

Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought

By Brook Ziporyn

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"Other than the devil, there is no Buddha; other than the Buddha, there is no devil." The Chinese monk Siming Zhili (960-1028) uttered this remark as part of his justification for his self-immolation. An exposition of the intent, implications, and resonances of this one sentence, this book expands and unravels the context in which the seeming paradox of the ultimate identity of good and evil is to be understood. In analyzing this idea, Brook Ziporyn provides an overview of the development of Tiantai thought from the fifth through the eleventh centuries in China and contributes to our understanding of Chinese intellectual culture and Chinese Buddhism, as well as to basic ontological, epistemological, and axiological issues of interest in modern philosophy.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap
"Other than the devil, there is no Buddha; other than the Buddha, there is no devil". The Chinese Tiantai Buddhist monk Siming Zhili (960-1028) uttered this remark as part of his justification for his planned self-immolation. As an exposition of the intent, implications, and resonances of this one sentence, this book expands and unravels the context in which the seeming paradox of the ultimate identity of good and evil -- or to use another of Zhili's memorable phrases, "the ultimacy of the dung beetle" -- is to be understood. This value paradox in Tiantai Buddhist thought is centered on the notion of the inherent evil in the Buddha nature, a doctrine that sets this school apart from all other forms of Buddhism. In analyzing this idea -- and the related concepts of holism, intersubjectivity, and value theory that are its foundation -- Brook Ziporyn provides an overview of the development of Tiantai thought from the fifth through the eleventh centuries in China and contributes to our understanding of Chinese intellectual culture and Chinese Buddhism, as well as to basic ontological, epistemological, and axiological concepts. In the conclusion, he looks at these ideas from a wider perspective by teasing out the philosophical and moral implications of Zhili's ideas.

About the Author
Brook Ziporyn is Assistant Professor of Asian Religion and Philosophy at Northwestern University.

Users Review

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