



# The Formless Self

*Joan Stambaugh*

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*Bringing together the depth insights of eastern and western traditions, this book places the topic of the self in a new context.*

"I confess that this work--from the perspective of exposition, analysis, interpretation, application, and stimulation--is, I believe, just about as good as it gets. This book is an unexcelled example of *comparative* philosophy. Stambaugh's uses of Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Tillich, etc. to illumine Buddhist sensibilities is discreet, even-handed, and nuanced to a degree that comparativists seldom achieve. My greatest concern about this book is that it might not be followed by another one from the same hand." -- David L. Hall, co-author with Roger Ames of *Thinking from the Han*

Gathering and interpreting material that is not readily available elsewhere, this book discusses the thought of the Japanese Buddhist philosophers Dogen, Hisamatsu, and Nishitani. Stambaugh develops ideas about the self culminating in the concept of the Formless Self as formulated by Hisamatsu in his book *The Fullness of Nothingness* and the essay "The Characteristics of Oriental Nothingness," and further explicated by Nishitani in his book *Religion and Nothingness*. These works show that Oriental nothingness has nothing to do with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western concept of nihilism. Instead, it is a positive phenomenon, enabling things to be.

"So much of contemporary Western thought is in a deep struggle to revision and reinvent a more profound sense of 'self.' And Stambaugh's narrative strikes right at the core of this effort, bringing the most advanced thinking in East and West into a creative synthesis. She brings out how the nondual discourse of the Self is profoundly different from any tradition that situates its hermeneutic within the dualistic patterns of Subject/Object thinking. At this point in our evolution it is particularly important for thinkers in the Western traditions who struggle to reach a 'postmodern' vision of the Subject or Self to have a direct encounter with the classical powers of nondual thinking about the Self--the Formless Self." -- Ashok Gangadean, Haverford College

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