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Jin Y. Park. *Buddhisms and Deconstructions (New Frameworks for Continental Philosophy).* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. xxii + 290 pp. $87.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-3417-9; $30.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7425-3418-6.

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This book contains a number of fascinating articles dealing with a comparison between two systems of thought, one a longstanding tradition from the East and the other a contemporary movement in the West, that have in common an emphasis on a main philosophical element–the interconnectedness of phenomena characterized as emptiness in Mahayana Buddhism, and "difference" or *différance* in the works of Derrida.[1] Other forms of modern Western thought such as existentialism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and pragmatism have come close to and are often compared with Buddhism for the way they advocate going beyond egocentrism and substantive notions of selfhood to realize a dynamic and holistic understanding of reality. However, according to this volume, it is deconstructionism that is the best approximation in seeking to overthrow logocentrism in all its manifestations, overt and hidden, and to surpass onto-theology (a term first coined by Heidegger to capture the Western metaphysical and theological traditions both based on substantive ontology).

What particularly links various schools of Mahayana Buddhism and Derridean middle path deconstruction is an uncompromisingly critical approach to all viewpoints and ideologies and the refutation of illusory notions and philosophical inconsistencies. Many of these connections and disconnections have been discussed in two books, *Derrida on the Mend* (1984) and *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds* (1996), by Robert Magliola, a follower of Derrida seeking to extend to and explore Asian linkages, who helped inspire and also was called upon to comment on a number of the articles in the volume (some were originally delivered at an international conference on comparative philosophy a few years ago).

The thirteen essays are presented in six parts that are followed by Magliola's afterword and a selected bibliography on comparative philosophy compiled by William Edelglass. The first four parts containing eight chapters deal with various forms of Buddhism in relation to deconstructionism, especially N?g?rjuna's philosophy of the M?dhyamika school in its Indian and Tibetan commentarial redactions and the Chan/Zen school in East Asia. The book opens with editor Jin Y. Park's overview of the connections between the two approaches, and continues with discussions of Madhyamika by Ian Mabbett, Zongqi Cai, David R. Loy, and Roger R. Jackson. The Buddhism section of the book is rounded out with Ellen Y. Zhang's view of Ji Zang and two examinations of Chan by Youru Wang and Frank W. Stevenson. Of particular note are Loy's exploration of the categories of play and ethics and Jackson's analysis of the balance of foundationalist and deconstructive tendencies in Buddhism, as well as Wang's emphasis on the way "the Hongzhou masters both reconstruct and deconstruct Buddhist themes, notions, and concepts. On the one hand, they ceaselessly deconstruct all terms including their own; on the other, they never stop using positive terms" (p. 141).

The next five chapters focus on various aspects of Western thought, including Christianity, Judaism, and Continental thinkers other than Derrida such as Sartre. The two articles in part 5 by Jane Augustine and Gail Horowitz are very much related and are enhanced by a background in Magliola's thought. My feeling is that these articles probably should have been placed either just before or just following his essay for a greater sense of continuity. The final three articles by Simon Glynn, Steven W. Laycock, and E. H. Jarow extend the scope of the Western side of the comparison in exploring connections with Buddhism, particularly on the topic of selfhood and (in)substantiality.

The combined impact of the articles examining deconstructionism from Buddhist perspectives and Buddhism from Western perspectives, according to Park, is to create a new platform for East-West philosophical comparisons and exchange without the imbalances favoring one side over the other that have plagued previous attempts at such a construction. My concern is that

there seem to be two separate books placed into a single volume–one dealing with Buddhism, and the other with the West–and there is little question about which takes priority. This concern appears to be ratified by Magliola's remark which appears toward the end of his essay but at the beginning of his comments on the final chapters in the last two sections. "Insofar as this anthology is *centered* on Buddhism/deconstruction," he writes, "I have relegated the last part of this Afterword to afterwards, i.e., I forego detail and comment in abbreviation" (p. 251, emphasis in original).

Having said that, it can be left to the reader to decipher and determine what is most relevant or appropriate to their own level of interest, but in any case, I feel that Magliola's conclusions are tremendously helpful in pulling together some of the loose threads, helping organize the articles into a coherent whole, and giving a sense of vision and gravitas to the volume. I confess that I was a bit taken aback at first as the opening page takes a rather combative tone, and I feared that Magliola's style might threaten to undermine further the delicate balance between Eastern and Western methods and perspectives. Fortunately, I found that he quickly redeemed not only his own approach but the volume as a whole by giving just the right touch of insight and deconstructive insolence to his probing commentary. Magliola's essay is very helpful for understanding the relations and relative strengths and weaknesses of the various Buddhist schools and how they are connected (or not) to Continental thought.

By the end of the book, I felt strongly that while there are disparate approaches represented here–as signaled by the pluralizations in the title–Park and her colleagues had demonstrated convincingly multiple levels of connection and why deconstructionism works so well in a Buddhist context. Therefore, it is clear that the contributors have gone a long way toward achieving the goal of forcing out of stagnancy and reinvigorating the noble task of linking Buddhism with Western philosophy.

Note

[1]. This review was transacted by Dan Lusthaus, H-Buddhism review editor for China.

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