



The Sound of the One Hand: 281 Zen Koans with Answers (New York Review Books Classics)

By Yoel Hoffman

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When *The Sound of the One Hand* came out in Japan in 1916 it caused a scandal. Zen was a secretive practice, its wisdom relayed from master to novice in strictest privacy. That a handbook existed recording not only the riddling koans that are central to Zen teaching but also detailing the answers to them seemed to mark Zen as rote, not revelatory.

For all that, *The Sound of the One Hand* opens the door to Zen like no other book. Including koans that go back to the master who first brought the koan teaching method from China to Japan in the eighteenth century, this book offers, in the words of the translator, editor, and Zen initiate Yoel Hoffmann, “the clearest, most detailed, and most correct picture of Zen” that can be found. What we have here is an extraordinary introduction to Zen thought as lived thought, a treasury of problems, paradoxes, and performance that will appeal to artists, writers, and philosophers as well as Buddhists and students of religion.

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Editorial Review

Review

“The very strain of koan meditation [found in *The Sound of the One Hand*] is not unlike the self-imposed strain of a creative mathematician, writer, or artist. Such a person deliberately sets himself difficult problems, and deliberately renews them once they have been solved in order to compose or harmonize or solve himself.” —Ben-Ami Scharfstein

“Koans aim for the complete destruction of the rational intellect.” —Carl Jung

About the Author

Yoel Hoffmann was born in 1937. He received his PhD in the philosophy of religion and Buddhism from Kyoto University, Japan, and went on to teach Eastern philosophy at the University of Haifa. In addition to his works of fiction, he is the author of several books on Zen Buddhism, comparative philosophy, and Japanese poetry. Hoffmann has been awarded the Koret Jewish Book Award, the Newman Prize of Hebrew Literature by Bar-Ilan University, and the Bialik Prize by the city of Tel Aviv. He lives in the Galilee.

Dror Burstein teaches literature at Tel Aviv University. He is the editor of the poetry journal *Helikon* and the recipient of the 1997 Jerusalem Prize for Literature. His books *Kin* and *Netanya* have been translated into English.

Users Review

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Stacey Eades:

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Irene Gonzales:

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