



Bernard Faure. *Double Exposure: Cutting across Buddhist and Western Discourses.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. xiv + 174 pp. \$23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8047-4348-8; \$52.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-4347-1.



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Published on H-Buddhism (December, 2004)

In some ways, this book seems quite different from other publications by Bernard Faure, including several books that were also translated from French such as *Visions of Power* (1996) and *Will to Orthodoxy* (1997), which have a specific focus on the practice of Chan or on gender issues in Buddhism. *Double Exposure* deals with broad, wide-ranging philosophical themes concerning Buddhist thought set in comparative contexts with Western intellectual history since the Enlightenment, especially continental European philosophy. Faure is well known from previous works for his extensive explorations of post-structural theory in examining historical and doctrinal buddhological issues. Clearly, however, this book was intended primarily not for Buddhist studies scholars but for an audience of French intellectuals and cultural critics, encompassing, but also more diverse, than the academic community, who wish to understand how the discourse of Buddhism pertains to, yet remains distinct, from their own recent history of thought. Rather than citing a particular set of poststructural thinkers to illuminate Buddhism, Faure does the converse and uses Buddhism to make key points about the development of Western thought.

At the same time, *Double Exposure* is consistent with and an extension of Faure's earlier books in that it tracks the role of the twofold or double in its various manifes-

tations, both in Buddhist thought and in methodological approaches to interpreting Buddhism. Faure is endlessly fascinated by and delights in exposing the fact that the Buddhist tradition, which claims to espouse a standpoint of nondualism, invariably and inevitably divvies up reality into an endless series of polarities and paradoxes regarding the apparent oppositions or contradictions between the realms of nirvana and samsara, karmic causality and transcendence of karma, ultimate and mundane reality (or two levels of truth), and sudden and gradual enlightenment. He asserts, "the history of Buddhism ... seems to be governed by what Bergson, in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, suggested calling the 'law of dichotomy,' a law which apparently brings about a realization, by a mere splitting, of tendencies which began by being two views, so to speak, of one and the same tendency" (p. 124).

In addition to Bergson, Faure cites classical notions like the Platonic division between the ideal form and the world of concrete forms, the two-faced Roman god Janus who rules over past and future, and the Manichean split between good and evil. Faure also emphasizes more recent French thinkers and scholars, including Emile Beneviste, Nayla Farouki, Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Henri Michaux, among others, who, in probing the "diabolical" sense of truth versus

error (which are considered eternal contraries in Western thought, especially Christianity), are useful for discussing parallels and differences with Buddhism. *Double Exposure* also examines interpretive debates about whether Buddhism should be seen as epitomizing agnosticism versus mysticism, pragmatism versus supernaturalism, or rationalism versus mythology, as well as conflicts in using the method of psychology as opposed to anthropology and the impact of hidden, or not-so-hidden, Orientalist and reverse Orientalist tendencies. Perhaps the best organized chapter in the book is “The Major Schools” (chapter 5), which offers a quick but insightful overview of early Buddhist realism, Yogacara idealism, the Madhyamika middle way, and Chan’s compromise between immanence and transcendence. The most imaginative section is “External Thought” (chapter 8), which delves into a vast array of topics. These range from Tantric sexuality as a form of spiritual energy and Diderot’s view of the perpetual shifting of ordinary thought to Zongmi’s image of the bright pearl as a metaphor for sudden realization compared with Paul Claudel’s own pearl metaphor in *Conversations dans le Loir-et-Cher* which evokes a gradual path of self-understanding.

I think Faure’s main aim in all his many publications is to explore and expose the wedges, gaps, and inconsistencies, without making a judgment other than to underscore that what is said by the tradition may well not be what is done. Or, to give the situation a different spin, we may find that held within the doing there is revealed a double of the saying, as with the practice of ritual iconography that at once reflects and contradicts the iconoclastic conceptualization. Additional images of doubleness are Wittgenstein’s duck-rabbit which has the

beak of the former and the ears of the latter, and M. C. Escher’s distinctive recursive imagery, both of which indicate the kaleidoscopic intertwining of seemingly contrary perspectives.

Where does this leave us, hopelessly chasing after our tail? According to Faure’s presentation in this book, the way out of the square of contradiction is to encircle it endlessly, as with the magic circle of the *mandala* or the circular form traced out on the ground by Kant, “out of which one could not step on pain of being ruled out of the game” (p. 47). This condition also resembles both the Heideggerian hermeneutic circle in which we acknowledge that our conclusions often precede investigation and the ancient *junkenpo* game that is still popular in Japan of rock-paper-scissors. Or, according to a story told by Georges Didi-Huberman, there is the “vicious pseudocircle” (p. 138) in saying that a tightrope dancer does not fall because of the balancing pole and the pole does not fall because of the dancer.

Faure might have also included the final section of the *Tsurezuregusa* by Kenko, in which a father admits he is bested by his inquiring son, who drives him “into a corner” with a series of queries about the Buddha, to which the father, after a number of regressions, finally retorts, “I suppose [the first Buddha] fell from the sky or else he sprang up out of the earth.”[1] I think Faure would agree, it must be one or the other, or perhaps a combination of the two.

Note

[1]. *Essays in Idleness*, trans. Donald Keene (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981, rpt. Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 201.

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Citation: Stephen Heine. Review of Faure, Bernard, *Double Exposure: Cutting across Buddhist and Western Discourses*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. December, 2004.

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