenal content and character of perception.

Therefore, Coseru suggests that an anti-foundationalist account of Buddhist epistemology is available, provided "we abandon the requirement that perceptual awareness provides a justification for basic empirical beliefs" (p. 227). Once we give up the naive empiricist view that perception grants foundational certainty to our ordinary beliefs about middle-sized objects in the world, we can attend to the intentional structure of what is actually given in experience, namely phenomenal aspects of unique particulars. In chapter 8, Coseru uses this phenomenological approach to address the criticism that non-conceptual perceptions of propertyless particulars should not be considered to possess intentional content. Critics argue that a cognitive, contentful perception should at least identify or categorize its object as being a certain way in order to be "about" that object in a veridical or non-veridical manner, and also to subsequently motivate actions with respect to the object identified. Still, Coseru insists that a phenomenological account of intentionality allows nonconceptual perception to be cognitively significant without bearing representational belief-content. He expands on how non-conceptual content presents a meaningfully given world by drawing parallels between the Buddhist account and ecological theories of perception. Together, these non-representational accounts claim that the world shows up in perceptual experience as affording possibilities for embodied activity in one's environment.

Moreover, by abandoning the attempt to view perception as a source of foundational justification for ordinary empirical beliefs, we can undertake a naturalistic study of knowledge and belief-formation that is guided by cognitive science, rather than by normative epistemology. However, the naturalistic orientation of Buddhist epistemology would not favor materialist or functionalist explanations of mental content and the qualitative aspects of consciousness, explanations that reduce these phenomena to internal representational states physically encoded in the brain. Instead, Buddhist theories of perception and self-awareness are aligned with a more capacious form of naturalism as found in enactive and embodied models of cognition, which view conscious awareness as arising through a dynamic interaction of a perceiver and its environment. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla reject the Cārvāka view that consciousness is reducible to physical elements by arguing that there are causal processes and powers unique to the cognitive/mental realm. On Coseru's reading, a chain of cognitive states reflexively acts as its own "acquiring cause" *(upādānakāraṇa)* by exercising the capacity of attention *(manaskāra).* It is when attention is directed

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toward sensory and cognitive states that these states "acquire" an experiential character. Thus, Coseru draws a parallel between this reflexive causal "autonomy" of mental states and recent autopoietic models of consciousness, which view consciousness as emerging out of a dynamically self-producing, self-regulating biological system that is coupled with an environment through the body, without being reducible to the body.

This summary has not done justice to many of the textual insights and thought-provoking references to contemporary scientific research that are found throughout Coseru's work. But, I would just note that in taking such a "wide-angled" view of Buddhist epistemology that emphasizes its continuity with phenomenology and cognitive science, Coseru glosses over points of discontinuity between these three domains of thought. At the very least, Coseru does not always exercise enough care when selectively portraying epistemological positions through a phenomenological lens, leading to a sometimes inconsistent and ambiguous exegesis of Buddhist views.

Take, for instance, Coseru's claim that the Buddhists, in agreement with Husserlian phenomenology, advocate an "active perception phenomenalism that is essentially nonrepresentational in character" (p. 142). In the phenomenological account, the notion of an inner representation that resembles an external world is incoherent, since there is no way to know that the representation accurately resembles the world if our access to the world is always mediated by a representation (p. 260). One problem, though, is that Coseru initially distinguishes between the camps of *sākāravāda* and *nirākāravāda,* or aspectualism and non-aspectualism, by claiming that it is the non-aspectualist who holds that "consciousness is devoid of any internal representations" (p. 103), an apt characterization of *nirākāravāda* that nonetheless seems to contradict his reading of Yogācāra *sākāravāda* as non-representational. (Staying with this passage, Coseru also suggests that aspectualism is held by those philosophers who think that consciousness is inherently intentional, a claim that prematurely dismisses the staunch intentionalism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā defenders of *nirākāravāda,* and conflicts with his acknowledgment on p. 225 that Indian epistemologists in general think cognitive events are intentional.)

Given that the *sākāravāda* view takes our access to objects in the world to be mediated by a phenomenal aspect, the Sautrāntika-Yogācāra Buddhists argue that the epistemic status of perception rests on the resemblance *(sārūpya)* of an *ākāra,* here as a perceptual image/appearance *(pratibhāsa),* with a particular *svalakṣaṇa.* Of course, Coseru ultimately reconciles the phenomenologists' aversion to positing representational intermediaries in perception with the Buddhists' epistemological reliance on such representations by specifying that, for the Yogācāra Buddhists, the subjective phenomenal aspects of perception are not representations because, ontologically speaking, there are actually no external objects to represent, and so, phenomenologically speaking, perceptual aspects just provide a reflexive, non-representational acquaintance with themselves.

Still, the tension between Coseru's "phenomenological reduction" of Buddhist epistemology and the Buddhists' own normative epistemological pretensions remains apparent in his treatment of perceptual illusion. Dharmakīrti argues for adding

the qualifier "non-erroneous" *(abhrānta)* to Dignāga's definition of perception as merely non-conceptual *(kalpanāpoḍha),* since it is possible for non-conceptual sensory impairments to produce perceptual illusions that do not conform with reality, and that do not lead to the successful obtainment of an object as it is illusorily presented in perception. Coseru, however, is unconvinced, stating that it is still an "open question" (p. 189) as to whether perception could appropriately be considered to be erroneous or non-erroneous, since discerning that a perception is erroneous or not involves a retrospective inference, while illusions are still valid perceptions insofar as they retain an unmistaken, non-inferential acquaintance with their own experiential contents. Yet, Coseru fails to mention that Kamalaśīla anticipates this sort of objection in TSP 1359–1361. Against the claim that the qualifier "non-erroneous" is superfluous because perception takes place before we have inferential confirmation of its epistemic warrant, Kamalaśīla points out that even prior to obtaining such confirmation we still pre-inferentially adopt an epistemic stance of certainty or doubt toward a given perception, thus evincing our understanding of the possibility that perception itself can be erroneous or non-erroneous.

Moreover, Coseru gives a misleading rendition of Kamalaśīla's own interpretation of the qualifier "non-erroneous" as meaning "non-deceptive" *(avisaṃvādin).* An inconsistency arises when he claims that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla reject "the notion that cognitive errors only belong in conceptual thought (given the evidence from defective sensory apprehensions)" (p. 185), and then later writes that Kamalaśīla prefers to interpret "non-erroneous" as "non-deceptive" because actually "perceptual illusions (and defective perceptions) do not really qualify as cognitive errors but rather as cases of deceptiveness" (p. 190). In going on to claim that, for example, the jaundiced perception of a white conch shell as yellow is deceptive but is still non-erroneous (ibid.), Coseru evidently conflates Kamalaśīla's position with that of Dignāga, who generally holds that all error is a product of conceptual fabrications. This same conflation also occurs when Coseru incorrectly claims, against the argumentative context of the specific passage, that according to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, the illusion of a circle of fire produced by a whirling firebrand *(alātacakrābhāsa)* cannot be perceptual in character, but instead is "a construct that bears all the characteristics of (top-down) conceptual cognitive processes" (p. 178). But, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla clearly view the fire-wheel illusion as a (bottom-up) perceptual error, and not as a mental/conceptual error, since conceptual processes cannot impart the vividness and distinctness with which the fire-wheel illusion appears in experience. Thus, it seems that Coseru is unwilling to admit that cognitions can be perceptual in character and also epistemically unwarranted, and that his anti-foundationalist reading of Buddhist epistemology cannot therefore do justice to those Yogācāra Buddhists who still treat perception as capable of providing, or failing to provide, an epistemic warrant for ordinary empirical beliefs and practical activity.

Coseru's account of the parallels between Buddhist epistemology and phenomenology also faces tensions owing to the Buddhists' commitments to momentariness and the sharp division between perception and conception. Buddhist phenomenology undercuts our "natural attitude"—that ordinary experience reveals a world

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of external and enduring entities—by instead showing us that perception is really a series of discrete, momentary cognitive episodes that present perceiver-dependent phenomenal aspects. But, Coseru explains, "When these qualitative experiences are fused together into something like a distinct spatio-temporal object, we no longer move within the horizon of perceptual awareness, but are instead caught up in the operations of thought" (p. 209). A striking upshot of the Buddhists' account, then, is that such a central feature of experience as perceptual constancy or object coherence—which Coseru describes as both an "illusory construct" (p. 175) and "the backbone of successful experience" (p. 195)—is generated by our habitual tendencies of conceptual construction (p. 293).

However, while it may be true that perceptual constancy must involve conceptual construction for the Buddhists, Husserl thinks that perceptual constancy is still experienced within the horizon of perceptual awareness, that is, the anticipatory awareness of an object as having other possibly perceivable aspects. It is this horizon that enables us to experience an object and its properties as remaining identical through variations in sensory stimuli, and as extending beyond its immediately perceived surface. The Buddhists would therefore have to dismiss as a pseudo-perception the phenomenology—well-attested by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (see Mulligan 1995 and Kelly 2004)—of directly experiencing a three-dimensional object as transcending one's immediate perspective. In his Yogācāra-inspired eagerness to refute our "common sense" experience of ordinary objects as persisting entities that exist beyond their perceptible parts, Coseru thereby dismisses some of the direct realist motivations behind phenomenology and its non-representational account of perception.

What's more, Coseru may be overreaching in citing contemporary cognitive science to support Buddhist phenomenology's rejecting of our "natural attitude" toward ordinary experience. According to Coseru, our naive belief that perception directly presents observer-independent entities is undermined by the fact that our conscious perception of these entities is produced by, but bears no resemblance to, the sensory input unconsciously processed in the brain (p. 232). Instead, a clear awareness of perception, untainted by conceptual fabrication, shows us that "at the level of pure sensations . . . only the embodied forms of intentionality, as pure presence to the world, are given; determined 'selves' and 'entities' are yet to emerge from the perceptual stream" (p. 233). Unfortunately, in further considering how Buddhist phenomenology is compatible with cognitive science, Coseru does not address the number of contemporary psychological accounts that take the ability to perceptually individuate and re-identify enduring, numerically identical objects—an ability demonstrated at early stages of infancy—to be a function of non-conceptual processes operative in the unconscious, cognitively impenetrable stages of vision (see Pylyshyn 2007 and Raftopoulos 2009). If these psychological accounts are correct, then they might complicate Coseru's view that the phenomenological reduction reveals our experience of enduring objects to be a conceptual superimposition on the pure perception of momentary mental events.

Though Coseru's writing could be more perspicuous in navigating between theoretical approaches with different methodological orientations, his work is none-

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theless to be admired for its creative and richly suggestive account of Buddhist epistemology. The insights of his phenomenological interpretation of Buddhist theories of perception and self-awareness allow these ancient ideas to become live options for current debates in the philosophy of mind. Moreover, the ample references to empirical research lay the groundwork for further Buddhist engagement with the scientific study of consciousness and cognition.

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If there is any justice in the world, Bai Tongdong's recent book *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom* will find a ready audience among students and nonspecialists interested in classical Chinese political thought and what it has to say about China now and good government in general. Although it is a fine introduction to early Chinese political philosophy, it is more than just that. Bai's overarching theme is that China in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period (referred to as SAWS, roughly 771–221 B.C.E.) was facing a social and political situation very similar to that in modern Europe, and the Chinese philosophy of this period is best understood as a kind of modern philosophy. He argues that the nature of the philosophical problems in China was significantly different from what it was in ancient Greece, despite the close proximity in time (although he still makes occasional comparisons with Plato's *Republic*). In his view, China displays an alternative form of modernization that is instructive both for understanding the phenomenon of modernity and for reflecting on the limitations and problems of current political structures and philosophies that developed out of European modernity, particularly liberal democracy.

This is a controversial and challenging point of view, and I will come back to it later. First, I want to describe the content of the book. The theoretical framework