It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Flath is not concerned with the monument’s place in intellectual history, but looks into “the work of creating architecture, the art of constructing memorials, and the problem of managing a sacred place.” Readers will learn about the Temple’s historical (“Kong Temple as Structure”), ritual (“Ritual as Material Culture”), and spatial (“Kong Temple as Space”) evolution and contexts in Chapters 2–4. Chapters 5–6 engage with the Temple’s more recent past with a view to its political (“Kong Temple and the Modern Politics of Culture) as well as cultural and economic uses (“Kong Temple Inc.”). Flath admirably succeeds in his goal to take Kǒng Temple as a case study to shed light on some broader issues, namely to better “understand how monuments achieve iconic status, how architecture engages its inhabitants through contingency, and how space and time intersect in the formation of place.”

LuCAS POKrOnY
University of Vienna


Matthew A. Foust, associate professor of philosophy at Central Connecticut State University, presents the reader an engaging comparative analysis concerning ancient Chinese versus American Transcendentalist and Pragmatist traditions. Comparative approaches to different philosophical conventions can often yield both fruitful and surprising results, and they could even become revelatory at times, in terms of touching upon some more profound and elaborately concealed layers of each tradition. Hence owing to a thoroughgoing and methodical comparative analysis, old notions and concepts may very well take on new and richer meanings as the examination brings forth something unexpected and fresh from the deep well of a tradition. As Foust remarks, “Comparative philosophy often leads to creative responses to philosophical problems. Insights from one tradition might be blended or paired with insights from another to provide an innovative approach or response to a philosophical problem.” Foust begins his opening comparative analysis in this optimistic spirit when he turns in the first two chapters to the relationship of Confucianism with American Transcendentalism. In Chapter 1, he studies the philosophies of friendship in the thought of Confucius and Emerson, in particular how the latter was influenced by the former’s teachings, and in what ways his views have changed over time. Chapter 2 then details the connection between Thoreau’s thought and Confucianism. Thoreau, who himself translated passages of the Confucian classics from French to English, appears to have been significantly influenced by the thought of both Confucius and Mencius. As Foust notes, “although Thoreau explicitly opposes ideas he associates with Confucian thought, he is more Confucian in ‘Civil Disobedience’ than he lets on, or than he realizes.” In Chapter 3, the train of thought turns away from American Transcendentalism and begins to focus on the relation between Pragmatism and Confucianism. Chapter 3 deals with the views of Peirce and Confucius vis-à-vis inquiry and belief. Chapter 4 compares the insights of James with the opposing views of Mencius and Xunzi on human nature and morality. Finally, Chapter 5 tackles the problem of shame and atonement with regard to Royce’s, Confucius’s, and Mencius’s ideas. Foust concludes this volume by stating that “Confucian philosophy and American philosophy have a lot to learn from one other. My hope is that scholars of these traditions will continue the conversations that have begun and initiate innovative and productive lines of dialogue.”

Lehel Balogh
University of Szeged


The topic of this thought-provoking publication is of major interest for everyone interested in the history of Chán/Zen Buddhism and East Asian religion in general. It is a fresh and innovative interpretation of a seminal collection of commentaries on one hundred gōng’an / kōan pieces from the Sòng dynasty (960–1279), commonly referred to as “Blue Cliff Record” (Biéyánlù 碧巖録/Hekiganroku 碧巖録). It was compiled in 1128 by disciples of the Chán monk Yuánwù Kèqín 圓悟克勤/Engo Kokugon (1063–1135) who collected and commented sayings of the monk Xuéduō 雪竇 (980–1052). The Biéyánlù became a Buddhist classic due to its innovative approach to one of the most characteristic elements of Chán Buddhism. It is famous even outside the confines of mere academic interest due to the popularization of Zen and its kōans in the West—although it never became as popular as the easier to understand Wūmēnguān 無門關/Mumonkan 無門関 (from the thirteenth century). The myth of this collection is also intimately connected to its fate, namely the fact that a disciple of Yuánwù, Dàhūi Zōnggāo 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163), who became his harshest critic, destroyed his teacher’s work that only two centuries later became reconstructed and re-edited. Heine provides the first in-depth study fully devoted to this most fascinating collection and applies various strategies to cope with the enormously difficult textual material, thereby drawing on historical, cultural, and intellectual trends and tendencies of the time the texts were written to get a full understanding of their meaning. Because of the rich use of various symbols, and the many allusions to Chinese literature and to the history of Chán the Biéyánlù poses major problems as the typical Chán Buddhist “uncertainty” accompanies many of
its utterings. This crucial concept is also a kind of theoretical basis the author draws on in his interpretation of the text as he explains in the introductory chapter that promotes “a new hermeneutics.” It is not easy to follow all of the arguments, and sometimes the academic approach seems to shift into Chán “uncertainty,” particularly in cases when Heine draws on this “uncertainty” topic as a kind of literary principle that he also traces, for instance, in modern English literature (as with his remarks on James Joyce). These digressions are interesting, but often they seem to be out of place. Heine also mixes several layers in his approach, which makes the general structure of the monograph sometimes a bit confusing. Nevertheless, it will remain a major academic contribution on the Biyínlù (despite its tendency toward uncertainty).

Franz Winter
University of Graz


The volume is based on a conference held a Minzu University in Beijing that was financed by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. The editors place their volume in the service of searching for holistic ecological worldviews in religious traditions, as suggested by Tucker and Grim. While this aim may not have been achieved it proves to be a stimulating guideline for re-interpreting traditional Chinese thoughts on “nature” and also for observing present-day China’s approach to environmental problems. Summer certainly has as point when she observes that earth and land were of surprisingly little interest to ancient thinkers when compared to the dominant position they attributed to heaven. Miller speaks of “transgressive ecospirituality” in his description of how adherents of Highest Clarity Daoism concentrated on the natural landscape that they saw as present in the physical body. The volume (Chen Xia, Peng Guoxiang, and Miller) also opens a small spectrum of the contemporary Chinese discussion of ancient attitudes to “nature” with a reference to landscape painting, the Taiping jing, and the question to which extent Neo-Confucian “deep ecology” (Adler) was rooted in Buddhist beliefs. For the present-day situation, Bruun shows in almost dramatic intensity how feng shui epitomises “an anthropocentric outlook,” Qi Jinyu points to problems of “ecological migration” or rather forced resettlement and Yeh describes how Tibetan skepticism against environmental arguments is based on religious grounds. The volume reads really well and contributes fresh and solid arguments to a major discussion.

Barbara Hendrischke
University of Sydney


“The work before you is an interpretive journey through the historical reception of Chinese and Buddhist philosophy in modern German thought,” explains Nelson, associate professor of philosophy at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, in his introduction, and then moves on to elaborate further the aims of his excellent book, which are “to describe and analyze the intertextual nexus of intersecting sources for the sake of elucidating implications and critical models for intercultural hermeneutics and intercultural philosophy.” What Nelson means by intercultural philosophy and why the term is crucial to his philosophical undertaking become obvious when he unmistakably distinguishes “intercultural” philosophy from “multicultural” or “comparative” philosophy. He argues that “intercultural philosophy” is “not a juxtaposition of differences or a search for an underlying identity. Intercultural signifies the multidimensional space of encounter between philosophies of different social-historical provenience.” Thus, it comes as no surprise that Nelson sharply criticizes and opposes the established Eurocentrism of the traditional philosophico-historical paradigm which affirms “the primacy of Western philosophy that sets the standard and measure of what should and should not count as philosophy.” Nelson proposes, instead, that intercultural philosophy should take on itself the task to “reveal the multi-perspectivity and multi-directionality of thinking.” In Chapter 1 the reader can learn about how German philosophy, from Leibniz to Buber received and interpreted the teachings of Confucius, while Chapter 2 describes the interaction that took place among Zhang Junmai, Rudolf Eucken, and Hans Driesch. Chapter 3 explains the functions, implications and the generally positive aspects of the notion of “resentment” in early Confucianism, contrasting it with the views of Nietzsche and Scheler on the same topic. In Chapter 4, the focus shifts from Confucianism to Daoism, whereupon Nelson elucidates “how images, metaphors, and ideas from the texts associated with Zhuangzi and Laozi were appropriated in early twentieth-century German philosophy,” in particular by Buber and Heidegger. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the concept of the “origins of philosophy” by Heidegger and Misch, whereas Chapter 6 deals with phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger in relation to Buddhist and Daoist thought. In the final two chapters, the spotlight turns on Zen (C. Chan) Buddhism: Chapter 7 is about encounter and dialogue in Buber’s and Zen’s philosophies, while Chapter 8 details the interconnectedness of nothingness, emptiness, and language in Heidegger’s and Chan Buddhist thought. The volume ends with a brief Conclusion that expresses a hope for change and points toward the need for an intercultural turn in thinking.

Lehel Balogh
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