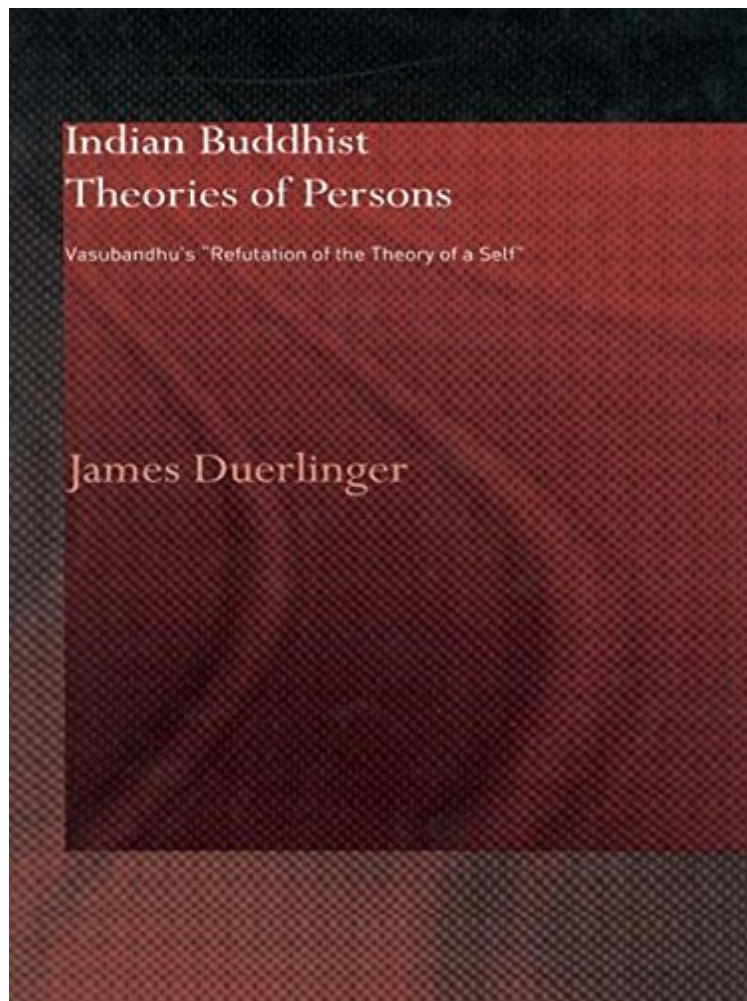


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Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons: Vasubandhu's Refutation of the Theory of a Self (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism)

James Duerlinger

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James Duerlinger : Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons: Vasubandhu's Refutation of the Theory of a Self (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons: Vasubandhu's Refutation of the Theory of a Self (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism):

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. An essential book for understanding differences in Buddhism By C. Allyn I have had the wonderful opportunity to take classes from the author while he was composing this work. His understanding of the complex issues between those who propose a permanent Self (or soul), those who propose no self, and those who walk the middle path between these two extreme views. It is this middle path that Professor

Duerlinger (and Vasubandhu) is attempting to illuminate. Professor Duerlinger has done a wonderful job capturing the debates between Vasubandhu and his opponents. Those familiar with the style of Socrates' dialogs will see a very familiar style of presentation in Vasubandhu's work. Many times, Vasubandhu moves from answering a question from one opponent to attacking another in the very same response. Vasubandhu and other Buddhist writers often attempted to have their work be in verses that were easily memorized so that they could be meditated upon more easily. While this is great for monks and Geshe, it leaves the uninitiated reader a little confused by the brevity of Vasubandhu's statements. This is where Professor Duerlinger shines. He is able to separate out the intricate points that Vasubandhu condenses into a four line verse to fully explain the implications each line has to the overall belief in the existence of a Self. Vasubandhu lived in a time when Buddhism was thriving in India. His main opponents are Hindus and Nihilists, although at times he has an opponent from another school of Buddhist thought. This was a time before the mass proliferation of what has historically been called Mahayana Buddhism. But for the students of later Buddhist thought, such as Gelug-pa, you can see the philosophy of Vasubandhu distancing himself from the Hindus and the Buddhist schools of thought that clung to hard to absolute existence in a Self. While Vasubandhu's arguments against a Self never reach the Middle Way that Nagarjuna or Tsong Kha Pa espouse, you can definitely see the congruity between these three great Buddhist philosophers. Many times while reading, you feel like answering Vasubandhu's opponents with later Tibetan arguments against a Self. That is one of the wonderful things about this book, Professor Duerlinger helps one see these dialogs in the in historical context, as well as their later lasting effects on Buddhist thought.

In this book, Vasubandhu's classic work Refutation of the Theory of a Self is translated and provided with an introduction and commentary. The translation, the first into a modern Western language from the Sanskrit text, is intended for use by those who wish to begin a careful philosophical study of Indian Buddhist theories of persons. Special features of the introduction and commentary are their extensive explanations of the arguments for the theories of persons of Vasubandhu and the Pudgalavdines, the Buddhist philosophers whose theory is the central target of Vasubandhu's refutation of the theory of a self.

'The translation itself (pp. 71-121) is lucid ... [In] Duerlinger's important long commentary ... [e]very nuance of the text is well-explored and analyzed. ... He gives to a classic Indian Buddhist Sanskrit text the sort of critical attention that specialists in Greek philosophy give to Greek philosophical texts. This is a book everyone who studies Indian philosophy should read, and I hope it will become a standard against which other works in the field may be judged.'

N.H. Satami, Philosophy East West

About the Author James Duerlinger has taught in the Philosophy Department at the University of Iowa since 1971. He has published on topics in Greek philosophy, philosophy of religion, and Buddhist philosophy, which are also his current teaching and research interests.