

The Study of Buddhist Monastic Practice

Reflections on Robert Buswell's *The Zen Monastic Experience*

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SCHOLARLY WORKS ON Buddhist monasticism do not appear very often. Although studies have described the development of monastic life and practice in early India, South-east Asia, China and Japan, till now there has been no full-scale study of Korean Buddhist monasticism. Robert Buswell's book, *The Zen Monastic Experience* (hereafter ZME) fills this gap. His book also corrects the dominant impression that Zen is the exclusive possession of Japan, showing clearly that Zen (*Ch'an* in Chinese, *Sŏn* in Korean) has flowered in a quite different way in Korea.

Buswell's book has a further virtue. It is, I believe, the first scholarly book on monastic practice to try to span the methodological gap between the viewpoint of the scholarly observer and that of the monk practitioner. Buswell dropped out of college at nineteen to travel to Thailand, Hong Kong and then finally to Korea where he became a Zen (*Sŏn* in Korean) monk in the monastery of Songgwang-sa. He says that this book grew out of the five years 1974–79 which he spent there in Buddhist training. However, he could not have written this erudite tome, had he not left the monastery and started a second career. After his return to North America, he completed a doctorate in Buddhism and has since authored several works in Buddhism. The present book, on the Korean Zen monastery, however is the only one in which his personal experience as a monk is claimed to play a major part. At last, it seems, we have someone who has the unique double perspective of both authentic monk and competent scholar, both "insider" and "outsider," who will finally tell us the truth about what happens in Zen monastic practice.

* This article is, in part, a review of Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), xiii + 264 pp. ISBN 0-691-07407-0.

By spanning the gap between scholar and practitioner, Buswell hopes to dispel some widespread stereotypes.

Westerners exposed to Zen through English-language materials have been offered a picture of an iconoclastic religion that is bibliophobic, institutionally subversive, aesthetically sophisticated, devoted to manual labor, and intent solely on sudden enlightenment. Its most revered teachers are depicted as torching their sacred religious icons, bullying their students into enlightenment, rejecting the value of all the scriptures of Buddhism, and even denying the worth of Zen itself. (*From the book jacket*)

In the course of ZME, Buswell puts together a detailed picture of life in a Korean Sōn monastery so that at its final conclusion, he will challenge most of this picture.

In need of a reviewer for this book, the *Eastern Buddhist* asked me in particular to read this book because, I think, of my own background as an academic and as a monk. Reversing Buswell's order, I completed a Ph.D. before entering the Rinzai Zen monastery system in Japan for thirteen years. Though there is much contentious talk between scholars and practitioners these days, rather than experiencing a conflict, I have found scholarship and practice complementary. In fact, I wish I had had even greater academic training before entering the monastery since Japanese Zen *kōan* practice presupposes knowledge of classical Chinese and Japanese language. In the years since I have withdrawn from the monastery, I have discovered to my own surprise that having to teach Buddhism as an academic subject has made me better understand my years of monastic practice. Thus, in reading ZME, I have tried to evaluate whether Buswell has succeeded in the central task he set for himself, to give a picture of monastic life which is both accurate scholarship and yet informed by the experience of one who had trained as a monk. As traditional scholarship, the book is very good. Buswell works in all the required languages, meticulously examines a wide range of primary documents, and is familiar with current methodological issues. If there is a scholarly failing, it is that he is too descriptive and not sufficiently analytical or interpretive. But as a new departure from traditional scholarship, I do not think Buswell welds together the viewpoints of scholar and monk successfully. Ultimately there is a gap. That gap remains for methodological, or perhaps it is better to say, ideological reasons. To explain this requires a few more pages than the average book review.

Studies of Monastic Life

Over several decades, numerous studies have gradually filled in our understanding of the different forms of monastic life across the Buddhist spectrum. How did the first Buddhist monasteries arise and what did they look like? To answer this question, Professor Sukumar Dutt, in his first book *Early Buddhist Monachism*, showed how Buddhist saṅgha life originally developed within, and then distinguished itself from, the wandering bands of men devoted to ascetic practice, a cultural practice already existent at the time of the Buddha.¹ Professor Dutt continued his research all his life and thirty-eight years later produced *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, a greatly revised and expanded study which added valuable archaeological evidence.² Charles Prebish's translation of the precepts, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*,³ explained the connection between the precepts as text, as ritual and as norm of behavior in early saṅgha life.

Notable studies of monasticism in the Theravada tradition include Melford Spiro's singular study of monastic life in Burma undertaken in the 1960's in which the anthropologist applied Freudian theory to his work.⁴ Not surprisingly, in Spiro's account, the monastic impulse appears to be a form of neurosis. Jane Bunnag in *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman* provides a less sensational view. Her sociological study of monastic life in Thailand shows how ordination is a significant rite of passage for the entire male population in Thai culture.⁵

In Chinese Buddhism, Johannes Prip-Møller toured Chinese Buddhist monasteries in the years 1929-33 and compiled the fascinating record of Buddhist monastic life, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*.⁶ His descriptions and draw-

¹ Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism: 600 B.C.-100 B.C.* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1924).

² Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture* (1962; Reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988).

³ Charles Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimoksa Sūtras of the Mahasanghikas and the Mūlasarvastivādins* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975).

⁴ Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: The Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970).

⁵ Jane Bunnag, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman: A Study of Urban Monastic Organization in Central Thailand* (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

⁶ Johannes Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life* (1937; reprinted Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1982).

ings, his detailed plans of temple buildings and grounds, his photographs, even the enormous size and weight of his book help conjure up a world not yet modern, a world seemingly unaware of the struggle in which China was then engaged to enter the modern era intact. Holmes Welch, writing many years later in the 1960s, tried to reconstruct this world using, in addition to the usual scholarly documents, detailed interviews which he personally conducted with the many refugee monks who fled China to Hong Kong after the Communist takeover in 1949. Welch could not at that time actually visit the monasteries he described in *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*.⁷ Now, fifty years later, foreigners can actually step foot into Chinese Buddhist temples and Buddhism is flourishing again in China. A scholar visiting a Chinese monastery today feels a small thrill seeing living examples of the details of monastic life which Welch described.⁸ Further studies of Buddhist monastic life in China are still needed as we do not yet have a good account of the development of Chinese Buddhist monasteries through its long history and we now want to know how Buddhist monasticism has changed in the fifty years since the People's Republic was declared. A caveat: Chinese Buddhist monastic life should not be considered apart from Confucian ritual or Taoist monastic life because of the obvious overlap in ritual forms, patterns of social organization and even vocabulary.⁹ This is an area which has not yet received much scholarly attention.

In the Japanese tradition, D. T. Suzuki's early work *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* introduced the daily and annual schedules, the chants,

⁷ Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism: 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

⁸ For two months in the summer of 1994, I sat every morning with the novices in the new meditation hall of the temple and seminary of Nanputuo-su in Xiamen, Fujian Province. Just as Welch described, there was the same running around in circles, the same slapping of the floor with the long bamboo pole, the same monks in slouching meditation. New, however, was the job of one monk who controlled a bank of electric fans using a remote control device.

In a monastery on the outskirts of Putian where more than 200 monks reside, I saw the monks in the midst of rice harvest. The sight of long rows of tables in the dining room immediately reminded me of the photographs in Welch's book.

⁹ Peter Goullart's book *The Monastery of Jade Mountain* (London: John Murray, 1961) is the author's account of his stays in Taoist monasteries. The book gives no precise date but his visits must have occurred in the early part of this century since the author was part of the group of Russians who fled to China after the Russian Revolution. "Taoist Monastic Life" by Yoshitoyo Yoshioka in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, ed. by Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 229-252, is an account by a Japanese scholar of his study of the largest Taoist monastery in Peking during 1940-46.

the meal rituals, the work, the kōan practice of the Zen Buddhist monastery.¹⁰ However, Suzuki's extremely idealistic portrayal of Zen monks makes the reader wonder why there is need for Zen monks to engage in Buddhist practice at all, if they are as pure and selfless as he describes. Martin Collcutt's *Five Mountains* traces transmission of the Chinese Ch'an "Five Mountains" monastic system to Japan during the Kamakura period (1192–1338 C.E.) and its subsequent development there. Complete with lists of regulations, architectural plans and a thorough study of the historical and political context, it is the major scholarly resource on Japanese Zen monasticism in English.¹¹

Thus far, no systematic study of Tibetan Buddhist monastic life has appeared although one can get impressions from the several films and monk biographies now available. Professor George Dreyfus of Williams College is at work on a study of the curricular aspects of Tibetan monastic life. This will be a valuable contribution since he himself completed that curriculum as a monk.

Practitioners' Accounts

In addition to scholarly studies of monastic life, writings by practitioners also provide descriptions and explanations of monastic life. Monks themselves sometimes write autobiography. For example, Buswell includes a section from his own master Kusan sūnim's autobiography (64–68). In English, we have available Hakuin's dramatic autobiography which includes vivid accounts of the spiritual confusion of his youth, the hardship of his early practice, the great transformation he experienced through his enlightenment experiences, the joy and freedom he experienced thereafter.¹² Morinaga Sōkō Rōshi has written a short article, "My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk."¹³ In the Chinese tradition, the autobiography of one of the legendary monks of the modern period, Xu Yun who lived to be 120 years old, has been translated into English.¹⁴

Very different from these accounts is the cartoon book, *Unsui: A Diary of*

¹⁰ D. T. Suzuki, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (New York: Globe Press, n.d.) and "The Meditation Hall and the Ideals of the Monkish Discipline" in *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series* (London: Rider and Co., 1949), 314–462.

¹¹ Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹² *The Embossed Tea Kettle, or Orategama, and Other Works of Hakuin Zenji*. Translated by R. D. M. Shaw (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963).

¹³ Morinaga Sōkō, "My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk," trans. by Jim Stokes in Kenneth Kraft, ed., *Zen: Tradition and Transition: A Sourcebook by Contemporary Zen Masters and Scholars* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 13–29.

*Zen Monastic Life*¹⁵ written and illustrated by former Japanese Zen monks. Despite its light-hearted format, it accurately and nostalgically captures the detail of everyday monastic life. Unlike in autobiography, the personalities and individual concerns of the authors are totally absent.

Autobiography, of course, is a genre that lies between fact and fiction and needs to be read with a critical eye. Scholars tend to be especially sceptical of Buddhist biographical and autobiographical accounts since life stories of a Buddhist patriarch (beginning with the life of the Buddha) tend to be written according to a hagiographical formula.¹⁶

To social scientists, monks are not good informants. When Holmes Welch conducted his interviews with Chinese monks, he found that the monks' memories of events were less than accurate and their explanations were formalistic and idealized. Buswell also recounts how Lewis Lancaster found that Korean monks questioned about monastery life gave the pro forma answers to be expected from good monks. When one of our local graduate students who was researching Buddhist nuns in Fujian Province, China, asked why the women had become nuns, she was invariably told "In order to worship the Buddha." There is little factual information to be gained in listening to monks if all their utterances are such pious slogans.

There is another source of practitioner accounts, however: Westerners have entered monasteries in Asia as practitioners and have eagerly described their experiences. These accounts are often dismissed by scholars on a variety of grounds: the intrepid Westerner usually had little knowledge of Buddhism, did not speak the language of the monks, did not persist long enough to correct mistaken first impressions, and so on. And in any case, the very fact of being a practitioner seems to preclude being a competent witness or infor-

¹⁴ Xu Yun, *Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master Xu Yun*, Trans. by Charles Luk, ed. by Richard Hunn (Shaftesbury U.K. / Longmead: Element Books, 1988).

¹⁵ *Unsui: A Diary of Zen Monastic Life*, Drawings by Satō Giei, text by Eshin Nishimura, edited by Bardwell L. Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1973).

¹⁶ Scholars too can be seen as writing autobiography according to formula. Yanagida Seizan and Iriya Yoshitaka, the two most senior Zen scholars now living in Japan, have written life accounts whose features ironically resemble monk autobiographies. Both emphasize the spiritual malaise of their youth, the hardship of early studies, the transformation they experienced (this time through scholarship) and the satisfaction they feel at the end of their careers. Yanagida Seizan, "Passion for Zen," translated by Urs App, in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7 (1993-94) 1-29 and Iriya Yoshitaka, "Catching the Rhythm of Ch'an," interview with Kinugawa Kenji, translated by Urs App, *ibid.*, 31-43.

mant.¹⁷ But if one is interested not just in the institution but in how the practice life of a monastery affects a person's life, then these accounts by foreigners provide essential material, albeit all told from an individual point of view. Because he could speak the language, one of the earliest is one of the better, John Blofeld's *The Wheel of Life*,¹⁸ describing his experiences in Chinese and Tibetan temples and monasteries in the early part of this century. The author of *The Empty Mirror* Janwillem van de Wetering spoke little Japanese but was a skilful story-teller in English (he is now the successful author of a series of Zen mystery novels). Thus his book does not tell us much about the workings of the Zen monastery itself but it does give a very dramatic account of how he was drawn or driven down the path of Zen practice.¹⁹ Gary Snyder gives an account in "Spring Sesshin at Shōkokuji," which conveys the tension and power of *sesshin*.²⁰ A particularly moving account of the life of practice is *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind: The Zen Journal and Letters of Maura "Soshin" O'Halloran*, a young Irish woman who spent three years in Sōtō Zen training in Japan and then was tragically killed in a bus accident in Thailand.²¹ I will come back to this book later. It is true that the narrative accounts of practitioners fail to offer a systematic analysis of the sorts of topics that interest Buddhist scholars—sectarian interpretation of doctrine, monastic ritual, the officer structure, the work and meditation schedule, economic or political context. But the monastic institution qua institution, however, is specifically designed for personal practice and transformation (granted there can be other motives and causes behind the building of monasteries). So long as that is true, the practitioner's story is primary text.

¹⁷ Arthur F. Wright lists one of John Blofeld's books with the caution that Blofeld is "a convert and an enthusiast"; see Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford University Press 1959; reprinted New York: Atheneum, 1967), 134.

¹⁸ John Blofeld, *The Wheel of Life: The Autobiography of a Western Buddhist* (London: Rider, 1959; reprinted Boulder CO: Shambhala, 1972).

¹⁹ Janwillem van de Wetering, *The Empty Mirror: Experiences in a Japanese Zen Monastery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Several years ago, an American film company planned a movie version of this book. Predictably, the movie script showed little interest in meditation, gratuitously created a love interest and even manufactured a scene with child prostitutes in hanging cages.

²⁰ Gary Snyder, "Spring Sesshin at Shōkoku-ji" in *The World of Zen: An East-West Anthology*, ed. Nancy Wilson Ross (New York: Random House/Vintage, 1960) 323-330.

²¹ Maura O'Halloran, *Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind: The Zen Journal and Letters of Maura "Soshin" O'Halloran* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994).

Scholars and Practitioners

Although both scholars and practitioners pay lip service to the necessity of including the other's viewpoint for a complete understanding of Buddhist monastic practice, nevertheless both sides have a stake in showing that the other's viewpoint is false or misses the point.

Practitioners tend to dismiss scholarship and quote the verse ascribed to Bodhidharma which reads (in Buswell's translation), "[A] special transmission of Buddhism distinct from the teachings, which is not dependent on words or letters" (216), "to point directly to the human mind so that one may see the nature and achieve Buddhahood" (218). Many practitioners, taking this at face value, sincerely believe that intellectual study hinders true insight into Zen. This self-induced ignorance encourages them to misinterpret the history and teachings of their own tradition. This bias against scholarship can make it difficult for a Buddhist scholar to also be a practitioner. I remember one scholar telling me that he finally left his practice center because, although he was frequently asked to give lectures on Buddhism to the other members, the master always treated him as specially benighted because he was a scholar. The scholar: expert and idiot.

The way Zen practitioners use the notion of Zen enlightenment here resembles the way others in the history of religion have used the concept of religious experience. Rudolf Otto, for example, argued that fundamental to religious life was the experience of the holy, the numinous or the *mysterium tremendum*.²² The numinous was not definable, not rational, not explicable in concepts and not reducible to anything else. Although a great many words point to the numinous, one cannot explain it to others; one can only try to get others to experience it for themselves. Religious experience is thus ineffable and private. The corollary of this claim is that those who have not had the experience of the numinous do not know what religion is and are not qualified to pronounce upon it. The strategic effect of this claim was to draw a boundary line between Otto and the defenders of religion (Christianity in his case) on the one hand and their secular critics on the other. On one side of the boundary line were those who had experienced the numinous and therefore understood religion. On the other side were the secular critics who, because they had not had the private and ineffable experience of the numinous, were not qualified to speak about religion. Those of a secular and scientific disposition had previously criticized religion because its claims were not publicly testable and

²² Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Enquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, translated by John W. Harvey (Oxford UP, 1923).

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therefore not empirical. Otto turned this weakness into a strength: privacy and ineffability were made the very mark of the numinous and thus, by implication, the very fact that one demanded public testability indicated that one lacked the experience of the numinous, and thereby disqualified oneself from those who were qualified to speak on matters religious.²³ The parallel with Zen experience should be obvious.

Scholars too draw boundary lines. When a scholar explains the behavior of a religious community, for example, as implicit political protest, or as an attempt by a marginal group to gain social identity, or as the compensatory act of people with weak self-esteem creating a substitute family for themselves, the scholar thereby *de facto* implies that the political, or sociological, or psychological explanation is the real explanation and that the practitioner's own explanation is not. The presumption to offer the *real* explanation again defines a boundary on the other side of which is the unreal. And on that other side are often placed the first-person accounts which practitioners give from their own experience. Such accounts are thought to be naive and uninformed by historical or theoretical understanding. They are treated as data in the explanation of religion but not as themselves giving the "real" explanation. Scholars thus doubly irritate practitioners: not only do scholars lack "experience" but they also presume to know more about the religion than the practitioners themselves and treat practitioners patronizingly.

Thus both scholars and practitioners define themselves against the "other." Each claims to possess the truth by implying the other does not. This impasse recreates, at the methodological level, the religious conflict between believer and non-believer. That is why Buswell's attempt to span this methodological *cum* religious gap is so interesting.

In the "Introduction: Zen Monasticism and the Context of Belief," Buswell explains why Western scholars have misunderstood Zen training. Scholars of Zen have misread Zen texts as factual accounts of daily practice when really they were "mythology and hagiography, . . . an idealized paradigm of the Zen spiritual experience" (4-5). Also, scholars study Buddhism primarily through historical texts and ignore the "living tradition" (11). More generally, Buddhist scholarship in the West has depicted the Buddhist monastic tradition in quite negative terms: Weber portrayed the arhat as "apathetic, cool and aloof" (12) while Melford Spiro claimed the Buddhist monkhood in Burma was motivated by "dependency, narcissism, and emotional timidity" (12). Finally, Western scholars and ethnographic researchers inappropriately impose Western modes of analysis upon other cultures (14). Because interviews

²³ Wayne Proudfoot's book, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) is an extended discussion of this and related issues.

and questionnaires and the other typical tools of anthropology and sociology usually elicit quite standardized pro forma responses, Buswell says:

I would even go so far as to say that only by living with the monks *as a monk* does the researcher have much hope of gaining an accurate picture of the monk's lives and the motivations that underlie it. (16)

In the case of the Korean Son monastery, Buswell himself is the one researcher who meets the condition of having lived with the monks as a monk. We certainly do hope for an accurate picture.

Some anthropologists and literary critics have advocated new kinds of "dialogic" ethnographic writing in which the informants who are the object of study get to speak in their own voices (14). One would expect that Buswell would take advantage of the "dialogic" style in order to write about life with the monks "as a monk," but surprisingly he does not. Aside from the occasional anecdote, he eschews writing systematically in the first-person because, he says, the third-person style of writing is more appropriate to the "detached and aloof" monastic environment and because the "dialogic" style might produce the same separation between writer and subjects written that it was designed to avoid (16). Whether these are good justifications remains to be seen. Perhaps he was motivated by the humility proper to a monk, but the fact remains that after claiming that one can understand monastic life only by living it as a monk, Buswell then eliminates that first-person perspective. What is the point of, and what is the effect of, privileging a first-person point of view and then erasing it?

Historical and Physical Setting

The first three chapters of ZME lay the historical and physical setting. The first chapter, "Buddhism in Contemporary Korea," presents a quick overview of how present-day Buddhism in Korea reached its present condition. The greater part deals with the modern period, in particular, with the dramatic schism that arose between the celibate and married monkhood. Korean Buddhist intellectuals in the early twentieth century first argued without success that celibacy for monks was no longer appropriate in the new secular age, but the argument became pointless when the Japanese annexed Korea in 1910 and imposed marriage among monks. Married monks dominated the monastic system during the Japanese occupation of Korea, but with the defeat of Japan in 1945, the celibate monks reasserted themselves. The two sides organized—married monks became the T'aego order, celibate monks became the Chogye order—and fought bitterly for control of monasteries. Eventually the celibate monks prevailed; in 1961 the Supreme Court formally awarded the celibate

monks title to most of the main monasteries. By this time, however, the Buddhists found themselves outflanked by a vigorous Christianity, the religion of modernization, democracy and economic progress. In addition, the new Korean government's postwar land reforms cut away Buddhist monastic land holdings. Though much reduced from its former size, the dominant Chogye order, now representative of most of Korean Buddhism, as of 1986 claimed control of 1628 monasteries with 7,708 monks and 4,153 nuns supervised through a network of twenty-five head monasteries, of which four are particularly large monastic centers (34–36). One of these is Songgwang-sa where Buswell trained.

Chapter Three “Songgwang-sa and Master Kusan” contains interesting physical descriptions of everything from the layout plan of the Songgwang-sa—roughly like an ocean-seal or dharma-realm chart meant to symbolize the interrelationship of all existence (51–52)—down to the cleverly engineered heating system of the *ondol* floors. It also recounts the history of Songgwang-sa and gives a short account of Chinul (1158–1210), the monk who created a distinctly Korean style of Sōn and made Songgwang-sa the center of Korean Buddhism (60). Through its history, Songgwang-sa experienced cycles of destruction and reconstruction. It was last destroyed in the Korean War and then reconstructed on a large scale by Buswell's own master, Kusan sūnim (1908–1983). The chapter ends with an excerpt from Kusan's autobiography, an account of his own enlightenment experience (64–68).

Chapter Two “Daily and Annual Schedules,” starts to reveal the problem strains in this text. It sets up the first instance of what will become a more general problem: Zen texts describe monastic practice but Buswell experienced something different in Korea—why the difference? Zen texts emphasize ritual and ceremony; even the official Korean Sōn monastery calendar, both daily and annual, is also full of detailed ritual and ceremony. Yet, says Buswell, such ritual and ceremony were viewed by meditation monks at Songgwang-sa as “occasional nuisances” (41) rather than as part of training. In fact, meditation monks rarely attended such ritual and even then only as silent witnesses. Why the difference between the official text and the actual practice? He suggests that Zen texts and modern ethnographic research emphasize ritual simply because it is easier to write about clearly defined ritual than about open-ended daily life (41). In the roundabout language of the scholar, he certainly implies that scholarly literature and Zen texts have constructed a mistaken stereotype. “The apparent emphasis on ceremonies and rituals that we find in the normative texts of the Zen tradition may again be deceptive” (41).

Buswell does not consider the option which to me seems the most obvious: that the practice he encountered at Songgwang-sa in 1974–79, though an authentic form of Zen practice, is just different from practices—also

authentic—found in other times and other places. In other times, Korean Son was probably much more ritually oriented. Buswell himself speculates that in the past, ritual and ceremony were formerly more central to monastic practice but persecution of Buddhism during the Choson Dynasty (1392–1910) forced monks into the less public practices of meditation and scholarship. The present schedule of rituals, now performed mostly pro forma, is a vestige of that older style of practice. As an example of Zen practice in other places, one can these days view an easily obtained video, *Principles and Practices of Zen*²⁴ which records current Rinzai Zen monastic discipline in Japan. This video makes quite clear that in a Japanese Rinzai Zen monastery, not only are ritual and ceremony indeed important parts of Zen training, but also that all aspects of monastic life—sleeping, eating, running, chewing one’s food, reaching for a teacup—are ritualized and choreographed. Should we say that only the de-ritualized practice of Songgwang-sa in 1974–79 is authentic and that emphasis on ceremony and ritual “in the normative texts of the Zen tradition [is] deceptive”? Why cannot we say that Buddhist practice in another time, place or culture takes a different but equally authentic form? Why, in the first place, are we engaged in this polemic of trying to show that someone else’s ideas about Buddhism are false?

Monks and Their Lives

In Chapter Four “A Monk’s Early Career,” Buswell describes the many motivations which can lead a person to become ordained, the six-month waiting period of the postulant still contemplating ordination, the novice ordination, the final bhikṣu ordination three years later, the postordination career of the monk which may include seminary, and the monk’s custom of wandering for three months between retreats. There is even an account of monk’s clothing, a topic which deserves more attention in scholarly literature.²⁵ Buswell’s account of ordination practices in the Korean Buddhist tradition complements the accounts of ordination in Chinese Buddhism found in the earlier accounts by Holmes Welch and Prip-Møller. His contribution to the field here makes clear that we now need a similar study of ordination practices in Japan both before and after the Meiji reforms which initiated the married priesthood across all Buddhist sects. (Ordination, “leaving home,” to enter a temple loses its meaning if one’s home is already temple.)

²⁴ A translation into English of two documentary programs originally made by the Japanese national television network NHK and available in the United States from Films for the Humanities Inc., Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053, USA.

²⁵ Several full studies of the Buddhist robe exist in Japanese, for example. But so far, none has appeared in English.

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Among motivations, Buswell mentions that some monks came from the army seeking to recapture the camaraderie and discipline of the military; others more philosophically inclined had turned to Buddhism after reading literature like Herman Hesse's *Siddartha*; and some came because their families had pledged a son to the monastery (70-75). But he does not mention what I, and any other practitioner, would think the most obvious motivation: the desire for enlightenment and the wish to commit oneself to a life of compassionate action. Unlike academic scholars who make no value judgement about the different kinds of motives for becoming a monk, practitioners know that some motives are less worthy than others. Buswell attaches an Appendix, "Principal Chants Used in Korean Monasteries" (229-242). In these chants, the monks daily vow to attain enlightenment as quickly as possible and engage in the work of the bodhisattva. These are the motives of a true monk and I am quite sure that there were many monks who came to Songgwang-sa moved by the sincere desire for enlightenment. In ZME, about the closest we come to the consciousness of the true monk is the story Buswell recounts of Hyobong sū-nim (1886-1966), who in his lay life as a judge had sentenced a man to death. Hyobong was so affected by his decision that he walked out of his office and became a monk, eventually rising to become one of the preeminent Sōn masters of his generation (91-92). Also Buswell mentions that in junior high school, he himself had begun to read philosophy bothered by the question, "How can I live without exploiting other people?" (72). That too is the sort of question that drives a true monk. There must have been many such true monks at Songgwang-sa but their point of view is not expressed. Here is a concrete example of the conflict between the scholar's viewpoint and the monk's viewpoint. Buswell, the scholar, ignores the motivation which Buswell, the monk, ought to recognize as the only authentic motive for Buddhist practice.

In Chapter Five "The Support Division" Buswell is at pains to show that the Korean Sōn monastery does not consist entirely of monks whose lives are dedicated to meditation. Officer monks often must forego meditation practice in order to carry out their responsibilities. For this they deserve recognition: they also serve who stand and administer. The catalogue of officers and their duties will not surprise anyone who has read Holmes Welch. The chapter also details the many kinds of monastery work, everything from making *kimch'i* to battling forest fires.

Chapter Six "Relations with the Laity" tells how Songgwang-sa has successfully responded to the pressures of modernization and industrialization. The contrast with the Japanese case is most instructive. In Japan, with the shift of both population and economy from rural to urban areas, rural temples since Meiji have lost their *danka* temple supporters; more and more sons of priest refuse to follow their fathers in what will most likely be an economically demean-

ing career. Some Japanese temples have managed to survive by creating other means of income—by becoming kindergartens and old folks homes, restaurants and tourist sites, foci of new rituals such as the *mizuko kuyō* abortion rituals, and so on. But most temples are atrophying, the old priest desperately seeking a successor and dreading the time when the *danka* will no longer be able to support the temple. Songgwang-sa in Korea, however, has successfully developed the Puril Hoe, a nationwide support group of lay people who identify themselves specifically with Songgwang-sa and undertake to support it materially. This well-organized system not only supports Songgwang-sa materially, but it also serves as a channel through which the Buddhist temple can carry the dharma to the lay population. Buswell speculates that Songgwang-sa modeled the Puril Hoe on Korean Christian lay fellowship groups.

Kōan Practice

Chapter Seven “The Practice of Zen Meditation in Korea” first explains the “critical phrase” *hwadu* 話頭 (*watō* in Japanese) technique of Korean *kōan* practice. A Zen *kōan* text like the *Pi-yen lu* (*Hekigan-roku* in Japanese) sections a single *kōan* into many parts, each of which is in turn handled like a *kōan*. To each part, one or more capping phrases is attached and this phrase too can be handled as if it were an independent *kōan*. Rinzai Zen in Japan still continues this tradition of handling the *kōan* from a closer and closer microscopic distance causing the apparently single *kōan* to differentiate into more and more *skandha*-like sub-parts. By contrast, the Korean tradition takes a more distant view and sees the different parts of a *kōan* coalescing into a single *hwadu*, its essential theme, principal topic or “critical phrase” (150). Single-minded concentration upon the *hwadu* of the *kōan* eventually leads the student to “that nondual state before discrimination arises in the mind” (152). “Once the student has realized this nondual state of mind, there is no need any longer to try to *explain* why Chao-chou said ‘no’; rather he simply *knows* it intuitively for himself” (152). The latter half of this chapter describes Kusan sūnim’s particular training method, which was to arouse the great doubt through concentration on the question, “What is it?,” which is the *hwadu* of all *hwadu*, so to speak. In Buswell’s explanation, the *hwadu* question has no real answer in itself for all *hwadu*, all *kōan*, are “simply expedient means of generating the sensation of doubt” (158). Constantly pushed by the great doubt, the student constantly probes the *hwadu* without cease until “Suddenly one morning he shouts ‘Ha!’ and heaven and earth are overturned” (159).

Since Buswell is expounding Kusan, it is unclear which elements of this account of *kōan* practice to attribute to whom. But there is a problem. These two pictures—the *kōan* as simply an expedient means without content or

rationale of its own, and the enlightenment experience as the attainment of an intuitive, nondiscriminative, nondual state of mind—go hand in hand. The problem with this and all such similar explanations of how a *kōan* works is that they reinstate the duality which the *kōan* is supposed to overcome. Any distinction—between intellect and intuition, between discriminative and non-discriminative, between expedient means and attained enlightenment, between dual and nondual states of mind—is itself a dualism. To reside in the “nondual state before discrimination arises” is just as dualistic as to reside in the dual state after discrimination arises. The initial enlightenment experience which attains such a nondual state of mind merely trades one side of a dualism (duality) for the other (nonduality). Nonduality at one level reinstates duality at a higher level. A thoroughgoing nonduality must go further and overcome the dualism between duality and nonduality itself. This is a standard problem encountered at later stages in Zen practice in what is called “the practice after enlightenment,” the context in which the phrase, “Meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha” takes on real significance. The experience of nonduality (“Meet the Buddha”) may at first be a great insight but all practitioners are wont to reify that experience into something special, creating another object of attachment. Thus, practitioners are urged to go further and see the non-duality of enlightenment and ignorance (“Kill the Buddha”). That is, in philosophical terms, emptiness itself must be shown to be empty. One cannot expect Buswell to present all of Kusan sūnim’s teaching in just a very few pages; Buswell himself has written extensively on *hwadu* practice elsewhere.²⁶ And, of course, any *conceptual* account of *kōan* inevitably reinstates dualism since concepts are used dualistically. But in this book, this depiction of *kōan* practice will not satisfy advanced practitioners.²⁷

²⁶ Robert E. Buswell, Jr. “The ‘Short-cut Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism” in Peter E. Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977), 321–77; “Chinul’s Systematization of Chinese Meditative Techniques in Korean Son Buddhism,” in Peter E. Gregory, ed., *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 199–242.

²⁷ Scholarship too does not accept this stereotype. The very idea of a nondiscriminative state of consciousness has been under attack for several years. See Steven T. Katz in “Language, Epistemology and Mysticism” in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 22–74, and “The ‘Conservative’ Character of Mystical Experience” in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), 3–60. See also the collection Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992). For the opposing side, see Robert K. C. Forman, ed., *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (New York: Oxford

Chapter Eight "Training in the Meditation Hall" is by far the longest chapter in the book. It combines Buswell's meticulous scholarship—textual analysis of documents containing monastic regulations, detailed descriptive accounts of almost every facet of contemporary regulations and practices—with several personal anecdotes, often amusing. Despite its length, this chapter covers much familiar ground to those who have read Holmes Welch, Martin Collcutt or D. T. Suzuki on Zen monastic training. It presents Korean variations on such themes as the schedule of the meditation hall, the monk's first entrance into the hall, its decorum (especially the use of the stick), the regulations regarding illness, bathing, and so on. Noteworthy is a long section on ascetic practices such as fasting and burning off the fingers. Unique to Korean Sōn are the monks' practice of wandering the countryside for three months between retreats and the ideal of withdrawing to hermitage in one's mature years to engage in solitary practice. Chapter Nine "The Officers of the Meditation Compound" is really an extension of the previous chapter describing the functions of the Sōn master and the officers who work under him.

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine together make clear that although both Korean Sōn and Japanese Zen use the *kōan* in meditation, they do not have the same culture of instruction. The Korean Sōn master lectures only once every two weeks, giving it seems, a set speech in the florid language of Mahāyāna sutras, followed by more practical advice on meditation. Monks rarely have face-to-face interviews with the Master since they work on a single *hwadu* which they retain unchanged for many years. By contrast, the Japanese rōshi lectures four days in ten (one pattern is to lecture on every day with a 1, 3, 6 or 8 in the date); monks meet the rōshi almost daily outside *sesshin*, and several times a day during *sesshin*, as they move through the numerous *kōan* of the Rinzai *kōan* curriculum. Japanese Rinzai monks thus develop a special individual relationship with a particular rōshi, partly because of their frequent interaction with him, partly because each rōshi teaches a particular version of the

UP, 1990); Robert K. C. Forman, "Mystical Knowledge: Knowledge by Identity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXI, 4 (Winter 1993): 705–738. For a criticism directed specifically at Zen, see Dale S. Wright, "Rethinking Transcendence: The Role of Language in Zen Experience," *Philosophy East and West* 42:1 (Jan. 1992), 113–138.

Unfortunately, most of the literature on *kōan* practice is introductory and very little deals with advanced practice. The best account of the entire *kōan* curriculum in the Japanese Rinzai tradition is still Miura Isshū Rōshi's lectures, "Kōan Study in Rinzai Zen" in Miura Isshū and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust: The History of the Kōan and Kōan Study in Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen* (Kyoto: The First Zen Institute of America, 1966), 33–76. Also see Shimano Eido, "Zen Koans," in Kenneth Kraft, ed., *Zen: Tradition and Transition* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 70–87.

kōan curriculum not shared by other teachers outside his lineage. Accordingly, Japanese Rinzai monks do not wander from master to master as do Korean monks but remain with a single rōshi as long as possible. And when they do have to change masters, e.g., if the rōshi should die, monks try to continue with another rōshi in the same lineage so that they can get advanced standing for their previous *kōan* work instead of having to start all over again from Mu and “Sound of One Hand.”

Zen Stereotypes: Boundaries Again

In the “Conclusion: Toward a Reappraisal of Zen Religious Experience,” Buswell claims, “The vision of Zen presented in much Western scholarship distorts the quality of Zen religious experience as it is lived by its own adherents” (223). He challenges “the shibboleths concerning the nature of the Zen religious experience found in Western writing” (217). Chief among these shibboleths is the famous four-line verse which the Zen schools uses to define itself: “[A] special transmission of Buddhism distinct from the teachings, which is not dependent on words or letters” (216), “to point directly to the human mind so that one may see the nature and achieve Buddhahood” (218). The problem is that “[t]aking the statement at face value, many Western writers depict Zen Buddhism as radically bibliophobic and advocate that doctrinal understanding has no place in Zen training” (217). Then influenced by writers like William James who was fascinated by transformative religious experience, Western scholars have viewed Zen as “focused purely on the goal of enlightenment” (218). In contrast to this image, Buswell finds that in actual practice, Korean Sōn monks are far from bibliophobic; most read classical Chinese and value doctrinal understanding (218). And in actual practice, many Korean Sōn monks spend little time in meditation. This leads Buswell to say that “a disciplined life, not the transformative experience of enlightenment, is actually most crucial to the religion” (219).

This entire issue of what is image and what is actual is quite a bit more complex than even Buswell presents. First of all, not just Westerners but Zen monks themselves sometimes take “no words and letters” at face value. Zen rōshi, at least in Japan, point out in lecture to their monks that “no words and letters” is not an excuse for not studying. In fact, for older monks (but not for younger monks), there is lots of study. Buswell will be pleased to learn, for example, that in the Japanese Rinzai tradition, Zen monks at advanced stages of practice submit written assignments to the rōshi who dutifully reads them while writing margin comments with a red pen. (Such scholarly study of a *kōan*, however, also shows that a *kōan* has a rational content of its own; it is not merely a skilful means whose only use is to generate doubt.) Nevertheless

despite the element of intellectual and literary activity, it still remains true that the *kōan* cannot be realized through doctrinal study but must be realized in one's own insight. The explanation of a *kōan* in words is possible only because the Zen monk has experienced a prior "no words and letters" insight. Thus younger monks are urged to put their entire energy into *zazen*, and are scolded if they should be seen reading or writing or even holding a pen in public. What most people, Western or Asian, find hard to comprehend is that *both* "no word and letters" *and* intellectual study are necessary for the final realization of the *kōan*. It is not accurate to depict this situation, as Buswell does, as a Westerner's misconception and it is wrong to suggest that because monks are doctrinally learned, the image of "no words and letters" is false. Or, perhaps this is another point where Korean and Japanese practices differ.

Buswell goes on to say that the images of the Zen monastery as a place of ritual, of manual labor, of aesthetic sophistication, of an institution devoted to enlightenment are similarly stereotypes. His general position is open to the criticism I pointed out earlier. Perhaps Korean Sōn monasteries do not give importance to ritual, or engage in manual labor, or encourage aesthetic discipline, or take enlightenment as a goal. But does this fact establish that the received image of Zen is a mistaken stereotype? Is the Korean Sōn monastery as Buswell experienced it in 1974–79 the standard by which to determine what is authentic and what is stereotype in Zen?

His final conclusion is that in monastic life, many, perhaps most, Korean Sōn monks are seeking a life of discipline and not the experience of enlightenment. Taken as an empirical statement of the kind offered by social scientists who avoid value judgements, this is most certainly true. Many—perhaps most—who wear the monk's robes do not seek enlightenment. But some few do. If you are a scholar, then the many monks who do not seek enlightenment are statistically representative of the monastery. If you are a practitioner, then the few monks who do seek enlightenment are representative of the true purpose of the monastery. The fact that Buswell emphasizes the former shows that despite his claim to have lived as a monk, he is not writing this book with any recognition of a monk's concerns. Although he makes a personal appearance when recounting some illustrative anecdote, ultimately the questions he considers important in ZME are the scholars' questions, and the responses he gives are the scholars' responses.

ZME was published in 1992. Since then, Zen scholarship has become increasingly critical of practice. In recent years, D. T. Suzuki's depiction of Zen *satori* has been coming under attack. As noted in footnote 27 above, the recent scholarship on mystical experience has tended to argue that there cannot be a noncognitive, nonconceptual experience of the kind that Suzuki seemed to be describing. In addition, there is now the argument that the ideologi-

cal function of Suzuki's picture of Zen experience was to promote a thinly disguised Japanese nationalism.²⁸ The most extreme form of this criticism implies that there is no experience which is the referent of *satori*, *kenshō* or "enlightenment," and that "to be enlightened" is not to have had an experience but to have attained a ritually defined status.²⁹ Such criticism implies that those people presently engaged in Buddhist meditation seeking enlightenment are doing the Zen version of waiting for Santa Claus to come down the chimney. If these criticisms are correct, then whatever it is that present-day practitioners are doing, it is not real Buddhism but a projection of their own fantasies. What the real Buddhism is, is left undefined in this criticism but, by implication, it seems it is that Buddhism which is recorded in premodern primary texts. This way of strategically redefining boundaries means that only Buddhist scholars who can read those premodern primary texts will be considered qualified to speak about Buddhism; practitioners are disqualified.³⁰ Strategically speaking, this argument position is the counterpart to those who claim that enlightened practitioners and only enlightened practitioners have any right to speak about Zen; scholars are disqualified. ZME was published in 1992 before this recent scholarship became current. Buswell is not a part of it. But in claiming that Korean monks are not interested in enlightenment but in a life of discipline, he is faintly drawing a line in the sand marking the place where other later scholars will draw a heavier boundary line whose effect is more and more to disqualify practitioners from speaking about Buddhism.

Scholarship and Practice

Perhaps I am being naive, but I believe that scholarship is more than the study of statements as ideological maneuvering for positions of power. I still believe

²⁸ See the essays by Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions* 33, no. 1 (August 1993): 1-43, and "Zen and the Way of the New Religions," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 3-4 (September 1995): 417-458. The volume edited by James Heisig and John Maraldo, *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School & the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) deals with the same issues in connection with the Kyoto School of Japanese philosophy.

²⁹ Robert H. Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42 (1995): 228-283.

³⁰ The recent volume, *Curators of the Buddha*, edited by Donald Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) explicitly examines the process by which the Buddhist studies scholar redefines the subject matter of Buddhist studies so that the native teacher of Buddhism (from whom the scholar learned Buddhism) no longer has authority over the subject matter.

it useful to study statements for their truth and not merely for their political effect. If scholars and practitioners could set aside ideological competition, then there is real work to be done together. Buswell states at the beginning of ZME:

I have come to believe that Buddhism weaves doctrine, praxis, and lifeway together into an intricate tapestry. In this tapestry, the daily rituals of Buddhism reticulate with its teachings and its practices, each aspect intimately interconnected with each other. The regimens of monastic life—indeed, the entire cultural context of Buddhist training—therefore interface directly doctrine and practice. The monks, after all, come to realize their enlightenment through the daily routine of the monastery. (9)

Buswell includes a sample of Zen doctrine, Kusan sūnim's lectures delivered in "formulaic" (183) imagery.

The oranges of Cheju Island and the apples of Taegu: do you know where they fall? One pill of golden cinnabar [the elixir of the Taoist Perfected] swallows all the dharma realms and exudes many marvelous manifestations. (183)

With one blow of our fists we knock down Sumeru's peak,
And build the palace of Maitreya.
Kāśyapa's offering bowl is not a difficult matter.
We make offerings to all within the great sea of the ten directions.
(184)

Just what does such doctrinal teaching mean? How do doctrine and practice interface directly? How does meditation and work, cooking and begging, walking barefoot in the winter and sitting with mosquitoes in the summer, interface directly with "One pill of golden cinnabar swallows all the dharma realms"? One might have thought that one of the central purposes of ZME is to show how day by day practice gets conceptualized as Buddhist doctrine and how Buddhist doctrine gets actualized in daily practice. But despite the wealth of detailed description of monastery activities, by the end of ZME, we still do not know how and where doctrine and practice meet. I believe that we will never be able to show that interface so long as monasticism is studied only from the point of view of the scholar and the understanding of the practitioner is omitted.

One of the *keisaku* sticks in the monastery of Daitokuji in Kyoto bore the calligraphy *Ichi ryūbei shumisen no gotoshi*, "A single grain of rice is as Mount Sumeru." Mount Sumeru, in the ancient Indian cosmology, was the

enormous mountain that stood at the center of the universe; the sun and moon revolved around its peak and all the continents of material existence floated around its base. A tiny grain of rice is said to be equivalent to huge Mount Sumeru. In metaphorical language, this phrase equates the very small with the very great. It is an instance of the nondual logic of Mahāyāna, expressed in the general principle, form is emptiness and emptiness is form. This nonduality underlies the doctrinal statements Kusan sūnim makes in lectures (“One pill of golden cinnabar . . . swallows all the dharma realms”), and it is nonduality which is cultivated in *kōan* practice (“Two hands clap and there is a sound. What is the sound of one hand?” is a demand for nonduality beyond duality.) But this inscription was written on a *keisaku* hanging in the kitchen of the monastery. In the practice context of the Zen kitchen, this phrase takes on a practical significance for it admonishes a monk never to waste even a single grain of rice, to treat even a single grain with utmost importance. The practitioner sees the connection between the nonduality of doctrine and the nonduality of kitchen practice. Maura O’Halloran writes in her journal:

It’s a nuisance to pick up the sesame seeds one by one when everyone has finished eating *goma senbei* [sesame crackers], to eat the potato peels that the others don’t like, to chase and rescue even a single grain of rice. That the single grain of rice is all rice is all things, is nothing, is valueless, that there is no value and not-value great or small; only is.³¹

Here is the direct interface between nonduality as doctrine and nonduality as kitchen practice.

Practitioners are indeed innocent and naive. To Maura O’Halloran, it seemed that there were so many Japanese people who had experienced *kenshō*, and even if they had not, at least they were unfailingly kind. But she also writes:

In a sense, though not in his sense, Descartes was right—I think therefore I am. It is the reflexive thinking that creates the isolated subject.³²

One can be naive about the ways of the world and yet see with explicit clarity that *cogito ergo sum* can be turned on its head to express Buddhist *anātman*. Where did she get that insight? She writes:

The first night I kept thinking all beings are Buddha, I could feel

³¹ O’Halloran, *ibid.*, 117.

³² *ibid.*, 233.

it. . . . The 2nd night I kept thinking no separation. The next day, pulling weeds, they were part of me but different, like the back and front of my hand are different but not separate. Taking a break, I drank a cup of coffee. It was like no other cup of coffee. It was me, like sucking my own blood, but more intense, as its familiarity was shocking.³³

The language which Maura O'Halloran uses here are expressions of her experience of the nonduality of self and other, of subject and object. Many Zen phrases and words express the same nonduality. "Walking down the street, every face I see is me." "I look at the flower and the flower looks at me." "The ass looks at the well; the well looks at the ass." If one drink of a cup of coffee is sucking one's own blood, then it is not far to the one pill of golden cinabar that swallows all the dharma realms.

In the context of the academic study of religions, this phrase "A grain of rice is as Mount Sumeru," can also be taken as expressing the this-worldly attitude of thrift, though expressed in otherworldly language. Thrift as a religious practice brings together religion and economics, the pairing exploited by Weber with great insight. Protestantism may or may not have provided workers under early capitalism with a compulsive self-denying work ethic, but there is no denying that in religious discipline, individual practitioners and practice communities can learn attitudes and habits which are practically useful in the economy of this-world. Thrift is also a practice cultivated by many of the New Religions of Japan, as Winston Davis has pointed out.³⁴ What goes for thrift also goes for the whole range of attitudes and habits cultivated in religious practice—sincerity, perseverance, compassion, optimism, attention to tiny detail, not stopping until the job is complete, etc. If we could understand the fit between this repertoire of personal and social attitudes and habits acquired through Buddhist practice and the social and political economy around Buddhist communities, perhaps then we might have more useful answer to questions like "Why is Buddhism irrelevant to modern urban society?"

The monastery ideally cultivates in each monk an entire repertoire of spontaneous behavior patterns, emotional reactions, nondual insight, intellectual understanding, world-view and trained will. To understand how Mahāyāna

³³ *ibid.*, 127.

³⁴ Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), esp. Ch. 4, "The Weber Thesis and the Economic Development of Japan," 113-151.

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doctrine gets transformed into the practices of an individual's daily life and how those practices affect behavior in the economic, political and social life of the wider culture will require the combined efforts of practitioner and scholar. Robert Buswell's book, though full of scholarly erudition, packed with descriptive detail, and embellished by personal experience, has not accomplished that task for us. But in attempting to straddle the divide between scholar and practitioner, he has surely advanced us in the right direction.