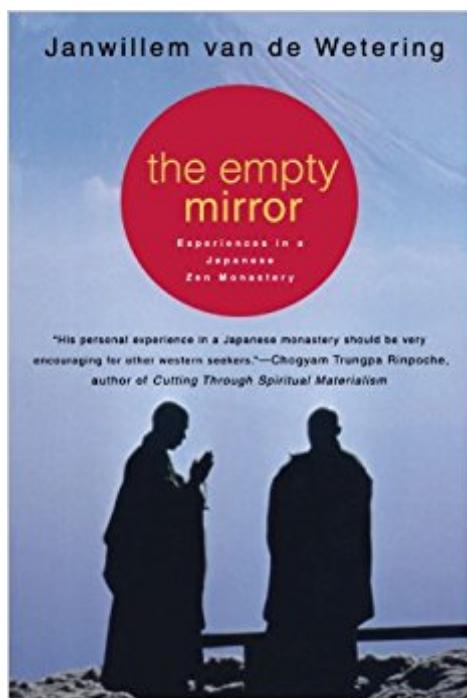


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# The Empty Mirror: Experiences In A Japanese Zen Monastery



## Synopsis

Seen by many as a contemporary classic, Janwillem van de Wetering's small and admirable memoir records the experiences of a young Dutch student—later a widely celebrated mystery writer—who spent a year and a half as a novice monk in a Japanese Zen Buddhist monastery. As Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, author of *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, has written, *The Empty Mirror* "should be very encouraging for other Western seekers." It is the first book in a trilogy that continues with *A Glimpse of Nothingness* and *Afterzen*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nearly 30 years ago, van de Wetering, who would later achieve fame as a mystery novelist, published *The Empty Mirror*, about his experiences at a Zen monastery in Japan in the mid-60s. In 1975, he published a sequel, *A Glimpse of Nothingness*, about his stint at the Moon Springs Hermitage in Maine. Now the author has written a follow-up, *AfterZen*, told from the perspective of an aging soul who dropped most formal Zen practice years ago but still carries an abiding respect for the gut truths of the teaching and for at least some of its teachers. Much of the book has the air of the classic Zen saying, "If you see the Buddha on the road, kill him": with humor and occasional crankiness, van de Wetering knocks koans, meditation and some of the trappings of the monastic Zen life. There are many flashbacks, to Japan, to his American experiences, to meetings with fellow ex-students, and the book has a somewhat chaotic feel, rather more like life than art. Throughout, van de Wetering's voice is sincere, if iconoclastic. Those looking for composed wisdom should read

Basho; those looking for an honest memoir by a perhaps wise man will find this to their taste. One Spirit alternate. (June) FYI: Also in June, van de Wetering's two earlier books, which have been out of print, are being reissued by St. Martin's/Dunne; Empty Mirror: \$10.95 paper 160p ISBN 0-312-20774-3; Glimpse: \$11.95 paper 192p ISBN -20945-2). Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

“This small and memorable memoir records the experiences of a young Dutch student who spent a year and a half as a novice monk in a Japanese Zen Buddhist monastery . . . What makes this account extraordinary is that the book contains none of the convert's irritating certitude.”  
“What is accessible is the day-to-day description of life, of the monks themselves and of the others he met, of the jokes they played and the food they ate, of the moments of satori, the explosive moment of an understanding surpassing understanding.”  
Los Angeles Times

This is a story of a Dutchman who visits Japan in 1958, arriving without language skills or much else other than an introduction to a Zen master and his Buddhist temple. The content is very everyday, gritty and down-to-earth, and I think that's the right way to approach the Buddhist religion. I sympathized very much with Janwillem's very painful efforts to sit properly and still (sazen style) for hours on end, with his long inflexible Western legs. It doesn't end well, or does it?

I read this book 20 years ago, and I recently had the desire to read it again. This is an excellent book! Enough said.

It gave an interesting outlook on Buddhism I had never really considered before. If you're looking to broaden your knowledge of religions this is definitely a good look into someone's mind during a transformation.

A great read. A must for anyone interested in Buddhism. I ordered the sequel to this book. His writing style is fantastic

I read this book for my college Buddhism course and really enjoyed every page. The book portrays an honest view of a westerner's experience in a Japanese Zen monastery. Through the authors humorous stories one gets insight to Buddhist teachings and the hardships he's faced with while

living the lifestyle of a monk. He faces many difficulties with adjusting to the Eastern way of life and developing the meaning to his koan. The book is an easy read and only requires little knowledge on Buddhism to enjoy and understand the stories. I recommend this book to anyone remotely interesting in Buddhism. Enjoy!

This is a simple account of JEs stay at a monastery. It's very readable, interesting, well written. I enjoyed the experience.

just read it, and start sitting. give the copy away, keep sitting, and after a while get another copy and read again. keep sitting. you'll want to do this each day, until you don't do it anymore.

The book was in great condition and came promptly. The story is very good. Very satisfied.

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