

ignorance of Ultimate Reality. Besides, McNabb and Baldwin argue that the God of classical theism could want His creatures to escape suffering in the way espoused by Buddhism.

Having offered a creative synthesis of classical theism and Buddhism, the last part of the volume entertains the question of whether the religious experience of classical theism and that of Buddhism is in fundamental tension or conflict. Chapter 6 first briefly surveys John Hick's Kantian religious pluralist hypothesis. Drawing on the work of Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, and William Lane Craig, the chapter provides reasons to reject Hick's view that all religious experience is mediated.

Chapter 7 offers an inclusive model for how classical theists could perceive the religious experiences reported by their Buddhist counterparts. Explicating the correspondence between emptiness and kenosis, the chapter argues that it is possible for both classical theists and Buddhists to have the same type of Buddhist experience of emptiness. Thus, the chapter further argues that it is possible for a classical theist to accept the fundamental metaphysical thesis of Buddhism and the thesis that ultimate reality has both personal and suprapersonal aspects. By integrating Buddhist views of two truths and the two sides of God, the chapter innovatively argues that the characteristic Buddhist religious experiences could map onto the 'far side' of God and the typical theistic religious experiences could map onto the 'near side' of God (120).

I propose two further points in favour of the general argument of the volume. First, double religious belonging has been practised for a long time in many parts of the world. In China, for instance, many people have identified themselves as Buddhist Daoist or Daoist Buddhist. They hold that Buddhism and Daoism are compatible and complementary, which suggests that they are sympathetic to the sort of inclusive approach to Buddhist metaphysics advocated by McNabb and Baldwin. And, second, Mahāyāna Buddhist notions of Buddha-nature, Dharmakaya, and One Mind show some affinity with theism in the broad sense. A discussion of the suprapersonal and personal implications of these key Mahāyāna Buddhist notions may further bridge the two traditions and inspire mutual learning.

Overall, this volume is an important contribution to the growing field of intercultural philosophy of religion. While focusing on mere Buddhism and classical theism, the volume also engages most of the major Buddhist traditions, theistic traditions, and the common objections to each, bringing fresh perspectives to bear on conceptual bridge-building between Buddhism and classical theism. The arguments of the volume raise many crucial questions, which will inspire Christian and Buddhist philosophers, practitioners, and all those interested in religious pluralism to continue the discussion and debate.

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## **Byung-Chul Han *The Philosophy of Zen Buddhism***

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Byung-Chul Han is an eminent South Korean-born philosopher and cultural theorist who has lived and taught in Germany for some forty years. Early training in metallurgy gave way to doctoral study of Heidegger. Thirty years and twenty books later, he is renowned as a leading critic of contemporary culture. Han explores the ‘signature afflictions’ of life in neoliberal societies. These include burnout, depression, exhaustion, tiredness, facile cultures of ‘positivity’ and – in a nod to Heidegger – a cultural mood of *Unheimlichkeit* (more a theme of his German-language books than those translated into English). Han’s recent books – such as 2015’s *The Burnout Society* and *The Transparency Society* – express this vision. In our late modern condition, we are ‘afflicted’ and in need of salvation. Such pessimism may explain Han’s preference for writing very short books. *Burnout Society* was only fifty pages and his latest, *The Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, seems lengthy by contrast at one hundred.

*The Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* is intended, explains its author, to be ‘comparative’. Eighteenth- to early twentieth-century German thinkers are in rapid-fire style ‘confronted’ with ‘insights of Zen’ as a way of ‘disclosing meaning’ (vii). The cast list is large and distinguished. Other than Plato and the mystic Meister Eckhart, there are appearances by Leibniz, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Han also appeals to Zen writing and arts, especially *haikus*. He acknowledges Zen’s ‘fundamental hostility to theory and discourse’ and happily avoids the sorts of hyperbolic claims, once made popular by D. T. Suzuki, about Zen as essentially ‘irrational’ (vii). The six chapters have pithy, poetic titles – such as ‘Emptiness’, ‘No one’, ‘Dwelling nowhere’ – that invoke Zen and Heideggerian lexica. The book ends with twenty pages of references.

The book does not have a systematic thesis. It is a staccato set of reflections on themes radiating from Zen and probed using Heidegger et al. In principle this suits Zen. Much of its literature relies on suggestive, allusive styles of discourse. In practice, though, it is difficult. The book’s ‘confrontations’ of Zen with German authors can be interesting but also too brief to get going. Ideas pile up, thinkers pop up, but there isn’t a broader narrative to help a reader to cope with them. Complex concepts from challenging thinkers situated in diverse contexts are suddenly introduced, discussed briefly, then we quickly move on (like the segues into Leibniz and Heidegger on pp. 8–9).

A scholar of Zen Buddhism will also worry that the lightning-fast style omits or obscures important points. The provocative ‘Kill the Buddha!’ claims, beloved of anarchist admirers of Zen, are neither explained nor contextualized (24). There is little on Zen ethics – on self-restraint and humility, say, and the abiding ethos of quietism of that tradition. This quietism seems integral to Zen comportment and a clear connection to Heidegger’s ideal of homelike dwelling in the world, of deep *Heimlichkeit* (59ff.). Moreover, readers may want more on claims that *haikus* are ‘free of any invocation or longing’ (9). Certain *haikus*, surely, do aspire to invoke a deep sense of the interconnectedness of phenomena. An experiential perspective of that sort seems integral to an enlightened Zen stance on the world.

Other remarks about the German cast members might also make one pause. ‘Heidegger holds onto God’, argues Han, ‘so his thinking cannot really be taken to be in the vicinity of Zen’ (10). But Heidegger is critical of ‘onto-theology’ and is not sympathetic to any familiar conception of God. Moreover, there are rich points of contact between Zen and Heidegger that go unexplored. The mystic Meister Eckhart gets praise for his rich concept of *Gelassenheit*, but the later Heidegger’s own use of it goes unmentioned (12). We are told that Zen ‘immerses itself in the everyday’ in a way that ‘lies wholly outside Heidegger’s phenomenology of the everyday’ (22). Yet insufficient detail is given here of Heidegger’s ‘phenomenology of the everyday’. Moreover, there is not enough on common themes: cultivating an appreciative sense of the richness of our everyday encounters with the world, say. Also, a half-sentence gloss of *Dasein* as the ‘ontological term for the human

being' is insufficiently detailed (22). Many discussions of Heidegger shift between the 'early' and 'later' writings without explanation of the differences between those periods. This exaggerates a sense of difference between Zen and Heidegger. The early Heidegger's concerns with authenticity-as-resoluteness are a poor fit for Zen, for sure, but later Heidegger's aspiration to 'dwell' quietly among things – surely a much better fit – barely plays a role in the later discussion (22). In a later chapter, we are told that 'things do not dwell', but this misses Heidegger's point that only human beings can dwell. Dwelling should be our proper way of experiencing and engaging with things (35ff.). A Zen Buddhist's receptive comportment is closer to what was intended by the later Heidegger than is intimated by Han.

The discussions of emptiness and Zen art offer many interesting and richly expressed insights. An extended passage on page 27 about Zen art in relation to emptiness and openness is engaging. Tellingly, these discussions are those without the cycling back and forth between Zen and other thinkers. Some remarks on Zen and experience of nature veer into hyperbole – 'the mountain *is* the river', 'the flower *is* also the bird' (28–29). Such talk obscures the delicately balanced Zen appreciation that the particular items of experience – *mountain, flower, bird* – are really unique nodes in a whole network of relations. Enlightened experience is holistic but preserves a sense of the uniqueness of things. Han ironically makes precisely this point in an aphoristic remark: 'Enlightened vision sees every being shining in its uniqueness' (32). The discussions of Zen-inspired art are often interesting. Han suggests the 'beauty' of a Noh mask is to be found in 'the peculiar way in which it *hovers* between expressions' (53). Is this so, or does its beauty lie in a *subtle definiteness* of expression, discernible only to true aficionados? In such cases there are interesting ideas for readers knowledgeable about the traditions. Likewise, the discussion of the 'erotic' character of Platonism – the abiding *longing* for the world of the Forms – is thoughtfully contrasted with the renunciatory 'fasting' of Zen and Daoism (66–67).

Those who know Zen and Heidegger et al. might find *The Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* insightful or illuminating. Others, one fears, may simply find it confusing. Perhaps this is an intended effect of its strategy of 'confrontation'. The gaps where careful exegesis ought to be could be filled by the readers' own thought and imagination. Han's remarks on Schopenhauer on compassion left out his point that moral virtue is incapable of fully releasing us from the 'will-to-live' (93–94). Here I wanted him to add that 'release' is only possible in Buddhist-inspired *renunciation* of will. Perhaps, here and elsewhere, inviting readers to supply relevant connections *is* the point. If so, the readers who will get most out of the book are those already familiar with Zen and Heidegger et al.

In practice this limits the readership to those with the requisite learning. Even for them, in practice there is the barrage of words, terms, and ideas that get run together. They include notoriously difficult concepts like *śūnyatā*, 'dwelling', 'fourfold', and 'presenting'. None are easy to handle and all need introduction and exegesis. There are also some non sequiturs: 'Comprehending an object in its entirety would mean fully taking possession of it' (51). Why think this is true, unless those terms are being used in some new, strange sense? Other remarks seem, at least to me, overblown ('*You die while dying*', 82).

*The Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* is a work that reflects impressively broad acquaintance with Zen and the German philosophical tradition. I think it may suit those already initiated into those different traditions. It is a book for *initiates*, not one offering *initiation*. For the initiated, the allusions and ideas scattered through Han's book might be intriguing. For the rest, the best place to start when exploring Zen philosophy will be elsewhere.