

“Western” Buddhism fit into this picture? As mentioned above, Emmanuel points out the difficulty of these kinds of narratives in his introduction. Second, how can we include “Buddhist philosophy on its own terms” into global philosophy and use it to transform the very foundations of academic philosophy itself? Third, how do exercises in comparative philosophy help us transform the way we do philosophy? How does comparing individual Buddhist and “Western” philosophers assist in developing a language and method for a global philosophy? Introducing Buddhist thinkers to readers familiar with the practice of European philosophy is a valuable and laudable project, but do comparative and global philosophy not invite us to turn the table and examine European and American philosophies using the language of Buddhist philosophy as well and to finally find a new terminology that allows us to conduct philosophy in a truly global way? Another question is whether authors engaging in comparative philosophy need to be able to access their main sources in the original language or to assess the strengths and weaknesses of translations. Last but not least, recent discussions have brought the overall demographics of the contributors to, and the proponents of, visions of comparative and global philosophy into focus. I think this is an important topic to keep in mind as we strive to globalize philosophy and make academia more inclusive.

Again, these questions are not unique to this volume but are inevitably raised by it. Given the framework of how we currently do philosophy, Emmanuel’s collection constitutes a worthwhile and formidable contribution. But I cannot help wondering what lessons we might learn from these insightful essays and the philosophers they engage to subvert our current framework of doing philosophy so that our field inches closer to the wonderful ideals Emmanuel outlines in his introduction.

*Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan.* By Levi McLaughlin. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019. xiv + 219 pages. Hardback: ISBN-13: 978-0-8248-7542-8.

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Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (lit. Value Creation Study Association; hereafter Soka Gakkai) is a lay Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhist organization which began as a small group of educators in the 1930s and became a highly influential religious movement in postwar Japan. It now claims over eight million households in Japan and close to two million members in one hundred ninety-two countries around the world under the organizational structure of Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

Levi McLaughlin leaves the SGI outside the scope of his monograph. Instead, he focuses on local Japanese Soka Gakkai communities and their members' grassroots-level experiences. *Soka Gakkai's Human Revolution* is the culmination of participant observation fieldwork that he carried out between 2000 and 2017, when he interviewed more than two hundred Soka Gakkai members across Japan. McLaughlin's keen attention to the details of members' everyday lives makes this book a fascinating inside look at the organization's internal operations. It gives us a detailed picture of what it is like to be a member of an actively proselytizing religious group in the twenty-first century.

The book's empathic yet critical ethnographic perspective is not its only distinguishing feature. McLaughlin also suggests a new methodological framework in which Soka Gakkai is framed as "a mimesis of the nation-state" (p. 19) with a full range of core elements, including a political party (Komeitō 公明党), a bureaucratic administration overseen by powerful presidents, a media empire, a comprehensive school system, massive cultural enterprises, and many other "nation-state-like appurtenances" (p. ix). McLaughlin also indicates that Soka Gakkai is not a unique case—he argues that most new religions exhibit "nation-state-like dimensions" (p. 27), and indicates that his approach might help model future inquiries into religion's place in the modern nation-state.

*Soka Gakkai's Human Revolution* contains six chapters. Chapter 1 provides basic information about the organization. This chapter details those daily Soka Gakkai practices that cohere with civic functions: study meetings (*zadankai* 座談会), activities with and within cultural centers, examinations, electioneering, soliciting subscriptions for the daily newspaper *Seikyō shinbun* 聖教新聞, and so on. In this chapter, McLaughlin also describes the tricolor flag which appears on the book's front cover, the organization's unique calendar and burgeoning textual canon, and many of Soka Gakkai's other nation-like features. He also gives a clear explanation of the mimetic nation-state metaphor which he employs to guide his discussion throughout the book.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed historical overview of Soka Gakkai's development from its founding as a small intellectual collective to a large and widespread religion. In this chapter, McLaughlin is particularly keen to demonstrate how the focus of Soka Gakkai shifted under the leadership of its first three presidents. The organization was, he argues, originally concerned with education and its relevance to imperial Japan under its founder and first president, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871–1944). Two crucial shifts occurred after World War II. First, second president Toda Jōsei 戸田城聖 (1900–1958) led the organization toward aggressive proselytizing activities (the Great March of Shakubuku 折伏) and deeper political engagement. Second, Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (1928–), the third and current president, has led the organization to focus on advancing the causes of world peace and a global humanist culture. This chapter also

covers the schism between Soka Gakkai and its monastic parent organization Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗, and post-schism changes to the former's religious doctrine and practices.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide close readings of the serialized novel *Ningen kakumei* 人間革命 (*The Human Revolution*) and its sequel, *Shin ningen kakumei* 新人間革命 (*The New Human Revolution*) written by Ikeda. These works are fictionalized biographical accounts of Toda's and Ikeda's lives and discipleship. McLaughlin claims that these works can be understood as the mimetic equivalent of national literature because they function as the organization's historical record and as a source of ethical instruction for adherents. Through close readings of these texts, McLaughlin explores their dramatic narratives, wields ethnographic accounts to reveal how the novels became canon, and explains how and why Soka Gakkai members treat them as scripture. He emphasizes that this canon is "still being written" (p. 73) and is "participatory" (p. 91) in nature; this leads him to suggest that the possibility that members might be immortalized as characters within a still-developing sacred text helps explain the organization's wide appeal.

Chapter 5 discusses Soka Gakkai's mimesis of academia. McLaughlin deftly illustrates its youth training systems and shows how generational changes in instruction, especially in the appointment examination, reflect broad changes in Japanese society. One issue that is briefly mentioned but deserves more attention is the large role played by a seemingly endless cycle of campaigns and memorial events in cultivating commitment to the organization (p. 133).

Perhaps the best chapter is chapter 6, in which McLaughlin provides a fresh and in-depth gendered analysis of Soka Gakkai. He presents the stories of female members as case studies that reveal the various roles women play, and are expected to play, in the organization's activities. He examines the organization's feminine ideal—a "good wife, wise mother, and foot soldier of conversion" (p. 137)—and explores how it demands that female members be active outside the home. He shows how some of these women, such as Mrs. Watanabe, lead happy and harmonious lives despite their busy schedules determined by Gakkai priorities. For instance, Mrs. Watanabe's home operates as both a private and an institutional space: the long dining room table in her home is "where meals, [her daughter's] homework, and Gakkai activities all take place" (p. 158). This challenging path, on which women must combine their private and public roles, sometimes leads women into conflict with their family members. For instance, Mrs. Hashimoto often argues with her son, who is "completely opposed to Buddhism" (p. 143). He criticizes the organization and his mother because she was "always out fighting for the Gakkai" (p. 144) instead of spending time raising him when he was a child. This chapter also reveals what happens when a Gakkai household falls apart through the case of Miho, a married woman who chants daily, reveres Ikeda Daisaku, but is not committed to Soka Gakkai activities. Miho was physically and psychologically dam-

aged by her father, who self-converted to Soka Gakkai after reading *The Human Revolution*. She also read the novel when she was a teenager and reread it after spending a decade struggling with her post-traumatic stress. As McLaughlin tells it, these “teachings can enable traumatized individuals to recover by placing themselves back within Soka Gakkai’s dramatic narrative” (p. 166), even when a Gakkai household collapses.

The book ends with a brief afterword, in which McLaughlin discusses Soka Gakkai’s future. Here, he considers how the new generation’s personal aspirations may not cohere with the level of self-sacrifice and institutional dedication that the organization demands of its members.

The book’s most important contribution may be its persuasive way of analyzing Soka Gakkai as the product of the “twin legacies” (p. 3) of lay Nichiren Buddhism and modern Euro-American humanism. As founder, Makiguchi committed himself to these two ideological traditions. His successors inherited these traditions and extended them significantly. Ikeda in particular conflated Nichiren Buddhism and modern Western literature, and shifted the organization’s main focus toward internationalism, culture, and comprehensive engagement with Euro-American art and humanism. McLaughlin successfully examines these twin legacies through his close reading of *The Human Revolution*.

It would have been nice to see McLaughlin pay more attention to the organization’s concept of human revolution—how the adherents interpret it, frame its relevance to their own lives, and so on. In a similar fashion, McLaughlin raises some interesting points in his discussion of the Soka Gakkai concept of transformation of karmic burdens (*shukumei tenkan* 宿命転換) in chapter 6, but this discussion is not as in-depth as it might have been. The ethnographic vignettes that McLaughlin skillfully weaves into his narrative show that the idea of individual empowerment by continually chanting *daimoku* 題目 and thereby transforming one’s karmic burdens has played an important role in grassroots-level understandings of human revolution. However, he does not discuss how the Soka Gakkai concept of *shukumei tenkan* is deeply connected with the idea of the nine consciousnesses (*kushiki* 九識), a principle which helps adherents understand the significance of chanting and clarifies their self-perception of their own buddha nature. I would have liked to have seen more and deeper reflections on these topics because such reflections would help us better understand how Soka Gakkai members conceive of human revolution.

Nevertheless, McLaughlin’s monograph provides a valuable and absorbing window into Soka Gakkai in Japan, a modern religion that previous studies have described either in harsh critiques or in hagiographies published by the organization itself. Thus, *Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution* fills an important gap in the literature, and thus represents a valuable contribution to the broader scholarship on modern religions in Japan as well as religion’s place in the modern nation-state.