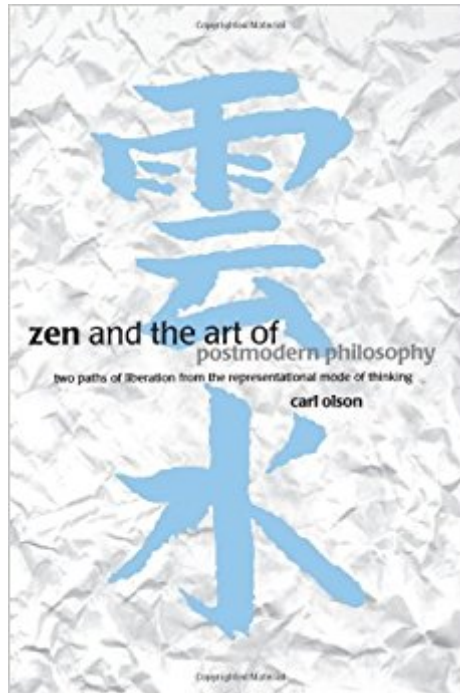




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# Zen And The Art Of Postmodern Philosophy



## Synopsis

This book examines and compares the philosophical positions of various postmodern thinkers and Zen Buddhist philosophers on: language and play; modes of thinking; skepticism and doubt; self and other; time and death; nihilism and metaphysics; and the conception of the end of philosophy. The Zen thinkers dealt with are Dogen and Nishitani, and the Western thinkers are Derrida, Lacan, Heidegger, Lyotard, Foucault, Deleuze and Guatarri, Kristeva, and Levinas. Although each share similar notions concerning the shortcomings of representational thinking, major differences still exist. By clarifying these differences, Olson counters the tendency to overtly assert or covertly imply that postmodern and Zen philosophies are moving in the same direction. Some postmodern thinkers and Zen Buddhist philosophers share common philosophical ground with regard to a mutual philosophical attack and attempt to overcome the perceived shortcomings of the representational mode of thinking that conceives of the mind like a mirror and assumes a correspondence between appearance and reality that is supported by a metaphysical structure."The book is fascinating! I was so excited by this work that I could hardly bear to put it down. Every page is replete with fresh insight. It is rare to discover a writer who is not only conversant, but also clearly expert in both the postmodern and Zen traditions. Olson's scholarship is impressive. His competent and detailed analyses elucidate both traditions. One can never approach either tradition in the same way again."The book approaches representational dualism with penetration and depth, and helpfully illuminates both the postmodern and the Zen traditions. The issues it deals with are central both to the Western tradition of postmodernism and to the East Asian tradition of Zen Buddhism. Olson's book could easily become a standard in the field of comparative philosophy." -- Steven W. Laycock, author of *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of Mind: Buddhist Reflections on Western Phenomenology*

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## Customer Reviews

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Carl Olson is Professor of Religious Studies at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. His previous books include *The Indian Renouncer and Postmodern Poison: A Cross-Cultural Encounter* and *The Theology and Philosophy of Eliade: A Search for the Centre*.

This was a tough read for me: The author assumes a good level of familiarity with the postmodern philosophers under discussion, so I recommend studying them a bit before jumping into this book or, like me, you will have a tough time comprehending/following about 20 percent of the material.

That said, this is a unique work of serious comparative philosophy, one that can be read several times before it really sinks in. I am surprised by how well Dogen holds up against post-modern philosophers...a true testament to the genius and plasticity of the Buddhist tradition. The author does a really fantastic job of setting the Buddhist and post-modern philosophers side by side in dialogue with each other - you'd almost believe they really were.

This book is not a harsh discourse on deconstructionalism and the radicalism associated often with youthful postmodernism. Rather it is a beautiful discourse on the many parallels of Zen and philosophy in the 1900s. Strongly recommended. Also see Benoit's Zen and the Psychology of Transformation.

This book elucidates the thought of Dogen which is often ignored in books on important Buddhist thinkers. This in itself was appreciated but there is much more to be valued in this excellent book on comparative Postmodern thinking and Buddhism.

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