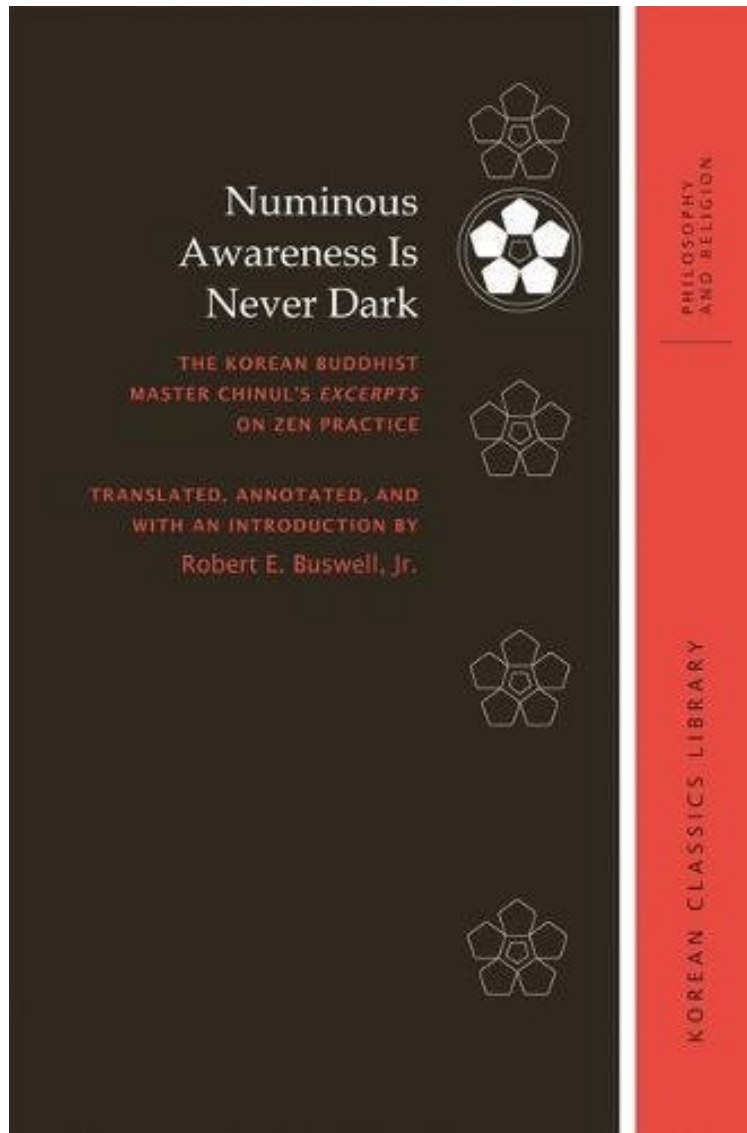


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Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark: The Korean Buddhist Master Chinuls Excerpts on Zen Practice (Korean Classics Library: Philosophy and Religion)

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Buddhist Master Chinuls Excerpts on Zen Practice (Korean Classics Library: Philosophy and Religion):

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Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark examines the issue of whether enlightenment in Zen Buddhism is sudden or gradual—that is, something intrinsic to the mind that is achieved in a sudden flash of insight or something extrinsic to it that must be developed through a sequential series of practices. This sudden/gradual issue was one of the crucial debates that helped forge the Zen school in East Asia, and the Korean Zen master Chinuls (1158-1210) magnum opus, *Excerpts*, offers one of the most thorough treatments of it in all of premodern Buddhist literature. According to Chinuls analysis, enlightenment is both sudden and gradual. Zen practice must begin with a sudden awakening to the numinous awareness—the sentience, or buddha-nature—that is inherent in all sentient beings. Such an awareness does not need to be developed but must simply be recognized (or better re-recognized), through the unmediated experience of insight. Even after this initial awakening, however, deeply engrained proclivities of thought and conduct may continue to disturb the practitioner; these can only be removed gradually as his or her practice matures. Chinuls sudden awakening/gradual cultivation soteriology became emblematic of the Buddhist tradition in Korea. *Excerpts*, translated here in its entirety by the preeminent Western specialist in the Korean Buddhist tradition, goes on to examine Chinuls treatments of many of the quintessential practices of Zen Buddhism, including nonconceptualization, or no-thought, and the concurrent development of meditation and wisdom, as well as, for the first time in Korean Zen, examining meditative topics (kanhwa) what we in the West know better as kans, after its later Japanese analogues. Fitting this new technique into his preferred soteriological schema of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation was no simple task for Chinul. *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark* offers an extensive study of the contours of the sudden/gradual debate in Buddhist thought and practice and traces the influence of Chinuls analysis of this issue throughout the history of the Korean tradition. Copiously annotated, the work contains extensive selections from the two traditional Korean commentaries to the text. In Buswells treatment, *Chinuls Excerpts* emerges as the single most influential work written by a Korean Buddhist author.

Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark is a significant contribution to the Korean Classics Library: Philosophy and Religion Series. Buswell's translation of Chinul's masterwork *Excerpts* is lucid and full of aids for the dedicated reader. It is a must read for students of Korean thought and religion, particularly students of Korean Buddhism, because it is one of the seminal writings of the Korean Buddhist tradition since its compilation in the early thirteenth century, and it is pertinent to Korean Buddhist thought today.-- "Acta Koreana, 20:1" *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark* is a significant contribution to the Korean Classics Library: Philosophy and Religion Series. Buswells translation of Chinuls masterwork *Excerpts* is lucid and full of aids for the dedicated reader. It is a must read for students of Korean thought and religion, particularly students of Korean Buddhism, because it is one of the seminal writings of the Korean Buddhist tradition since its compilation in the early thirteenth century, and it is pertinent to Korean Buddhist thought today. (Acta Koreana, 20:1) About the Author Robert E. Buswell, Jr. holds the Irving and Jean Stone Endowed Chair in Humanities at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he is also Distinguished Professor of Buddhist Studies in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and founding director of the university's Center for Buddhist Studies and Center for Korean Studies.