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Foreword by
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A Mirror
IS FOR
Reflection

UNDERSTANDING
BUDDHIST
ETHICS

Introduction

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I.1. For the Purpose of Reflection

Once, the story goes, the Buddha asked his son, “What do you think, Rāhula? What is a mirror for?” And Rāhula answered, “A mirror is for reflection, sir” (MN.i.415).¹

The term used in the Pāli Buddhist text here, *paccavekkhana*, like the English *reflection*, has two meanings, one referring to an image being thrown back from a surface such as water or glass, and the other referring to the process of careful consideration. These two different sets of connotations make some sense given the literal meaning of *paccavekkhana*, to “look back,” “look again,” or “re-view.” The Buddha plays on these dual meanings of the term to suggest that one should review carefully one’s bodily actions, one’s speech, and even one’s thoughts and mental states, before they occur, during, and also afterward. Those actions of body, speech, and mind that one knows on reflection do not lead to one’s own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both, those are wholesome, leading to well-being; those sorts of actions should be done. On the other hand, those actions of body, speech, and mind that one knows on reflection do lead to one’s own affliction, to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both, those are unwholesome, leading to unease; regarding those sorts of actions one should confess any that have been done to one’s teacher or fellow practitioners and one should guard oneself from doing such actions again in the future.

The practical advice given here is thus to carefully consider the consequences of one’s actions. Notice that not only bodily actions and speech but also the occurrence of thoughts and emotions are classified as actions, *karma* in Sanskrit, *kamma* in the closely related language of the Pāli Buddhist texts

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preserved in the Theravāda tradition (for the sake of consistency, the terms given in this Introduction are from the Pāli except where otherwise noted). This central focus in Buddhist thought and practice, on the ethical choice to cultivate certain wholesome mental and emotional habits and to weaken other, unwholesome ones, opens up an area of ethical investigation that is underexplored in Western theoretical systems. Yet from the perspective of philosophy as it has been practiced in the West, the Buddha's advice to Rahula also leaves important questions unanswered. Is the discourse suggesting that we are to evaluate whether a state such as anger is wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*) based on its future consequences? Or is the idea that those "mental actions" that are considered unwholesome, such as anger, have bad karmic effects because they are unwholesome, independently of those consequences? Questions such as these have been the subject of a lively debate over the past few decades.

In the service of understanding Buddhist ethics, scholars in these debates have often appealed to similarities and differences with Western ethical theories such as Mill's consequentialism or Aristotle's virtue-theoretic approach. This brings out a different aspect of the analogy to reflection: looking into a mirror, we see an image of ourselves. There is a downside to this; if those of us raised in a context dominated by the history of European thought see in Buddhist ethics only reflections of our own philosophical heritage, we may miss new perspectives to be found in Buddhist traditions and also impose on them ideas that are not their own. For instance, some scholars have suggested that while deliberation about action is central to Western conceptions of moral choice, the Buddha's advice to Rahula is something of an exception, and that Buddhist ethics focuses not on this kind of deliberation but instead on training habits of mind to the point that the thought of doing unwholesome actions simply would not arise to be deliberated about (see, e.g., Heim, 2014).

In recent years the academic study of Buddhist ethics has been moving beyond the project of comparison and categorization, renewing the aim to achieve a genuinely cross-cultural, cosmopolitan dialogue on matters that are important to us all. Engaging with perspectives different enough from our own can challenge us to see our assumptions and unquestioned starting points; it can help to point out our cultural blind spots as well as our individual ones. As Owen Flanagan notes in his [introduction](#) to this volume, from the perspective of a Westerner considering whether we [should](#) to adopt Buddhist attitudes toward anger, or whether Buddhists ought to adopt our attitudes toward politics, in the process of considering whether other forms of moral life could be live possibilities for us we encounter "challenges to our normal ways of thinking about the content, scope, order, and sufficiency of our moral beliefs, virtues,

and principles.” In this sense too the project of understanding Buddhist ethics can serve the purpose of reflection. This last sense involves both of the meanings of reflection/*paccavekkhana*, for it involves carefully reviewing and considering the image of ourselves, warts and all, that we see reflected back when we engage with a different perspective. By engaging in such critical cross-cultural reflection, Buddhists as well as Western thinkers may find that refinement and adaptation of their views is needed. Indeed such a process of transformation in the course of transmission to new human contexts is as old as the Buddhist teachings themselves.

1.2. The Roots of Buddhist Ethics

The exact dates of the individual venerated as the Awakened One, the Buddha, are a matter of some controversy, and even the existence of such an individual is not immune to skeptical doubt. Yet we can say with considerable confidence that roughly five hundred years before the Christian era certain central doctrines and meditative techniques were promulgated, and a monastic community of monks and nuns was formed, with a gradually expanding list of explicit rules to live by. This “Doctrine and Discipline” is referred to as *dharmavinaya* in the language of the Pāli texts preserved by the modern Theravāda Buddhist traditions. These sets of texts were transmitted in a northern Indian dialect to Sri Lanka and later to the peoples of Southeast Asia. Other sets of teachings were transmitted in a variety of dialects, including Sanskrit, in which the Buddha’s teachings are referred to as the *dharma* (cognate with Pāli *dhamma*). Texts preserved and innovated in these later lines of transmission were subsequently translated into the languages of Central Asia, the Tibetan plateau, and East Asia. Each of these transmissions to new cultural contexts has involved adaptation and innovation. For this reason the range of modern traditions that are identified as Buddhist display a diversity of ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological claims. In cases such as the modern Theravāda, there have been periods of relative isolation from competing worldviews. In other cases, Buddhist philosophers were continually engaged in lively debates with non-Buddhist Indian or Chinese thinkers. (For an excellent introduction to Buddhist doctrine and its development, see Gethin, 1998).

Despite the diversity of Buddhist thought, certain central doctrinal features are found across most Buddhist philosophical traditions and are a useful starting point for scholars and students unfamiliar with these traditions. The Four Noble Truths are a leading example. The first of these is the Noble Truth of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is to be contrasted with *sukha*, which connotes pleasure and ease. The first noble truth thus points both to the grosser forms

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of suffering due to aging, disease, and death as well as to more subtle and pervasive aspects of unease, unsatisfactoriness, and troublesomeness that are inherent in being a conscious being. The second Noble Truth is that the arising of *dukkha* is due to *taṇhā* (Sanskrit *trṣṇā*), a term literally meaning “thirst” and referring to the insatiable force of craving. The third Noble Truth, of cessation of *dukkha*, *dukkha-nirodha-sacca*, points to the possibility of freedom from *dukkha* by removing its cause. To realize the cessation of *dukkha* is to taste for oneself the peace of *nibbāna*. The fourth Noble Truth is the path of practice leading to cessation of *dukkha*, that is *dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*. This path of practice is broken into eight factors: right view and right aim; right speech, right action, and right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Together these are referred to as the Eightfold Noble Path. Buddhist ethical proposals for how we ought to live and practice can thus be seen as structured by the two opposing poles pointed to by the first Noble Truth, *dukkha*, and by the third Noble Truth, liberation from *dukkha*. The aim of Buddhist practices is to remove the causes of *dukkha* and to replace them with other, better habits of mind, speech, and action.

To go beyond this simple characterization of Buddhist ethics, however, would require us to carefully examine a host of philosophical debates that have occupied ancient Buddhist philosophers as well as modern interpreters, as the chapters of this volume illustrate. For instance, the issue of how to prioritize the goal of eliminating *dukkha* for all sentient beings rather than eliminating the causes of *dukkha* first in oneself has divided Mahayāna Buddhist traditions of Central Asia and East Asia from other schools, such as the Theravāda tradition that is dominant in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. In part these differences in ethical advice may turn on ontological questions about the three characteristics of existence: the characteristic of *anicca* or impermanence, the characteristic of *dukkha* or suffering, and especially the characteristic of *anattā* or nonself. Some Abhidharma schools adopt a reductionist or eliminative stance toward the concept of persons, claiming that individuals are nothing more than (a causal process of) mental and physical elements. If nonself is to be understood along these lines, as implying that there are no ultimately real differences between your suffering and mine, this might lead to the ethical conclusion that one should strive equally to reduce all suffering, without prioritizing one’s own. While this line of thinking is influential, not all Buddhist philosophers, ancient or modern, would agree with it. For instance, some understand the doctrine of nonself instead as a claim about how we should each relate to our own experience—for instance, by not taking it personally—rather than a claim about what ultimately exists or not. Moreover while all schools have pointed to the unwholesome psychological roots of craving, aversion,

and delusion—*lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*—some have held that the concepts we use to draw distinctions not only between individual people but also between objects in the world necessarily involve some level of delusion. In contrast, others seem to suggest that use of concepts is both possible and also unproblematic for a being who is fully liberated from the causes of *dukkha*.

To explore these fascinating debates would take us beyond the scope of this introduction. Focusing more narrowly within the realm of Buddhist ethics, while there are differences between the traditions on the specifics of monastic discipline, *Vinaya*, there is general (though not universal) convergence on the claim that lay Buddhists should maintain precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying, for instance. Yet in applying and extending such a list to the vast range of situations encountered in human contexts one is tempted to look for a theoretical structure that underlies and justifies these basic Buddhist ethical claims. Modern interpreters have debated what this structure might be, and indeed whether there is such a theoretical structure to be found in Buddhist ethics. In his landmark 1992 monograph, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, Damien Keown pointed out extensive parallels between the suggestions for living found in Buddhist texts, with their focus on *nibbāna*, and the teleological conception of virtue found in the works of Aristotle in particular, with their focus on *eudaemonia*. A rival interpretation of Buddhist ethics along the lines of Western consequentialist theories, which Keown argued against, has found able defenders in the work of Mark Siderits (2003) and Charles Goodman (2009). By approaching the study of Buddhist ethics as a comparison between theoretical systems, the work of these and other scholars gave rise to a lively and fertile philosophical debate. Over the past decade, however, many have come to think that the project of fitting Buddhist ethical thought into Western philosophical categories may be of very limited utility, and the focus of investigations has shifted considerably.

1.3. An Overview of the Chapters

This volume offers a snapshot of the present state of investigation into the nature of Buddhist ethics. Keown's contribution to part I departs substantially from his earlier project of comparing Buddhist with Aristotelian ethics. Indeed he suggests here that Buddhist thought lacks the sort of moral theorizing that could be compared directly to Western meta-ethical systems, and he considers in detail a number of reasons for this "curious absence." Bronwyn Finnigan offers a rigorous demonstration of the philosophical complexities that prevent an easy solution to the question of how to fit Buddhist ethics into Western philosophical categories. She identifies the most salient

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philosophical features of virtue-theoretic and consequentialist interpretations in particular, demonstrating the difficulties of deciding between these two interpretative approaches and arguing that both may be plausible as rational reconstructions of the available textual evidence. Christopher Gowans also reviews some difficulties with these two interpretative approaches. He suggests that Indian Buddhist thinkers are best understood as holding moral theorizing to be mainly unimportant to the practical goals of Buddhist traditions, including living ethically and achieving enlightenment.

If the chapters of part I move us away from the project of comparing and contrasting with Western ethical theories in order to identify the theoretical superstructure underlying Buddhist ethical thought, one alternative approach is to construct ethical theories that speak to contemporary concerns yet are inspired by and derived from Buddhist principles, to greater and lesser degrees. In her contribution to part II, Jin Park develops an approach rooted in the nonduality of the Zen and Huayan traditions of Buddhist thought prominent in East Asia. She examines a number of problems that these nondual perspectives pose for formulating an ethical framework, in particular the tension between an ultimate perspective on emptiness and the phenomenal level of difference and distinction. Yet Park proposes that an awareness of these tensions can open a fertile space for ethical reflection and moral cultivation. Graham Priest also develops an approach that draws out the ethical implications of nonself and emptiness. Priest puts particular emphasis on the value of equanimity, by which he means a tranquil state of mind something like *ataraxia* in the Hellenistic context and *upekṣā/upekkhā* in the Buddhist one. Whereas Park and Priest develop their own constructive proposals, Christian Coseru offers a critique of the modern program of Buddhist neuroethics, with its emphasis on both compassion and empirical paradigms of knowledge. Coseru investigates a number of ways this empirically oriented program might advance philosophical understanding of Buddhist ethics: he investigates whether affective neuroscience supplies enough evidence for a naturalized account of Buddhist compassion, whether such a naturalized account of compassion can advance the philosophical debate concerning freedom and determinism (for which see also part III), and how recent empirical work might bear on a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics.

One downside of constructive approaches is their narrow focus on certain aspects of Buddhist ethical thought, to the exclusion of complex relationships with other aspects of doctrine that might be given equal or greater emphasis in traditional contexts. Particularly noteworthy is the relative lack of emphasis on the doctrines of karma and rebirth among approaches to Buddhist ethics developed for our contemporary cultural context. In developing one such

constructive approach, for instance, Priest's chapter is explicit about dispensing with aspects of traditional Buddhist frameworks such as rebirth. Part III turns to focus on this issue. Charles Goodman's contribution to the section on karma and rebirth sets out from the premise that in the context of modern scientific worldviews, traditional Buddhist conceptions of karma are giving way to new conceptions that focus not on consequences in future lives but rather on psychological consequences in a single life. Interestingly Goodman not only locates resources for such a psychological understanding of karma in classical descriptions by Buddhist philosophers such as Śāntideva; he also applies this to the question of the nature of Buddhist ethics as a whole, arguing that understanding karma psychologically in fact considerably strengthens the consequentialist interpretation against the virtue-theoretic one. Jan Westerhoff's chapter raises a powerful objection to such naturalistic approaches to Buddhist ethics: if there is no continuity of mind after the decay of the body, then the most effective way to put an end to one's suffering would be suicide rather than the development of ethical behavior, concentration, and wisdom advocated in Buddhist texts. Westerhoff takes as his primary target the general approach to naturalizing Buddhist ethics articulated by philosophers such as by Owen Flanagan, and the suicide objection has particular force within the sort of consequentialist framework advocated by Goodman. Whereas Goodman and Westerhoff focus on theoretical considerations, Sallie King offers a more practical take on the question of karma in the modern social context. Surveying the uses and abuses of the notion of karma from the perspective of the movement toward a Buddhism engaged with social and political issues, King focuses in particular how the notion of suffering as karmic desert can be used to rationalize unjust institutions, and she draws on Buddhist philosophical resources to offer three pithy rebuttals to such rationalizations.

Taking a similarly practical approach to traditional notions of karma and rebirth, but on a more individual level of ethical transformation, Sara McClintock's contribution to part IV takes up the issue of karmic opacity, how living with the assumed reality of an infinite number of forgotten past lives might lead to ethical transformation in one's present life. McClintock's rich account focuses on how an "ethical reading" can impact a listener's remembrance—perhaps a type of "mindfulness," she suggests—of the fact that one has forgotten most of the formative actions that have brought one to one's current situation. Indeed, as Jay Garfield remarks, cultivating clear awareness is taken in many Buddhist texts to be the foundation of all moral development. Garfield focuses on training in mindfulness as a central contribution that Buddhist traditions can make to contemporary investigations

of moral psychology, and to the field of cognitive science more generally. Surveying texts from the classical discourses of the Pāli Buddhist texts and from the Mahayāna philosopher Śāntideva, among others, Garfield argues that mindfulness is practiced for the sake of being able to embody ethical action with an effortless virtuosity, in the way that a masterful jazz artist spontaneously manifests the fruits of his own dedicated and careful practice. Drawing on similar sources from the Pāli texts as well as recent empirical studies, my chapter brings together two themes in Buddhist ethics: the emphasis on mindfulness as foundational to wisdom and the ethical focus on emotional motivations such as hatred and love that give rise to an intention to act. I argue that, taken together, these can in fact offer a foundation for universal ethical values of the sort Western philosophical systems have aimed at, but one founded in shared human experience of various emotional motivations rather than abstract theoretical reasoning.

A number of modern and ancient interpreters have placed a great deal of emphasis on the role of intention in Buddhist ethics, sometimes overlooking less psychological, more objective factors. Indeed, as noted earlier, one drawback of constructivist approaches such as mine and others surveyed above is that an excessive focus on any one such principle can obscure the context in which it is placed in traditional theories. Karin Meyers's rich exegetical work on Vasubandhu's analysis of intention, in part V, provides one corrective example. Meyers demonstrates how Vasubandhu rejects in his own historical context both the overpsychologization of intention that is characteristic of many modern interpretations of Buddhist theory and also the opposite objective extreme, represented by a Buddhist school that attributed ethical qualities to physical entities. Meyers concludes by noting also that because the freedom Vasubandhu values is not the freedom to do what one desires but rather liberation from suffering, he is not particularly concerned about whether karma might be compelled or free. A number of recent theorists have suggested that the Buddhist understanding of nonself is orthogonal to, or even diametrically opposed to the Western notion of free will. Riccardo Repetti's critical review of this literature argues that Buddhist traditions nonetheless do contain the philosophical resources to enrich the philosophical discussion of free will, and indeed that Buddhist sources pose a serious challenge to the strongest forms of free will skepticism. In a similar vein, Mark Siderits aims to show how Buddhist analyses of action without an agent might prove a resource for contemporary philosophical theories of action. His chapter draws on recent work by E. J. Lowe to help articulate a Buddhist action theory and an approach to free will that features both a conventional, personal level of description and an ultimate, causal level.

In his contribution to part VI, Christopher Kelley engages Buddhist philosophical approaches to the self with a practical, pressing political issue. Kelley focuses on the apparent contradiction between the Dalai Lama's philosophical views on selflessness and emptiness, and his endorsement of human rights law, with its basis in essentialist notions of inherent dignity and inalienable rights of persons derived from the Western Enlightenment. Kelley resolves this tension by suggesting that the doctrine of emptiness, as it is employed in the Madhyamaka philosophy of the Dalai Lama's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, can offer a better philosophical basis for conceptions of human rights, one that counteracts essentialism in its many pernicious forms. Amber Carpenter takes up the relationship of nonself to the political—and emotional—issue of justice. Carpenter investigates Śāntideva's claim that the roots of anger should be eliminated, and with it the metaphysical picture of distinct individuals, some who act and others who are acted upon, that is necessary for resentment of injustice to arise. Carpenter uses this example to suggest that the domain of the ethical in Buddhist thought is not centered on issues of justice but on an ethics of care (*karuṇā*) grounded in dependent arising. Emily McRae's contribution also notes how the forces of aversion as well as attachment cause us to solidify perceptions of identity. Her discussion focuses on the context of intimate relationships, suggesting that the spaciousness of equanimity (*upekkhā*) allows us to witness and respond appropriately to controlling behavior or to laziness, for instance, without seeing it as evidence of our loved one's being a controlling or lazy person. McRae's chapter closes the volume with a very practical analysis of equanimity's role and value in manifesting the attitudes of friendliness, compassion, and sympathetic joy that are central Buddhist values.

1.4. The Ethical Imperatives of Studying Buddhist Philosophy

The chapters collected in this volume are each focused on one or another particular problem in understanding Buddhist ethics and are focused on these issues in the narrow way necessary for rigorous examination. Nonetheless they can be seen as part of a much larger project, one whose time has come. I write these words on a journey back to the United States from the funeral and cremation of my teacher, the eminent meditation master Sayadaw U Pandita of Burma. Over a lifetime of ninety-five years, Sayadaw lived through great political changes, from British colonial rule of Burma, through the resultant Burmese nationalist independence movement, followed by half a century of a repressive and

isolationist military dictatorship, and—only a few weeks before his death—a democratically elected government, headed by his student Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Sayadaw's life offers an interesting window into the forces that have shaped how Buddhist thought and practice from South and Southeast Asia, from the Tibetan plateau, and from East Asia are understood today: forces of tradition and of modernity, of European colonialism and of indigenous Asian nationalism, among others. Understanding these forces enables us to better see the promise of and the obstacles to understanding Buddhist ethics.

First, though the British Raj is no more, the colonial divide between ruler and ruled continues to be replicated in the Western academy. The study of European thinkers (those with theological inspiration, such as Aristotle and Kant, as well as those without) is given pride of place in the course offerings and hiring practices of Anglophone philosophy departments, while the study of Indian, Chinese, African, and Native American traditions of philosophical thought (which mainly operate without the distinction we draw between religious and secular) is largely relegated to departments of religious studies. It is a sign of progress that many philosophy departments now see the need to have at least one faculty member trained in some area of “non-Western philosophy.” Yet this terminology itself reveals also a way of thinking that replicates the political lines drawn by European colonialism; compare the number of positions explicitly advertised as covering non-Indian, non-Chinese, or non-African philosophy. This is not to suggest that Asian colonialism has been any better than European colonialism, much less to deny the fact of Chinese or Burmese Buddhist political domination and intellectual marginalization of less powerful ethnic groups. The point is instead to be aware of how philosophy as studied in the modern academy has been impacted by political history and how far there is to go to achieve a truly global philosophical conversation, one that would assess in an even-handed way different individual thinkers' and different traditions' investigations into various aspects of wisdom and draw the best of each into a cosmopolitan philosophical conversation. This volume aims to take Buddhist (and other) philosophers seriously as conversation partners, in the sense of questioning and debating Buddhist doctrines rather than documenting these as historical curiosities. Because to do so is to overturn the intellectual legacy of European colonialism, this intellectual project is unavoidably a political one as well.

Nonetheless, colonialism has played multiple roles in fostering interest in Buddhist thought and practice today. One direct impact was that political, economic, and religious agents of European colonial regimes traveled to Asia, learned local languages, translated texts, and cataloged and appropriated ideas as well as objects held sacred in local traditions. This occurred even in cultures

that were not under European colonial rule, such as in Tibet and Thailand. On the other hand, recent scholarship has shown how local movements developed in Asia in reaction to the imposition of colonial worldviews, attempting to demonstrate the value and contemporary relevance of indigenous traditions. Attempts to show Buddhism to be more “scientific” than the Christian religion of the European colonizers can be seen as an instance of this movement (Sharf, 1995; McMahan, 2008; Braun, 2013). In the case of Burma, these nationalist political forces were directly responsible for popularizing Buddhist meditation and doctrine both nationally and internationally. Shortly after gaining independence from the British, the government of Burma established the Mahasi meditation center in Rangoon, at which Sayadaw U Pandita was trained. And this lineage of teachers and students led directly from the Mahasi Sayadaw, to U Pandita, to the small group of young Westerners who, along with students of theirs, have made mindfulness meditation a rapidly growing phenomenon in the West.

The extent and range of our exposure to differing metaphysical, ethical, and epistemological perspectives in this global information age offers both a challenge and also an opportunity for Buddhist thought and practice to grow in new directions. It presents new opportunities to offer Buddhist proposals for human development to those who might not have considered them before, and new opportunities for Buddhist traditions to engage in critical self-reflection and refinement. Indeed the global interconnections that have allowed the spread of Buddhist ideas and practices to the West also bring into sharp relief the value and necessity of philosophical conversation and reflection. Sayadaw U Pandita commented to me on occasion that from what he could see Western philosophical investigations simply went round and round in intellectual proliferation without arriving at the wisdom promised by the name of the discipline. He had a point. Practitioners of Buddhist meditation sometimes emphasize the nondiscursive or nonconceptual nature of the wisdom gained from meditation practice. And it may well be that one contribution Buddhist philosophy can make to a global philosophical conversation is to help us see our way to an epistemology that balances the value of personal experience with that of rational reflection. However, many traditional Buddhists justify Buddhist metaphysical and ethical claims by appeal to the judgments of those wiser than us, those who see more clearly, the Buddha first and foremost. If this is right, one might think that all that is needed to settle cross-cultural ethical disagreements is to know and to appeal to the authority of the Buddhist teachings as they have been handed down to us. However, one problem with this move is that this same kind of appeal to authority is also employed by other traditions, both religious and scientific, to

justify claims that conflict with Buddhist views. In the context of competing worldviews, the appeal to any particular source of authority itself is in need of justification, and to critique another's justification for their views is at least implicitly to suggest that one's own justificatory story is similarly required to be responsive to critical consideration from other perspectives.

The principal aim of this volume is to lay the groundwork for that sort of critical, cosmopolitan philosophical conversation by bringing Buddhist approaches into that exchange in an integral way. In these regards, however, there is much more to be done. For one, the range of Buddhist textual traditions represented here is but a subset of those that should be discussed. The bulk of recent philosophical research has focused on Mahāyāna sources in Indo-Tibetan traditions; more research is needed on sources from the Theravāda, Vajrayāna, and East Asian Buddhist philosophy. Second, the scholars whose work is represented here are for the most part members of the Western academy who were not raised in Buddhist cultures; much more needs to be done to bring thinkers embedded in Buddhist cultures into this conversation, such as Buddhist meditation masters and traditional scholars of Tibet, Japan, and Burma, among others. From this a third direction would follow naturally, of applying the fruits of cross-cultural philosophical investigations to issues faced by Buddhist cultures today. In the years leading up to Sayadaw U Pandita's passing, for instance, the Burmese government, now headed by the Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has been faced with the politically fraught, but also ethically fraught, question of how to balance the concerns of the ethnic Burmese majority to preserve the vitality of their Buddhist culture with the preservation of the rights of Muslim and other minority groups. One urgent project would be to demonstrate ways in which contemporary Buddhist approaches to such political problems, as well as contemporary Buddhist approaches to more individual aspects of thought and practice, could be refined and improved by engagement with other philosophical and scientific perspectives. In this way the continuing project should be to benefit global conversations through the contribution of Buddhist approaches and to benefit Buddhist thought through the contribution of other perspectives. My hope for this volume is that it will help to lay the groundwork for future generations to continue to develop such a truly global exchange about issues that matter deeply to us all.

Abbreviation

MN *Majjhima Nikāya*, volume and page in the Pali Text Society edition.
Translations are my own.

Note

1. This is the *Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta* (MN 61, at MN.i.414ff), my translation. In this discourse Buddha starts up a conversation with Rāhula on the subject of telling lies in jest; according to multiple commentarial traditions, it seems that Rāhula was prone to just this vice (Anālayo, 2011, p. 342).

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