

NIETZSCHE AND ZEN



SELF-OVERCOMING WITHOUT A SELF



André van der Braak

Nietzsche and Zen

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In memory of Niek Pierson (1953–2007)

Preface

For a good understanding of this study on Nietzsche and Zen, it is important to first elucidate three crucial characteristics. First, it is situated within the field of comparative philosophy and follows a cross-cultural hermeneutical approach. Second, it uses a conception of philosophy that is non-propositional: it views philosophy as a form of *áskēsis*. Third, it situates itself within the discussion of whether Nietzsche can be seen as a soteriological thinker.

COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY

As globalization spreads ever farther across the planet and dialogue between global cultures increases, it is becoming more and more apparent that cultural exchange has been at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition itself. The Greek tradition, long considered the very root of the Western philosophical tradition, has Asian origins. Many Western thinkers from the modern era have invoked non-Western philosophy (often in a skewed way) to provide an alternative standpoint from which to criticize Western institutions and practices. In the eighteenth century, for example, Voltaire hailed Confucianism as a truly rational religion, free of the superstition that could be found in Christianity. In the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer and others idealized the mystical philosophy of the Indian Upanishads and Buddhism.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the academic discipline of comparative philosophy has taken root. In his history of this discipline, J. J. Clarke distinguishes three historical phases, which can be loosely connected to three methodological approaches.¹ The first approach was the universalist one. The universalists attempted a grand synthesis between East and West. They grossly schematized and simplified the various traditions: the West was rationalistic and materialist, the East was intuitive and spiritual. This universalizing approach was characterized by a “will to truth”: a will to find the one overarching perspective under which all philosophical traditions can be subsumed. The second approach, comparativism in a more restricted sense, has been more modest. It has aimed to compare the views of Western and non-Western philosophers, mapping out similarities and differences. The comparativists abandoned the ambition of a great synthesis and more modestly compared doctrines from individual thinkers.

Over the past decennia, cross-cultural hermeneutical philosophy has gained influence as a third approach. The thinker most often associated with philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), was a well-known proponent of intercultural dialogue and a major source of inspiration for the study of cross-cultural philosophy in the West. Philosophical hermeneutics stresses the importance of interpreting philosophers within their temporal and cultural context and of keeping in mind that every interpretation constitutes another recontextualization. The aim is not to arrive at some static “objective truth” about reality, but to expand the range of possible interpretations, and in this way to contribute to the ongoing conversation of global philosophy. Philosophical hermeneutics recognizes a plurality of different traditions and stresses that one’s own tradition needs to be continuously both reinterpreted and strengthened in light of its exposure to what is foreign to it.

Cross-cultural hermeneutics aims not so much at comparison per se, but at deconstructing fixed perspectives and opening up a plurality of interpretations, in order to enhance the fullness of our understanding. Within this approach, it can even be misleading to speak in essentialist terms about

“Western” or “Chinese” or “Japanese” philosophy, as if these were clearly demarcated philosophical traditions with their own unique characteristics (which are then considered to be the essence of Western, Chinese, or Japanese thought). From the cross-cultural hermeneutical point of view, there is just one philosophy, which has been practiced at various times and places around the world. From this perspective, comparing Nietzsche and Zen is not fundamentally different from comparing Nietzsche to Plato. Such comparisons can assist in the emerging global conversation of philosophy and can be mutually enlightening. Philosophical positions and approaches that are minor in one tradition can be dominant in another.²

This study’s methodological approach can be characterized as “doing intercultural philosophy the Nietzschean way.” In offering a critical interplay of opposing perspectives, a “hermeneutics of difference” is established, leading to a multiplication and proliferation of horizons.³ In the global context of interculturality today, hermeneutics must undergo a fundamental change, according to some. Since every hermeneutics has its own culturally sedimented roots and cannot claim a universal acceptance unconditionally, the fundamental principle of intercultural hermeneutics is the view that an interpretation is always determined in terms of culture. Therefore, intercultural hermeneutical attempts to always recognize and respect the “foreign” element.⁴ Fostering a cross-cultural dialogue between Western and Asian philosophical traditions can help to provide the kind of regeneration that these traditions are in dire need of or, as Froese puts it, “cultural dialogue provides a possibility for reinfusing our world with meaning and preventing the kind of stagnation of ideas that leads us to assume that the cosmos itself is meaningless.”⁵

The French sinologist Francois Jullien stresses that, through the detour of non-Western philosophies, we can regain access to lost or underemphasized dimensions of our own Western tradition:

However taken it may be with surpassing itself, Western philosophy never questions itself except from within. However radical it may wish to be, this criticism is always relatively integrated, remaining within the limits of an implicit understanding from which certain positions may emerge. There is always that on the basis of which we question ourselves, which, for that very reason, we cannot question.⁶

To step back from the Western tradition and criticize it from without can allow us to assume a more truly global position. Cross-cultural philosophy is, therefore, especially valuable and helpful in undercutting assumptions about one’s own tradition.

Jay Garfield has noted that comparative philosophy has too often functioned as an arm of Orientalism, where Western scholars appropriate the expertise on non-Western traditions. Moreover,

comparative philosophy often imports hermeneutical and philosophical methods to the study of non-Western texts that succeed in distorting or simply missing the significance of those texts or the meaningfulness of their claims and arguments in the contexts of their home cultures. In addition it has been noted that the interpretative lens privileged in most comparative philosophy is distinctly Western [. . .] the Western texts, views, and arguments are typically taken as the standards against which non-Western texts are compared.⁷

Garfield goes on to suggest that a more promising approach would perhaps be to elucidate forms of Western thought through the lens of non-Western ways of thinking. In one of his essays, Garfield retells the development of Western Idealism from the perspective of the Indian Cittāmatra school. Methodologically this study is indebted to his approach.

NON-PROPOSITIONAL PHILOSOPHY AS WAY-SEEKING RATHER THAN

TRUTH-SEEKING

One such assumption within Western philosophy is that philosophy is a propositional discipline that aims at the establishment of true doctrines. But such a conception of philosophy has not been dominant in all philosophical traditions. In the Chinese tradition, the notion of philosophy as aiming at the establishment of true doctrines (a Truth-seeking paradigm) has historically been superseded by the notion of philosophy as a way of life (a Way-seeking paradigm).

Such a Way-seeking paradigm can also be found in Buddhism. It is a religious and philosophical tradition that focuses more on practice than on doctrine. In religious studies, a distinction is made between orthodoxic religious traditions that put an emphasis on correct belief in theological and philosophical doctrines, and orthopraxic ones that emphasize correct practice.⁹ Buddhism stresses orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. It is therefore characterized by a kind of spiritual pragmatism that is intensified in Zen. As the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dōgen wrote, “a Buddhist should neither argue superiority or inferiority of doctrines, but only be mindful of authenticity and inauthenticity of practice.”¹⁰

As Pierre Hadot has argued, in ancient Western philosophy such a Way-seeking paradigm was common. Philosophy was practiced by the ancients as a form of *askēsis*—a practice of continual self-overcoming and self-transformation. With the rise of Christianity in the West, philosophy became an orthodoxy, a quest for correct doctrine. Philosophy was no longer practiced as a way of life because the Christian way of life was already established as the only true one. Philosophy became a theoretic practice aimed at the justification of the revealed truths of Christianity.¹¹ In the Chinese tradition, the reverse occurred: Truth-seeking philosophies (such as the Mohists for example) were relegated to the countercultural margins of the tradition.

Hadot writes about *askēsis* as a means to “let ourselves be changed, in our point of view, attitudes, and convictions. This means that we must dialogue with ourselves, and hence we must do battle with ourselves.”¹² *Askēsis* makes use of techniques of the self that are as much bodily as intellectual. The exercises were designed to bring about “a conversion which turns our active life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it.”¹³ It should not be confused with asceticism. Michel Foucault comments on the difference between asceticism and *askēsis*: “Asceticism as the renunciation of pleasure has bad connotations. But the *askēsis* is something else: it’s the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make the self appear that happily one never attains.”¹⁴

Richard Rorty writes about such a different kind of philosophy as *edifying philosophy*, a term he borrows from Gadamer. In such a philosophy, the will to truth is replaced with the will to edification. Philosophy should be seen as a conversation beyond the exchange of views:

The attempt to edify (ourselves or others) may consist in the hermeneutic activity of making connections between our own culture and some exotic culture or historical period, or between our own discipline and another discipline which seems to pursue incommensurable aims in an incommensurable vocabulary. [. . .] [This] activity is [. . .] edifying without being constructive—at least if “constructive” means the sort of cooperation in the accomplishment of research programs which takes place in normal discourse. For edifying discourse is *supposed* to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings.¹⁵

This study is situated within Rorty’s notion of philosophy as edifying philosophy. However, this does not mean that it leaves the search for truth entirely behind:

The contrast between the desire for edification and the desire for truth is, for Gadamer, not an expression of a tension which

needs to be resolved or compromised. If there is a conflict, it is between the Platonic-Aristotelian view that the only way to be edified is to know what is out there (to reflect the facts accurately—to realize our essence by knowing essences) and the view that the quest for truth is just one among many ways in which we might be edified.¹⁶

The Truth-seeking paradigm is also an assumption that Nietzsche rejects and tries to undo by means of his revaluation of all values. Nietzsche's philosophy is not propositional in the sense of aiming at discovering objective truths about reality. In opposition to the modern Western conception of what means to practice philosophy, Nietzsche aims to revive the Greek way of philosophizing as a way of life. Nietzsche's *askēsis*, however, seems in some points to go beyond the *askēsis* that Hadot describes. Some have claimed that his Dionysian philosophy in fact constitutes a soteriology, a teaching of religious liberation.

NIETZSCHE AS A SOTERIOLOGICAL THINKER

From 1890 to 1920 Nietzsche was often interpreted as a religious thinker. In her book on Nietzsche Lou Salome represented him as such.¹⁷ Several varieties of Nietzschean religion blossomed.¹⁸ The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who had been an admirer of the early Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*, complained about this phenomenon in his book *The Nietzsche Cult*.¹⁹ Since the Second World War, however, the secular Nietzsche interpretation has dominated the field of Nietzsche studies.

The past years have seen a renewed interest in Nietzsche as a religious thinker. But the nature of his religious thought has been interpreted in widely divergent ways. Tyler Roberts has described Nietzsche as a “postreligious thinker.” In 2000, two collections of essays, *Nietzsche and the Gods* and *Nietzsche and the Divine*, appeared. Julian Young sees Nietzsche as a religious reformer who never let go of his youthful ideal of a Dionysian communitarianism. Alistair Kee describes Nietzsche's religious thought as a clash between his own Dionysianism and Christianity.²⁰

Does Nietzsche preach a soteriological doctrine? Gilles Fraser thinks he does: he has interpreted Nietzsche's thought as an anti-Christian soteriology.²¹ Bruce Benson, on the other hand, interprets his Dionysian piety as an anti-soteriology.²² He notes that the Pietism that Nietzsche grew up with emphasized a childlike trust in God rather than doctrinal correctness. It approached Christianity as a practice of faith, not as an agreement with a set of propositions. Nietzsche calls his own Dionysian philosophy “the highest of all possible faiths,” which he baptizes “with the name of Dionysus” (TI 49).²³ In chapter 8 I will examine this question further.

The debate in the literature whether Nietzsche's thought can be considered a soteriology or not is perhaps clouded by the fact that the English word *soteriology* implies a *soter*, a savior. In the Buddhist tradition, the equivalent to soteriology is conceptualized as a path to liberation (*mārga*). Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello suggest, in their introduction to a collection of essays on the Buddhist *mārga*, that this concept might prove useful in cross-cultural studies, and that

it may have scope and theoretical potential sufficient to allow us eventually to speak—with due caution and proper nuance—of Christian *marga*, Jewish *marga*, Islamic *mārga*, and so forth. Perhaps the study of Buddhism may be enlisted to illumine those other traditions in ways in which their own categories alone do not [. . .] because we think that [. . .] the concept of “the path” has been given in Buddhism an explication more sustained, comprehensive, critical, and sophisticated than that provided by any other single religious tradition.²⁴

As Buswell and Gimello argue, the term *mārga* is somewhat analogous to “soteriology” but without

the theistic connotations. Perhaps, therefore, it could be fruitful to speak of a Nietzschean *mārga*, Nietzschean path of self-overcoming.²⁵ The concept of *mārga* is also suited for approaching the question of Nietzsche's soteriology because it helps to move the attention from doctrines and approaches to wisdom, from Nietzsche's philosophical views to the way he philosophizes, his practice of revaluation of all values, and his philosophical *áskēsis*.

A dialogue with Zen can be very helpful in such an undertaking. Zen is a prime example of a non-propositional philosophical tradition, full of deconstruction and iconoclasm. One of the reasons that Zen might arguably be the most suitable Buddhist tradition to clarify Nietzsche's soteriology is that it rejects the standard Buddhist soteriology; it could be called a skeptical soteriology or even an anti-soteriology.²⁶ Although Zen emphasizes practice and experience, seemingly endorsing the *mārga* paradigm, its rhetoric is very strongly anti-*mārga*. Zen rejects gradualist practice aimed at a goal. Therefore, the path and the goal become one. Zen's strong anti-*mārga* rhetoric, combined with its strong emphasis on the necessity of practice and continual self-overcoming, also runs through Nietzsche's work. We could therefore speak of a Nietzschean *mārga*—keeping in mind that this would be as much a non-path as the Zen *mārga*. This study aims to elucidate such a non-path through the dialogue between Nietzsche and various representatives of the Zen tradition.

NOTES

1. J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 119-29.
2. J. N. Hoffman, *Wahrheit, Perspektive, Interpretation. Nietzsche und die philosophische Hermeneutik* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 252–306, comments that Nietzsche has long been excluded from the cosmos of Gadamer's hermeneutics. This may be because his theory of interpretation, his understanding of language, and his uncovering of power relations behind interpretations all oppose Gadamer's hermeneutical universalism and optimism. Where Gadamer speaks of the importance of prejudices for interpretation and understanding, Nietzsche speaks from different perspectives and valuations.
3. Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xi describes a hermeneutics of difference as a form of deconstructive dialogue, where dialogical exchange respects otherness beyond assimilation. See also Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism*, 39-62.
4. R.A. Mall, *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen: Interkulturelle Philosophie, eine neue Orientierung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).
5. Katrin Froese, *Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Daoist Thought: Crossing Paths In-Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 5.
6. Francois Jullien, *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 371.
7. Jay. L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152.
8. Garfield, *Empty Words*, 152–69.
9. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 191–97.
10. Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō, Bendōwa*. Quoted in: Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*:

Reflection on His View of Zen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 22.

11. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy As a Way of Life* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995).

12. Hadot, *Philosophy As a Way of Life*, 91.

13. Hadot, *Philosophy As a Way of Life*, 83.

14. Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989), 309.

15. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 360.

16. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 360.

17. Lou Salome, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (Vienna: Carl Konegen, 1894).

18. See Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany: 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

19. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Der Nietzsche-Kultus* (Leipzig: O.R. Reisland, 1897).

20. André F. M. van der Braak, *Hoe men wordt, wat men is. Zelfvervolmaking, zelfoverwinning en zelfvergetelheid bij Nietzsche* (Budapest: Damon, 2004); Bruce Ellis Benson, *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008); Gilles Fräser, *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief* (London: Routledge, 2002); Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche and the Gods* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Richard Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche's Postmoralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jim Urpeth and John Lippitt, eds., *Nietzsche and the Divine* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000); Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Tyler Roberts, *Contesting the Spirit: Nietzsche, Affirmation, Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Alistair Kee, *Nietzsche Against the Crucified* (London: Trinity Press International, 1999). See the overview of some of these works by Michael Skowron, "Rezeptionen: Neuerscheinungen zu Nietzsches Philosophie der Religion und der Religion seiner Philosophie," in *Nietzsche-Studien* 36 (2007), 425–39.

21. Fräser, *Redeeming Nietzsche*; see already Ulrich Willers, *Friedrich Nietzsches anti-christliche Christologie. Eine theologische Rekonstruktion* (Wien: Tyrolia Verlag, 1988).

22. Benson, *Pious Nietzsche*.

23. Nietzsche's friend Franz Overbeck wrote an essay in which he diagnosed the problem of the theology of his time as being too concerned with theory and not enough with practice. Nietzsche most likely agreed. In *The Antichrist* 39, Nietzsche speaks about Christianity as not a faith, but a doing—another state of being (AC 39). Nietzsche is against Christianity as an orthodoxy.

24. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 2.

25. Buswell and Gimello, *Paths to Liberation*, 2f.

26. Benson characterizes Nietzsche's religious thought as an anti-soteriology (Benson, *Pious Nietzsche*, 9).

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My own philosophical *askēsis* has included the practice of Buddhist meditation since 1981. Thanks to my Dutch Zen teachers Nico Tydeman and Ton Lathouwers for their continuous support and encouragement. Teaching Zen (especially Dōgen) to the students of Zen Center Amsterdam has provided much inspiration for writing this book. Thanks to Henny van der Veere, lecturer in Japanese Religions at Leiden University, for his continuous deconstruction of Zen myths during several Classical Chinese reading groups.

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Nietzsche citations refer to the following editions of Nietzsche's writings:

Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe (KSA). Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1967–1977.

Sämtliche Briefe, Kritische Studienausgabe (KSB). Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1986.

Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (KGW). Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1967–.

Letters will be cited by KSB volume followed by page number. All translations are my own, except those from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo*, where I have used the following English translations:

Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody. Translated by Graham Parkes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Ecce Homo: How To Become What You Are. Translated by Duncan Large. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Unpublished texts are cited as KSA, followed by the numbering of Nietzsche's notebooks.

Even though I have worked mostly from the German text, I shall use the following English titles and abbreviations to indicate Nietzsche's published writings. Numbers following the abbreviations refer to sections, rather than pages.

AC	The Antichrist
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
CW	The Case of Wagner
D	Daybreak
DW	The Dionysian World-view
EH	Ecce Homo
GM	On the Genealogy of Morality
HAH	Human, All Too Human
JS	The Joyous Science
NCW	Nietzsche Contra Wagner
PPP	The Pre-Platonic Philosophers
PTAG	Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks
SE	Schopenhauer as Educator
TI	Twilight of the Idols
TU	The Untimelies
TSZ	Thus Spoke Zarathustra
WS	The Wanderer and His Shadow

For Zen koans and stories, I have used the following translations:

Addiss, Stephen, Stanley Lombardo and Judith Roitman, eds. *Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*.

Citations from Linji are from the following edition:

Taishō shinshū daizōkyō, ed. Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe Kaigyoku, 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932.

I have used the following translation:

Watson, Burton, transl. *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi: A Translation of the Lin-chi lu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993/1999.

Citations from Dōgen are from the following edition:

Dōgen, Kigen. *Shōbōgenzō*, edited by Mizuno Yaoko. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1990.

For the fascicle *Genjōkōan*, I have used the translation of

Davis, Bret. “The Presenting of Truth: Dōgen’s Genjōkōan.” In *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*, edited by William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield, 251–259. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

For all other fascicles, I have followed the translations in the following work (except where indicated otherwise):

Kim, Hee-Jin. *Eihei Dōgen—Mystical Realist*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004 (original edition 1975).

As a reference, I have used two other translations:

Waddell, Norman, and Masao Abe, transl. *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*. New York: North Point Press, 1985.

A Summary of Arguments

Buddhist philosophical traditions can be seen as “emerging traditions” that call for an engagement with Western philosophical thinkers. Nietzsche is a prime candidate for such an engagement. He can be considered a transcultural thinker who aimed to revitalize Western culture by using his self-proclaimed “trans-European eye” (see chapter 1). Nietzsche was one of the few Western philosophers with an interest in non-Western philosophies, especially Buddhism, even if his familiarity with Buddhism was limited to early Buddhism¹ and his understanding of Buddhism was marred by nineteenth-century preconceptions of Buddhism as a “cult of nothingness,” as Roger-Pol Droit has called it.² In line with these preconceptions, Nietzsche rejected the early Buddhism that he knew as life-denying nihilism (see chapter 1).

Nietzsche’s thought has been extensively received and commented on by Japanese Buddhist philosophers. But although the comparison between Nietzsche and Buddhism has had a long history in Japan, it is fairly recent in the West. Only since the 1980s have some affinities, albeit unintended or “ironical,” between Nietzsche and Buddhism been pointed out in comparative studies.³ Although these studies focused on the early Buddhism that Nietzsche himself was familiar with, Graham Parkes has convincingly argued that the later Mahāyāna Buddhism (that only became well-known and fully appreciated in the Western world after 1900) is a much better candidate for a fruitful comparison with Nietzsche’s philosophy. According to Parkes, Nietzsche might have considered the Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophical ideas much to his own taste.⁴ In China, Mahayānā Buddhism met the Daoist tradition, which led to the emergence of Chan Buddhism (better known in the West under its Japanese name Zen), which is, according to Parkes, perhaps closest to Nietzsche.⁵ As Parkes notes elsewhere:

This is surely a most fertile field for Nietzsche studies, the common ground between the hermit of Sils-Maria and the life-artist-sages from the Chan and Zen traditions. The first wave of Zen to reach Western shores struck mainly *lit-térateurs* and religious types, now that Nietzsche is finally coming into his own is the time for a more philosophical engagement with thinkers of those Asian traditions, in which dialogue based on correspondences between both sides aims at precise elucidation of the divergences. Time, finally, for more of us to cast a trans-European eye over Nietzsche’s legacy.⁶

Although Nietzsche as a philosopher and Zen as a Buddhist religious tradition seem to be widely divergent in their concerns, I aim to show that whereas Nietzsche is more religious than previously thought, Zen is more philosophical and skeptical than previously thought. However, this study does not aim to make a Zen master out of Nietzsche, and neither does it present a Nietzschean Zen to its readership. As Nietzsche remarks, “Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes” (JS 228). A crucial difference between Nietzsche and the Zen tradition lies in their respective relationship to practice. On the one hand, both are praxis-oriented: philosophy is not a theoretical or speculative enterprise, but a form of spiritual practice. On the other hand, what distinguishes them is Zen’s emphasis on the practice of sitting meditation, *zazen*. Other important differences have to do with historical and cultural context. Nietzsche was very much a nineteenth-century German thinker, concerned with cultural criticism and the question of decadence, neither of which have much to do with the Zen tradition.⁷

Exactly the differences between Nietzsche and Zen make for a rich interplay of interpretations and perspectives that can open up new avenues for investigation in both Nietzsche studies and Zen studies. The “and” in Nietzsche and Zen should therefore be read both ways. This confrontation of two language games of widely different cultures calls into question the familiar identities of both Nietzsche and Zen.

OPENING UP THE NIETZSCHEAN TEXT

Derrida has spoken about a kind of interpretation that is not merely a “doubling” commentary on a text, but also an opening up of a text.⁸ This study aims to open up Nietzsche’s texts, his concepts, the way he *does* his philosophy, especially with regard to the religious or soteriological aspects of his thought. In this way it aims to contribute to a fuller and richer interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Although Nietzsche the skeptical thinker is usually emphasized in Nietzsche research, his skepticism actually serves his project of self-overcoming.

A confrontation with Zen can help to open up perspectives on Nietzsche’s thought beyond his skepticism because it takes us beyond the “familiar” Nietzsche. There are some gaps in most Nietzsche interpretations that could be fruitfully addressed by means of a comparison with Zen. As Roger Ames has observed, since Nietzsche is part of our own Western philosophical tradition, we are too easily expect him to share with us some unannounced assumptions. The exoticness of Zen can help us to get behind what we initially take to be familiar in Nietzsche only to discover that he, too, is very exotic indeed.⁹ Nietzsche’s famous declaration of the death of God has often been misunderstood as a radicalization of the Western Enlightenment. But Nietzsche’s “philosophizing with the hammer” served for him as a preparation for a reevaluation of all values, a return to a life-affirming mode of existence, and even a new way of speaking about the divine.

Nietzsche was a transcultural thinker who used comparisons with non-European philosophical traditions in order to question what we call our “own.” He not only used non-Western philosophy to criticize his own Western tradition, but he also attempted to go beyond it to a more global “world philosophy.” (It is therefore fitting that he has been read widely in non-Western cultures, especially in Japan and China). A comparative study with a non-Western philosophical tradition does justice to Nietzsche’s own aspirations to go beyond Western philosophy. Nietzsche can be considered a transcultural thinker with a self-described trans-European and even trans-Asiatic eye. Therefore, to read Nietzsche himself with a trans-European eye (an East Asian eye, even further removed from Europe than the Near Asian and Indian eye that Nietzsche had in mind) can further elucidate Nietzsche’s work.

ZEN

What is known in the West as the single entity of “Zen” in reality comprises a varied and heterogeneous collection of Buddhist traditions in China, Japan, Korea, and other East Asian countries, that span about 1500 years. After the death of the historical Buddha (traditionally placed at 480 bc, but according to recent research perhaps as late as 400 bc, which would make him contemporary of Socrates), his message was spread by several schools. This early Buddhism is the Buddhism of the Pali Canon, which survives today in the school of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma.

In the first centuries ce, Mahāyāna Buddhism arose, most likely as a reform movement against scholasticism that had set in. Its *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras (sutras of the wisdom beyond wisdom) claimed that all views, including Buddhist views, were “empty” (*sūnyatā*). This was the philosophical climate in which Nāgārjuna was born, one of the most important figures in the early development of the philosophical tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He is the founder of the Madhyamaka school, a rich skeptical tradition, startlingly similar to the Western skeptical tradition, in respect of its aims, methodology, and philosophical problematic.¹⁰ Nāgārjuna’s radical ontological and epistemological skepticism deconstructed the dogmatic philosophical systems of some early Buddhist Abhidharma schools (see chapter 4).¹¹

The Mahāyāna teachings were transmitted to China by Indian Buddhist monks. One of them was the legendary Bodhidharma (d. 532?),¹² who is revered as the founder and first patriarch of the school of Chan or Zen.¹³ Bodhidharma’s successors combined Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism with indigenous Chinese Daoist elements. In combining Nāgārjuna’s philosophy of emptiness with the Daoist thought of Zhuangzi, they opened up the possibility of a thoroughly this-worldly affirmation of life, an *amara fati* beyond good and evil, that replaces early Buddhist renunciate morality. In the Song dynasty, Zen became the established form of Buddhism in China. This is when it was brought to Japan by several monks, among whom the thirteenth-century founder of the Sōtō Zen school, Dōgen (1200-1253).

ZEN AND THE WEST

In an interesting twist of fate (or karma), Nietzsche and Zen have suffered similar misrepresentation in their reception throughout the twentieth century. Initially, both were misrepresented as an anti-philosophical mysticism and a panacea for an ailing Western culture. Steven Aschheim has documented the many Nietzsche cults throughout Europe that claimed Nietzsche’s thought for their own brand of spirituality.¹⁴ Zen was presented to the West as a universal mysticism that contained the core of all religions without cultural baggage, especially through D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) and the members of the so-called Kyoto School, a collection of Japanese thinkers who attempted to engage Zen with Western philosophical thought in order to arrive at a world philosophy for our times.¹⁵

Zen was seen as an anti-ritualistic tradition that focused on the experience of enlightenment (*satori* or *kenshō*). Because of this, it has exercised a fascination over Western philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and spiritual seekers. It has been hailed as a universal religion, founded on individual experience rather than conformity to church structures, meditation rather than ritual, critical investigation leading up to “the Great Doubt” rather than belief in religious dogmas. For many intellectuals, Zen served as a perfect replacement for a Western Christianity that was perceived as outmoded. It was viewed as an exponent of the mystical East, as epitomized, for example, in Eugen Herrigel’s bestseller *Zen in the Art of Archery*.¹⁶ Kyoto School member Kitarō Nishida (1870–1945) described the Zen enlightenment experience as a “pure experience” prior to the subject-object distinction. Nishida’s concept of pure experience was based on his reading of a.o. William James (which he was introduced by Suzuki). And although Nishida dropped his notion of “pure experience” in his later work, Suzuki adapted it as the central hermeneutic principle in his presentation of Zen to the West.¹⁷

Just as Nietzsche’s thought was misused by the Nazis, Zen thought was misused by the Japanese government in an effort to justify its war efforts. Both were seen as philosophies “beyond good and

evil” that justified violence. Western Zen priest Brian Victoria published in 1997 *Zen at War* documenting nationalism and war crimes by Japanese Zen masters and throwing doubt on the universality of Zen spirituality.¹⁸ A 1995 publication, *Rude Awakenings*, stressed the need for critical self-examination within the Zen tradition itself.¹⁹

In the fifties, Zen was embraced by artists and intellectuals like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Alan Watts, who formed the Beat Zen Generation. They embraced a kind of romantic and even “Nietzschean Zen” beyond good and evil, a radical iconoclasm that went beyond all conventions. In the sixties, Western counterculture claimed both Nietzsche and Zen in their protest against rationalistic Western culture. Nietzsche’s “God is dead” was echoed by the Zen dictum “if you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him.” Zen was one of the non-Western philosophies that was invoked as a way of criticizing Western culture.²⁰ Over the past decades, however, historians of the Zen tradition have stressed the role of embodiment, practice, and ritual in Zen, deconstructing the idea of Zen as a spiritual tradition aimed at a mystical experience of enlightenment.²¹ Currently, Zen studies is at a crossroads, looking for a new paradigm and a new hermeneutics.²² Contemporary hermeneutical and postmodern interpretations of Zen emphasize its theories of language and interpretation, enabling many useful and fruitful confrontations with Nietzsche’s thought. Especially postmodern Nietzschean interpretations could do much to further de-mystify Zen and disclose its significance as a philosophical tradition.

Elsewhere, I have argued that the conflict between what I called the “Romantic” and the “historicist” Zen reception could be fruitfully approached from a cross-cultural hermeneutical perspective.²³ A hermeneutical approach to Zen would not so much look for the “real Zen” (whether conceived as a Romantic ineffable truth or an objective historical narrative) as for what Zen has been and can be to world citizens of the twenty-first century. One’s interpretation of Zen cannot but be shaped by one’s own pre-verbal understandings of what “truth,” “self-overcoming” and “enlightenment” mean, and the contexts and conditions within which it is possible to have “an enlightenment experience.”

So, whereas Nietzsche and Zen have been strange bedfellows throughout the twentieth century, perhaps in the twenty-first century a dialogue between them can open up new and liberating insights into the philosophical *áskēsis* that can be discerned in their thought, but that has, in both cases, been undervalued and underemphasized. Even though Zen has been presented to the West by some as an anti-philosophical mysticism, the Zen philosophy contains a philosophical *áskēsis* as well. As Thomas Kasulis notes, the Western popular notion that Zen resists philosophical explanation is more Western than Japanese.²⁴

SELF-OVERCOMING WITHOUT A SELF

For Nietzsche, philosophy as *áskēsis* is connected with the notion of self-overcoming. In *Ecce Homo* he discerns a path of self-overcoming that is reflected in his works, leading up to “*what I am today where I am today—at a height where I no longer speak with words but with lightning bolts*” (EH I TU, 3). For example, he views *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* as overcoming his addiction to idealism and Wagner. About *Human, All Too Human*, he says, “I liberated myself from what in my nature *did not belong to me*” which constituted “*progress—towards myself*” (EH III HAH, 1). Today many Anglo-American Nietzsche interpreters fail to see this aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy, or choose to ignore it. But recently, this aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy has received more attention.

Several studies have appeared that argue that Nietzsche can profitably be read as advocating such philosophical *askēsis*. Bruce Benson interprets Nietzsche's *askēsis* as being aimed at realizing Dionysian piety: a way of being that fully embraces life. Horst Hutter focuses on the specific ascetic practices that serve as a means for Nietzsche for overcoming decadence. Richard White shows how Nietzsche in his writings sought to provoke a personal sovereignty. Tyler Roberts reads Nietzsche's *askēsis* as an attempt at postreligious philosophical practice.²⁵

The peculiar and paradoxical thing is that both Nietzsche and Zen also deny that any such thing as self ultimately exists. Their self-overcoming is therefore a self-overcoming without a self. As far as Zen is concerned, this may be obvious: the idea of non-self (*anātman*) is crucial to all Buddhist traditions. But also for Nietzsche, what we call a self is ultimately a fiction. Although in *Schopenhauer as Educator* Nietzsche writes about aspiring to one's true Self, in his later work, self-overcoming turns into self-overcoming without a self, expressed through the cipher of Dionysus, the Greek god of ecstatic self-transcendence. This study will investigate what such a "self-overcoming without a self" could possibly look like. It engages Nietzsche in dialogue with four major representatives of the conglomerate of traditions that we call Zen:

1. The Indian founder of Madhyamaka Buddhism, Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 ce), who is, although chronologically a predecessor to Zen, nevertheless traditionally regarded as a patriarch of the Zen tradition. Although Nāgārjuna certainly was a historical figure, not much is known about his life, nor about the exact role he played in the transition from early Buddhism to Mahāyāna.²⁶ He is widely considered to be the most influential Buddhist philosopher after the Buddha himself.
2. Linji Yixuan (d. 860), one of the classical Chinese Chan masters of the Tang Dynasty, has been the most influential Zen master in further Zen traditions in China, Japan, and Korea. He has been accorded the highest praise within the Zen tradition. According to translator Burton Watson, he is "the oldest and most authentic voice that has come down to us from the early tradition of Chinese Chan or Zen, the fullest exposition of its teachings."²⁷ Linji has contributed to Zen's reputation for iconoclasm. He famously declared that the Buddhist goals of bodhi (awakening) and nirvāṇa (enlightenment) were hitching posts for donkeys. His most famous injunction is "if you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him." The followers of Linji stressed that Zen was "a separate expression outside the teachings, beyond words and letters," which has co-determined the Western image of Zen as a radical antinomianism and iconoclasm.²⁸
3. The thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dōgen strongly criticized Linji for his antinomianism and iconoclasm. He stressed that enlightenment is not beyond words and letters but always takes place within words and letters. He also stressed the importance of the body. In some ways, Dōgen can be seen as a Zen Buddhist Nietzsche, critically examining and unmasking cherished notions within the Zen tradition. As a Japanese "master of suspicion," he deconstructs orthodox Zen perspectives on language, thinking, practice, and most of all, enlightenment.²⁹
4. The Japanese Zen Buddhist philosopher Keiji Nishitani (1900–1990) studied with Heidegger from 1937 to 1939 and attempted to integrate Zen with Western philosophy. He wrote a study on nihilism, in which he devoted several chapters to an interpretation of Nietzsche's thought informed by his Zen Buddhist background.³⁰ However, as a contemporary Zen philosopher who attempted to connect Zen Buddhist thought to Western philosophy, Nishitani focused on certain aspects of Zen thought that he thought would be of greater relevance to Westerners.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Part I (chapters 1 through 3) will set the stage for a cross-cultural dialogue between Nietzsche and Zen. Chapter 1 will briefly recap Nietzsche's own relationship to Buddhism, his status as a transcultural thinker, the way he practiced transcultural philosophy, and why comparing Nietzsche to a non-Western philosophical tradition is in line with his own philosophizing. Chapter 2 will review the research on Nietzsche and Zen so far (give an overview and summarize the basic findings) and indicate where the present study can be situated within the field. Chapter 3 will set out the basic argument and the hermeneutical approach of this study. It will argue that both Nietzsche and Zen can be interpreted as philosophies of self-overcoming. Such a process of self-overcoming has famously been described by Nietzsche in terms of the three transformations of the spirit into camel, lion, and child. However, in this study the Mahāyāna Buddhist hermeneutic of *upāya* will be applied to interpret these transformations as moving from an other-oriented to a self-oriented to a world-oriented way of experiencing reality and the process of self-overcoming itself.

Part II (chapters 4 through 7) will elucidate various practices of self-overcoming. Chapter 4 addresses self-overcoming from an other-oriented perspective. From such a perspective, self-overcoming is connected to a will to truth and takes place in the context of the ascetic ideal. Both Nietzsche and Nāgārjuna criticize their own philosophical tradition for such a will to truth and ascetic ideal. Their critical views with regard to truth (epistemological skepticism) and reality (ontological skepticism) seem to culminate in epistemological nihilism, but as it turns out, they consider it possible to overcome this nihilism. Nietzsche differentiates between a weak, nihilistic skepticism and a strong skepticism that refers to a new truth practice. Nāgārjuna differentiates between conventional and ultimate truth. His notion of emptiness serves as a conventional truth that allows for the realization of ultimate truth. The identity of samsara and nirvana makes room for a radical affirmation of life.

Chapter 5 explores a new truth practice that is aimed not at discovering static truths about reality but at becoming a truthful person, a "Master of Truth." Such a magisterial conception of truth can be found both in Nietzsche and the Zen tradition, where Nāgārjuna's philosophy of truth is worked out in a Chinese context. In this conception, truth is not representational (knowing that) but performative (knowing how). It is a quality of persons, not of propositions; truth refers to a personal embodiment.

Chapter 6 focuses on practices of embodiment. According to Nietzsche, in matters of knowledge and truth, incorporation plays a very important role. The constellation of one's physiological drives determines how one views the world and to what extent one is able to refrain from not only distorting one's perception, but to step outside the representational model of knowledge. From such a perspective, the only way for self-overcoming would be to "educate the drives," which would in fact amount to a self-education of the body. Such a self-cultivation of the drives allows one to incorporate truth, become a Master of Truth, and be able to digest "higher" perspectives than before. The Zen tradition presents not only a well-worked out perspective on the theory of such a self-cultivation through the body, but also describes various somatic practices as part of this self-cultivation. For Dōgen, such a somatic practice takes the form of *zazen*, sitting meditation practice. Nietzsche's self-cultivation and self-overcoming of the body will be compared to Dōgen's notion of *zazen* as a somatic practice.

Chapter 7 discusses the self-overcoming of the ego. From a naturalistic, non-anthropocentric perspective, self-overcoming refers to an optimal way of functioning without the friction of the conscious "I." There is no unique individual soul that can be liberated, but the multiplicity of drives

(taken as an orchestra) performs a beautiful concert. Every drive knows what to play without needing a conductor. The later Nietzsche uses the metaphor of self-forgetfulness to point to self-overcoming. In the post-Zarathustra works we find many passive and even fatalistic formulations suggesting a process of ripening, pregnancy, organic growth, and the absence of struggle, emphasizing the allowance of transcendence and openness. All conscious attempts at self-cultivation actually only interfere with this process. Even the willful attempt at self-overcoming must overcome itself: the self-overcoming of self-overcoming. Dōgen's notion of "forgetting the self" will be used to elucidate such a perspective.

Part III (chapters 8 through 10) addresses the question of a possible end point of self-overcoming. In chapter 8, Nietzsche's ambivalent use of the notion of redemption will be compared to Zen's deconstruction of Buddhist enlightenment.³¹ Nietzsche is well-known for his critique of Christian redemption as a symptom of decadence and resentment. But in his work, especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, an attempt can also be found to define a positive (although skeptical) form of redemption and liberation, centered around incorporating the thought of eternal recurrence and relinquishing an ego-centered perspective. However, in both Nietzsche and Zen there is a tension between an apophatic critique of such a state of liberation and attempts at a kataphatic construction of liberation.

In chapter 9, one of such kataphatic constructions, Nietzsche's notion of the child, will be investigated in dialogue with Dōgen. From a child perspective, self-overcoming is no longer directed toward any particular goal. For Nietzsche, this constitutes a restoration of the innocence of becoming. In Zen, a similar dynamic can be observed, which Dōgen expresses as the oneness of practice and realization. Chapter 10 investigates Nishitani's interpretation of Nietzsche's child stage as the self-overcoming of the will to power. According to Nishitani, Nietzsche's views on self-overcoming eventually fall short of the Zen Buddhist perspective because he remains mired in the notion of will to power. I will critically discuss this conclusion.

In Part IV (chapters 11 and 12) I argue that, especially in his recognition of the need for a self-overcoming of philosophy, Nietzsche comes closest to the spirit of Zen. Chapter 11 addresses one of Nietzsche's notebook fragments on the notions of exoteric and esoteric in order to advance the argument that Nietzsche regards the will to power as an exoteric notion, an instrument to facilitate the realization of an esoteric Dionysian philosophy. In Buddhist terms, the will to power serves as *upāya*.

The practice of philosophy now comes down to a revaluation of values. In chapter 12, I will interpret Nietzsche's revaluation of all values as a philosophical *áskēsis*. Nietzsche's immoralism and self-overcoming of morality, which are associated with such a revaluation, have been interpreted as "beyond good and evil," just as Zen has been interpreted as antinomian. However, a look at Dōgen's views reveals how "beyond good and evil" can be combined with "the non-production of evil."

NOTES

1. See Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading about Eastern Philosophy." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28 (2004): 3–27.
2. Roger-Pol Droit, *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
3. Freny Mistry, *Nietzsche and Buddhism: Prolegomenon to a Comparative Study* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1981) and Robert G. Morrison, *Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Morrison claims that ironically enough

Nietzsche's thought can be interpreted as akin to the early Buddhism that he was familiar with and rejected as a form of passive nihilism. He therefore calls his comparative study "A Study in Iron Affinities." Another recent collection of essays on Nietzsche and African American thought by Jacqueline Scott and A. Todd Franklin, eds., *Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and African American Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), bears the title "Critical affinities." This study will argue that the affinities between Nietzsche and Zen are more critical than ironic, since they both focus on unmasking and revaluing crucial notions within their respective philosophical traditions.

4. Graham Parkes, ed., *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15.

5. Parkes, *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, 14.

6. Graham Parkes, "Nietzsche and East Asian Thought: Influences, Impacts, and Resonances," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 377.

7. Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion*.

8. Benson, *Pious Nietzsche*, xi.

9. Roger T. Ames, "Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' and Chinese 'Virtuality' (*De*): A Comparative Study," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, 132.

10. See Jay L. Garfield, "Epoche and *sunyata*: Skepticism East and West," *Philosophy East and West* 40/3 (1990): 285–307.

11. Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term *Hīnayāna* is used pejoratively to refer to those early Buddhist traditions that developed a systematic soteriology (in particular the Sarvāstivādin school). *Hīnayāna* therefore does not refer to the contemporary Buddhist schools that base themselves on the early Buddhist Theravāda school. Their positions are much more nuanced than the (caricatured) *Hīnayāna* views.

12. Very little contemporary biographical information on Bodhidharma is available, and subsequent accounts became layered with legend, but most accounts agree that he was South Indian Tamilian and was a Pallava prince from the kingdom of Kanchipuram, the third son of King Sugandha. Bodhidharma left the kingdom after becoming a Buddhist monk and traveled to Southern China and subsequently relocated northwards. The accounts differ on the date of his arrival, with one early account claiming that he arrived during the Liu Song Dynasty (420–479) and later accounts dating his arrival to the Liang Dynasty (502–557). Bodhidharma was primarily active in the lands of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534). Modern scholarship dates him to about the early sixth century.

13. Chan is the Chinese transliteration of *dhyāna*, the Sanskrit term for meditation. In Japan the Chinese term was transliterated as Zen, in Korea as Son. Since the term *Zen* has become well-known in the West, it will be used in this study.

14. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*.

15. E.g., Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1934). See André F. M. van der Braak, "Enlightenment revisited: Romantic, historicist, hermeneutic and comparative perspectives on Zen," *Acta Comparanda* 19 (2008): 87–97; Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

16. Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (London: Routledge, 1953). For a critical discussion of this work, see Shōji Yamada, "The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery," *Journal of Japanese Religious Studies* 28/1–2 (2001): 1–30 and Shoji Yamada, *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

17. But Zen was also approached very critically. Arthur Koestler criticized the deliberate obscurity of the Zen texts in his book *The Lotus and the Robot* (New York: Macmillan, 1961). The Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima portrayed the Zen monastery in his novel *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (New York: Knopf, 1959) as a power-infested, authoritarian community. In line with this critical approach, the Chinese historian Hu Shi approached Zen as merely one religious sect among others and attempted to describe the Zen tradition within the context of larger political and social developments in the Chinese historical tradition.

18. Brian Daizen Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

19. Jim Heisig and John Maraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995).

20. In a related development, Japanese Zen masters (roshis) came to teach in the West (Yasutani, Maezumi, Shunryu Suzuki, Sasaki), and their Western students became roshis as well (Richard Baker, Robert Aitken, Philip Kapleau, Dennis Merzel, Bernie Glassman, Daido Looi). They emphasized not so much Zen philosophy, like the Beat Zen generation, but Zen as a religion, which included traditionally and culturally mediated meditation practices, such as the sitting practice of zazen and koan practice and all kinds of ritual.

21. In the seventies and eighties, the Japanese Zen scholar Yanagida Seizan gave a new impulse to the philological research of Zen texts. Together with Western students, he carefully researched many Zen texts that had been discovered in the early twentieth century in a cave in Dunhuang. Their results led to a questioning of many established Zen myths and to critical considerations about the nature of the spirituality of Zen.

22. In a recent publication, Steven Heine has attempted to clarify the conflict between the two competing perspectives on Zen that he calls "the traditional Zen narrative" and "historical cultural criticism." See Steven Heine, *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). As Heine points out, the Western study of Zen Buddhism has all too often been a reflection of the preoccupations of Western modernity. The critical approach to Zen is part of a reaction to the wider phenomenon of Orientalism, the stereotypical approach of Western scholars to Oriental culture based on thinly disguised, hegemonic agendas. Whereas the colonial West has tended to portray the East as generally inferior and degenerate compared to Western civilization, the field of religious studies (more dominated by the temperament and outlook of Romanticism) has often shown a seemingly opposite pattern of thought. The spirituality of the East is considered superior to Western varieties (reverse Orientalism). Those two opposed perspectives are both a gross distortion, Heine notes: "Buddhism is seen either as a sublime and quaint form of meditative mysticism, based on mind-purification and self-transformation, or as the hollow shell of a sequestered ancient cult that broods on death and decay yet thrives on monastic political intrigue" (Heine, *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow*, 4).

23. Van der Braak, *Enlightenment Revisited*.

24. Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), ix.

25. Horst Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006); Benson, *Pious Nietzsche*; Richard J. White, *Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Roberts, *Contesting Spirit*.

26. See Joseph Walser, *Nāgārjuna in Context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and Early Indian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

27. Burton Watson, transl., *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi. A Translation of the Lin-chi i*

(New York: Columbia University Press, 1993/1999), ix.

28. ~~This image has been constructed largely through the writings of D. T. Suzuki. But as recent studies by Welter show, the Linji interpretation has taken place through the lens of Japanese sectarian scholarship. As more and more historical material becomes available, it is even unclear which part of his writings can actually be attributed to the historical Linji. See André F. M. van der Braak, "Toward a Philosophy of Chan Enlightenment: Linji's Anti-Enlightenment Rhetoric," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37/2 (June 2010): 231–47.~~

29. Since the 1970s, the field of Dōgen Studies has exploded with various schools of thought not only in Japan, but also in the West. The orthodox Sōtō Zen academia interprets Dōgen according to the Sōtō orthodoxy in a religious way. In Japan, resistance has arisen from the thinkers of the so-called Critical Buddhism movement, who want to liberate Buddhism from its reactionary status and call for its modernization. In their opinion, Dōgen should primarily be interpreted as an intellectual thinker, not as a meditation master. Western Dōgen studies treat him primarily as a philosophical thinker. For an overview of the various approaches to Dōgen, see Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen—Mystical Realism* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), xv-xxii.

30. Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

31. Nietzsche uses the term *Erlösung* which can be translated as either redemption or salvation. In this study, I will use "redemption." See the discussion in chapter 8.

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