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Daniel Cozort, Craig Preston. *Buddhist Philosophy: Losang Gonchok's Short Commentary to Jamyang Shayba's Root Text on Tenets.* Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2003. xiv + 330 pp. $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55939-198-6.

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Light on Buddhist Philosophy

Doxographies (*grub mtha'*) are not generally the kind of Tibetan literature that one jumps up and down about. They do not have the sexy allure of tantra, the magical description of biographies (*rnam mthar*), or the mystique of treasure texts (*gter ma*). They deal with known quantities, the nuts and bolts of Buddhist philosophy on which everything else rests (or is shown not to rest). Soteriologically speaking, they are considered extremely valuable. Yet both in the Tibetan tradition and today in the West, they have primarily been studied by professional scholars and only the most serious practitioners. By making an entry-level doxography readily accessible, therefore, Cozort and Preston's *Buddhist Philosophy* provides a welcome remedy to this situation.

Some translations of Tibetan doxographies will already be familiar to readers of H-Buddhism. In particular, *Maps of the Profound* (2003) and *Unique Tenets* (1998) come to mind (the former is Hopkins's voluminous translation of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's *Grub mtha' rnam bshad chen mo*, and the latter is Cozort's study of Madhyamaka as developed in that same text, and in Ngag dbang dpal ldan's even larger *Grub mtha' chen mo'i mchan 'grel* and in lCang skya rol ba'i rdo rje's *Grub mtha'i rnam bzhag*). These works clearly set the bar for the *grub mtha'* genre, both in terms of complexity and apologetics.

With *Buddhist Philosophy*, Cozort and Preston advance doxographical studies in a different direction: for the lay reader. This is not to say that the book is easy reading. By nature, Tibetan doxographies are generally dry and almost scientific in their sequential dissection of tenet after tenet, philosophical point after philosophical point. But the two texts chosen by Cozort and Preston here strive for simplicity and straightforwardness, with the root text first setting up a topic, and the commentary then briefly elucidating it. The subject matter may contain few surprises for the serious student of Buddhist philosophy, but in a sense this is the strength of the book. There are no digressions or arguments to distract from the core presentation, the tenets of Buddhism as codified by the dGe lugs pa order. As Cozort and Preston note, "It avoids the copious citation of Indian sources and construction of hypothetical debates that swell Jamyang Shayba's own commentary, giving the student of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism an extensive but not unmanageable handbook of Buddhist philosophical discourse" (p. xiv).

At the heart of *Buddhist Philosophy* is a short poem (*Grub mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa 'khrul spong gdong lnga'i sgra dbyangs kun mkhyen lam bzang gsal ba'i rin chen sgron me*, 16 folios) by the great seventeenth-century dGe lugs pa scholar, 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, and a commentary on that poem (*Grub mtha' rtsa ba'i tshig tik shel dkar me long*, 294 folios) written by bLo bzang dkon mchog (1742-1822), a student of that lama's reincarnation. The content of both works is familiar: an overview of the four primary philosophical movements of Buddhism (as codified in Tibet from the Indian Nik?ya and Mah?y?na traditions), set against six sets of non-Buddhist views (dating to P?la dynasty India). Cozort and Preston have collaborated on the translation, which is preceded by eighty pages of introduction written by Cozort.

Cozort and Preston can hardly be faulted for failing to reproduce in English the poetic form of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's Tibetan root text, which was in all likelihood written in verse in order to facilitate the memorization of key philosophical points by students in the bLa brang academy. To the contrary, their translation succeeds in putting the poem in stark language that can be picked up directly by the commentary. Both translations are lucid and eminently readable, albeit at the cost of certain digressive passages deemed worthy of omission.

Doxographies in the Indian and Tibetan traditions set up dialectical systems only to knock them down, one by one. According to most *grub mtha'* presentations, in the

end only Pr?sa?

..gika-Madhyamaka is left standing. The fact that the Pr?sa?

..gika refute all tenet-systems by means of absurd consequences does not, however, mean that the Pr?sa?

..gika themselves have an absolute, final position. In essence, the *grub mtha'* text is somewhat like a house of cards which achieves its apotheosis not with the perfect placement of the final card but with that card's effective collapse of the entire structure into emptiness.

Buddhist Philosophy varies little from doxographical convention in this way. After offering the obligatory homage to ??kyamuni and the great teachers of the dGe lugs pa lineage, bLo bzang dkon mchog begins to expand on 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's root text. Dispensing first with various non-Buddhist views (the Ayata; S??khya; Br?hmana, Vaiy?karana, Ved?nta, and Guhyaka; Vai??-ava and M?m??saka; ?aiva, Vai?e?ika, and Naiy?yika; and Nirgrantha [Jaina] schools of thought), the authors move to Buddhist philosophy proper. This includes the H?-nay?na systems of Vaibh??ika and Sautr?ntika, and the Mah?y?na systems of Cittam?tra and Sv?tantrika- and Pr?sa?

..gika-Madhyamaka. The closer that one gets to the Tibetan authors' own perspective, the more detailed the treatment. Regarding the content of these systems, little needs to be said here. Readers who are unfamiliar with the respective philosophical positions should proceed directly to the book.

While translations of more elaborate *grub mtha'* texts often necessitate the inclusion of a translation of an extremely detailed Tibetan topical index or table of contents (*dkar chag*), the smaller scale of this work means that readers left to rely on the conventional Western-style table of contents are not completely marooned. That said, a more detailed Tibetan *dkar chag* would have been a nice addition. Moreover, concerning transliteration style, while appreciating the rationale behind the use of phonetic transcription employed by many descendents of the University of Virginia, this reviewer was relieved to find that the reference sections at the end of the book include Extended Wylie transliterations of the names of authors and titles (pp. 291-309). For novice students of Tibetan language this well-established Wylie convention is indispensable; and such standard notation is also more convenient for those scholars who may not have mastered Hopkins's newer system of "essay phonetics." One admittedly trivial criticism with the authors' use of Wylie is that forward-pointing apostrophes were used for the transliteration of the Tibetan *achung* rather than reverse apostrophes. One other small criticism is the ubiquitous use of the adjectival form "M?dhyamika" even when the nominal form "Madhyamaka" would be more appropriate. Otherwise the book should be a pleasure to read for scholars and neophytes alike, with full diacritics and helpful footnotes explicating technical terms.

Rather than leaving readers to plunge directly into the translations, Cozort's introduction compassionately breaks the ice with an overview of the primary tenets that will be discussed. Despite some seemingly trite subheadings (e.g., "What Is Ignorance?"; "What Is a Person?-"; "What Is the World"), this section of the book does a very solid job of preparing the reader for the terse style of doxography. In fact, this addition in itself is reason to recommend this book for instructors or students looking for a primer on Buddhist philosophy.

In terms of its potential audience, then, *Buddhist Philosophy* is especially recommended to serious students of Buddhism. This means students who have a solid grounding in the religion or are willing to enter the deep waters of its tenet systems. This book lends itself especially to inclusion in academic curricula, as the inherently ordered structure of the root doxography and its commentary provide for a very natural introductory progression of Buddhist philosophical schools of thought. Depending on the level of the course, instructors can choose whether or not to supplement the book with Hopkins's and/or Cozort's translations of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's *Grub mtha' chen mo* or other doxographies. But there is no need to do so; the work stands quite well on its own.

Within Buddhism, doxographies do fill a soteriological function. As noted in the preface of the book, tenets are not "merely a world of intellectual games but a means to salvation" (p. vii). For this reason, *Buddhist Philosophy* should be of interest to Western Buddhists in their migration along the path. In fact, the texts translated here do occasionally diverge from the subject of philosophy, broaching ethics in the context of "the path" with a brief discussion of the five faults (p. 198), and shining light on Buddhist cosmology with an elucidation of the variegated enlightened bodies of the Buddha (pp. 281-285). The book also concludes with several pages on the subject of secret mantra (pp. 286-288).

Outside the dGe lugs pa order, it is not uncommon for Tibetan doxographies to be more far-ranging in their treatment of subjects other than philosophy. This tendency is certainly true of Bon po *grub mtha'* texts, and also rNying ma ones. Although in his brief overview of Indian and Tibetan doxographies Cozort does mention

kLong chen rab 'byams pa's *Grub mtha' mdzod* as an example of these, it might have been helpful for the reader if he had expanded on this a bit more. Most pointedly, Cozort's treatment of sTag tshang lo ts? ba shes rab rin chen–a fifteenth-century Sa skya pa critic of Tsong kha pa who warranted more than a dozen pages of refutation by bLo bzang dkon mchog–deserves greater elaboration than is afforded by the single footnote which he devotes to this topic (p. 53, n. 1). To be sure, the dedicated scholar might follow Cozort's recommendation to seek out 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's *Grub mtha' chen mo*, written largely with sTag tshang in mind. But despite the expressed intent of *Buddhist Philosophy* to limit its scope, one has to wonder if any readers will be left wanting in this regard. Perhaps the real point here is that the authoritative work on the Tibetan doxographical tradition remains to be written.

In what it attempts to do, *Buddhist Philosophy* succeeds admirably. Indeed, just as the Tibetan doxographies contained within it are as relevant today as they were two or three hundred years ago, so this English book could very well remain perfectly relevant for many decades of future Buddhist study.

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