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DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

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KARIN PREISENDANZ

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analysis. The book is the result of a bold undertaking, in which two scholars have made accessible to us a huge body of material.

Gudrun Bühnemann

Christian Coseru

Perceiving Reality. Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xvii + 356p. US$ 78,– (ISBN 978-0-19-984338-1).

Over the past decades some scholars primarily trained in philosophy departments in European and North American universities have devoted book-length studies to investigate Indian and Buddhist philosophical thought from the standpoint of contemporary Western philosophical concerns. In *Perceiving Reality* (hereafter *PR*) Christian Coseru aims to make the Buddhist epistemological program continuous with and relevant to contemporary philosophical concerns, and "to propose novel solutions to enduring and genuinely universal philosophical problems" (p. 6). The author discusses and argues for a naturalized approach to Indian Buddhist epistemology, with phenomenology and analytical philosophy of mind forming the conceptual framework for an exploration of perceptual awareness. Phenomenology, in particular, is said to be "inescapable" as it offers an account of experience that is "capable of capturing the specific ways of our *being-in-the-world*, a world that is inseparable from its mode of apprehension" (p. 271; see also p. 291). While giving due recognition to the views of his predecessors, from Bimal K. Matilal to Tom Tillemans and George Dreyfus,[1] Coseru offers a philosophical discussion of self-awareness as constitutive of perception primarily based on the Tattvasaṃgraha and the commentary on it, the Pañjikā, composed by the eighth-century Indian Buddhist epistemologists Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, respectively. Several sections, especially in chapters 7 and 8, rely on the views of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, the philosophers who laid the foundations of the Buddhist tradition of epistemic enquiry between the fifth and seventh century.

Methodological issues are dealt with at length in chapter 2, which presents a nuanced overview of methods applied in the study of Indian philosophy and more specifically Buddhist epistemology in the past decades. Larger questions about perception in relation to knowledge and conception are discussed in the final chapter 9. Here, based on Roger Jackson's claim concerning the optimism about the possibility of knowledge reflected by the Buddhist epistemological

[1] Dreyfus' *Recognizing Reality* is echoed in the title of the book; see p. 26, n. 28.

model, the author argues that the phenomenological reflection shows how such a possibility is found beyond the distinction of "seeing" and "seeing as" because "seeing reveals an intentional relation that does not detach it from seeing as" (p. 281).

Within the framework provided by these two chapters, the author presents a detailed description of Indian Buddhist epistemology "as a system of pragmatic or context-dependent reasoning" (p. 34). Chapter 3 offers a useful overview of the descriptions of consciousness and cognition that appear in the Nikāyas and in Abhidharmic literature, which are the backdrop against which Buddhist epistemology developed. The author observes that the model of cognitive dynamics of the Abhidharmic tradition shows how perception follows the sense and not the object, which becomes a percept only when it enters "the horizon of awareness" (p. 84). This model is linked with Edmund Husserl's concept of a world of lived experience (*Lebenswelt*) as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view of the world as a meaningful realm of experience (pp. 66f.). Chapter 4 provides a highly informative account of the Indian philosophical debate on the tension between direct perception and conceptualization, which also includes language. The interplay between the author's methodological background and his philosophical considerations is especially evident here. For example, Coseru refers to the importance of a "historically anchored and philosophically edifying" approach in the reconstruction of the thought of past philosophers (pp. 109f.); the adopted strategy of naturalization, which consists in "bridging the gap between phenomenology and natural science" and including the mental in the natural (p. 115); or the role of anti-psychologist tendencies in assessing the value of Buddhist and more in general Indian thought (p. 118).

Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate the purpose of Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's epistemological project and their discourse concerning perception as an epistemic modality which is devoid of concepts and non-deceptive, and is therefore the basis for effective action. With regard to the purpose of their project, *PR* connects the insights deriving from listening, thinking, and meditating – an Abhidharmic model related to the Buddhist path to liberation – to the understanding of the interdependent arising of phenomena (pp. 133f.). However, it fails to clarify the nature of such an understanding and the reason for its importance, which lies in its connection with liberation from suffering. In chapter 6, the lengthy exploration of perception according to Buddhist epistemology emphasizes the separation between perception and conceptualization, and provides an introduction to how the Buddhist epistemologists' position can be seen from a phenomenological point of view, also hinting at Kamalaśīla's commitment to a sort of sensory-motor account of phenomenal experience. Throughout the discussion, it is clear that the author subsumes under the term perception dif-

ferent modes of direct perception described by Buddhist epistemologists, but he does not specify whether his considerations on the phenomenal character of the referent of perception apply to a distinct mode or all of them. This lack of specification might not be irrelevant in the process of naturalizing Buddhist epistemology.

One of Coseru's main concerns in *PR* is to show the connection between the Buddhist epistemological view of self-awareness and the idea of perception as perception of the intended object, with intentionality revealing "the co-constitutive nature of perception and that which is perceived" (p. 9). In chapter 7, in particular, the author looks into the adequacy of a foundationalist approach to the Buddhist epistemological program, eventually arguing for an "anti-foundationalist reading" of it insofar as perceptual awareness is not bound to justifying basic empirical beliefs (p. 227). In the author's understanding of Buddhist epistemologists, perception "is epistemically warranted because of, and only when, its content (that is, the object as perceived) is reflective of the causal cognitive web experience", with "our cognitive faculties embodied and embedded within the environment of which we are part" (pp. 199 and 194). Coseru suggests an alternative foundationalist view that includes consideration of developments in cognitive science. Drawing from the embodied mind thesis famously propounded by F. Varela, E. Thompson and E. Rosch,[2] he endorses a return to naturalism in epistemology and a view of the latter as "contained in sciences of cognition" (p. 228). Nevertheless, he acknowledges Matilal's remark that the question of what we perceive directly is not a scientific question and can only be answered through conceptual analysis and philosophical argument (p. 227). Furthermore, in considering Buddhist epistemology from within the framework of "a modern cognitive scientific setting", Coseru also claims a contribution of Buddhist epistemology to "expanding our knowledge of the phenomenology of first-person experience" (pp. 229–230). In chapter 8, following Jonardon Ganeri, Coseru argues for the accountability of self-awareness in Buddhist epistemology based on the intentionality of perception, with the intentional character of self-awareness being apparent in the sense of embodied agency typical of epistemic feelings. Furthermore, he explains that, if we adopt a phenomenological understanding of intentionality, it is possible to "make sense of our perceptual experiences" without resorting to a transcendental subject or self (p. 272). Dignāga's theory of cognition is illustrated as having a dual aspect, with the subjective aspect being self-awareness as cognizing agent and the objective aspect the intentional aspect of cognition. In this view, awareness of something as well as awareness

[2] *The Embodied Mind. Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991.

of the perception that is occurring are constitutive of perception, and "the subject of experience can also become an intentional object of experience when it is reflectively apprehended" (p. 269).

As we have seen, *PR* offers a detailed discussion of a vast range of views – from previous philosophical readings of Buddhist epistemology to phenomenology and cognitive science – and shows possible continuities between them. In doing so, *PR* contributes to a non-compartmentalised study of the sources of Buddhist epistemology and to the integration of the latter in a non-regionally based philosophical perspective. These are long-term processes that require sustained exchange and cooperation between philosophers and philologists who work on South Asian philosophical literature. Each group can learn from the other specific contents as well as consideration of and sensitivity to larger issues that might be deemed common sense in one domain and yet fall outside the scope of customary attention in the other. *PR*, in particular, illuminates philosophical matters that would remain undetected in a philological approach to Buddhist epistemology. On the other hand, a few issues related to cultural and intellectual history appear less sharply outlined to the eye of a philologist.

From a philologist's point of view, a first set of observations is about *PR*'s representation of Buddhist and, more in general, Indian philosophical and cultural history. Although the book purposely does not fall in such a historical frame, it inevitably describes features related to the latter. In these cases, its narrative at times generates a picture that is only partially supported by the present state of historical and philological research on Buddhist epistemology. For instance, the author explains the causal model of perception as resting on two sets of premises, the second of which is that unique particulars are able to produce real effects even in the case of perceptual illusions (p. 233). Since the subsequent lines do not offer specifications on this statement, it is not possible to situate the latter within the complex Buddhist account of perception, which might only partially accommodate such a view. Another case in point is the author's claim of an absence of distinction between the causal question and the question of justification. This is deemed to be a reflection of "the pragmatic concern of Indian philosophers, rather than a failure to address the normative question – of why might we be justified in believing something – on its own" (p. 213). Now, consideration of the philosophical debate around, for example, the authority of the Vedas or other scriptures would possibly challenge the idea of such an absence and provide materials to clarify the impact of the normative question as well as the contours of the pragmatic concerns in Indian philosophy. Here I use the conditional mood not to avoid judgment speech, but because I am not aware of comprehensive interpretative studies on relevant South Asian philosophical literature that can shed light on these issues.

The narrative of *PR* also seems to cast a distorted light on Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's thought when it describes their ultimate aim as providing "a basis for effective action" (p. 191). Contextually, "effective action" seems to suggest the primacy of a pragmatic concern and thus to obliterate the soteriological nature of the ultimate aim of the Buddhist epistemological program. Indeed, the author ascribes a primacy of pragmatic concerns to this program (e.g., p. 250), especially when he discusses a model of phenomenology that takes the Buddhist epistemological account of perception as intentionally constituted and supporting the dual-aspect nature of intentional acts (see especially section 8.3–4). However, it remains sometimes unclear how and to what extent the proposed model would be supported by the Buddhist authors from whom the entire discussion derives. This is especially evident in the case of Dignāga's presentation of self-awareness. While Birgit Kellner argues that, due to its brevity, it cannot present unequivocal evidence for intentional self-awareness, Coseru finds confirmation in the mere coherence of the model that he prioritizes (p. 264).

A second set of observations is concerned with the "longevity of Eurocentrism", on which Sonja Brentjes has recently written.[3] *PR* adopts the terminological and conceptual apparatus of specific trends of Western philosophy for describing the Buddhist epistemological program. It is thus in a way unavoidable that the book's narrative translates that program into a Western cultural and philosophical discourse. This has its own merits in hermeneutical terms, but it also entails the danger of a Eurocentric approach to philosophy, which includes conferring a preference to specific topics mainly because they figure high on the agenda of philosophers who work in Western universities. A longevous aspect of a Eurocentric attitude is observable in the claim that the results of modern neuroscientific research (which is used as being synonymous with Western science) can settle "beyond speculative arguments" whether there is empirical support for an insight which "the Buddhist tradition had sought to defend mainly on phenomenological grounds", namely that the central role of perception for knowledge is in jeopardy due to imagery and natural cases of misperception (pp. 230f.). Such a claim reflects the mostly unquestioned view of the objectivity of modern research and its capacity to settle things in a way that is more valuable than others. However, if things are settled, we can at the most seek confirmation for what we already know, instead of acknowledging what is different and exploring other ways of thinking based on a holistic approach rather than on cherry-picking. Moreover, to use as a yardstick the results of neuroscientific

[3] Relationships between Early Modern Christian and Islamicate Societies in Eurasia and North Africa as Reflected in the History of Science and Medicine. *Confluence. Online Journal of World Philosophies* 3 (2015) 85–121.

research poses the question of why we, in the so-called West, should engage in thinking philosophically and, additionally, from the point of view of far distant philosophies such as Indian Buddhist epistemology. Despite a narrative that might give a different impression, *PR* in fact well displays that at least some of the questions asked in the field of cognitive science are informed by coherent philosophical models for understanding the complex human cognitive world and by the philosophers' capacity and experience in developing such models. Furthermore, *PR* shows that Buddhist epistemologists provide one such model, by means of which they explain cognitive processes and make sense of human experience within a coherent frame of reference. The latter does not find correspondence in any of the schemes developed in cognitive science. So, it may all the more help to ask new questions as well as interpret the data coming from the latter field of research. Eventually, Coseru has recourse to a philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to explain "what it might be like to be fully immersed in the perceptual experience" (pp. 231–233).

Another longevous aspect of a Eurocentric attitude can be seen in the little consideration given to subjects that are not traditionally included in the Western philosophical discussions concerning knowledge. Meditative practices and their attainments as well as yogic perception are this type of subject. *PR* mentions them on different occasions, but usually without further discussion, which makes the author's statements somehow axiomatic. For example, it is claimed that Buddhist accounts of meditative attainments are phenomenologically opaque (p. 265); or that Buddhist meditative traditions can supply "methods for a phenomenological exploration of the constituent elements of experience", but cannot be separated from the "epistemological inquiry that has evolved to bear on the results of such experience" (p. 229). In the latter case, the explanation that follows is about "essential qualities of things", for example a specific tree, which is cognized as such (e.g., a redwood) because it is not "a causal basis for the apprehension of that which is other than this specific instance of redwood". The latter point is a reference to the theory of *apoha* ("exclusion"), which Dignāga and later authors developed to explain how the application of a word to an object and the formation of concepts function, namely by referring to an individual *x* by way of excluding every individual that is a non-*x*. The connection made by the author between cognitive methods developed in meditative traditions and the notion of *apoha* is interesting, but it can hardly be supported by the provided example because the essential qualities of things explored by Buddhist meditative practices are ultimately – to mention the qualities that are especially relevant in the epistemological discussion – being momentary and selfless. On the other hand, although not overtly related to meditative practices, some remarks in *PR* are potentially useful for a discussion

of knowledge that includes meditative practices and their results. A case in point is the author's elaboration on the opposition between "ordinary, untutored perception" and "trained perception", as related to a pragmatic–phenomenological model in which "perceiving is learning the 'rules' of sensorimotor contingency, that is, the non-propositional form of *knowing how*" (pp. 219–221; see also p. 142). The phrase "trained perception" might well describe the kind of perception attained by the yogis.

Coseru's philosophical reading of Buddhist epistemology is an important contribution to the understanding of Indian philosophy outside South Asian studies and its inclusion in the realm of philosophy tout court. While exemplifying the specificity of philosophical skills in crafting concepts and models for making sense of the process and results of cognizing, Coseru's *PR* shows that Indian philosophy is a complex way of thinking that can trigger other ways of thinking. It is to be hoped that *PR* will not only generate a debate on the philosophical side, but also an exchange between philosophers and philologists because things are not settled on either side, quite the contrary.

Cristina Pecchia

Jens W. Borgland
Examination into the True Teaching. Vidyānandin's Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. xii + 290p. € 72,– (ISBN 978-3-447-06703-4).

Vidyānandin was a Jaina Digambara scholar of the tenth century CE. His Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā covers 47 pages in its single edition by Gokul Chandra Jain.[1] Jens W. Borgland's book offers the first complete translation of the extant text into a European language. The book gives a good overview over the examination of the philosophical traditions that are mainly addressed in the available parts of the work, namely, Advaitavedānta, Yogācāra, Cārvāka, Sautrāntika, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā. Vidyānandin's examination (*parīkṣā*) as to whether these doctrines (*śāsana*) are true (*satya*) or not, ends disastrously for their proponents; they are not at all true. They are to be understood as one-sided (*ekānta*) because their central tenets are contradicted by the results of two means of valid cognition, i.e., perception and inference (*dṛṣṭeṣṭaviruddha*).

Borgland's (B.) book is divided into two parts, an "Introduction" (pp. 1–97) followed by "Text and translation" (pp. 99–263). For the text, B. provides a

[1] *Vidyānandi-kṛta-Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā*, ed. by Gokul Chandra Jain. [Jñānapīṭha Mūrtidevī Jaina Granthamālā: Saṃskṛta Grantha 30]. Calcutta 1964.