



# On Engaging Buddhism Philosophically

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## Methodological Considerations

That traditions of thought, such as Buddhism, are the repositories of vast resources of philosophical skill is both better known today than at any time in the past and, rather paradoxically, still of considerably less concern for most philosophers. To earlier generations of scholars—who dedicated entire careers toward making Buddhist philosophy accessible by translating and interpreting its principal works—this parlous situation would be seemingly incomprehensible. There is, of course, an obvious, often overlooked, reason for this situation: simply acknowledging the presence of systematic philosophy in other cultures does not suffice to motivate contemporary philosophers to engage with it, let alone to take up the study of Sanskrit, Pāli, Tibetan, or classical Chinese.<sup>1</sup> One must also demonstrate that the presence of unique perspectives and argumentative strategies unavailable in the Western canon can nonetheless advance contemporary debates in new and productive directions. Arguably, for many authors and their texts (e.g., Nāgārjuna, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Tsongkhapa, Mipham, Fazang, Zhiyi, Wonhyo, Dōgen, and Nichiren, to name but a few), this has already been done, although often with mixed results, owing largely to exegetical and interpretive disagreements. There is also the difficulty of making these historically and culturally distant authors relevant to contemporary debates (a difficulty compounded by the fact that, rather predictably, philosophy, as it is understood and practiced today in the academy, is increasingly shaped by advances in the natural and mind sciences). The real issue, however, is that regardless of what it is that Buddhist philosophy can or cannot contribute to advancing contemporary debates, its study is not a historical necessity—even if we do recognize the contested legacies of orientalism and colonialism—but an epistemic luxury.

It should thus come as no surprise that nearly two centuries since the first systematic, albeit controversial, treatment of Buddhist thought by a prominent Western philoso-

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<sup>1</sup>I discuss this point at length in Coseru (2018).

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pher—Hegel’s *Lectures in the History of Philosophy*<sup>2</sup>—a book on why Buddhism matters to philosophy, can still be timely.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Garfield’s *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* is in many ways both an attempt to take stock of the many achievements of modern scholarship, including his own prodigious and celebrated oeuvre, and a testament to the challenges that still lie ahead. It is also a manifesto of sorts, one that advocates for reading Buddhist texts and taking their positions seriously. As a manifesto, it has its own ideological agenda insofar as Garfield advocates on behalf of *certain* Buddhist positions at the expense of others. Garfield also puts forward an ambitious argument for curricular reform, and for changing the culture of academic philosophy itself. As he makes quite clear in the preface, a true measure of success for the book would lie not merely in having demonstrated the value of engagement with Buddhist philosophy for contemporary philosophical practice, but in having shifted attitudes toward such practice in ways that would prevent European philosophy from occupying the default position.

The call for this ideological shift is a rather tall order, but coming from one of the central authorities in the field, it will without doubt command both scholarly and philosophical attention for many years to come. A distinctive feature of the book is Garfield’s own overt articulation of what he thinks a core set of Buddhist commitments amounts to when viewed through the lens of different scholastic perspectives, namely the Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and the dGe lugs pa schools. The execution of such a project demands that Garfield acknowledges his philosophical debt, and convinces his readers that the Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka and Yogācāra treatises he has spent a career exploring are the most deserving of philosophical attention. Garfield does indeed offers reasons why it is he thinks that some of the positions he defends on behalf of these treatises are true or indeed better than others. Non-specialist readers will undoubtedly find the many points of contact he finds between Buddhist and contemporary defenses of physicalism, dialetheism, and antirealism interesting and among the best illustrations of the project’s scope. But, as some critics have already pointed out, this move is not without controversy. To take just one example, claims to the effect that accepting the thesis of emptiness commits Buddhists to dialetheism (the view that there are true contradictions) are problematic on both textual and philosophical grounds, and a minority view among interpreters of Madhyamaka thought (Goodman 2015; Siderits 2015).

If one wants mainstream Anglophone analytic philosophers to become receptive to the richness and sophistication of Buddhist philosophy, one must at the very least

<sup>2</sup> The lectures, delivered between 1825 and 1826, were published posthumously in 1840–1844 in Berlin (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot). As is well known, Hegel had an enormous impact in shaping modern conceptions of philosophy’s relation to its own history in particular and to concrete historical developments in general. Given this impact, his negative characterization of non-European ways of life has cast a long shadow on Western attitudes toward Asian philosophy (Bemasconi 2000; Droit 2004; Nelson 2017). Nonetheless, even critics of his “orientalism” agree that Hegel’s examination of the metaphysical contours of subjectivity captures an essential aspect of the human condition in its historical unfolding that in many ways is unparalleled in other philosophical cultures. A recent assessment of Hegel’s project sees his speculative history as “an examination of...how the self-interpreting, self-developing collective human enterprise has moved from one such shape to another in terms of the deeper logic of sense-making, and how that meant that subjectivity itself had reshaped itself over the course of history” (Pinkard 2017, 167).

<sup>3</sup> Garfield’s project is in many ways similar to Siderits’ earlier effort, in *Buddhism as Philosophy* (Siderits 2007), to make a case for why, and how, Buddhism may be engaged philosophically.

attempt to meet them halfway. In this book, perhaps more than in any of his previous publications, Garfield's extensive expertise in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and cognitive science comes out in full display: the result is a conceptually rich, theoretically innovative, and empirically informed framework of analysis likely to appeal to a broad category of philosophical readership. Of course, a project of this magnitude and scope demands a sound methodology. In rather categorical terms, Garfield assumes that the project of comparative philosophy, which is concerned with figuring out the similarities and differences between different philosophical traditions, has run its course. Such an endeavor may have been indispensable in the early stages of cultural globalization, but, as he puts it, "we can now safely say, 'been there, done that'" (Garfield 2015, 3). In advocating for a "cross-cultural" approach to philosophy, Garfield joins the ranks of those who have been championing new ways of doing philosophy in our global, polycentric world. Mark Siderits has famously been pursuing what he calls "fusion philosophy" (Siderits 2003, p. xi), specifically the counterpoising of distinct traditions for the purpose of problem-solving, which he sees as central to philosophy. In a similar vein, Owen Flanagan speaks of "cosmopolitan philosophy," which he regards as "the exercise of reading and living and speaking across different traditions" in an open and non-committal way that captures what it is like to dwell "at the intersection of multiple spaces of meaning, waiting and seeing and watching whatever happenings happen" (Flanagan 2011: 2). Jonardon Ganeri has recently framed a "blueprint" for an even more radical cosmopolitan approach, one which avows that "listening to 'deepest concerns, assumptions and insights' need not be associated with the idea that some are 'others' and some are 'ours'" (Ganeri 2015). Compared to these other approaches, Garfield's methodology is somewhat conservative: its plea for recognizing that there is "enough commonality of purpose" between different philosophical traditions is tempered by a call for "respecting their distinct heritages and horizons" (Garfield 2015, 5). In effect, Garfield goes as far as to suggest that a problem-centric approach might be too utilitarian and self-serving if the goal is to make room for a distinctly Buddhist voice in this cross-cultural philosophical dialog.

## Brief Synopsis

Before I introduce the essays that are part of this special "author meets critics" issue, a brief overview of the structure of the book is in order. In ten chapters, the book addresses such core topics as causality, the nature of reality and the self, consciousness, the semantics of *apoha*, and the scope of Buddhist ethics. The book begins, in Chapter 1, with a synoptic account of the development of Buddhist philosophy across Asia. In Chapter 2, one learns that Buddhist thinking about causality is best understood on a Humean model "as a kind of brute regularity" (p. 25). The difference here is that Hume is interested in how the idea of causality arises in the first place, whereas the Buddhists agree that causality, conveyed by the principle of dependent arising, is a fundamental feature of reality. The signature doctrine of emptiness, which captures the notion that entities lack inherent nature, is introduced in Chapter 3, where Garfield invites his readers to consider the possibility that taking Madhyamaka seriously entails a commitment to dialetheism. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, we are introduced to the Buddhist no-self doctrine, and its implications for conceptions of personal identity and moral

cultivation. These are by far the most technical and philosophically rich parts of the book: for example, one learns that Nāgārjuna's "essencelessness" dialectical stance is reworked by Vasubandhu into a critique of the relational view of emptiness, ultimately leading to the rejection of a permanent self. Similarly, Dharmakīrti's commitment to a conception of epistemically salient subjectivity is shown to face a robust challenge from Candrakīrti, who adopts a critical and opposing stance on agency as a category that tracks real phenomena. Chapter 8 consists mainly of synoptic accounts of Buddhist views on language and their implications for the project of naturalizing epistemology, while Chapter 9 deals with the Buddhist ethical project, and the difficulty of capturing its scope using the vocabulary and theoretical frameworks of Western ethical discourse. The book concludes with a methodological postscript outlying some of the interpretive difficulties Buddhist philosophers must confront when seeking to reconcile the tradition's varied and often conflicting moral claims.

### **Buddhism, Science, and the Problem of Personal Identity**

The critical commentaries showcase the merits and challenges of such a project, and provide both criticism and valuable suggestions for moving the discussion forward. Anita Avramides takes up the issue of what it means to engage with philosophical traditions outside the mainstream Anglophone analytic tradition, given the legacy of positivism and its view that scientists are the only partners worth engaging in conversation. She notes the deep divisions that already exist in Western philosophy itself and wonders if bridges to a philosophical tradition as culturally distant as Buddhism can indeed be built, given the general perception that Buddhism is at best a religion with a philosophical perspective rather than a philosophical tradition in the proper sense of the term. But, she also agrees with Bernard Williams that philosophy can make progress without embracing the vindicatory model of the sciences, and that well-reasoned positions, even when couched in the highly allusive language of Buddhist philosophical verse, should provide an entry point for philosophers curious to see what this tradition of thought has to offer.

The substance of her critical engagement, however, concerns the problem of personal identity, specifically the issue of whether the no-self view can satisfactorily account for such phenomena as agency, responsibility, rationality, and subjectivity, and the synchronic unity of consciousness they presuppose. After noting the presence of a personalist response to the no-self view in Buddhism, Avramides finds common cause with contemporary defenders of this response (e.g., Carpenter 2015) against the position Garfield favors, which relies on Candrakīrti's critique of personalism. Against the orthodox Buddhist position that Garfield endorses on behalf of Candrakīrti (and to some extent, of Vasubandhu), which relies on an argument from causal connectedness, the personalist makes the case that agency, subjectivity, and the unity of mental life require a conception of persons as ultimately, and not just conventionally, real. The no-self theorists say that selves, like chariots, are convenient designations for certain parts (call them 'aggregates') grouped together for a specific function. But, as Avramides convincingly argues, the conventional reality that includes selves is already presumed in judgments of convenience: "We must conclude that in the case of persons a circle lurks; it is convenient to grasp a group of aggregates together as a person given some

ends, but these ends are conceivable only by reference to persons” (Avramides 2018). Furthermore, she also finds a deep resonance between the Buddhist no-self view that Garfield defends and P.F. Strawson’s (1959) account of a no-ownership account of personal identity. The problem is that Strawson (whose position is ultimately traceable to Wittgenstein) finds the no-ownership account incoherent, and so any attempt to eliminate first-person reference terms (“I,” “my,” or “by a certain person”) “yields something that is either false or not a contingent fact” (Avramides 2018). If Avramides and Strawson are correct that “it is a necessary condition of one’s ascribing experiences to oneself that one should also ascribe them to others,” and that we have to accept that the concept of ‘person’ is a primitive, the Buddhist no-self view turns out to be a harder sell to analytic philosophers than Garfield might have anticipated.

## Phenomenal Realism and Its Critics

Much like Avramides, Eric Schwitzgebel also acknowledges both the value and the challenge of engaging with perspectives outside the main orbit of contemporary Anglophone philosophy. His main concern, however, is Garfield’s critique of phenomenal realism, which—Schwitzgebel argues—rests on a false dilemma: “reference to qualia, or phenomenal properties, must be reference to something to which we have excellent, maybe infallible, introspective access; or else it is nothing special, just reference to straightforwardly biological and cognitive processes and our tendency to make certain sorts of judgments about them” (Schwitzgebel 2018). That is, either we must take people’s introspective reports as reliable testimony—something that Garfield thinks is tantamount to “embracing delusion; or resting on an ‘improbable model of introspection’” (Garfield 2015, 173)—or see the task of phenomenology as necessarily involving what people believe about their introspective reports. The second horn of the dilemma puts Garfield in the company of Dennett (who Garfield thinks is already “channeling Buddhist ideas unawares” (Garfield 2015, 172)). But, as Schwitzgebel quite clearly demonstrates, this is a false dilemma that leaves out perfectly serviceable alternatives such as the fallibilist phenomenal realism he favors. Regardless of whether one does or does not attend to the phenomenal content of one’s experience, and of whether the attending is fallible or not, the phenomena in question is real qua psychological data. What is characteristic of the variety of experiences that we have is that they present themselves not only in terms of their intentional content or what they are about, but as having a distinct character or phenomenality. Schwitzgebel agrees with Garfield that the well-worn expression for phenomenal consciousness—Nagel’s (1974) “what it is like”—is problematic on several counts, but he does not think it is an incoherent or empty term. Nor does he think that any endorsement of phenomenal realism must necessarily contend with the possibility that metaphysical idealism remains a live option. Commitment to there being experiential content of a certain kind does not entail commitment to an infallible experiencer. For Schwitzgebel, Garfield’s rather idiosyncratic framing of the problem of phenomenal consciousness closes the door on a range of metaphysical possibilities. If certain Buddhist analyses of phenomenal experience do appear to force on us the conclusion that phenomenal realism is an untenable position, then so much the worse for them.

## Buddhism, Phenomenology, and the Crucible of Consciousness

As Thompson states in his own commentary, it may just be that Garfield is wrong both about what Buddhists mean to endorse in their phenomenological analysis of consciousness, and about the methods and claims of key figures in the Western phenomenological tradition that are the target of his criticism. For Thompson, Garfield's stance on Buddhist positions about consciousness and the self may get a pass (given that these positions lend themselves to different and varied interpretations), but his misunderstanding of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and of contemporary phenomenologists such as Dan Zahavi, is less excusable. Indeed, according to Thompson, Garfield's systematic presentation of Buddhist philosophy as an evolving critique of various conceptions of the 'given' is troubling enough to warrant diagnosing it as the manifestation of a new brand of Buddhist modernism he labels "*Sellarsian Buddhism*."<sup>4</sup> For a work that aims to provide a best practice template for how to engage with Buddhist philosophy, this is a sobering diagnostic and a warning to unsuspecting readers that *Engaging Buddhism* is far more ideologically motivated than it may appear at first glance.

Thompson identifies at least four propositions of Sellarsian Buddhism, which he deems 'extreme' for the following reasons. First, the claim that "our own experience ... is as opaque to us and as deceptive to us as the objects we encounter" (Garfield 2015, p. 75) amounts to suggesting that "there is no epistemological and phenomenological difference between the way external objects are given to us and the way our subjectivity is given to us" (Thompson 2018). Second, the notion that "[w]e construct ourselves and our awareness just as surely as we construct the objects we posit" (Garfield 2015, *ibid.*) introduces a problematic ambiguity in the way the Buddhist notion of conceptuality or conceptual construction (*vikalpa, kalpanā*) is used either to suggest "that we construct both ourselves and the objects we experience, or ... that our subjectivity is constructed in the same way that the objects we encounter are constructed" (Thompson 2018, *ibid.*). Third, the view that "the construction of ourselves and our awareness is conceptual and happens mainly through introspection" (Garfield 2015, 35, 197) simply denies that there could be "such thing as nonconceptual and nonintrospective forms of self-awareness" while also implying that "introspection or introspective self-awareness should be understood according to an object-perception model" (Thompson 2018, *ibid.*). Lastly, the fourth proposition that "the mind, and even consciousness, are hidden, rather than manifest phenomena, known only by inference, and through imperfect processes" (Garfield 2015, 170) does not only put forth an inferential view of self-knowledge but suggests, rather controversially, that "all perception is inferential, and hence that there is no such thing as direct (noninferential) perception or 'intuition' in the (Kantian and Husserlian) phenomenological sense" (Thompson 2018, *ibid.*).

<sup>4</sup> Garfield not only acknowledges his debt to Sellars but makes a compelling case for the relevance of Sellars' philosophy to understanding topics in Buddhist philosophy. As he observes in his introduction to a new edited collection of papers on this topic, "when scholars of Buddhism encounter 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,' they feel right at home. The attack on givenness, the attack on foundationalism in epistemology, and the account of ontology as responsive to our language and conventions offer an analytical approach to understanding these fundamental Buddhist ideas. In short, Buddhologists see in Sellars a contemporary exponent of the most central ideas articulated by the Madhyamaka tradition" (Garfield 2018b, p. xii).

Given the extensive analyses of mind and mental phenomena in the Buddhist literature, Garfield rightly engages with the tradition of European phenomenology in forging his dialog. But his account of the phenomenological method suffers from some of the same problems many mainstream Anglophone analytic views of phenomenology do: (i) it misunderstands the *epoché* by taking it to mean that, in the phenomenological attitude, we “bracket the world,” when in fact Husserl’s notion of bracketing concerns the natural attitude, specifically that attitude which compels us to posit an independent existence for the objects of experience; (ii) it misunderstands the scope of Heidegger’s existential analytic, the purpose of which is to argue that subjectivity is “given through ongoing syntheses of intentional experience of the world” (Thompson 2018), and not that “the reality of the subject” (Garfield 2015, 195) must be also bracketed; and (iii) it misrepresents the scope of neurophenomenology, which according to Thompson is concerned with whether the cognitive neuroscience of consciousness can proceed without introspective data, and not with whether trained introspectors “find mental reality as it is” (Garfield 2015, 208) when they attend to the content and character of their experience. Despite these points of criticism, Garfield’s adoption of a common distinction in phenomenological circles (e.g., Levin 1983, 220; Zahavi 1999, 207) between “surface” and “deep” phenomenology—which is used to mark the difference between conventional, everyday experience and what lies beyond or beneath it—is laudable, as it makes room for phenomenal content that is inaccessible to reflection (though it is unclear whether Garfield thinks such content can be accessed by other means).

The substance of Thompson’s criticism, however, pertains to the consequences of adopting Garfield’s physicalist stance for our understanding of Buddhist views of consciousness and the self. Given Garfield’s illusionist view of the self the experiential sense of self, as well as the notion that consciousness is implicitly reflexive or self-reflexive, are both grounded in a fundamental illusion about consciousness and embodiment. This view, while compatible with certain orthodox interpretations of the Buddhist no-self doctrine, is hard to reconcile with any but the most radical views of consciousness, the self, and the first-person perspective in contemporary philosophy. Thomas Metzinger’s influential self-model view of personal identity, with its defense of a representational theory of subjectivity, which reduces subjective mental states to representational mental processes, is perhaps the closest analogue to the view Garfield articulates on behalf of the Buddhists. But even Metzinger’s claim that “no such things as selves exist in the world” and that “nobody ever *was* or *had* a self” (Metzinger 2003, 1) must contend with the presence of a “minimally phenomenal self” given in conscious experience (a position Metzinger actually endorses (cf. Blanke and Metzinger 2009; Metzinger 2018)).

Indeed, faced with the (seemingly monumental) implications of the no-self view, contemporary interpreters of this Buddhist doctrine have adopted a wide range of positions: some see the capacity for self-awareness as pointing to deeper aspects of consciousness as conscience (Harvey 1995, 22), others delineate several ways in which pronominal and indexical uses of the “I” can engender a false sense of self (Collins 1982, 10), and still others claim that the sense of a bounded self results from certain patterns of attention to, and grasping of, various features of experience (Albahari 2006, 11). Critics of various attempts to advance such neo-Buddhist accounts of personal identity point out the various limitations of the no-self account,

especially in terms of its ability to explain our first-person phenomenology or justify our social and intersubjective practices. Dan Zahavi, for instance, argues that the sort of “self-view” no-self theorists target is a philosophical fiction. Furthermore, the denial of subjectivity, and of the rich repertoire of ecological, dialogical, narrative, social, and embodied aspects of our conscious lives, effectively amounts to a denial of the phenomenal character of agency and consciousness (or their relegation to an illusory construct). More recently, Zahavi has conceded that while a minimal account of subjectivity—entailed by some Buddhist conception of reflexive self-consciousness (*svasamvedana*)—might be indistinguishable from the account of self he favors, his commitment is to the conception of a world-immersed self: a self that is not ontologically distinct from the surrounding world (Zahavi, 2016, 43–49). Likewise, Jonardon Ganeri (2012) thinks that the no-self picture of personal identity fails to bridge the explanatory gap between the phenomenal and the normative aspects of experience: conscious mental states are not merely occurrent but owned, and the ownership relation is both constitutive and normative.

Lastly, in taking aim at all those who assert that consciousness is reflexive or self-reflexive, Garfield claims that such an assertion is tantamount to claiming that there can be conscious mental states that are independent of their relation “to any object, to any perceptual system, or to any other psychological processes” (Garfield 2018a). That the self-reflexivity thesis does not entail, as Garfield puts it, “the possibility of a state being conscious, but not being conscious of anything” (*ibid.*) should be obvious when we consider that this is a thesis about the phenomenal character of consciousness and its intentional structure, and not about its representational content. As Thompson notes in his critical response, to say that reflexivity is an intrinsic feature of consciousness simply “means that the relevant kind of self-awareness cannot be analyzed into an extrinsic relation between two otherwise independent mental states; it does not mean that the state’s being conscious consists in its being reflexive apart from its being intentional” (Thompson 2018). Yet Garfield is adamant that those of us (e.g., Coseru 2012; Dreyfus 2011; Krueger 2011; MacKenzie 2010; Thompson 2011) in the pursuit of a cross-cultural phenomenological project are misguided in our assumption that to be a person amounts to anything more than to supervene on a bundle of interacting sensory, motor, and cognitive processes lacking any phenomenal character: “It may well be that the phenomenological project as prosecuted by Dignāga and Husserl, and as resurrected by Coseru and Zahavi, may be misguided for a simple reason: There may be nothing that it is like for me to see red, because I don’t. Instead of a single locus of consciousness contemplating a distinct world of objects—like a Wittgensteinian eye in the visual field or a Kantian transcendental ego—to be a person, from a Buddhist perspective, is to be a continuum of multiple, interacting sensory, motor and cognitive states and processes” (Garfield 2015, 209). But in dismissing the explanatory usefulness of locutions such as Nagel’s famous “what it is like” for phenomenal consciousness, Garfield appears either to mistake character for content, by taking ‘what it is like’ to be an object or added element of experience, or to deny that experience has any character at all. Mistaking character for content is missing an important distinction between the *mode of presentation* of an experience (e.g., as a perception, thought, or memory) and its content (the object, proposition, or event

recalled). Denying that experiences have any character at all should by any account strike many readers as an extreme view. Indeed, much like Schwitzgebel, other critics too have been puzzled by Garfield's apparent dismissal of the phenomenality of consciousness. Admittedly, while it may be reasonable to deny that locutions such as "what it is like" have the particular philosophical implications some philosophers attribute to them, denying "flat out that *there is anything it is like* to be a conscious being experiencing variously unique cognitive episodes, regardless of their ultimately complex, possibly deceptive metaphysical/causal composition" (Repetti 2015, 79), is less so.

## Conclusion: a Matter of Perspective

In responding to his critics, Garfield addresses what are undoubtedly the three most outstanding issues of this conversation: (i) the soteriological problem; (ii) the problem of the relation between philosophy and science, and its implications for bringing Buddhist philosophy into the mainstream; and (iii) the dispute between phenomenal realists and their critics. As Garfield notes in response to Avramides, whether "an argument or a philosophical position arises in the context of an explicitly soteriological project, it would be a serious genetic fallacy to refuse to credit it if it is cogent on its own terms" (Garfield 2018a). As for whether Buddhism has a more problematic relation to science than contemporary Western philosophy, Garfield points to the decades' long series of productive dialogs between Buddhist contemplatives and scientists spearheaded by the Mind and Life Institute. Lastly, on the question of whether phenomenal realism is a tenable position, Garfield responds to both Schwitzgebel and Thompson by noting the plurality of views on this topic in both Buddhism and contemporary Western philosophy. As for the more substantive point of criticism—that commitment to the fallibility of our cognitive states entails that we have no inner lives—Garfield offers a clarificatory response: "if by 'qualitative states' we mean states that are the objects of immediate awareness, the foundation of our empirical knowledge, inner states that we introspect, with qualitative properties that are properties of those states and not of the objects we perceive, there are no such states" (Garfield 2018). Part of the rationale for denying that such states exist is Garfield's worry that to do so is to participate in the multiplication of entities, and in a sealing off of the inner domain of experience from the outer domain of objects with their causal and functional properties.

The important questions raised by the critics and Garfield's reply demonstrate the richness and complexity of the issues under consideration, and the new perspectives that come to light when we establish a meaningful and productive dialog between different philosophical traditions and cultures. The papers gathered here were first presented at an "Author Meets Critics" invited session on Jay Garfield's book *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*, that I organized for the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association meeting, held in San Francisco, March 30–April 3, 2016. Together with Garfield's reply, these papers are presented here in their final, revised format.

Whether one agrees or not with the critical points they raised here, the arguments adduced in their support undoubtedly offer a compelling example of the value of

engaging philosophical perspectives outside the mainstream, and serve to vindicate Garfield's view that "to take the West as the unique locus of philosophical activity was never a good idea" (Garfield 2015, x).

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