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Images of Mind, Images of God: Mirror as Metaphor in Chinese Buddhism and Early Mysticism

Jiani Fan

ABSTRACT

In ancient China, Zen Buddhism undergoes three stages of transformation: from advocating “contemplating the heart” and “maintaining quiet,” into “absence of thought” and “see one’s nature,” then into “ordinary mind is the way,” which corresponds to Meister Eckhart’s three stages concerning the relation between human beings and God: man created according to the image of God, man as creature flowing out of the God of nothingness, and detachment from the concept of God. In this article, we will discuss the mirror as an indispensable metaphor in the process of Zen Buddhism’s and German Mysticism’s transformation, as a mediator between man and God, sometimes even discarded as an obstacle to discern Godhead as nothingness or to act in quotidian life with a detached ordinary mind. The essay will discuss the different functions of mirror image in Mysticism and Zen Buddhism, and how the *apophatic* approach facilitates pure mystic experience to access the non-embodied or even Godhead reduced to nothingness, as well as Buddha-nature, through “‘emptying’ out of other conscious content in order to ‘make room’ for the apprehension of God, who is beyond our discursive, sensual natures.” Therefore, nothing and nobody, through *apophasis*, should replace Him and God, which not only is discussed in Meister Eckhart’s later sermons, but also is unfolding in the conflict between two eminent ancient Chinese Zen masters, Huineng (the Sixth Patriarch) and Shenxiu. The “ordinary mind is the way” in Zen Buddhism, resonating profoundly with Mystic detachment, indicates the different emphasis on *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* in different periods, as well as diverting beings gradually from attachment to the heart and divinity to leading a spontaneous life guided by detachment and ordinary mind.

KEYWORDS: mirror, *vita contemplativa*, *vita activa*, *apophasis*, image, Godhead, emptiness, Mysticism, Zen Buddhism, ordinary mind.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient China, Zen Buddhism underwent three stages of transformation: from advocating “contemplating the heart” and “maintaining tranquility,” into “absence

of thought” and “see one’s nature,” then into “ordinary mind is the way,”¹ which correspond to Meister Eckhart’s three stages concerning the relation between human beings and God: man created according to the image of God, man as creature flowing out of the God of nothingness, and detachment from the concept of God, as well as weighing *vita activa* over *vita contemplativa*. In this article, we will argue that in the three stages of Zen Buddhism and German Mysticism, the mirror is an indispensable metaphor. Sometimes it functions as a mediator between man and God (or Buddha). In some opposite cases, it is discarded as an obstacle, which deters man from discerning Godhead as nothingness or acting in quotidian life with a detached ordinary mind.

PART I: MIRROR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SPECULATING GOD AND BUDDHA

In ancient Mahayana Buddhism that was assimilated into Chinese Buddhism, the metaphor “the hall of mirrors” is a fundamental image, which indicates that Buddha is reflected in sparks of the soul. In an ancient anecdote, the Buddhist master Fa Zang taught Empress Wu the “phenomenon of totality” and the Buddha-nature, which was reflected in all sentient or non-sentient beings: “Fa Zang led Empress Wu into a room lined with mirrors on all sides and on the ceiling and floor. In the center of the room he placed an image of the Buddha with a burning candle beside it. Empress Wu was amazed to gaze at the infinite images of Buddha produced by the mirrors.”² Through this ingenious installation, we can discern that each phenomenon generates an image through the reflection of the mirrors, and each image comprehends all the other phenomena as well as other images as reflections of these other phenomena in the mirrors. All these constitute a network of reflections of phenomena. Although different phenomena are relatively different, they are harmonious and interdependent, since they are all reflections of the Buddha-nature.³ In the same vein, we cherish all sentient beings and non-sentient beings such as trees, fishes, human beings, because they themselves all contain the Buddha-nature. In the mirror metaphor cited above, since the images of phenomena are sheer reflections in the mind with no intrinsic property, if the consciousness about them is absent, the images of the phenomena will not appear or multiply.⁴ Nonetheless, since these images are the reflections in our mind of the phenomena, which are representations of the Buddha-nature and of the principle of universal movements, we should behave according to the images of phenomena without being attached to them. If we attach our mind to them, according to this metaphor of “the hall of mirrors,” they will disturb our minds and deceive us to consider the reflections of phenomena as the ultimate truth.

Meister Eckhart also discussed similar dialectics between the one Ultimate truth and multiple phenomena reflected in the imagery of the mirror in his Sermon Two:

The blessed see God in a single image, and in that image, they discern all things. God too sees Himself thus, perceiving all things in Himself. He need not turn from one thing to another, as we do. Suppose in this life we always had a mirror before us, in which we saw all things at a glance and recognized them

in a single image, then neither action nor knowledge would be any hindrance to us. But we have to turn from one thing to another, and so we can only attend to one thing at the expense of another. For the soul is so firmly attached to the powers that she has to flow with them wherever they flow, because in every task they perform the soul must be present and attentive, or they could not work at all. If she is dissipated by attending to outward acts, this is bound to weaken her inward work. For at this birth God needs and must have a vacant free and unencumbered soul, containing nothing but Himself alone, and which looks to nothing and nobody but Him.⁵

Here, the blessed is the one who reveals the spark of intellect in the soul, which is equivalent to "*semen divinum*," so the blessed can perceive all things in one, as "'one' with the one (*wesen ein mit einem*) and as the fruit of the virginity in the soul, which is detached from the multiple."⁶ "God too sees Himself thus, perceiving all things in Himself" indicates that all creatures are images or reflections of God, and he contains all phenomena but is not disturbed by them. However, as the created, if we distract ourselves by attending to outward acts, this attachment to outward acts will stain the originally limpid mirror—our soul—with defilement, as much as the image of God reflected in our soul is distorted due to our troubled mind. Only through keeping a detached mind, and evacuating all the encumbering ideas, can we receive and see through God. Here, in order to be enlightened, we should not resort to external inquiry, but reveal our internal spark of divine seeds through brushing aside harassing illusions.

These comparative discussions asserted the intelligible Ultimate reality and phenomena are the reflection of the Ultimate reality, either Buddha or God, and the mirror metaphor is an instrument for speculation about the Ultimate reality and the ontological nature of being. The two passages both admonish the peril of attachment to the external defilement in the mind, for we have a tendency to fall victim to idolatry of substantial and embodied gods, which constitutes also an obsessive attachment to the incarnated God and to the self. The solipsism imprisons God in the self's mind like a Buddha with a burning candle, trapped among the mirrors. And the solipsism renders the soul "containing nothing but Himself alone, and looks to nothing and nobody but Him," in which the self manifests an ultimate egocentric possessiveness of God. According to Meister Eckhart, the attachment to the self will obscure our ultimate transparent existence in God, so we have to relinquish all forms of attachment,⁷ in which the negation of the images as the embodiment of the self and God is a crucial step. In particular, the two quoted passages both adopt *kataphatic* approaches, such as words, images, symbols, and ideas, in order to demonstrate the residence of God (or Buddha) in the soul. However, these approaches evoke quite substantial and concrete consciousness of God as well as our own desire to be blessed or enlightened. By contrast, an *apophatic* approach facilitates pure mystic experience and access to non-embodied or even Godhead equivalent to nothingness as well as Buddha-nature, through "'emptying' out of other conscious content in order to 'make room' for the apprehension of God, who is beyond our discursive, sensual natures."⁸ Therefore,

nothing and nobody, through *apophasis*, should replace Him and God. This is not only demonstrated in Meister Eckhart's later sermons, but also unfolds in the conflict between two eminent ancient Chinese Zen masters, Huineng (the Sixth Patriarch) and Shenxiu.

PART II: NEGATIVE THEOLOGY: EMPTINESS AND NOTHINGNESS

Shenxiu:	Body is the Bodhi Tree,
Mind is like a bright mirror-stand.
Diligently wipe it all the time,
And allow no dust to cling. ⁹
Huineng:	Originally, Bodhi is not a tree,
Nor is a bright mirror a standing.
Originally, nothing exists,
So where is the dust to cling? ¹⁰

In the two short witty poems, the Bodhi tree and the bright mirror-stand are metaphors for the body and the mind of the Buddha as well as of human beings. Shenxiu's poem is still attached to the physical embodiment of the Buddha image and advocates a gradual enlightenment through diligent practice. Especially, his verse "diligently wipe it all the time" accurately constitutes a mirror metaphor of the mind. Of course ancient mirrors were not like modern mirrors of glass with a silver back. They were a stone surface on metal, which had to be polished frequently. Hence the appositions of the "mirror" image to ascetic disciplines of "self-polishing." Contrarily, in the second poem, through the abrupt and unexpected revelation of nothingness of all beings, Huineng advocates a lightning sudden Enlightenment. Huineng proclaims assertively that "originally, nothing exists," neither the Bodhi tree nor the bright mirror-stand, since they are products of the contingent correlation of the five aggregates in a specific time and space, namely, form, feeling, cognition, formation, and consciousness. The form belongs to the realm of spirit, while the other four aggregates can be categorized into the realm of the material, our body and our mind the products of random encounters of all material and spiritual elements.¹¹ *The Heart Sutra* testifies to the emptiness of all beings in the light of the five aggregates, which influences profoundly Zen Buddhism's perspective about the beings arisen through reciprocal random conditionality:

When Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara practised the deep *Prajnaparamita*, he saw that the five *skandhas* (five aggregates) were empty; thus he overcame all ills and suffering. *Shariputra*, form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is emptiness; emptiness itself is form. So too are feeling, cognition, formation, and consciousness.¹²

This radical proclamation of the emptiness of all beings, even the emptiness of Buddha, has a remote resonance with the negative theology perspective concerning the nothingness of God in Meister Eckhart's sermons. In Eastern Mysticism and

Western Mysticism, the embodied Buddha and God are equivalent to nothingness, while the coupling of Buddha-nature and Godhead strikes some profound resonance. In Meister Eckhart's sermons, he distinguished the hidden Godhead and the manifested Trinitarian God. He even asserted "God and Godhead are as different as earth is from heaven."¹³ As a pure Being without form, Godhead is "fashionless," not confined by mode of being, neither in this way or that way, neither this or that, so they are beyond any discourse or conception, ineffable, due to the limitations of logic in human rationality, which impedes higher speculation.¹⁴ In an *apophatic* way, Eckhart and Huineng avoid the words, since they might veil the Godhead or Buddha-nature and replace them with artificial conceptions. Therefore, Meister Eckhart and Huineng proclaim audaciously "originally, nothing exists" (including even Buddha) and Godhead is nothingness. Particularly, Meister Eckhart distinguishes the God reflected in the mirror of our soul and the superior Godhead:

"God becomes and disbecomes," says Eckhart. High above Him stands the pure Godhead. Out of the Godhead comes God: Godhead is ground of His possibility, and He is enfolded again within the Godhead in the course of the "God process." The seer has to pass beyond "God" into the silent void of the Godhead itself. That is the highest vision, and whoever still has "a God" has not yet reached to the highest and the last.¹⁵

Although God can be reflected in the mirror of our spark of intellect, this Godhead cannot be grasped by intellectual speculation. It is the absolute one, which is beyond the structure of time and space, since it is beyond all becomings and disbecomings, beyond all formal distinctions such as light or darkness, embodied or not embodied.¹⁶ Likewise, according to *The Heart Sutra*, which influences profoundly Zen Buddhism, form, feeling, thought, will, and consciousness are all emptiness as contingent properties. The five aggregates are dependent on the Buddha-nature as the ground of possible beings, which is also formless and transcends the intelligible concept of Buddha. It is "Absolute Emptiness" without "time, space, becoming nothingness. It is what makes all these things possible; it is a zero full of infinite possibilities, it is a void of inexhaustible contents."¹⁷ Although both Zen Buddhism and Meister Eckhart's Mysticism favor negative theological concepts such as "nothingness" or "emptiness," one can still discern the differences. The absolute nothingness of Zen is different from German Mysticism's "nothingness" as an *apophatic* strategy to preserve the pure essence of God.¹⁸ In Zen Buddhism, the essence of everything, either that of sentient beings or non-sentient beings is emptiness, since these beings are the products of the contingent correlation of the five aggregates—form, feeling, cognition, formation, and consciousness—in a specific time and space, so they obtain no property of themselves at all. It is our attachment to the world that gives rise to the causal viewpoint of the conditioned genesis of things. However, in Meister Eckhart's thought, with the blessing of grace, every being is created by the grace and divinity flowing out from the Oneness, either God or Godhead, so he does not dismiss the existence of all beings as contingent. Nevertheless, in the next part of this article, we will discuss "the ordinary mind as a way of life,"¹⁹ which advocates

to act in accord with contingent conditions caused by the five aggregates²⁰ in quotidian life and its resonance to mystic detachment.

PART III: "ORDINARY MIND AS THE WAY" IN ZEN BUDDHISM
AND DETACHMENT IN MYSTICISM

The idea "ordinary mind is the way" in Zen Buddhism resonates profoundly with the concept "detachment" in Mysticism. The two tenets in the two theologies demonstrate respectively different emphases on *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* from different perspectives, and manifest the process of diverting the beings gradually from attachment to heart and divinity to leading a spontaneous life guided by detachment and ordinary mind. Ultimately, the authentic Zen enlightenment lies "outside teaching, apart from tradition, not found in words and letters." The authentic Zen tenet discards at the same time the concept of Buddha and nothingness. Through an *apophatic* dialectics of affirmation and negation, it goes beyond all limits of concepts and special-temporal frames. Thus, the most efficient way to attain Zen is acting naturally²¹ in the ordinary life with an ordinary mind.

The orientation toward "ordinary mind is the way" in the late Tang dynasty corresponds, to some extent, to Meister Eckhart's detachment (*Abgeschiedenheit*) and his inclination to Martha's *vita activa* when he interpreted "*intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum, et mulier quaedam, Martha nomine, excepit illum . . .*"²² (Luke 10:38) in his Sermon Nine.²³

Meister Eckhart's approbation of the active Martha instead of Mary does not emphasize any side of the dichotomy between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, as Otto well observes: "Martha with her never-wearied doing and acting proves that she has already found what Mary still desires and seeks: the deep unmoved repose at the center, in unshakable unity and security."²⁴ In Sermon Nine, Meister Eckhart does not mention any mirror imagery, which is different from many of his other sermons concerning the relationship between creature, God, and Godhead—*imago dei*. Through intertextual analysis of Meister Eckhart's Sermon Nine and Diego Velázquez's painting "Christ in the House of Mary and Martha," which uses the apparatus of a mirror, we will reveal various possible or even controversial interpretations of Luke 10 and eventually grant the privilege to the interpretation advocating detachment and *vita activa*.

In Spanish, *image* designates a mental image or picture, while *imagen* indicates reflection. In addition, God creates human beings according to his own image, namely, *imago dei* can be translated into Spanish as *imagen*, or reflection. "God created man in his own image and likeness" is thus translated as *Dios creó al hombre a su imagen*. In Velázquez's painting "Christ in the House of Mary and Martha," the image of Jesus is reflected in the mirror or metaphorically in the female servant's mind.²⁵ It is the apparatus of the mirror that renders the significance of Jesus's image to sway the pendulum between *image* and *imagen*,²⁶ which can be translated, respectively, as two different mental images, "vision" and "fantasia," opening up the possibility of an additional level of reality. Meanwhile, the ambiguity of the concept *imagen*

extends the illusionistic dimension of the painting, since the mirror image depicted in Velasquez's painting can refer to the dramatic scene *in situ* reflected in the mirror and the maiden's mental image projected on the wall, at the same time.²⁷ Especially, the floating semantics of the image created by the mirror imagery generate polysemantic or even conflicting interpretations of the painting, as well as the complicated relation between *vita contemplativa* embodied by Mary and *vita activa* embodied by Martha.

In this painting, concerning the identity of the young servant in the foreground, who is frowning at all the family chores, observing the orthodox line of interpretation of Luke 10:38–42, scholars have tended to identify her with Martha, either a Martha of Seville in the early seventeenth century or the Martha who is contemporaneous with Jesus.²⁸ These scholars weigh *vita contemplativa* over *vita activa*, since Martha is disturbed by many things, while Mary has chosen what is better (Luke 10:38–42). That is the reason why the gloomy young servant resents the trivial chores after being reproached by Jesus.

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38–42)

Figure 1. Christ in the House of Mary and Martha. Diego Velázquez, ca. 1620. Oil on canvas, 60 × 103.5 cm. National Gallery, London.

Nevertheless, in the light of Eckhartian Mysticism and the polysemantics of the mirror, we could audaciously surmise that in the foreground, the morose young woman can be identified with Mary, while the didactic old lady is Martha, since the inset women wear clothes in the same colors as those in the foreground, especially the scarves; and the postures and gestures of the right hands of the two figures comprise mirror images. After Martha has entreated Jesus, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Mary is forced to engage in housework with her fist clenched around the pestle, still obsessed with her passive contemplation under the knees of Jesus. In this sense, the mirror image depicting Mary's prayer in front of Jesus can ambivalently designate at the same time a reflection of the synchronic image in the mirror, and Mary's mental images (as vision or fantasia) concerning her obsession with contemplative ecstasy before Jesus. Privileging *vita activa*, Meister Eckhart advocates detachment from the presence of the incarnation of God—Jesus—since Jesus expels his disciples from him:

"It is expedient for you that I should go away from you, for if I do not go away, the Holy Spirit cannot come to you" (John 16:7). This is just as if he had said, "You rejoice too much in my present form, and therefore the perfect joy of the Holy Ghost cannot be yours." So, leave all images and unite with the formless essence, for God's spiritual comfort is delicate; therefore He will not offer Himself to any but to him who scorns physical comforts.²⁹

In the foreground, Mary suffers from the aftermath of possessiveness of the self, and the symbolic meaning of fish in Christianity, Jesus, is overshadowed by the disgruntled mental images projected on the groceries, which aggravate the disconsolate maiden. In Spanish, egg and garlic are associated with various metaphors, such as daydream or "to be like chalk and cheese for egg," and "I / you'll / she'll have to grin and bear it" or "to feel miserable."³⁰ The mirror image can also be considered as a displaced mental projection of the discontented maiden, who resorts to the external blessing from the embodied God through prayers. Rejoicing at the *ex stasis* (standing outside oneself) under the knees of Jesus, it seems that she abandons herself and enjoys the "possessiveness of the non-self," namely, the "possessiveness of God." However, this attachment to the incarnated God is also an attachment to her own desire through continuously nagging prayers, "since 'God' is ultimately a projection of the human being's wishes, desires, and needs, and, thus, is an idol. The best way to honor 'God' is, thus, to dive into 'a-theism' and not to have a 'God,' that is, to let God be nothing and exist in the same nothingness."³¹ When the gloomy girl fixes her resentful gaze on the reflection in the mirror, she is haunted by the illusory enlightenment, since clinging to the embodiment of God is another form of the possessiveness of the self and agitates and unsettles her due to the transient grip of God instead of an eternal reunion with Him. In order to unite eternally with the God of nothingness, she should release herself from all attachments, such as the obstinate conception of temporal or eternal reunion, physical weariness, or spiritual illumination, since these desires are closely related to self-interest and impede the soul to evacuate itself. As a

result, the desires prevent her from attaining a detachment from all the possessiveness and from the residence of God of nothingness in her heart.³² By contrast, Martha, the old woman in the foreground whispering the admonition into the maiden's ear and in the inset image imploring, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (Luke 10:40), embodies an existential detachment characteristic of the "letting-go and letting-be implying the profoundest respect for existence itself."³³ Therefore, in the mirror image, when Martha leads a contemplative life, she listens to Jesus and interacts with him dynamically; in the foreground, Martha also admonishes Mary to engage herself wholeheartedly in the active life, like Martha, since she has attained the "recognition of the ontological interconnectedness of all life,"³⁴ which indicates that the two parallel life modes on the two sides of the mirror—*vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, represented by Martha and Mary, respectively—are two indispensable ways of life for the well-grounded soul. According to Meister Eckhart, because Martha is mature and well grounded in her own everyday existence, she is not disturbed by family chores. Seeing her sister not well grounded in her being, she urges Mary to be equally established³⁵ and advises her as God admonishes Saint Paul in his ecstasy in front of God: "each virtue did not present itself clearly in spiritual fashion in his vision, and he has to practice them in deeds."³⁶ When one's soul is well grounded, the external gains in the active life are rooted in the serene reunion with the invisible God. It is the seed of the well-grounded internal aspect of the soul that gives birth to the external fruits like streams bubbling out of their sources.

Meister Eckhart prefers Martha's *vita activa*, which indicates an *apophatic* detachment. Martha cherishes an ordinary mind for every way of life, not for the sake of anything but out of nothing and no purpose, namely the nothingness or emptiness of God.³⁷ Martha's tranquil adaptation both to *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* strikes a chord with Zen Master Mazu Daoyi's tenet "ordinary mind is the Way" in the Tang dynasty (ca. 709–788 CE):

The Way needs no cultivation; just prevent defilement. What is defilement? When with a mind of birth and death one acts in a contrived manner, then everything is defilement. If one wants to know the Way directly: ordinary mind is the Way! What do I mean by "ordinary mind"? [It is a mind] that is devoid of [contrived] activity, and is without [notions of] right and wrong, grasping and rejecting, terminable and permanent, worldly and holy. The [*Vimalakīrti*] scripture says, "Neither the practice of ordinary people, nor the practice of sages, that is the Bodhisattva's practice." Just now, whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, responding to situations and dealing with people as they come: everything is the Way.³⁸

Here, like Meister Eckhart, Mazu Daoyi advocates an *apophatic* way in the non-deliberate spiritual exercise and everyday practice, which represents a breakthrough from the stereotypes created by words that obscure our spontaneous mind facing the natural phenomena and overcoming dualism such as "right and wrong, grasping and rejecting, terminable and permanent, worldly and holy." Meanwhile, the *apophatic*

way negates and confirms “otherness and sameness, and leads to release and openness,”³⁹ since the enlightened mind is not attached to any dichotomy, a sub-branch of mental defilement. This mental defilement is imposed by our mental calculation, which produces superfluous anxiety alienating us from the natural way of life. When our mind is detached from all grievances, we could empty our mind and give birth to the Buddha-nature as emptiness shining out of our heart. And every phenomenal realm becomes the Buddha’s realm, thanks to the quietness and clearness of our mind. Then we no longer distinguish between transcendental reality and this-worldliness, since “there is only one realm of reality (Skt. *dharmadhātu*; Ch. *fajie*), which encompasses and pervades everything.”⁴⁰

Like Martha, when “walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, responding to situations and dealing with people as they come” with an ordinary mind, in the quotidian world, we clear our mind from the attachments such as the ultimate salvation or theophany. Meanwhile, we behave according to nature, concentrate ourselves to *hic et nunc*, without being disturbed by anxiety due to unattainable future desires. Then the Buddha-nature reveals itself in a tranquil ordinary mind, or rather with an even-tempered soul in the performance of quotidian life. In the process, we even forget what Buddha-nature is and eliminate all the signifiers to the Buddha-nature: “if you find Buddha, kill him,” since detachment and breakthrough are essential processes for us to return to being grounded in quotidian activities.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

By comparing the mirror images in Chinese Buddhism and Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism, we discern the subtle differences and some similarities with regard to the rhetorical devices and the theological groundings between the two sects of mysticism with profound resonance, as well as respective theological and ontological perspectives. Both of the two religious sects discarded a specific rhetoric device, the *kataphatic* approach, because the positive demonstration of the residence of God or Buddha in the soul through obsessive images or affirmative words indicates our obstinate attachment to our own disturbing desires for possessing God. Instead, they advocate the *apophatic* device, in order that the soul can evacuate all personal desires and “make room” for the apprehension of God or Buddha, who is beyond our discursive comprehension. Moreover, the two different religious sects espouse keeping an ordinary mind in daily life, although the two sects have distinct visions about self-discipline in daily life. In Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism, Martha relishes *vita activa* because she has already been illuminated by divine teachings, so Meister Eckhart grounds his daily practice in the ultimate transcendental force. By contrast, Huineng advocates acting in accord with contingent conditions caused by the five aggregates as a way to detach from any desires. He even blasphemously proclaims that “if you find Buddha, kill him,” so the nothingness of Buddha is a more radical perception in a blasphemous way than that of Meister Eckhart’s Mysticism, which still pays homage to the God of nothingness.

NOTES

1. 孙昌武, 禅思与诗情. 中华书局 [Sun Changwu, *Chan Si Yu Shi Qing* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju)], 2006, 218.
2. Translated and cited from Joan Qionglin Tan, *Han Shan, Chan Buddhism and Gary Snyder's Ecopoetic Way* (East Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 13. Original Chinese text: 見贊寧,《宋高僧傳》卷5 (Zanning. *Song Gao Seng Zhuan*: [30 Juan]. [Taipei]: Taiwan shangwu yin shu guan, 1983, vol. 5):「藏乃指鎮殿金獅子為喻,因撰義門,徑捷易解,號《金師子章》,列十門總別之相,帝遂開悟其旨。又為學不了者設巧便,取鑑十面八方安排,上下各一。相去一丈餘,面面相對中安一佛像,燃一炬以照之,互影交光,學者因曉剎海涉入無盡之義。」大正藏冊50 [Da Zheng Zang Ce, vol. 50, 732],頁732上至中。
3. 湯一介,「華嚴「十玄門」的哲學意義」[Tang Yijie, "Huayan 'Shixuanmen' de Zhexue Yiyi] 在佛教與中國文化國際學術會議論文集下輯 [Proceedings of International Conference on Buddhism and Chinese Culture], 1995, 815 頁。
4. Refer to *The Heart Sutra*, translation <http://www.fodian.net/english/xinjing.htm>.
5. Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. Maurice O'Connell Walshe (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), 42.
6. Wolfgang Wackernagel, "Ymagine denudari," in *Éthique de l'image et métaphysique de l'abstraction chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 82.
7. C. C. Radler, "Living From the Divine Ground: Meister Eckhart's Praxis of Detachment," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no. 1 (2006): 32–33.
8. Jerome Gellman, "Mysticism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/mysticism/>. And see also Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God, The Christian Contemplative Tradition* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), chapter 4.
9. Translated by Steven W. Laycock, "Hui-neng and the Transcendental Standpoint," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (1985): 179.
10. Ibid.
11. 田光烈,「禪宗六祖得法偈之我見」[Guanglie Tian, *My Opinion about the Sixth Patriarch's Attainment of Enlightenment*], http://read.goodweb.cn/news/news_view.asp?newsid=67879.
12. *The Heart Sutra*, English translation, refer to <http://www.usashaolintemple.org/chanbuddhism-heartsutratranslation/>.
13. Sermon Fifty-Six, in Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 293.
14. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, trans. Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne (New York: MacMillan, 1970), 6.
15. Ibid., 7–8.
16. Ibid., 7–12.
17. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, 19. See also Jijimon Alakkalam Joseph, "Comparing Eckhartian and Zen Mysticism," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 35 (2015): 103–104.
18. See Ueda Shizuteru, "'Nothingness' in Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism," in Frederick Franck, *The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and its Contemporaries* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004); J. Lanzetta, "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," *Journal of Religion* 72, no. 2 (1992): 248–268.
19. What is called the "ordinary mind" is without artificially created activity, without right or wrong, without grasping or relinquishing, without annihilation of permanence, without secular or sacred. Thomas Yūhō Kirchner, *The Record of Linji* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 219–220.
20. The five aggregates (*skandhas*) are: i) form (*rūpa*); ii) feelings (*vedanā*); iii) perception (*samjñā*); iv) volitional factors (*samskāra*); and v) consciousness (*viññāna*). The five are known as the "aggregates of attachment" (*upādāna-skandha*) because as the means to pleasurable experiences they are objects of desire or craving (*trṣṇā*). Each of the *skandhas*, like all com-

pounded phenomena, bears the three marks (*trilakṣaṇa*) of impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and no-self (*anātman*). Enlightenment (*bodhi*) consists in realizing that the individual is in reality a process whereby the *skandhas* interact without any underlying soul or self. Damien Keown, "skandha," *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-1692>, accessed May 27, 2017.

21. Here, "naturally" means without artificially created activity and without attachment to any volition.

22. The English translation of Luke 10:38–42 is: 38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." New International Version (NIV).

23. As to Meister Eckhart's sermon, I refer to Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 83. See also Joseph, "Comparing Eckhartian and Zen Mysticism," 93.

24. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, 176; John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 3.

25. Jane Boyd and Philip F. Esler, *Visuality and Biblical Text: Interpreting Velázquez' Christ with Martha and Mary as a Test Case* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2004), 101.

26. Ibid.

27. Jane Boyd, "Picture This: Velázquez' Christ with Martha and Mary," *The Expository Times* 118, no. 2 (2006): 72.

28. Boyd and Esler, *Visuality and Biblical Text*.

29. Eckhart, "On Detachment," in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 574.

30. Boyd and Esler, *Visuality and Biblical Text*, 103.

31. Charlotte Radler, "Losing the Self: Detachment in Meister Eckhart and Its Significance for Buddhist-Christian Dialogue," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 26 (2006): 112.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 87.

36. Ibid., 84.

37. Radler, "Losing the Self," 114.

38. *Mazu yulu, Xu zangjing* 119.406c; Cheng-chien Bhikṣu [Mario Poceski], trans., *Sun-Face Buddha: The Teachings of Ma-tsu and the Hung-chou School of Ch'an* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), 65.

39. Radler, "Losing the Self," 112.

40. Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160.

41. Joseph, "Comparing Eckhartian and Zen Mysticism," 95–97.

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