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Madhyamaka and Yogācāra: Allies or Rivals? eds. by Jay L.
Garfield and Jan Westerhoff (review)

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and thought. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the life and thought of a seminal Korean Confucian philosopher.

Note

1 – Edward Y. J. Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Re-appraisal of the "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

Madhyamaka and Yogācāra: Allies or Rivals? Edited by Jay L. Garfield and Jan Westerhoff. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 280. Hardcover \$105.00, ISBN 978-0-1902-3128-6. Paper \$36.95, ISBN 978-0-1902-3129-3.



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Recent decades have witnessed a number of scholarly attempts to illuminate the philosophical affinity between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, the two main systems of thought in the Mahāyāna stream of Buddhism. Both schools originated in India in the first centuries of the common era, and had a significant impact on the doctrines of Asian Buddhism in such countries as China, Korea, Tibet, and Japan. Consequently, their views concerning reality have been documented in various textual sources, ranging from early philosophical treatises by their chief founders, Nāgārjuna (Madhyamaka) and Vasubandhu and Asaṅga (Yogācāra), to sūtras and later commentaries. These sources indicate that the two schools shared certain core ideas concerning the nature of reality, first and foremost the principle of emptiness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*), according to which phenomena (*dharma*) do not exist in the real, objective way that they are normally thought to exist. At the same time, however, these sources show that the epistemological and metaphysical views of the two schools evolved in different directions through mutual critique. In light of this tension, the question arises whether their philosophical positions are opposed to each other or perhaps complementary in some ways. *Madhyamaka and Yogācāra: Allies or Rivals?* edited by Jay Garfield and Jan Westerhoff gathers an impressive group of experts in Buddhist philosophy who consider this problem from different angles.

The title of the book raises a dichotomous question. Nevertheless, most of the essays in this collection afford observations that lie along a spectrum and display considerable sensitivity to the different tones and degrees of the philosophical interplay. Thus, for example, the very doxographical distinction between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra as two uniform and mutually exclusive schools is repeatedly called into question: their doctrinal diversity is aptly stressed in the contributions by

Mattia Salvini, Dan Lusthaus, and Eviatar Shulman. In like manner, some of the authors raise the important methodological question of what constitutes philosophical consistency in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus, Mark Siderits and Jan Westerhoff consider the approach of “Indian inclusivism” (to use Siderits’ term), or “gradualism” (as Westerhoff dubs it). This is the common Indian strategy that seeks to reconcile competing views by presenting the thought of one school as a useful step toward the realization of the more accurate view of another. Siderits and Westerhoff are, then, divided on whether or not this approach should be seen as a form of philosophical continuity.

The heterogeneity of replies also finds expression in the diversity of textual sources that were chosen for addressing the root question. Some of the authors rely primarily on the seminal works of Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, and Asaṅga (e.g., Jonathan Gold and Sonam Thakchöe); others rely primarily on the schools’ constitutive sūtras (e.g., Chaisit Suwanvarangkul); and still others examine works by later commentators (e.g., Malcolm David Eckel, James Blumenthal, and Dan Lusthaus). For reasons of space, this review will cover six out of the eleven essays collected in the book, which illustrate well, in my opinion, the various aspects covered by the volume.

The essay by James Blumenthal examines the works of Śāntarakṣita (eighth century C.E.), who aimed at a syncretism of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophies. It raises the question of whether, and in what sense, the two systems complement each other in these works. The author focuses in particular on two central Yogācāra principles that are rejected by the Madhyamaka, but are incorporated into Śāntarakṣita’s integrative view. The first is the rejection of mind-independent objects: in his *Madhyamakālaṅkāra* (Ornament of the Madhyamaka), Śāntarakṣita explains that conventional truths, namely the objects we know by conceptual thought, are causal phenomena that are inseparable from consciousness. In favor of this view, he argues that had the objects of conventional truths existed in complete separation from consciousness, their existence could not have been ascertained by direct perception. The second principle is the acceptance of reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedanā*): Śāntarakṣita maintains that reflexive awareness is incompatible with the view that objects are external to the mind. In his arguments he endeavors to show that by its nature consciousness is reflexive awareness and that consequently its objects must be of the same nature as consciousness. Blumenthal maintains that, for Śāntarakṣita, the two systems complement each other. Yet, although the Yogācāra views are essential to Śāntarakṣita’s system, both epistemologically and soteriologically, they only play a secondary role in comparison to the Madhyamaka doctrines.

Salvini’s wide-ranging essay convincingly demonstrates that an essential part of the debate between the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka relies on various linguistic categories. One such category is the mind, expressed by the terms *vijñāna* (consciousness), *vijñapti* (cognition), *upalabdhi* (apprehension/perception), and *citta* (left untranslated by Salvini), and included in the broader category of *nāma* (also left untranslated). This category points at the similarity between the two schools. Both employ it to examine the limits of discussing, by means of language, the Buddhas’

non-referential awareness (*jñāna*), relying on it for the analysis of conventional truth. For both, the concept of *nāma* is linked to the bending of the mind in two senses, namely “perceiving an object” and “moving to a new birth.” Other linguistic categories, however, reveal the disagreement between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. *Upacāra* (secondary or indirect usage of words) is employed by the latter school to criticize the Madhyamaka’s claim that all *dharmas* exist only conventionally and lack an ultimate existence. While expressions such as “self” and “*dharmas*” are *upacāras* and do not hold a literal meaning, they nevertheless require a certain real ultimate referent—the transformation of the mind—whose existence is denied by the Mādhyamikas. Similarly, certain Madhyamaka arguments rely on the category of *kāraṅka* (syntactical factors) to refute the Yogācāra understanding of reflexive awareness and of *svalakṣaṇa* (“own-characteristic”), by demonstrating that these notions escape the expressive framework of *kāraṅka*, which is employed by the Yogācāra itself in order to establish these two notions. Thus, linguistic categories are instrumental in revealing the points of affinity and disagreement between the two schools.

Lusthaus’ nicely written and penetrating essay centers on two seventh-century Chinese texts: (1) the *Da Tang Daciensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (A biography of the Tripitaka master [Xuanzang] of the Great Cí’en Monastery of the Great Tang dynasty by Huili and Yancong), and (2) the *Banre Boluomiduo xinjing youzan* 般若波羅蜜多心經幽贊 (A comprehensive commentary on the Heart Sūtra) by the Chinese scholar Kuiji. Xuanzang and Kuiji are both proponents of the Yogācāra views. The biography of Xuanzang records a series of debates he held with philosophers of the Madhyamaka, of non-Mahāyāna schools, and of non-Buddhist schools. In all of these debates, Xuanzang defeats his opponents. These narratives reveal that the crucial doctrinal divide was not between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra, but rather between the Mahāyāna and those arguing outside the Mahāyāna views. Whereas the two schools were rivals to a point, when confronted with non-Mahāyāna or non-Buddhist thinkers they joined forces and stood on the same side. Kuiji’s exegesis of the *Heart Sūtra*, which stresses the significance of practice (according to Kuiji, a key aspect of the Yogācāra school), is a commentary that provides both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra perspectives on the text. Sometimes these perspectives are in disagreement and at times they take different directions but do not conflict, while at other times the Yogācāra commentary constitutes an overriding elaboration of the terse Madhyamaka interpretation. By exhibiting the three types of relations, Kuiji’s commentary demonstrates that the two tenets agreed to different degrees on different philosophical points.

In his contribution to the volume, Eckel examines the response of the Madhyamaka philosopher Bhāviveka to the Yogācāra refutation of external objects put forth in the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* (Verses on the heart of the Middle Way). It is a common traditional and modern conception that Bhāviveka was the thinker who prompted the rift between the two schools. Contrary to this, the author shows that Bhāviveka in fact responded to earlier attacks by the Yogācārins, who accused the Madhyamaka school of nihilism, and urged the excommunication of its adherents. In his argument, Bhāviveka makes use of a three-part syllogism, which was derived

from the Indian Buddhist philosopher Dignāga and which indicates that for Bhāviveka logical reasoning (*tarka*) serves as the criterion for discerning between the true understanding of ultimate reality and mistaken misapprehensions of it. Bhāviveka's general claim is that in its understanding of reality, the Yogācāra falls into the two extremes of nihilism and reification. On the one hand, the Yogācārin rejects too much, since he denies the existence of the imagined (*parikalpita*), which according to the Madhyamaka view does exist conventionally. On the other hand, the Yogācārin also reifies too much in arguing for the ultimate existence of dependent identity (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), which according to Bhāviveka does not exist ultimately. Thus, Eckel concludes, the two schools were essentially in deep disagreement, and their accounts of the Middle Way were each the direct opposite of the other.

Gold's interesting discussion of the impetus behind the innovations of early Yogācāra suggests that in its inception the Yogācāra endeavored to restate the Madhyamaka ideas rather than to reject them. Its purpose was to synthesize a Mahāyāna doctrine free of disputations, in order, primarily, to prevent the danger of denying the validity of moral criteria. Asaṅga's critique of the Madhyamaka in the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* reveals the misunderstandings, inconsistencies, and unresolved questions that emerge from particular Madhyamaka interpretations of the principle of emptiness in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of wisdom) literature. Such interpretations assert the existence of designations (*prajñapti*), but deny altogether the existence of the designated object. By redefining the notions of emptiness and inherent nature (*svabhāva*), the Yogācāra addresses these problematics. In a similar vein, Vasubandhu's arguments in the *Vyākhyāyukti* (Proper mode of exposition) against Madhyamaka views that refute the "own character" (*svalakṣaṇa*) of designated entities is intended to resolve disputes between the Mahāyāna and Abhidharma schools. Vasubandhu's way of reconciling them is based on the principle that if all concepts are conventional, then when it comes to clarifying conventional truths, Mahāyāna scriptures have no supremacy over Abhidharma scriptures. Therefore, the former do not invalidate the latter. The same is evident from the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, which claims to offer a restatement of the same teachings expressed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature with a change in "implicit intention," namely that the doctrine of emptiness is conventional rather than ultimate. The strategy of the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* suggests that the Yogācāra philosophy was motivated by the wish to reinterpret the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness instead of undermining it.

Garfield's insightful essay is an imaginative cross-cultural inquiry, in which the affinity between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra is examined in light of a well-known thought experiment from Western philosophy, the Brain in a Vat hypothesis. This hypothesis questions the reality of external objects by suggesting a scenario in which our experiences are generated by an automatic machine, rather than by an external world. In order to formulate a variety of Buddhist responses to the hypothesis, the author draws upon two sources. The first is Vasubandhu's simile of the illusory elephant in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (Ascertainment of the three natures). The second is the Nāgārjunian *catuśkoṭi* method of argumentation. Vasubandhu's simile illustrates the illusory nature of "external" reality according to the Yogācāra, as

expressed in the theory of the three natures of reality. Although this position can be read as idealistic, Garfield understands it as primarily phenomenological (that is, as a claim about the structure of our experience). Taken in this way, he argues, the simile of the elephant, alongside a number of arguments put forth by Candrakīrti and Śāntarakṣita, support four alternative conclusions: that our phenomenological status resembles that of a brain in a vat, that our status is not that of a brain in a vat, that both claims are true, and that neither is true. The Madhyamaka and Yogācāra views exemplified in this philosophical move converge in concluding that the answer to the vat question must remain ineffable. The reason is that this hypothesis rests on a category mistake, erroneously presupposing an epistemic subject that is distinct from its object (contrary to the Yogācāra view) and that has an ultimately real referent (contrary to the Madhyamaka view). Both are merely conceptual-perceptual constructions.

The themes covered by the remaining five chapters are: the development and consolidation of the terms *pratīyasamutpāda* and *dharmadhātu* in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* and in the *Mādhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya* (Suwanvarangkul); the polemics between the Yogācāra, the Madhyamaka-Svātantrika, and the Madhyamaka-Prāsaṅgika surrounding the three-nature theory (Thakchöe); the Yogācāra's and Madhyamaka's conflicting views concerning the nature of truth and the role of philosophy in praxis (Siderits); Yogācāra motifs in the writings of Nāgārjuna as indicating the important role that Yogācāra ideas play in philosophical refinement and Buddhist practice (Westerhoff); and the philosophical affinities between Nāgārjuna's and Vasubandhu's metaphysics and their possible convergence in the classical Madhyamaka-Mayopamavāda sub-school (Shulman).

The strength of this book lies in the different perspectives from which the philosophical question is examined, in the polyphonic articulation of competing positions regarding the primary texts, and in its commitment to a deep philosophical investigation of the issue. The collection is an important contribution to the continuous study of the relations between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra, as well as to the understanding of each school separately.

Buddhist Perspectives on Free Will: Agentless Agency? Edited by Rick Repetti. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xxv + 240. Hardcover \$145.00, ISBN 978-1-138-95034-4.



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Buddhist Perspectives on Free Will: Agentless Agency? gives voice, for the first time, to exclusively Buddhist perspectives on free will. In bringing together the work of