



Rethinking the Buddha: Early Buddhist Philosophy as Meditative Perception

Eviatar Shulman

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A cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy, the doctrine of the four noble truths maintains that life is replete with suffering, desire is the cause of suffering, nirvana is the end of suffering, and the way to nirvana is the eightfold noble path. Although the attribution of this seminal doctrine to the historical Buddha is ubiquitous, *Rethinking the Buddha* demonstrates through a careful examination of early Buddhist texts that he did not envision them in this way. Shulman traces the development of what we now call the four noble truths, which in fact originated as observations to be cultivated during deep meditation. The early texts reveal that other central Buddhist doctrines, such as dependent-origination and selflessness, similarly derived from meditative observations. This book challenges the conventional view that the Buddha's teachings represent universal themes of human existence, allowing for a fresh, compelling explanation of the Buddhist theory of liberation.

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