



# Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction

*By Jan Westerhoff*

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## **Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction** By Jan Westerhoff

The Indian philosopher Acharya Nagarjuna (c. 150-250 CE) was the founder of the Madhyamaka (Middle Path) school of Mahayana Buddhism and arguably the most influential Buddhist thinker after Buddha himself. Indeed, in the Tibetan and East Asian traditions, Nagarjuna is often referred to as the 'second Buddha.' His primary contribution to Buddhist thought lies in the further development of the concept of sunyata or 'emptiness.' For Nagarjuna, all phenomena are without any svabhava, literally 'own-nature' or 'self-nature', and thus without any underlying essence. In this book, Jan Westerhoff offers a systematic account of Nagarjuna's philosophical position. He reads Nagarjuna in his own philosophical context, but he does not hesitate to show that the issues of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy have at least family resemblances to issues in European philosophy.

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#### Review

"This is a marvelous book. It is the first analytical account of N=ag=arjuna's philosophical system as a whole, and is rich in philosophical insight and in scholarship. Westerhoff considers N=ag=arjuna's entire philosophical corpus, as well as a vast array of canonical Indian and Tibetan literature and modern scholarship. His account of N=ag=arjuna's thought and of the literature that has grown around it is philologically rigorous and philosophically astute. He sets N=ag=arjuna's concerns in the context of Indian Buddhist philosophy and makes effective use of the resources of Western philosophy to understand and to explicate his ideas. Essential reading for anyone interested in Buddhist philosophy."--Jay L Garfield, Doris Silbert Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Philosophy, Smith College, and author of *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: N=ag=arjuna's M?lamadhyamakak=arik=a* and *Empty Words*, translator of Tsong kha pa's *Ocean of Reasoning*.

#### About the Author

Jan Westerhoff is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Durham, United Kingdom.

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