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Response to Mary Bockover's Review of "Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism"

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Frank J. Hoffman Response to Mary Bockover's review of *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism*

The exposition in Professor Mary Bockover's review of my book, *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism* (*Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 2 (April 1989)), is accurate for chapters two through six. I am grateful for what is, in general, a skillful review. However, the first and second paragraphs of that review contain several glaring inaccuracies. Bockover says that I demonstrate that early Buddhism is a "rational, 'accurate and non-trivial' school of thought." But (a) my usage of the term "early Buddhism" refers to a set of texts (the five *Nikāyas*), not to a school (p. 1). In contrast to *Sarvāstivāda*, *Sautrāntika*, and others, early Buddhism is not a "school." (Some scholars would like to think that everything in the five *Nikāyas* is indisputably prior to all schools, but this, too, is a gratuitous assumption.) In addition, (b) my words "accurate and non-trivial" refer to the ideal *study* of early Buddhism rather than to early Buddhism itself (as pp. 1–2 make plain).

In Bockover's account of my method as set out in chapter 1, she says: "Going to the Pali texts is essential, but it is also methodologically necessary to look at certain commentaries, given the more specific goal of understanding how Early Buddhism can be taken to bear on pertinent issues of mind." However, (c) my point is that it is *not* methodologically necessary to consider the commentaries for the purposes of this study (p. 5). Finally, (d) the phrase, "internally consistent and linguistically precise" is not applied by me to early Buddhism overall, but to that language in the texts which merits this description (p. 7).

In sum, Professor Bockover has misunderstood my expressed attitude in this study towards the *Abhidhamma* commentaries, as well as my basic usage of the term "early Buddhism."

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