type of non-realism developed in his work is both non-idealism and non-skepticism. Ram-Prasad takes Śrī Harṣa’s position as akin to naturalism, by which he understands a brand of analytic philosophy involving an attitude of suspension of metaphysics as we find it in Wittgenstein and Strawson.

In section 4 Ram-Prasad offers comparative remarks on David Hume and Śrī Harṣa with regard to the problem of causality. Śrī Harṣa is represented as having argued that causal connections that are reported in our experience are not there in the world independent of cognition. Ram-Prasad takes this to be a modest view in that such a position neither goes beyond nor falls short of the deliverance of cognition. He concludes his book with observations on the problem of perception against the backdrop of the direct theory of perception, representationalism, and adverbial theory of consciousness of the Western tradition as well as Indian theories of perception involving the thesis of nirākāra-tva and that of śakāra-tva. Śrī Harṣa rejects the direct theories of perception. This implies a suspension of metaphysical commitment to objects of perception, and this is consistent with the variety of non-realism developed in the book.

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad deserves our appreciation and praise for being able to present a reconstruction of Advaita philosophy in a comparative setting, basing his interpretations mostly on three great Advaita philosophers. But he has left out many others, notably Prakāśātman, whom we all take to be one of the great philosophers of the school. It seems to me that by treating drṣṭiśrṣṭivāda as a variety of idealism and thinking that Prakāśātman supports it, he avoids discussing this Advaitin and his committed followers. But he should have argued more elaborately for such an omission. I also miss a statement of his attitude toward the philosophical concepts of threefold reality and ajñāna as well as toward soteriological doctrines like ekajūva-vāda and pratibimbavāda. I look forward to a statement of his position on these concepts and on Prakāśātman and his followers.

It would be churlish to cavil at such an excellent work, but if the book is reprinted the author should consider whether “designating as having equal status” (p. 112) is the proper translation of sāmānādhikaranyavyapadesāḥ, and whether the Sanskrit verse from Suresvāra as quoted in note 5 (p. 21) has been properly spelled. That said, I hope this book receives the recognition it is due from the academicians of both traditions.


Reviewed by David L. McMahan Franklin and Marshall College

The teacher of courses on Buddhism now has an unprecedented number of high-quality introductory texts from which to select, many of which have just been published or revised in the past few years. Thus, the problem becomes which to choose. Donald W. Mitchell’s Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience should be
among the first choices, especially if the course focuses on the doctrinal and textual elements of Buddhism. Those looking for rich descriptions of Buddhism on the ground or detailed analyses of living traditions, however, will either look elsewhere or supplement Mitchell’s text with others.

The organization of Buddhism is fairly typical of the genre. After an introduction, the chapters are: “The Life of Gautama Buddha,” “The Teachings of the Buddha,” “The Way of the Elders,” “The Great Vehicle,” “The Indian Experience of Buddhism,” “The Tibetan Experience of Buddhism,” “The Chinese Experience of Buddhism,” “The Korean Experience of Buddhism,” “The Japanese Experience of Buddhism,” “Modern Buddhism in Asia,” and “Buddhism in the West.” Also included are some photographs, maps, a pronunciation guide, and a glossary. The book also features twenty-two boxes with short writings, often autobiographical, by modern Buddhists elucidating some feature of their own understanding or experience of their tradition. Among these are writings by well-known Asian Buddhists such as the Dalai Lama, Dharma Master Sheng Yen, and Sulak Sivaraksa; Western Buddhist teachers like Robert Aitken and Sylvia Boorstein; and scholar-practitioners like Jeffrey Hopkins, Rita Gross, and Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka. Although brief, they successfully bring to life the practice of Buddhism from various inside perspectives.

The strongest parts of the text are the explications of Indian Buddhism as presented in sūtras and other primary sources. Here Mitchell presents surprisingly (for an introductory text) rich accounts of the Pāli suttas, Mahāyāna sūtras, and the various philosophical schools. He stays close to the texts and offers coherent accounts of main doctrines, accessible yet nuanced and peppered liberally with quotations from primary sources. Of particular interest is an extended treatment of Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhi-magga* and accounts of the main themes of important Mahāyāna sūtras: the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, the *Lančavatāra Sūtra*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra*.

The chapters on Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism do not—and, in the limited space allotted, could not—maintain the level of detail provided in the chapters on Indian traditions. Indeed, it seems inevitable that introductory texts must give a sometimes tedious list of schools and figures when addressing these geographical areas. In Mitchell’s book, however, even these chapters feature accounts of certain doctrines that go beyond those of most introductory texts. The chapter on Chinese Buddhism, for example, introduces in some depth the intricacies of Ch’ih-i’s T’ien-t’ai doctrine, the visionary extravagance of the Hua-yen school, and the poetic subtleties of Hui-neng’s explication of Ch’an in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*.

The book’s richness in the presentation of doctrines and texts does exact a certain cost in historical nuance. While an introductory text cannot afford space for too much scholarly debate, some historians of Buddhism will likely find unsatisfactory the distinction presented in the introduction between the “vast array of Buddhist religious cultural forms” and its “profound spiritual quest” or “the more fundamental depths of Buddhist experiences” (p. 1). Such language, although widespread, perpetuates the “core philosophy and practice”—versus—“culturally accumulated bag-
gage” picture of Buddhism constructed by early western Buddhologists, implicitly suggesting that scholars can extract this original tradition from later cultural accretions. Thus, while Mitchell is by no means uncritical in his analysis of traditional historical claims, he sometimes blurs distinctions between these claims and those which can be verified by critical historical study. He presents, for example, a concise account of the scholarly debates surrounding the rise of the Mahāyāna, but offers the crucial story of Hui-neng “as is,” with no indication of the important critical scholarship on this narrative—scholarship that has had a real impact on the contemporary understanding of the history and doctrines of Ch’an and Zen.

Mitchell’s choices in the presentation of modern trends in Buddhism reflect specific interests rather than an attempt to account for the overwhelming diversity of recent forms of Buddhism. The chapter on modern Buddhist movements in Asia focuses almost exclusively on those “concerned with the physical, social, and political as well as the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence”—that is, Engaged Buddhism (p. 283). While he explicitly steers away from discussing “nationalist or fundamentalist” movements, he does mention the entanglement of Zen and Japanese nationalism, although he mistakenly attributes it exclusively to the Rinzai school.

Every text purporting to be an introduction to Buddhism must face certain built-in challenges owing to Buddhism’s long history and dazzling diversity. Mitchell makes it clear in his introductory chapter that he is focusing primarily on texts and doctrinal issues. Those whose courses have more of an anthropological bent, or who are concerned with redressing the historical bias toward textual accounts of Buddhism, will find this approach unsatisfying. If, however, you are in need of a text that introduces Buddhist textual traditions or if you emphasize philosophy in your course—and certainly these should not be neglected—you would be hard-pressed to find a better introduction than this one. Perhaps the ideal use of this book would be in conjunction with other works illustrating the anthropological facets of Buddhism. All told, this is a work that does what it does superbly and is one of the best of its kind.


Reviewed by Michiko Yusa Western Washington University

A quarter of a century ago William LaFleur published his book on Saigyō, Mirror for the Moon, which the present work, Awesome Nightfall: The Life, Times, and Poetry of Saigyō, thoughtfully and masterfully supersedes. In this connection I may mention the philosopher, Nishida Kitarō, whose Zen no kenkyū (An inquiry into the good) was reprinted in 1936, twenty-five years after its first publication. On that occasion Nishida, deeply moved by the thought that his earliest work was still being read, expressed his sentiment by quoting the last two lines of one of Saigyō’s poems: