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While it may seem odd to include a journal in a set of book reviews, this special issue “On Method” is an outstanding landmark in the field of critical reflection on Buddhist Studies. The issue comprises six articles, and here we can only highlight some of the important topics raised and points made with the hope of guiding the interested reader to the original sources.

D. Seyfort Ruegg’s “Some Reflections on the Place of Philosophy in the Study of Buddhism” opens the issue. Ruegg argues that philosophy is integral to Buddhism. He directly addresses those classic texts that are cited as grounds for making of Buddhism a tradition that rejects philosophic reflection, such as the story of the man shot by an arrow. Through a careful analysis of the actual texts, he concludes that “What is rejected, then, is disputing for the sake of disputing, rather than useful discussion and analysis” (p. 152). Ruegg also discusses one of the familiar styles of the philosophic study of Buddhism, the comparative approach. He says that often such an approach proves “to be of rather restricted heuristic value, and methodologically it turns out to be more problematical and constraining than illuminating” (p. 154). The difficulties inherent in such projects lead to a discussion that also appears in other papers in this issue. This is the apparent conflict between approaches which place philosophic insights within specific intellectual, historical, social, and cultural contexts, and those which attempt to understand such insights as transcending their contexts of origin and applying universally. For example, consider the claim that everything that exists does so only as the result of causes and conditions. This is itself a universal claim, yet it arises in a particular intellectual environment. Crudely paraphrased, Ruegg’s answer is that an adequate understanding is dependent upon first placing a philosophic insight within its context of origin so as to avoid reading onto it our own conceptions, and only then comparing it with other insights from other times and places.

Ruegg is internationally renowned for his studies of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, and one of the issues that this essay takes up is the “critical Buddhism” of Hakamaya and Matsumoto (see the review of *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* included in this issue). Hakamaya and Matsumoto have criticized *tathāgatagarbha* and buddha-nature theories as contravening the teaching of interdependence, and therefore not Buddhist. Ruegg points out that they have failed to take into account the many Buddhist thinkers outside Japan who accepted both the *tathāgatagarbha* theory and the foundational character of interdependence.

Also worth noting is Ruegg's treatment of the mismatch between the conception of authority in Western philosophy and that of *pramāṇa*, which is often translated as authority, in Buddhist philosophy. In Western thought authority is not considered to be a very dependable source of knowledge. However, in Buddhism the authority of a buddha is based on possession of "immediate knowledge of reality" (p. 176). This mismatch reveals just how essential it is to adequately comprehend a philosophic concept in its context of origin.

The second essay is "Unspoken Paradigms: Meanderings through the Metaphors of a Field" by Luis O. Gómez. He points out that refusal to consider the issues of theory and method in the study of Buddhism does not mean that one thereby becomes "magically divested of a method, a theory, and a particular choice of perspective" (p. 184). While contemporary Buddhist Studies is expanding through interaction with the new historicism, and literary and critical theory, the field is still structured by and continues to require the older methods of classical philology and historical positivism.

Additionally, Gómez calls attention to the relation between the scholar and the various audiences for his/her work. While some scholars might only consider their academic colleagues as their audience, the field of Buddhist Studies also has several other audiences. These include the contemporary religious communities that constitute Buddhism in the present, as well as institutional authorities and interested members of society generally. The effect of the social environment on Buddhist Studies is also reflected in the difference between the way in which Christian Studies has developed as an integral part of Western, Christian social and intellectual history. For Buddhist Studies, however, the "methods and expectations of our scholarship and our audiences have been shaped by a cultural history very different from that of Buddhist traditions" (p. 190). Gómez points out that the Buddhist tradition has its own critical intellectual resources that have as yet not been brought to bear by contemporary scholars in their inquiries into Buddhism itself.

In one section Gómez outlines four different styles of Buddhist Studies which have been influenced by their object, i.e., by Buddhism itself. These are the classic philological method, which gives primacy to the etymology of words and sees Buddhism as primarily embodied in texts; the scholastic method of examining systems of thought as orderly, complete wholes; the doxological method of examining doctrines, either as a matter of personal commitment or as an object of critical inquiry. The fourth method is the creation of histories on the basis of textual chronologies. This has the danger of unconsciously recreating organizing systems that originally served a polemic purpose, whether cast as progressive development ("culminationist") or as devolution and decay from an originally pure, pristine teaching.

The third essay is "Buddhist Studies as a Discipline and the Role of Theory" by José Ignacio Cabezón. Cabezón examines some of the differing ways in which Buddhist Studies has recently been critiqued. Some find traditional Buddhist Studies as overly focused on India, marginalizing other Buddhist cultures, such as Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. Others critique the focus on texts that excludes other kinds of Buddhist praxis, such as ritual, meditation, social and institutional organization, artistic and aesthetic forms. Critiques have been leveled both at what is studied and at how it is studied. The critique of traditional philology seems to threaten any unity that Buddhist Studies might have hoped to maintain, any hope of disciplinary identity. Cabezón is quite careful, however, to avoid being misunderstood as suggesting that some other method should displace philology as the unifying model for Buddhist Studies. Rather, he suggests that what will assure "the stability and longevity of the discipline is . . . embracing heterogeneity" (p. 240).

From the current of conflicting stereotypes of different styles of Buddhist Studies—European, North American, Taiwanese, Japanese, etc.—Cabezón draws out two general positions which he identifies as positivist and interpretivist. In his usage, positivists focus on texts, seeing for example the reconstruction of texts as the end of scholarship. On the other hand, interpretivists for Cabezón see texts as basic, as the starting point for further inquiry. One of the presumptions that Cabezón discusses is typical of the North American style of scholarship, the view which holds that "true research . . . contains an element of novelty" (p. 254). In other words, purely philological work is not in itself adequate. Rather, research in this style

requires the full involvement of the scholar not only in the text, but beyond it as well, utilizing the text as an object of interpretation with the goal of achieving results that are broad and general in scope (p. 254).

Cabezón also explains the rationale for the expansion of Buddhist Studies from a strictly textual project to one that includes all other aspects of Buddhism: "doctrine itself cannot be fully understood independently of culture in the broad sense of the term" (p. 263). This is more than simply an argument for an examination of the context of a text, but rather entails a redefinition of the character of Buddhism itself. Not solely the philosophic reflections of monastic intellectuals, but the living religion of peasants and kings, of mothers and fathers, of artisans and poets. From this perspective, other issues, such as the relation between Buddhist institutions and social, political, and economic power, open up for examination.

Cabezón portrays an extreme of the philological approach as one in which "scholars can and should be devoid of—or rather, since this is

something that must be cultivated, ‘void themselves of’—all bias and prejudice, allowing the text to speak for itself” (p. 251). This portrayal is directly confronted by Tom J.F. Tillemans in his “Remarks on Philology,” the fourth essay in this issue. He asserts that no philologist actually undertakes his/her work in this fashion. None would have so narrow a view as to ignore “the history, institutions, context and preoccupations of an author and his milieu” (p. 269). The goal in Tillemans’s view is not to “allow the text to speak for itself,” but rather to gain an understanding of an author’s thought. His argument appears to be basically one against solipsism: if we can claim to understand the thought of a contemporary, and the thought of someone living a decade ago, then it is only a matter of degree to claim that one can understand the thought of a medieval Indian such as Dharmakīrti. Granted, as temporal and cultural distance increases, such understanding becomes more difficult. However, this only means that one needs to be willing to apply greater effort.

Tillemans rejects the assertion frequently heard in some contemporary academic circles that it is impossible to get outside of one’s own cultural conditioning, in a word, that all texts are simply mirrors in which we can only see our own reflection.

. . . we can often get rid of mistaken ideas about what texts and authors thought by means of rational argumentation and by meticulous analysis, so that it just won’t do to say baldly that we read our own baggage of cultural prejudices into a text (p. 272).

Although Tillemans does not belabor the fact, his argument is effective because it turns the assertion back upon itself. Any convincing exemplification of the assertion, such as demonstrating that Stcherbatsky’s understanding of certain key Buddhist philosophic concepts was unduly influenced by neo-Kantian thought, only works because we are able to demonstrate a better understanding by “means of rational argumentation and by meticulous analysis.”

In his essay, “A Way of Reading” C.W. Huntington, Jr., implicitly agrees with Tillemans when he asserts that “grammar and vocabulary are in themselves not enough” (p. 280). Initially, Huntington critiques a view of comparative philosophy which seeks to read philosophic works from other traditions as part of a “denaturalized discourse” (p. 282, the term is Paul Griffiths’). Approaching, for example, Nāgārjuna from the perspective of a denaturalized discourse seeks “to peel back from Nāgārjuna’s writing the layers of cultural baggage (everything that has to do with the period and place in which these texts were composed) and uncover a core of timeless philosophic truth” (p. 281). Thus, where Cabezón critiques the view that we must remove all of our own cultural baggage, and Tillemans

critiques the view that it is impossible for us to know anything other than that baggage, Huntington critiques the view that we can understand by removing the cultural baggage from the hands of the other.

Huntington points out that our own conception of philosophic discourse—such as talk of persuasion, argument, grounds, and theory—is itself far from denaturalized, but rather arises “not only from later Indian and Tibetan commentaries but from our own deeply embedded preconceptions about what constitutes legitimately ‘philosophic’ language” (p. 282). Rather than reading Nāgārjuna within the framework of our own preconceptions of philosophy, mistakenly believing that conception of philosophy to be transcendent, or denaturalized, Huntington suggests that Nāgārjuna be read as an instance of apophatic discourse. “At the center of apophatic discourse is the effort to speak about a subject that cannot be named” (p. 283). On this reading the argumentation found in Nāgārjuna is not the sole criteria for defining his intentions, for “even the most rigorous logical form can be exploited for a variety of literary and rhetorical effects” (p. 283).

Rather than argumentation, Huntington suggests reading Nāgārjuna in terms of the religious imagination. Approaching the language of religious writings in this way,

the task of the theological critic is to interpret the significance of such language not as a function of whether it is true or false, but rather to seek to uncover the vitality of the text as a vehicle for religious transformation (p. 296).

On this pragmatic view, it is not necessary to abstract out some ultimate truth from the cultural context of a religious text, but rather to understand how that text works to produce religious transformation in exactly that cultural context.

The final essay in the issue, Jamie Hubbard’s “Upping the Ante: budstud@millenium.end.edu,” discusses the societal context of contemporary Buddhist Studies, specifically the impact of computers on the ways in which research and teaching are done. In large part a survey of recent history, including efforts such as BUDDHA-L and an electronic conference hosted by the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Hubbard identifies three general areas in which computers have transformed the way in which scholarship had been done. These are word processing, electronic communication, and large scale electronic archives of textual and visual materials. These in turn have wrought further changes, including the use of electronic media in teaching, the extension of intellectual community, the effect of differing levels of access to technology on tenure, promotion, and publishing, the possible infringement on intellectual property rights, and the pressure to

improve the quality of scholarly work. All of these involve additional investment of both finances and professional time, hence the title phrase “upping the ante.”

Together these essays identify the important methodological issues facing Buddhist Studies, presenting different views on those issues in such a fashion as to stimulate the reader’s own creative reflection. On the one hand Buddhism itself is being redefined in a variety of ways. On the other, those different ways in which Buddhism is understood entail different ways of studying it.

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