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Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New Directions Paperbook)

Thomas Merton

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Thomas Merton : Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New Directions Paperbook) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New Directions Paperbook):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Merton Offers Sharp Insight on Virtues of Christ in a Broad Cultural ContextBy CustomerMerton insightfully uses Zen and Eastern concepts of desire and connection to illuminate the basic human issues of spiritual burden--appetite, or desire.In "Birds of Appetite", Fr. Merton does not denigrate features of Eastern culture as a foil, but instead he explores them to uncover a deep existential problem present across

cultures, which is inherent in the nature of human will. In his work, he references, Bonhoeffer, D.T. Suzuki, among others to show how we can become burdened by our own will and desires when we pursue them in ignorance of the will of others, of universal forces, and, yes, of God. The book is delightfully accessible. And Merton convincingly delivers in showing Christ's redemptive sacrifice as, both, a unique event and a profound way for individuals to find peace and reconciliation with themselves and in creation.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. An Important Collection
By Bro. John This is a collection of essays published over the years dealing with Thomas Merton's great interest in Eastern Religion, especially Buddhism and more precisely Zen Buddhism. Merton had perhaps one of the clearest understanding of Zen, and in the ways which it came close to touching western mysticism in some of the Rhenish Mystics (Eckhart and Ruysbroek) and even St. John of the Cross. The final Essay is a dialogue between Merton and the great Japanese Zen Master D. T. Suzuki, a treasure of a document. Two of the greatest minds of the twentieth century coming together from totally different cultures and meeting in the harmonious atmosphere as two monks having tea together. A wonderful read.¹ of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not for a novice but a wonderful conversation
By George J. Smith This is a conversation between Merton, a devout Trappist Monk versed in the traditions of Buddhism, and DT Suzuki, a Buddhist Zen Master. The conversation discloses the commonality of the goals of each discipline. You will need to wrap your head around the Christian tenets of Constant Prayer and sacrifice of one's life in devotion to God and the Buddhist doctrine of emptying one's self to become one with the universe. Heady reading, but surprising in it's conclusion.

Merton, one of the rare Western thinkers able to feel at home in the philosophies of the East, made the wisdom of Asia available to Westerners. "Zen enriches no one," Thomas Merton provocatively writes in his opening statement to *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*--one of the last books to be published before his death in 1968. "There is no body to be found. The birds may come and circle for a while... but they soon go elsewhere. When they are gone, the 'nothing,' the 'no-body' that was there, suddenly appears. That is Zen. It was there all the time but the scavengers missed it, because it was not their kind of prey." This gets at the humor, paradox, and joy that one feels in Merton's discoveries of Zen during the last years of his life, a joy very much present in this collection of essays. Exploring the relationship between Christianity and Zen, especially through his dialogue with the great Zen teacher D.T. Suzuki, the book makes an excellent introduction to a comparative study of these two traditions, as well as giving the reader a strong taste of the mature Merton. Never does one feel him losing his own faith in these pages; rather one feels that faith getting deeply clarified and affirmed. Just as the body of "Zen" cannot be found by the scavengers, so too, Merton suggests, with the eternal truth of Christ.