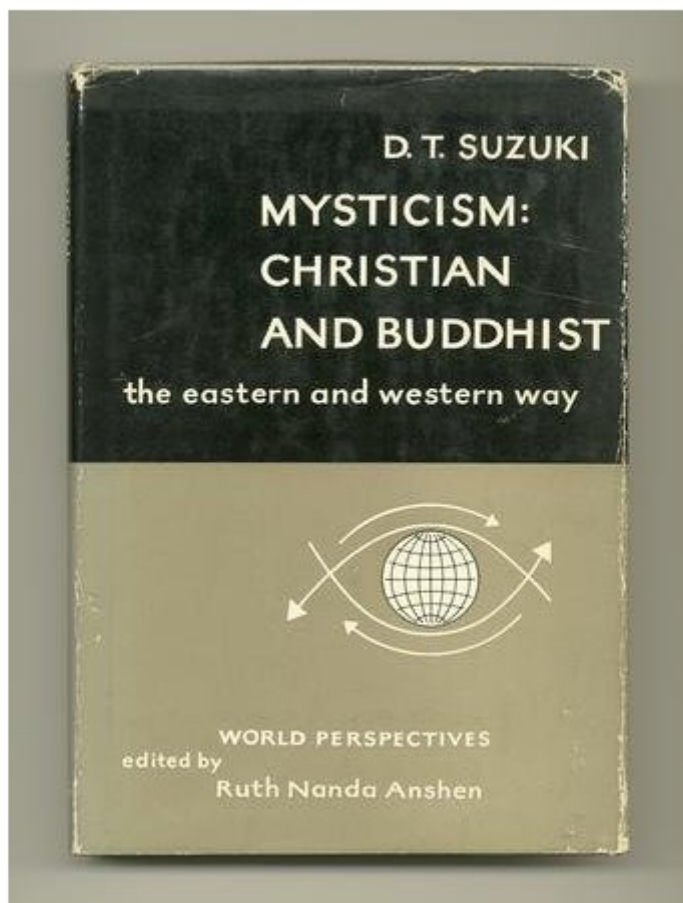


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Mysticism: Christian And Buddhist



Synopsis

D. T. Suzuki performs a careful and insightful comparison of the Christian mysticism of Meister Eckhart, with core Buddhist teachings. Christian mysticism and Buddhist reflect the same Universal experience of union with God.

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Customer Reviews

I found this to be a really interesting book. I like most everything that Suzuki wrote. Meister Eckhart is the primary Christian quoted by Suzuki, and his mysticism is quite similar to that espoused by Zen Buddhists. Suzuki was one of the first to point out that all mystical traditions point to the same unitive reality, and this book focuses specifically on what these similarities consist in. His finest work is probably The Zen Theory of No-Mind, followed by Zen and Japanese Culture. Suzuki was the true pioneer who introduced Western readers to Zen, and much that he said is still quite original and penetrating.

I believe that you are able to come to a clearer understanding of mysticism when D.T Suzuki compares Christian and Buddhist mysticism. You find that there are many more similarities than differences between these two philosophies. I believe the central theme uniting both these

philosophies is that there is only one "Reality". Meister Eckhart, the great Christian Mystic, states that there is an "Absolute" which he calls the "Absolute Nothingness". In contrast, "God", "relativity", is "something". This is expressed in Buddhist terms as "Trisna", the basis of all existence. Trisna is even before existence and is not yet a "what". Trisna can be called the pure will. Trisna with a small t may be described as "nature" or the manifestation of "Trisna". In section II of the book under Appendices-section VIII,IX,X, the book becomes somewhat difficult to understand as proper definitions are not provided for Buddhist terms; however, notwithstanding the foregoing, the author gives a cogent and compelling synthesis of these two great schools of thought and offers insight into the difficult subject of mysticism. I would highly recommend this book.

Suzuki takes the reader through a contrast and comparison of the "mystical" experience and the commonalities between Christian and Buddhist awakening and/or the mystical spiritual experience.

This is an excellent overview on a complex often misunderstood topic.

*NOTE This book is almost *identically* titled to 2 other seemingly similar works by this author published by other companies under the same title. This one, with a yellowish background and black type is the 2002 by Dover -- Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. I own the 2002 publication and mentioned it to someone who asked me if it was "that new one?". I answered no, but it seems that the books may be very similar indeed. The 2002 book (isbn 0486425088 and is 214 pages NOT 240 as stated on) includes weighty ponderances of Meister Eckhart's writings and Buddhist texts and precepts. Perhaps D.T. Suzuki has evolved some further elucidation? or perhaps different publishing houses each molded the text to their liking? I don't know but there you have some info that might help your purchase.

D.T. Suzuki was in his time a well known scholar on Buddhism, especially the Japanese Zen variety, and was later appointed a Professor of Buddhist Philosophy. In 1948 Suzuki studied some sermons of Meister Eckhart and wrote this little book, pointing out what he felt were the close connections between the Meister's ideas and those of Zen Buddhism. Having studied both Christian and Buddhist spiritual traditions myself quite closely, I think Suzuki has tried but failed to find common ground between these two great world religions. Nowhere in Eckhart's sermons or tracts for example, does Eckhart conceive of God as Buddhist 'emptiness' or 'shunyata.' While it is true Eckhart felt God was One, and this One was above being itself, Eckhart also believed this One was

a Trinity and contained a super-richness or overflowing of being, rather than a void which mysteriously and transcendentally is the source of all other things. The Buddhist ideas which Suzuki refers to have far more in common with those of Oriental mysticism, such as the Tao of Lao Tzu or the Brahman of the Upanishads. Eckhart's idea is closer to Gregory of Nyssa or Dionysius, who saw God as infinite, perfectly One, incomprehensible but also a Trinity. However many of Eckhart's ideas do have parallels in Buddhism, especially those on 'detachment', imageless contemplation (something shared with Evagrius Ponticus, a 4th century Eastern Christian monk) and the ground of the soul, which may be compared with the Buddhist notion of the inherent 'Buddha nature' shared by all beings. Yet, I think Eckhart is best considered what he really was, a Catholic mystic who saw himself as an Orthodox Christian through and through, rather than a Zen master in disguise.

The great scholar of Zen Buddhism does the kind of careful and insightful work he is known for, here comparing the Christian mysticism of Meister Eckhart, (a 13th and 14th century Christian mystic) with core Buddhist teachings. The insights of a Christian mystic and a Buddhist differ in words, but reflect the same underlying experience of union with the Ineffable Suchness that is God or Tathata. I value this book deeply for its subject matter. Be advised, this is not light reading or "beach reading" as Eckhart can be somewhat impenetrable at times. But Suzuki is very adept at interpreting him and gets to the essentials, making it a book to be ingested slowly, meditatively.

Suzuki basically has written this book, which primarily about Buddhism rather than Christianity, as a way of drawing connections between the different mysticisms present in Christian tradition and how some of these mysticisms share common traits and insights with Buddhism. Not surprisingly, the mystic whom he chooses to do this with is almost exclusively Meister Eckhart. This is, thus, no comparative history but a Buddhist slant on Eckhart's thought and spirituality. It is a slant that might make some Christians uncomfortable but it is interesting nonetheless. This serves a window through which he continues to discuss Buddhist mysticism at large in the rest of the book.

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