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An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues. By Peter Harvey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 478 pages, ISBN: 0-5215-5640-6 (paper): 13.95/\$19.95. ISBN: 0-5215-5394-6 (hard): 37.50/\$59.95.

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Up until now, there has been no textbook that could form the basis of a university course on Buddhist ethics, but Professor Harvey has admirably remedied that deficiency. Teachers of Buddhism who were previously keen to branch out into this area—in which there is much student interest—but hesitated because of the dearth of accessible literature can now be reassured that the required teaching material is at hand. This is a substantial and systematic introduction that can safely be placed in the hands of students of all levels and is substantial enough by itself to provide the backbone of an undergraduate course.

The format adopted is similar to that used by many course books on Western ethics, and it makes for an interesting and varied syllabus while facilitating course planning. The volume contains ten chapters in all, the last seven of which are devoted to issues in applied ethics.

These seven chapters discuss the natural world (ch. 4), economic ethics (ch. 5), war and peace (ch. 6), suicide and euthanasia (ch. 7), abortion and contraception (ch. 8), sexual equality (ch. 9), and homosexuality (ch. 10). All of these questions have contemporary relevance, and the discussion will be readily intelligible to a broad readership. Given their controversial nature, they are certain to maintain a high level of student interest.

In order to lay the foundations for a proper understanding of the distinctive Buddhist perspective on the above matters, the first three chapters are devoted to the foundations of Buddhist ethics (ch. 1), key Buddhist values (ch. 2), and Mahāyāna adaptations of the early teachings (ch. 3). Apart from providing an introduction to Buddhist ethics, these three chapters also provide a fine introduction to Buddhism itself. They discuss fundamental questions such as karma and rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Five Precepts, the different roles of laity and monks, Mahāyāna innovations, and the *bodhisattva* ideal. Many introductions simply confuse the newcomer by dwelling on abstruse doctrines that play almost no part in the religious life of most Buddhists, while avoiding important issues that students wish to discuss. Examples of some of the important questions for ethics addressed in these early chapters include the following: Is the Path merely a means to an end and is to be discarded like a raft once one has "crossed over" (p. 50)? Do the enlightened pass "beyond good and evil" (pp. 43ff)? Is the goal of Buddhism knowledge or moral virtue (p. 46)? How do we distinguish degrees of moral responsibility (pp. 52ff)? Does Buddhism believe there are objective moral values (p. 57)? These, and other questions raised, are the groundwork for a sound appreciation of Buddhist ethics and the values and goals of the tradition overall.

Chapter two is particularly noteworthy for its methodical discussion of the Five Precepts, and the careful exegesis of their meaning in the light of canonical and commentarial literature. The Buddhism that emerges here is more conservative than many readers will expect, and does not resemble the modern liberal construct that Westerners became familiar with in the 1960s. Indeed, on reading through the chapters, many Western Buddhists may be challenged to think again concerning the popular image of Buddhism as in harmony with "progressive" Western values.

It is gratifying to see that the discussion throughout is well grounded in primary sources, as well as making abundant reference to secondary literature. Discussion of ethical issues in Buddhism often takes place in a vacuum, as if the tradition provided no precedent and that all that carried weight were personal feelings about an issue. As Harvey demonstrates, there is

abundant authoritative opinion that deserves to be engaged with.

The seven chapters on applied issues are too complex to discuss individually in this review. However, it can be said that, in general, they are distinguished by attention to a wide range of primary and secondary sources, the inclusion of both Theravāda and Mahāyāna perspectives, reference to historical parallels, and perspectives from a range of Buddhist cultures. The amount of data assembled and the breadth of learning involved is impressive: much of the information is new, and no other work brings to bear such a range of source material focused on individual issues. A wide range of opinion is surveyed from classical and contemporary sources, and the author's judgments concerning the weight to be placed on different testimonies are judicious and balanced. This objective presentation of the issues and arguments makes the book the first port of call for anyone pursuing research in these areas, and an ideal starting-point for student dissertations.

What criticisms can be made? I can think of very few. Given the volume of data presented, it is sometimes not clear whether facts are adduced in support of an argument, or simply for the reader's information. However, this problem is remedied at the end of each chapter by the helpful conclusions that review the points made. There is also an occasional tendency for the discussion to lapse into a "what if" format in the style of a *Vinaya* commentary, as in the discussion of abortion on page 322. However, these are very minor points. As is to be expected, a range of positions can be staked out on the substantive issues, and no doubt readers are even now considering responses. For example, I am not persuaded as to the validity of the "baby and chimpanzee" test used in the discussion of abortion. These differences of opinion, however, are the hallmark of a seminal work.

The volume is the first systematic introduction to Buddhist ethics and is an excellent and much-needed work. The volume includes a glossary, extensive bibliography, list of useful addresses, and three indices. It will make the job of teaching Buddhist ethics much easier, and I am sure I will not be alone in adopting it as a course book.