

“The key to understanding what is going on here is the realization that the issue is less one of philology than of doctrine”. This remark refers to a passage in *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* which he chose to illustrate how clearly the *Lotus-sūtra* distinguishes the difference between singular and plural use of *śāriira*. In this passage the Buddha says that wherever an exposition of his Dharma will be presented, a precious shrine should be built for the Tathāgata, but “Tathāgata’s relics (*tathāgataśārīrāṇi*) need not necessarily be installed there. Why? [Because] the Tathāgata’s body is truly placed there [already] as one compact substance (*ekagghanam eva tasmīns tathāgataśārīram upanikṣiptaṃ bhavati*)”. This statement satisfies the author by its grammatical correctness, but he is intrigued by its possible meaning. He quotes also Kumārajīva’s translation and finds it equally grammatically accurate (*shèlì* for *śārīrāṇi* and *quánshē* for *śārīrā*), but no less puzzling.

What the author does not seem to take into account is the context of the *Lotus-sūtra*, a Mahāyāna text dating from around the turn of our era. The Buddha Śākyamuni who is preaching it is a cosmic personage; the historical Buddha on this earth, the originator of the teachings recorded in the Pāli Canon, came to be viewed within the circles which produced the *Lotus-sūtra* as only one of the innumerable manifestations of this personage in the course of his teaching career spanning innumerable cosmic periods. He himself is also just one of the innumerable Buddhas active in innumerable worlds of this vast ‘multiverse’.

The *Lotus-sūtra* of course addresses Buddhist followers of its time when stūpa worship was widespread. The text’s assertion, put into the mouth of the cosmic Buddha Śākyamuni, that no relic need be placed in stūpas since the Tathāgata was already present in them with his full substance may have been a further elaboration of the Buddha’s instruction in the Pāli Canon, referred to above, that after his cremation a stūpa should be built for the Tathāgata. The *Lotus-sūtra* also represents, among other things, a stage in the development of buddhological ideas culminating in the Trikāya doctrine. But that is beyond the scope of this review and the work reviewed.

The work itself is a valuable piece of primary research and is evidently meant for experts specialising in textual research across language barriers. It makes interesting, but rather difficult, reading for a religionist studying the development of Buddhist doctrines, because of its style. The author presented earlier versions of this work and the basic contents of its final form to academic audiences in Japan and benefited from their feedback. The style of the published form still makes the impression of an elaborated summary from a discussion forum in a draft form. Many afterthoughts and explanations are in footnotes and quite a few relevant observations in the main text appear in subclauses of complicated sentences. At the end we get ‘Inconclusive Concluding Thoughts’ instead of a coherent summary, although the ideas thrown up in it suggest that the author was aware of the deeper significance of the manipulations of the term *śārīira* for the reinterpretation of the status of the Buddha. After that still come six lengthy ‘Additional Notes’ which should have been worked, I think, into the main text. The work would certainly merit republication after a thorough restructuring of its contents and rethinking of some of its formulations.

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ON THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD IN THE *CH’ENG WEI SHIH LUN* (*Studia Philologica Buddhica*, Occasional Paper Series XIII). By LAMBERT SCHMITHAUSEN. pp. 66. Tokyo, The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2005.

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Ch’eng wei shih lun is a commentary to Vasubandhu’s work *Trīṃśikā*. It was compiled by the Chinese scholar Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang, 602–664) on the basis of materials he collected when on pilgrimage in

India. Its affiliation is to the Yogācāra school of Buddhist Philosophy (also known as Vijñānavāda) often referred to as the ‘Mind-only’ (*citta-mātra* or *vijñaptimātra*) teaching. Its basic tenet is the denial of the independent existence of material things and the whole external world outside consciousness. However, it recognises several layers of consciousness and the eighth one, called ‘storehouse’ consciousness (*ālaya vijñāna*), preserves impressions (*vāsanās*) of past experiences and seeds (*bījās*) of karmic actions. When these mature (become *vipākavijñāna*), the minds of individual beings project them outwards and perceive them as objects and events in an external world around them which shape their lives. The world, thus projected, appears to be shared by beings, or perhaps better expressed, the worlds projected by individuals appear to overlap, hence the assumption that individual *ālaya vijñānas* also overlap or have a common ground. This seems to be corroborated by the view, expressed in *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, that *ālaya vijñāna* harbours Buddha nature, also termed *tathāgatagarbha* or ‘womb of buddhahood’, in other words, that every being has deep inside himself the potential to become a Buddha.

In the context of western philosophical thought the idea that there is no external world is regarded as an ontological stance and therefore Yogācāra philosophy has been classified as phenomenological idealism. However, recently this classification has been challenged. The author singles out a work by Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology. A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng wei shih lun* (Routledge Curzon, London, 2002) from which it transpires that Lusthaus suggests that Yogācāra’s phenomenological idealism need not imply ontological commitment; its ‘mind-only’ stance may be just a ‘therapeutic device’ or soteriological strategy aimed at detachment from the world, but need not rule out existence of matter (*rūpa*) independent of mind in the same way as other beings’ minds exist independently of one’s own mind. This would mean that although we know about external objects and other minds only through our mind, they still may exist independently from it.

Leaving Lusthaus’s philosophical interpretations aside, the author, “not being a philosopher”, decided to examine the relevant passage of Xuanzang’s text on the basis of internal interpretation. He dedicated to it the bulk of the work under the heading ‘Discussion of the Basic Evidence’ which abounds in quotations, some of them in Chinese, lengthy footnotes, translations and re-translations of portions of Xuanzang’s text, some commentaries to it and other works dealing with the problem. I am not quite sure that the interpretation the author has finally arrived at can be seen as limited to purely internal (textual) evidence without an element of philosophical argumentation. On some level we all are philosophers so that his disclaimer need not be taken seriously. But his arguments appear sound. In any event, his conclusion is that Xuanzang’s *Ch’eng wei shih lun* does not allow for the independent existence of the external world.

The work finishes with a piece on ‘The Spiritual Context of *vijñaptimātrata*’ in which the author points out that Buddhism is concerned with *sentient* beings and their *intentions* which result in either karmic effects or liberation. It is therefore *mental* factors which produce their world or their experience of the highest truth or true reality (*tathatā*). This strengthens the argument for the mind-only (*vijñaptimātra*) understanding of the nature of the world. To regard it as independent of mind is, from this point of view, a misconception from which Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are free even when they enter the karmically produced worlds/minds (*vipākavijñānas*) of other beings to help them transform their impure worlds into pure ones and share with them their Buddha fields or the final freedom.

The mind-only doctrine is certainly a feasible philosophical conception of reality. As developed in Buddhist texts it has the advantage over once favoured idealistic trends in western philosophy in that it cannot fall into the trap of solipsism. It even shows affinity with the modern scientific view, which has dissolved matter into subatomic processes and recognises the role of the observer in determining their outcome. There is nothing in it which could be seen as distortion of the Buddhist message and hinder its practical purpose. There are even passages in the early Pāli sources from which, as a starting point, the mind-only doctrine could have been developed. And the suggestion voiced by Lusthaus

that it may have been understood in some quarters as a soteriological strategy without an ontological commitment cannot be ruled out. That would bring it even more in line with the early Pāli texts in which the Buddha discourages speculation and recommends just practising the spiritual path to develop direct rather than conceptual knowledge of reality.

This small work is meant for specialists and its style is not easy. Nevertheless, even without being able to check its arguments against the Chinese texts which it refers to, working through the author's arguments is worthwhile and useful for grasping the subtleties of the doctrine.

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ORDINARY MIND AS THE WAY: THE HONGZHOU SCHOOL AND THE GROWTH OF CHAN BUDDHISM. By MARIO POCESKI. pp. xii, 248. New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.
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For scholars of Chan Buddhism the task of rescuing History from the intricate web of myths and legends spun by its most brilliant minds seems to have always been the most pressing (and most tempting). Perhaps the most notable figures in this regard are the Chinese historian Hu Shih and the Japanese Zen historian Yanagida Seizan who, precisely for this reason, receive a fair amount of attention in Mario Poceski's new book *Ordinary Mind as the Way*. Poceski does not, however, invoke Hu and Yanagida to bolster his own claims about Chan or to secure his place in this intellectual lineage of sorts but to take them – especially the latter – to task for not applying the same critical tools that they used to demystify early Chan to the study of middle Chan or, more specifically, to the so-called Hongzhou school, the subject of Poceski's well-researched book. What seems to trouble Poceski most about Hu and Yanagida's views on the Hongzhou school and its putative founder Mazu Daoyi (709–788) is their tendency, despite their differing agendas, to see the rise of Mazu and his school as a kind of revolution that gave birth to a new Buddhism (sometimes referred to as 'classical Chan') that was, to borrow Poceski's own words, "distinctively Chinese" (p. 10). One of the major aims of Poceski's book is to thus show that such views are based on the hasty use of misleading sources – most notably the so-called "encounter dialogues" – and not corroborated by other extant sources which, if used judiciously, can offer a more accurate, nuanced, and context-sensitive picture of a school that flourished between the eighth and ninth century. And that is exactly what he delivers in *Ordinary Mind as the Way*.

But what Poceski delivers is anything but shocking, and rightly so. In stark contrast to the well-established image of the maverick Hongzhou school as a provincial, antinomian, and egalitarian movement, what we find in Poceski's book – in large part a reworking of his doctoral thesis – is a strikingly conservative, elitist, and, dare I say, banal Chinese Buddhist school whose presence was felt in the various regions of the Tang empire, including its capitals Chang'an and Luoyang. In Chapters One and Two, Poceski juggles a large body of epigraphical and hagiographical material, laid out neatly in the Appendix, to show that Mazu and his disciples were, indeed, conventional monastics who rose to prominence by maintaining close relations with local officials and the imperial court and by holding the abbacy of important state-sponsored monasteries. In Chapter Three Poceski offers some more general observations on the history of the Hongzhou school such as the pattern of its growth, its attitude towards other Chan lineages, and its place in what he calls the larger 'Chan movement'. Curiously, what we also find in Chapter Three is a discussion – a discussion that one would expect to find in the Introduction – of what Poceski means by 'school'. For Poceski, a 'school' in this context