David Jones, ed., *Buddha Nature and Animality*. Fremont, CA: Jain Publishing, 2007. xii + 223 pages.

While, as with most edited volumes, the quality of the chapters in this book varies, as a whole, *Buddha Nature and Animality* offers fresh Buddhist insight into the nature of contemporary ecological problems—problems that produce untold suffering for humans and non-humans alike, and problems that routinely threaten species, ecosystems, and even the biosphere with extinction. Ironically, the volume's central questions focus primarily on neither "Buddha-nature" nor "animality" but rather on the nature of "humanity"—humanity in relation to its own animality and to its animal, natural, and religious environments. This interesting though anthropocentric posture is to be understood, I think, in light of the contributing authors' intentions to mitigate problems that are, for the most part, created by humans, or are, at least, exacerbated by their actions. Importantly, as is acknowledged by at least one of the volume's contributors (Bret W. Davis of Loyola College in Maryland), anthropocentrism also has a long history in Buddhism, which has often, if not typically, maintained important distinctions between humans and other animals—e.g., the unique ability of humans to make "enlightened" (or "enlightening") decisions about their actions and thereby propel themselves and others toward liberation. Regardless of their stances toward the appropriateness of anthropocentrism for the Buddhist tradition, most of the authors nevertheless approach the meanings and relations of the interrelated concepts they explore with eyes toward elucidating the ethical implications—both personal and social—of these meanings and relations for humans.

The approach of the authors is, moreover, decidedly Buddhist in orientation. Each writes from the perspective of Buddhism, at least in part, for an audience who shares his or her Buddhist commitments. Most favor Chan/Zen, or, at least, Mahāyāna traditions. The book's most important contributions stem from this Buddhist orientation, with several of its better chapters clarifying and advancing Buddhist thinking about the important and timely issues they address. Jason M. Wirth (Seattle University), Thomas A. Forsthoefel (Mercyhurst College), Peter D. Hershock (East–West Center), Harriette Grissom (University of North Carolina at Asheville), Bret Davis, and David Jones (Kennesaw State University) are especially to be commended in this regard. Each, according to his or her own philosophical style, makes clear how traditional Buddhist thinking and practice is relevant for the contemporary world, at least for those who hold Buddhist worldviews. Although there is not space here to consider any of their contributions in detail, in sum, all the contributions to this volume converge around a view of ecological interrelatedness, where value is ascribed to beings by virtue of their mutual participation in the realization of self and

others in the on-going play of universal Buddha-nature, emptiness, and dependent origination that both surrounds and constitutes us. Recognition of this interrelatedness not only should lead us to value animals and ecosystems more highly than we currently do but also should help us to see in them (at least) reflections of Buddha from which we can learn directly about ourselves and the most sublime truths.

In addition to developing Buddhist thought on ecological issues, the contributors to the volume wish also to contribute to contemporary Western philosophical discourse about ecology and the rights of animals. How well the volume does so is open to debate. Most of its contributions are certainly thought provoking, and their emphases on interrelatedness resonate with much of the discussion as it is already occurring among Westerners. What is lacking, I think, is sufficient attention to the kinds of concerns that are bound to arise for Western philosophically minded readers. The most important of these is the one that people are probably most reluctant to address in this "postmodern" age, which has to do with the intellectual plausibility of the Buddhist worldview entailed and presumed within these discussions. As Hershock maintains, such a Buddhist perspective is important because it reveals the "meaningful" rather than merely the "factual" interrelatedness of all phenomena, as does Western science. Understanding that it was not the intention of the authors to engage in apologetics on behalf of Buddhist metaphysics, I would still contend that if they want their offerings to contribute to the discussions of Western philosophers, the contributors should have better addressed questions (uncomfortable as they may be) about the factuality of the kind of interrelatedness—i.e., Buddha nature, karma—they describe and take for granted in their chapters. It still matters, even in this postmodern age—and even among philosophers and theologians—whether the metaphysical claims that undergird their worldviews are reasonably accurate descriptors of the reality we encounter through our senses. If not, then it is hard to see the relevance of such discussions for "secular" academic philosophy.

Still, this volume makes important contributions to contemporary discussions about the relevance of traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices for the contemporary world. For this reason, it is likely to be of interest to scholars occupied with its subject matter and those who are interested in discovering radical alternatives to contemporary forms of Western, or, at least, Anglo-American philosophizing.

JIM DEITRICK
University of Central Arkansas