



Introduction

Why Ask about Madhyamaka and Ethics?

Jay L. Garfield and Graham Priest

This volume is a successor to our previous polygraph, *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy* (Cowherds 2011). Just as that volume was our collective attempt to understand what it is to take truth seriously in the context of the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness, this volume is our collective attempt to understand how to take ethics seriously in that metaphysical context. (Some interpret Madhyamaka as a *rejection* of metaphysics. Arguably, this is itself a metaphysical attitude. But at any rate, in what follows, when we refer to metaphysics, this is to be understood as including this possibility.) It is one thing to take the doctrine of the two truths seriously as providing an account of how the world *is*, and to assent to the claim that nothing is more than conventionally real. It is another to understand its consequences for an understanding of ethics and morality. The Cowherds have set themselves the tasks of working out those consequences in a way that does justice to the Madhyamaka tradition in the contemporary philosophical context.

Although Buddhism is manifestly concerned with ethics—with the character of a morally commendable life—it has become almost a commonplace to note how thin the canonical Buddhist literature is on explicit articulation of ethical *theory* or *metaethics*. Indeed, the scarcity of literature attending to the kind of ethical questions so often asked in the Western philosophical tradition in part explains