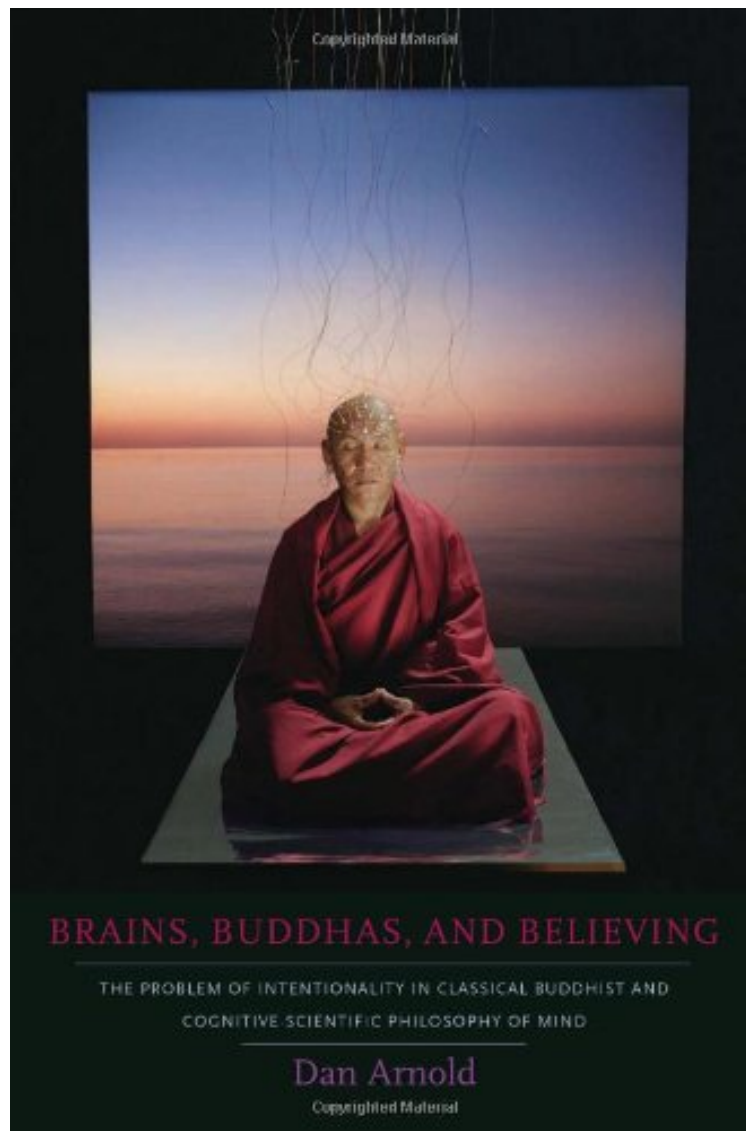


[Library ebook] Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind

Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind

Dan Arnold

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#3344732 in Books 2012-05-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.10 x 1.10 x 6.10l, 1.23 #File Name: 0231145462328 pages | File size: 78.Mb

Dan Arnold : Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Don't listen to the 1-star reviewing bloke
By Dan Kim
Condemning this truly refreshing comparative inquiry into a time-old question (vigorously renewed by the upsurge of modern neuroscience and philosophy of mind) by citing obscurantism is a hopelessly misguided gesture, especially since the prose, in my view, is clear as an instruction manual (doubly so considering most scholars are not so clear, in which case condemnation of obscurantism is at times justified. But then that rhetoric itself is a battle cry of the ignoramus, who is prone to deifying those wielding the technical jargon of the sciences while denying philosophy and the humanities of their art of linguistic idea-construction). Anyway rant is over, this is a worthy read for anyone interested in the confluence of subjects it deals with.
9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Dan Arnold's book is a brilliantly conceived, far-reaching effort to engage in cross-cultural and ...
By Dale Wright
In response to the first reviewer of this book, I want to confirm that *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing* is an extremely difficult and challenging book intended for philosophers whose analytical skills are highly refined. That is not, however, a legitimate reason to give any book a lowly one-star rating. To criticize a peach for not being a turnip is to miss the point altogether and to misrepresent what something is. Dan Arnold's book is a brilliantly conceived, far-reaching effort to engage in cross-cultural and cross-historical philosophy, and its success deeply impressive. Its author is one of very few thinkers today capable of confronting important historical texts both in their own historical contexts and in full view of contemporary insights on the same issues that were being addressed in the original. Arnold employs current Western discussions of intentionality to illuminate what might have been at stake in early Buddhist philosophical debates, and the results shed revealing light on both traditions. This is contemporary thinking at its very best and deserves our praise and admiration rather than one-star ratings.
5 of 30 people found the following review helpful. Incomprehensible to the average person
By arthur a haschak
I'm sure Dan Arnold is a very smart guy and if you are PHD in philosophy at an Ivy league college this is the book for you. However for the rest of us with just average minds this book is painfully difficult to understand. I was very excited about the book when I first got it but after reading the introduction and first chapter I found that I didn't understand more than one sentence in ten. I thought maybe it was just me so I skipped around the book reading different sections and reading the last chapter and it was all just as meaningless. Perhaps I should say it was so meaningful that it was incomprehensible. It is written in the language of philosophers with no explanation of terminology, no examples of processes and just plan hard to read. Philosophers tend to tie themselves up in knots using language but this ball of tangled string was not something I had the time or desire to untangle. This book will not help you to understand the workings of the mind nor will it give you any greater joy in life. For that you should read something more accessible like Eckhart Tolle or Lama Anagarika Govinda.

Premodern Buddhists are sometimes characterized as veritable "mind scientists" whose insights anticipate modern research on the brain and mind. Aiming to complicate this story, Dan Arnold confronts a significant obstacle to popular attempts at harmonizing classical Buddhist and modern scientific thought: since most Indian Buddhists held that the mental continuum is uninterrupted by death (its continuity is what Buddhists mean by "rebirth"), they would have no truck with the idea that everything about the mental can be explained in terms of brain events. Nevertheless, a predominant stream of Indian Buddhist thought, associated with the seventh-century thinker Dharmakirti, turns out to be vulnerable to arguments modern philosophers have leveled against physicalism. By characterizing the philosophical problems commonly faced by Dharmakirti and contemporary philosophers such as Jerry Fodor and Daniel Dennett, Arnold seeks to advance an understanding of both first-millennium Indian arguments and contemporary debates on the philosophy of mind. The issues center on what modern philosophers have called intentionality—the fact that the mind can be about (or represent or mean) other things. Tracing an account of intentionality through Kant, Wilfrid Sellars, and John McDowell, Arnold argues that intentionality cannot, in principle, be explained in causal terms. Elaborating some of Dharmakirti's central commitments (chiefly his apoha theory of meaning and his account of self-awareness), Arnold shows that despite his concern to refute physicalism, Dharmakirti's causal explanations of the mental mean that modern arguments from intentionality cut as much against his project as they do against physicalist philosophies of mind. This is evident in the arguments of some of Dharmakirti's contemporaneous Indian critics (proponents of the orthodox Brahmanical Mimamsa school as well as fellow Buddhists from the Madhyamaka school of thought), whose critiques exemplify the same logic as modern arguments from intentionality. Elaborating these various strands of thought, Arnold shows that seemingly arcane arguments among first-millennium Indian thinkers can illuminate matters still very much at the heart of contemporary philosophy.

Brains, Buddhas, and Believing is an important work of philosophy that offers arguments aimed simultaneously at classical Buddhist thinkers and at important contemporary physicalists. Numerous books have offered accounts of Buddhist tenets, but few have ventured sophisticated and serious critiques of those tenets. Arnold's book now joins [Paul] Griffiths' *On Being Mindless* among the key works that those who wish to defend Buddhist philosophy today must read to understand the scope of the challenges they face. (Charles Goodman, *Notre Dame Philosophical Studies*) Arnold, the author of the award-winning *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*, offers another erudite and carefully crafted contribution to the fields of Buddhist and comparative philosophy.... those engaged by the philosophical dimensions of

Buddhism-and-science discourse are in for a treat.(Laura Harrington, Choice)"[This] book is strong both philosophically and philologically, with Arnold's characteristic erudition, analytic rigor, interpretive sensitivity, and enthusiasm evident throughout.Brains, Buddhas, and Believing is clearly intended to provoke discussion, and the book's claims and arguments deserve such discussion - both within and across the multiple scholarly fields Arnold targets."(Richard Nance, H-Buddhism)About the AuthorDan Arnold is associate professor of philosophy of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he also received his Ph.D. His first book, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion*, won an American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion.