Leighton, Taigen Daniel. *Bodhisattva Archetypes: Classic Buddhist Guides to Awakening and their Modern Expressions*. New York: Penguin Arkana, 1998, xviii + 364 pages, ISBN: 0–14–019556–4 (paper), US $14.95.

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The first words of this lovely volume's preface tell us much: "This book is an introduction to the psychology of bodhisattva practice, imagery, and imagination, directed at the many Westerners now exploring traditional resources for spiritual values and for wholesome, productive lifestyles" (p. ix). In this sentence Taigen Daniel Leighton writes as the Sōtō Zen priest and *Dharma* holder he is, spreading the *Dharma* in a new and constructive way. But over most of the next two pages, Leighton sounds more like the scholar he also is, noting that though he introduces the great *bodhisattvas* and their practices, he cannot aspire to be comprehensive; nor can he ignore the fact that Mahāyāna rhetoric needs to be reclaimed from the social realities of Mahāyāna countries and Mahāyāna history. This committed but reflexive quality permeates the whole of *Bodhisattva Archetypes* and gives it power that scholarly works seldom strive for and accuracy that apologetic works seldom achieve.

A *Tricycle* review of this book would surely evaluate its Buddhology and practitioner-friendliness. Such a review indeed would respond to the book's main objective: to bring an awareness of the transcendent and imminent aspects of *bodhisattvas* and *bodhisattva* practice to the lives of Western readers. This review, though, is appearing in an academic journal, so it will evaluate Leighton's work from a more scholarly perspective. I will describe the book with an eye toward the question of how scholars

might use it. I'll give away the ending by stating right now that this book has real classroom potential.

Leighton frames the book's central chapters with three introductory chapters (sixty-three pages on the *bodhisattva* ideal, on Mahāyāna, and on the *pāramitās*) and a closing chapter that brings the book right into the reader's life. Leighton allows that readers familiar with Mahāyāna might want to "skim" the first three chapters (p. xi), but despite my familiarity, I found those chapters foundational to understanding the book.

Leighton begins by presenting the *bodhisattva* ideal and then *bodhisattvas* themselves as archetypes. He defines *bodhisattvas* not simply as psychological reductions or as cosmic forces, but rather both (pp. 14–15). This allows them to be models for our own *bodhisattva* expression, and Leighton plainly holds this expression as a personal and collective goal. As for his presentations of contemporary figures as *bodhisattvas*, they are "speculations," not "ironclad," but "playful" (p. 5). His presentation of the Four Inconceivable Vows is quite penetrating in a contemporary Zen fashion, but also manages to remain descriptive of historical reality. For example, Leighton writes of the fourth vow (as he translates it: "The Buddha Way is unsurpassable, I vow to realize it"), "This is a psychological orientation and direction, and also the fundamental formal ritual and practice of Buddhism" (p. 13). This, in very condensed fashion, displays Leighton's balance of foregrounding his very clear expression of Mahāyāna mind and, in the background, evoking religious ritual, doctrine, and history. This is just the opposite of scholarly works (let alone textbooks), where ritual, doctrine, and history predominate. Yet in Leighton's hands this not contradictory to them. This brings me to perhaps this review's most important point: this chapter, the first three chapters, in fact the entire book, would be most suitable for teaching Buddhism at the undergraduate level—the chapter perhaps in a survey course on religion, the three chapters perhaps in a course on Buddhism, the whole book perhaps as the central text for a course on Mahāyāna.

Concerning teaching with this book, I have to mention that Leighton has eliminated the use of diacriticals. While for the scholar, the lack of diacritical marks is slightly disconcerting, it will hardly cause confusion for students. In fact, I imagine this will help them focus on Buddhist practice, the intention of the book. The teacher would have to integrate this book with other sources that do use diacritics, but given a smooth integration, I strongly believe this is a suitable book for teaching.

The second chapter gives a simple introduction to the changes in Buddhism from early Buddhism to Mahāyāna. It then introduces basic types of *sūtras* and schools. These introductions were at times too brief for me,

yet were accurate and nonsectarian. The third chapter wraps up the introductory material by treating the *pāramitās*, which Leighton translates as the Ten Transcendent Practices. He defines them liberally, much in the manner of Robert Aitken Rōshi, whose work on the *pāramitās* Leighton cites. Because these *pāramitās* are the six classic perfections coupled with the four practices of *bodhisattvas* in the world, they form a fit transition to the book's main section. Still, the chapter seemed insufficiently connected to the *bodhisattvas* themselves and somehow imperfectly clear in describing the *pāramitās* as a template for Mahāyāna life and practice. This was the single place in the text where I did not clearly see the intent of Leighton's argument.

Bodhisattva Archetypes's substance is seven chapters covering Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, Maitreya, and Vimalakīrti, in that order. Leighton has chosen these figures because they express the primary values of Mahāyāna Buddhism and have become the objects of widespread devotion. One might argue that Vimalakīrti, the great householder *bodhisattva*, does not quite belong in this august company. Leighton's response, that his *sūtra* (the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeṣa Sūtra*) is "highly entertaining" spiritual reading (p. 275), is not really enough to justify his presence here. I think that Leighton includes him because Leighton likes his teaching and because his example is so useful for Western householder practitioners. More on this issue can be found below.

Leighton rightly treats Śākyamuni as the archetype of these archetypes, a human paradigm of the *bodhisattva* path. He covers the main events of Śākyamuni's *bodhisattva* phase (up to his awakening), then describes his practices and iconography, and lastly gives examples of modern-day human expressions of this archetype, as his subtitle promises. Leighton leads off with Muhammad Ali, and although he admits this may be "startling," to my mind he presents a powerful case for Ali (as well as Daniel Ellsberg, St. Francis, and Dōgen as embodying the Śākyamuni archetype (pp. 86–87). This method of treating the cosmic figure first, then progressing to contemporary exemplars, becomes the model for following chapters. Usually Leighton describes the *bodhisattva* and then mentions associated texts, practices, places, figures, and *pāramitās*; he always concludes with exemplars. This model effectively orients the reader, despite each *bodhisattva* requiring a somewhat different focus.

The chapter on Mañjuśrī associates him with the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and Mount Wutai, but also with Prajñāpāramitā as Mother of the Buddhas because Mañjuśrī is teacher of the Buddhas. This is one example (of many) in which Leighton analyzes the *bodhisattvas* and their rich associations as

if each one's mythos and history were dream material. I appreciate this approach to this rich material and find it evocative, which, I imagine, is just what Leighton wants it to be. Certainly *bodhisattva* myths and rituals are excellent candidates for psychological methods of study. Still, historically-minded scholars may have problems with a few of Leighton's associations, despite Leighton's consistently careful distinguishing between established associations and speculative ones. Particularly effective in this chapter is Leighton's treatment of James Joyce, whose brilliance made him a teacher of writers even when he was perhaps ironically effectively limited by his own skill-in-words (pp. 114–115). The point—that Joyce thus parallels Mañjuśrī in limitation as well as skill—is irresistible.

The chapters on Samantabhadra and Avalokiteśvara must cover an enormous territory. The detail with which Leighton describes Samantabhadra's variety of practices and cosmic scale and Avalokiteśvara's varied manifestations and their particular powers reveals their bewildering multiplicity. Leighton devotes significant attention to seven different forms of Avalokiteśvara and mentions more than a dozen others. Leighton has a linguistic background in the translation of Buddhist texts from Chinese and Japanese and so is particularly nuanced in analyzing the meaning of various names of Avalokiteśvara and their relations to texts and modes of worship and practice (pp. 177–184). This work both illuminates the textual history of this *bodhisattva* and grounds it in its cultural efflorescence. In doing this Leighton appropriately includes the miracle stories so central to Avalokiteśvara, even mentioning a modest story from his own life. This inclusion is the kind of thing that separates this book from standard scholarly work. Yet I do not find that this inclusion detracts from the reliability of Leighton's presentation. On the contrary, it shows us where Leighton stands, and that is the foundation of all good teaching.

The Kṣitigarbha chapter concentrates on his Japanese form, Jizō, due to his popularity. Leighton interestingly suggests the idea of Jizō as shaman (due to his travel through other realms, spirit helper, self-sacrifice, etc.) , but does not develop the idea enough to satisfy an academic audience. Although this is not his intention, here is one place where I was frustrated and wished at least for scholarly references to pursue. They were not forthcoming here or many other places. Although Leighton does cite his sources in an annotated bibliography and does provide endnotes for most chapters, he is only trying to keep his readers oriented, not provide a full scholarly apparatus for the book.

Maitreya's chapter provides the most historical context of any, treating Maitreya's appearance in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and especially his rise in Yogāchāra thought, including that of Asaṇga and,

later, Xuancang (pp. 244–252). Leighton also manages to work in many of Maitreya's historical prefigurings: Hotei, Mahāsattva Fu, Kūkai, and Ryōkan, as well as the White Lotus cults (pp. 257–265). Issues of time come up here, and Leighton treats them from a heavily Dōgen-influenced perspective (as befits Leighton's lineage).

Finally, the Vimalakīrti chapter gives Leighton and his readers a chance to work through a *sūtra* extremely popular with his target audience of Western Buddhist practitioners. Leighton guides the reader through the intensely non-dual teaching of the *sūtra*, especially its celebration of inverting spiritual hierarchies. More than in other chapters, the reader here gets the *bodhisattva* filtered through Leighton's American Sōtō perspective. But given Vimalakīrti's heightened prominence in just such circles, such a presentation may be appropriate. Leighton's presentation of Gary Snyder as an exemplar of Vimalakīrti is remarkably convincing (pp. 303–305) and itself forms an argument for the coherence of his position (by which I mean Leighton's *and* Snyder's, as their arguments tend to converge).

Bodhisattva Archetypes concludes with Leighton's highly compressed adaptive vision of what *bodhisattva* practice should be. In a truly beautiful and classically Mahāyāna passage, he evokes the presence of *bodhisattvas* in our lives (p. 315), and on the next page, Leighton surprises the reader by carrying her directly into a mindfulness meditation as she reads. In these passages Leighton writes with a special grace and humanity and teaches as a pure scholar cannot and should not. As he concludes, his ruling metaphor is stories, not archetypes. "Buddhist liberation is about fully knowing our stories, and not being trapped by them" (p. 318). He believes awareness frees us from our overdetermined stories and allows us to recast them in terms of *bodhisattva* stories. Through the power *of* and the power *over* story we all awaken together. It is a beautiful vision and unabashedly sincere.

What Leighton offers is the living tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism: diverse, mysterious, vibrant, real. This is, of course, exactly what more academic works so often fail to offer and what makes this book so valuable, despite its non-scholarly goals. I recommend *Bodhisattva Archetypes* to anyone interested in Mahāyāna practice, and I mean that to include both practitioners and scholars. I learned much from the book and will use it repeatedly for reference. But I and others will also turn to it for direction and inspiration in our personal *bodhisattva* practice. Finally, though for classroom use the book needs supplementing with more traditional pedagogic materials, in my reading it is exceptionally informed and reliable. I look forward to bringing Buddhism to life for my students with this informative and, finally, transformative work.