

with delusional misidentification syndromes which are not only pathological states of the human brain but are also inducible in healthy subjects by various manipulations or stimuli. What the clinical neurocognitive datum shows is how much these pathological states, much like ecstatic mystical states, are processes that challenge and disrupt the distinction between self and other.

While the mystic may interpret mystical techniques as “sacred or prophetic experiences that reveal mystical secrets about human or divine nature” (117), they can be comprehended through the neurocognitive science, which involves more neuro-imaging than brain mapping. The aim is to “stress the importance of the assemblage of technical, sociocultural, and linguistic factors for the construction of the human self, as based on physiological and neurocognitive characteristics that were altered by the use of ecstatic mystical techniques” (117). The challenge remains: to enable introspection to evolve in tandem with the rapid pace of technology, which is able now to measure so much in the neurocognitive domain.

Each author features his own appendix, introducing the general reader to particulars of neurology and ecstatic kabbalah respectively. The footnotes do little to elucidate the authors’ arguments, especially relating to primary and secondary sources on Jewish mysticism. I. is familiar with vast swaths of kabbalistic literature, but quoting an entire book in the notes rather than pointing to specific passages becomes very frustrating for the specialist and likely intimidating for the non-specialist. Also lacking are any aids for further reading and reflection, especially for the theologian, including an index of scriptural or mystical references.

Avoiding anachronistic modernist methodologies in the humanities, I. and A. offer another approach to mysticism. Advances in theory, clinical studies, and neuro-imaging technology are fruitful when applied as a methodological lens of interpretation to the phenomenology of mystical states described in kabbalistic texts. I. is to be commended for continuing to think critically about kabbalah, expanding the discourse beyond the humanities and into dialogue with science.

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Jesus and Buddha: Friends in Conversation. By Roger Haight and Paul Knitter.
Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015. Pp. xvii + 253. \$26.

This volume is based on a seminar taught by Paul Knitter in 2012 at Union Theological Seminary in New York, for which Roger Haight was a resource person. Each chapter has a similar structure, either a Buddhist perspective (K.) or a Christian perspective (H.), and then a response from the other tradition; each chapter ends with a joint “It seems to us” section. The topics are wide-ranging: spirituality; dialogue; the teachings of Buddha and Jesus; their identities; ultimate reality; the source and destiny of the world; the problem and potential inherent in human nature; words and silence; attaining peace by working for justice; double religious belonging. The topics are dealt with

thoughtfully, with nuance, and guided by a desire to find common ground even while acknowledging differences: Jesus and the Buddha, and their teachings, always turn out to have much more in common than differentiates them. Though neither K. nor H. merely accepts what the other says, neither pushes hard on the acknowledged difficult questions. The book flows along, a work of friendship that hopes to explain how Jesus and Buddha would be friends (as K. and H. are friends) and how each of us can befriend even her or his inner “religious other.” Thus it might serve as a fruitful introduction to theology in pluralistic seminary and college classrooms.

What distinguishes the book is the idea of a Buddhist–Christian theological conversation. That H. is a Catholic Christian, a faithful Jesuit, and a “single believer,” is indisputable. More novel is the idea that K., who speaks here as a Christian and as a Buddhist-Christian, offers on each topic the “Buddhist perspective” and “a Buddhist response.” K. still has a very recognizable Christian resonance to his voice; that he can or should speak as a Buddhist-Christian is not self-evident, and this is why, at the book’s start, he admits that he is not “a formally trained Buddhist scholar but a Christian who has done his best to understand the variety of Buddhist traditions,” one who “has incorporated Buddhism into his own Christian spirituality and speaks in particular out of his study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism” (xii). Refreshingly, H., ever clear and calm, plays the role of a sympathetic interlocutor, responding with a typical steadiness to K.’s Buddhist-Christian, multi-voiced reflections.

The book’s Christian and Buddhist-Christian hybrid will not entirely satisfy those seeking a more traditional version of Buddhist–Christian dialogue. For that we might even return to *The Raft Is Not The Shore* (1975), the more straightforward conversations of Thich Nhat Hanh and Daniel Berrigan. Or, H. might have written such a book with a contemporary Buddhist; K. himself might have dialogued with his Buddhist teacher John Makransky, professor at Boston College.

Or perhaps it is a mistake to make too much of an author’s identity. Allow me a personal example. For over four decades I have studied Hinduism, learning deeply from its many strands. I too have experienced a deepening and enriching of my Christian faith through this long study of another religion. My writing is less autobiographical, dedicated rather to journeying through Hindu learning back to Christian faith and theology, with a rather low-key “including theology”: the Christ-centered believer finds room in her or his life and theology for deep learning of the other, and the resulting insights require no admission of hybridity or hyphen on the author’s part: I am “just” a Catholic and Jesuit who has for more than four decades studied Hinduism deeply. Like H., I still find myself graced to remain nothing but a companion of Jesus. Deep study of the other will at its best foster interreligious friendships and a more complex spiritual and theological awareness, but such study might also gently push aside concerns about new hyphenated identities and the achievements of this or that interesting authorial self.

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