PACIFIC WORLD

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TWO SPECIAL SECTIONS:

Psychological Reflections on Buddhism
Introduction by Mark Unno

New Perspectives on Buddhist Modernism
Guest editor Jeff Wilson

FRONT COVER

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SPECIAL SECTION:
PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON BUDDHISM

Introductory Note

Mark Unno
University of Oregon

BEGINNING WITH 2004, the Center for Humanities, Religion, and Science at Ryukoku University of Japan; the Institute of Buddhist Studies; and the University of Oregon have been the central collaborators on research into the field of Buddhism and psychotherapy. Of these three institutions, the biggest driving force has been the Center for Humanities, Religion, and Science at Ryukoku University and its current director, Professor Naoki Nabeshima—recipient of three consecutive Twenty-First Century Center of Excellence grants from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology—and the largest contributor in terms of funding and resources. Also key have been the Institute of Buddhist Studies and its dean, Dr. Richard Payne, and various units within the University of Oregon including the Department of Religious Studies, the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, and the Oregon Humanities Center. In addition, the Institute for Philosophy & Religion, Boston University, and the then director, Dr. David Eckel, have also been instrumental in our collaboration as the host of the first of three international conferences held biannually from 2004 to 2008, the second and third conferences having been held at the University of Oregon and Ryukoku University, respectively.

From these efforts, three edited volumes have been published: *Buddhism and Psychotherapy across Cultures: Theories and Practices,* edited by Mark Unno (2006); *Shi to ai: inochi e no fukai rikai wo motomete* (Death and Life: In Search of a Deeper Understanding), edited by Naoki Nabeshima (2007); and *Kokoro no yamai to shūkyōsei: fukai keichō* (Psychopathology and Religiousness: Deep Listening), edited by Osamu Kuramitsu, Naoki Nabeshima, Yasunobu Okada, and Mark Unno (2008). Currently, two further volumes are planned, one each in English and Japanese. For

the forthcoming volume in English, we will be drawing upon papers presented at the previous two conferences in 2006 and 2008.

However, rather than include all papers from these two conferences in the upcoming volume, we have decided to publish a select number in the present issue of *Pacific World.* These include Hogen Bays' essay on silence, Takanori Sugioka's exposition on the dialectic of the three vows as found in the thought of Shinran, Veena Howard's on Gandhi and Buddhism, Naoki Nabeshima's examination of the story of Ajātaśatru from a Shin Buddhist perspective, and Marie Yoshida's analysis of family systems theory in light of the story of Ajātaśatru. All of these papers were part of the University of Oregon conference in 2006 except for that of Takanori Sugioka, which was presented in Kyoto in 2008.

The first three, by Bays, Sugioka, and Howard, do not directly address current methods and issues in clinical psychotherapy. However, they were very significant for the interdisciplinary elucidation they brought to our conference efforts, providing key points of reference and comparison from the perspectives of Zen Buddhist practice, Shin Buddhist thought, and Buddhism and Hinduism in the context of the work of Gandhi as spiritual and socio-political healer.

The last two essays two provide in-depth examinations of the story of Prince Ajātaśatru involving his regicide of his own father as well as imprisonment of his mother. Through the work of Japanese clinicians Heisaku Kosawa and Keigo Okonogi, this episode, a cornerstone of Shin Buddhism, has also become integral to the narratives of Japanese psychiatry and psychotherapy. Nabeshima and Yoshida's studies further our understanding of the significance of this story in Buddhist and family therapy contexts. These two papers, we felt, would be most illuminating for the readers of *Pacific World.*

Our critical, interdisciplinary inquiry has brought to light what has turned out to be the complex intersection of multiple Buddhisms and psychotherapies, the fruits of which will be borne out more fully in our upcoming edited volumes. However, the selection of essays presented here stand on their own for the contributions they have made to our ongoing investigations.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Richard Payne and Natalie Quli of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for all of their expert editorial work on this selection of papers.

On Silence

Hogen Bays
Great Vow Monastery, Oregon

TO REALLY HEAR we must be silent. Sound exists against a background of silence, just as the foreground is in contrast with what is behind it. When the background is clear and empty then the foreground is vivid and bright.

We all experience this background silence. When we hear a sound, whether it be a note or a symphony, it exists against the backdrop of silence and space. This is true not only of sound but also of the objects of the other five senses. Just as our planet rests in space, thought and sensation are surrounded by silence. The thoughts and ideas which we think of as our mind rest in space and stillness. Silence is around this moment. This background cannot be known with the intellect, because as soon as some "thing" is perceived it has already been distinguished from what is behind it. Because it is ubiquitous it is called Great Silence, Great Stillness, or Great Space. But, even Great Silence becomes just another idea as soon as the intellectual mind tries to know it.

To experience Great Silence it is first important to empty the mind of ideas, notions, and insights. One common way to do this is through Buddhist meditation. There are many types of Buddhist meditation, and they all require our attention to be fully engaged with what is, right here, right now. This process is not easy. Usually we have to proceed through several stages to touch deep silence. It is helpful to begin by creating ordinary silence, finding a quiet environment free from normal distractions. Then we can begin formal meditation, turning the attention inwards, using "mindfulness and insight." With mindfulness we first become aware of sensation, such as sound, and then with insight we look into it deeply. When we begin to meditate there is little awareness of silence. At first our attention is not focused on silence or sound, but on the endless stream of opinions, memories, and likes

and dislikes that obfuscate deeper awareness. Gradually, by letting go of distractions and repeatedly turning the attention back to the direct sensory experience of sound, sound becomes purified. There is "just sound." When a concentrated mind rests completely on pure sound then we can take a step backward into a greater awareness of the silence around the sound.

To be aware of vast silence enables us to hear what someone else is saying uncluttered by the background noise of our own thoughts. Just as in a silent room a faint sound maybe clearly heard, when our mind is deeply quiet we can hear subtleties of speech and presentation that otherwise would go unnoticed. To be silent inside is to be open, willing to receive what the speaker wishes us to hear. To deeply listen and hear the sounds of the world, we must be familiar with silence.

There is a classic Zen story of a professor who visited a Zen master. The master greeted him and offered him tea. The professor said, "Please teach me about Zen." The master began pouring tea. He continued pouring till the tea overflowed and splashed on the floor. "Stop, stop, the cup is full. No more will go in!" Master smiled and said, "Just so. You can't put more in a full container. Before you can learn, you must empty your mind."

The thinking mind is too full to know deep silence. It is always busy, separating this from that, defining, identifying, and creating. To experience deep silence the mind must be empty, not blurred by the interference of thoughts, opinions, worries, music, or images. These all require the mind to be active, engaged with past memories and future possibilities. When the mind rests in silence there are no or few thoughts. It is empty of judgment and opinion, free of fantasies of past and future. The mind, when it is silent, is always present. This is not a void, empty, dead state. It is like a vast universe of potential energy out of which all things arise.

Jizō Bosatsu (Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva 地蔵菩薩) represents the archetypical vow to relieve suffering in all six realms of existence. Compassionate people who work to relieve suffering encounter many kinds of frightening, dark, and difficult circumstances. How can we as budding bodhisattvas do this? With Great Silence. Deep inner silence is of high value to anyone who works with violence, catastrophe, death, or great suffering. Hearing stories of torture, abuse, or cruelty with an angry or anxious mind can lead to hopelessness and despair. But, if we listen from a place of deep silence we can maintain some equanimity

and clarity of mind. Inner silence is not anxious. Inner silence is not reactive. Inner silence allows us to hear things clearly and deeply, to hear things as they really are. When we know things as they really are then we can respond effectively without reactivity and burnout.

Deep silence is the source of creativity. When the mind is busy we tend to look at things through our filters, our opinions, and our assumptions based on our past experience. But silence can be experienced only now, so what comes into the view of the silent mind can be seen freshly. This fresh eye can look on problems with more flexibility and creativity. The restricted mental filters through which we habitually view the world dissolve, allowing new perspectives and creative approaches to old challenges. For example, many artists experience blocks in creativity. No matter how hard they try what they produce feels stale, uninspired, or just wrong. Often the cause is attempting to "think" their way through a problem by grasping at old ideas that no longer work. When artists stop the mind, stop exerting effort to make something happen and rest in alert, aware silence—then out of the unbounded mind of silence creativity blossoms anew.

Experiencing silence of the mind is not easy. It can even be frightening when we first touch it because all that we are accustomed to relying on disappears. We enter a state of "not knowing." In the ordinary way of thinking our lives are dependent on what and how much we know: knowing where we are, who we are, what we are going to do, what the outcome will be, and so on and on. The most important task of the maturing mind is to learn what will enable us to survive and succeed in society. Throughout life learning and being open to learning is essential for an intelligent life. But learning has an end. No matter how much we know there is always more that is unknown. Deep silence is the heart of the unknown, the Great Mystery. To let go, even for a few moments, of all that we know, and to step into the Great Mystery, can change our view of the world and of ourselves. We see that what we normally think of as "I" is only a small and pale reflection of our true nature, Deep Silence. To take this step is one of the perennial challenges of the spiritual path.

For people of our age, discovering the satisfaction and peace of silence is difficult. Silence is constantly challenged. Setting aside ignorance (Jpn. *mumyō* 無明, Skt. *avidyā*, Pāli *avijjā*; also Jpn. *chi* 癡 or Pāli *moha*, "delusion") for the moment, these threats to silence fall into two basic categories, trying to get something we want (Jpn. *ken* 慳, Skt.

rāga; also *lobha*, or *tṛṣṇā*), or trying to get rid of something we don't want (Jpn. *shin* 瞋, Pāli *dosa*, Skt. *dveṣa*). We are taught from an early age that we should be able to buy what we want. We are educated by the media on what we "should" have, and how we "should" get it. Applying this one-sided view, we attempt to get anything we think might bring peace and pleasure. We insist that with enough effort, the best technique, or the perfect environment, we will get what will make us happy. When this grasping state of mind is applied to the spiritual life we try to capture the peace and wisdom of silence as if it were one more thing we could buy. But this attempt to get something, to "get" silence, to "make" inner peace happen, creates so much noise that real silence cannot be heard. Because this noise obscures the deep truth of our lives, some people are driven into ever greater frantic activity of the mind. To sit with a distressed person and guide his or her attention to what is present, to help him or her learn to quiet the mind, gives that person a touch of peace. In the Zen Buddhist tradition this is one of the principles that is used in private interview (Jpn. *sanzen* 参禅, or *dokusan* 獨參). The teacher sits, calmly in a quiet room, with his or her mind still, without judgment or expectation, waiting for a student to arrive. When the student enters this environment, sits quietly, and breaths attentively, the student resonates with the teacher's state of mind. In this way little by little the student can learn to feel the silence in him- or herself that is always present.

However, instead of delving into the silence of the Great Mystery, much of our society tries to get rid of it. As a culture we are averse to silence, often afraid of it. We have used our technical skills to try to fill silence, cover it over, with music, radio, television, movies, and iPods. People walk down the street in their own separate world of sound, wired directly into the ear. In most buildings, from homes to shopping malls, there is ubiquitous sound. Movies bombard all of the senses with sounds so intense they can be felt and seen. In the war against silence, we have created the greatest cacophony in human history, where inner and outer noise pollution has become so extreme that it is regarded as "normal." But it is not normal. Paying attention in this environment becomes like trying to have a conversation on a cell phone with poor reception in a crowded room with rock music playing. Without the ability to rest in silence, to know what is behind all of the noise, we become confused, unable to think clearly, unable to focus, distracted. To be healthy we must know silence.

The main weapon in the war against silence is desire or craving (Jpn. *ai* 愛, Skt. *tṛṣṇā*). Environmental noise covers over one level of silence, but it does not stop at the ear drum. As a culture we have chosen to subject ourselves to the relentless bombardment of noisy advertising. This goes directly into the mind. In silence there is no separation and therefore no desire. But when we attune our mind to the seductive noise of the world we become full of desires for things we do not have and did not know existed. Through media we begin to live stirred up, full of artificially generated emotions, which give us the illusion of living an exciting, pleasure-filled life. Instead, dissatisfaction and dismay (Jpn. *ku* 苦, Skt. *duḥkha*) with our self-generated insufficiency are the results. By trying to treat our dismay with still more noise, more desire, we fuel the source of suffering. The suffering that we then feel leads to violence by humans against the rest of the natural world. As the second noble truth says, "Craving is the origin of suffering." Through craving we turn away from what we have always had, is always with us, in us, around us—silence.

But the deep silence that is underneath all things is always present, always available. It is not relative so it is worth nothing. It cannot be created, used up, bought, or sold. It cannot be killed, blown up, or destroyed. It can only be hidden, and what is hidden can be found. This is the eternal truth of Buddhism, that peace, nirvana, freedom is always possible. The Great Silence, Great Stillness, Great Space is the source of all things. It is Wisdom (Jpn. *chi* 智, Skt. *prajñā*), in which there is no distinguishing, no past, no future, no color, sound, taste, touch, sensation, or thought. And, though we may know about this possibility, we only recognize and understand through practice how far the power of silence extends. To know this we must listen with our whole body and mind.

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The Dialectic of the Three Vows as an Expression of Shinran's Religious Experience

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PREFACE

One of the characteristics of Shinran's thought is its great emphasis on interior religious awareness and experience. Leaving behind the traditional framework of communal practice, and instead seeing himself directly in light of the cosmic reality of Buddhist awakening, Shinran articulated a vision of self-realization based upon the overturning of the ego-self and the awakening of the deepest reality of the self as cosmic personality. In the traditional terms of Buddhist philosophy, this can be understood as being fully in accord with the core teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Perhaps the most important of the core teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism is that all beings may attain buddhahood. According to Buddhologist Junjiro Takakusu, "The Buddha is the completion of personality on a cosmic scale."[1] The complete cosmic personality is that which, having overcome the dualistic orientation of the self-centered ego that is based in delusion and blind passions, manifests the heart and mind of one who transcends this visible universe in both time and space. The vast mind of the Buddha refers to a compassion that is based in non-dual wisdom. The great compassionate one sees the suffering of all other beings as inseparable from self, is aware of the equality of all things, and manifests the wisdom of the Buddha that sees the unhindered working of dharma in all things. The Buddha brings to fruition non-dual wisdom as it necessarily appears as great compassion at work in all sentient beings.

It is likewise with Shinran's Shin Buddhism. That is, the path to enlightenment and buddhahood is to express the right wisdom and

compassion; it is not the path of extreme asceticism or petitionary prayer. According to Shinran, in *mappō,* the final degenerate age of the dharma, the only path to attain non-dual wisdom is to "attain the true and real entrusting"[2] of the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, that is, Amida Buddha. True entrusting comes from the pure mind of the Buddha that is free from the doubt and blind passion of sentient beings, "the mind that leads sentient beings to unsurpassed nirvana,"[3] the mind that has already been directed towards and bestowed upon all sentient beings. Sentient beings awaken to the compassionate mind of the Buddha in the form of the forty-eight vows created by Amida while still in the stage of bodhisattvahood with compassion and mercy for all.

In general, the religious turning over of mind is called "metanoeia" (*eshin* 廻心). However, Shinran states, "Metanoeia is the overturning of self power [into other power]."[4] Self-power is false "reliance on one's body, mind, ability, and supposed virtues."[5] Thus, the attainment of true entrusting is to turn over self-power by virtue of the Buddha's great compassion.

Through such an experience, the old Shinran died, and the new Shinran was born, one who irrevocably set forth on the path to the completion of cosmic personality.

THE *LOCUS CLASSICUS* OF THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS

Shinran writes very little about his own personal life. We have very little biographical information about him, and ideas concerning the hardships he faced in his religious quest are largely inferential. Most of his statements concern his existential state and relate the sense of his living deeply in gratitude to the Buddha's great compassion and the profound karmic evil of his existence as a foolish being illuminated by the Buddha's infinite light. One of the few places where he writes personally can be found in the "Chapter on the Transformed Land" of his magnum opus, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching Practice, *Shinjin*, and Realization), where he briefly describes the process of his religious transformation:

> Thus I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni, through reverently accepting the exposition of [Master Vasubandhu,] author of the Treatise, and depending on the guidance of Master [Shan-tao], have forever left behind the temporary gate of the myriad practices, the various good acts, and the birth attained beneath the twin Sala trees.

> Turning about, I entered the true gate of the root of good and the root of virtue, and wholeheartedly awakened the mind leading to the birth that is inconceivable.
>
> I have now decisively left behind the "true" gate of provisional means and, [my self-power] overturned, have entered the ocean of the selected Vow. Having swiftly become free of the mind leading to the birth that is difficult to conceive, I am assured of attaining the birth that is inconceivable. How truly profound in intent is the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth!
>
> Having forever entered the ocean of the Vow, I now realize deeply the Buddha's benevolence.[6]

This has come to be known as the passage on the "dialectic of the three vows." The three vows are the nineteenth, twentieth, and eighteenth vows, in that order, that Shinran identifies as the key sequence among the forty-eight vows originally made by Amida Buddha while in the stage of bodhisattvahood. Thus, they are the called the "original vows" of Amida Buddha, and in particular, the eighteenth vow ("the ocean of the selected vow") is regarded as the key, *the* original vow of Amida Buddha, into which the nineteenth ("the provisional gate of myriad practices") and the twentieth ("the true gate of the root of all good and virtue") flow. In Shin Buddhism, undergirding all three vows is the practice of intoning the name of Amida Buddha, "*namu Amida Butsu*," which means, "I entrust myself to the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life," or more dynamically in terms of the impersonal dimension of the formless body of the dharma (*hōshin* 法身, Skt. *dharmakāya*), "I entrust myself to the Awakening of Infinite Light and Eternal Life." The act of intoning the name is also called *nenbutsu* (念仏, Ch. *nianfo*, Skt. *buddhānusmṛti*), or literally, "remembering the Buddha."

Furthermore, Shinran states that the standpoint of these three vows corresponds to the teachings of the *Meditation Sutra* (nineteenth vow), the *Amida Sutra* (twentieth vow), and the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* (eighteenth vow). Furthermore, he states that, in relation to the *Meditation Sutra* and the *Amida Sutra,* there is an "exoteric and esoteric significance" that is explicated before the passage on the dialectic of the three vows. The exoteric meaning is the explicit teaching of each of these respective sutras. The esoteric meaning is the teaching of the *Larger Sutra* that underlies that of each of the other two sutras. The idea that the former two sutras each have both an exoteric and an esoteric meaning can only be derived by having realized and internalized

the significance of the eighteenth vow as the core of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life.*

In modern scholarship, the dialectic of the three vows has been analyzed from a number of different perspectives including that of Western philosophy, depth psychology, and so forth. Several of these studies focus on the question as to whether the unfolding of this dialectic represents and therefore corresponds to Shinran's own religious experience. This leads to further questions about the timing of each stage of the dialectic in relation to specific moments in Shinran's life. Here I would like to offer my own interpretation for consideration.

The text of the three vows found in the *Larger Sutra* is as follows:

Nineteenth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions give rise to the mind of aspiration for enlightenment, cultivate the various practices and virtues, with sincere mind express the bodhisattva vows, and desire to be born in my Pure [Land], and if I fail to appear along with a throng of bodhisattvas and other deities before the practitioner at the time his or her death, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."[7]

Twentieth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions hear my Name, turn their thoughts to my [Pure] Land, cultivate the various practices and virtues, with sincere mind direct their virtues to all beings, desire to be born in my [Pure] Land, and fail to realize the fruits of their labors, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."[8]

Eighteenth vow: "If, when I attain buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten directions, with sincere mind and true entrusting, desire to be born in my [Pure] Land, and say my Name even ten times, and fail to be born there, then I refuse to attain enlightenment."[9]

In the following sections, I will explain the basic doctrinal understanding of the three vows.

Nineteenth Vow

According to the nineteenth vow, practitioners follow both meditative (visualizations) and non-meditative practices, as well as the chanting of the name, or *nenbutsu.* The path to birth in the Pure Land

of Amida Buddha according to this vow is called "birth under the twin Sala trees," due to the fact that the practitioner, following the path of sages and all of its difficult practices, seeks to replicate the life of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni who, upon completing his path in this world, passed into nirvana, or the Pure Land, under the twin Sala trees.

This is also known as the vow of "appearing at the time of death." That is because one who has followed the path of sages and fulfilled all of one's practices with a pure heart, according to the Pure Land teachings, will be greeted at the time of death by Amida Buddha, the retinue of bodhisattvas and other deities, who appear before the practitioner to welcome him or her into the Pure Land. Yet, as Shinran states, "How hard it is to cultivate the meditative practices due to the mind of that is filled with thoughts of doubt. The various other practices are also hard to cultivate due to the harmful disturbance of good practices."[10] The result is that, rather than having the peace of mind that accompanies birth into the Pure Land, the practitioner is overcome with fear of death. Unable to see the Pure Land, the practitioner desperately calls out the Buddha's name, but as Shinran suggests, such a practitioner ends up reborn in the "land of sloth."[11] Nevertheless, he also suggests that the deeper significance of the nineteenth vow is that it is designed to encourage the follower of the path of sages to seek out the mercy and compassion of Amida Buddha.

Twentieth Vow

As described in the *Amida Sutra,* the follower of the twentieth vow abandons all of the sundry practices and focuses single-mindedly on chanting the name of Amida Buddha in order to direct the merit of this practice towards birth in the Pure Land. Also called the vow of "birth difficult to conceive," the problem with this is that the follower, through one's own human calculations, attempts to attain the Pure Land, which is by definition inconceivable. Thus, the greater the effort made by the practitioner, the more difficult it becomes: "Because one seeks to cultivate one's own roots of good by means of the Buddha's Name, one fails to attain true entrusting and the Buddha's wisdom."[12] It is as though one is attempting to usurp the Buddha's name by attempting to attain birth through one's own power, when it is truly only the Buddha's power that leads to birth, that is, the power arising spontaneously from the formless *dharmakāya*, emptiness itself. Such a one manifests the "mind of reifying one's karmic evil and blessing,"[13]

shin zai fuku shin, as if one could control karmic evil and the blessings of faith with one's own ego: "They have been enveloped in self-attachment unawares, and do not approach fellow practitioners and true teacher (*zenchishiki* 善知識, Skt. *kalyānamitra*)."[14] Shinran calls such a person "the practitioner of self power nenbutsu" who is destined to be reborn in the "land of doubt."[15]

Nevertheless, Shinran finds positive significance in this path as well, since it brings one closer to the ultimate mode of practice, in which one abandons one's futile ego-centered attempts to attain birth: "Renunciants and householders both should quickly enter 'the true gate of the complete practice and ultimate virtue' (so-called) and thus seek 'birth in the Pure Land difficult to conceive.'"[16] Thus, the twentieth vow is the skillful means to compassionately lead the practitioner into the universal vow, the eighteenth.

Eighteenth Vow

The eighteenth vow is called the "vow of the ultimate mind of true entrusting," representing the standpoint of "inconceivable birth." It is the vow that contains the three aspects of true entrusting, of the "sincere mind, true entrusting, and desire for birth (in the Pure Land)," and is predicated on just ten repetitions of the name of Amida. Traditionally, this vow has been understood in terms of the practitioner, who having internalized these three aspects attains the full flower of truly entrusting to the vow of Amida and attains inconceivable birth in the Pure Land. However, Shinran states that deluded "sentient beings, filled with blind passion, do not have an ounce of truth or sincerity in their hearts and minds."[17]

Rather, for Shinran, the deeper truth is that Amida has already bestowed the mind of true entrusting to sentient beings by virtue of the great vow, in precisely the form that they can accept and embrace, as the name, "*namu* Amida Butsu." Thus, it is not that the practitioner calls out to Amida ten times, but that it is Amida Buddha who calls out to us, "the directive to respond to the Original Vow."[18]

The key here is that, in chanting the name, in that very chanting practitioners are called to hear deeply the voiceless voice of Amida's vow. In thus hearing the name, the practitioner attains the "stage of non-retrogression of the rightly settled." That is, one attains the stage equivalent to the Buddha, of not falling back on the path of practice,

settled firmly in one's destiny to be born in the Pure Land. One is thus "turned into" the vessel of Amida's great compassion.

As we have just seen, the dialectic of the three vows takes one through the progression from the nineteenth to the twentieth and finally on to the eighteenth. At each stage, one abandons the problematic practices and attitudes of the previous stage in order to move on and eventually attain the full flowering of the eighteenth. However, the entire process is sustained and illuminated by the power of the eighteenth vow, enabling one to turn over the mind of self-power and enter into the ocean of the vow of other-power. In this sense, each stage has its own positive significance on the path to inconceivable birth.

JINEN: LED TO BECOME SO THROUGH OTHER-POWER

According to Shinran, "Other power is the power of the Buddha's Original Vow."[19] It is the power of Amida to bring religious benefit to all sentient beings. Amida Buddha is not an entity in some distant place but the deepest, truest reality of each person such that other-power, being other-than-ego, "fills the hearts and minds of all beings":[20] "Other power is the power to truly entrust oneself to the Eighteenth Vow specially selected (for foolish beings like us), grasping us, never to let go, so that we may say the Name and attain birth in the Pure Land."[21]

One of the key concepts for understanding the process of entering into the ocean of the vow of other power is *jinen* (自然), "led to become so." *Jinen* is composed of two characters, *ji* or "self," and *nen* or "so," as in "just so." *Ji* as self has the dual meaning of a particular self, as in "you" or "me," as well as universal self, as in "other-power." *Nen* as "so" has the meaning of being "just so," in the sense of something just as it is, and carries a sense of spontaneity, as when we speak of a person "just being himself."

Ji and *nen* together, then, carry the sense of a person being just so, him- or herself, illuminated, embraced, and dissolved into the flow of the universal self, other-power. Here, the particular self and the universal self come together seamlessly in the spontaneously flow of the suchness of "so"-ness of reality. That is, the Shin practitioner, in saying the name, is borne forth on the name as other-power, and the awakening of true entrusting is realized spontaneously in the unfolding of the reality of "led to become so." According to Shinran,

> *Ji* is "to become so." "To become so" is *jinen.* (More deeply), *jinen* means "led to become so." "Led to become so" means that the practitioner

from the beginning, without any (ego-centered) calculation, has all karmic sin of past, present, and future turned over and transformed into good (beyond calculation). "Turned over" means that this good is realized without eliminating karmic sin. It is just as all the waters (of creeks and rivers) enter into the great ocean without being lost.[22]

From this we can see that this "turning over" that transforms karmic evil into the great compassion of the Buddha occurs through *jinen,* "made to become so." It is the process by which self-power is turned over and transformed into other-power, where self-power is not eliminated. Rather, like the waters entering into the great ocean, self-power is transformed into other-power by the power of other-power leading it into the ocean.

THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS IN THE HERE-AND-NOW

The passage on the dialectic of the three vows cited at the beginning of the paper, which marks Shinran's religious experience of entering into the other-power of the eighteenth vow, ends the with the statement, "Having *forever* entered the ocean of the Vow, I *now* realize deeply the Buddha's benevolence" (italics mine).[23] Here, I would like to consider the relation between the meaning of "now" and "forever" as found in this passage. As Oka states, we may consider the entirety of the *Kyōgyōshinshō,* from which this statement is taken, as the systematic expression of this single moment of religious experience, then the "now" of this passage signifies the moment of Shinran entrusting himself to the original vow of Amida.[24]

Of course, it is not as if the fully articulated understanding of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was present to Shinran in that moment of experience. It took many decades for him to differentiate his experience into the logical and systematic expression of his magnum opus. If, however, it can be said that religious experience is at the core of what may be considered a sacred text, then the "now" of the moment of Shinran receiving the transmission of the teachings from Hōnen, as expressed in the *Kyōgyōshinshō,* is creatively unfolding at this very moment.

It is not the case that the moment of entering into the dialectic of the three vows took place eight hundred years ago when Shinran was twenty-nine, and that we merely attempt to re-experience that moment vicariously. Such a view reduces that experience into a superficial moment of nostalgia. Historians such as Takehiko Furuta have sought to establish the historical dating for Shinran's experience of

the dialectic of the three vows, citing the decade when Shinran was between the ages of forty-two and fifty-two. Of course, as a historical personage, Shinran must have had his own experience separate from ours. However, to discern the religious significance of the "now" of the passage in question, and thus of the dialectic of the three vows itself, one must see this "now" present in the here-and-now of our present awareness. Otherwise, we lose the one-time character of this moment of entering into the dialectic of the three vows.

Historically, the "one-time" character of Shinran's metanoeia is a temporal matter, having occurred in 1201 at Yoshimizu as a follower of Hōnen. However, the true religious meaning of this "one time" is that it is always present in the here-and-now. It is a "one time" that is re-peated continuously; it is the "one time" from that moment in history that is reappropriated or re-realized in every moment of the here-and-now. Rather than a nostalgic reflection on the past, the true apprecia-tion of the "now" is a forward-looking, dynamic now that is open to everyone. Takamaro Shigaraki expresses this in terms of a Buddhist view of time:

> Shinran's experience of entrusting himself to the Original Vow and his attainment of true entrusting is, within a temporal framework, one that stands on the absolute present, a present that includes all of the future and all of the past. Similarly, continual unfolding of his realization is one that actually began in the beginningless past, that is, "forever in the past," and that continues endlessly into the fu-ture with the present as its fulcrum, a present that is a continuity of discontinuity. The frame of mind in which the absolute present of this continuity-*qua*-discontinuity unfolds is that of abandoning self power to entrust oneself to the Original Vow, to enter into the ocean of the vow. Although true entrusting to the Vow occurred in the beginningless past, one is paradoxically also looking forward to abandoning self power, where this "already, but not yet" frame of mind unfolds in the absolute present, continuously repeating itself moment by moment.[25]

The awareness that the moment of true entrusting (*shinjin* 信心) is continually re-established in the past *and* continually realized in the absolute "now" reflects a dynamic understanding of Shinran's religious awareness. Furthermore, the sense of "forever" may be understood to express not just the sense of the beginningless past but also the end-less future, reflecting a forward-looking orientation. However, all of this comes to light in the "now" as the absolute present, reinforcing, as

Shigaraki states, the framework of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as the logical, systematic expression of Shinran's moment of the attainment of *shinjin.*

IS THE DIALECTIC OF THE THREE VOWS A NECESSARY PROGRESSION?

Is the dialectic of the three vows a necessary progression in the process of religious awakening? As noted before, there are both positive and negative aspects to the nineteenth and twentieth vows. The view that seeks to affirm these self-power vows as steps towards enlightenment itself reflects a self-power mentality. From the standpoint of the eighteenth vow, however, even within the modalities of the various and sundry practices (nineteenth vow) and the self-power *nenbutsu* (twentieth vow), the great compassion of the Buddha is at work at the deepest level of reality (eighteenth vow). As Shinran states in the *Hymns on the Pure Land,*

> Those who say the Name in self-power, whether meditative or non-
> meditative—
> Having indeed taken refuge in the Vow that beings ultimately attain
> birth—
> Will spontaneously, even without being taught,
> Turn about and enter the gate of suchness.[26]

The first line refers to the nineteenth vow, the second to the twentieth vow, and the third and fourth to the eighteenth. "To be led," *jinen,* indicates the working of other-power, and "true suchness" is nirvana. Thus, Shinran is telling the reader that, as the practitioner of the nineteenth vow progresses, one enters into the twentieth vow, and this eventually leads to the unfolding of the vow-power that leads the practitioner to become so, *jinen,* that is, the suchness of nirvana*.* From this one can see the logical necessity of the progression through the vows. Insofar as the eighteenth vow is described as that which is "turned into" dialectically, the preceding stages of the nineteenth and twentieth vows become necessary within the framework of *upāya,* skillful means (*hōben* 方便). As Genpō Hoshino states, the formulation of all three vows share the phrase, "sentient beings of the ten directions."[27] This makes it clear that the dialectic applies to all beings. Thus, Hoshino continues, "In order to sever the blind passions, one must pass through the progression of the Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Eighteenth Vows."[28]

The eighteenth vow is designed specifically for the karmic propensity of real human beings living in history who exhibit a powerful desire to reduce everything to the terms of their own egos. Shinran dem-

onstrates this himself, in both having been bound by self-power blind passions and by his turn into the other-power of the eighteenth vow. Thus the very universality of "sentient beings of the ten directions" is realized through the singular particularity of "For myself, Shinran, alone."[29] Conversely, while the dialectic of the three vows is an expression of Shinran's highly particular life, the fact that he traversed the three vows expresses its necessity and universality as the working of the Buddha's vow.

However, when we turn to the concrete instructions Shinran provided to his followers, we find no mention of the dialectic of the three vows. What we do find are descriptions of the practice of the *nenbutsu*, the intoning of the name of Amida: "Those who feel uncertain about attaining birth in the Pure Land should say the Onembutsu."[30] In this passage, the honorific "O" is added to "*nenbutsu*," indicating that this is the *nenbutsu* of the eighteenth vow, not self-power *nenbutsu*.

Again, in a letter by his wife Eshinni, we find the following: "As for Kurizawa, he has taken up the practice of continuous nembutsu in the mountain temple of Nozumi where he has chosen the practice of intoning the Name."[31] Kurizawa refers to Shinran's son Shinrenbō Myōshin. The practice of continuous *nenbutsu* (*fudan nenbutsu* 不斷念仏) refers to the chanting of the name characteristic of the nineteenth vow, in which it is carried out in conjunction with various other practices in preparation for the arrival of Amida Buddha and his throng at the time of death to welcome the practitioner into the Pure Land. In this case, perhaps Shinrenbō was attempting to retrace the religious path taken by his father.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world, can something like the dialectic of the three vows be considered in any way to be praticeable? Are there people around today who practice the path of sages, practitioners of the self-power sundry practices, or the practitioners of self-power *nenbutsu*, those whom Shinran criticized so severely in his day? The statement that the Buddha's compassion showers upon even those of self-power practice seems utterly irrelevant. This renders meaningless the idea that the dialectic of the three vows must be realized in practice. Of course, these ideas may still be somewhat applicable if we can reformulate them in a more general way. For example, in terms of religious metanoeia, one can certainly argue that there are those who undergo

gradual conversion as well as those who enter faith in a dramatic and sudden manner. Superficially, this is a temporal matter of long versus short, but deeper inquiry reveals that it concerns the transformation of self-power into other-power. In this regard, the dialectic of the three vows both logically and psychologically describes a necessary process, religiously speaking.

Nevertheless, there remains a doubt concerning its contemporary application. This is related to the fact that Shinran spent one hundred days consecutively in attendance with Hōnen imbibing the latter's teaching, and no doubt chanting the name of Amida Buddha throughout this period, something that remains distant to most contemporary peoples. The fact remains that the only way to realize the *nenbutsu* in the working of the Buddha's wisdom is to chant the name for oneself. Chanting the name is not self-power. True realization occurs through the cultivation of the right non-dual wisdom.

NOTES

1. Junjiro Takakusu, *Bukkyō no Shinzui* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchō-sha, 1978), 87–88.

2. Shinran, "Chapter on *Shinjin*," *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching Practice, *Shinjin*, and Realization), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 2 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), 47; and Shinran, *Collected Works of Shinran*, 2 vols. (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1977), 1:77.

3. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon'i* (Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone"), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:633; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:464.

4. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:628; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:459.

5. Shinran, *Ichinentanen mon'i* (Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling)*,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 614; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:485.

6. "Chapter on the Transformed Land," *Kyōgyōshinshō,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 166 and *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:240.

7. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:144; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:208.

8. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:158; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:229.

9. "Chapter on *Shinjin*," *Kyōgyōshinshō, in Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 2:48–49; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:80.

10. "Chapter on the Transformed Land," *Kyōgyōshinshō,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:154; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:223.

11. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:146; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:211.

12. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:165; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:239.

13. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:165; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:239.

14. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:157; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:228. See also *Sangyō ōjō monrui* (A Collection of Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:557; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:648.

15. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:158, 165; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:229, 239. See also *Sangyō ōjō monrui,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:558–559; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 2:651–652.

16. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:157; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:228.

17. Shinran, *Songō shinzō meimon* (Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:560; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:493.

18. "Chapter on Practice," *Kyōgyōshinshō,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:22; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:38.

19. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:38; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:61.

20. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon'i,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:630; *Collected Works of

Shinran, 1:461.

21. Shinran, *Goshōsokushū* (A Collection of Letters), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:658; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:525.

22. *Yuishinshō mon'i,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:623; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:454.

23. "Chapter on the Transformed Land," *Kyōgyōshinshō,* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 154; *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:223.

24. Ryōji Oka, "*Kyōgyōshinshō* josetsu: Shinran no shin no kozō," *Shinshū gaku* 75–76 (1987): 23.

25. Takamaro Shigaraki, "Shinran ni okeru sangan-tennyu no ronri," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 434–435 (1989): 90.

26. Shinran, *Jōdo Wasan* (Hymns on the Pure Land), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:493; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:343.

27. Genpō Hoshino, *Jōdo* (Kyoto: Hōzokan, 1957), 110.

28. Ibid., 110.

29. See *Tannishō* (A Record in Lament of Divergences), in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:752; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:695.

30. Shinran, *Goshōsokushū*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho,* 2:697; *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:561.

31. Eshinni*, Eshinni shōsoku,* in *Jōdo Shinshū seiten* (Kyoto: Hongwanji shuppan-sha, 2004), 826.

Listening to the Buddha's Noble Truths: A Method to Alleviate Social Suffering

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THE MAIN CONCERN OF THE Buddha's teachings is to ease human suffering (*dukkha*) manifesting itself in physical and mental *dis-ease*. The Pāli word "*dukkha*" generally is translated as "suffering," but it literally means an "uneasy" or "unwanted feeling" (Skt. *pratikūlavedanā,* unpleasant agony or sensation).[1] The Buddha presents an *upāya* (approach) with a systematic range of physical, psychological, and moral practices that are required for the development of *kusala* (apposite moral conduct). These means provide an individual with the ability to wield and eventually transcend the human predicament. Scholar Padmasiri de Silva succinctly describes this. "The doctrine of the Buddha clearly accommodates the interlacing of the psychological and the ethical aspects of behavior.... The development of virtue is not merely blind adherence to rules, but the development of certain type of skill (*kusala*)."[2] The Buddha's urgent call to listen deeply to the reality and cause of *dukkha* and his pragmatic means to transcend it resonated with the religious people of India and continues to guide the lives of millions across a multitude of cultures.

Even though the Buddha's diagnosis of the present human condition is apparently bleak, and his ethical and contemplative disciplines seem to focus on the ultimate end to *dukkha*, his techniques have also has been utilized for the purpose of constructing methods to address worldly human afflictions. Thus, in modern times, the value and purpose of the Buddha's strategy have been evaluated in a broader context, including various fields—from psychology and psychotherapy to mediation and communication. Specifically, in the field of psychotherapy, in spite of its presuppositions (which are different from those of

the Buddha's), several Buddhist techniques have been utilized for the purpose of alleviating human misery apparent in symptoms of anxiety, identity crisis, depression, etc. In this paper I seek to explore the relevance of Buddha's call to listen deeply to the *truth* of suffering and his method to remove suffering, specifically the prescribed principles of renunciation and ethical regimen, in the context of addressing social suffering. I ask whether the Buddha's methods of ameliorating suffering could also be applied to the purpose of curing the ills of society. More precisely, could his principles of morality, which essentially are meant to transform an individual and overcome the metaphysical reality of *dukkha,* be directed to remove the existential forms of suffering—personal and social? For the purpose of examining these queries, I take Mahatma Gandhi, a twentieth-century political leader, as a model who was inspired by the Buddha and also by the teachings of Hinduism. In his writings, Gandhi portrayed the Buddha, the embodiment of renunciation, as a socially concerned activist, and chose to apply ethical and renunciatory principles as tools to treat his own physical and mental infirmity, as well as to address social ills present in the forms of gender and race inequality, social injustice, and oppression.

First, it must be noted that, as understood within the Indian context, Buddhism and Hinduism, in spite of some varied doctrines, do not represent distinct systems of belief, which is the interpretation that Gandhi asserts.[3] The ideologies of both religions not only share historical roots but have also shared philosophical and ritual spaces. The relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism has been reciprocal and reflects the ability of *deep listening* that leads to reformation of the individual self as well as the society. The Buddha's fundamental teaching of the reality of *dukkha* and his methods to alleviate suffering not only presented an alternative to the existing methods to approach the predicament of life, but also reshaped the ailing cultural and religious norms within Hinduism of the time. In turn, later Buddhism was remolded—in its philosophy and techniques—by Hindu culture. Gandhi's philosophy of ascetic-activism—constituted upon the ideologies of these traditions for his purpose of personal and social reform—is an example of these syncretistic tendencies. Not surprisingly, Gandhi in his actions of social service and his methods of nonviolence has been compared to the Buddha. Gandhi's religio-political methods (which were different from the customary methods of confrontation) to address the social problems of slavery, discrimination, and injustice re-

flect his propensity for the practice of ethical disciplines and a capacity for *deep listening.*

DEEP LISTENING: A PREREQUISITE

In the ancient texts of Hinduism one of the preliminary steps for the purpose of realizing the truth of reality or attainment of spiritual freedom is *śravaṇa*, meaning "listening"—listening to the scriptures and the words of the guru.[4] The Sanskrit word "*śravaṇa*" is derived from a root verb, √*śru*, which literally means "to hear, to listen, to be attentive, and to attend upon."[5] Listening is not merely hearing but attentive listening with a focused and attentive mind. This type of listening requires a kind of *antaḥ-karṇa-śuddhi*—purity of the mind and heart achieved through fundamental precepts—where selfish concerns drop away. Deep listening leads to understanding of the teachings and ultimately to the realization of the truth of the reality of one's own self and those around us. Buddha often asked for the attention of the monks. His discourses were often preceded by this refrain: "Listen carefully, O *bhikkhus*!" In fact, the entire Pāli canon is a record of the deep listening by the monks who recited the entire canon after the *parinirvāṇa* (the ultimate liberation) of the Buddha. (The canon was passed down orally for hundreds of years before it was written down.) The phrase "Thus I have heard" often introduces the sermons of the Buddha.[6]

Deep listening in personal spiritual development requires faith, receptivity, and cognitive discernment, and in an interpersonal context—such as communication—it calls for empathy. Joseph Bailey differentiates between hearing and listening:

> Hearing is a physiological phenomenon while listening is a psychological state. To listen deeply is to perceive beyond mere words and gestures. Without analyzing, we sense the underlying feelings and meanings; we understand the subtler level of communication. When we are listening deeply, we are affected and touched by the other person. And for the moment we are changed.[7]

Many therapists, counselors, and mediators incorporate deep listening and other Buddhist principles of mindfulness and compassion in their respective fields.[8] I suggest that the significance of deep listening to the Buddha's teaching of suffering also has the same significance for social healing. Even though his ideology of the ubiquitous nature of *dukkha* and the Buddha's own life of renunciation may appear to be

"world-denying," an attentive listening to this reality opens an avenue to address social suffering.

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING
TO A BROAD REALIZATION OF ITS REALITY

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The Buddha elaborates on the first noble truth of suffering in his sermon, *Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth (Dhamma). Dukkham ariyasaccam—dukkha* is the truth (reality)—the Buddha's great proclamation:

> The Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*) is this: Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant [persons or objects] is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant [persons or objects] is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering—in brief, the five aggregates [five groups of clinging that form the object of attachment, the notions of I, mine, and self] are suffering.[9]

The Buddha presents a systematic list of various possibilities of suffering that can be categorized into three types: physical (pain, privation, and discomfort), mental (the discrepancy between our illusion and reality, the disappointments), and realization that clinging to one's personality or individuality is suffering.[10] For the Buddha the existence of *dukkha* is the existential and verifiable truth and makes up the core of his life and thought. The Buddha's claim leads us to construe the Buddha's view of life that suffering is ubiquitous: "all created things are sorrowful and transitory."[11] One may ask: if our entire existence is, by its very nature, enveloped by the dark shadow of *dukkha,* is there even a possibility of addressing the issue of removing mental and social suffering? What was the Buddha's purpose to assert the grim reality of suffering unlike some of his counterparts who focused on the positive ways to explain the reality of the universe? Does this stated fact behoove us to choose a life of renunciation similar to that of the Buddha? For these queries it is essential to listen to the Buddha's life story.

The account of the life of Siddhārtha Gautama (who later came to be known as the Buddha) tells us that as a youth he was very sensitive and restless with his life and surroundings, leaving no choice for the his father, the king, but to keep watch over him lest he decide to escape. Fortuitously, during some of his excursions from the palace, his personal experience of suffering in the form of three separate sights of physical suffering—death, disease, and decrepitude—led Siddhārtha

to embark on a journey to understand reality. Generally, in this world most experience pain, death, old age, and suffering, but continue with their daily lives in the hope of betterment of their situation. However, Siddhārtha was unusually agitated by these sights of "physical suffering." In the Freudian idiom, he was suffering from "reality anxiety."[12] Siddhārtha's reaction was unusual. He was not in pain physically (he was a prince with good health and opulent wealth), but the thought of what the future held for him and his loved ones—the trauma of old age and certain death—haunted him. Anxious to find the cause and cure of suffering, Siddhārtha left home in the middle of the night. Under the spell of his own neurosis about suffering, he didn't hesitate to turn his back on the grief of his devoted wife, the cries of his innocent child, and the laments of his loving father. In his choice of renunciation, Siddhārtha turned a cold shoulder to his family obligations and his princely duties. Disregarding familial concerns, Siddhārtha chose the life of a wandering ascetic intent upon discovering the cause of suffering and a method to stop its vicious cycle.

Siddhārtha's "great renunciation" from family, social, and political life and his arduous search for the end of suffering through the practice of various outer and inner disciplines comes to fruition in his *bodhi* (awakening). His awakening was unique, however. He was not awakened to a transcendent reality (such as *brahman*) or to a glorious realm of heavenly gods, but he was awakened to a disturbing revelation of the reality of suffering (*dukkha*) and impermanence (*anicca*). However, his revelation was not entirely of a hopeless nature; it included the cause of suffering rooted in selfish desires as well as the way to attain release from the cycle of suffering (classified as the four noble truths).[13] Various sources of the Buddha's life story tell us that with his awakening to reality, he also became filled with *karuṇā* (compassion). In his deep silence he contemplated the sounds of suffering that surround samsara. Breaking his prolonged serene silence, the Buddha set out to share his realization with his fellow beings in the hope that listeners would also be able to rid themselves of the arrow of suffering. The only way to alleviate this "uneasy" feeling manifesting itself in physical and mental suffering is to eliminate *taṇhā* (selfish cravings), the root cause of *dukkha,* by following the eightfold path.

RECONCILING THE REALITY OF SUFFERING AND EFFORTS IN HEALING

Apparently, the Buddha, through his truth of *dukkha,* conveys to us the tenet that living means suffering. For example, in the *Dhammapada,* the Buddha recommends the path of a recluse. His renunciation of the worldly life accordingly presents an approach for his fellow beings to lead a life of seclusion and tranquility away from the worldly quagmire. The experience of ultimate freedom presupposes the life of a mendicant who is intent on realizing the end of personal *dukkha.* According to him, those who choose this path "do not delight in an abode; like swans who have left their lake, they leave their house and home."[14] Although the Buddha taught both the lay and renunciate, his approach to ending the cycle of *dukkha* required a life of worldly detachment. The path of a householder (representing worldly engagement) is considered a path defiled by passions leading to suffering, and the path of renunciation a path of freedom from suffering.

The following four aspects of the Buddha's life and teaching seems to inspire his followers to give up a life of worldly engagement: his own renunciation of the family life, his invitation to a life of seclusion, his advocacy for urgency in getting out of the cycle of samsara—the world of change and flux[15]—and his disciplinary and contemplative practices (*śīla* and *dhyāna*) for going beyond the entrapment of individual self or ego. Taken together these affirm that living and getting involved in this world reinvigorates ego and selfish cravings (*taṇhā).* Relief from *dukkha* is achieved by renouncing this-worldly life of family and social relations. The "homeless" (*bhikkhu*) ideal and the Buddha's establishment of the organized community of mendicants (sangha) are representative of his renunciatory ideology.

Due to his overt declaration of the ever-present nature of suffering in samsara*,* Buddha has been accused of a pessimistic attitude and indifference to the existential suffering of day-to-day life. However, it would be naive to construe, on the basis of his truth of suffering and his personal renunciation, that the Buddha was unconcerned with the existential form of suffering, leaving no optimism for bringing comfort for worldly physical, mental, and social ailments. A deep listening to the Buddha's life and his insight into the nature of suffering offers significant counsel in various situations of life. Therefore, several components of the Buddha's path leading to ultimate freedom from *dukkha* have been applied to address suffering of various forms—mental, physical, psychological, and social. The Buddhist psychophysical tech-

niques, including mindfulness and meditation, have been successfully applied to resolve mental ailments, conflicts, and even physical health issues.

In the following section I focus particularly on the therapeutic application of the Buddha's program in the pragmatic context—social suffering—with a modern day example, Mahātma Gandhi, a political and social activist. The Buddha's life and his renunciatory teachings (which were similar to other Indian religious traditions) inspired Gandhi to confront his personal neurosis and to bring relief to the people of India suffering from an "identity crisis," slothfulness, and slavery.[16] Even though the Buddha and Gandhi appear to be very different figures, the narrative of the Buddha's journey to find a cure for *dukkha* carries similarities to the incidents that led Gandhi to commit himself to confront the social suffering of humanity. Gandhi's ideology of activism that combined the elements of asceticism for social activism draws attention to the following points: (1) the elements of renunciation offer a strategy to confront social suffering; (2) the Buddha's strategy of transcending *taṇhā* offers a therapeutic solution to various forms of suffering; and (3) the embodiment of asceticism itself becomes instrumental in the efforts to confront suffering caused by social systems.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE BUDDHA AND GANDHI'S JOURNEY TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING: A COMPARISON

As we mentioned earlier, due to his personal life of renunciation and choice of non-violent methods, Mahātma Gandhi has been often compared to the Buddha.[17] On the surface, however, these two personalities resemble each other neither in their personages nor in their actions. One critic says:

> Outwardly it would be hard to conceive of two individuals more different. On the one hand is the tranquil Buddha who walks serenely and calmly across the pages of history, or traditionally sits peacefully on a lotus with a gentle smile of infinite compassion.... On the other hand is the Mahātma, speed and energy in every moment, laughing and sorrowing in his ceaseless endeavor to help mankind with the problems of human life....[18]

The above statement portrays the Buddha as a compassionate being but inactive, witnessing the reality of suffering in deep detachment; on the other hand, Gandhi is an activist relentlessly engaged in his venture to alleviate the suffering manifesting in the form of social in-

justice. However, this seems to be a superficial comparison: these are caricatures that exaggerate only one dimension of these figures. Was the Buddha merely a passive figure who calmly sat on a lotus immersed in his individual delight, bringing his message of the crude inevitability of suffering? Did Gandhi, who sought to help humankind with human problems, possess no composure? Then, how could Gandhi have derived inspiration from the Buddha's life of renunciation for the purpose of his endeavor to help humankind with its socio-political problems?

To understand these questions we must look at the beginnings of Gandhi's career as an activist as well as listen to his understanding of the message of the Buddha. According to Gandhi's own autobiographical records, he was raised in a middle-class family. In his early twenties, he had not thought about the ills of discrimination and slavery until he came face-to-face with "color prejudice." Gandhi suffered the most unexpected trauma while travelling on a train in South Africa, when a white man objected to his presence in the first-class compartment because he was "colored." He was an ordinary man: he was neither endowed with a charismatic personality nor was he an extraordinary barrister. In spite of the conductor's threats to "push" him out from the compartment, Gandhi refused to get off the train. Unaware of the deep color prejudice in that country, he asserted that it was his right to travel in first class because he carried a first-class ticket. Gandhi's resistance was to no avail, and the constable pushed him off the train with his luggage. Gandhi, determined to assert his right, refused to sit in the third-class compartment and the train steamed away. Humiliated and surprised, the barrister Gandhi spent the entire night in the "cold, bleak, and windswept waiting room" of the train station reflecting on that evening's incident.

The direct encounter with prejudice awakened Gandhi to a dark side of humanity: inequality and injustice of the social system manifested in forms of colonial suppression and racism, just as the Buddha was awakened to the reality of suffering through direct experience in the form of three passing sights. In the grave silence and bitter cold of the dark night Gandhi reflects on his predicament:

> I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India.... It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should

try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.[19]

The firsthand experience of the injustice of the social system also made Gandhi realize the suffering of oppressed fellow beings. This incident became the antecedent to Gandhi's commitment to a life of non-violent activism for which he eventually adopted a lifestyle similar to that of a renunciate. Later he recalls this incident as a "formative experience in this career."[20] Gandhi's embodiment of an ascetic for the purpose of his non-violent activism incited millions of Indians to participate in his movement for securing India's freedom from the misery of slavery and other social afflictions including untouchability. Gandhi's non-violent strategies have been experimented with in various situations throughout the world and serve as a model for an alternative method of confronting any form of social suffering.

Gandhi's sudden commitment to this colossal task was atypical. Just as the Buddha turned his back on the luxurious life of the palace, Gandhi gave up his lucrative profession and took the vows of celibacy and poverty. Gandhi's life has been a subject of vast scholarly commentary. Many scholars have speculated on possible reasons for Gandhi's behavior and subsequent decision to choose a lifestyle reminiscent of an ascetic. For example, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, in his monumental work *Gandhi's Truth*, tries to discover the roots of Gandhi's behavior in his past.[21] Gandhi as a child was bashful and as a young man had a very sensitive conscience. Gandhi described himself as being nervous and afraid of the dark. He suffered from neurosis and had even attempted suicide. Besieged by the experience of social evil on the train, Gandhi decided to embark on rooting out the suffering. Roy Walker recounts the incident, which is reminiscent of the Buddha's final determination to find a cure for suffering.

> Throughout the long hours of darkness he fought one of the decisive spiritual battles of his life. The natural impulse was to give up the unequal battle and return to India.... But there was another impulse too that told him to stay, to stay and fight. It would not be a fight for himself alone.... It was the battle for humanity itself, for all who were sick and weary and oppressed. When morning dawned his decision was made, the way ahead was clear.[22]

But at the time when he made this resolve, Gandhi had not contemplated the possible methods to address the oppressive injustices of the systems of society. How could this ordinary man confront the mighty

empire on behalf of the oppressed? He was neither an eloquent ora-
tor nor an astute statesman. Nonetheless, Gandhi had spiritual founda-
tions. In his autobiography, he recalls that he was deeply influenced by
the *Light of Asia* (a book about the life and philosophy of the Buddha),
the Sermon on the Mount, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[23] In particular, due
to his predisposition and his upbringing he was attracted to the teach-
ing of renunciation found in these texts. "The renunciation was the
highest form of religion [and] appealed to me greatly."[24] These teach-
ings inspired him to choose moral-force instead of violent methods to
confront social ills. For his non-violent strategy, Gandhi combined the
elements of renunciation with activism.

RENUNCIATORY DISCIPLINES FOR THE *TELOS* OF ACTIVISM

"The Buddha's main concern," as M. G. Bhagat puts it, "was to re-
duce human suffering by explaining its causes; he wanted to expose
evil tendencies in man and show how they could be cured."[25] However,
according to Gandhi, the Buddha also exposed and confronted the ills of
society. The Buddha was no less concerned about the social sufferings
caused by individuals possessing selfish tendencies. Gandhi remarks:
"The Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the adversary's camp and
brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood."[26] Interestingly,
Gandhi did not invoke the bodhisattva ideal of the Mahāyāna Bud-
dhism, which represents the embodiment of compassion; but, rather,
he presented the Buddha himself as an example of a concerned and so-
cially involved being. The Buddha was not simply a detached figure; he
was a compassionate being who dedicated his life to teaching his mes-
sage to humanity. Gandhi asserts that the Buddha also worked toward
the alleviation of suffering caused by oppressive systems. "When the
Buddha," Gandhi explained, "with the lamb on his shoulders, went up
to the cruel Brahmins who were engaged in an animal-sacrifice, it was
in no soft language that he spoke to them; he was however, all love at
heart."[27] Gandhi's emphasis that the Buddha was an activist is consis-
tent with his own unique interpretations of religious figures and texts.

According to Gandhi, the Buddha through his renunciation purified
his own passions and thereby found the cure for *dukkha* for all human-
ity including his family. "The Buddha, by leaving his parents, brought
deliverance to them as well," asserts Gandhi.[28] Although Gandhi did
not renounce family and the social aspects of humanity, by choosing a
life of an ascetic Gandhi seems to follow the steps of the Buddha. The

Buddha's methods of personal and social reform and Gandhi's own socio-political activist strategy appear to be different in nature, yet they hold a fundamental resemblance.

The Buddha's method of getting rid of suffering includes the *pañca-śīla* (five precepts)—the principles for purification of the mind from negative tendencies. In his prescriptive approach, the Buddha emphasizes that the demons of greed, hatred, and attachment haunt the mind that needs to be purified by the practice of ethical conduct (*pañca-śīla).* "*Śīla* is a discipline of both body and mind, whereby the defilements that cloud wisdom are removed."[29] The *śīla is* comprised of five essential disciplines: non-violence, truth, not taking what is not given, sexual restraint (*brahmacarya*), and abstaining from intoxicating substances. These virtues have also been prescribed for the purpose of spiritual freedom by other Indian traditions of Hinduism and Jainism for the purpose of spiritual freedom.

However, Gandhi experimented with these moral virtues as instruments for his socio-political goals and inverted the purifying power of the *pañca-śīla* for the purpose of purifying social ills. Gandhi sought to utilize these virtues, generally prescribed for achieving the ultimate liberation from samsara, as tools for the purpose of securing freedom from the vicious cycle of social suffering. For him, the observance of non-violence, truth, and celibacy, which have roots in the ancient religious traditions, also had functional value.

Gandhi claimed himself to be a "practical" visionary, who saw the sum value of any religious observance also in terms of its relevance for the purification of the society. He sought to apply the "technology" of ascetic disciplines—which categorically fall into the domain of religious renunciation—to address social and political issues. Even though an engagement in the socio-political issues is generally considered to be the domain of worldly engagement by orthodox ascetic traditions, for Gandhi, it provided a framework for the service of humanity. (Gandhi also likened the service of humanity to the service of God.) Gandhi asserted: "if we want to put this body in the service of truth and humanity, we must first raise our soul by developing virtues like celibacy, non-violence and truth. Then alone may we say that we are fit to render real service to the country."[30]

The value of these restraints has also been assessed by some scholars in the context of establishing a harmonious society. "While certain anti-social impulses that lead to the moral degradation of society

should be eliminated, the Buddha recommends the development of the socially valuable psychological qualities of self-control (*dama*), mental calm (*sama*), and restraint (*niyama*)."[31]

The practice of *śīla* principles channels the mental energies to purity and calmness. Gandhi adopted the disciplines (the essential vows that he saw present in all religions)[32] for his personal purification and inner empowerment and at the same time experimented with their efficacy on a mass level for purging social ills. Gandhi transformed religious virtues into activistic tools such as non-cooperation, self-suffering, and passive resistance. He employed non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) to fight against the mighty British Empire.[33] Gandhi made a novel connection between the practice of *ahiṃsā*, compassion, and participatory resistance to violence: "No man could be actively nonviolent," he pronounced, "and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred."[34] He equated non-violence with compassion. "He [Gandhi] thought," Bhikhu Parekh suggests, "even as compassion led to avoidance of harm, it could and indeed ought to lead to a positive desire to help others."[35]

Gandhi was aware of the Buddha's message that violence breeds violence and keeps the cycle of hatred and fear in motion. Gandhi, who chose the means of love instead of retaliation, echoes the Buddha's proclamation: "All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death. Likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay."[36] Gandhi understood the weapon of non-violence to be superior to any other weapon. He declared that "the Indians…must forge a weapon which would be different from and infinitely superior to the force which the white settler commanded in such ample measure."[37] Later, Gandhi coined the word for his passive resistance, *satyāgraha*, literally meaning "soul-force" or "truth-power": an ancient ascetic way of utilizing soul-force to overcome evil and transform the heart of the evil-doer. A famous legend tells us that the Buddha himself utilized this practice to confront and transform the mind of the cruel bandit, Aṅgulimāla. The Buddha declares: "He who leads others by a procedure that is nonviolent and equitable, he is said to be a guardian of the law [*dhamma*, justice], wise and righteous."[38] Only the righteous one—who seeks to conquer his or her inner negative tendencies—could be the guardian of law, none other. The path of non-violence requires overcoming the three negative forces of *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (hatred), and *moha* (delusion). The Buddha teaches people to loosen the knot of suffering by giving up selfish desires, worldly passions, and attach-

ment to one's individuality, not by denying the world. For Gandhi, a life of renunciation simultaneously became instrumental in shattering the shackles of physical, mental, and social suffering.

THE EMBODIED RENUNCIATION AND SOCIAL HEALING

The stereotyped image of downcast eyes, pervasive in the pages of art and history, may represent the composed and complacent Buddha, but this image can also be seen as an illustration of defiance to the overly ritualistic and at times aggressive behavior of the priesthood. Walter Kaelber explains the ascetic power of protest: "The particular ascetic practice is comprehensible only in terms of the cultural practice it self-consciously seeks to challenge. Ascetic practice may, therefore, frequently be seen as an intentional language of protest."[39] The Buddha raised his voice against the practice of animal sacrifice and untouchability and taught the equality of all beings. Gandhi states: "One of the many things for which I revere the life of Gautama Buddha is his utter abolition of untouchability, that is, distinction between high and low."[40] By virtue of his renunciation of the caste and ties of blood, the Buddha was able to address broader social issues. The Buddha's pragmatic teachings and applications brought new life to those oppressed under draconian conventions. In her ethnographic study of *sādhus* (holy person, renunciate), Kirin Narayan observes the renunciation of "ties of blood or caste" moves the *sādhus* to the periphery of society where they are free to get involved in the service of society at large. "Ironically," states Narayan, "the act of renunciation may in fact push an ascetic into more extensive social involvement than if he or she remained a layperson."[41] A renunciate who steps outside of society proper may even become a catalyst for social reform and a "dynamic center of religious development and change."[42]

A prominent scholar Raghavan Iyer assesses the result of the Buddha's teachings: "The impact of Buddhism on the corrupt social order of India was comparable in its intensity and significance to the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation on Europe."[43] During the nineteenth century, some of Gandhi's predecessors who were leaders of religious reform movements were renunciate and also social activists.[44] They incorporated religious concepts and technical vocabulary to reinvigorate their countrymen who "had fallen prey to waves of foreign rule because they had become passive, effete, and devoid of energy as a result of their sensuous and self-indulgent lifestyle."[45] Gandhi saw a

direct connection between religious renunciation and the attitude of social service. Joseph Alter comments, "Gandhi is very clear in pointing out that renunciation is worthless unless it manifests itself in selfless service and social reform."[46]

For Gandhi, the composed image of the Buddha was not a symbol of indifference because of the pervasive reality of *dukkha*, but it was a symbol of the embodiment of universal compassion and concern for all beings. Inner purity must be cultivated, and the force of inner power must be redirected to defy the will of the evil-doer while cultivating "a positive state of love, doing good to even an evil doer." The Buddha teaches his listeners to replace the negative tendencies of hatred, delusion, etc. with *mettā* (love), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity). To fight against social evils, Gandhi first must purify himself from selfish cravings. Even though he never donned the robes of a renunciate, Gandhi subjected his mind and body to austere restraints for purifying the body, speech, and mind: he took the most formidable vow of *brahmacarya* (comprehensive self-restraint in thought, word, and deed) to control his sensory desires and exercise non-attachment; renounced his material belongings to a bare minimum; followed a strict vegetarian diet to harm no living entity; and restricted his intake of food and food types to control his passions and needs.[47] He tested his willpower by committing himself to various disciplinary vows.

By these practices, Gandhi sought to transcend individual gratification and selfishness and prepared a way for Indians to become independent in daily life by having very few desires. Moral disciplines (which were prescribed by the Buddha to break the fetter of *taṇhā*) for Gandhi became an approach to removing dependence on the foreign regime. Spiritual freedom would lead to political liberation. Gandhi claims: "Truthfulness, *brahmacharya*, non-violence, non-stealing, and non-hoarding, these five rules of life are obligatory on all aspirants.... Everyone who observes these vows will be able to find a way out of all perplexities."[48] He utilized these teachings as a liberating apparatus to purify inner passions and social evils: slavery, racism, oppression, and gender inequality. The result was therapeutic. He mobilized a mass movement that awakened Indians to the reality of their suffering caused by racial oppression and prejudice and inspired them to sacrifice in order to confront oppression and slavery. Gandhi's mass mobilization to confront unjust laws and his "mission of relieving the

grief-stricken and downtrodden" has been compared to the "the Buddha's great march of renunciation."[49] Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, records the psychological transformation of the Indian people:

> The essence of his [Gandhi's] teaching was fearlessness and truth and action allied to these.... So, suddenly as it were, the black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulder, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree.... It was a psychological change, almost as if an expert in psychoanalytic method had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid them of burden.[50]

CONCLUSION

The direct experience of suffering made the Buddha and Gandhi analyze the cause and find the cure for the suffering that extended beyond their personal pain and private concerns. Iyer writes: "The revelation of the pain as the law of existence can be regarded as the condition sine qua non for redemption. Suffering can have a positive, constructive function and a value."[51] But suffering could be constructive only when one is able to realize its reality and alter the negative experience into a therapeutic program for one's own self and society. The Buddha's teachings may appear to be world-denying, but they also present a formula to address the various forms of *dukkha*—physical, psychological, and social.

The Buddhist way of overcoming suffering can also be applied to overcoming psychological, physical, and social problems as illustrated by the example of Gandhi. Erik Erikson reflects on Gandhi's confession of personal anxiety and his overcoming of suffering:

> For while our clinical era might see in his confessions [referring to Gandhi's confessions of guilt, shame, depression, and shyness in his autobiography] only an admission of having been possessed by irrational guilt, the Mahatma does not stop there. He *experimented,* so he means to emphasize..., with the devils of shame and doubt, guilt and inferiority: he challenged them and won.[52]

Gandhi challenged the "devils" as the Buddha confronted Māra by using the inner strength acquired by moral disciplines. They both chose the life of a renunciate and sought to purge the phobia and pain created by social oppression. Gandhi echoes the Buddha[53] when he un-

derscores deep-rooted passions and attachment as the source of fear and suffering:

> There is fear of disease in enjoyments, there is danger of destruction in having a family, there is danger from kings in having riches, there is danger of ignominy in trying to be respected, there is danger of creating enemies in showing one's physical power, there is danger of disfigurement in having beauty, there is danger of disputation in discussing scriptures, there is danger from the evil-minded in being endowed with high qualities, there is danger of death in having the body, thus is everything a cause of fear. Only complete renunciation is free from fear.[54]

Gandhi, by adopting a religious strategy, broadened the scope of alleviating suffering. He integrated his efforts for acquiring personal freedom from suffering with the freedom from suffering caused by social systems. His methods were religious in nature, but they were functional in the socio-political context. By identifying the service of humanity as a spiritual endeavor, Gandhi aimed at relieving his followers from the fetters of suffering from both the present and future lives.

In today's society, with its shrinking geographical distances and broadening gap between traditional established norms and the fast and fluctuating modern life—media, instant news, job, relationships—the problems of "unease" and fear are extensive. At this time, listening to the Buddha's clear message of the reality of suffering; his call to root out suffering by overcoming emotions of greed, hatred, and delusion by the diligent practice of moral disciplines; and his recommendation to cultivate positive mental attitudes by self-analysis could bring relief to all people, from patients and physicians, to psychotherapists and political leaders.

Even though Gandhi's overt emphasis on action and the Buddha's on renunciation seem to make them ideologically different, a deep listening to their narratives and message brings convergence to these dichotomous strands: renunciation and ethical principles are instruments to end social and metaphysical suffering. Through his attentive listening to the Buddha's *truth of suffering* and following the moral teachings propagated by him in other religious texts, Gandhi found a therapeutic program: the neurosis of fear and pain is deeply rooted in egotistic and private attachments. The recognition of the source of suffering and gradually overcoming inherent negative emotions of greed and delusion through renunciatory practices leads the way to the inner

"ease" that seeks to ameliorate the factors causing social dis-ease (*dukkha*). The pure—passionless—mind is able to listen deeply to the concerns of others and act to alleviate their suffering. In the deep listening mind, a miraculous transformation dawns: understanding of the root of suffering leads to the concern for the well-being of others. A modern Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, emphasizes: "While listening you know that only with deep listening can you relieve the suffering of the other person. If you listen with just half an ear, you cannot do it."[55]

NOTES

1. In English, there is no direct equivalent to the word *dukkha*; it is generally translated as "suffering" or "illness." "It signifies dis-ease in the sense of discomfort, frustration, or disharmony with environment." In Christmas Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1962), 70.

2. Padmasiri De Silva, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology,* 3rd ed. (Lanham, Boulder, and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 2.

3. "It may be said that, in India at any rate, Hinduism and Buddhism were but one, and that even today the fundamental principles of both are identical." Gandhi elaborates during one of his lectures that the Buddha did not start a new religion, but those who came after him gave his teachings "the identity of a new religion." In Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* CD-ROM, 98 vols. (Delhi: Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958–1994), 4:247.

4. A serious candidate is required to go through a series of "preparatory" states of "understanding." "The first of these states is known as *śravaṇa*: study, listening to the teacher and thoroughly learning the revealed texts by paying careful attention to what they say." Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 431.

5. V. S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* 4th ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), 932.

6. For example, "The Fire Sermon." In Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught,* rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 95.

7. Joseph Bailey, "Deep Listening: The Prerequisite to Presence," http://www.thespeedtrap.com/Reflections/Heart_to_Heart/Listening.listening.html; quoted in Rev. Ann C. Fox, "Deep Listening," http://www.uufairhaven.org/2002/Ser2002Oct13.htm.

8. There are several volumes that explore the interactions between psychotherapy and Buddhism, such as Mark Unno, ed., *Buddhism and Psychotherapy across Cultures* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006); and Manly P. Hall, *Buddhism and Psychotherapy* (Los Angeles: The Philosophical Society, 1967).

9. "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth" (*Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*), in Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught,* 93.

10. Lama Anagarika Govinda thus explicates three types of suffering. He quotes the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, *Dīgha-nikāya* 22: "jāt ipi dukkha, jarā pi dukkha, maraṇam pi dukkhaṃ (I) (soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsa pi dukkhā), yam p'ichaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ (II) saṃkhittena pañv'cupādanakkhandā pi dukkhā (III)." In Lama Govinda Anagarika, *Psycho-*

logical Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy and Its Systematic Representation according to Abidhamma Tradition (London: Rider & Company, 1961), 49.

11. The *Dhammapada* (*Maggavaggo*: 5–6), trans. and ed. S. Radhakrishnan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 146. Subsequent references to the *Dhammapada* from the same edition.

12. "Reality anxiety is a painful emotional experience resulting from a perception of danger in the external world." Calvin Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* (New York: The New American Library, 1979), 63.

13. Some scholars discuss the Buddha's classification of the fourfold regimen of noble truths in the context of therapeutic models of Āyurveda, medical science, and the *Yoga-bhāṣya*: "In an analysis of the four-fold division the Yoga-śastra, the Āyurvedic medical science and the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, A. Wezler discusses the term *ārogya*, 'health' (*a* 'not,' *rogya* 'broken, from √*ruj*, 'to break'). Wezler notes that *ārogya* connotes *restoration* to a condition free of disease, presupposing an original state of health." In Gregory P. Fields, *Religious Therapeutics: Body and Health in Yoga, Āyurveda, and Tantra* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 133.

14. *Dhammapada* (*Arhantavaggo, 2*), 89.

15. Literally, "going or wandering through," "undergoing transmigration." Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, new ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 1119.

16. At times Gandhi was mocked by his fellow Hindus as following Buddhism instead of Hinduism, by adhering to the principles of non-violence and compassion like the Buddha. Gandhi replies to this accusation: "And sometimes I feel even proud of being accused of being a follower of the Buddha, and I have no hesitation in declaring in the presence of this audience that I owe a great deal to the inspiration that I have derived from the life of the Enlightened One." Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 40:368–369.

17. Gandhi, however, deplored the comparison on the basis of his "ordinariness" and the Buddha's divine qualities. Gandhi writes: "First and foremost, it is a mistake to consider me a reincarnation of Buddha or of the Prophet. I have never made any such claim. I am an ordinary man. Of course I do try to follow the principles of life as preached by our scriptures and our great men." Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 95:55.

18. In Nicholas. F. Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence from Gautama to Gandhi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 58.

19. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 112.

20. Catherine Clement, *Gandhi: The Power of Pacifism*, trans. Randhir Singh (New York: Abrams, 1996), 38.

21. By utilizing the lens of psychoanalysis Erikson studies the possible underlying hidden meanings of his compulsive anti-sexual behavior. Erikson notes: "I was a psychoanalyst...men of my kind do not merely ask for facts that can be put on the dotted line but really want to discover hidden meanings within the facts and between the lines." E. H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: Norton & Co., 1969), 65.

22. R. Walker, *Sword of Gold: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Indian Independence Union, 1945), 15.

23. Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia: The Great Renunciation* (London: Trübner & Co., 1879). The book presents the life, character, and philosophy of the Buddha.

24. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* 69.

25. M. G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1976), 160.

26. Quoted in Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence*, 59.

27. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 22:159.

28. Ibid., 14:176.

29. G. P. Malalasekera, "Some Aspects of Reality as Taught by Theravāda Buddhism," in *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: East-West Center Press and University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 83.

30. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 15:242.

31. De Silva, *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*, 4–5.

32. Hinduism (principles of *dharma* ethics) and Jainism (five *aṇuvrata,* small vows) recommend a similar set of five ethical principles for spiritual evolution.

33. *Ahiṃsā* is a basic principle of all of the Indian religious traditions. In the Hindu tradition it is considered to be the "highest virtue (*dharma*)."

34. M. K. Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. Krishna Kriplani (New York: Continuum, 1990), 81.

35. Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse,* rev. ed. (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 127.

36. *Dhammapada* (*Daṇḍavaggo:* 1), 102.

37. Quoted in Jonathon Schell, *The Unconquerable World* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003), 125.

38. *Dhammapada* (*Dhammaṭṭhavaggo:* 1), 140.

39. Walter O. Kaelber, "Understanding Asceticism—Testing a Typology: Re-

sponse to the Three Preceding Papers," in *Asceticism,* ed. Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 325.

40. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 6:193.

41. Kirin Narayan, *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 79.

42. Louis Dumont discusses the dynamic role of the renouncer in social reform and creating values in *Religion/Politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology* (Paris and Hague: Mouton, 1970), 46.

43. R. N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 235.

44. They include Swami Dayananda (1824–1883) of the Arya Samaj movement, Swami Vivekananada (1863–1902) of the Vedanta Society, and Swami Sivananda (1887–1963).

45. Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform*, 204.

46. Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 51.

47. Gandhi says: "I was anxious to observe *brahmacharya* in thought, word, and deed, and equally anxious to devote the maximum of my time to the *Satyāgraha* struggle and fit myself for by cultivating purity. I was, therefore, led to make further changes and greater restraints upon myself in the matter of food...the new experiments were made from a religious point of view." Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers,* 26.

48. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 14:355.

49. Mahadev Desai reflecting on the sentiments of people during the Salt March led by Gandhi. In Dennis Dalton, *Gandhi's Power: Nonviolence in Action,* 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004), 109.

50. Quoted in Susanne Hoeber Rudoph and Lloyd Rudolph, *The Traditional Roots of Gandhi's Charisma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1967] 1983*),* 6.

51. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 236.

52. E. H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, 107.

53. "From the liked arises grief; from the liked arises fear.... From affection arises grief; from affection arises fear." The *Dhammapada* (*Piyavaggo:* 4–9), 129.

54. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* 13:279.

55. Thich Nhat Hanh, *For a Future to Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Mindfulness Trainings,* rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2007), 48.

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The Emancipation of Evil Beings:
The Story of the Salvation of King Ajātaśatru

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> *To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human;*
> *it is to be a beast.*
> —Jīvaka

> *Karmic evil is from the beginning without real form;*
> *It is the result of delusional thought and invertedness.*
> —Shinran

INTRODUCTION

Human history has witnessed the conflict between good and evil. Human beings have been fighting each other with swords and shields of justice. In a sense, these are battles of one good against another good. Hatred, antagonism, torture, murder, and war emerge from the self-centered darkness of the mind (*mumyō* 無明). How can we seek peace of mind in the midst of conflict between good and evil? Shinran uses the story of King Ajātaśatru to articulate the spiritual emancipation of evil persons. Shinran's Pure Land teachings have helped its followers understand the defilements of the world and the evilness within themselves by confronting their sorrows and leading them on the path to enlightenment.

Shinran's Reflection on the Emancipation of Evil Being

Shinran (1173–1262), the medieval Pure Land Buddhist cleric and the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, reasoned that spiritual release and realization is achieved through other-power (*tariki* 他力),[1] namely, Buddha's wisdom and compassion. Shinran particularly em-

phasizes the spiritual transformation of *bonbu* (凡夫, evil person) who is filled with *bonno* (煩悩, evil passions, Skt. *kleśa*), and who understands his/her limitations, recognizes the depth of his/her delusion, and entrusts his/her spiritual release to other-power, the Buddha's primal vow.[2] To explain the reality of spiritual transformation and release of the evil person, Shinran coined the expression *akunin shōki* (悪人正機). Describing the person who is the most favored for spiritual release, *akunin shōki* arose from the egalitarian posture that the mind that is free from ego-attachments and has transcended the dualism of good and evil.[3] Encouraged by Amida Buddha's vow that embraces and never abandons the karmic-filled person (*bonbu*), the notion of *akunin shōki* crystallizes the rationale and process for spiritual release. The karmically-filled evil person is assured spiritual release when he/she squarely faces his/her karmic limitations, realizes his/her delusion, tries to live sincerely, and wishes happiness for himself/herself and others.[4] However, Shinran never encourages people to commit evil deeds that would lead themselves and others to suffering.

Shinran outlines the rationale and process of spiritual transformation and release of the evil person through the working of Amida Buddha's primal vow by reference to the tragedy at Rājagṛha. The original story is found in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Shinran quotes selective passages in the "Chapter on *Shinjin*" in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Shinran identifies Prince Ajātaśatru, who assassinated his father, King Bimbisāra, and imprisoned his mother, Queen Vaidehī, as personifying all the three types of evil persons. Their respective illnesses are so severe, incurable, and fatal that even the Buddha is at a loss. The three are those who:

1. slander the *buddhadharma*, the Mahāyāna teaching, and speak ill of the Buddhist teachings;
2. commit the five grave offenses: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an *arhat*, causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha, and disrupting the harmony of the sangha; and
3. have severed the root of goodness (or mind of goodness) and are dispossessed to the seeds for buddhahood, i.e., the *icchantika*s (*issendai* 一闡提).[5]

The transformation and cure of these three types of persons requires able physicians, proper therapies, and effective medication. Accordingly, by listening to the teaching of the Buddha and bodhisattvas and following their guidance, these types of persons can awaken their *bo-*

dhi-mind even in the midst of their suffering. In the retelling of the tragedy of Rājagṛha, I explain and comment on the essentials of Shinran's teachings.

The Buddha's Salvation of the Evil Being: The Case of Prince Ajātaśatru

The following events summarize the story of the salvation of Prince Ajātaśatru:

1. Ajātaśatru's killing his father
2. advice of six ministers
3. Ajātaśatru's meeting with Jīvaka: significance of repentance
4. voice from heaven
5. the Buddha's meeting with Ajātaśatru
6. the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi*
7. significance of the moon-radiant love *samādhi*
8. teaching of the Buddha: encountering a true teacher and mentor
9. Ajātaśatru's anxiety
10. the Buddha's teaching to Ajātaśatru
11. conversion of Ajātaśatru
12. true repentance
13. aspiration and repentance of Ajātaśatru
14. significance of reverse condition
15. significance of deep listening and hearing

(1) Ajātaśatru's Killing His Father

Prince Ajātaśatru lived in the palace of Rājagṛha in a country called Magadha in northwestern India. His nature was very violent and his mind filled with greed, anger, and ignorance.[6] The people usually called Prince Ajātaśatru "Prince Sudarśana," which means "good wisdom." One day, Devadatta enticed the prince, saying, "Your father King Bimbisāra once attempted to kill you."

> Devadatta said, "Before you were born, all the soothsayers declared, 'This infant, once it has been born, will assuredly slay its father.' For this reason, the common people all call you 'Unborn Enemy.' Everyone close to you, in order to protect your feelings, calls you Sudarśana."

"Queen Vaidehī, having heard the words of the prediction, cast you from the top of a high tower when you were born. In that fall, your finger was broken. Because of this incident, the people call you 'Broken Fingered.' When I heard this, such sorrow and resentment sprang up in my heart that I could not face you and tell you of it."

Devadatta related a variety of such matters, seeking to induce the prince to kill his father, and said, "If you kill your father, I too will kill the sramana Gautama."[7]

After hearing this, the prince spawned hatred for his father. He conspired against his father and was eventually successful in imprisoning him. Angry that his mother would try to save her husband, Ajātaśatru confined her to her quarters. He then enthroned himself as king of Magadha. Seven days after he stopped providing his imprisoned father clothing, bedding, food, drink, and medicine, the king passed away. Informed that his father had died, Ajātaśatru realized the graveness of his offence and began to regret and repent for what he had done. Shortly thereafter he became very ill; his body was covered with foul-smelling boils. Stricken by a sense of guilt and his body and mind in pain, Ajātaśatru feared falling into hell.

(2) Advice of Six Ministers

Each of his six ministers visited King Ajātaśatru and consoled him, telling him he was blameless. Each also advised him to cast off his sorrow and affliction, because the more he felt sorrowful, the more pain he would suffer.[8] Respectively, the advice of the ministers reflected the six competing philosophies that rejected the truth of *pratītyasamutpāda* (*engi* 縁起), the principle of causation and interdependence.

(3) Ajātaśatru's Meeting with Jīvaka:
Significance of Repentance

Subsequently, Ajātaśatru met with Jīvaka, an eminent physician, and explained the background of his illness. Although the six ministers advised King Ajātaśatru that he was blameless, Jīvaka's counsel differed from the advice Ajātaśatru received from his six ministers. Jīvaka praised the King for his confessing his misdeeds and crime by saying, "Oh excellent, excellent! Though the king committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled shame and self-reproach. To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human; it is to be a beast."[9] By affirming Ajātaśatru's admission of his

mistakes, Jīvaka in essence introduced the king to the Buddha's teaching. Repenting self-centered crime is to be human. "Though the King has committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled with shame and self-reproach." The significance of "shame and self-reproach" is critical in understanding Shinran's notion of *akunin shōki.* The quickening of "shame" leads to a cessation of committing further evil deeds and to humility. The awakening of "self-reproach" results in not leading others to commit evil, expressing one's abasement outwardly, and the feeling of humility before heaven.

Those who commit crimes are not able to reform if they fail to acknowledge the reality of their crimes or if they rationalize their innocence. Self-delusion only increases suffering and self-torment. The path toward spiritual transformation begins by facing the reality of their crimes, reflecting on their past conduct, and sincerely confessing their faults.

(4) Voice from Heaven

When Ajātaśatru heard his father, King Bimbisāra, speaking from heaven, he fainted and his physical condition worsened considerably.

> "Great King, the person who commits one grave offense suffers fully the corresponding retribution for it. If he commits two grave offenses, the retribution is double. If he commits five, the retribution is fivefold. Great King, we know with certainty now that you cannot escape your evil acts. Pray, Great King, go quickly to the Buddha! Apart from seeing the Buddha, the World-honored one, there is no help. It is out of deep pity that I urge you to do so."
>
> As the Great King heard these words, terror gripped his heart and a shudder ran through his body. He trembled in his five parts like a plantain tree. Gazing upward, he replied, "Who is it? There is no form, only the voice."
>
> [Then it replied,] "Great King! It is your father, Bimbisāra. Let Jīvaka's advice be heeded. Do not follow the words of the six ministers; their views are wrong."
>
> Upon hearing this, the King fainted and collapsed to the ground. The sores on his body spread with vehemence, and the stench and filth grew worse. Cooling salves were applied to treat the sores, but they still burned and the poisonous fever only worsened, with no sign of alleviation.[10]

It is noteworthy that Ajātaśatru's sores suddenly increased twofold. The first time was when Ajātaśatru's mother, Vaidehī, was caring for

Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru realized the significance of having caused his father's death in jail. Because he killed his father, a fever of remorse arose in his heart. Because of this fever of remorse in his heart, sores began to cover his entire body. As soon as Ajātaśatru's mother, Queen Vaidehī, was liberated from prison, she applied a variety of medicines.[11] She took care of Ajātaśatru without judgment. Then, his sores only spread, showed more clearly, and increased in stench. The second time was when Ajātaśatru heard his father's voice from heaven; Ajātaśatru's sores and stench again increased dramatically.[12]

Why did Ajātaśatru's sores suddenly increase twofold? Ajātaśatru's fever, sores, and stench represent his remorse and his repentance of his evil deeds toward his father and mother. Ajātaśatru clung to his belief that his father and mother hated him. However, after badly mistreating his parents, he came to appreciate their kindness and compassion. His sores and stench grew worse in proportion to his deeply realizing his offences.

(5) The Buddha's Meeting with Ajātaśatru

Encouraged by the physician Jīvaka, Ajātaśatru met with the Buddha, who, seeing his suffering, said, "Good son! I say, For the sake of Ajātaśatru, I will not enter Nirvana…. Why? Because for the sake of means for all foolish beings, and Ajātaśatru includes universally all those who commit the five grave offenses…. Ajātaśatru refers to all those who have yet to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment."[13] The utterance "For the sake of Ajātaśatru, I will not enter Nirvana" is especially significant for Shinran, who believes that Buddha's compassion pours out to the people who are afflicted with very deep anguish. Concerned for those persons who have committed the most hideous deeds, the Buddha says, "I will be with you until you are saved." Ajātaśatru came to truly realize his own evilness through his encounter with the compassionate mind of the Buddha. Most human beings cannot avoid committing evil deeds, but the Buddha guides all suffering beings toward enlightenment. It is noteworthy that the Buddha refers to Ajātaśatru as "good son"; it is another indication of the Buddha's great concern for suffering beings.

(6) The Buddha's *Samādhi* of Moon-Radiant Love

Completing his interview with Ajātaśatru the Buddha entered the moon-radiant love *samādhi* and radiated a brilliant light that instantly healed the stricken Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru asked Jīvaka,

"Does the Tathagata, the World-honored one, think to cast his eye on me?"

Jīvaka replied, "Suppose there are parents with seven children, when there is sickness among the seven children, although the father and mother are concerned equally with all of them, nevertheless their hearts lean wholly toward the sick child. Great King, it is like this with the Tathagata. It is not that there is no equality among all sentient beings, but his heart leans wholly toward the person who has committed evil."[14]

As shown in the words of the Buddha, he exists wholly to save ordinary beings in the depths of karmic evil.

(7) Meaning of the *Samādhi* of Moon-Radiant Love

The *samādhi* of moon-radiant love brings joy to all:

Jīvaka answered, "The light of the moon brings joy to the hearts of all travelers on the road. Such is the samadhi of moon-radiant love, which brings joy to the hearts of those in practice on the path of nirvana. This is why it is called 'the samadhi of moon-radiant love'.… It is the king of all good, it is sweet nectar. It is what all sentient beings love and aspire for."[15]

The radiance of the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* is not a supernatural cure. The Buddha's *samādhi* of moon radiant love conveys two meanings. First, just as the light of the moon shines gently without overwhelming the darkness, the Buddha's non-judgmental and unconditional compassion can embrace the evil person. For an evil-filled suffering person, it is very reassuring to have someone be with them silently. Buddha's *samādhi* of moon-radiant love demonstrates the power of compassionate presence. Those who experience unspeakable suffering need a good listener who can enable self-reflection. Second, the Buddha's *samādhi* of moon-radiant love signifies the necessity of quiet reflection free from secular distractions. A suffering person seeks without the need for explanation, because one cannot express one's deep sorrow in words. Zen meditation and reciting the *nenbutsu* are methods through which one can realize one's true self. In other

words, embraced by Amida Buddha's infinite light of compassion, one comes to know one's foolishness.

(8) Teaching of the Buddha:
Encountering with a True Teacher and Mentor

After emerging from the of moon-radiant love *samādhi*, the Buddha said to all those in the great assembly, "Among the immediate causes of all sentient beings' attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment, the foremost is a true teacher. Why? If King Ajātaśatru did not follow the advice of Jīvaka, he would decidedly die on the seventh day of next month and plunge into Avīci hell. Hence, with the day [of the death] approaching, there is nothing more important than a true teacher."[16] It is difficult to accept responsibility for one's evil deeds; one is prone to rationalize one's actions. As the narrative reveals, it becomes possible for one to accept one's evilness when one encounters a being who can wholly accept a person who is aware of one's own evil. The narrative of Ajātaśatru describes an encounter between an evil person and a true teacher and mentor that brought spiritual relief. Ajātaśatru's intimate encounter with Jīvaka and the Buddha gave him the opportunity for self-reflection. The encounter that helped Ajātaśatru develop a mutual relationship is also true for others.

(9) Ajātaśatru's Anxiety

Ajātaśatru anxiously begged Jīvaka with the following request: "Come with me, O Jīvaka! I want to ride on the same elephant with you. Even though I should with certainty plunge into Avīci hell, my wish is that you grasp me and keep me from falling. For I have heard in the past that the person who has attained the way does not fall into hell...."[17] Though the Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* healed Ajātaśatru's mental and physical afflictions, Ajātaśatru was still burdened with the grave offences he committed; he was still afraid of falling into hell. Depressed by terrible guilt, he was fearful of the retribution for the offences that he committed.

(10) The Buddha's Teaching to Ajātaśatru

Causes and conditions of an evil deed. The Buddha's instruction to Ajātaśatru is long and ambiguous. This section of the sutra is also very difficult to interpret, and its doctrinal significance has yet to be thor-

oughly unpacked. But one thing is clear. Śākyamuni Buddha reveals a path for resolving the problem of evil from the perspective of enlightenment. The Buddha explains to Ajātaśatru the causes and conditions of his evil deeds that can be understood, not only from Ajātaśatru's perspective, but also from many differing viewpoints. The following words of the Buddha are particularly noteworthy.

> "King, if you have committed evil, all Buddhas, world-honored ones, must have done so also. Why? Because your father, the former king Bimbisāra, always planted roots of good by paying homage to the Buddhas. For this reason, he was able to occupy the throne in this life. If the Buddhas had not accepted that homage, he would not have been able to become king. If he had not become king, you would not have been able to kill him in order to seize the kingdom. If you have committed evil in killing your father, we Buddhas too must have also. If the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, have not committed evil, how can you alone have done so?"[18]

The Buddha's statement, "if you have committed evil, all Buddhas, world-honored ones, must have done so also," are words of compassion toward Ajātaśatru. Here, the Buddha announces that his offense is not his alone.

The Buddha's compassionate mind identifies with the mind of a person who has committed a crime as if the Buddha had committed it himself. Compassion is the Buddha's method to remove suffering and give peace to others. Such compassion is expressed in the words "your suffering is my suffering." This attitude of non-duality of self and others transcends the self and sympathizes with others. No matter how grave a person's offense may be, when the person feels a loving mind that tries to get beyond the transgression, a pure good mind can arise even from the mind that willed the grave offense. It is important that someone be present with the person who commits an offense and share their suffering until the end. The Buddha is not a co-conspirator with the murderer. However, a murder is not resolved by simply putting all the blame on a single person. The Buddha knows the significance of understanding the sadness of a person who commits a murder as one's own sadness.

The Buddha understands that Ajātaśatru fully realizes the seriousness of his crime of murder and that he is gripped by the fear of falling into hell alone. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that his crime occurred when various causes and conditions came together. He sees that, because of the crime, Ajātaśatru feels extremely shameful and cannot see

his future at all. The Buddha understands that an evil person cannot bear to live with the burden of the crime they have committed by simply reproaching them and tormenting them by foretelling their retributions. The Buddha instead thinks together with Ajātaśatru about how he can go on with his life.

Giving widened perspectives of dependent co-arising. The important issue is that the Buddha does not see evil as permanently fixed. All events are after all subject to change and are empty of permanent reality. The Buddha's perception that the karmic retribution created by a crime is not permanently fixed provides Ajātaśatru with a totally new perspective on his future.

First, Ajātaśatru is given a broader perspective on reality with the concepts of emptiness and dependent co-origination. Ajātaśatru's murder of his father is a reality and a very grave offense of taking away a human life. However, from the Buddhist perspective based on the concepts of emptiness and dependent co-origination, an evil deed occurs as a result of various causes and conditions. Ajātaśatru is not the only person who is to be blamed for the crime. The Buddha provides Ajātaśatru a new and broader perspective on evil deeds. Shinran interpreted the essence of evil as "unformed evil."

> Karmic evil is from the beginning without real form;
> It is the result of delusional thought and invertedness.
> Mind-nature is from the beginning pure,
> But as for this world, there is no person of truth.[19]

Shinran states that, by its nature, evil does not have a firm substantial form. It arises when one makes a judgment through eccentric and delusional views and adheres to a completely inverted interpretation of truth. Thus, he says that there is no "person of truth," even though one is pure by nature. Shinran's interpretation of evil, that it has no form in itself, but arises from delusion and distortion, has much in common with the contents of the Buddha's sermon described in the *Nirvana Sutra.*

Second, the Buddha teaches that one should not simply be constricted by a crime one committed, but should also be given hope for the future. Ajātaśatru cannot erase the grave offense of murdering his father. However, at the same time, he should not perceive karmic retributions of the crime as fixed. His future is not determined only by the crime committed in the past. Of course, the more deeply one laments, the more one becomes bound to the terror of the crime committed

and must live with the heavy burden of the crime. It is important not to forget the crime. However, realizing the graveness of the crime, it is even more important to seek to live a true life beyond remorse for the crime.

Reflecting on ourselves, we need to remember that our own self-righteousness and authoritarianism are often created out of our own attitude that we are good. On the other hand, if we dwell too much on the evil aspects of our nature, we tend to deprecate ourselves and shut ourselves into a world of darkness. If we put too much emphasis on karmic retribution, we may fall into the fallacy of determinism. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that we must take responsibility for the crimes we commit, but, without being bound by the past, we need to explore the future to be liberated from our evil minds.

(11) Conversion of Ajātaśatru

The Buddha's compassionate words enabled *shinjin* (信心) to arise within Ajātaśatru, who responded with deep gratitude. Ajātaśatru said,

> "O World-honored one, observing the world, I see that from the seed of the eranda grows the eranda tree. I do not see a candana tree growing from an eranda seed. But now for the first time I see a candana tree growing from the seed of an eranda. The eranda seed is myself: the candana tree is shinjin that has no root in my heart."[20]

"Eranda" signifies self-awareness of Ajātaśatru's crime. "Candana" signifies *shinjin* filled with Buddha's infinite compassion. In this process, Ajātaśatru in his shame and self-reproach comes to realize the graveness of his crime, and his evil mind is transformed into pure faith (*shinjin*) through the compassion of the Buddha.

True repentance. Quickening awareness of shame and self-reproach equals to a process of understanding oneself and to live one's life seriously. One has to be aware of evil as evil. In other words, having awareness of shame and self-reproach is neither a rite of passage for salvation nor an expiation of evil. It remains throughout one's life and will be gradually deepened. It is clear in the following confession that *shinjin* with no root arose in Ajātaśatru's heart. He said, "Having met with evil friends, I committed evils whose recompense spanned past, present and future. Now, before the Buddha, I repent; may I henceforth never perform evil again."[21] *Shinjin* with no root arisen in Ajātaśatru's heart led him to humbly repent before the Buddha. Consequently,

Ajātaśatru's awareness of shame and self-reproach began immediately after the death of his father and he is entirely filled with Buddha's primal vow. Even after *shinjin* with no root arose in Ajātaśatru's heart, the awareness consistently continued and gradually deepened. Regarding shame and self-reproach Shinran explained that,

> Although I am without shame and self-reproach
> And lack a mind of truth and sincerity,
> Because the Name is directed by Amida,
> Its virtues fill the ten quarters.[22]

Shinran confessed that what he should have shame and self-reproach for was nothing but himself, as he could not have even the awareness of shame and self-reproach.[23] However, at the same time, he described that even though he was not capable of having the awareness, he was entirely filled with the virtue of Amida's primal vow. True shame and self-reproach are not those that one can be aware of by will or efforts. They can be eventually conceived by one, once the deceitful self is enlightened by Amida's primal vow to save all sentient beings by the other-power.[24]

ASPIRATION AND REPENTANCE OF AJĀTAŚATRU

Now, let us consider the most important statement by Ajātaśatru, which articulates his psychological change when *shinjin* with no root arose in his heart. His *shinjin* was expressed as an aspiration: "World-honored one, if I can clearly destroy sentient beings' mind of evil, even if I were to dwell in Avīci hell constantly for innumerable kalpas, undergoing pain and suffering for the sake of sentient beings, it would not be painful."[25] Although Ajātaśatru deeply repented his evil acts and greatly feared going to hell, he declared his aspiration to assist evil sentient beings' who were suffering, even if he would eventually go to hell. His holding on to evil and fear of hell were transformed into love towards others, for which he did not hesitate to go to hell. His aspiration arose by going through deep sorrow and remained with a deep repentance, which was expressed in his poem dedicated to the Buddha.

> Having met with evil friends,
> I committed evils whose recompense spanned past, present and
>   future.
> Now, before the Buddha, I repent;
> May I henceforth never perform evil again.

> May all sentient beings alike awaken the mind aspiring for
>   enlightenment,
> And with a whole heart think constantly on the Buddha
>   throughout the ten quarters.
> And may all sentient beings
> break free forever from blind passions,
> and in seeing Buddha-nature clearly,
> be the equal of Mañjuśrī.[26]

Ajātaśatru's straightforward repentance and aspiration arose from the bottom of his heart. He swore not to commit any more evil deeds and aspired to free all sentient beings from the sufferings of their evil passions. Ajātaśatru, who committed a grave offense, encounters the Buddha's embracing compassion. At that moment, a deep gratitude arose and he discovers a new direction for his life, a life of faith (*shinjin*). Ajātaśatru's old self dies and a new self is born. He breaks out of his solitary shell of ego-attachment and is born as a son of the Tathāgata. This is *shinjin*.

In the *Nirvana Sutra*, the Buddha's concern for Ajātaśatru does not simply arise from a sense of duty or responsibility, but from joy and hope. Śākyamuni Buddha believes that there is a future even for a person who commits the gravest offenses. If the entirety of our lives were predetermined, we would have no control over our actions, both good and evil. Happiness and unhappiness would be determined, a matter of fate. If the future is determined by the past, there would be no point to hope, no need to make efforts to repent transgressions or to be kind for the sake of others. Philosophies that negate *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent co-origination), such as determinism, do not provide any motivation for hope in the future.

The Buddha's teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda* informs Ajātaśatru that everything and all events arise due to various causes and conditions, are dependent on each other, and are continuously changing. To live in accordance with the teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda* is to respect the freedom of each human being. To understand that everything is interconnected means that "I am not alone; I live in the love and vows of others." When we experience such compassion, we can transform our suffering into energy and hope for the future. The possibility of spiritual transformation negates the determinism of karmic deeds. No matter how grave one's karmic evil may be, when one realizes the depths of his or her misery, one can transform this misery into a truly nurturing and pure compassion. Faith and hope can provide people

with the power to live. On the relationship between evil and enlightenment Shinran writes,

> Through the benefit of the unhindered light,
> We realize shinjin of vast, majestic virtues,
> And the ice of our blind passions necessarily melts,
> Immediately becoming water of enlightenment.
>
> Obstructions of karmic evil turn into virtues;
> It is like the relation of ice and water:
> The more the ice, the more the water;
> The more the obstructions, the more the virtues.[27]

This passage explains Shinran's understanding of the relationship between good and evil, and the warmth of Amida's vow. Although the appearance of ice and water are different, their nature is identical. "Evil passions are themselves enlightenment." Evil passions are attachments that harden the human mind. However, like ice that can melt into water, wrong thoughts can be transformed into the water of enlightenment through the warmth of Amida's light and vows. Amida Buddha's primal vow becomes one with one's lost self and converts evil into the goodness of enlightenment. By recognizing each other's evil we can together transcend the evil and build a peaceful future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVERSE CONDITIONS

Adverse conditions can be catalyst for enlightenment and appreciation of Amida Buddha's benevolence. Ajātaśatru, Bimbisāra, Vaidehī, and Jīvaka, the principal personalities involved in the tragedy at Rājagṛha, are "the incarnations of benevolence"; they are the incarnations of bodhisattvas who appeared respectively as a prince, king, queen, and doctor.[28] For Shinran, the tragedy at Rājagṛha is a narrative to make one aware of infinite benevolence and tolerance of Amida Buddha. Just as flowers blooming at the edge of a garbage dump seem especially beautiful, suffering and sorrow offer an opportunity to find true tenderness and benevolence.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DEEP LISTENING AND HEARING

"Deep listening and hearing" has something in common with the *samādhi* of moon-radiant love practiced by the Buddha and the feeling of compassion arising from an awareness of dependent origination. "Listening," interpreted by Shinran as "guided to listen," means that

one with evil passions is wholly accepted, embraced, and guided by Amida to listen to the voice of truth. On the other hand, "hearing" is "awakening" to Amida's primal vow as the highest expression of compassion in relation to the deep crisis of one's existential plight.[29] "Hearing" is the experience of *shinjin*. In other words, "hearing" refers to the internal experience of feeling that Amida has reached out to one while one is in calm contemplation, when one is most aware of a sense of longing for help, in the midst of agony. It is through this "deep listening and hearing" that in agony one comes to recognize one's bare self and realize dependent origination with all beings, in the light of the Buddha's teachings. Ultimately, one's lost self is converted into a more flexible personality, set free from various attachments.

In psychotherapy as well, "deep listening and hearing" is the basic attitude for the therapist (one who listens) to take toward the client (one who is heard). The therapist, sitting by the client, hears without a word the client's talk of his/her sufferings in order to offer an unbiased analysis/finding. Through a continuous human relationship, mutual understanding is established between the therapist's self and the self of the client. "Hearing" has the significant potential of bringing an unexpected, creative change to the self of the client.

"Deep listening and hearing" is a manifestation of affection done by someone who stays close but does not judge. It aims to ease the situation in which one is shackled by some kind of concept of one's own, and to encourage one to lead a more flexible life in the midst of sufferings of day-to-day life.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to reflect on the true intention of Shinran's understanding of the meaning of the emancipation of King Ajātaśatru. How did Ajātaśatru come to realize his own evil? What kind of ethical attitudes did Ajātaśatru cultivate through becoming aware of his evilness? The process of the salvation of King Ajātaśatru has three spiritual bonds filled with compassion that made Ajātaśatru come to realize how foolish he had been.

First, after the death of his father, Ajātaśatru became aware that his father and mother loved him deeply. As a result, Ajātaśatru keenly felt how terrible his behavior had been. Second, Jīvaka counseled Ajātaśatru, instructing him that living while feeling one's evilness is living as a human being. Thanks to this, Ajātaśatru was able to face

honestly the offenses he had committed. Third, the Buddha trusted Ajātaśatru with complete confidence for his future, which in turn gave Ajātaśatru the motivation to transform himself into a being who could respond to the suffering of others and treat all living beings compassionately. The Buddha's moon-radiant love *samādhi* made Ajātaśatru realize that he was in the darkness of ignorance. Thus Shinran reasoned that by realizing that human beings live in *shinjin*, as vowed by the Buddha, our world expands beyond our ego-centric self. Encountering the Buddha's compassion or the Buddha's other-power frees us from the bondage of ego-attachments and enables us to accept our own real self, to continue living into our own future.

Ajātaśatru, knowing that he was embraced by the Buddha's vow just as he was, possessed of the evil deeds he had already committed, realized a great peace of mind. Encouraged by the Buddha's vow that would never abandon him, he came face to face with his own evil offenses and realized his ignorance. Because he realized his own ignorance, he became all the more sincere to make efforts to live his life honestly, wishing for the happiness of himself and others. *Shinjin* is one's love for all beings, which arises in the awakening of one's own ignorance. Ajātaśatru, who received the love and kindness of his father and mother, Jīvaka, and the Buddha, in turn extended his love and kindness to all beings. Although it took a long time, the Buddha's compassionate vow gradually penetrated Ajātaśatru's evil mind. Finally, his defiled mind was transformed into the mind of sincere repentance with aspiration for the happiness of all beings.

Shinran's teaching of the emancipation of evil beings (*akunin shōki*) developed out of the non-discriminating egalitarian thought fundamental to Buddhist teaching. *Akunin shōki* is the crystallization of profound self-reflection on human evil and loving compassion. Illuminated by the light of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion, we become aware of our real selves and realize that even within our own good mind, an evil mind is hiding. We realize the falseness hidden inside of good appearances. When we human beings transcend our attachment to the mind of calculation on good and evil, we become aware that all human beings are interconnected with each other.

Spiritual maturity in Buddhism can be measured by the capacity to acknowledge one's dependency on others. By accepting the loving kindness of others, a feeling of gratitude arises in our hearts. And that

feeling of gratitude is then transformed into our compassionate mind directed to all living beings.

All beings are interdependent. Violence arises from a sense of vanity. When one is conscious of being dependent upon others and Amida Buddha, one can reflect on oneself and go forward. Salvation is not a miracle that suddenly happens. Salvation from deep repentance of evil takes a long while. Enlightened by the benevolence of Amida, who stays with one in silence, and awakened by Amida's primal vow, one can be aware of one's evil and will be able to take the path to remaking one's life.

NOTES

1. In Shinran's words, "Where the mind of self-power is made to disappear… the realization of true entrusting that is Other Power (*tariki no shinjin*) comes out." Shinran further states, "Other Power means to be free from any form of calculation or attachment." The realization of other-power is awakening to the reality of interrelationship to all beings and identifying the self with others. Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, 2 vols. (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 2:198.

2. *Tannishō*, chap. 3, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:663. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:95. "Hymns of the Dharma-Ages," in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:421.

3. The Buddha explains the approach to transcending good and evil as follows: "For those who have awakened and transcended good and evil, there is nothing to fear" (*Dhammapada* 39) and "A holy man is a man who has calmed himself, is a man who has abandoned merit and demerit. Knowing this world and the other, he is dustless and has overcome birth and death" (*Sutta-nipāta*, trans. Hammalava Saddhatissa [London: Curzon Press, 1985], 60). Enlightenment, which transcends both good and evil, is becoming liberated from worldly judgments and self-centered calculations.

4. *Mattōshō* 20, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:553–554.

5. "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization," in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:125.

6. *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:125.

7. Ibid.*,* 1:142.

8. Ibid.*,* 1:126–130.

9. Ibid.*,* 1:131.

10. Ibid.*,* 1:132.

11. "Then the queen-mother Vaidehī applied a variety of medicines, but the sore only spread and showed no sign of alleviation. The King said to his mother, 'These sores have been produced by the heart.'" Ibid.,1:126.

12. Ibid.*,* 1:132.

13. Ibid., 1:132.

14. Ibid., 1:133.

15. Ibid., 1:134.

16. Ibid., 1:134.

17. Ibid., 1:134.

18. Ibid., 1:135.

19. "Hymns of the Dharma-Ages," no. 107, in *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:423.

20. "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization," in *Collected Works of Shinran,* 1:137–138.

21. Ibid., 1:139–140.

22. "Hymns of the Dharma-Ages," no. 97, in *Collected Works of Shinran,* 2:421.

23. Sokusui Murakami writes, "Shinran's words about evil and foolish beings are based on his real, deep repentance. When Shinran found himself aspiring for salvation by the benevolence of Amida, he at the same time found with regret that he was so far from it. The saint could not claim himself to be a good person, because, in his belief, he was rather nothing but a 'being with deep evil and numerous defilements.' This finding was indeed a matter for real shame and self-reproach. To be precise, however, Shinran found himself as a being who could not have even a sense of shame and self-reproach. He, therefore, called himself 'A shameless being without a sense of self-reproach.'" Sokusui Murakami, *Shinran kyōgi no gokai to rikai* (Misinterpretation and Understanding of Shinran's Doctrine) (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1984), 58.

24. Chang Wai 張偉 writes, "Ajātaśatru's tears of shame, self-reproach, joy, and sorrow" is mundane in comparison to the true shame and self-reproach in Buddhism.

> The shame and self-reproach from the perspective of Buddhism differ from those in mundane meaning. Shame and self-reproach in the mundane meaning are intentional work exposed to other's eyes. One cannot be free from mingling of the elements of deceit, deceptions, or utilitarian schemes [in] how one tries to work with sincerity. Although shame and self-reproach in the mundane meaning could occasionally become the catalyst for [a] shift to a higher level of shame and self-reproach, if one stays with it one would not be able to reach the level of salvation by Buddhism. Shame and self-reproach of the level of Ajātaśatru could not be realized by intention. Now I understand afresh Shinran's feeling expressed in his words "Unrepentant and unashamed." Conceivably, the words "Unrepentant and unashamed" have the implication that shame and self-reproach would not be realized in the true sense of the word as long as one has such an awareness as "I will do, won't do, can do, or can't do" and as long as one does not abandon one's own willful attempt. Ajātaśatru's feeling of shame and self-reproach was triggered by his awareness of evil, and it is the power of Tathāgata that turns the awareness into an opportunity for salvation. The awareness of real shame and self-

> reproach so realized is not the product of human will, but it would be brought about by the benevolence arisen of Amida's primal vow.

Chang Wai 張偉, "Ajase no zangi to hiki no namida (Ajātaśatru's Tears of Shame, Self-Reproach, Joy, and Sorrow)," *Jisho Dojin* 19 (November–December 2003): 12.

25. *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:138.

26. Ibid.*,* 1:139–140.

27. "Hymns of the Pure Land Masters," nos. 39–40, in *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:371.

28. Shinran regarded the persons in the lore surrounding Ajātaśatru as bodhisattvas who lead foolish beings to spiritual ease. "When conditions were mature for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land, Devadatta provoked Ajātaśatru to commit grave crimes, and out of pity for beings of this defiled world, Śākyamuni led Vaidehī to select the land of peace. As we turn this over in our minds and quietly reflect, we realize that Devadatta and Ajātaśatru bestowed their generous care on us, and that Amida and Śākyamuni thus manifested their profound intention to save all beings." *Collected Works of Shinran*, 1:302.

29. Ibid.*,* 2:189.

Ajātaśatru: Family System and Karma

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THIS ESSAY PROVIDES an interpretation of King Ajātaśatru, a figure well known in Japanese Buddhist culture from the perspective of Bowen Family Systems Therapy. This therapeutic approach is based on concepts such as individuality and togetherness, anxiety, and the multigenerational transmission process.

FAMILY THERAPY

History of Family Therapy

Family therapy first appeared when psychiatrists who studied and treated schizophrenic clients were confronted with the need to take family dynamics into account. At that time, many psychiatrists did not regard the family as an essential factor in the etiology and treatment of schizophrenia or of other mental illnesses. Family became the object of attention after Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) started to pay careful attention to the relationship between clients and their families. From the 1940s to 1950s, research on the correlation between family relationships and schizophrenia were carried out. Particularly important was the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson. Bateson found a peculiar communication pattern in families with schizophrenics. Don Jackson (1920–1968), a psychiatrist, and Jay Haley (1923–2007), one of the initial family theory founders, participated in this research. In 1959, Jackson and Haley started to utilize family therapy instead of psychoanalytic therapy and established the Mental Research Institute (MRI), which has been one of the leading institutes in the family therapy field. Several well-known family therapies, including Bowen Family Systems Therapy, emerged from this early work.

Bowen Family Systems Theory

Murray Bowen (1913–1990), who was a psychiatrist and the founder of Bowen Family Systems Therapy, started his study of schizophrenia in the late 1940s when he perceived a common pattern of relationship between patients and their mothers. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen state that Bowen's theory is based on natural systems. This makes Bowen Family Systems Therapy unique because the other family theories are based on the concepts of cybernetics, general systems theory, and communication theory, theoretical orientations that focus more on the immediate present and the prospective future. Although other family theories have a here-and-now stance toward therapy, Bowen's theory expands into past relationships including the extended family because Bowen claims that the family contains two distinct systems: "the family *relationship* system and the family *emotional* system."[1]

Bowen regards the family as "a multigenerational network of relationships" and focuses his attention especially on the mother-child relationship. Furthermore, he assumes that humans are more dependent and emotionally oriented than many people have imagined. Bowen's assumptions are that "human relationships are driven by two counterbalancing life sources, *individuality* and *togetherness*,"[2] which combine in the family's emotional system. Four key concepts arising from this tension between individuality and togetherness are differentiation of self, emotional triangles, nuclear family emotional process, and multigenerational transmission process.[3] Bowen claims that it is essential to understand the relationship in the family as a triad, rather than as a dyad. In this view human beings and their families can be observed in terms of emotional triangles. As Kerr and Bowen state, "In actuality, it is never possible to explain the emotional process in one relationship adequately if its links to other relationships are ignored. One relationship becomes intertwined with others through a process of *triangling....* The triangle is the basic molecule of an emotional system."[4] Bowen makes *anxiety* a core concept of triangles in the emotional system and argues that relationships, drug use, personality traits, and beliefs form important anxiety-based factors in relationships. He claims that not only does one person's anxiety infect another person in the family, but anxiety can also be transmitted to later generations. Bowen called this a *multigenerational transmission process.*

Major Concepts of Family Therapy

Some family therapies pay attention to family structure; some focus on solving problems; and some emphasize communication patterns in a system. Family therapies, however, generally share the same basis, benefiting from concepts of systems theory, cybernetics, and communication theory. The concepts of all these theories are intertwined and constitute the core of family theory. These include wholeness, homeostasis, feedback loop, and process. These concepts have influenced Bowen Family Systems Theory as well.

"The Whole Is More than the Sum of the Parts"

In family therapy, "the wholeness" of the system is emphasized over "the parts." The parts are each family member, while families constitute a systemic whole. As Nichols and Schwartz state: "[T]he essential properties of an organism, or living system, are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the interactions and relationships among the parts.... The whole is always greater than the sum of its parts."[5] Therapists focus on relationships between a client and his/her parents, between parents, and between the parents and their parents. This view makes it possible to understand presenting problems more accurately through the relationships and power balance between the parts of the family system. Thus, the therapist focuses not only on the individual as having the problem, but rather pays careful attention to the background of the client's family history, including extended family, so as to understand a multidimensional pattern.

Homeostasis

Homeostasis, a concept of the utmost importance in family therapy, means that there is a tendency on the part of the family system to seek a stable equilibrium among the parts. Jackson introduced this idea to family therapy as a model for family interaction.[6] He describes homeostasis as a family's resistance to change in order to maintain the steady state; when a family system is disturbed, homeostasis operates to bring the disturbed system back into balance.[7] Nichols and Schwartz also suggest that homeostasis is "the self-regulation that keeps systems in a state of dynamic balance."[8] Homeostasis is one of the key

concepts for many family therapy models because family homeostasis enforces unspoken agreement or "family rules."

As Kerr and Bowen state: "A two-person system may be stable as long as it is calm, but since the level of calm is very difficult to maintain, a two-person system is more accurately characterized as [generally] unstable. When anxiety increases, a third person becomes involved in the tension of the twosome, creating a triangle. This involvement of a third person decreases anxiety in the twosome by spreading it through three relationships."[9] Two people who are under stress and anxiety need a third person so that they can obtain a stable constellation in a system. Bowen assumes that a stable state in a relationship is indispensable for people, even though it may be maintained by negative emotions. Thus, homeostasis is central to Bowen Family Systems Theory, and is reflected in the concepts of triangles, nuclear family emotional process, and multigenerational transmission process.

Feedback Loop

First advocated by Norbert Wiener (1894–1964) in 1948, cybernetics is interested in patterns and communication in a system. One of the key concepts is the feedback loop, which influenced Bateson's family therapy.[10]

There are two types of feedback that maintain homeostasis in a family interaction pattern: positive and negative. According to Watzlawick and others, homeostasis is generally maintained by negative feedback, which plays an important role in maintaining the stability of relationships, while positive feedback leads to change.[11] Positive feedback works as an amplifier, encouraging change while a family is learning and growing, seemingly in a spiral pattern. Negative feedback reduces change and maintains the status quo of the system. The pioneers of family therapy understood this mechanism by which problems are persistently maintained in a family. How to deal with this mechanism is one of the key points of family therapy.

In Bowen Family System Therapy "[t]he information of three *interconnected* relationships can contain more anxiety than is possible in three separate relationships because pathways are in place that allow the shifting of anxiety around the system."[12] Bowen's theory presumes that negative feedback loops are elicited from *chronic anxiety* that makes the system dysfunctional and is found in multiple generations in a family history.

Process

Family therapy is more interested in communication patterns and interaction than in the contents of communication.[13] Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson write:

> Now, if it is accepted that all behavior in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot *not* communicate. Actively or inactively, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating.[14]

In systems theory, process means "to change over time and includes the ongoing functions and history of a system."[15] For Bowen's therapy, *process* is one of the most important concepts. Bowen's theory pays attention to the process of interaction in a family, including the extended family, because the *process* expresses patterns of behaviors and reactions within the family. Nichols and Schwartz state that "Bowenian therapy is a process of active inquiry, in which the therapist, guided by the most comprehensive theory in family therapy, helps family members get past blaming and fault finding in order to face and explore their own roles in family problems."[16] Although Kerr and Bowen state that Bowen's theory is modeled on natural systems rather than general systems theory, it is clear that Bowen's systems theory is also a part of the large group of systems theories.

CASE STUDY

Introduction of Ajātaśatru/Ajase

It is widely believed that Ajātaśatru (Jpn. Ajase 阿闍世), who appears in the Buddhist story of King Ajātaśatru at Rājagṛha, was a real person in India. From the second to the fifth centuries C.E., Mahāyānists compiled new versions of the Mahāyāna sutras. Therefore, it is commonly said that many extant Mahāyāna sutras are of questionable historicity. More recent research, however, has revealed that quite a number of stories included in these sutras are indeed based on historical fact. The story of King Ajātaśatru appears in both the *Meditation Sutra* (Skt. *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*, Jpn. *Kanmuryōjukyō* 觀無量壽經) and in the *Nirvana Sutra* (Jpn. *Nehangyō* 涅槃經). The majority of this story is currently regarded as essentially historical.

The general outline of this story is that a king and queen, Bimbisāra and Vaidehī, are unable to conceive a child and go to a seer for advice. The seer tells them that a certain hermit upon his death will be reborn as their son, the crown prince. Unable to wait for his passing, the king and queen murder him. Thus are planted the seeds of anger, betrayal, and hatred. The hermit on his deathbed vows to take revenge upon them. Realizing what they have done, the king decides to kill the infant. However, his human love overcomes his fear, and the king dotes on the boy. As a prince, Ajātaśatru is befriended by the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta, who convinces the crown prince to plot to take the throne and become Devadatta's benefactor. The king cedes the throne to Ajātaśatru believing that his son will reign peacefully, but the newly crowned King Ajātaśatru throws his father into prison with the intention of starving him to death. When the new king finds out that his mother, Queen Vaidehī, has been smuggling food into Bimbisāra's prison, he commands the court barber to cut open the king's feet and torture him. Bimbisāra dies in agony, but when Ajātaśatru has his own child, he asks his mother Vaidehī about his father's love for him. When he learns of his father's great love, he breaks down in agonized remorse. Both the queen and the prince seek out the Buddha's teachings for relief from their suffering, and both become devoted followers of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Variations in this story will be dealt with below.

Ajātaśatru attempts to kill Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru's father, the former king, in malice. The main axis of human relationships in this story is father-son. The version of this story found in the *Meditation Sutra*, however, focuses on the mother-child relationship and describes how Vaidehī, who becomes an accomplice in the attempted infanticide of Ajātaśatru, suffers as a woman and is extricated from her torment by the teachings of the Buddha. While conveying Buddhist teachings, the story clearly depicts a love-hate relationship between parent and child. While such troubled relationships have been repeated throughout time and speak to fundamental pathologies of human nature, their complexities have yet to be fully elucidated, even through cutting-edge modern psychology. The particular Japanese slant on this story will be examined later on. Naoki Nabeshima states that this story, by addressing such topics as child abuse, misconduct, parricide, incitement, egoism, the sense of the accused, divination, and fatalism, depicts the socio-psychological reality of human beings across time.[17]

It is possible to say that this story represents a microcosm of human life in the present and shows that human nature has remained largely unchanged for thousands of years, even as specialists from different fields have searched for ways to educate people to be better. As Hiroi Takase suggests:

> The human being is tormented by the gap between how he should be and the reality of how he is; he has but to anticipate what is to come, and take his chances. In *The Tragedy at Rājagṛha Castle*, the same circumstances existed. Oedipus in Greek mythology meets the same fate as Ajātaśatru. Humans' agony goes on interminably. The *Meditation Sutra* is salvation for The Venerable [Buddhist Master] Honen, who sought the reason for the existence of human beings. Ajātaśatru's remorse corresponds to Shinran's statement in his *Gutokuhitanjukkai* (Hymns on Lamentation of the Bald-headed Fool), and also corresponds to the passionate wish for the Buddhist Pure Land, which is deeply embedded in the Japanese mind. One might very well find oneself in the same situation as the father king, Queen Vaidehī, and Ajātaśatru.[18]

By substantially increasing material abundance, modern science has brought about dramatic transformations in people's lifestyles, yet much of human nature remains unchanged and yet unexplored. The enduring vicissitudes of human nature can be seen through this story. Nabeshima has positioned this story as providing a meaning to live for when people lose sight of their goals and begin to look for the self.[19]

The Source of the Ajātaśatru Story

There are two perspectives from which the Ajātaśatru story may be analyzed: psychology, which focuses on Ajātaśatru's psyche, and Buddhism, which focuses on observing and construing human beings through religious discipline. Heisaku Kosawa, a pioneer of psychological studies in Japan, compared Freud's Oedipus complex to King Ajātaśatru's behavior, and he analyzed Ajātaśatru's psychological process by focusing on the notion of karmic failing. Kosawa developed the original idea of an Ajātaśatru complex, and Keigo Okonogi furthered this study.[20] Though the outline of this story is simple and clear, it is full of psychological subtlety. Since each scholarly interpreter tends to examine only a part of the whole story, the story is seldom covered in full detail. It seems that there are as many stories as there are experts.

India is the birthplace of the Ajātaśatru story, but as this thesis focuses on Japan, we will limit our discussion to the tradition of the Ajātaśatru story beginning with Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in which he reinterprets the story in accordance with his own observations of human beings and his thinking on how a person might be aided in their search for salvation according to Japanese cultural sensibilities. Mikisaburo Mori also claims that although it may seem that Shinran directly takes over all doctrines from Shandao, Shinran converts the doctrines into his own style.[21] As mentioned above, Shinran also includes numerous citations to the *Nirvana Sutra.*

Kosawa and Okonogi's Interpretation of the Ajātaśatru Story

While Freud explains the Oedipus complex on the basis of the triad relationship among father, mother, and (male) child, Kosawa and Okonogi construct the Ajase complex on the basis of the dyadic father-son and mother-son relationships. In the Ajase complex, particular emphasis is placed on the mother-son relationship, which is characteristic of Japanese thinking in general. As mentioned before, Kosawa was a devout Shin Buddhist and was clearly influenced by Shinran's thought.

In the Ajase complex, Kosawa articulates two notions of failing. Since Vaidehī, the wife of King Bimbisāra in Magadha, had still not been blessed with children, she was gradually becoming apprehensive that Bimbisāra's affection for her would diminish and fade away. Finally she consulted a diviner about a successor, and the diviner implied that she would have a baby three years later who would be the incarnation of a hermit in the mountains. She could not wait for the hermit to die because she was not young enough, and so she commanded that the hermit be killed. In his last moment, the hermit was filled with resentment; her son, who is a reincarnation of the hermit, would kill King Bimbisāra in retaliation for Vaidehī's plot. As Vaidehī was apprehensive about the hermit's deathbed resentment, she plotted to kill her newborn son, Ajātaśatru, immediately upon delivering him. Having a narrow escape from death, Ajātaśatru grew up and met Devadatta, a jealous cousin of the Buddha who had joined the latter's movement, and who had watched for his chance to usurp the religious leadership of the sangha. Devadatta revealed to Ajātaśatru the facts concerning his birth. Incensed, Ajātaśatru captured and imprisoned his father, but a loyal vassal, by appealing to reason and moral principles, prevent-

ed him from killing his mother. After Bimbisāra died in confinement, Ajātaśatru fell seriously ill, his body covered with boils, and nobody could come close because of his powerful stench. Vaidehī, however, nursed Ajātaśatru back to health; as a result, Ajātaśatru seriously reflected on his conduct.

Kosawa articulates two notions of karmic failing in his psychoanalysis of Ajātaśatru: failing based on punishment, and failing based on reparation.[22] The former notion is aroused by the action of Ajātaśatru trying to kill his mother, and the latter is aroused by Vaidehī being devoted to taking care of Ajātaśatru even though she was about to be killed by him. In the former, Ajātaśatru's attempt to kill his mother is a failing or transgression that can only be righted by punishment, including as seen through the eyes of the transgressor. In the latter, recognition of karmic failing takes place *precisely because* of being embraced, in this case, by the nurturing of the mother; the primary consciousness is the desire to make reparations, not the fear of punishment. The former fear justifies punishment; the latter seeks to repair by way of being embraced.

The Ajātaśatru Story in the Sutra of Eternal Life

The description of events preceding the birth of Ajātaśatru as found in the Kosawa version outlined above differs in significant ways from that in the *Meditation Sutra.* In the version found in the latter, it was King Bimbisāra, not his wife Vaidehī, who felt anxious about not having a successor and went to see the diviner. The diviner told him that after the death of a hermit in the mountain, Vaidehī would be expecting a child because of the hermit's reincarnation. Bimbisāra could not wait for three years and demanded that the hermit be killed. Bimbisāra was apprehensive and fearful when he listened to the hermit's deathbed resentment.

Ajātaśatru was enraged and imprisoned his father after he learned the secret of his birth from Devadatta. When Ajātaśatru knew that his mother Vaidehī secretly brought some food for Bimbisāra so that he could survive, Ajātaśatru was again enraged and tried to kill his mother. While Ajātaśatru desisted from killing his mother after receiving timely moral advice from a vassal, Bimbisāra ultimately died of starvation. Ajātaśatru regretted his actions and became seriously ill when he learned of his father's death. Nobody came close to Ajātaśatru because

of a severe odor caused by his illness; however, Vaidehī took care of him sincerely. It was then that Ajātaśatru recognized his own failing.[23]

Ajātaśatru and His Family

In the study of human relationships or psychology, it is often appropriate to compare and contrast two factors. In some cases, however, it is more appropriate to broaden the analysis to include three or more factors. In traditional Japanese literature, there are a great many stories, ranging from classical prose fiction to modern novels, in which triadic human relationships take center stage. It is pertinent to observe and examine human relationships between two people in many cases, but dysfunctional relationships often expand to encompass three people. Kawai states in *The Hollow Center in the Depth Structure of the Japanese*[24] that it is a distinctive character of Japanese social structure that nobody unilaterally dominates the central position in a triadic relationship, a fact that makes this type of relationship especially stable. As mentioned *supra*, Kerr and Bowen argue that triadic relationships are typically more stable than dyadic relationships, and that when anxiety is predominant, people often intentionally form triads so that they can establish a more stable relationship.

Kosawa develops his Ajase complex theory focusing on the dyadic relationship between mother and child. In the Buddhist sutras related above, on the other hand, the focus is slightly different. Among the sutras, the *Nirvana Sutra* emphasizes the dyadic father-child relationship, and the *Meditation Sutra* emphasizes the dyadic mother-child relationship. In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran describes the viewpoints of father, mother, and child; he deals, in other words, with a triadic relationship. The relationship between Ajātaśatru, Bimbisāra, and Vaidehī as found in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in which Shinran interprets the Ajātaśatru relationship triad using native Japanese and Buddhistic sensibilities, may be analyzed in terms of fundamental elements of Bowen Family Theory, such as anxiety, emotional triangles, and the multigenerational transmission process. Using American cultural sensibilities and psychological theory Bowen developed these concepts in his interpretation of triad relationships. Application to the Ajātaśatru story will reveal the strengths and limitations of applying Bowen Family Systems Theory, which is rooted in American social norms, to the Japanese family triad.

Bimbisāra's Anxiety

When Vaidehī was expecting Ajātaśatru, a new triad relationship between father, mother, and child arose. Following Kerr and Bowen, one could say that "the anticipated birth can sufficiently disturb the emotional equilibrium in the marriage that one of the two parents gets into an unfavorable position emotionally."[25] In Bimbisāra's case, when the hermit was about to be killed, he told Bimbisāra that he would be reincarnated as his son, Ajātaśatru, and would kill Bimbisāra. Bimbisāra felt much more anxiety than the typical father would.[26] Before this incident, Bimbisāra was already very impatient and anxious about failing to produce a successor, and as a result, he hastened to kill the hermit. Only at the moment when he was informed that Vaidehī was expecting a child did Bimbisāra not feel anxiety in this familial triad relationship. Apart from that moment, his anxiety gradually intensified, ultimately driving him to attempt the murder of Ajātaśatru. This reaction can be taken as Bimbisāra's flight from his anxiety. As Kerr and Bowen suggest, "In an anxious environment, people who want to make decisions based on a broad and long-term view are pushed aside by people who want quick answers and immediate relief from problems."[27] Bimbisāra, without contemplation of the repercussions, made the evil decision to try to kill his own son.

Vaidehī's Anxiety

In the *Meditation Sutra*, Vaidehī approved of her husband's wish to kill the new born baby after she delivered him: "Through this process, anxiety that begins first in one person can eventually manifest itself in a physical, emotional, or social symptom in *another* person."[28] Bimbisāra's anxiety entangled Vaidehī. It is difficult to imagine that she was calm after this failed attempt at murder. As Kerr and Bowen explain, "Distress that begins in the mother about some event in her personal life may be first reacted to by her most undifferentiated child."[29] In this case, Vaidehī's anxiety is reacted to by Ajātaśatru.

The source of Vaidehī's anxiety is that she had helped carry out the nefarious plan to kill her own son in cooperation with Bimbisāra. Her anxiety was intensified by Ajātaśatru's immature actions as he grew up, which Nabeshima expresses as follows: "He [Ajātaśatru] was of a violent temperament and did not in the least feel pain about killing people…and he lived a pleasure-seeking life."[30] It seems that Bimbisāra and Vaidehī, who had not yet overcome their own failing, were in a

chronically uneasy state, for they were frightened of their punishment. As a consequence of this, it could be said that Bimbisāra and Vaidehī brought up Ajātaśatru in an emotionally warped situation in which they showed affection, but their affection was mingled with intense anxiety.

Ajātaśatru's Anxiety

The circumstances in which Ajātaśatru was raised were dominated by anxiety, and Ajātaśatru gradually became depressed. Both Bimbisāra's and Vaidehī's anxiety would surely have spread to Ajātaśatru.[31] These led to Ajātaśatru's depression and immature actions; Devadatta, who harbored resentment towards the Buddha, then showed up and divulged the secrets surrounding the circumstances of Ajātaśatru's birth. Ajātaśatru came to understand the cause of his anxiety, and he began to doubt the sincerity of his parents and all that they had done for him including their shows of affection. Nabeshima explains that Ajātaśatru's malice was engendered by his rage against his father's false love and by the hollowness and loneliness that Ajātaśatru felt as a result of not receiving love from a reliable mother. When Ajātaśatru lost both his emotional ties to his father and any sense of togetherness with his mother, he became tormented and lost all reason for existence; his despair ultimately morphed into resentment and murderous intent.[32] It resulted in doubts about being loved by his parents and in a deep anxiety over the isolation he felt at being bound neither to his father nor to his mother. Under sudden and intense anxiety, Ajātaśatru could not maintain calm judgment. In order to resolve his discomfort and regain emotional stability as quickly as possible, he confined his father. As Kerr and Bowen state, "While quick fix approaches often do relieve the anxiety of the moment, typically the problem soon returns and the same approaches no longer work."[33] This prompt decision on Ajātaśatru's part does not provide a permanent solution. Specifically, even if Bimbisāra physically disappears from Ajātaśatru's view, the root cause of Ajātaśatru's anxiety is not truly eliminated. Ajātaśatru utilized this hasty problem-solving method twice: once when he confined Bimbisāra, and again when he allowed his father to die because of his rage against Vaidehī's support for her imprisoned husband. At the moment his father Bimbisāra departed this world, Ajātaśatru was racked with feelings of remorse; he was not emancipated from his anx-

iety but rather felt it even more intensely. Ajātaśatru thus completely erred in his attempt to relieve his anxiety.

Buddha and Devadatta

In this story, there are two persons crucial to explaining the emotional triangle: Buddha and Devadatta. Bowen proposes the establishment of a therapeutic triangle as a problem-solving technique within a family. In a therapeutic triangle, the third person who has achieved differentiation of the self ultimately possesses the power to treat all family members within a problematic family. If the third person, however, feels uneasy, the intervention will instead amplify a given problem within a family: "This anxiety in the 'helpers' can increase symptoms in the family."[34] In Ajātaśatru's story, it was the Buddha who established a therapeutic triangle, and it was Devadatta who amplified Ajātaśatru's family problems.

Emotional Triangles

As stated above, upon learning that Vaidehī was expecting a baby, Bimbisāra felt uneasy about the forthcoming triad relationship between Ajātaśatru, himself, and Vaidehī. As a result of his fears about his unborn son, Bimbisāra embroiled Vaidehī in his murderous plot. If this relationship was purely dyadic in nature, Bimbisāra would have killed Ajātaśatru by himself without involving his wife. Kerr and Bowen write that under anxious situations "functioning based on principle requires a tolerance of anxiety and a willingness to focus on the self."[35] Bimbisāra could not manage his anxiety by himself; he embroiled Vaidehī so that he could lighten his emotional burden.

The triadic relationship between Bimbisāra, Vaidehī, and Ajātaśatru was unstable from the beginning. It was necessary for Ajātaśatru to meet Devadatta so that Ajātaśatru could ease his anxiety and obtain stability. Moreover, Devadatta also had his own strife with the Buddha. It was necessary for Devadatta to meet Ajātaśatru in order to relieve his own uneasiness. Ajātaśatru and Devadatta thus needed one another in order to obtain emotional stability. There are four identifiable triad relationships: (1) Ajātaśatru-Bimbisāra-Vaidehī, (2) Ajātaśatru-Bimbisāra-Devadatta, (3) Ajātaśatru-Vaidehī-Devadatta, and (4) Ajātaśatru-Devadatta-Buddha.

The original unstable triangle is the first of these. According to Kerr and Bowen, "It is not always possible for a person to shift the

forces in a triangle. When it is not possible, the anxiety spreads to other triangles in an interlocking fashion."[36] Devadatta's uneasiness regarding the Buddha requires the involvement of a third person in order for Devadatta to establish a stable state. Devadatta's uneasiness easily connects with another unstable triangle such as (1). Consequently, the triads (2), (3), and (4) appear. Bowen calls these *interlocking triangles.* In (4), although Devadatta feels that he is in conflict with the Buddha, the Buddha has attained enlightenment; therefore, it is a unilateral dysfunction in which only Devadatta feels instability. Devadatta should have been a reliever for Ajātaśatru. However, he does not provide a solution for Ajātaśatru, but rather amplifies Ajātaśatru's anxiety. Nabeshima also notes that Ajātaśatru's hatred toward his parents was amplified by Devadatta, and Ajātaśatru became enraged not only because Devadatta revealed the circumstances of his birth, but also because Ajātaśatru felt emotionally insecure and unloved by his parents before he met Devadatta.[37]

Multigenerational Transmission

Kerr and Bowen state that "If one member of a triangle dies, another person usually replaces him."[38] When one individual among three who maintain an emotional triangle disappears, the emotional triangle itself will not break down but rather another person will assume the role of the lost member. In actuality, Ajātaśatru eventually fathered a son and took care of his child when the child became ill. In the same manner that Bimbisāra's anxiety influenced Ajātaśatru, Ajātaśatru's uneasiness would be reflected in his behavior toward his own son. After Bimbisāra's death, Ajātaśatru would suffer for his compunction and uneasiness until he attained faith and became a Buddhist supporter. The whole of Ajātaśatru's suffering would influence his son. Kerr and Bowen explain, "When a father gets anxious, he may direct his efforts to trying to get the child to 'be happy.'"[39] This behavioral pattern will be represented by doting on his children (*kobon'nou*). Tamura elaborates,

> Although "doting parents" appear to outwardly express parental love, their actions may be motivated by self-centered goals. In some cases, parents devote themselves to taking care of their children even to the point of extreme physical or emotional self-sacrifice. The sense of "my" child that permeates their behavior, however, suggests self-centeredness, and it does not seem to be genuine love in many cases.

> The child, on the other hand, feels that there is a millstone around his neck and gradually develops hatred, and then the relationship between child and parent ends in tragedy.[40]

It seems that Ajātaśatru burdened his son with his own sense of guilt over killing his father, Bimbisāra. It is not perhaps surprising then, as Nabeshima points out, that Ajātaśatru was later murdered by his own son. It does not seem that Ajātaśatru was stable during his son's childhood. Even though Ajātaśatru mended his ways, the seeds of dysfunction had already been sown. As Kerr and Bowen explain, "The mutigenerational emotional process is anchored in the emotional system and includes emotions, feelings, and subjectively determined attitudes, values, and beliefs that are transmitted from one generation to the next."[41] It is said that thereafter the pattern of patricide in the family of Ajātaśatru lasted at least three generations.

CONCLUSION

My findings in analyzing the King Ajātaśatru story through Bowen Family Systems Theory are that it is indeed possible to apply Bowen's theory to Ajātaśatru's story, which exhibits certain pathologies reflective of relationships defined in Asian and specifically Japanese Buddhist literature. However, I also find that there are key differences regarding views on the human being and human relationships between Bowen's theory and Buddhistic ideas. The target of family therapy and other psychotherapies in the U.S. is an individual person and their relationships. Even though family therapy was launched while arguing against traditional psychotherapy, family therapy does not depart from the basic assumptions of mainstream Western psychology; it is based on an atomistic, scientifically-oriented outlook. Family therapists focus their intervention primarily on visible, verifiable problems of individuals seeking autonomy. Many Japanese who face personal trauma and dilemmas, however, are often less concerned with the exact nature or medical classification of their pathology and more fixated on the reason for its existence in the first place. In seeking therapy, their implicit question regarding their situation is often, "Why has this happened to me?" As Kawai explains, they really want to know "why" it happened, not "how" it happened, a question to which outward logic may never provide an entirely satisfactory answer.[42] The Japanese are apt to observe and understand individuals in the context of their relationships among people. In the future, it will be necessary to examine whether

this inclination is particular to the Japanese, how much the Japanese have been influenced by Buddhism, and to what extent the Japanese have adopted Western ideas.

NOTES

1. Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation* (New York: Norton, 1988), 11.

2. Michael P. Nichols and Richard C. Schwartz, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2004), 119.

3. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*; Nichols and Schwarz, *Family Therapy*.

4. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 134.

5. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.

6. Don D. Jackson, "The Question of Family Homeostasis," *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement* 31 (1954): 79–90.

7. Paul Watzlawick, Janet B. Bavelas, and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967).

8. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.

9. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.

10. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 95.

11. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*.

12. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.

13. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*.

14. Ibid., 48–49.

15. William C. Nichols and Craig A. Everett, *Systemic Family Therapy: An Integrative Approach* (New York: Guilford Press, 1986), 75.

16. Nichols and Schwartz, *Family Therapy*, 129.

17. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui* (Tokyo: Hōjōdō shuppan, 2004), 12.

18. Hiroi Takase, *Butsuon to Nihonjin*, trans. M. Yoshida (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2003), 248–249.

19. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 13. When Kosawa developed his theory, he also changed the original story in order to interpret it as primarily a mother-child relationship, which better reflects the Japanese social context at that time, and which would make it easier for Japanese people to understand his theory. The Ajātaśatru story that Kosawa uses to explain his Ajase complex is not the same as that which appears in the Buddhist sutras transmitted from India to China and then Japan via Chinese translations. In the original Buddhist story, Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru's father, plotted to kill Ajātaśatru because Bimbisāra was seized by the anxiety that Ajātaśatru might kill him. In Kosawa's version, Vaidehī, Ajātaśatru's mother, plotted to kill Ajātaśatru because

of her anxiety that her son might kill her. However, the story presented by Kosawa in which the mother attempts to kill her son cannot be found in any Buddhist sutra. Thus, it is thought that the story in Kosawa's Ajase complex theory was, by and large, of his own creation. Although there is some criticism in Japanese Buddhist circles regarding such an amendment of scriptural authority, Kosawa himself was a devout Pure Land Buddhist and, according to Okonogi's research, many parts of Kosawa's Ajase story were referred to in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, written by Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, the largest sect of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Akihiko Sakurai, on the other hand, claims that Kosawa's story is very much like that found in the *Zangeroku* (Record of Repentance), a text written by Jōkan Chikazumi, a Pure Land Buddhist priest (Akihiko Sakurai, "Zaiakuishiki no Nisyu no Bukkyōteki Haikei," in *Ajase Konpurekkusu*, ed. Keigo Okonogi and Osamu Kitayama [Osaka: Sōgensha, 2005], 108). In either case, Kosawa would develop his theory based on a rearranged Ajātaśatru story so that he could more readily focus on the mother-child relationship, which was more intimately reflective of the typical pattern of parent-child relationships at that time in Japanese society.

20. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 13.

21. Mikisaburo Mori, *Rōsō to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Kodansya Gakujutsubunko, 2003), 274.

22. Keigo Okonogi, "Ajase Konpurekkusu ron no Tenkai," in *Ajase Konpurekkusu*, ed. Keigo Okonogi and Osamu Kitayama (Osaka: Sōgensha, 2005), 12.

23. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 48–82.

24. Hayao Kawai, *Chūkū kōzō Nihon no shinsō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1982).

25. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 114.

26. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 70.

27. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 132.

28. Ibid., 129.

29. Ibid., 124.

30. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 84.

31. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 129.

32. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 12.

33. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 133.

34. Ibid., 141.

35. Ibid., 132–133.

36. Ibid., *Family Evaluation*, 139.

37. Naoki Nabeshima, *Ajase ō no sukui*, 176.

38. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 135.

39. Ibid., 125.

40. Yoshio Tamura, *Gendaijin no Bukkyō: Nehangyō* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), 33. My translation.

41. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 224.

42. Hayao Kawai, *Yungu Shinrigaku Nyumon* (Tokyo: Baifukan, 1967).

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Affinities between Zen and Analytical Psychology

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Editor's Note: With the kind permission of his son, Thomas Kirsch, M.D. (Jungian analyst, and member of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco), we reprint here the essay "Affinities between Zen and Analytic Psychology" by the late James Kirsch, a pioneer of Analytical Psychology in the United States. This essay, published in the journal Psychologia *in 1960, was his contribution to a workshop on "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" held in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1957. Three of the contributions to that workshop, those by Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino, were published together under the same name as the workshop—*Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis. *Appearing as it did in 1960, right at the start of the widespread popularization of Buddhism beyond the limits of Beat Buddhism, this work has been highly influential in forming the field of Buddhism and psychology, as well as contributing to the construction of a psychologized representation of Buddhism. We are pleased to be able to reintroduce Dr. Kirsch's contribution to that conversation, a conversation that continues to grow today.*

IN HIS *INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM*, D. T. Suzuki answers the question: What is Zen? by quoting from a letter by Yengo. "It is presented right to your face, and at this moment the whole thing is handed over to you. For an intelligent fellow, one word should suffice to convince him of the truth of it.... The great truth of Zen is possessed by everybody. Look into your own being and seek it not through others. Your own mind is above all forms; it is free and quiet and sufficient; it eternally stamps itself in your six senses and four elements. In its light all is absorbed."[1]

Those who know what Zen is will immediately understand what is meant by these words but to the outsider, and especially the Westerner, these words remain a great mystery. And yet, as Suzuki acknowledges, there have also been men in the Western world who have found themselves and described their experiences in a different terminology, and at times also used similar expressions. Meister Eckhart is a notable example. In our time it has been C. G. Jung who, coming from psychiatry and psychology, has discovered that in the psyche of some individuals developments take place which lead to far-reaching illuminations. In trying to give an approximate understanding to the Westerner of what Satori is, he calls it also "acquiring a new viewpoint."

Western psychotherapy originated in the consulting room of the psychiatrist. He was confronted with sickness of the soul and discovered that healing could only occur if the suffering human being could acquire a new viewpoint. One could say that the distance between the old and the new viewpoint was sometimes small, sometimes very great. Zen speaks of Satori as a sudden and extensive change of the viewpoint. In psychological language one would say that lesser or mere significant contents can enter consciousness, and without a doubt the psychotherapist occasionally sees that an extraordinarily significant and numinous content enters consciousness and transforms the personality in a most remarkable manner. This is particularly the case when an individual has a sudden realization of that content to which Jung has given the name "Self" in contrast to the ego. Such an event would then be a Satori experience. The name does not matter really and I hope my Eastern friends will not mistake this for the "ego."

Clearly and admittedly the methods of achieving Satori are far different in the East and in the West for they naturally developed out of totally different historical conditions. To a certain extent Koans and many aspects of Zen discipline must appear rather strange, understandable and sometimes also objectionable to the Westerner. Of course the same is true of the Easterner's attitude towards Western methods. I want to speak here of a series on dreams which in their sequence describe a process in which ultimately a great amount of significant, unconscious material comes to consciousness and thus brings a radically new viewpoint, which to the Easterner might not seem to be very impressive but which in the experience of the dreamer brings about an illumination. What Suzuki writes of Zen is equally true of the process of individuation as it occurs in some Western individuals. Suzuki says:

"Unless, therefore, you devote some years of earnest study to the understanding of its primary principles, it is not to be expected that you will begin to have a fair grasp of Zen." Both approaches try to do what Richard of St. Victor emphasized: "If thou wishest to search out the deep things of God, search out the depths of thine own spirit."[2]

My patient had found herself "cornered" in a situation which could not be solved by conventional or rational means, and to which the Unconscious proposed an unexpected solution. Quoting again from Suzuki: "The Zen method of discipline generally consists in putting one in a dilemma, out of which one must contrive to escape, not through logic indeed, but through a mind of higher order."[3] The patient was in her middle thirties and had come to analysis for several years, mostly twice a week, during which time a great number of personal and practical problems had been adequately solved. With the solving of these problems and with the clarification of essential aspects of the life situation, one could have accepted the patient as "cured" but she hung on to analysis and felt that she had to go on with her treatment. In such a case one can be sure that a most numinous content has "constellated" itself in the relationship between analyst and patient and it becomes vitally necessary to make this content conscious. One would fail as a physician if one simply cut the patient off and sent her, as it were, back into the world. Both the patient and the doctor must discover the nature of this content and with patience and devotion bring about its realization. In this situation the dreams are extremely helpful. First dream:

> "There was a marvelous piece of music or writing that needed to be retrieved. This piece of writing rested in a grave between the hands of someone who had died and been buried. I planned to retrieve it and in this dream saw myself as a man, strong and capable of it. At first I had no qualms or conflict about such a grisly undertaking but yet when you (analyst) asked me why I delayed, I replied, 'Well, you know actually it isn't a very pleasant task to rob a grave!' And then I began to think just how unpleasant it was, for it would mean entering the grave with my own body and I envisioned the earth itself and what I might find. I continued talking to you: 'But it is such an extraordinary piece of work that is there, I feel I must do it,' and so saying, I undertook to get it. The details are not clear, but I know that I accomplished it."

The patient is here given a task. There is no mention of who gives the task. It is simply stated that "it needed to be retrieved." The ob-

ject to be retrieved is characterized by two aspects: it is a piece either
of music or writing. That is, it is a content of emotional and spiritual
quality and at this point receives no further characterization. The pa-
tient has to bring the content back from the beyond (death), that is, in
a psychological sense from beyond consciousness (the Unconscious).
Suzuki says, "That the process of enlightenment is abrupt means that
there is a leap...the psychological leap is that the borders of conscious-
ness are overstepped and one is plunged into the Unconscious which is
not, after all, unconscious."[4] The dream then describes her plan of how
to go about this task. She feels she has to be strong, even to the extent
of changing her sex. At first she has no conflict about it but feels it is
something she has to do in close cooperation with me, the analyst, to
the extent that she feels my presence in the dream and addresses me as
"you." It is then that she realizes a great deal of negative feeling about
this "grisly" task, for she would have to enter the grave fully. It is only
her awareness that this piece of work is of an extraordinary charac-
ter that enables her to overcome her negative feelings and correct her
courage. The dream ends with a certain vagueness but yet with the
feeling that she has accomplished the task. Dream nine days later:

> "I saw a river flooding towards me; it was a muddy yellow color. I
> raised myself and begin to swim in the direction of its current so that
> I would not be submerged, and then the sun polished all the facets of
> the water's reflections to a shiny yellow."

In this dream the Unconscious is symbolized as a river, i.e., as a
dynamic process. At first there is a conflict between her and the dyna-
mism of the process (the river is flooding *towards* her). The river is her
libido and has a specific color: "a muddy yellow." In its psychological
meaning, the yellow represents intuition (in her case the so-called in-
ferior function, the least differentiated of the four functions described
by Jung in his *Psychological Types*).[5] But yellow is also associated with
healing. For instance, Paracelsus speaks of the flower "Cheyri," which
symbolizes healing.[6] In Chinese meditation yellow frequently refers to
the Self (The Golden Castle).[7] I presented my patient with these associ-
ations in order to avoid an intellectual limitation of the symbol. In any
case a change of attitude occurs here in the patient. From now on her
ego goes *with* the current of the river and, concomitantly, something
occurs in the non-ego. The *sun* polishes all the "facets of the water's
reflections to a shiny yellow." The ego's change of attitude also effects
a change in the non-ego. Dream same night:

> "I explored the cellar of my childhood home. Step by step I saw again each detail: the furnace, the coal, the coal-shute, the washtubs, the bathroom, the water outlets. Then I explored the outside garden and the steps leading to the porch. I was searching for memories. Emotions came back to me—slightly sad—but I could not discover anything traumatic or too dreadful to think about."

The dream takes her back to her childhood home, somehow to the fundamentals of her childhood psyche (cellar). She sees then in detail symbols which have to do with the two elements fire and water; the coal as the accumulated basic energy, the furnace as the container which transforms this black natural material into fire (energy), and different tools in which the water is set and which function for the use of water. In this way she becomes aware of basic memories of her childhood and of basic energies. Since she was afraid that there might have been something pathological in her childhood, the dream is rather comforting since it assures her there was nothing traumatic or dreadful, but that this recovery of her childhood would allow her to feel certain emotions which she had repressed for a long time. Dream the following day:

> "I am driving somewhere in my car—long, empty, lonely stretches. It is not daylight but not really dark, although progressively darkening. Suddenly I am on a huge divided highway with faint lights placed at spaced distances, and I become frightened. I think someone has misled me onto this road, which would take hours for I would become lost. I have the feeling that once before I have taken this road and become lost. The division curves into opposite directions and I take the one to the left. I arrive someplace where there are people and now the simplest of my movements seems to produce a completely irrational and unexplainable entanglement with objects. For example, when I park my car I have a distinct feeling of having parked too close and having collided with another car. But there is no physical evidence of damage. Instead this contact has produced—from me—as if by magic—the deposit of a pink scarf on the other car. I want to avoid talking to the people there but I keep being placed in irrational contacts with them. The second incident is my picking up and examining a watch belonging to a woman there. No sooner do I raise it in the air than near the face and partly upon the bracelet of the watch is deposited a blob of deeply-colored jelly. My feeling of strangeness is that I did not *see* the jelly placed there; it simply materialized; it *is* there and gives the impression of having *been* there; but it also was

> *not* there before I picked up the watch. Who put it there? Someone?
> Me?"

In this dream the entering into the Unconscious is described as a path that leads into the dark. The gradations of consciousness are described as "progressively darkening." There she comes to a typical division of the roads (Scheideweg). She must make a fateful decision. The nature of her further experience and the course of her psychological development depend on which road she takes. Just in time she remembers that once before she was taken on the wrong road and then became confused and lost. This time however she decides to take the turn toward the left, to continue in the direction of the Unconscious, and in the Unconscious she encounters "people" (= personified complexes of the Unconscious) and realizes that every action of the ego has an immediate effect upon other contents of the Unconscious. Ego is understood here in the sense of Jung's definition of the ego as the center of consciousness. In the dream she gives different examples of such encounters which are obviously of psychical nature. The impression she has is that these happen by "magic," clearly evidencing the mutual effect which the ego complex and other contents of the Unconscious have upon each other. She gives two distinct examples: There is a collision between her car and another car—and as if by magic (a psychic event without any lapse of time)—there is a pink scarf on the other car. I understand this pink scarf as "feeling" in contrast to sexuality, that is, a feeling relationship now exists between the ego-complex and other complexes in another part of her personality. Since the ego is within the different complexes of the Unconscious, irrational contacts occur. Through this interaction of the various complexes a change of the whole personality is initiated. She uses the term "irrational" in the sense of the German word "irrational." The second incident brings the problem of time. Out of the Unconscious, again without lapse of time, something occurs which has no time: "A blob of deeply-colored jelly is deposited on the bracelet of the watch." It is undifferentiated psychic material which is "eternal." It carries a much stronger feeling-tone than the pink scarf and she is now filled with very powerful numinous feelings. Actually she tries in simple and beautiful language to express that something has materialized out of nothing. In picking up time (the watch) she also picks up no-time, or eternity (the blob). The dream ends then with the significant question, "Who put it there?" She an-

swers, "Someone? Me?" But this "me" is obviously not the ego. Dream four weeks later:

> "I am seated on a couch watching television, together with several friends. Suddenly it is as if I have been transported to another setting: A party is taking place in an extremely large banquet like room which takes up the complete circumference of a building. I note with surprise that the motif of this party has been to provide individual sunken bathing pools for each guest, and I see that I am myself lying in one. I must have been prepared for it for I am enjoying it to the fullest extent because I suitably am wearing no clothes. We can all lie comfortably in our individual pools and listen to the host who sits talking to us. I gather he is some kind of potentate in order to have furnished such luxurious settings.
>
> "The scene changes and I am expecting word from a man who has had to leave hurriedly. When I am told there is a letter from him for me, I search for it in a huge bag. Another man is trying to help me find this communication and we search together. We retrieve from the bag the beginning of a white scroll made of indestructible plastic-like material. It keeps rolling out and out as if there were no end to it. We keep pulling it out, searching anxiously for the writing on it—but there is no writing! We can only conclude that the writing has been washed away since the scroll had been placed among wet clothes in the bag.
>
> "Then there is another party, this time with dancing."

The first part of the dream describes a most comfortable, lazy situation. The main interest is to be entertained and amused. She enjoys the situation to the "fullest extent" and her attitude is that of the pleasure-loving guest of some fabulous host. This host is described as "some kind of potentate." In our analytical terminology he would represent an animus figure (opinions and attitudes) who is mainly interested in an expression of the pleasure principle. Described here is the sort of life which has no meaning, where one lives for the moment and on the most superficial level. An interesting point in this description is that this large banquet-like room is described as circular and that every individual guest has his own sunken bathing-pool. It corresponds most beautifully to the drawing that Prof. Suzuki gives in his book *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* to illustrate a kind of thinking which is particularized; one in which a series of events is experienced each separate from the other and from the totality of the human being. Whichever way one looks at this symbolic drawing or the situation in the dream one can see it as a perfect description of a psychological

state in which the ego is in the center. It is the very opposite of totality. Pleasure-loving and divorced from the wholeness of the psyche, the ego is seduced into this isolation by the potentate-animus who incarnates the pleasure-principle.

But then a change occurs in the dream, and the significant and meaningful content enters again into consciousness. She is expecting word from another man; from another type of animus figure. It is again a letter, a piece of writing, as in the first dream. It is a message which is most significant and takes her out of the deceptively comfortable situation. She retrieves this letter which turns out to be a white scroll made of "indestructible plastic-like material," and which seems to be infinite. But since her ego is still ignorant and her consciousness obscured by the "potentate," the articulate expression of the message has been washed away and she is unable to understand it. And so the end of the dream returns to a situation similar to that of the beginning of the dream with the difference that dancing is added. But the principal subject of this series of dreams, the scroll of writing, has again been brought up as the most valuable content. She is searching for it but for the time being it is lost due to her egocentric attitude. Dream two nights later:

> "I receive a series of letters which I read and study carefully. The black-ink writing on the white sheets seems rather shaky and the composition of the letters seems weak, but the content is so filled with emotion that I am deeply moved. It touches fee1ings I had experienced many times."

This dream takes up the same motif even more fully and more dramatically. This time it is not one letter but a series of letters which, in the dream, she reads and studies carefully. The writing is there but seems "rather shaky," and so much emotion enters into the letters that her consciousness is affected by these emotions. They bring back memories of emotion she had in earlier times but which had been repressed and had disappeared from her conscious life for a long time. As in the first dream, the work of art has to be retrieved. It is also writing, but the music is replaced by emotion. It is the same content but the emotions are quite different. No more does she feel this as a "grisly undertaking." On the contrary she is deeply moved by the spiritual content. When she awoke from this dream she could not remember the text of the letters. In order to bring it back to her mind she did what we call "active imagination":[8]

"It was my guess that the shaky writing and the poor composition could only come from someone who was in the grip of such a strong emotion he had little strength left to guide a pen carefully, or to express himself fully. Was it a man seated at a desk, his head now resting on his outspread arms? I looked at the letters again and saw the ink begin to fade perceptibly before my eyes. I quickly snatched at some of the words, trying to write them down hastily because I knew that some magic was going to erase it all almost immediately and my memory would correspondingly lose the original message. I worked in a kind of panic and was capable of retrieving only fifteen or twenty words before the print was completely obliterated from the sheets. It was amazing how, once the words were isolated, they became alien unknowable clues, and the context of the letter already lost.

"Working against time and resistance I sought to write anything I could possibly associate the words with, and a more difficult time I have never spent. The words I had been able to capture—and not in the proper sequence of their appearance either—were: dealt-mirror-undergrowth-formidable-replica-stealthily-write-full-length-commend-inevitable-sacrosanct-beseech-suffering-delayed-immobile-shades-princely.

"Seventeen words. First I tried pairing the words together by their contrasting qualities or by their similarity. But I could see at a glance none of them could be coupled. Rather their texture was one of continuity.

"I begin to piece together: I *write* at *full-length* to *beseech* that *sacrosanct* things are *inevitable*...but then I notice that *full-length* could just as well pertain to *mirror*. It's no use at all to go on with this guesswork. I must simply start a train of thought and weave the words in somehow. And the following is what suggested itself to me:

'I have *dealt* with some *formidable* things in my time, but never has a more *princely* gift been presented to me. A *mirror* which is a *replica* of *sacrosanct* waters. I *beseech* you to *commend* such an offering to a *suffering* soul who can no longer remain *immobile*. Were it not that the *undergrowth* has various shades, its *full-length* size would not have been so long *delayed*. To *write* is then *inevitable* and no longer undertaken *stealthily*.'"

So finally she has found that piece of writing which has been lying in her unconscious and to which the dreams repeatedly referred. Naturally it has a powerful meaning for her since it has been the leitmotif of this series of dreams, but what is indicated here is a gift of the future. It is a princely gift. It is a mirror, and a very special mirror—"a replica of sacrosanct waters." It is interesting to note that Zen Buddhism makes

wide use of the symbol of the mirror. Suzuki says: "Dhyāna is Prajñā, and Prajñā is Dhyāna, for they are one…. It is like a brightly-shining mirror reflecting images on it. When the mirror does this, does the brightness suffer in any way? No, it does not. Does it then suffer when there are no images reflected? No, it does not. Why? Because the use of the bright mirror is free from affections, and therefore its reflection is never obscured. Whether images are reflected or not, there are no changes in its brightness. Why? Because that which is free from affections knows no change in all conditions."[9] The patient's mirror is the numinosum which exists everywhere and exists in her in its fullness. It is the consciousness of the Unconscious or the no-mind or universal mind, as Zen expresses it, the mirror which "needs no dusting."[10] In our psychological language we would call it the Self. The writer of the letter beseeches the patient to commend such an offering (the mirror) to her suffering soul, which under this impact can no longer remain immobile. She can allow herself to move again and to have emotions. Were it not for the fact that the undergrowth—that is, different parts of her psyche which remained undeveloped and even misdeveloped—has various shades (different qualities), then these psychic faculties would have developed long ago. In other words, the undifferentiated part of her psyche would now have a chance to develop fully. The effect of accepting this mirror, the no-mind—or as we could also say, making the Unconscious conscious—would allow her inferior function to develop fully and she would then be able to write. That is, quite literally she would be able to fulfill her artistic capacities and would no longer have feelings of guilt about her creative abilities. But beyond this specific gift of writing, the very fact that the symbol used here is that of mirror of sacrosanct waters indicates that more is meant than the development of any special function. What is meant is the breakthrough of the whole human being. The experience of having received the seventeen words and the inspiration under which she wrote this had the character of a revelation. This piece of writing in itself represented a widening of consciousness, but not yet the full breakthrough of the Self. That is rather indicated in the text of the writing for the future and requires a great deal of further work. Nevertheless, it is psychologically of the greatest significance that this woman had now such an experience and that such a goal is set for her. I therefore believe that the path proposed by the Unconscious of this Western woman has the same validity for her as that of Zen for Japanese psychology. In its final analysis this

is the aim for both East and West, classically described by Zen-masters as Satori, and by Jung as the fulfillment of individuation. And I believe that Suzuki would accept this conclusion because he has acknowledged that the Satori experience has also occurred in the West, for example in Meister Eckhart.[11]

We in the West accept dreams, images, and imagination altogether as a fruitful path which eventually, when fully and intensely pursued and accepted by the human being, will lead to Satori. The East has rejected the images, which occur during meditation. It has used method of Koans to strip the ego of all illusions and to throw it, as it were, into the abyss and into the terrible conflict. We in the West have not yet, and perhaps never will, develop such a method but will accept the language of dreams which nature, the Unconscious, proposes. And if the individual human being gives his all to this process it will lead to the same result.

NOTES

1. D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider & Co., 1957), 46.

2. Ibid., 43.

3. Ibid., 69.

4. D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), 185.

5. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1923), 563.

6. C. G. Jung, *Paracelsica* (Zürich and Leipzig: Rascher Verlag, 1942.), 86 n. 2.

7. Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931), 98.

8. Active imagination:
   a) C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 7 (Princeton: Printon University Press, 1979), 220, 387.
   b) C. G. Jung, *Practice of Psychotherapy,* Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 16 (Princeton: Printon University Press, 1979), 199; C. G. Jung, *Aion*, Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 9 (Princeton: Printon University Press, 1979), 39, 323.
   c) C. G. Jung, *Psychology & Alchemy,* Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 12 (Princeton: Printon University Press, 1979), 243, 244, 262, 333.
   d) C. G. Jung, *Practice of Psychotherapy,* 199; *Aion*, 39, 323.
   e) J. Kirsch, "Journey to the Moon," in *Studien zur Analytischen Psychologie Festschrift C.G. Jungs*, 2 vols. (Zürich: Rascher, 1955), 1:319.

9. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, 182.

10. Ibid.

11. D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian & Buddhist* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), chap. 3.

New Perspectives on Buddhist Modernism

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THE SPECIAL SECTION of this issue of *Pacific World* began as a session at the Buddhism in the West program unit of the American Academy of Religion. Formed in late 2006, the Buddhism in the West Consultation is designed to provide a forum for new studies on Buddhism outside Asia, which often end up as orphans: the West is not a traditional concern of Buddhist studies, and Buddhism is not always seen as important within North American or European religious history. Yet Buddhism is undeniably a rapidly growing phenomenon outside of Asia. The encounter of "East and West" has implications for both the evolution of Buddhism and the future of Western culture, which increasingly includes not only actual Buddhist populations but also measurable impact from Buddhist influences in pop culture, medicine, psychology, and other areas.

The first session of the consultation was held at the 2007 AAR annual meeting in San Diego. The topic of discussion was "New Perspectives on Buddhism Modernism in the West." "Modern Buddhism" is a term increasingly used to describe and analyze certain developments within Buddhism since approximately the mid-nineteenth century. It was an apt initial topic for the Buddhism in West unit because while the creators and proponents of modern Buddhism have not always been Westerners, they have all operated in the period of significant contact with the West, and Western influence—sometimes positive, sometimes imperialistic—is one important stimulus for the rise of modern Buddhism.

Modern Buddhism is described in slightly different ways by different scholars, but in general it is ably characterized in the following description taken from Donald Lopez Jr.'s *A Modern Buddhist Bible*, which presents selections from major figures in the movement:

> Modern Buddhism shares many of the characteristics of other projects of modernity, including the identification of the present as a standpoint from which to reflect upon previous periods in history and to identify their deficiencies in relation to the present. Modern Buddhism rejects many of the ritual and magical elements of previous forms of Buddhism, it stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, and often exalts the individual over the community. Yet...modern Buddhism does not see itself as the culmination of a long process of evolution, but rather as a return to the origin, to the Buddhism of the Buddha himself.... For modern Buddhists, the Buddha knew long ago what Europe would only discover much later. Yet what we regard as Buddhism today, especially the common portrayal of the Buddhism of the Buddha, is in fact a creation of modern Buddhism. Its widespread acceptance, both in the West and in much of Asia, is testimony to the influence of [its] thinkers.[1]

These attitudes are often portrayed as emerging from changing social situations originating in or provoked by the West, especially in relation to the industrial revolution and colonialism, and as Lopez notes, the Buddhist developments parallel similar phenomena in other religions and movements affected by modernism. Steven Heine and Charles Prebish summarize some of the most important influences as "intellectual trends such as scientism and rationalism; changes in lifestyle such as secularization and an increasing dependence on technology; the rise of ideologies that present alternative or rival standpoints to traditional religion ranging from Marxism to psychotherapy, as well as the influx of syncretic and new religious movements; and the effect of ethical crises raised by medical and environmental concerns."[2]

Modern Buddhism, then, is a hybrid product of both Buddhist Asia and the West. It occurs in both Asia and the West, and exists alongside others forms of Buddhism, including groups that are less interested in reform or even harbor explicitly anti-modern viewpoints. From some perspectives it operates almost as a separate, self-sufficient form of Buddhism that partially transcends traditional sectarian or geographic boundaries.

In the following four papers, all taken from the 2007 AAR session, several scholars tackle modern Buddhism from a variety of approaches. In the first article, Wakoh Shannon Hickey discusses the influence of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) on several of the most important early disseminators of Buddhism in the West. Because Swedenborg died well before Buddhism came to the West, and does not appear to have

been directly influenced by Buddhism, his role in Buddhism's modern history may come as a surprise. However, as Hickey demonstrates, a number of key figures combined Swedenborgianism with Buddhism in their approach to religion, at times allowing elements of the Swedish mystic's philosophy to enter into the stream of modern Buddhism that developed in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century North America.

In the second article, David McMahan traces the fascinating transformation of dependent co-arising into interdependence in modern Buddhist discourse. Under the influence of Transcendentalism, environmentalism, and related intellectual/spiritual movements, discussion of this key Buddhist concept has shifted considerably. Whereas dependent co-arising was related to negative valuation of the self and world (since all things are transient and unsatisfying), the rise of interdependence as the main terminology indicates a reformulation that is world-affirming and wonder-producing. McMahan expands on this discussion in his recent book, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Richard Payne, in the third article, presents a critique of the role that Traditionalism has played in the depiction of Buddhism in the modern era. Traditionalism combines the concept of a single, universal, esoteric insight or religious truth with opposition to modernism. Yet Traditionalism is itself a product of the modern world, not a genuine recapture of the pre-modern, and it actively uses traditionalizing language in innovative ways that speak to contemporary concerns and attitudes. Though it is not the main subject of Payne's essay, it is worth noting that many people manage to simultaneously combine elements of modernism *and* Traditionalism in their understandings or approaches to Buddhism, especially in the West. Thus Traditionalism comes to be a strategy by which some contemporary Buddhists or Buddhist sympathizers assimilate Buddhism to meet their modern circumstances, even as they assert their adherence to unmodified *buddhadharma*.

In the fourth essay, Natalie Quli examines how the *jhāna* meditation stages and techniques have been approached by various figures important to Theravāda Buddhism in the West. Because these teachers are often portrayed as modern Buddhists opposed to traditional understandings of cosmology and supernormal consciousness, hostility to *jhāna* meditation is normally assumed on their part. But in fact, Quli shows how attraction to the Buddha's use of *jhāna* in his teachings

allows more traditional viewpoints to be partially affirmed by some of these Theravāda teachers, while others labor to make them more symbolic or psychological in interpretation. She asserts, therefore, the need to pay attention to how modernism within Buddhism displays multiple facets.

Richard Jaffe of Duke University provided a response to the papers at the session, and his helpful comments have informed the revisions that went into these final versions. Together these essays help to further chart the complexities (and especially the genealogies) of modern Buddhism in the West.

NOTES

1. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), ix–x.

2. Steven Heine and Charles S. Prebish, eds., *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

Swedenborg: A Modern Buddha?

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WHEN PEOPLE INTERESTED in American Buddhism think about its literary and philosophical roots, the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg is not the first person who leaps to mind. During the early stages of research for this article, I queried various specialists about possible Swedenborgian-Buddhist connections, and all said, "There aren't any." As it turns out, however, there are. Swedenborg himself was not directly involved in popularizing Buddhism to Europeans or Americans, but his ideas influenced many aspects of European and American thought and culture, and he was an important influence for some of the key people who *did* popularize Buddhism in the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With few exceptions, scholars have overlooked this influence. This article is one attempt to address that oversight.

I will focus on four writers: Albert J. Edmonds, Herman Carl Vetterling, Warren Felt Evans, and D. T. Suzuki. Because many people are unfamiliar with Swedenborg, and he is a complicated figure, this essay will begin with some general background on the eighteenth-century scientist, mystic, and theologian, before turning to Edmunds, Vetterling, Evans, and Suzuki.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG (1688–1772)

Swedenborg was the son of a pietist Lutheran bishop of Uppsala. He studied mathematics, physics, chemistry, and engineering throughout Europe and, for most of his career, served as chief assessor for the Swedish Bureau of Mines. He published books and pamphlets in the fields just mentioned, as well as in anatomy, biology, mineralogy, and astronomy. Some of his scientific and engineering works were remarkably prescient. Swedenborg's *Principia*, a cosmological treatise

published in 1734, "anticipated the modern picture of the galaxy by painting the Milky Way as a vast collection of stars wheeling about a common center."[1] He also identified the cerebral cortex as the locus of cognitive and volitional activity, and recognized that the right and left hemispheres of the brain function differently. He designed a fixed-wing aircraft, and a one-person submarine for attacking enemy ships underwater.[2]

At age fifty-six, Swedenborg began to have a series of visions in which he spoke to angels and other spirit-beings, visited heaven and hell, and received revelations about the hidden meanings of Christian scripture. For the rest of his life he devoted himself to theology, and his writings in that field were published in thirty hefty volumes. Fully half of Swedenborg's theological corpus is devoted to verse-by-verse exegeses of Genesis, Exodus, and Revelation. He believed that his own writings constituted the Second Coming of Christ.

Among the most popular of his theological works, all written in Latin, were the *Arcana Coelestia*, a multi-volume exegesis of Genesis and Exodus; *Apocalypse Revealed*, a multi-volume exegesis of Revelation; *Heaven and Hell*, which Swedenborg visited in his visions; *Conjugal Love*, in which the lifelong bachelor discusses the spiritual meanings of gender, sexuality, and marriage;[3] and *The True Christian Religion*, a summary of his ideas composed at the end of his life. Swedenborg's key doctrines include divine influx, correspondence, spiritual progression, free will, and social use. He saw the cosmos as "a single dynamic entity created through successive emanations from a unitary life force."[4] This view of divine emanation is a feature of Neoplatonic thought, the European Hermetic tradition, and both Jewish and Christian Kabbalah. Swedenborg almost certainly studied Kabbalah as a student in Sweden, and again in London during midlife.[5] According to Swedenborg's doctrine of divine influx, "all power to act flows into all of creation from God, constantly and unceasingly."[6]

Swedenborg saw the cosmos as organized hierarchically in an orderly, tripartite structure: the triune God; three realms of existence (celestial, spiritual, and natural); and three aspects of a person (soul, mind, and body). The spiritual and natural realms are related through a correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm. He believed that the purpose of human life is to progress toward union with God, through a process of study and self-discipline. He rejected the doctrine of original sin and asserted that humans were free to choose evil or

good. Evil was self-love, turning away from God toward selfishness. Spiritual progress required gradual relinquishment of self-centeredness. Essential to this process was "use," or good works for the benefit of society.[7]

Swedenborg's theological works were extremely controversial. For the first seventeen years of his career as a theologian (1749–1766), his books were published anonymously. All of his theology was published outside his native Sweden, in England, the Netherlands, or Germany. After the publication of *Conjugal Love*, the first to appear under Swedenborg's own name, his exegetical method and challenges to Lutheran orthodoxy were the subject of a heresy trial. (He was eventually exonerated.) Within two or three decades after his death, however, all of his theological works had been translated from Latin into English. By the 1790s the first Swedenborgian churches had formed in England. His ideas also attracted scathing criticism, the most influential of which was penned by Immanuel Kant, who, like other detractors, denounced Swedenborg as a madman.

Gradually, Swedenborgianism fell into obscurity, and today it receives relatively little attention from scholars of religion, particularly American religion.[8] Although the denomination founded upon his teachings, the Church of the New Jerusalem, has always been small, Swedenborg's direct and indirect influences in American religious thought nevertheless have been far-reaching. Traces of his ideas can be found in abolitionism, English Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Spiritualism, Shakerism, Mormonism, utopian socialism, homeopathy and other unorthodox medical theories, the New Thought movement,[9] art, and antebellum efforts to promote public education.[10]

Swedenborg also influenced four men who wrote about both Swedenborg and about Buddhism for audiences in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Warren Felt Evans and Herman Carl Vetterling were, for part of their careers, Swedenborgian ministers. Albert J. Edmunds and D. T. Suzuki were regarded as experts in Buddhism. All four were also interested in Theosophy, which was influenced by Swedenborg's reported conversations with spirits, and which was for many years the major interpreter of Buddhism in the West. Each of these writers is considered below.

ALBERT J. EDMUNDS

Albert J. Edmunds (1857–1941) was a Quaker and a vegetarian who explored Theosophy, Buddhism, psychic phenomena, and Swedenborgianism. He was born in England but spent much of his life in Philadelphia, where he worked as a librarian for the Historical Society.[11] He lectured on Buddhism and wrote several books and articles exploring parallels he saw between Christian and Buddhist scriptures. He also produced an extensive bibliography of Buddhist literature then available in the libraries of Philadelphia.[12] In 1903, Edmunds accepted a position as the American representative to the International Buddhist Society.[13] Edmunds repeatedly argued for historical connections between Buddhism and Christianity, and believed that "When this link is recognized, as it is now in the process of being, the two great religions of the world, which have hitherto been hostile, will approach each other with respect, and the last obstacle will be removed to the founding of a modern world-religion based upon the facts of science, physical, historical, and psychical."[14]

Like many people at the time who were interested in hypnosis and clairvoyance, Edmunds believed that Swedenborg's visionary encounters with spirits supplied proof that the soul lives on after physical death. In one article, he compared reports on clairvoyance published by the American Society for Psychical Research with Swedenborg's writings and various Buddhist scriptures. He argued that the supernatural feats of Jesus, Buddha, and Swedenborg—such as casting out demons, recalling past lives, or communing with unseen spirits—were all confirmed by recent research on hypnotic trances and spirit mediums.[15] This research, he said, provided a rational, scientific basis for religious beliefs, and for rapprochement between different faiths.

Edmunds also claimed that Swedenborg had predicted Marc Aurel Stein's 1907 discovery of the massive cache of Buddhist texts in the Mogao Caves near Dunhuang. In two books, Swedenborg claimed to have spoken with spirits from "Great Tartary," a region that in his time was understood to encompass the whole of the eastern part of the Asian continent.[16] These spirits, Swedenborg said, carefully preserved and guarded ancient scriptures and religious practices predating the Hebrew Bible. This so-called "ancient Word" provided the basis for later Judaism and Christianity. In *True Christian Religion*, Swedenborg described these spirit conversations as follows:

[3] Of that ancient Word which existed in Asia before the Israelitish Word, I am permitted to state this new thing, namely, that it is still preserved there among the people who dwell in Great Tartary. In the spiritual world I have talked with spirits and angels from that country, who said that they have a Word, and have had it from ancient times; and that they conduct their Divine worship according to this Word, and that it consists solely of correspondences. They said, that in it also is the Book of Jasher, which is mentioned in Joshua (10:12, 13), and in 2 Samuel (1:17, 18); and that they have also among them the books called the Wars of Jehovah and Enunciations, which are mentioned by Moses (Num. 21:14, 15, and 27–30); and when I read to them the words that Moses had quoted therefrom, they searched to see if they were there, and found them; from which it was evident to me that the ancient Word is still among that people. While talking with them they said that they worshiped Jehovah, some as an invisible God, and some as visible.

[4] They also told me that they do not permit foreigners to come among them, except the Chinese, with whom they cultivate peaceful relations, because the Chinese Emperor is from their country; also that the population is so great that they do not believe that any region in the whole world is more populous, which is indeed credible from the wall so many miles in length which the Chinese formerly built as a protection against invasion from these people. I have further heard from the angels, that the first chapters of Genesis which treat of creation, of Adam and Eve, the garden of Eden, their sons and their posterity down to the flood, and of Noah and his sons, are also contained in that Word, and thus were transcribed from it by Moses. The angels and spirits from Great Tartary are seen in the southern quarter on its eastern side, and are separated from others by dwelling in a higher expanse, and by their not permitting anyone to come to them from the Christian world, or, if any ascend, by guarding them to prevent their return. Their possessing a different Word is the cause of this separation.[17]

Edmunds believed that Swedenborg had actually conflated two different spirit-conversations about separate bodies of sacred literature. "My thesis is...that Swedenborg had two visions which he mistook for one: viz., 1. A vision of a lost sacred literature which was the lineal ancestor of the Old Testament, and which was destined to be found in Babylonia; and 2. A vision of a far more epoch-making discovery of a lost sacred literature in Chinese Turkestan which was to connect Christianity and Buddhism and lay the foundation for the coming world-religion."[18]

Edmunds argued that the first vision involved what he described as "Chaldean Creation and Deluge legends"—possibly a reference to the Epic of Gilgamesh, which recounts a flood similar to the one described in Genesis 6–9, and the Enuma Elish, a creation story. These ancient Mesopotamian mythological texts predate the biblical material.[19] Swedenborg's second vision involved the Buddhist and Nestorian Christian texts found in China at Dunhuang. Thus, Edmunds asserted, Swedenborg had accurately predicted later archaeological discoveries of both kinds of manuscripts, although the predecessor to "the Israelitish Word" actually differed from the "ancient Word" of Great Tartary. Edmunds also asserted that the Buddhist texts discovered at Dunhuang, in Sogdian and Tocharic languages, proved that Swedenborg's Asian spirit-informants had been talking about esoteric Buddhism.

Several years before the discoveries at Dunhuang, Edmunds had argued that the pre-Israelite "ancient Word" was the esoteric Buddhism of Tibet and Nepal. Tibet was indeed isolated, as Swedenborg's informants had said—although by the Himalayas, rather than the Great Wall.[20] He also claimed that the text called "Enunciations," which Swedenborg had mentioned, really referred to the *Udāna* ("Exclamations"), the third book of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* in the Pāli canon; that the "Wars of Jehovah" referred to the *Māra-saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*; and that Genesis corresponded to the creation story in the *Aggañña-sutta*, found at *Dīgha-nikāya* 27.[21]

Edmunds' contortions of the literary and geographic evidence, and his claim that the ancient Word of Great Tartary meant Tibetan Buddhism, were not entirely original. In at least three books and two articles between 1877 and 1897, Helena P. Blavatsky asserted that Swedenborg's revelation about Great Tartary referred to the esoteric Buddhist and Hindu teachings of Ascended Masters in the Himalayas, the purported source of Theosophical teachings.[22]

HERMAN CARL VETTERLING

A man who took this argument even further was Herman Carl Vetterling (1849–1931), a.k.a. Philangi Dàsa. He was a Swedenborgian minister, a homeopathic doctor, a Theosophist, and the publisher of *The Buddhist Ray*, the first English-language journal of Buddhism. Although relatively little biographical information about him survives, recently published electronic databases, including Census data and immigration and passport records, have made some new details available.[23]

Born in Sweden in 1849, Vetterling emigrated to the United States in 1871 and settled in Minnesota. He became a naturalized citizen in 1880. Ordained a Swedenborgian minister in 1877, he served congregations in Pittsburgh, Ohio, and Detroit until 1881, when a Detroit newspaper accused Vetterling of misconduct. Although members of his congregation and an investigation by another newspaper supported his assertion of innocence, he nevertheless left Detroit and the New Church ministry. In 1883 he graduated from a homeopathic medical school, Hahnemann Medical College of Chicago, and by 1886, he was practicing homeopathic medicine in Santa Cruz County, California. He married Margaret Pitcairn around 1890; she died in 1915. The couple sold their Santa Cruz property in 1894, and by the time of the 1900 Census, they lived in San Jose, California. Vetterling, a generous patron of local Humane Societies, died in 1931.

The Theosophist published sections of his "Studies of Swedenborg's Philosophy" over seven issues ranging from October 1884 to December 1885.[24] In 1887, Vetterling produced a fictional work titled *Swedenborg the Buddhist*, the subtitle of which is *The Higher Swedenborgianism: Its Secrets and Thibetan Origin.*[25] It asserts that Swedenborg received instruction in esoteric Buddhism from spirits in Tibet, China, and Mongolia. The book was favorably mentioned in a number of American magazines, and even in a Burmese Buddhist journal.[26] In 1893, a Japanese translation was published in Japan.

The protagonist and narrator of the story, Philangi Dàsa, recounts a series of dreams. In the one that occupies most of the manuscript's 354 pages, he witnesses an extended theological discussion among Swedenborg, a Buddhist monk, a Brahmin, a Zoroastrian, an Aztec, a Confucian, an Icelander (who represents Norse mythology), and "a woman," who expounds Kabbalah, ancient Egyptian religion, Western esotericism, and other traditions. This group, of which Swedenborg is clearly the star, considers a number of theological topics to demonstrate the purported Buddhist origin of Swedenborgian thought, and the common core of all religions. This presumed common core was a popular Theosophical theme.[27]

The Buddhist Ray, which Vetterling published monthly from 1888 to 1895, had subscribers not only in the United States and Europe, but also in India, Japan, Ceylon, and Siam—including Crown Prince Chandradat Chudhadharn of Siam and Ven. Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṅgala, one of the most senior Buddhist monks in Ceylon.[28] Several Japanese Buddhist

journals, including *Kaigai Bukkyō jijō*, published articles from *The Buddhist Ray*, including Vetterling's articles on Buddhism and Swedenborg.[29] These journals also published Theosophical writings that Vetterling provided.

On the front page of every issue, the *Ray* declared itself to be "Devoted to Buddhism in General and to the Buddhism in Swedenborg in Particular." For its first two years, all but one issue contained installments of a sequel to Vetterling's novel, titled "Swedenborg in the Lamasery." This text underscored Vetterling's belief that Swedenborgian ideas derived from Tibetan Buddhism, which Vetterling had read about in accounts of Jesuit missionaries to Lhasa and in various Theosophical texts. Like Albert Edmunds, Vetterling was also familiar with a variety of Pāli and Mahāyāna Buddhist texts translated by European Orientalists.

While Swedenborg claimed to reveal the hidden meanings of Hebrew and Christian scriptures, Vetterling claimed to reveal the hidden meanings of Swedenborg. For example, he asserted that Swedenborg's references to Jesus were really covert references to Urgyen, a.k.a. Padmasambhava, the legendary saint said to have brought tantric Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century.[30]

While that particular correspondence seems bizarre, if not hilarious, a few contemporary scholars have seen similarities between Swedenborgian thought and tantra. The idea that Swedenborg actually knew something about tantra, while far-fetched, is not beyond the realm of possibility. Marsha Keith Schuchard has argued that Swedenborg could have learned about tantric yoga from Moravian missionaries who traveled to India, China, Tibet, Tartary, and central Russia, and from Moravian converts in the Malabar region of India, who traveled to London and Holland. In London, Swedenborg and his Moravian associates studied Kabbalist forms of meditation, visualization, breath control, and sexual yoga that were similar to tantric practices. His posthumously published diaries describe these in detail.[31]

Citing Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams* and *Conjugal Love*, Jeffrey Kripal of Rice University, a specialist in Western interpretations of Hindu and Buddhist tantra, wrote that the seer understood divine influx to be

> intimately connected to the sexual powers, whose numinous energies
> he attempted to sublimate into spiritual vision by meditating on the
> Hebrew letters as male and female bodies, by regulating his breath,

by arousing himself to erection without ejaculation through control of the male cremaster muscle, and by something he called "genital respiration." Such techniques led to a kind of erotic trance in which love itself (*amor ipse*) imploded into a nondual realization of itself and suffused the entire body with a palpable bliss closely akin to the pleasures of sexual intercourse. [32]

Because of strong anti-Semitism in Sweden, however, and because of popular interest in Asia generated by the Swedish East India Company, Schuchard suggested that Swedenborg gradually displaced Kabbalist theories and practices "from Israel to Asia, which was considered a more acceptable source of mysticism in contemporary Sweden."[33]

Anders Hallengren has proposed that Swedenborg learned about esoteric Buddhism from Swedish soldiers, who had been prisoners of war in the Siberian and Tartar areas of Russia and returned to Sweden in the 1720s. Among these were Swedenborg's cousin Peter Schöenström, an avid collector of manuscripts along the Silk Route, particularly Mongolian religious texts. Other sources included the explorer Philip Strahlenberg, whose travel journals Swedenborg mentions in his *Spiritual Diary*, and a Russian historian and geographer whom Swedenborg met in Stockholm.[34] Although some Swedenborg specialists debate theories about Swedenborgian-tantric connections, the evidence is at least intriguing.

WARREN FELT EVANS

Another Swedenborgian who helped to popularize Buddhist ideas and practices, particularly as they were refracted through the esotericism of Theosophy, was Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889). A Methodist minister who left that denomination and was later ordained to the New Church clergy, Evans is best known as the first philosopher of New Thought. This religious-healing movement widely promoted Buddhist and Hindu meditation practices in the United States, a century before Asian missionaries began teaching Transcendental Meditation and *zazen* to Beats and hippies.[35] New Thought is a cousin of Christian Science, but more religiously eclectic and very decentralized. Its basic premise is that if one attunes oneself to God—or in Swedenborgian terms, opens oneself to divine influx—then happiness, health, and prosperity will naturally result.

From 1869 to 1886, Evans produced five books dealing with the relationship between mental states and health.[36] He learned mental healing

from a self-educated New England inventor and healer named Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866), whom Evans had met in 1863. Evans went on to teach and practice mental healing for more than twenty years in New Hampshire and the Boston area. As Beryl Satter observed, "Every major historian of New Thought and Christian Science agrees that Evans' ideas profoundly shaped the New Thought Movement."[37] He was the first to advocate the use of "affirmations": positive statements about the results one wants (or expects) to achieve.

Over time, New Thought diverged in two directions. One is more church-oriented: the largest denominations today are the Church of Religious Science; Unity, which reaches millions through a variety of publications; Divine Science; the Foundation for Better Living; and the Japanese group Seichō-no-Ie. Particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, community-oriented New Thought groups tended to be overwhelmingly female, and they were frequently involved in social-justice and social-reform movements. During the 1920s and '30s, New Thought also influenced a number of community-oriented black nationalist movements, such as Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, the Moorish Science Temple, and the Nation of Islam, as well as the interracial Peace Mission movement of Father Divine.

The other strand of New Thought is individualist and tends to be focused on personal success and prosperity. It spreads primarily through books, lectures, and workshops, and its chief spokespersons have been white male authors. The most famous is Norman Vincent Peale, whose book *The Power of Positive Thinking* spent three and a half years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and in 1955 sold more copies than any book but the Bible. This strand of New Thought is also found in various forms of New Age religion and in the prosperity gospel of some television evangelists. Its premise is that we draw good or bad things to us according to how we think. One recent example is the book and movie titled *The Secret*, which describe the "Law of Attraction," and have been promoted by talk-show celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Larry King, and Ellen DeGeneres. The book reached number one on the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller lists; currently more than 7.5 million copies are in print.[38]

As part of his New Thought teaching, Warren Felt Evans strongly recommended two meditative practices that were also promoted by subsequent teachers in both strands of the movement: contempla-

tion of the breath and one-pointed concentration. Evans's discussions of these practices appeared in print seven years before Buddhist and Vedānta missionaries such as Anagārika Dharmapāla and Swami Vivekananda spoke at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions and began teaching meditation to white Americans in its wake. "Right *thinking* and right *breathing* are the two things most essential to happiness and health," Evans wrote.[39] The rhythmic motion of inhaling and exhaling reflects the

> forward and backward movement of the pendulum, the ebb and flow of the tides, the succession of day and night, the systolic and diastolic action of the heart.... When we breathe in harmony with this movement, we are well, and our individual life marches forward in exact step with the tranquil life of nature; when our respiration is discordant with it, our life-force is out of tune.[40]

In addition,

> A very essential qualification for the practice of the mental-cure system, is...the ability to fix our thought upon one thing and to banish all other things from the mind. This state of mental concentration was called in the Hindu metaphysics *Ekāgrāta*, that is, one-pointedness. The attainment of that power was considered as an indispensable condition of all philosophical speculation and religious development. In order to obtain this abstraction from external things, and concentration of thought, they repeated the holy syllable *Om*.... [T]he ability to concentrate the mind upon one thing, is a natural endowment, but can be cultivated by practice.[41]

A more relaxed form of meditation that Evans also recommended is called "entering the Silence." He wrote, "We must lay aside the toiling oar and float in the current of the infinite Life."[42] Both of these practices were recommended by numerous subsequent New Thought teachers and authors.[43]

In developing his philosophy of New Thought, Evans drew upon many sources, including Swedenborg and Theosophy. He read widely and eclectically, and his fourth book, *The Divine Law of Cure* (1881), indicates his interest in Buddhist and Hindu ideas. It includes passing reference to the Orientalist F. Max Müller and to James Freeman Clarke, a Unitarian minister who authored an early book of comparative religion and became an important Western interpreter of Asian religions. In this book Evans also articulated two themes that would become key features of New Thought: that all religious traditions were

valuable for their various efforts to heal maladies of the human soul, and that sectarian creeds and fixed liturgies were completely unnecessary to spiritual healing. His next book, *The Primitive Mind Cure* (1884), made numerous favorable references to Buddhism and Hindu Vedānta, and show that Evans had read two important Theosophical texts—H. P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883)—as well as *Oriental Christ* (1869) by Protap Chunder Mozoomdar (or Protap Chandra Majumdar), a leader of the Hindu reform movement Brahmo Samaj and later a speaker at the World's Parliament of Religions.[44] Evans's sixth book, *Esoteric Christianity and Mental Therapeutics* (1886), draws repeatedly upon Hindu and Buddhist ideas. Carl T. Jackson characterizes it as reflecting "almost a conversion to the Theosophical viewpoint, or better yet, a 'Christian Theosophy,' since the Christian element remained quite central."[45] In fact, in 1887 *The Theosophist* published a favorable review of Evans's book.[46]

In *Esoteric Christianity*, Evans cited the legendary biography of the Buddha as providing a clue to the root cause of disease:

> It is said of Gautama, who did for the East what Jesus, six hundred years later, did more fully for the West, that he sought long and earnestly, and with extreme ascetic mortifications, which proved of no avail, for the *cause* of all human misery. At last the light from the supreme heavens broke in upon him, and his mind became entirely opened, "like the full-blown lotus-flower," and he saw by an intuitive flash of the supreme knowledge, that the secret of all the miseries of mankind was *ignorance*; and the sovereign remedy for it was to dispel ignorance and to become wise. If this is not the key that unlocks our dungeon, it shows where the lock is to be found.[47]

Although he did not identify the source for his quotation, "like the full-blown lotus-flower" is the exact phrase that Henry Steel Olcott used to describe the Buddha's enlightenment in his *Buddhist Catechism*, first published in 1881.[48]

Evans, like his teacher Quimby, believed that disease resulted from ignorance, or from erroneous thinking, and that wisdom about the true nature of reality was the cure. As a Christian, he read the story of Buddha's awakening from ignorance in his own religious terms. "The teaching of the Buddha is here identical with the principles of esoteric Christianity," Evans explained. Jesus taught that the root of suffering is sin, which is "an error of the understanding, which may lead to wickedness in the life."[49] That, in turn, leads to dis-ease of various kinds. Ev-

ans explained other Buddhist concepts in terms of Christian doctrine, as well:

> The birth into the spiritual life is called *Moksha* and *Nirvana*, and is that of which Jesus speaks, as entering into the kingdom of the heavens, or the kingdom of God, a condition of spiritual development, or education, that is attainable on earth, and not to be taught, as is usually done, as belonging exclusively to a future state.... Even Nirvana is attainable on earth. The Buddha is represented as teaching that "those who are free from all worldly desires enter Nirvana." (*Precepts of the Dhammapada*, v. 126.)[50]

His reference to "spiritual development" as "education" probably reflects a Swedenborgian belief in spiritual progression through processes of self-discipline and scholarship.

Evans also attributed to Swedenborg teachings that sound remarkably like Buddhist doctrines about *dukkha*. In discussing pain, Evans wrote that we have three types of responses to our experiences: indifference to neutral sensations, desire for pleasurable sensations, and aversion to unpleasant sensations. Pain arises from desire and aversion. The examples Evans gives for desire are thirst and hunger. In Buddhist thought, positive, negative, and neutral responses to stimuli are called *vedanā*, "feeling," which is one of the five *skandhas*.[51] According to the second noble truth, the root cause of *dukkha* is *taṇhā* (Skt. *tṛṣṇā*), translated "thirst" or "craving."

After his discussion of the roots of pain in craving and aversion, Evans wrote, "Swedenborg defines pain to be a feeling of repugnance arising from *interior falses*."[52] The prescription: "If we can bring ourselves to feel that pain is not an *evil*, but a good, and that all good is desirable and delightful, and remove from our minds repugnance to it, and replace it by a state of perfect patience and tranquil endurance, the pain will subside and finally cease."[53] While Buddhist doctrine regards pleasant sensations as equally a source of dissatisfaction because we become attached to them, it does regard equanimity as one of the seven factors of enlightenment.[54] This passage does not provide any direct evidence that Evans's discussion was informed by actual Buddhist sources, but the similarities are striking.

In the midst of a discussion about healing by the power of the Holy Spirit, he wrote:

> In the earlier [than Christianity] and purer philosophy of Buddhism it was taught that the Akasa contained a permanent record of all that

> was ever thought, felt, said, or done. These are all preserved in that universal principle as in "a book of life," or living book. All our states of thought and emotion exist in it, and can never have existence outside of it.[55]

Ākāśa, a term employed by Theosophists such as Blavatsky and Sinnett, refers in Hindu philosophy to "space," a subtle element pervading the cosmos. In Buddhist thought, "space" is sometimes a simile for "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*).[56] Evans's reference to the "book of life," in which experiences are stored, is reminiscent of the *ālaya vijñāna*, or "storehouse consciousness," which contains the "seeds" (*bījā*) of past experience and is the source of all present and future experience, according to Yogācāra philosophy.

It seems unlikely that Evans actually had direct access to Yogācāra or other Mahāyāna literature; most of the Buddhist texts translated into European languages during the latter nineteenth century were Pāli. Given his references to Blavatsky and Sinnett (and probably to Olcott), Evans's sources were most likely Theosophical, as the society drew rather indiscriminately from both Mahāyāna and Theravāda doctrines.

However, several other sources available by the time Evans wrote *Esoteric Christianity* make more direct access to Buddhist literature at least conceivable. These possibilities are more speculative, given the documentary evidence, but seven volumes of *The Sacred Books to the East* had made a number of Buddhist texts available in English by 1886,[57] and Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, published in 1879, was extremely popular at the time. Scholars such as Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852), F. Max Müller (1823–1900), and others had translated several Sanskrit Buddhist texts by 1886.[58] If Evans read French or German, he could have had access to such scholarly material. Some information about Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese Buddhism was also available in English and other European languages. Evans was clearly well read and had studied at Middlebury College and Dartmouth University.[59] In addition, some information about tantric Buddhism was available during Evans's time. Italian Jesuit missionaries had lived in Tibet and studied Buddhism there as early as the eighteenth century, and various other scholars had studied the tantric Buddhism present in Mongolia and among the Kalmyks in Russia during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The only Buddhist text Evans cites directly in *Esoteric Christianity* is the *Dhammapada*, so it is impossible to determine exactly how much he knew about Buddhist thought. Given Evans's references to Theosophical authors (whose writings were readily available in English) and his interests in Mesmerism, psychic phenomena, Swedenborgianism, Kabbalah, and other forms of esotericism, the Theosophical Society is his most likely source. Whatever his sources, "his works undoubtedly encouraged New Thought readers to a more serious interest in the Eastern message."[60]

D. T. SUZUKI

Perhaps the single most important figure in shaping American views of Buddhism, and another admirer of Swedenborg, is D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966). Albert Edmunds claimed credit for interesting D. T. Suzuki in Swedenborg when the two met at Paul Carus's Illinois home in 1903.[61] By that time, however, Swedenborg had been known in Japan for more than a decade. *The Buddhist Ray*, published from 1888 to 1895, had Japanese subscribers, and excerpts from that journal were reprinted in Japanese Buddhist magazines. In 1890, Hirai Kinza (1859–1916), who later spoke at the World's Parliament of Religions, published an article about Swedenborg and Zen in a Japanese magazine, according to Andrei Vashestov.[62] In 1893, the year of the Parliament, Vetterling's book *Swedenborg the Buddhist* was published in Japan. Two years later, in the preface to the Japanese version of Paul Carus's *Gospel of Buddha*, Zen master Shaku Sōen wrote that Swedenborg was well known in Japan. Suzuki was Sōen's student and translator, lived in Japan at the time, and translated Sōen's Japanese preface into English.[63] Yoshinaga Shin'ichi has written that "Suzuki must have read the Japanese Translation of *Swedenborg the Buddhist* before he went to the U.S.A, which was in 1897."[64] Suzuki acknowledged, however, that Edmunds had first inspired him to read the Swedish seer directly.[65]

Suzuki translated four of Swedenborg's books from English into Japanese. In 1908, the Swedenborg Society of London invited Suzuki there to translate *Heaven and Hell*, which it published in 1910. That same year, Suzuki served as a vice president for the International Swedenborg Congress in London.[66] In 1914 and 1915, Suzuki translated *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, and *Divine Providence*. He also wrote an overview of Swedenborg's life and work—*Suedenborugu*—which in English translation is titled *Swedenborg,*

Buddha of the North, an epithet taken from the 1833 novel *Louis Lambert*, by Honoré de Balzac.[67]

In 1924, Suzuki contributed an essay to *The Eastern Buddhist*, the journal he founded, exploring affinities between Swedenborgian theology and Shingon and Pure Land forms of Buddhism. It was titled "Swedenborg's View of Heaven and Other-Power."[68] These two essays clearly indicate that Suzuki was familiar with several other books and pamphlets by Swedenborg, both scientific and theological, and that he had seen additional, unpublished manuscripts. After 1924, Suzuki made scattered references to Swedenborg in various books and essays.[69]

In *Suedenborugu*, Suzuki presented Swedenborg as an exemplar: a man whose work combined both science and religion, who was both practical and mystical, who lived simply despite considerable wealth, and who "was childlike and innocent in all matters, with the air of a transcendent mystic who had escaped defilement."[70] His description of the Swede reminds one of the ancient masters idealized in Zen literature:

> He is a likable old man, with an aura of renunciation flowing from his brow. Even though his physical body cannot be disentangled from the troubles of this defiled world, his mind's eye is always filled with the mysteries of heaven. As he walks through the mist, a wonderful joy seems to well up and play beneath his feet. If someone asks the old man about such things as the way of heaven, like a mountain stream that is never exhausted, he patiently and repeatedly expounds it…. Listeners are shocked, their minds probably bewildered. Nevertheless, he coolly regards these things as if they were daily fare.[71]

Suzuki even said Swedenborg had "realized his true nature."[72] In the *Eastern Buddhist*, Suzuki drew several parallels between Swedenborgian and Buddhist teachings. For example, Swedenborg's most famous doctrine is that phenomena in the material world correspond to phenomena in the spiritual world, and one who can "read" this world correctly can discern corresponding divine truths. Suzuki likened this correspondence to the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness, in which the world of samsara, correctly perceived, *is* nirvana. He also compared it to the Shingon practice of *mudrās*, in which one identifies with the qualities of various buddhas by visualizing them and adopting their characteristic gestures. Suzuki compared Swedenborg's notion of innocence with the Pure Land teaching that one must utterly relinquish self-power, and with the disdain for scholasticism found in some Zen

rhetoric.[73] Suzuki identified Swedenborg's teaching on free will with the Buddhist doctrine of karma: in other words, that we are responsible for the consequences of our choices for good or evil. However problematic Suzuki's interpretations of Buddhism—and of Swedenborg—may be to contemporary scholars, for Westerners he was, and is, widely regarded as an expert, and extremely influential.

Because he was both an accomplished scientist and a religious visionary, Swedenborg appealed to people interested in esotericism and mysticism, and to those seeking to bridge religion and science. Likewise, Buddhism appealed to people seeking "scientific religion," and to those seeking secret wisdom and contact with spirits. Both Swedenborgianism and Buddhism were very important resources for Theosophy. Although it was tainted by allegations of fraud, the Theosophical Society was for many decades a major interpreter and promoter of Buddhism in the modern period, and it also played important roles in the Buddhist revivals of Sri Lanka and Japan.[74] All three traditions—Swedenborgianism, Buddhism, and Theosophy—clearly influenced Edmunds, Vetterling, Evans, and Suzuki.

CONCLUSION

Why does all this matter? There are at least three reasons. First, these connections suggest that scholars of American religions could pay much more attention to the ways that Western esotericism—in such forms as Swedenborgianism and Theosophy—have influenced religion, culture, and intellectual history in Europe and the United States over the past two centuries. Catherine Albanese's recent study of American metaphysical religions, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, which received an American Academy of Religion award in 2007, makes clear that metaphysical traditions in the United States merit far more study than they have received thus far. This very important book pays relatively little attention to Buddhism, however. Its discussion of what Albanese calls "metaphysical Asia" could benefit from additional input by scholars in various sub-fields of Buddhist studies.

Second, this study suggests that scholars of Buddhism might find fruitful avenues of research by exploring the roles that Western esotericism played in the development of both Asian and American Buddhist thought during the nineteenth century. With very few exceptions, this is an aspect of modern Buddhist history that has been largely overlooked. This may be due in part to the ways that Theosophy was dis-

credited by various frauds, scandals, and schisms. It may also have to do with the ways that the psychic phenomena central to Swedenborgianism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and mental healing became medicalized in the early twentieth century.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many people who were interested in these metaphysical movements believed that accounts of clairvoyance provided scientific proof that the soul or consciousness functioned independently of the body, and that the spirits of the dead could communicate with the living.[75] Over time, however, the religious dimensions of psychic phenomena were supplanted by medical discourses, which explained these phenomena in more strictly neurological or psychological terms.

The Scottish physician James Braid coined the term "hypnosis" in 1842 to describe the trance-states he induced in his patients and to dissociate his method from the antics of spirit-mediums and traveling showmen, who were demonstrating clairvoyance to eager audiences throughout Europe and the United States.[76] Pierre Janet (1859–1947) studied hypnotic amnesia and formulated an early theory of dissociation and double consciousness as part of his widely publicized treatment for "hysteria." William James (1842–1910) drew upon Janet's ideas in his discussions of the subconscious mind, and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) practiced hypnosis before developing his theory of subconscious repression and the "talking cure."[77] Thus, the religious discourses of Swedenborgianism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and New Thought were appropriated by the discourses of orthodox medicine and psychology.

Similarly, Theosophical interpretations of Buddhism have given way to psychological interpretations in Western Buddhism. Robert Sharf, among others, has described and critiqued the ways that Buddhist practices such as merit-making and devotionalism have been obscured and minimized by modernist psychological interpretations, which focus instead on individual meditative experience.[78] These psychological interpretations are not necessarily bad, he has argued, but they can truncate one's understanding of Buddhist tradition, particularly of its communal and cultural dimensions. Efforts to uncover the esotericism underlying modern interpretations of Buddhism may help us to see aspects of Buddhist history that these primarily psychological interpretations have thus far obscured. As Richard Payne points out elsewhere in this issue, such efforts also can shed light on political issues ranging far beyond the academic discipline of Buddhist studies,

such as the role of fascism in spreading the ideology of Perennialism—the notion that all religions share a common core.

Finally, explorations of these largely overlooked histories can highlight the need for interdisciplinary research and a broad historical perspective. Historians of religion can only see certain relationships and lines of influence if we cast a wide gaze across the boundaries of multiple countries, cultures, religious traditions, and academic disciplines. This brief study, for example, has drawn upon histories of metaphysical religion in Europe and the United States, histories of modern Buddhism in Asia and the United States, and histories of medicine and psychology. Such interdisciplinary approaches can reveal connections between things that may at first seem to be completely unrelated: Swedenborg and Buddhism, for example. This has been one modest effort to contribute to a broader view.

NOTES

1. Steve Koke, "The Search for a Religious Cosmology," in *Emanuel Sweden-borg: A Continuing Vision* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1988), 460. Swedenborg also developed what some have called a "nebular hypothesis" of planetary formation more than sixty years before Pierre Simon de Laplace published his generally accepted nebular hypothesis. Their theories differed significantly. Swedenborg believed that planets formed from a disk of matter extending outward from the sun, via the centrifugal force of the sun's rotation. Laplace, in a series of publications from 1796 to 1835, argued that stars and planets coalesce from clouds of matter into dense globes, via gravitation (ibid.).

2. Robert H. Kirven and Robin Larsen, "Emanuel Swedenborg: A Pictorial Bi-ography," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1988); Stephen Larsen, "The Soul and the Abyss of Nature," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* (New York: Swedenborg Founda-tion, Inc., 1988). The pictorial biography includes a reproduction of Sweden-borg's aircraft design, and a three-dimensional model, on p. 18.

3. In short, Swedenborg argued that the feminine corresponds to love and will; the male to wisdom and understanding; both are necessary to spiritual growth; and marriage is the best way to realize this ideal.

4. Richard Kenneth Silver, "The Spiritual Kingdom in America: The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on American Society and Culture: 1815–1860" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983), 30.

5. According to Jewish Kabbalah, the divine manifests through ten emanations or Sephiroth. Johann Kemper (1697–1796) was a Jewish convert to Christian-ity who worked for the University of Uppsala while Swedenborg was enrolled there; Kemper also tutored students in Hebrew. Some scholars have suggest-ed that Swedenborg studied with Kemper, who wrote a detailed commentary on the *Zohar*, a well-known Kabbalist text. Swedenborg's brother-in-law Eric Benzelius purchased a copy of Kemper's *Zohar* commentary for the univer-sity. Marsha Keith Schuchard argues that Swedenborg's father was interested in Kabbalah and had his son tutored in it as a boy; she describes in detail Swedenborg's later Kabbalist studies. See Marsha Keith Schuchard, *Why Mrs Blake Cried: William Blake and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision* (London: Century, 2006), 59–121 (chaps. 5–8). In an article published earlier, Swedenborg scholar Jane Williams-Hogan expressed doubt that Swedenborg had worked directly with Kemper, but noted a few references to Kabbalah in Swedenborg's note-books. Jane Williams-Hogan, "Swedenborg Studies 2002: On the Shoulders of Giants," *The New Philosophy Online, Journal of the Swedenborg Scientific Associa-tion* (January–June 2002); http://www.thenewphilosophyonline.org/journal/article.php?page=1002&issue=106.

6. Robin Larsen et al., ed., *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1988), 514.

7. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. James Lawrence, Dean of the Swedenborg House of Studies in Berkeley, CA, for his careful reading of the foregoing summary and his suggestions for improving its accuracy. Surveys of Swedenborg's basic ideas may be found at: Silver, *Spiritual Kingdom in America*, 21–43; George F. Dole, "Key Concepts in the Theology of Emanuel Swedenborg," in *Emanuel Swedenborg a Continuing Vision*, ed. Robin Larsen et al. (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1988); George F. Dole and Robert H. Kirven, *A Scientist Explores Spirit: A Biography of Emanuel Swedenborg with Key Concepts of His Theology* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997).

8. Swedenborg does fare better among scholars of modern European literature and of Western esotericism.

9. Robert H. Kirven, "Swedenborg's Contributions to the History of Ideas," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1988).

10. Silver, "Spiritual Kingdom in America," ibid.

11. He is said to haunt a room on the library's third floor to this day. George Eberhart, "Haunted Libraries in the U.S.: Pennsylvania-Texas," Encyclopedia Britannica Blog, http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2007/10/haunted-libraries-in-the-us-pennsylvania-texas/.

12. Albert J. Edmunds, "A Buddhist Bibliography," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (1902–1903): 1–60.

13. Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 102, 99 n. 52.

14. Albert J. Edmunds, "Has Swedenborg's 'Lost Word' Been Found?" *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 7, no. 5 (1913): 270–271.

15. Albert J. Edmunds, "F. W. H. Meyers, Swedenborg, and Buddha," *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research* 8 (1914): 253–285.

16. Anders Hallengren, "The Secret of Great Tartary," *Arcana* 1, no. 1 (1994): 37.

17. Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion: Containing the Whole Theology of the New Church Predicted by the Lord in Daniel 7:13–14 and Revelation 21:1–2* (Lutherville, MD: The Swedenborg Project, Swedenborg Digital Library, 2007; digital version of the 1946 edition by Swedenborg Foundation), ¶279.3, 4. See also Emanuel Swedenborg, "The Book of the Apocalypse Revealed, Uncovering the Secrets That Were Foretold There and Have Lain Hidden until Now" (Lutherville, MD: The Swedenborg Project, Swedenborg Digital Library, 2007),

http://www.smallcanonsearch.com/read.php?book=ar&section=11, ¶11.3–4.

18. Edmunds, "Has Swedenborg's 'Lost Word' Been Found?" 262. The Dunhuang manuscripts found in the Mogao Cave included so-called "Jesus Sutras," Chinese-language texts of Nestorian Christian teachings, brought to China during the Tang dynasty by Alopen, a missionary bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East.

19. Archaeological expeditions during the nineteenth century had discovered manuscripts of both the Gilgamesh Epic and the Enuma Elish. Thus it is possible that Edmunds was referring to this material, although his description of it is vague. Thanks to Frank Yamada, PhD, of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, for providing this information.

20. Edmunds may have conflated Tibet and Mongolia.

21. Edmunds had proffered this argument in a lecture to the First New-Jerusalem Society of Philadelphia on April 19, 1901. His remarks were reported in an article titled "The Ancient Word," *New Church Messenger* 80:18 (May 1, 1901): 242–243. The article notes that Edmunds's "conclusions are of special interest, having been derived from researches entirely independent of Dasa." This was probably a reference to the *nom de plume* of Vetterling, who had made similar arguments in a number of publications from 1887 to 1895. Edmunds also summarized this argument in a paragraph of his 1903 "Buddhist Bibliography," 35. The bibliography includes Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion.*

22. Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (orig. pub., New York: The Theosophy Co., 1877), http://www.theosophy.org/Blavatsky/Isis%20Unveiled/isis_unveiled1.htm; Helena P. Blavatsky, *A Modern Panarion: A Collection of Fugitive Fragments* (orig. pub., New York: The Theosophy Co., 1895), http://www.theosophy.org/Blavatsky/Modern%20Panarion/Panarion.htm; Helena P. Blavatsky, "A Collection of Notes and Appendices on an Article Entitled 'The Âryan-Arhat Esoteric Tenets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,' by T. Subba Row, B.A., B.L.," *The Theosophist* 3, no. 4 (January 1882), http://www.theosophy.org/Blavatsky/Articles/NotesOnSomeAryan-ArhatEsotericTenets.htm; Helena P. Blavatsky, "Lamas and Druses," *The Theosophist* (June 1881), http://www.theosophy.org/Blavatsky/Articles/LamasAndDruses.htm. In *Isis Unveiled*, see, for example, vol. 1, chap. 15, p. 580; and vol. 2, chap. 9, p. 471. In *Occultism of the Secret Doctrine* (1897), see vol. 3, sect. 51, p. 424; available online at http://books.google.com/books?id=QFTApMUCc0EC.

23. Biographical sources on Vetterling include the online database "Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s–1900s" (Provo, UT: The Generations Network, 2006), for America, 1871, p. 107, and for Minnesota, 1871–1872, p. 133, accessed at http://www.ancestry.com; Vetterling's application for a U.S. passport on September 2, 1922, accessed at http://www.ancestry.com; The United

States Census, 1900, San Jose, Santa Clara, California, Roll T625_147, p. 6A, Enumeration District 149, image 622, and Roll T623_110, page 10A, Enumeration District 60, accessed at http://www.ancestry.com; Andrei Vashestov's "Introduction" to Dàsa, *Swedenborg the Buddhist*; Vetterling's obituary, "San Jose Writer Called by Death: Dr. Herman C. Vetterling, 82, Physician, Philosopher Dies at Home," *San Jose Mercury Herald*, Sunday, September 6, 1931, p. 1, col. 1; and Paul Tutweiler and Marion Pokriots, "Philangi Dasa, the Buddhist of Santa Cruz: Herman Vetterling, the Philosopher of San Jose," online article posted September 14, 2007, at http://researchforum.santacruzmah.org/viewtoopic.php?t=289&highlight=vetterling.

24. Reproduced as appendices to Philangi Dàsa, *Swedenborg, the Buddhist, or the Higher Swedenborgianism: Its Secrets and Tibetan Origin* (Charleston, SC: The Swedenborg Association, 2003), 359–437.

25. Ibid.

26. *The Buddhist Ray* 1, no. 10 (October 1888); 1, no. 11 (November 1888): 84.

27. As Richard Payne explains elsewhere in this issue, it is also a key feature of Traditionalism, which informs some other modern interpretations of Buddhism.

28. *The Buddhist Ray* 1, no. 5 (May 1888): 44; 1, no. 6 (June 1888): 48; 1, no. 7 (July 1888): 52, 56; 1, no. 8 (August 1888): 64; 2, no. 4 (April 1889): 28.

29. Yoshinaga Shin'ichi, "Japanese Buddhism and the Theosophical Movement, A General View," and Akai Toshio, "The Theosophical Accounts in Japanese Buddhist Publications Issued in the Late Nineteenth Century, A Select Bibliography," both in Yoshinaga Shin'ichi, ed., "Hirai Kinza and the Globalization of Buddhism of Meiji Era, a Cultural and Religio-Historical Study" (Maizuru, Japan: Japan Grants-In-Aid for Scientific Research #16520060, 2007). Thanks to Richard Jaffe, Ph.D., of Duke University, for providing copies of these articles.

30. H. C. Vetterling, "Swedenborg in the Lamasery," *The Buddhist Ray* 1, no. 3 (March 1888): 22.

31. Marsha Keith Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Blake, Swedenborg, and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision," *Esoterica* 2 (2000): 55–57; accessed online at http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/printable/BlakePrintable.html. See also Schuchard, *Why Mrs. Blake Cried* (2006), 102–109, 116–120, 152–154. She shows that Swedenborg was involved in the Moravian congregation at London's Fetter Lane. Schuchard notes that Moravian missionaries gained a number of converts in Ceylon, another possible source of information about Buddhism (ibid., 103). Devin Zuber asserts that "None of the world's leading scholars on Swedenborg have accepted Schuchard's contentions that he was a life-long closet Kabbalist, expert in sexual Yoga, or secret spy for the Swedish government." He does not cite any specific scholars on this point, however.

Devin Zuber, "The Buddha of the North: Swedenborg and Transpacific Zen," special issue, *Religion and the Arts* 14, nos. 1–2 (forthcoming): n. 6. Among the scholars who find possible Swedenborg-tantra connections more persuasive are Jeffrey John Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 139–141; D. Gopaul Chetty, "Was Swedenborg a Yogi?" in *New Light Upon Indian Philosophy, or Swedenborg and Saiva Siddhanta* (London: J.M. Dent, 1923), 125–146; Stephen Larsen, "Swedenborg and the Visionary Tradition," in *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision*, ed. Robin Larsen et al. (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1988), 192–206; and David Loy, "The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg: A Buddhist Perspective," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 16 (1996): 11–35.

32. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*, 139–141. David Loy described a number of parallels he saw between Swedenborg's theology and various Mahāyāna doctrines, including Tibetan teachings about the *bardo* in "The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg: A Buddhist Perspective," in *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, ed. Mary Lou Bertucci (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996; orig. pub. in *Arcana* 2, no.1 [Fall 1995]).

33. Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Blake, Swedenborg, and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision," 55.

34. Hallengren, "The Secret of Great Tartary."

35. Swedenborg influenced several forms of unorthodox medicine popularized during the nineteenth century, including homeopathy. Richard Silver's "The Spiritual Kingdom in America" discusses in some detail Swedenborgian influences in unorthodox medicine. After leaving the New Church ministry, Vetterling became a homeopathic physician.

36. His first book, *The New Age and Its Messenger*, published in 1864, deals primarily with Swedenborg. Gail Thain Parker, *Mind Cure in New England: From the Civil War to World War I* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1973).

37. Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 79.

38. Carol Memmott, "'Secret' to Happiness," *USA Today*, February 14, 2007. See also http://www.thesecret.tv/behind-the-secret-creative.html.

39. W. F. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity and Mental Therapeutics* (Boston: H.H. Carter & Karrick, 1886), 95. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 95.

40. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 96–97.

41. Ibid., 154.

42. Ibid., 141.

43. The only scholarly discussion of meditation in New Thought I have found

currently in print to date is chap. 4 of Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005). My 2008 doctoral dissertation at Duke University, "Mind Cure, Meditation, and Medicine: Hidden Histories of Mental Healing in the United States," deals with this topic in detail.

44. Carl T. Jackson, "The New Thought Movement and the Nineteenth Century Discovery of Oriental Philosophy," *Journal of Popular Culture* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1975): 526. Theosophy draws heavily on Vedānta as well. See, for example, A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (orig. pub. 1893; London and Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, Ltd., 1972).

45. Ibid.

46. W. F. Evans, "Mental Therapeutics and Esoteric Christianity," *The Theosophist* 9, no. 97 (October 1887): 62–63. The erroneous title of the book is in the original article.

47. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 63.

48. Henry Steel Olcott, *The Buddhist Catechism*, 42nd ed. (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Publications Division, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1908), 12. A facsimile of this 1908 edition, published posthumously by Annie Besant, is available online from the Theosophical Society (URL below). Besant's preface notes that although some minor changes had been made in the text, the numbering of questions and answers was unchanged. In the online document, the reference to the Buddha's awakening, in which "his mind was entirely opened—like a full-blown lotus flower" appears on p. 12, answer 63. See http://www.theosophical.org/resources/library/olcott-centenary/ts/buddhist-catechism.pdf. In an 1886 edition of the *Catechism*, the same phrase appears in the answer to question 50. Henry S. Olcott, *A Buddhist Catechism* (Madras: the author, 1886), n.p. Thanks to Katie McMahon, reference librarian for the Newberry Library, for assistance in tracking down this information.

49. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 68.

50. Ibid., 158–159. Evans does not provide a complete citation for his *Dhammapada* quotation. A search of WorldCat revealed only one book with a similar title in print around the time Evans wrote *Esoteric Christianity*: James Gray, trans., *The Dhammapada, or Scriptural Texts: A Book of Buddhist Proverbs, Precepts, and Maxims* (Rangoon: Amer. Mission Press, 1881). The wording of Gray's translation of v. 126 (p. 13) is slightly different, however: "those free from worldly desires attain *Nibbân.*" Again, thanks to Katie McMahon of the Newberry Library for help locating this information.

51. The other four *skandhas* are physical form (*rūpa*); perception (*saṃjñā*), the mind's capacity to discern phenomena and their characteristics through the five physical senses and ideas or concepts; volitions or intentions (*saṃskāra*),

which shape patterns of behavior and character; and awareness (*vijñāna*), both conscious and subliminal. Damien Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

52. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 117.

53. Ibid., 116–117.

54. For further discussion of these terms, see Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism.* The seven factors of enlightenment and their scriptural sources may be found in Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 65.

55. Evans, *Esoteric Christianity*, 103–104.

56. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, Sanskrit Terms Database, http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb/indexes/term-sa.html. See also Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, 8.

57. Vols. 10, 11, and 13 (all published in 1881) include various Pāli suttas and *Vinaya* texts; vols. 17 (1882) and 20 (1885) contain additional *Vinaya* texts; vol. 19 (1883) contains Aśvaghoṣa's biography of the Buddha from a Chinese translation; and vol. 21 (1884) contains the *Lotus Sutra.* Later, vols. 35 (1890) and 36 (1894) made more Pāli texts available. Vol. 49 (1894) contained a collection of important Mahāyāna texts, including two Pure Land sutras, the *Diamond Sutra*, and two Perfection of Wisdom sutras.

58. J. W. de Jong, *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1997), 27–47. For a chronological bibliography of translations of Buddhist texts and descriptions of Buddhist practices, Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna, see Roger-Pol Droit, *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*, trans. David Streight and Pamela Vohnson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 191–259.

59. C. Alan Anderson, *Healing Hypotheses: Horatio W. Dresser and the Philosophy of New Thought* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 306; James F. Lawrence, "An Extraordinary Season in Prayer: Warren Felt Evans' Journey into 'Scientific' Swedenborgian Spiritual Practice," *Studia Swedenborgiana* 12, no. 3 (2002): 39 n. 21.

60. Jackson, "The New Thought Movement," 257–258.

61. Tweed, *American Encounter*, 185–186 n. 14, citing Albert J. Edmunds, Diary 10, 18 July, 1903.

62. Andrei Vashestov, introduction to *Swedenborg the Buddhist* (Charleston, SC: The Swedenborg Association, 2003), xxii, xxx n. 27. Vashestov identified the journal's title as *Kwatsuron* and said the article appears in its third issue. I have been unable to locate it.

63. D. T. Suzuki produced an English translation of the Japanese preface to

Carus's book, published in Paul Carus, "A Japanese Translation of 'The Gospel of Buddha,'" *The Open Court: A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Science of Religion* 9 (February 21, 1895).

64. Yoshinaga Shin'ichi, in a November 24, 1999 post to an electronic forum on Theosophical history, http://www.theohistory.org/notes-queries-archive1.html.

65. Thomas A. Tweed, "American Occultism and Japanese Buddhism: Albert J. Edmunds, D.T. Suzuki, and Translocative History," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32, no. 2 (2005): 258–259.

66. Andrew Bernstein, introduction to *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, ed. Mary Lou Bertucci (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996), xviii.

67. In a letter from Lambert to his uncle dated November 25, 1819, the novel's protagonist wrote: "Any man who plunges into these religious waters, of which the sources are not all known, will find proofs that Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and Swedenborg had identical principles and aimed at identical ends. The last of them all, Swedenborg, will perhaps be the Buddha of the North." Honoré de Balzac and John Davis Batchelder Collection (Library of Congress), *Histoire Intellectuelle De Louis Lambert* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1833). Available online in English translation at http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1943.

68. D. T. Suzuki, *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, ed. Mary Lou Bertucci, trans. Andrew Bernstein, Swedenborg Studies (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1996).

69. David Loy refers to a list of ten citations he received from a Japanese source. He does not detail them. Loy, "The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg: A Buddhist Perspective," 122 n. 5. I found one reference to Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences in his first essay on Zen, D. T. Suzuki, "Zen as Chinese Interpretation of the Doctrine of Enlightenment," presented as a lecture in 1911, published in *Eastern Buddhist* 2, no. 6 (1923), and published in book format in 1927. My copy is D. T. Suzuki, "Zen as Chinese Interpretation of the Doctrine of Enlightenment," in *Essays in Zen Buddhism (First Series)* (London: Rider & Co., 1961), 56 n. 1. See also Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 320 n. 29.

70. Suzuki, *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, 44.

71. Ibid., 7.

72. Ibid., 22.

73. I am not sure Swedenborg would have agreed with the latter, given that he was an accomplished scholar and saw education as a path to God.

74. The following books touch on the Theosophical Society's role in American Buddhism and in modern Asian Buddhist revivals. Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998); Stephen Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism.* Yoshinaga Shin'ichi and Akai Toshio have documented the widespread publication of Theosophical materials in Japan during the Meiji era. Yoshinaga Shin'ichi, "Japanese Buddhism and the Theosophical Movement, a General View," and Akai Toshio, "The Theosophical Accounts in Japanese Buddhist Publications Issued in the Late Nineteenth Century: A Select Bibliography."

75. George Bush (1769–1859), an American Swedenborgian minister and author of the book *Mesmer and Swedenborg*, put it thus: "*if Mesmerism is true, Swedenborg is true*, and if Swedenborg is true, the spiritual world is laid open, and a new and sublime era has dawned upon the earth" (italics in original). In this same volume, Bush included an appendix endorsing the Spiritualist philosopher Andrew Jackson Davis, who claimed direct inspiration from Swedenborg. George Bush, *Mesmer and Swedenborg; or, the Relation of the Developments of Mesmerism to the Doctrines and Disclosures of Swedenborg* (New York: John Allen, 1847), 161.

76. James Braid and Arthur Edward Waite, *Braid on Hypnotism: The Beginnings of Modern Hypnosis* (New York: Julian Press, 1960); Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 51.

77. Janet employed the theory of dissociation to explain the phenomenon commonly called multiple personality disorder, now called dissociative disorder. Ann Taves initially argued that psychological dissociation might help to explain religious phenomena such as Mind Cure, ecstatic states during revivals, and spirit mediums. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). She has since proposed that these phenomena may be better explained by research on hypnosis and suggestibility. Ann Taves, "Where (Fragmented) Selves Meet Cultures: Theorizing Spirit Possession," in *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting* (San Antonio, TX: American Academy of Religion, 2004). For more information about the history of hypnosis, see Adam Crabtree, *Animal Magnetism, Early Hypnotism, and Psychical Research, 1766–1925: An Annotated Bibliography*, Bibliographies in the History of Psychology and Psychiatry (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988); Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Alan Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

78. Robert H. Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42 (1995). See also Andrew Cooper, "Losing Our Religion: An Interview with Robert Sharf," *Tricycle* (Summer 2007).

A Brief History of Interdependence

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INTRODUCTION

I have on occasion declared to colleagues in academe that my next research project will be to prove that something or other is monolithic. It brings forth the chuckle of an academic insider's joke, because possibly the most fashionable and stinging critique of a historian, sociologist, or anthropologist today is that he or she presents something—a culture, a society, a religion, a practice—as monolithic. It is the mistake *de jour*, for it is widely recognized as never before that not only are all of these things internally variegated, but also that nothing can stand on its own; all ideas, social practices, institutions, and cultural phenomena are the results of a complex multiplicity of factors that extend out into an ever-widening causal web. Current studies of natural systems, nations, economies, and cultures see them as multifaceted, interdependent processes—networks in which each part is both constituted by and constitutive of larger dynamic systems. That we live in a radically interconnected world has become a truism. Indeed, this age of internationalism and the Internet might well be called the age of *inter*: there is nothing that is not interconnected, interdependent, interwoven, interlaced, interactive, or interfacing with something else to make it what it is. Thus any religious tradition that can claim "interdependence" as a central doctrine lays claim to timely cultural resonance and considerable cultural cachet.[1]

It is not surprising then that this term has been emerging with greater and greater frequency in contemporary Buddhist literature and acquiring increasing consonance with other modern discourses of interdependence. Sometimes used to translate the term *pratītya-samutpāda* (more precisely translated "dependent origination" or "de-

pendent co-arising"), its semantic field has now extended beyond this term to represent what many today see as *the* fundamental outlook of Buddhism—a doctrinal *sine qua non* with broad-ranging implications on personal, social, and global scales. It is not only a philosophical view of the world as a vast interconnected web of events with each phenomenon constituting and reflecting other phenomena, but also an idea with powerful ethical and political implications: if we are all part of a vast, interdependent network of being, what we do can have profound effects on others as our actions reverberate throughout this network.

As articulated in contemporary Buddhist literature, interdependence combines empirical description, world-affirming wonder, and an ethical imperative. As empirical description, it represents the world as a vast, interconnected web of internally related beings—that is, beings whose identity is inseparable from the systems of which they are a part, rather than having an *a priori* identity independent of these systems. Description of this web sometimes melds indistinguishably with descriptions of other interrelated processes like communication networks or biological systems. The contemporary Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, has coined the term "interbeing" to capture the idea of the interdependence of all things, presenting it in an accessible and playful style:

> If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist.... So we can say that the cloud and the paper *inter-are.*
>
> If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow.... And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper.... The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up only of "non-paper elements".... As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it.[2]

The doctrine of emptiness declares all things to lack inherent self-existence (*svabhāva*); therefore, all beings are constituted by their interactions with other beings and have no independent, enduring nature in and of themselves. Interdependence, or interbeing, applies as well to the self: "What we call self is made only of non-self elements."[3] Because

things are empty of a separate self, they live in interdependence with all other things. Some authors use the hologram as a metaphor to suggest that all individual beings contain a miniature cosmos, like Nhat Hanh's sheet of paper contains the universe. Whitman's "I am large, I contain multitudes," as well as Blake's "To see a world in a grain of sand" are cited regularly in contemporary articulations of this microcosm/macrocosm relationship.

Descriptions of interdependence often convey a sense of celebration of this interwoven world, of intimacy and oneness with the great interconnected living fabric of life, and an expansion of the sense of selfhood into it. Joan Halifax cites Chinese Buddhists who declare the entire world, including "rock, sea, and flower," as sentient and presents Buddhism as a matter of connecting deeply with the living "web of creation":

> A thing cannot live in isolation; rather, the condition of beingness... implies a vital and transformative interconnectedness, interdependence. And thus one seemingly separate being cannot be without all other beings, and is therefore not a separate self, but part of a greater Self, an ecological Self that is alive and has awareness within its larger Self.[4]

This dynamic between the separate self and the larger Self implies a particular interpretation of the Buddhist concept of no-self (*anātman*): once one realizes that one has no fixed, bounded self, one's sense of selfhood expands to include the others in the web of interdependence. According to Jeremy Hayward: "The growing into maturity of a human is experienced as an ever widening sense of self, from identification with the individual bodymind, to self as family, self as circle of friends, as nation, as race, as human race, as all living things, and perhaps finally to self as all that is."[5]

This idea of interdependence suggests natural alliances with some traditions and critiques of others. Often set up in opposition to the "Cartesian, mechanical, anthropocentric world view," Buddhism, with interdependence as its central feature, is said to conceive of the world as an "interrelated, intercausal universe similar to the world described in Native American wisdom...and quantum physics," according to Allan Hunt Badiner.[6] "Buddhism, shamanism, and deep ecology," asserts Halifax, "are based on the experience of engagement and the mystery of participation."[7]

Contemporary descriptions of interdependence, though, do not stop at the celebration of its wonder. They also emphasize the fragility of the interconnected network of beings: because everything depends on everything else, altering the balance of the web of life can be—and has been—catastrophic. Thus the concept entails strong ecological imperatives. The many Buddhist and Buddhist-inspired groups engaged in environmental activism routinely cite interdependence or interconnectedness as the conceptual rationale for the link between the dharma and environmentalism. Contemporary discourse on interdependence also carries ethical and political imperatives regarding social and economic justice. It recognizes that the interdependencies of the modern world are often sources of suffering. Perceiving interconnectedness may involve tracing a running shoe for sale at the local mall to global warming because of the fuel it took to ship it from China, where it in turn connects to economic injustice since it is made by women in a sweatshop making barely enough to survive, while a huge percentage of the profit from the shoe goes to corporate executives. It stresses finding root causes and seeking out hidden sources of social problems. The idea of interdependence, therefore, is an essential part of the conceptual arsenal of engaged Buddhism, the contemporary activist movement that strives to relieve suffering by addressing human rights, war, poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation. It is not then just a matter of "experiencing" the world as a part of the self but also a matter of ethical and political commitment.

Interdependence in this sense is often evoked by Americans and Europeans of eclectic spiritual orientation who freely mix Hindu, Daoist, and neo-Pagan traditions with Buddhism. It is not, however, simply a Western appropriation. While the poet and essayist Gary Snyder may be the most well-known American to offer an ecological interpretation of Buddhist interdependence, many of the most prominent Asian leaders of contemporary Buddhism—the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Daisaku Ikeda, Sulak Sivaraksa, Buddhadāsa, and others have made interdependence central to their teachings, explicitly relating it to modern social, political, and ecological realities. The famous Thai reformer Buddhadāsa (1906–1993), for example, contends that the fundamental truth of nature—and the central doctrine of the dharma—is the dependent arising of things. Seeing this "universal cooperation" of celestial bodies, the elements of the natural world, and the parts of the body leads us to care for nature and others. He insists that failing to see this

mutual dependence has unleashed rampant greed and selfishness, as well as catastrophic social and environmental ills. If we cannot see the world as a "mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise," he states bluntly, "we'll all perish."[8]

While modern articulations of interdependence are rooted in the traditional Buddhist concept of *pratītya-samutpāda*, in the last few decades they have taken on meanings, implications, and associations unique to the present era. The contemporary Buddhist concept of interdependence, therefore, provides the historian of religion a fruitful arena for analyzing the processes of conceptual and praxiological change and adaptation to shifting global circumstances. In this article I want to show how this concept has developed from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist lineages. It is in many ways a paradigmatic example of a hybrid concept. In brief, the idea in some of its current forms is a hybrid of indigenous Buddhist concepts—dependent arising, the interpenetration of phenomena in the Huayan school, and various attitudes toward the natural world in East Asian Buddhism—co-mingled with conceptions of nature deriving from German Romanticism and American Transcendentalism, popular accounts of modern scientific thought, systems theory, and recent ecological thought.

I should mention that, although I am discussing a *concept*, it is actually much more than a disembodied idea. It is rather the most visible— and therefore most analyzable—aspect of a complex of social practices, attitudes, dispositions, and beliefs very much enmeshed in current social and political worlds. In other words, it is not monolithic! Its complexity is underlined by the fact that early classical formulations take a nearly opposite view of the significance of interdependence than do their contemporary successors. The concept of dependent origination and its implications were developed by monks and ascetics who saw the phenomenal world as a binding chain—not a web of wonderment but a web of entanglement. So our task is to show how interdependence developed from a position that took a rather dim view of worldly life to one that compels this-worldly celebration of life along with vigorous social and political engagement. Foucault said that "all history is history of the present," which means essentially that our view of the past is deeply conditioned by the concerns, categories, and assumptions operative in the present.[9] In this respect this chapter is quite self-consciously a history of interdependence from the perspective of the present transformation of the concept, addressing salient ideas in clas-

sical Buddhist as well as Western texts that have been important in it modern articulation.

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL BUDDHIST VIEWS OF NATURE
Dependent Origination in Classical Pāli Literature

The Buddha, as is often repeated, said that he taught only two things: suffering and the end of suffering. No doubt Buddhists and Buddhist institutions have supported efforts to relieve suffering throughout history. The moral ideal of compassion for all living beings cannot help but harmonize with the various modern efforts to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and promote economic and environmental sustainability for people and animals. The great number of Buddhists around the world active in these efforts are undoubtedly acting in accordance with the basic Buddhist principles of universal compassion and relief of suffering. But the Pāli suttas do not present temporary relief of suffering as the dharma's ultimate goal. Buddhism has always employed means of transitory reprieve from suffering, by means both natural and supernatural, but the "end of suffering" that the Buddha declared was to be permanent. The post-mortem state of *parinirvāṇa*, or nirvana without the substratum of the five *skandhas*, the aggregates of personal existence, was beyond suffering because it was beyond time and space, beyond becoming, beyond personal existence, beyond all conditioned things. It was by definition nearly unimaginable—everything that the phenomenal world of transience and rebirth was not. The end of suffering was an end not to this or that problem but ultimately a transcendence of the phenomenal world itself. No doubt the vast majority of Buddhists throughout history have been laypeople who did not aspire to such a remote goal. Even most monks, it turns out, have not considered this a realistic aspiration in this lifetime given the age of decline in which we live. The ideal, however, is at the heart of the symbolic world of Buddhism.

The Pāli suttas arose out of an ascetic milieu that viewed family, reproduction, physical pleasures, material success, and worldly life as ultimately futile, disappointing, and binding. Dependent origination denotes in early Buddhist literature the chain of causes and conditions that give rise to all phenomenal existence in the world of impermanence, birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). Far from being celebrated as a wondrous web of interconnected life, it is repeatedly referred to as a "mass of suffering" (*dukkha*). Indeed, it is through the *reversal* of

this chain of interdependent causation—not an identification with it— that the Buddha is said to have become awakened. The "world" (*loka*) itself is conceived as a flow of phenomenal events dependent on contact between the senses and sense objects, consciousness and objects of consciousness. It does not exist in and of itself but arises with the intertwining of a falsely reified subject and object. The point of elucidating the relationships between the various kinds of consciousness and its objects—visual consciousness and objects of vision, auditory consciousness and sounds, etc.—is to help the monk understand how to disentangle them and thus bring about a dissolution of the phenomenal world (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* 12.44). This of course does not mean the literal destruction of the world, but rather the dismantling of the experienced world as it is constituted by this intertwining of consciousness and its objects based on craving, aversion, and delusion. While modern Buddhists and scholars sometimes present the chain of dependent origination as a kind of empirical theory of causality, the point was not so much to account for the arising of natural phenomena but rather for the arising of the conditions for dissatisfactory life in the cycle of rebirth. Understanding these conditions provided the possibility of undoing them and being released into the liberated state beyond all causes and conditions (see, for instance, *Dīgha-nikāya* 15). Rather than celebrating the "experience of engagement and the mystery of participation" in the interconnected "web of life,"[10] Pāli literature instead encourages quite the opposite: the *disengagement* from all entanglement in this web.

Many Pāli suttas attempt to foster the dissolution of the interdependent chain of causality and the world of ordinary experience to which it gives rise by emphasizing the impurity and undesirability of physical life. Sense desires are "perilous" and "bring little enjoyment, and much suffering and disappointment" (*Majjhima-nikāya* 22). The investigation of the world and worldly life bring about "disgust" (*nibbidā*) with them. In order to cultivate such disgust and counter lust, some suttas spare no detail in describing the unattractive aspects of the body: it oozes secretions from various orifices, is full of foul fluids, slimy organs, bones, and tendons; soon it will decay and become food for jackals, worms, and birds. Yet, people think it is beautiful; therefore, the monk is instructed to contemplate the body's foulness and impermanence, thereby becoming disenchanted by it (e.g., *Aṅguttara-nikāya* 9.15, *Saṃyutta-nikāya* 1.11).

It is important to note in light of all this that characterizing Buddhism as a whole as "pessimistic" or "life-negating," as did many nineteenth-century European writers, is misleading. Pāli Buddhism is in no way thoroughly world-negating: there is no shortage of representations of the Buddha giving advice on worldly matters and ascribing value to ordinary happiness within the world. The tradition develops positions on family life, work, governing, and other worldly affairs. It very early develops proximate concerns regarding ordinary life, many of which are implicitly life-affirming. But its more remote goal of achieving nirvana and transcending embodied life, beyond rebirth and temporality itself, have always formed at least the symbolic center of the tradition and the long-term (i.e., multiple-lifetime) goal of practitioners.[11] There is little in early Buddhist literature, therefore, that suggests the celebratory implications of the contemporary articulation of interdependence.

Early Indian Buddhist attitudes toward the natural world and wilderness also cannot account for the reverence for nature associated with interdependence today. The attitude toward the natural world and wilderness is ambivalent in the Pāli canon. Some passages suggest that the best place to practice the dharma is in quiet natural settings, and others even celebrate the beauty of the natural world. In the *Theragāthā*, for instance, Kassapa extols the joys of living and practicing in the wilderness, where "these rocky crags do please me so" (*Theragāthā* 1062–1071). Yet, while early followers of the Buddha were ascetics who left the burgeoning cities of the time for the relative solitude of the forest, there is little indication that it was primarily to appreciate the beauties of nature. In fact, some Indian Buddhist literature suggests that the forest was considered a place of fear and danger from animals, insects, and bandits.[12] More importantly, there is no sense in the Pāli literature that nature is sacred or that the feeling of merging with the natural world is synonymous with or even conducive to awakening.

There are, however, more general values that feed into the contemporary conception of interdependence and its ethical implications. Pāli literature emphasizes a universal moral imperative to preserve the lives and well-being of all sentient beings and to practice unselfish acts for the widest possible circle of living things, including animals and even insects. Loving-kindness (*mettā*) meditations in a number of early suttas and commentaries are designed to train the mind to cul-

tivate this compassion and loving-kindness towards all beings. This universal ethic does not depend on any idea of the dense interconnectedness of beings such that the actions of one reverberate throughout the cosmos to affect all but rather on the moral law of karma, the high value placed on compassion, and the fact that rebirth in various orders of beings provides a continuity between humans and animals—they could be one's own relatives and friends from the past. While this moral imperative encourages empathetic identification with all sentient beings, this does not imply expanding the subjective sense of *selfhood* to include other beings—any selfhood, limited or encompassing, is ultimately rejected in this early literature.

The early concept of dependent origination, therefore, cannot fully account for the contemporary concept of Buddhist interdependence and its implications. In some ways the early view appears, in fact, quite contrary to the contemporary one. It depicts the interdependent chain of causes and condition as binding one to a world of suffering. Although it emphasizes ethical concern for all sentient beings, it does not advocate the expansion of self-identity to include all things and beings. The ultimate goal, moreover, is not identification with the interdependent network of causality but transcendence of it.

Interdependence and Interpenetration in the Mahāyāna

Emptiness and Dependent Origination

A number of South Asian Mahāyāna texts, however, introduced ways of thinking about dependent origination that allowed for a tilt toward a more affirmative view of the phenomenal world, and these have proven to be important sources for modern articulations of interdependence. They include the ideal of the bodhisattva who remains in samsara until all beings are saved, as well as new conceptions of the goal of the path as buddhahood within the world rather than a wholly transcendent nirvana. These are prominent themes, for example, in the highly influential *Lotus* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*) and the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) *Sutras.*

Another important source for rethinking the valuation of dependent origination is Nāgārjuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*), one of the most influential texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As is well known, the basic thrust of the text is a development of the idea that all things lack, or are empty (*śūnya*) of, inherent self-existence (*svabhāva*)—a fixed, substantial, independent, and

permanent nature. They are instead constituted by a multiplicity of causes and conditions. In asserting that both samsara and nirvana are empty of inherent self-existence, Nāgārjuna declares that there is "not the slightest difference between the two" (*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* 25:19–20). Since all things lack inherent self-existence, any conceptual construction, including even the difference between samsara and nirvana, is merely a conventional truth (*saṃvṛtti-satya*). Nāgārjuna also identifies emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the ultimate truth of this lack of inherent self-existence of things, with dependent origination: "That which is dependent origination is emptiness. It is a convenient designation, and is itself the middle way" (*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* 24:18). This suggests that samsara be viewed not as something inherently binding—for, lacking inherent self-existence it cannot be *inherently* anything. Rather samsara, since it is itself empty, is from the highest level of understanding just like nirvana. As a Perfection of Wisdom text puts it, all *dharmas* are "limitless" and "boundless" (*ananta* and *aparyanta*).[13] That is, if we "see" all of the elements of existence (*dharmas*) that constitute dependent origination correctly, we see them as empty and therefore of the nature of awakening itself. I have argued elsewhere that this reconfigures the relationship between nirvana and samsara, the unconditioned and the conditioned, presented in the Pāli literature.[14] Rather than attempting to attain the unconditioned (nirvana) and reject the conditioned (samsara), Nāgārjuna and the Perfection of Wisdom literature suggest that what is important is stopping the conceptual reification of any *dharma* at all, thus seeing all of them as empty. Apprehending the true empty nature of the *dharmas* that constitute dependent origination, therefore, can be the occasion for liberation, for their nature is ultimately the same as that of nirvana itself.

Seeing dependent origination, therefore, constitutes awakening. This is not a new idea: Pāli suttas claim that on the night of his awakening Śākyamuni Buddha "saw" dependent origination, beholding the causes and conditions that produce both suffering and awakening. Through this sweeping vision of all causes and conditions, he was able to enact his own liberation (*Udāna* 1.3). There is a subtle difference, however, between the emerging Mahāyāna understanding of "seeing" dependent origination and that of the Pāli traditions. The biographies of the Buddha present him as seeing dependent origination first in the specific case of the trajectory of his own karma extending back into the infinite past. He therefore apprehends all of the causes and conditions

that have brought him to the brink of awakening. This vision then expands to encompass the causes and conditions of all sentient beings and the karmic trajectories by which they have come to be what they are. This gives the Buddha a thorough understanding of the entire process of dependent origination, i.e., the factors that give rise to dissatisfaction as well as the path by which to undo those factors. The seeing of dependent origination, therefore, is not in itself liberative; again, it is not that he becomes one with the world, merging with the infinite web of existence—in fact, he is "disjoined" from the world (*Itivuttaka* 112). Seeing dependent origination, according to Pāli sources, allowed the Buddha to discern the path to ending his entanglement with dependent origination. The vision was a kind of map or instruction manual for reversing the causes and conditions for this entanglement (see, for example, *Udāna* 1.3).

It is possible to read Nāgārjuna, however, as abandoning this interpretation of "seeing dependent origination" as a map in favor of simply seeing any dharma in its emptiness as sufficient for apprehending the highest truth. Seeing the emptiness of all *dharmas* renders one liberated in this world. On this interpretation, revulsion for dependent origination is no better than clinging to it; the important thing is seeing into its true nature rather than transcending it altogether.

The Visionary Cosmos

The reading of Nāgārjuna given above is supported by quite a few Mahāyāna sutras that re-interpret the ultimate goal of Buddhism from transcending the conditioned phenomenal world (samsara) to various conceptions of awakened life in the midst of the world. Subsequently tendencies emerge toward a view of this "seeing" of dependent origination as a kind of vision of the cosmos that is itself liberative, aside from any "instructive" elements showing the causes and conditions of both bondage and liberation. There are two ways of understanding this. One is the Nāgārjunian insight that all things are empty of inherent self-existence which, having freed one from the illusion of inherent self-existence, constitutes liberation itself. Another way of interpreting this "seeing" is as a kind of cosmic vision. In the more visionary genre of Mahāyāna literature, seeing the Buddha, or having a vision of the cosmos as it is seen by the Buddha, can itself constitute liberation, or at least great progress towards it.

The *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* epitomizes this visionary tradition and is also one of the most important sources for the contemporary interpretation of interdependence. Here, especially in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* section,[15] the idea of emptiness is transposed into visual imagery in which each individual thing and all things in the universe interpenetrate and yet retain their distinctiveness. The fact that all individual things in some sense contain or reflect all others corresponds to Nāgārjuna's "truth in the highest sense" (*paramārtha-satya*), the emptiness of inherent self-existence—everything is constituted by other things. The fact that things, despite this, maintain their individual distinctiveness corresponds to the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtti-satya*). This is symbolized in the Chinese Huayan school, which takes the *Avataṃsaka* (Ch. *Huayan*) as its main text, by the jeweled net of Indra, an immense net with multifaceted jewels at each juncture, each of which both reflects and is reflected by all of the others. This powerful image has become a standard symbol for the interdependence in our contemporary sense, and the Perfection of Wisdom literature and the *Avataṃsaka* are the sources for Thich Nhat Hanh's idea of "interbeing"—recall the illustration of how the sheet of paper contains all things.

The *Avataṃsaka* also contains numerous visionary episodes culminating in one in which the hero, Sudhana, has a vision of the entire cosmos within the body of the Buddha Mahāvairocana. This vision, in which Sudhana becomes one with Mahāvairocana, enacting in a moment all of his eons of wondrous deeds as a bodhisattva, reveals the world as a resplendent, radically interpenetrating cosmos in which the ordinary categories of time and space are collapsed. Here we have an example of a motif important to the modern articulation of interdependence: the identification of a person with a being who is the universe itself or with the underlying reality of things. Moreover the world into which Sudhana merges is not permeated with foulness and suffering but shot through with countless buddhas and bodhisattvas, some in resplendent garb, some in the guise of fishermen, children, and all manner of seemingly ordinary people, some in the pores of a buddha's skin and in the land itself. It is a transfigured world of magic and wonder, quite distant it would seem from binding chains of dependent origination in the Pāli literature. We have, therefore, three more ingredients of the contemporary conception of interdependence: the identification of the individual with the cosmos or a cosmic being; the

radical interpenetration and inter-reflectivity of all things; and a more affirmative, enchanted view of the world of phenomena.[16]

Whether presented as an analytic insight into the nature of all things as empty or as a visionary revelation, some South Asian Mahāyāna texts mark a rethinking of the significance of dependent origination and the phenomenal world. Seeing dependent origination in these texts entails seeing all things as empty of inherent self-existence, an act that itself constitutes awakening. This is then developed into a conception of a liberative vision of the totality and of the world as the manifestation of a cosmic reality—Vairocana, *dharmakāya*, or buddha-nature: the hidden buddhahood or buddha-potential of all things. While the ideas of the emptiness of all phenomena, liberation within the world, the interpenetration of all phenomena, and identification of the individual with a cosmic reality all provide important resources for the contemporary conception of interdependence, it is not until they are transformed in East Asia that these become associated with reverence for the natural world.

Nature and Buddha-Nature in East Asia

When Buddhists came to China, they encountered views of the natural world quite alien to those of South Asia. Chinese literature shows little of the distaste for embodiment and everyday life found in Indian ascetic traditions. By the time Buddhism was becoming established in China, there was an indigenous literature of reverence for mountains, rivers, and uncultivated forests, as well as the concept an underlying force, the Dao, that coursed through humanity and the natural world. Lewis Lancaster suggests one factor in the divergent orientations had to do with the fact that India was at the time a large forest with islands of urban centers, while China was mostly deforested with islands of mountain forest. It is not, therefore, that the Chinese had a uniformly positive valuation of uncultivated wilderness; rather, some intellectuals and sages began to appreciate the remnants of wilderness in part because it was disappearing, giving way to cities and cultivated fields.[17]

Nevertheless, the sages' views of nature created conditions for a revaluation of the phenomenal world within Buddhist traditions. We have mentioned that some Indic Mahāyāna traditions characterize awakening as identification with this larger reality of Buddha nature, or what is sometimes called the "womb" or "matrix" of the buddha (*tathāgata-gārbha*). In contrast to the earlier emphasis on no-self

(*anātman*), texts such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* affirm a "great self" hidden in all people. The Buddha becomes a transcendent and eternal cosmic being with which the individual is ultimately identical. In China, buddha-nature is mapped more explicitly onto the natural world, and the natural world is re-envisioned as both symbol and manifestation of this cosmic reality rather than a continuing cycle of dissatisfaction to be transcended. Some Chinese Buddhist thinkers contended that all beings, even grasses, rocks, and rivers, contained buddha-nature. Such ideas suggest a new relationship emerging within the Buddhist tradition between humanity and nature, one of mutuality and harmony rather than ambivalence and suspicion.

A number of the philosophical writings of East Asian schools of Buddhism support both a more positive view of the conditioned, dependently originated world and the idea of awakening as identification with this larger cosmos. Fazang, the most prominent thinker of the Huayan school, developed the implications of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* in ways that essentially overturn the Pāli conception of dependent origination and the distinction between the conditioned and the unconditioned. For Fazang, since all entities interpenetrate each other, the distinction between samsara and nirvana ultimately breaks down in a more radical way than with Nāgārjuna. The universe is the body and mind of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana, which pervades and sacralizes all things equally. There is no need to escape from the process of dependent origination, only to see it aright as the marvelous manifestation of the cosmic Buddha. As with most Chinese Buddhist thinkers, Fazang rejects the idea of transcending the realm of the conditioned and instead suggests attunement to the world and seeing it as the wonder that it is. It is not surprising that some modern ideas of Buddhist interdependence draw heavily from this school.[18]

The work of famous East Asian Buddhist poets, such as China's Hanshan and Japan's Bashō, combine in unprecedented ways Buddhist teachings with a keen appreciation of the objects and processes of the natural world. In Hanshan's poems, Cold Mountain—his alpine home as well as the name he took for himself—is a symbol of awakening, and the abundant images of clouds, towering mountains, and wind-blown trees are all fashioned into metaphors of the path to awakening. Yet Hanshan has more than a merely metaphorical interest in nature and clearly revels in the beauty of his natural surroundings. It is no wonder that the contemporary American Buddhist poet, Gary Snyder, also a

reverent disciple of the natural world, would translate many of Hanshan's poems about freely wandering in wilderness, seeing traces of buddha-nature in the crags and streams, and spurning affluence and reputation.

> In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place—
> Bird-paths, but no trails for men.
> What's beyond the yard?
> White clouds clinging to vague rocks.
> Now I've lived here—how many years—
> Again and again, spring and winter pass.
> Go tell families with silverware and cars
> "What's the use of all that noise and money?"[19]

The last lines are Snyder's obvious smuggling of Hanshan's spirit into the modern world, playfully rendering what is more precisely translated, "I send this message to families of wealth/An empty name will do you no good."[20] The intent in both versions is clear: to sketch the contrast between civilization, with its demands for money and reputation, and the unencumbered sacredness of the wilderness. As we will see, this contrast is easily translated into nineteenth- and twentieth-century American sensibilities, and the mingling of Chinese and American versions of this opposition will be highly productive for modern Buddhism.

Buddhistic attention to the natural world continued and developed in Japan as well. Saigyō, the twelfth-century Japanese Buddhist thinker and poet, reflected on the natural world as a locus for awakening, partly in view of the fact that plants were conceived as having buddha-nature. Encounters with the vast variety of sentient and even non-sentient beings could be occasions for perceiving this hidden, sacred reality within all things.[21] Dōgen, the prolific thirteenth-century founder of the Sōtō school of Zen, likewise discussed the non-duality of humanity and nature in a number of his writings. In "Mountains and Rivers Sūtra," which Snyder has interpreted in an ecological vein, Dōgen puts the matter vividly: "The mountains and rivers of this moment are the actualization of the way of the ancient Buddhas. Each, abiding in its own phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the eon of emptiness, they are alive at this moment. Because they have been the self since before form arose, they are liberated and realized."[22]

A brief passage from Dōgen has also become a standard citation for modern Buddhist expressions of the widening sense of selfhood that encompasses all beings: "We study the self to forget the self. When you forget the self you become one with the ten thousand things."[23] The verse in a stroke erases what for many Buddhists are the "Māras" of the present age: the erroneous belief in the isolated Cartesian ego, the mechanistic view of the natural world, and the disenchantment and desacralization of the world with its accompanying materialism, over-consumption, and environmental degradation. But in order for thinkers such as Dōgen to be called forth from their own time to speak to such issues, the ground had to be prepared by a variety of Western ideas and practices. The various pictures of dependent origination, samsara, and the natural world that emerge from South and East Asian canonical texts do not themselves provide sufficient material to account for the ways in which the concept of Buddhist interdependence has developed in recent decades. There exists a parallel genealogy of this concept that does not join the one we have just discussed until well into the twentieth century. It is to this lineage that we now turn.

WESTERN SOURCES OF BUDDHIST INTERDEPENDENCE

Between Rationalism and Romanticism

In order for the Buddhist conception of interdependence to attain the significance it has today, it had to acquire ingredients from a variety of sources and situate itself within the broad tensions between rationalist and Romantic orientations. The Western lines of influence that would feed the contemporary conception can be traced back to the eighteenth century. The modern age in Europe, going back as far the Deists, produced a number of philosophies depicting the universe as a vast "interlocking order"—to use Charles Taylor's phrase—with beings of various natures and purposes organically connected and unified into a total system.[24] It is a view of a cosmos in which all the various functions and purposes of individual things work together in a harmonious order for the ultimate good of all. This view affirms the goodness of nature and asserts that human beings must act in accordance with it. We find an early articulation in Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*, where he describes nature as an interconnected whole pervaded by one spirit:

...Look round our world; behold the chain of love
Combining all below and all above.

See plastic Nature working to this end,
The single atoms each to other tend,
Attract, attracted to, the next in place,
Form'd and impell'd its neighbour to embrace.
See matter next, with various life endued,
Press to one centre still, the gen'ral good;
See dying vegetables life sustain,
See life dissolving vegetate again.
All forms that perish other forms supply
(By turns we catch the vital breath, and die),
Like bubbles on the sea of Matter borne,
They rise, they break, and to that sea return.
Nothing is foreign; parts relate to whole;
One all-extending, all-preserving, soul
Connects each being, greatest with the least;
Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast;
All serv'd all serving: nothing stands alone;
The chain holds on, and where it ends unknown.[25]

In the Romantic tradition, the German Idealists also developed various iterations of the organic wholeness of nature and our inseparability from it, as well as conceptions of the Absolute as nature itself, endowed with subjectivity and coming to individual consciousness in human beings. They offered a picture of the relationship between humanity and nature characterized by an ego that was separated from nature and longed to return to the primordial unity with the larger whole that connects everyone and everything. According to early nineteenth-century German Idealist philosopher Friedrich W. J. Schelling, for example, objects are not independent of the subject, though the usual immersion of the ego in objects blinds the subject to their primordial intertwining. Moreover, because subject and object are not ontologically separate, human beings can come to know nature in a unified sense, not through empirical judgments but through an "inner love and familiarity of your own mind with nature's liveliness…[and] a quiet, deep-reaching composure of the mind."[26] It is through what he calls "intellectual intuition" that the subject recognizes its own ultimate identity with objects. Restoring this lost communion between the self and the world is what constitutes true happiness and overcomes the "Fall," which is the arising of opposition and differentiation out of the primordial unity of the spirit. All human beings are ultimately one, he says, though on the empirical level they appear as many. The infinite absolute, however, is ineffable and beyond all distinctions.

English Romantics maintained that nature could be more pro-foundly accessed through feeling and internal impulse than the dis-secting blade of rational analysis. We have seen already that this was connected to an anti-mechanistic tendency, one that critiqued the Newtonian cosmology and Cartesian dualism, as well as the exclusive epistemological reliance on instrumental reason. They insisted that the dominance of instrumental rationality, Newtonian mechanistic cosmology, and Cartesian dualism fragments the wholeness of nature, cutting humanity off from its vital force. Coleridge, for example, prais-es the "intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves, as one with the whole," while characterizing as "mere understanding" the perception that occurs when "we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life."[27] Coleridge suggested the metaphor of God as a poet rather than a watchmaker and the universe as a system of relationships in which each thing has its own particular life, yet is also part of the all-encompassing life: "one omnipresent Mind/Omnific. His most holy name is LOVE."[28] Wordsworth's celebrated "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" offers the quintessential articula-tion of the Romantic view of nature as a living force:

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
> Of something deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man –
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.[29]

This sense of the wholeness of life, its organic unity and inter-relat-edness, was for the Romantics also a powerful source of the sublime, a feeling awe and reverence.

All of these themes work their way into modernist articulations of Buddhism. The idea of the separate ego that finds its way back to wholeness in expanding its boundaries to identify with the vast inter-related cosmos and all its inhabitants, giving up its separate, egocen-tric existence is clearly a key conception in the contemporary under-standing of Buddhism, especially in the West. Moreover, the sense of an animate universe, of a life-force flowing through all things offer-

ing an inner access to the spiritual essence of the whole, appears in various ways in modern and contemporary Buddhism. Clearly there are indigenous Buddhist sources for similar ideas, which I have just identified—*tathāgata-gārbha*, the identification of the individual with the cosmic Buddha, dependent origination, and the interpenetration of phenomena; however, the way they are taken up and embodied in the conception of interdependence and its implications is a hybrid process that draws upon a Western lineage extending back to the Deists and Romantics.

One of the ways in which Buddhist ideas were appropriated in a modern, Western context was to augment the Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism and its descendents. It is important here to identify a few key themes that Romantics and post-Romantics were struggling against in order to understand where Buddhism came into the picture. Descartes and Bacon are often identified as the starting point for the desacralized view of nature, and authors discussing Buddhist interdependence today often evoke Cartesian dualism as the quintessential orientation against which this conception contends. One of the key consequences of Descartes' re-envisioning of the self as "unextended substance" distinct from the extended substances (material things) is the view of the world as a mechanism or machine and the concomitant emergence of an attitude of disengagement toward and objectification of the "not-I." The world as a machine could not be understood as the embodiment of a meaningful order with spiritual and moral ramifications, as it was for the ancients. All meaning was now located in the mind itself and its private representations of external objects. This idea marks an important phase of the "disenchantment" of the world. Because all meaning now is "in" the mind, that which is "outside" the mind is disinvested of intrinsic meaning or value. Nature is neutralized and the mind is the exclusive locus of thought and value. This is quite different from the view of things as having meaning and value in and of themselves, in effect, ontologically residing in them.[30] Here the mind's primary orientation toward the world is that of instrumental control. Knowledge of the physical world is, in Descartes' words, "very useful in life," and by knowing the various principles by which nature operates "we can...employ [objects of nature] in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature."[31] Rational understanding of nature—devel-

oping clear and distinct ideas of its many facets—is inseparable from mastering nature as a collection of objects to be used for our purposes.

To be fair, the founders of this instrumentalist orientation did not conceive of it as inviting the plundering of the natural world in hedonistic pursuit of pleasure and power, nor could they have imagined the ramifications of this conceptual neutralization of nature when later it was combined with innumerable other social and material factors that have contributed to the current ecological crisis. It is too simplistic to attribute to Cartesian dualism the tremendous causal power that some give it, drawing a nearly direct line from Descartes' *Meditations* to Chernobyl. Still we can see this orientation toward the mind and natural world as a part of—rather than the cause of—the long, complex processes that have contributed to the commodification of natural resources and the degradation of the natural world. These processes ushered in a hegemony of instrumental reason in which the things of the world are objectified in ways that would serve as the rationale for the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources.

In attempting to stem this exploitation, contemporary societies across the globe have searched for practical solutions but also for conceptual and religious resources for re-envisioning and re-spiritualizing nature. It is in part this effort that provoked late-modern Buddhists—as well as other historical religions and new religious movements—to attempt to revivify a sense of the intrinsic worth and spiritual significance to nature, to resacralize and revalorize the natural world, bridging the Cartesian split between the mind and the material.

Transcendentalism and the Re-enchantment of the World

We have seen that some elements of Asian Buddhism—particularly certain strains of East Asian traditions—had already developed rationales for the intrinsic religious value of the natural world. As with a number of important developments in Buddhist modernism, we find that the particular way this reverence for nature was taken up in the West was shaped by Transcendentalists and their kindred spirits. It is they who brought Romantic metaphysics into an American framework that provided the vocabulary for the translation of Buddhism into Western categories. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America also inaugurated new ways of valuing the natural world that would later contribute to the development of the contemporary concept of

Buddhist interdependence, especially with regard to its implications for environmental valuation and protection.

The period of the Transcendentalists saw a revolution in ways of understanding the natural. Departing from the earlier Puritan sense of nature as a place of danger, evil, testing, and purification, they offered a full-throated affirmation of the sacredness of the natural world. This affirmation was also tinged with philosophical Idealism—like their predecessors, the German Romantics, some American Transcendentalists saw the natural world not just as a part of God's creation but as a part of God himself. This was one factor in the American articulation of the idea that undeveloped wilderness had an intrinsic, not just utilitarian, value. Sometimes connected to ideologies of American nationalism and sometimes suspicious of them, the romance of the wilderness became a prominent feature of American literature of this time. The sense of nature as a place of spiritual repose and rejuvenation, of awe and wonder became widespread.[32]

In his seminal work, *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson repeatedly extols the serene contemplation of landscape as not only spiritually uplifting but also noetic, offering the possibility of comprehending the "tranquil sense of unity" in the vast diversity of things. Visible nature is the outer edge of the manifestation of spirit, and the contemplation that perceives the affinities and ultimate unity in all of the greatly variegated phenomena "has access to the entire mind of the Creator...."[33] Such a vision of underlying connection, affiliation, and unity are possible mainly through the solitary contemplation of things away from the bustle of human activity. He famously describes the disembodied joy he experiences in the woods: "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God."[34] Emerson contrasts this mode of relatively passive, unitive envisioning of things to "Empirical science," which "is apt to cloud the sight, and by way of the very knowledge of functions and processes to bereave the student of the manly contemplation of the whole. The savant becomes unpoetic."[35] While nature indeed calls to the scientist, many "patient naturalists" miss the mark by "freez[ing] their subject under the wintry light of the understanding."[36]

The famous naturalist John Muir, a pivotal figure in the American conception of wilderness and its spiritual value, as well as the devel-

opment of the ethic of preservation, embodied this new perception of nature. Muir's writings brought to an apotheosis the Transcendentalist reverence for wilderness as a place of wonder and sacredness, as well as renewal and refuge from the harsh conditions of modernity. His articulation of the significance of the natural became ensconced in American consciousness and remains quite palpable today. Having studied both Emerson and Thoreau, Muir imbibed the vitalistic and holistic tendencies that they in turn had appropriated from the Romantics: nature, he declared, was "one soul" and wilderness a "unity in interrelation" that is "alive and familiar."[37] "When we try to pick out anything by itself," he declared, "we find it hitched to everything in the universe."[38] Re-tuning Christian language to the key of the earthy paradise of the mountains, forests, and lakes, Muir wrote of nature itself as an incarnation of divinity, its individual things "portions of God."[39] Communing with nature was a kind of earthly sacrament in which "you lose consciousness of your own separate existence: you blend with the landscape, and become part and parcel of nature"[40] There was a contemplative element to Muir's appreciations as well; both he and Thoreau suggested that a disciplined purification of the body and senses was necessary in order to properly access nature and allow its holiness to present itself. Muir also complemented his rapturous contemplations of nature with the development of an activist preservationist ethic, inspiring the development of the national park at Yosemite and founding the Sierra Club.[41] Muir fiercely criticized unrestrained commercialism as dangerous not only to the natural world but to the soul: "These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar."[42] Muir knew little of Buddhism, but his sensibilities have undeniably been absorbed into late twentieth-century ecological interpretations of Buddhism in the hands of its most important expositors. A number of interpreters of the contemporary view of Buddhist interdependence regularly reference his emphasis on the direct experience and reverence of the nature, as well as his biocentric view of a deeply interconnected world, his rejection of mechanistic conceptions, and his contempt for modern commercialism and materialism.

Elements of this American reverence for nature went hand-in-hand with a new valuation of solitude, especially solitude in the woods and the feelings of connection to nature that it could bring. Thoreau

is of course the paradigmatic example, though he was just the most visible of those who placed a high spiritual value on the solitary contemplations of nature. The writings of a lesser-known Transcendentalist, William Rounseville Alger, show that this emphasis on solitude and nature was a response to an increasing crowdedness of cities and the stress of modern bureaucratic and industrial work. Tapping into a wider anxiety among nineteenth-century progressives about urban life—its vice and materialism, its over-crowdedness alongside its alienation and isolation, as well as its masses of threatening immigrants—Alger saw the wilderness as a wholesome spiritual refuge. Praising solitude, he declared that society is "full of multiplicity and change, is in every way finite, wasting its force in incessant throbs; solitude, an unfaltering unity, is allied to the infinite."[43] Modern society for Alger was a cauldron of narcissism, anxiety, and greed, while solitude was the antidote for the "overtaxed...weary, uneasy, and ambitious" and to a market-driven world that thrived on competition and ego-assertion.[44] Alger embodies a trend toward inwardness and solitude as a response to the modern anxieties of the disenchanted world, and the increasing valuation of nature and connection to wilderness was a part of this response.

The infusion of this nineteenth-century combination of disenchantment, love of solitude, and reverence for nature into the interpretation of Buddhism comes at first through the dichotomous representations of East and West in currency at the time. It is no coincidence that Alger published, in addition to *The Solitudes of Nature and of Man* (in which he lists the Buddha as an example of the solitary life), a volume entitled *The Poetry of the East*, in which he reiterates the familiar representation of the spiritual, contemplative "East" as a necessary balance to the materialist, competitive, money-driven "West."[45] Here we see the familiar trope of Asia portrayed as the Other of that which is disturbing about modernity in the West. It comes to be associated with solitude, asceticism, interiority, and most important for us here, nature. "The East" is a place that is still enchanted, populated by sages who have retired to the forest in search of spiritual wisdom offered by the natural world. Thoreau in fact drew parallels between his own retreat to Walden Pond and the asceticism of the "Hindoos."[46] Nature, solitude, and the East were all construed as the antithesis of emerging forms of disenchanted modernity.

The attribution of religious significance to the natural world, the emphasis on solitary contemplation of nature, and the idea that such contemplation is a remedy for the commercialized, disenchanted, competitive modern world all provided essential ingredients for the interpretation of Buddhism in the West, particularly in North America. The explicit connection made in the Transcendentalist period between nature and what many considered a universal mystical experience provided a hermeneutic context in which figures like Hanshan, Bashō, and Dōgen would later be understood. The Transcendentalist category of "Universal Religion"—which was believed to transcend the bounds of time and place and was constituted by personal experience rather than dogma, ritual, and the specificities of culture—provided a vast arena into which apologists could assimilate Buddhist ascetic, hermitic, and meditative traditions, along with the East Asian reverence for nature, to this American mode of understanding. Not only did these factors influence how Westerners understood Buddhism, they impacted the shape that Buddhism would take in the modern world, in Asia as well as the West. These influences allowed a sketch of Buddhist attitudes toward the natural world to be cross-hatched with American reverence for wilderness, as well as with the social and political concerns of the time.

Interdependence, Systems Theory, and EcoBuddhism

The Romantic-Transcendentalist line of thinking supplied a ready array of motifs with which the Buddhist concept of dependent origination, its assertions of non-dualism, its universalist ethics, and its East Asian affinities with the natural world would be hybridized and transposed into the key of modern discourse. These themes would not, however, be sufficient to produce the synthesis that has emerged in the contemporary conception of interdependence. The final elements would be the infusion of recent theoretical approaches in the social and physical sciences, along with contemporary ecological thought. The synthesis of all of these elements did not in fact take place in a systematic way until quite recently.

If there is an overarching theoretical paradigm representing this development, it is *systems theory*, a broad-ranging, multidisciplinary theoretical approach that focuses on various kinds of systems—economic, biological, physiological, psychological, and social—that form wholes having qualities different than their constituent parts. It is a

widely applicable theory that can in principle address any network of relationships in which the members act as a whole and create emergent properties that cannot be accounted for by analysis of the parts in isolation. One of the figures most influential to the contemporary Buddhist concept of interdependence is Gregory Bateson (1904–1980), who argued that the mind was in many respects similar to other kinds of living, dynamic systems like cells, rainforests, and communities. Bateson argued against seeing minds as either separate from their physiological substratum or as isolated from other minds. The basic unit, for Bateson, is not the individual entity but the system of which entities are a part. Individuals must be understood as organisms in symbiotic relationships with their environments.[47]

Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer, was the first to explicitly interpret Buddhist dependent origination in terms of systems theory. Drawing upon systems theory seasoned by Spinozistic and Buddhist metaphysics, Naess founded the deep ecology movement, which, in his words, rejects the "man-in-environment image in favor of the relational, total-field image" and sees "organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations."[48] Deep ecology asserts a symbiotic relationship between the individual and environment in which each co-constitutes the other reciprocally. Individuals are seen as open-ended nodes in larger networks of activity rather than bounded, atomistic entities. This conception of the relationship between the self and the wider network of humans, animals, and plants also finds a deep kinship with James Lovelock's famous Gaia hypothesis. Often cited by deep ecologists and ecologically-minded Buddhists, this hypothesis proposes that the biosphere is a self-regulating organism. Naess and Lovelock are also kin to some extent with process philosophy/theology, which began with Alfred North Whitehead and which has been an important force in the contemporary interpretation of Buddhist dependent origination and emptiness.[49]

Popular accounts of recent scientific theories have also made a significant contribution. In the last three decades of the twentieth century, a number of popular books attempted to draw explicit parallels between recent scientific developments and Buddhism, as well as other Asian religions. Fritjof Capra, in his 1976 best-selling *The Tao of Physics*, asserted correlations between recent findings in quantum physics and ideas of the "universal interwovenness" of self and other in Buddhism and other forms of "Eastern mysticism." Such concep-

tions, he claimed, were similar to ideas in quantum physics of the "universe as an interconnected web of physical and mental relations whose parts are defined only through their connections to the whole."[50] His later work, including a book significantly entitled *The Web of Life*, criticizes Cartesian mechanistic and "linear" thinking, associating it with a host of contemporary evils and urging that not only quantum mechanics but also complexity theory and systems theory show the way to a more integrative, holistic approach that reveals underlying connections between biological, psychological, social, and ecological systems.[51] A voluminous literature has followed *The Tao of Physics* in exploring the putative parallels between Buddhism and various sciences. The value of such studies for understanding Buddhism has been debated by scientists and Buddhists alike in recent decades. Whatever their limitations, though, what is important here is that they have not only imbued dependent origination with the scent of scientific theory but have also influenced the reconfiguration of the concept itself in modern scientific terms.

Joanna Macy is as important as any contemporary author in assembling all of the components we have been discussing and forging them into the contemporary conception of interdependence. Macy explicitly articulates dependent origination in terms of systems theory and deep ecology, applying it to various social and ecological problems. Seeing these problems as manifestations of the "rampant, pathological individualism" that is a dominant feature of modern life, she takes it as a matter of urgency to show that the separate, isolated self is an illusion.[52] She hopes that the traditional way of viewing the self as a "skin-encapsulated ego" is being replaced by "wider constructs of self-identity and self-interest—by what you might call the ecological self or eco-self, co-extensive with the other beings and the life of our planet."[53] With Macy we come to the full articulation of the contemporary Buddhist-Western hybrid conception of interdependence:

> Contemporary science, and systems theory in particular, goes farther in challenging old assumptions about a distinct, separate, continuous self, by showing that there is no logical or scientific basis for construing one part of the experienced world as "me" and the rest as "other." That is so because as open, self-organizing systems, our very breathing, acting and thinking arise in interaction with our shared world through the currents of matter, energy, and information that move through us and sustain us. In the web of relationships that sus-

tain these activities there is no clear line demarcating a separate, continuous self.[54]

She then incorporates these claims into the doctrines of *anātman* and dependent origination:

> In much the same way as systems theory does, Buddhism undermines categorical distinctions between self and other and belies the concept of a continuous, self-existing entity. It then goes farther than systems theory in showing the pathogenic character of any reifications of the self. What the Buddha woke up to under the Bodhi tree was the paticca samuppada, the dependent co-arising of phenomena, in which you cannot isolate a separate, continuous self.[55]

Dependent origination is then turned into a mandate for an active—indeed activist—life, fully engaged in the world: "Far from the nihilism and escapism that is often imputed to the Buddhist path, this liberation, this awakening puts one *into* the world with a livelier, more caring sense of social engagement."[56] Such a view of the self, she asserts, "helps us recognize our imbeddedness in nature, overcomes our alienation from the rest of creation, and changes the way we can experience our self through an ever-widening process of identification" to the point where (quoting Naess) "the self [is] widened and deepened so that the protection of nature [is] felt and perceived as protection of our very selves."[57]

Macy not only sees the "ego-self" as an illusory product of the modern age, she sees it in terms of a universal process illustrated by a re-telling of a narrative that might seem surprising coming from a Buddhist: the Fall of Man. In the early stages of our species, she says, human beings lived in womb-like "primal intimacy" with trees, rocks, and plants. From this came "the fall out of the Garden of Eden," the emergence of self-consciousness, individuality, and free will, and thus began the "lonely and heroic journey of the ego." The "distanced and observing eye" brought about science and systems of governance based on individual rights. Thus enriched, we can now "turn and recognize what we have been all along...we are our world knowing itself.... We can come home again—and participate in our world in a richer, more responsible and poignantly beautiful way than before, in our infancy."[58] What is important to our tracing of the historical lineages of interdependence is not so much that Macy would draw upon a story from a tradition that she has rejected but rather that this re-imagining of the Genesis narrative is straight from the Romantics. Schelling

glossed the Fall of Man as a separation from primordial unity with the Absolute into individuated self-consciousness and the spiritual journey as a higher re-integration with it. Blake offers a similar view of the Fall: man lived in perfect unity and brotherhood until the original sin, which is none other than the descent into individual selfhood, and which entails fragmentation and alienation from other people and from nature. Redemption is the resurrection of humanity out of its solitary and dissatisfied state into unity—not the return to the oneness of humankind's infancy but a return that retains individuality while harmonizing with the whole.

Macy's recapitulation of this narrative suggests the importance to contemporary Buddhism in the West of the Weberian dynamics of disenchantment/re-enchantment of the world, which are here reconfigured into a universalized narrative. In addition to a Rousseauian longing for return to nature, community, and innocence, the implication is that the rationalizing, market-driven, differentiating processes of disenchanted modernity are a stage—the outer boundary—in the individuation and self-consciousness of humanity. We have now reached the juncture, the narrative suggests, where this individuation has become so self-destructive and fragmenting that it is suicidal, and now we must re-integrate, turning back toward our more primal, unitive relationship with the world. This formulation of Buddhist interdependence, therefore, is framed not just within the modern narrative of disenchantment but also within the wider Romantic narrative of the emergence and transcendence of self-consciousness, which is itself a re-configuration of the biblical narrative of the Fall of Man.[59]

Like Romanticism, this strain of late-modern Buddhism illustrated by the contemporary articulation of interdependence gravitates toward the large-scale questions that science asks while maintaining a suspicion of "reductive," as well as militarily or commercially driven, science. It continues the Romantics' scientific passion for discovering the "vital powers" that animate everything, as well as their critique of instrumental reason. It resists Cartesian dualism and its associated disinvesting of the world of inherent meaning and attempts to re-sacralize the world by envisioning it as co-extensive with human consciousness or animated by a universal consciousness. But it also very much a product of the late-modern world, drawing together a bricolage of resources, ancient and modern, to address current social and ecological issues. And its solution to all of them is to re-perceive and re-embrace

the world as an interconnected web of life rather than a collection of isolated egos within a neutral environment. Thus interdependence in this iteration assumes a significance nearly opposite to that of the early Pāli account. Far from a chain of causes and effects binding beings to rebirth in a world of suffering, today's interdependence implies a sacred matrix of mutual communality and co-participation, the extended body of all beings. Moreover, this shift in meaning and valuation comes not only from re-thinking of buddhahood in the Mahāyāna and the infusion of East Asian sensibilities into Buddhism but also from some of the fundamental dynamics of modernity.

IMPLICATIONS OF INTERDEPENDENCE

Re-envisioning Karma and Rebirth

The implications of the contemporary articulation of interdependence can sometimes be striking. Not only does the concept take on new political and ethical significance in the modern world, it also can significantly shift the meanings of associated Buddhist doctrines. Let us look at one example of how the modern re-interpretation of interdependence has important consequences for two of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism, karma and rebirth.

In classical portrayals of karma, nature responds to the individual's actions to produce circumstances resulting from those actions. Disease, floods, injury—or in contrast, a narrow escape from such things—may all be interpreted as the results (*phala*) of the individual's actions (*karma*). Variations on this view that nature responds directly to human action are pervasive in ancient and medieval worlds. Broadly construed, this understanding of the dialectic between humanity and nature is not limited to the Asian example of karmic consequences but also manifests itself in countless examples in literature, for instance, earthquakes in response to tremendous events (the Buddha's awakening, Jesus' death). While we may dismiss such things today as symbolic, we would miss something important about the lived understanding of the world among many ancients if we refused to see them as part of the way many people have actually understood their lives. The idea of random chance, while perhaps not unique to the modern period, is atypical in non-modern societies. Solar eclipses, thunderstorms, illnesses, and co-incidences *meant* things on a personal or communal level that they tend not to mean to those who subscribe to a scientific worldview. They were warnings, signs, or consequences.

The classical idea of karma is more a systematic regularization of such responses of nature to human action than a "natural law." The underlying idea is that there is a moral law intertwined with natural processes, one that shapes individuals' circumstances in direct response to their morally significant actions. There are indeed multiple causes and conditions that bring about particular fortunate or unfortunate circumstances in an individual's life; therefore not all experiences are the result of prior karma. Some experiences may be the result of particular physiologic conditions that were not karmic results of previous actions (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* 36.21). Karmic results, however, do directly shape a great deal of an individual's life. They determine the realm of life that one will be reborn in, whether one is born into high or low social standing, and whether one is an animal, human, or other order of life. And there are more specific correspondences between particular actions and characteristics a person acquires as a result. People who harm other creatures tend to be sickly in this or future lives, while those who do not are healthy. Those who are irritable tend to be ugly, while those who are not are handsome. Jealous people tend to be weak, while those free from jealousy are strong (*Majjhima-nikāya* 35). The early understanding of dependent origination was of a piece with this doctrine of karma in that it described not so much how natural phenomena in the world arise but rather how beings come to be born and reborn in various circumstances through their own karma.

The idea that the circumstances in one's life are primarily determined by one's past actions is obviously more difficult to accept today. The modern view of causality supposes that any event comes about through a multiplicity of causal trajectories that cannot be understood as governed primarily by an individual's morally significant actions. It may well be that a person's excessive drinking causes him to crash his car, and a modern Buddhist might use the language of karma to describe this. It is more difficult, however, to make a causal connection between the excessive drinking and the individual, say, getting hit by a bus after he has been sober for fifteen years. The traditional view of karma would have no trouble making this connection, while a modern scientific view would see the causal trajectory of the bus as unrelated to that of the man—until impact. He just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. To bridge the gap between these two views, Buddhist modernists have often referred to karma in terms compatible with modern ideas of causality: she is abrasive, therefore people tend

not to like her; he eats too much meat, therefore the heart attack was his karma. The Buddhist modernist, however, would not tend to think his physical ugliness is the direct result of his past irritability.

Some modern Buddhist thinkers appear largely to have abandoned traditional views of karma and rebirth in light of the contemporary transformation of the conception of interdependence. Thich Nhat Hanh, for example, offers surprising views of moral responsibility and rebirth in relation to "interbeing." Recall Nhat Hanh's formula for interbeing: any X is made wholly of non-X elements. In his discussion of the *Heart Sutra*, he uses an example of a prostitute in Manila to discuss interbeing. She is young, poor, and taken advantage of by many people. As a result she feels shameful and wretched. But if she were to look at her "whole situation" she would see that she is the way she is because others—those who created her poverty, those who sold her into prostitution, those who hire her, we who ignore the problem—have all contributed to making her that way. "No one among us has clean hands. No one can claim it is not our responsibility. The girl in Manila is that way because of the way we are. Looking into the life of that young prostitute, we see the non-prostitute people."[60] Now a response of compassion rather than condemnation of the prostitute would be wholly justified within traditional Buddhist ethical frameworks. Moreover, we can obviously see the empirical truth of Nhat Hanh's contention that her situation is brought about by multiple causes and conditions that go beyond her personal responsibility. In effect, he points out the *systemic* causes of her circumstance. Clearly his intention is to employ the doctrine of interbeing to encourage society to take responsibility for the plight of the disadvantaged, not to reformulate the doctrine of karma. (Nhat Hanh is, after all, one of the founders of engaged Buddhism and one of the world's most prominent Buddhist activists.) A more traditional Buddhist analysis, however, would eventually have to come around to ascribing ultimate responsibility to the prostitute herself, for the doctrine of karma must affirm that people's circumstances are ultimately the results of their own past actions, even if the vehicles of bringing those circumstances about might be the unmeritorious actions of others. Through the doctrine of interbeing, moral responsibility is de-centered from the solitary individual and spread throughout the entire social system. This is an important element of engaged Buddhism, which again emphasizes systemic, not just individual, causes of suffering.

Nhat Hanh also re-envisions other key doctrines in light of interbeing, like that of death and rebirth: "In our former lives, we were rocks, clouds, and trees.... This is not just Buddhist; it is scientific. We humans are a young species. We were plants, we were trees, and now we have become humans.... We are continually arising from Mother Earth, being nurtured by her, and then returning to her."[61] This account makes no mention of rebirth in the traditional Buddhist sense, and "former lives" here assume a metaphorical meaning. In discussing the "no birth and no death" doctrine of the *Heart Sutra*, he says:

> We cannot conceive of the birth of anything. There is only continuation.... Look back further and you will see that you not only exist in your father and mother, but you also exist in your grandparents and in your great grandparents.... I know in the past I have been a cloud, a river, and the air.... This is the history of life on earth. We have been gas, sunshine, water, fungi, and plants.... Nothing can be born and also nothing can die.[62]

Interbeing in this sense means that everything—humans, rocks, water—is dependent on non-human, non-rock, non-water elements. All of these elements combine into protean forms that then dissipate and become something else, and every being is just one of an infinite number of forms the universe takes in its endless manifestations, like waves on the water. Our true life, though, is that of the water—the living cosmos as a whole—not the waves, its transient forms. Death, therefore, is not to be feared, for all of the elements of which we are made will after our death continue to exist in other forms—trees, flowers, rocks, other people, etc. Again the "I" expands to include everything. Even though what we transform into may be dust, every dust speck reflects the whole cosmos and the cosmos is reflected in every dust speck. Here the traditional idea of the continuity of a karmically constituted life-trajectory from birth to death to rebirth is replaced by the dispersion of a being at death into the vast, inter-related cosmos to be "reborn" as any (and all) of the other forms while at the same time being one with the whole.

These ideas of the dispersion of karmic responsibility into the social system and the dispersion of the individual at death into all of the universe are significant innovations in Buddhist thought by one of the most influential contemporary Buddhists. They constitute a demythologization of karma in terms perfectly sensible to modern social analysis and a vision of "rebirth" made amenable to a scientific view of

the universe. More than just an interpolation of scientific perspectives, however, the latter also recalls nineteenth-century Romantic affinities with nature. William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), often considered a "proto-Transcendentalist," was a Massachusetts lawyer and poet reputed for his knowledge of science. His poem "Thanatopsis" is considered emblematic of the emerging nineteenth-century view of nature we have discussed. In it he gives a vivid portrayal of death as merging with the elements of the natural world, rejoining all who have gone before in a fusion of human, animal, plant, and rock.

> Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
> Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
> And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
> Thine individual being, shalt thou go
> To mix forever with the elements,
> To be a brother to the insensible rock
> And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
> Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
> Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.
>
> Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
> Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
> Couch more magnificent. . .

No notion of an individual afterlife is proffered, but rather a postmortem kinship with all of nature and with the living beings that have gone before. Therefore, he advises his reader:

> approach thy grave
> Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.[63]

Likewise, Nhat Hanh sees a mingling of entities in an all-encompassing life shared by all things; death, therefore, is simply the transformation of one manifestation of life into another. Again we hear echoes of Romanticism and Transcendentalism along with sketches of contemporary scientific understanding commingling with Buddhist conceptions to create new iterations of the dharma.

We should not assume that no Buddhist modernists maintain more traditional views of karma and rebirth—to the contrary, many do. Nevertheless, modernity opens a space for often radical re-interpretation to occur and for a wider continuum of hermeneutic options regarding key doctrines. Nhat Hanh's rethinking of karma and rebirth shows how the elaboration of one concept—interdependence—can exert a mag-

netic pull on others, reconfiguring the significance of a whole cluster of ideas and practices.

Is It Buddhist?

No doubt addressing issues of war and peace, environmental degradation, and the myriad social problems of our world is more urgent than the tracing of the history of an idea. Yet the intellectual historian may still ask to what extent Buddhist interdependence in its contemporary forms, with its infusion of Western ideas and practices and its sometimes radical re-interpretations of traditional doctrine, accords with those teachings found in the classic Buddhist texts. Some scholars have argued that the environmentalist strains of contemporary Buddhism with which our concept is especially associated are not ultimately compatible with traditional doctrine.[64] In particular, they assert that the idea of an artificially bounded ego that can, through meditation and cultivation of compassion, expand its boundaries to include a wider and wider sphere of entities, not only in its ethical scope but in its feeling of selfhood, has no precedent in traditional Buddhist sources. Of course, as we have seen, a number of Buddhist traditions offer the idea that a practitioner is to become identified with ultimate reality or with the cosmos as a whole. Some specifics about the contemporary representation of this identification, however, seem to be peculiar to the late modern conception of interdependence.

First is the idea that interdependence and this widening of the self is the ground for an ethical imperative. Buddhist ethics clearly mandate compassion for all sentient beings bound together in a chain of conditioned dependence. It is another question, however, whether dependent origination in pre-modern traditions is itself the basis for ethical behavior, particularly if the reason for ethical behavior is because the boundaries of self and other are ultimately artificial—hurting you is essentially hurting myself (and everything else), therefore I should not hurt you. In the 1968 film, *Requiem for a Faith* (Hartley Film Foundation), Huston Smith says of the Tibetan Buddhist position: "Separate selfhood is a fiction.... Our real identity is with Being as a whole, the scheme of things entire.... We become compassionate not from altruism which denies the self for the sake of others but from insight that sees and feels that one is the other."[65] Donald Lopez points out in response to Smith that the eighth-century Indian Buddhist scholar Śāntideva argues that one *must* in fact deny oneself for the sake of others.[66] Yet we

also find in East Asian thought, particularly in Huayan and Hauyan-influenced Buddhism, passages like this one by the Korean monk Gihwa (1376–1433): "*Humaneness* implies the interpenetration of heaven and earth and the myriad things into a single body, wherein there is no gap whatsoever. If you deeply embody this principle, then there cannot be a justification for inflicting harm on even the most insignificant of creatures."[67] Although there is no historical connection, it is a sentiment similar to some found in nineteenth-century American thought: "We find that we are all members of the one great body, and that no portion of the body can be harmed without all the other portions suffering thereby." While this line would be quite at home in contemporary Zen or engaged Buddhist writings, it comes from the leftist, spiritualist, and Transcendentalist-influenced Ralph Waldo Trine's 1897 best-seller, *In Tune with the Infinite*, who brought Emerson's pantheistic tendencies, New Thought, Christian social gospel teachings, and a hodge-podge of eclectic spiritualities of his day to bear not only on finding inner peace but also on serving his fellow men and women (as well as non-human creatures—he was active in the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).[68] His specific assertion of the rationale for ethics is clearly rooted in the Romantic-Transcendentalist cosmologies we have discussed, combined with neo-Vedāntic non-dualism. The ethical imperative of interdependence, as formulated today, likely came from a mingling of these sources with the Buddhist ideas we have discussed, and no doubt the Transcendentalist articulation of the "great body" prepared the way for the later assimilation of Huayan and Zen thought.

Second, there is debate on whether canonical texts refer to this wider identification of self and other as identification with the Earth or with the natural world per se. Mark Blum insists that there is no notion of "the expansion of self through a process of identification with the world" in traditional forms of Asian Buddhism. To the contrary, liberation is articulated in terms of a "rhetoric of nonidentification" with any form whatsoever, including those of nature. "Even Dōgen's statements about the self and object merging are not specific to merging with nature or natural objects but with any object of attention. The point, therefore, is one about the mind rather than about mountains and rivers."[69] There is room for debate here regarding interpretation of Dōgen. Certainly there is a dialectic in Zen thought between dis-identifying with constructed conceptions of things and re-identifying with a larger, all-encompassing unity, buddha-nature. Blum is right, however,

to question whether buddha-nature should be seen as the Earth or the natural world per se, despite the Chinese inclusion of grasses and rocks within the scope of buddha-nature. It is also important to note that the idea of identifying with an all-encompassing ultimate reality is simply not operative in certain forms of Indic Mahāyāna nor in any forms of Theravāda. In fact, one of its main sources is neo-Vedānta thought and Perennial philosophy, which have often been amalgamated with Buddhism in the modern period.

My point here is not to make claims about authenticity or inauthenticity but to recognize that, whatever its various components, there is something *new* in the contemporary articulation of interdependence, something emerging in response to the unique circumstances of the modern world and that attempts to answer questions that simply could not have arisen in the time of the Buddha, Nāgārjuna, or Dōgen. Let us re-ask the question then. Is the contemporary articulation of interdependence an unalloyed rendition of canonical and classical understandings? Harrison and Blum are correct in saying that they are not. It is something unique to this age—a hybrid construction that draws upon Asian and Western sources, synthesizing them into a novel conception. So one might be tempted to argue that it is "inauthentic." But this would be to grant a static, essentialized meaning to canonical texts, to the normative interpretation of one school or another, or to a particular moment in the history of Asian forms of Buddhism. The historian of religion, *qua* historian, should not recapitulate sectarian or even canonical rhetorics of authenticity. Thus to answer the question, "Is it Buddhist?" we must look not only at texts and our historical reconstructions of their meanings but at what Buddhists *do* with the texts. The reconfiguration of traditional doctrine and practice in response to novel historical circumstances is clearly the norm in the process of the development of religions. Texts and doctrines are never static but are repeatedly re-appropriated to struggle with changing situations. Certain themes fall away into irrelevance, others emerge as salient, and both are given new meanings constituted by their dialectical relationship with changing political, economic, social, and material realities, as well as other traditions. The text, then, is not a static reference point but a dynamic process whose meanings are always being reconstituted. This dynamic process of tradition-in-change establishes what Buddhism *is* empirically.

There are limits, of course. Texts have built-in boundaries for plausible interpretation: no informed person will ever try to argue that Buddhism espouses the doctrines that everything is permanent, that there is an individual and eternal soul, or that there are no causes and effects. Moreover, if novel interpretations of interdependence were only embraced by Californian Buddhists while all other Buddhists espoused traditional views, we might see it as a peripheral development insignificant to the main thrust of Buddhism in the modern world. But when leading Buddhist figures, along with a mass of laity and sympathizers, begin to embrace a reconfigured interpretation, practice, or idea, it should alert the scholar that an important reconstruction of doctrine is underway and the possibility of a new normativity is emerging. And if the most prominent Buddhists in the world seem to be embracing a reconception of interdependence, it would seem inevitably to be—or at least to be *becoming*—Buddhist.

Simply to dismiss the environmental and ethical discourse of Buddhist interdependence as an inadequate account of history, therefore, fails to take seriously the problem of modernity as it manifests in Buddhism and, for that matter, any historical religion. Although it inevitably draws upon historical sources, the starting point of this discourse is the pressing environmental crisis of the present. Buddhist environmentalism and ethical discourse based on interdependence are, like virtually all normative religious reflection, a constructive response by practitioners to an unprecedented situation rather than a historiographical endeavor. Merely to point out the incongruities between ancient and modern cosmologies, while crucial, is no more historically important than showing how these incongruities have been bridged by the often radical reconstitution of doctrine in terms of present circumstances. The history of religions is precisely the history of such reconstitutions of doctrine and practice that are themselves reconstitutions of prior versions.

Cultural Currency and Contestation

"So it's like another whole take on interconnectedness?" asks American Vipassana teacher Sharon Salzberg to Daniel Goleman in an interview in which he describes "mirror neurons" in the brain that attune individuals' emotional states to those of others.[70] It is a question that has been asked of countless recent theories and findings in sociology, economics, quantum physics, and life sciences, all of which seem

to confirm the central insight of Buddhism—interdependence. To see this merely as confirmation though is anachronistic, for the harmony between ancient Buddhist interdependence and modern interdependencies is produced in part by the way the former has been elaborated in terms of the latter. Contemporary Buddhism has reached out to embrace multiple late-modern interdependencies, claiming them for its own and synergistically weaving its own insights into countless contemporary ideas and realities like mirror neurons tuning themselves to the emotional ambience of a crowded room. The currency that the Buddhist concept of interdependence enjoys today comes not only from its intermixing with explicitly theoretical frameworks like systems theory but also from the term's more amorphous resonance with a central fact of our time: the interconnectedness of the various natural, national, corporate, and biological entities throughout the world. The fact that in recent decades interdependence has come to stand for the Buddhist position on virtually everything (I have not found this term used in such a way before the 1960s) reflects the currency of similar concepts in contemporary discourse on so many other subjects. In the age of the web, the network, the matrix, the nexus, the system, and the complex, the thing-in-isolation seems to have become a thing of the past.

As is the case with most hybrid elements of Buddhist modernism, however, the adaptation of interdependence to the conditions of late modernity has not been a matter of unidirectional accommodation to the times. Buddhism also contributes unique elements to the discourses of modernity that may challenge or augment Western approaches to interdependence. It brings, for example, rich resources for a critique of human well-being defined in terms of fulfillment of desires through buying and consuming of products. It also offers a view of ethical responsibility toward all orders of life. Buddhists today are attempting to bring such contributions to bear on contemporary realities, and the degree to which they will have an impact on the discourses of modernity is as of yet unclear.

For all of the concept's cultural cachet, however, the late-modern interpretation of interdependence is not universally accepted in the Buddhist world and is subject to contestation even in North America where it is perhaps most widely accepted. Some contemporary Buddhists, especially from the Theravāda tradition, have critiqued the contemporary view of interdependence through appealing to more

traditional doctrines in Pāli literature. In a popular Buddhist periodical, an essay displaying impressive historical acumen by the American-born Theravāda monk, Bhikkhu Thanissaro, traces the popular ideas of "interconnectedness, wholeness, and ego-transcendence" from the German Romantics (especially Schiller and Schleiermacher) through Emerson, William James, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow. Many popular ideas about Buddhism, he argues, come from these figures and are quite different from some of the "original principles of the dharma."[71] "Buddhist Romanticism," he argues, masks the Buddhist teaching that "all interconnectedness is essentially unstable, and any happiness based on this instability is an invitation to suffering. True happiness has to go beyond interdependence and interconnectedness to the unconditioned."[72] Similarly, Andrew Olendzki, director of the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies Massachusetts and editor of *Insight Journal*, cautions that "the more interconnected we become, the more bound in the net of conditioned phenomena we may find ourselves. I think the Buddha was pointing a way out of all this, but it is not through getting further connected. It has more to do with getting less connected, less entangled, and less attached."[73]

Moreover, while some Asian teachers embrace the contemporary, world-affirming view of interdependence, many insist on more traditional interpretations of samsara and dependent origination. Andrew Cohen quotes contemporary Tibetan teacher Patrul Rinpoche as saying: "The world has no real essence; it's meaningless, the whole of samsara is just meaningless. In fact, if you have complete realization of the faults of samsara, that *is* realization. That means you have gone beyond samsara to understanding that this world has no ultimate meaning."[74] In a similar vein, Mahāsi Sayādaw, founder of the Vipassana movement, characterizes the wheel of rebirth as "dreadful": "Every effort should therefore be made to acquaint oneself with the miserable conditions of Samsara and then to work for an escape from this incessant cycle, and for the attainment of Nirvana."[75] This is clearly far from Macy's seeing the world as "lover" and as "self."

Such fissures in the interpretation of the meaning and significance of interdependence highlight tensions between traditional and modernist articulations of Buddhism. They also recapitulate differences between Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions—the latter being more amenable to Idealist interpretations—and between various traditions unique to geographical areas within Asia—East Asian traditions being

more affirming of positive conceptions of the natural world than Indian and Tibetan ones. Such tensions suggest that the meanings of interdependence and the valuation of the phenomenal world will continue to shift and change in the contestations and negotiations between tradition and modernity that continue to shape Buddhism today.

NOTES

1. This article is adapted from a chapter in *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and is used by permission of the publisher.

2. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajña-paramita Heart Sutra*, ed. Peter Levitt (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1988), 3–4.

3. Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Sun in My Heart," in *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, ed. Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2000), 87.

4. Joan Halifax, "The Third Body: Buddhism, Shamanism & Deep Ecology," in *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, ed. Allan Hunt Badiner (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), 23.

5. Jeremy Hayward, "Ecology and the Experience of Sacredness," in *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, ed. Allan Hunt Badiner (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), 65.

6. Allan Hunt Badiner ed., *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), xvi.

7. Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness: Reconnecting with the Body of the Earth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), xxx.

8. Donald K. Swearer, "The Hermeneutics of Buddhist Ecology in Contemporary Thailand: Buddhadāsa and Dhammapiṭaka," in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions Publications, 1997), 29.

9. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 31.

10. Halifax, *Fruitful Darkness*, xxx.

11. The interpretation I have offered of nirvana as transcendence of the phenomenal world is disputed by some who claim that nirvana is simply the overcoming of psycho-moral afflictions (*kleśas*) and attaining a state of peace and internal freedom within this world. See, for example, David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). I see this interpretation as a form of demythologization that, while a viable reinterpretation for modern practitioners, is unacceptable as a *historical* account. For a critique of Kalupahana's general approach to interpreting Indic Buddhist texts, see David L. McMahan, "Demythologization and the Core-versus-Accretions Model of Buddhism," *Indian International Journal of Buddhism* 10, no. 5 (2004): 63–99.

12. Lewis Lancaster, "Buddhism and Ecology: Collective Cultural Perceptions,"

in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Eve-lyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions Publications, 1997), 10.

13. Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary* (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), 207 (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* 103).

14. David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York and London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 25–33.

15. The *Avataṃsaka* as a whole is compilation of sutras, some of which may have been composed in Central Asia or China. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is the last sec-tion and was composed in Sanskrit in India, circa the second century CE.

16. It is worth noting that the visionary strains of the Mahāyāna, however, cannot be interpreted as wholly world-affirming or reverential toward na-ture. Pure Land sutras, for instance, may at first seem to depict the possibility of a fully affirmative view of phenomenality. Like the *Avataṃsaka*, they depict the Pure Land as filled with jeweled trees, sweet-smelling golden earth and air, immaculately clear waters, and birds that sing utterances of the dharma. Ornaments and jewels are strewn everywhere. There is no death or disease, no briars or rough ground. While such descriptions clearly offer a positive view of *another* world, one in which mere residence there constitutes at least a penultimate form of liberation, they reinforce the dissatisfactoriness of the "ordinary" world. See Malcolm David Eckel, "Is There a Buddhist Philosophy of Nature?" in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge, MA: Har-vard University Center for the Study of World Religions Publications, 1997), 327–350. The idea of the Pure Land, rather than celebrating nature, improves upon it. These lavish descriptions suggest the ideal not of undisturbed nature but of a tamed and cultivated land with gardens and splendid buildings. The Pure Land is an inverse reflection of the "flaws" of nature experienced by sen-tient beings in "our" world and is thus largely in continuity with the earlier literature's assessment of life in the realm of rebirth.

17. See Lancaster, "Buddhism and Ecology: Collective Cultural Perceptions."

18. Some process philosophers and theologians drawing on the thought of Al-fred North Whitehead have taken a systematic interest in Huayan thought, based on its resemblance to Whitehead's highly nuanced cosmology of inter-dependence. Though not widely read outside academic circles, this compara-tive work has likely had an impact on the contemporary Buddhist idea of in-terdependence. See, for example, Steve Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).

19. Gary Snyder, *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry and Translations, 1952–1998*

(Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999), 524.

20. Robert G. Henricks, *The Poetry of Han-shan: A Complete, Annotated Translation of Cold Mountain* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 22.

21. William LaFleur, "Enlightenment for Plants and Trees," in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions Publications, 1997), 109–116.

22. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 97.

23. Gary Snyder, "Writers and the War against Nature," *Resurgence* 239 (2006), http://www.resurgence.org/2006/snyder239.htm. This is a loose translation that is popular in the West, one that significantly lends itself to being interpreted as the self expanding into all things. More precise translations of the whole passage include this one:

> To study the Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things of the universe. To be enlightened by all things of the universe is to cast off the body and mind of the self as well as those of others. Even the traces of enlightenment are wiped out, and life with traceless enlightenment goes on forever and ever. (Hee-jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen, Mystical Realist* [Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004], 125)

24. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 266–284.

25. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, ed. Maynard Mack (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), 91–92.

26. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (I Abtheilung vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung vols. 1–4; Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861), 7:62.

27. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, 3 vols. (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004 [1818]), 261–262.

28. Duncan Wu, ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology,* 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 455.

29. William Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth—The Major Works: Including the Prelude*, ed. Stephen Gill (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131–132.

30. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 187–188.

31. René Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldine and G. R. T. Ross, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 119.

32. Catherine L. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

33. Catherine L. Albanese, ed., *The Spirituality of the American Transcendentalists* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 70–71.

34. Ibid., 48.

35. Ibid., 71.

36. Ibid., 74.

37. Quoted in Albanese, *Nature Religion*, 99.

38. John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988 [1911]), 95.

39. Albanese, *Nature Religion*, 99–100.

40. Muir, *My First Summer*, 120.

41. Albanese, *Nature Religion*, 82–87.

42. John Muir, "Hetch Hetchy Valley," in *The Yosemite* (New York: The Century Company, 1912; republished online by the Sierra Club, 2007, http://www.sierra-club.org/john_muir_exhibit/frameindex.html?http://www.sierra-club.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/the_yosemite/chapter_16.html).

43. William Rounseville Alger, *The Solitudes of Nature and of Man or The Loneliness of Human Life* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), 170–171.

44. Ibid., 168.

45. William Rounseville Alger, *The Solitudes of Nature and of Man: The Loneliness of Human Life* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1867); *Poetry of the East* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004).

46. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Quality Paperback, 1997 [1854]), 184.

47. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Dutton, 1979).

48. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep: Long Range Ecology Movements," *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95.

49. See Odin and Kenneth Inada, *Buddhism and American Thinkers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

50. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (New York: Bantam, 1985 [1975]), 129.

51. Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* (New York: Anchor, 1996).

52. Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self* (Parallax Press, 1991), 185.

53. Ibid., 183.

54. Ibid., 187–188.

55. Ibid., 189.

56. Ibid., 190.

57. Ibid., 191.

58. Ibid., 13–14.

59. For a discussion and critique of the ways in which the Fall of Man narrative has worked its way into modern Buddhism, see Richard Payne, "Individuation and Awakening: Romantic Narrative and the Psychological Interpretation of Buddhism," in *Buddhism and Psychotherapy across Cultures: Essays on Theories and Practices*, ed. Mark Unno (Boston: Wisdom, 2006), 31–52.

60. Nhat Hanh, *Heart of Understanding*, 33.

61. Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Sun in My Heart," in *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, ed. Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2000), 86.

62. Nhat Hanh, *Heart of Understanding*, 21.

63. William Cullen Bryant, *Poems by William Cullen Bryant* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 19–22.

64. Mark L. Blum, "Baptizing Nature: Environmentalism, Buddhism, and Transcendentalism," in *Bukkyō to Shizen* (Buddhism and Nature) (Kyoto: Research Institute of Bukkyō University, 2005); Ian Harris, "How Environmentalist Is Buddhism?" *Religion* 21 (1991): 101–114; Harris, "Buddhism and the Discourse of Environmental Concern: Some Methodological Problems," in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 377–402.

65. Quoted in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 263 n. 12.

66. Chap. 8 of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a classic exposition of altruism through empathetic identification with others: "Just as the body, which has many parts owing to its division into arms and so forth, should be protected as a whole, so should this entire world, which is differentiated and yet has the nature of the same suffering and happiness." See Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, trans. Alan Wallace and Vesna Wallace (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 100. The point here, though, seems to be that one should identify with others' suffering *as if* it were one's own. The body here is a metaphor of empathy rather than an ontological assertion of cosmic unity.

67. "The Exposition of the Correct" *Hyeonjeong non* 顯正論 by Gihwa 己和 (Hamheo Deuktong 涵虛得通), chap. 7 (*Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* 7.219b22), trans. from the Hanmun Text by Charles Muller, http://www.acmuller.net/jeong-gihwa/hyeonjeongnon.html#refpoint-6-33. I am grateful to Professor Muller for informing me of this text.

68. Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite*: *Fullness of Peace, Power, and Plenty* (London: Thorsons, 1995), 169–170.

69. Blum, "Baptizing Nature: Environmentalism, Buddhism, and Transcendentalism," 30–31.

70. Sharon Salzberg, "I Feel Your Brain," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 62 (Winter 2006): 67.

71. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Romancing the Buddha," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 46 (Winter 2002), 109.

72. Ibid., 112.

73. Andrew Olendzki, "Interconnected…Or Not?" *Insight Journal* 24 (Spring 2005): 3.

74. Andrew Cohen, "The World is Unreliable: An Interview with His Holiness Penor Rinpoche," in *What Is Enlightenment?* 18 (Fall/Winter 2000), http://www.wie.org/j18/penor.asp.

75. Quoted in Gil Fronsdal, "Insight Meditation in the United States: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, ed. Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 171.

Traditionalist Representations of Buddhism

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We observe reality from a point defined by our species (and cultural, and individual) makeup, our observations can only be made through representations, and representations always both add to and subtract from what they represent.
—Derek Bickerton[1]

TRADITIONALISM HAS HAD A DEEP and pervasive influence on the formation of contemporary conceptions of religion, because of the power of its rhetorical claims of universality and inclusiveness, by its apparently liberal religious pluralism, and by the power of its prophetic narrative. However, Traditionalism's vision of unity, which many people seem to find inspiring, comes at a price.

Mark Sedgwick's work has been essential to the identification of Traditionalism and the exposition of its history.[2] Traditionalism has its roots in Romanticism, and combines Perennialism with anti-modernism. In addition, some Traditionalists extend the Perennialist hypothesis that there is a single core common to all religions, and give particular emphasis to the idea that this unitary and universal core is esoteric. They maintain that this core is only accessible through authentic initiation into religious traditions judged to be valid because they are unbroken, an idea itself rooted in Romantic nostalgia for an idealized past. Promoting their view as beneficial to human happiness and well-being, some Traditionalists seek to make the unitary and universal core available to all.[3]

Traditionalism can be understood as the extension into the religious culture of the twentieth century of themes and attitudes originating in the Romantic resistance to what were seen as the failings of the Enlightenment. For our purposes here, the most important of these can be summarized under the rubrics of what both Romantics

and Traditionalists oppose—rationality and modernity. The philosophic positions taken by the various figures involved in the history of Romanticism are, of course, actually much more complex and nuanced than the formulaic characterizations presented here. Such formulaic characterizations are, however, more relevant to our discussion because it is these simplified reductions that have in fact had the greater influence on popular religious culture and its resonance to the Traditionalist message. This essay is an examination of the Traditionalist representation of Buddhism, a representation that may well be much more widely influential than our own academic studies ever can be. It is the goal of this paper to explore the question of what price has been paid in the popular and scholarly understanding of Buddhism in the contemporary West.[4]

INTRODUCING TRADITIONALISM: REPRESENTING BUDDHISM

Traditionalism is, of course, no more monolithic than any other school of thought. Individual authors develop their thought in accord with their own concerns and preconceptions. There are, however, several themes that appear repeatedly in the Traditionalist representations of religion, and which mold their representations of Buddhism as well.

The Traditionalists deploy a set of rhetorical claims about their own project. First, while different authors formulate these claims in their own way, in general the Traditionalist claim is to be representing the traditional or pre-modern aspect of all religions. The location of the traditional is, however, never very clearly defined. As with the Romantics, it is somehow simultaneously in the religions of the Paleolithic era,[5] in the mystical strains of medieval Catholic Christianity, among the Celts and ancient Germanic tribes, and among native American, African, Asian, and Polynesian peoples in the present. It is in fact, however, nothing more than a polemical category serving to distinguish that which the Traditionalists approve of from that which they do not.

According to the Traditionalist rhetoric, this traditional aspect was originally present in all religions, but has been lost, obscured, or displaced by the forces of modernization, secularization, post-modern relativism, and science and technology. Notably absent in this critique of modernity is any mention of capitalism, urbanization, or industrialization—themes that the Romantics per se were fond of, as for example in Blake's image of "dark Satanic mills." These lacunae evidence

the shift toward spiritualized individual interiority, and the culture of individualized therapeutic self-improvement, reminiscent of late Romanticism. Part of the artificial idealized past constructed by the Traditionalists involves the retrograde projection of this therapeutic individualized interior spirituality onto all religious cultures—overcoding the concerns of those cultures with a prophetic vision of our own modern life as one of Fallen-ness.

This would explain why, for example, Daoism receives the Traditionalists' attention, and Confucianism is ignored. Daoism is more easily recast in the mold of therapeutic individualized interior spirituality than Confucianism—though only through the "parting of the Way," an artificial separation of "philosophic" Daoism from "religious" Daoism.[6] The former is, according to the Traditionalists, rooted in pure mystical experience, while the latter is a decadent, popularized form. Confucianism in contrast, having been the official state cult in the nineteenth century, was always linked with issues of governance and state in the Western conceptions of it, and hence resistant in this form to being molded into a Chinese version of Traditionalism.

If we avoid essentializing Buddhism, then it is clear that it is an imaginal object. As such, an examination of Traditionalist representations of Buddhism can serve to exemplify the rhetorical strategies by which Traditionalist preconceptions regarding the nature of religion as a general category create a version of Buddhism in contemporary popular religious culture. In large part this is done by employing selective representation—choosing particular parts of Buddhism to constellate (either positively or negatively)—in the service of a hegemonic metanarrative. Since all representations are of necessity constructive and selective—adding and leaving out as per Bickerton's quote in the headnote to this essay—it is important to understand the principles of selection, organization, and interpretation employed in the construction of a representation. The second major rhetorical strategy employed is overcoding—creating a new interpretation of Buddhist concepts that fits within the Traditionalist discourse.[7] Presuming what is called the "transcendent unity of religions"—the idea that all religions derive from the same transcendent reality and therefore ultimately teach the same set of truths—overcoding is frequently accomplished by equating Buddhist concepts with those of other religions. Such reinterpretation then is concealed under the guise of being an explanation.

In addition to these two rhetorical strategies—selective representation and overcoding—it is important to also examine the ideological commitments of Traditionalist thought. The Traditionalist themes that mold their representation of Buddhism can be summarized under the two dominant ideologies that flow together to form Traditionalist thought, Perennialism and anti-modernism. More specifically, some of the tropes regarding religion and Buddhism that Traditionalism inherits from its Romantic roots include (1) nostalgia for an idealized past, (2) appeal to the authority of the exotic, (3) heroic individualism, (4) an epistemology and theory of mind that are a version of "experience fundamentalism," and (5) an aestheticization of religion (including asceticism as an aesthetic).

"Religion" is a socially created category, and not a natural one. In other words, there is no entity "out there" to which we can point as religion per se, only instances of things that we identify as belonging to the general category of religion.[8] The definition of what a religion is, therefore, is not an incidental question, but rather it is central to any contemporary discussion of religion. The question of how religion is defined is important because the definition implicitly legitimates certain aspects of a religion and de-legitimates others.

THE INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS OF TRADITIONALISM

While Traditionalism is a modern form of religious thought it claims to provide access to the unitary worldview of all traditional peoples[9] and the single set of shared teachings that forms the essence of all "true" religions (the emphasis on true here points toward the use of that concept or its correlates in the process of selective representation). The apparent contradiction is resolved by attention to the difference between what Traditionalism is (the first) and what Traditionalism claims (the second). Although claiming to simply be presenting what traditional religious people have at all times and in all places believed, the representation is a modern creation, created in a colonialist manner—that is, by appropriating religious elements from other cultures in response to issues of modernity. Traditionalism as a system of religious thought—either explicitly (a theology) or implicitly (a crypto-theology)—dates from the end of the nineteenth century, is reactionary in its opposition to modernity, and is not, as it presents itself, a wisdom teaching millennia old.

The Traditionalist rhetoric of wisdom teachings is linked to what is now a common usage, the practice of calling a religious teaching "timeless." To describe a teaching or a religious tradition as "timeless" may seem like a harmless enough epithet, a polite way of saying something positive (but basically simply decorative). If, however, we step back from the pleasantries of polite discourse and consider the consequences of the use of "timeless" as an adjective, we can see that it is far from simply decorative, and certainly not harmless. To describe a teaching in this way, as timeless, is to cut off considering an idea as having an origin in some particular time and place—some specific socio-historic setting. More particularly, such ideas originate as answers to some specific problem. Placing a religious teaching in the realm of timeless truths not only obscures and conceals its origin, it also—oh, so politely—asserts that it is simply true, not to be questioned as to either its truth or its utility. As a rhetorical strategy, this is far from merely decorative, and serves to insulate such ideas from critical reflection.

As used by Traditionalist authors, "tradition" and "traditional" have been emptied out of any defining reference and function as little more than markers of approval. In addition to indicating approval, the use of the term at the same time conceals the location of the source of that approval as being in the present. The logic of "traditional" is that it is whatever serves the rhetoric of opposition to modernity. By deferring authority to the traditional itself, the responsibility for selection is concealed—"It is not I who approve of belief X or social practice Y, it is traditional." It is, however, Traditionalists themselves who select some beliefs and practices to value positively, to promote on the grounds that they are traditional, while rejecting others which may in fact be equally "traditional" but offensive to contemporary—dare one say "modern"?—sensibilities, rejecting them as degenerations of whatever it is that the Traditionalist wants to retain. In this way, the concept of "traditional," as in the phrases "traditional society" or "traditional religion," is kept conveniently ill-defined—convenient not only because it conceals responsibility for selecting what is and what is not traditional, but because it simultaneously gives the practice or belief authority in itself simply by being labeled "traditional." It serves to stop critical inquiry.

TRADITIONALIST FEATURES

The Traditionalist opposition to rationality takes the form of what some authors refer to as the absolutizing of the self,[10] and that I have come to call "experience fundamentalism," that is, a belief that individual experience is irreducible.[11] Because of this supposed irreducibility, personal, direct, unmediated experience is held to be irrefragable, that is, inherently veridical, and to be epistemologically privileged. In particular, religious experience—especially what the Romantics considered to be the most exalted form of religious experience, mystical experience—was accorded this status of veridicality and privilege, and held in opposition to the critical "analytic faculty or method that collects, classifies, experiments, takes to pieces, reassembles, defines, deduces, and establishes probabilities."[12]

Corollary to this is a positive valuation of the immediacy of the emotional and the spontaneous over the reflective and reasoned. Aesthetic sensitivity—such as nostalgia inspired by certain landscapes, especially those punctuated by ruins dating from an idealized past—became the mark of a Romantic soul. Romanticism hypothesizes that the allegedly spontaneous and unmediated responses are characteristics of pre-reflective or pre-verbal experience, and on this basis considers mystical experience to be the hallmark of true religion. And, at the same time, doctrinal studies, scholasticism, reasoned argumentation, and critical reflection are diminished, devalued, and dismissed as inadequate to the "true" religious goals of inspiration, exaltation, and ecstasy.[13] Romanticism, thus, provided the proximate ideological milieu out of which the two dimensions of Traditionalist thought—Perennialism and anti-modernism—developed in the twentieth century.

Perennialism takes its name from the notion that there is a *philosophia perennis*, a philosophy that was identified as perennial because it was to be found in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This collection of magical, alchemical, and gnostic speculative philosophical texts was originally—though mistakenly—thought to pre-date Christianity and Plato, yet appeared to prophetically foreshadow both. Rather than pre-dating Plato and Christianity, however, the work actually originates from a much later period. Despite the correct dating being known since 1614, the idea that the *philosophia perennis* recorded in the *Corpus Hermeticum* both pre-dated and provided the basis for Platonic and Christian ideologies was kept alive in Masonic circles. The influential Mason Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin asserted that "All the traditions of the earth must be

seen as deriving from a fundamental mother-tradition that, from the beginning, was entrusted to sinful man and his first offspring."[14] At the beginning of the twentieth century Traditionalists drew heavily on Masonic thought, including this Perennialist conception of a single, core, mystical teaching originating in the ancient past.

This idea was popularized in the mid-twentieth century by Aldous Huxley. Huxley's own introduction serves as an excellent summary of this idea:

> Philosophia perennis—the phrase was coined by Leibniz; but the thing—the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being—the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions. A version of this Highest Common Factor in all preceding and subsequent theologies was first committed to writing more than twenty-five centuries ago, and since that time the inexhaustible theme has been treated again and again, from the standpoint of every religious tradition and in all the principal languages of Asia and Europe.[15]

Here in Huxley's description we see the modern propagation of the conception of an original unity of religion, the long-discredited dating to five centuries before the rise of Christianity, and the Romantic equation of historically ancient with contemporary primitive.

Traditionalism also continues the anti-modernist strain of some of the Romantics, extending the Romantic nostalgia for an imagined ideal past to all "traditional" peoples.[16] Löwy and Sayre note that for English Romanticism, "Nostalgia for the Middle Ages and the English Renaissance predominated (in fact the two were often viewed as part of a single past era), but there was also nostalgia for "barbarian" societies (Nordic, Gaelic, Scottish, and so on), as well as for primitive Greco-Roman antiquity or traditional peasant society."[17] It is this idealized imaginal past that becomes the basis for a critique of modernity. "The specificity of Romanticism is that it develops this critique from the standpoint of a value system—with reference to an ideal—drawn from the past."[18]

Historically, Romantic anti-modernism is a reaction to the descent of the French Revolution into the Terror. Despite their initial sympathy for the noble cause of the Revolutionaries, Romantics—particularly those in Britain—then felt betrayed by the Terror, and came to reject Enlightenment values as leading to chaotic disorder. The Revolution had been seen as a coming into social reality of the values and ideas of the Enlightenment, specifically reason as the guiding principle for human decision-making, and the malleability of society that made such radical transformations as the displacement of the monarchy in favor of democracy possible. Having established that causal link the implosion of the Revolution and its descent into the Terror were then attributed to those very same Enlightenment values and ideas. The fear instilled by this vision of the seemingly necessary consequences of Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the idea that social structures are malleable[19] led the Romantics to revalorize the aristocratic social organization of pre-Revolutionary France, establishing an important motivation for the Romantic emphasis on nostalgia for an idealized past. Characteristic of the Romantic's reactionary response is that it takes the form of interiorizing, individualizing, and spiritualizing ideas of freedom and liberty, moving away from the social expression of those same values.[20] This same interiorized and individualized spiritual orientation then likewise characterizes the Traditionalists as well.[21]

Beyond this specific political history, much of the Romantic message is formed out of a resistance to the dehumanizing effects of modernity, a dehumanization that resulted from industrialization and urbanization. Seeing the world as "disenchanted," Romanticism "attempts to re-enchant the world and bring back the mystery driven away by the 'coldness' of the new science and its attendant worldview."[22] One need only think in this regard of Blake's "dark Satanic mills," and Dickens' London to understand what they were opposing.[23]

As suggested above, Romanticism is not a single or uniform phenomenon, and this is reflected in the variety of different kinds of anti-modernism found in Romanticism. Löwy and Sayre have identified six different versions of Romantic anti-modernism, which they describe as reactions "against industrial capitalism and bourgeois society."[24] Organized "roughly from right to left on the political spectrum" these are restitutionist, conservative, fascistic, resigned, reformist, and revolutionary/utopian.[25] Löwy and Sayre suggest that individual Romantics can be found to move easily from one of these positions to another, for

example, from fascistic to restitutionist to conservative. The reason for the ease of such movement is that Romanticism has a "fundamentally ambiguous, contradictory, and hermaphroditic...worldview [that] makes the most diverse solutions—and the shift from one to another—possible, without a need for the author to break with the foundations of his previous problematic."[26]

In the hands of many Traditionalists, however, the opposition to the dehumanizing qualities of industrialization and urbanization becomes generalized into an opposition to modernity *in toto*, and especially to the authority given to science and to (their own interpretation of) post-modernism as an un-nuanced and destructive relativism.[27] In doing so, they are generally either restitutionists, conservatives, or fascists, that is, they are toward the right end of the spectrum described by Löwy and Sayre. Restitutionists evidence the "essence" of Romanticism in that "nostalgia for a precapitalist state lies at the heart of this worldview. Now the restitutionist type is defined precisely as aspiring to the restitution—that is, the restoration or the re-creation—of this precapitalist past."[28] Conservative Romantics, on the other hand, wish to defend "societies that are already well along on the road toward capitalist development, but these societies are valued precisely for what they preserve of the ancient, premodern forms."[29] Fascist Romanticism is characterized by an anti-Semitic anti-capitalism in which capitalists and Jews are equated, as well as moving a positive valuation of the non-rational into a glorification of irrational aggression, and finally a solution to the problematics of the Romantic self (isolated individual) through its submersion into the fascist state. Such submersing depends upon the emergence of a leader who carries the projections of the Romantic heroic individual, the man of action who does not reflect, doubt, or give any consideration to the perspective of the other—the very model of the ideal fascist leader. The paradox of fascist Romanticism is that the ideal state is at one and the same time conceived as having existed in the past, and as requiring a restoration that is to be achieved through the use of modern technology.[30] In its nostalgic quest for an idealized past, Traditionalism employs one of the most powerful narrative modes in Western culture, prophecy.

PROPHETIC VOICE OF TRADITIONALISM

Although it is clearly the case that Traditionalism with its Romantic anti-modernism is defined by that which it opposes—modernity—

Traditionalists frequently employ a narrative structure that is much older. The narrative structure that is employed frequently in Traditionalist writings is prophecy, specifically in the literal biblical sense. The standard opening for a Traditionalist work is to declaim the decadence of the contemporary world and declare the need to return to an earlier time, idealized as holier or more harmonious.

Quoting Charles Upton, a contemporary Traditionalist author, at length in order to share the full effect of this prophetic rhetorical strategy:

> At the beginning of the third millennium, the human race is in the process of forgetting what it means to be human. We don't know who or what we are; we don't know what we are supposed to be doing here, in a cosmos rapidly becoming nothing to us but a screen for the projection of random and increasingly demonic fantasies. Human life is no longer felt to be valuable in the face of eternity simply because it is a creation of God, nor is it as easy as it once was for us to see the human enterprise as worth something because of our collective achievements or the historical momentum which produced them, since without a scale of values rooted in eternity, achievement cannot be measured, and without an eternal goal toward which time is necessarily tending (in the spiritual not the material sense, given that eternity cannot lie at the end of an accelerating linear momentum which is precisely a flight from all that is eternal), history is a road leading nowhere. The name we've given to this state of affairs is 'postmodernism.'[31]

Where Upton emphasizes post-modernism, another contemporary Traditionalist, Huston Smith, has focused on science as the source of our contemporary "crisis," employing the same prophetic narrative mode:

> The crisis that the world finds itself in as it swings on the hinge of a new millennium is located in something deeper than particular ways of organizing political systems and economies. In different ways, the East and the West are going through a single common crisis whose cause is the spiritual condition of the modern world. The condition is characterized by loss—the loss of religious certainties and of transcendence with its larger horizons. The nature of that loss is strange but ultimately quite logical. When, with the inauguration of the scientific worldview, human beings started considering themselves the bearers of the highest meaning in the world and the measure of everything, meaning began to ebb and the stature of humanity to di-

minish. The world lost its human dimension, and we began to lose control of it.[32]

Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a contemporary Traditionalist with an explicitly Sufi orientation, opens his work on ecology and religion by declaring that, "The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment."[33] Nasr blames this condition on "those who have secularized the world about them and developed a science and technology capable of destroying nature on an unimaginable scale."[34]

Even more sweeping is the anonymous "Editorial Note" introducing the recent reprint of René Guénon's *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, a work considered by most Traditionalists to be foundational. Here we learn that "The past century has witnessed an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world's traditional civilizations, giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions."[35]

This, however, is neither simply a stylistic flourish, nor an objective evaluation. If it were the first, a stylistic flourish, it would matter little. If it were the latter, then the truth of the many highly dubious claims making up these introductory paragraphs would need to be established rather than simply being asserted. Instead, these openings serve as the opening move in a rhetorical strategy. Like biblical prophecy, the Traditionalist prophetic rhetoric first creates the sense that there is a crisis, second, it gives that ill-defined sense of crisis a specific form, and, third, offers a specific religious solution for that crisis.[36]

TRADITIONALIST AUTHORS ON BUDDHISM

With a general understanding of the Perennialist preconceptions of religion that characterize Traditionalist theology (used in a broad sense here), it makes sense that many of them would have felt impelled to write about Buddhism. If their understanding of religion is correct, then it should be possible to fit every religion into the Traditionalist mold, including Buddhism. We now turn to six Traditionalist authors, each of whom has written about Buddhism: Frithjof Schuon, Julius Evola, Marco Pallis, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Mircea Eliade, and Huston Smith.[37]

Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998)

Schuon is best known for a work entitled *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*,[38] considered by many to be one of the key theoretical works of Traditionalism. Despite an early involvement with the Alawiyya, a secret Sufi sect, "Schuon retained his Traditionalist Perennialism,"[39] and *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* serves as the theoretical expression of this view.

Schuon's approach to Buddhism is an instance of overcoding, the imposition of an interpretive view onto a subject. Simply by refusing to countenance the possibility that there are real and irreconcilable differences between religions, Schuon creates a powerful rhetoric. Expressing the argument in logical form, however, reveals it to be a *petitio principii* fallacy:

> all religions are ultimately the same (suppressed premise)
> ∴ there are no real or irreconcilable differences between religions
> ∴ all religions are the same.

Another way of disclosing the problematic character of Traditionalist rhetoric is to test it against Popper's falsifiability criterion (now a pleasantly old-fashioned, but I believe still reliable, epistemological principle). Since there is no way to falsify the Traditionalist claims, they are meaningless, i.e., one can with equal justification (or absence of it) make exactly the opposite set of claims.

At the beginning of his *The Transcendental Unity of Religions*, Schuon lays out his claims of epistemological privilege. His fundamental claim regarding the epistemological status of the view that he represents is that it is a direct, intuitive participation in the Divine as it is directly known by the "pure intelligence." This is not, according to Schuon, the product of human thought, and therefore it transcends not only mere philosophy, but theology as well. Philosophy is constrained by reason, while theology or the religious point of view is "incomparably superior," proceeding as it does from Revelation. But far superior to this is "intellectual intuition [which] is a direct and active participation in divine Knowledge and not an indirect and passive participation such as is faith."[40]

Quite evident in these claims is the Romantic view of both aesthetic and religious, particularly mystical, experience as a function of a kind of special psychic capacity—perhaps found in all humans *in potentia*, or perhaps limited to an elite few, but in either case the source of a form of knowledge that is subject neither to question, nor to contradiction.

In Schuon's case, however, it is quite clear that his view is elitist. The special quality of such mystic intuitions, and its limitations to an elite, are evident in what he calls metaphysics. For Schuon, metaphysics is superior to revealed religion, just as revealed religion is superior to philosophy. Drawing the distinction between metaphysics and philosophy, a distinction he admits may be difficult for those accustomed to thinking of metaphysics as a part of philosophy, he says,

> When philosophy uses reason to resolve a doubt, this precisely proves precisely that its starting point is a doubt that it is striving to overcome, whereas we have seen that the starting point of a metaphysical formulation is always essentially something intellectually evident or certain, which is communicated, to those able to receive it, by symbolical or dialectical means designed to awaken in them the latent knowledge that they bear unconsciously and, it may even be said, eternally within them.[41]

Schuon's Perennialism leads him to make what seem to be intended as explanations, but which—if one is not already uncritically predisposed to accept his idea of the "transcendent unity of religions"—are quite evidently nothing more than assertions of identity. Thus, for example, in his discussion of Vajrayāna Buddhism, we find him asserting that

> The "Great Vehicle" possesses a mysterious dimension known as the "Adamantine Vehicle" (Vajrayana); in order to grasp its meaning, one has to first understand what we repeatedly have termed the "metaphysical transparency of the world," that is to say one has to base oneself on a perspective according to which—to quote an expression of Pascal's we favor—Reality is "an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere": it is this circumference and this center which are represented, in the adamantine doctrine, by the Buddha Mahavairocana (in Japanese, Dainichi Nyorai) who is at one and the same time—in Vedantic terms—*Ātmā, Īshvara* and *Buddhi*; that is to say Supra-ontological Essence, Ontological Essence and Universal Intellect.[42]

"Explanations" of this kind, that is ones in which a concept or idea from one religious tradition is given as the meaning of a concept or idea from another, are common in Traditionalist and Perennialist literature, and as mentioned previously function through overcoding, that is, interpreting away differences by laying a second "code" over the original message, which itself then becomes invisible. Considered critically, however, an assertion such as Schuon's claims regarding the "meaning" of Mahāvairocana in the Vajrayāna tradition of Bud-

dhism only makes sense if one has already accepted the notion that there is a single, esoteric set of teachings at the core of all religions, and that therefore they all have the same meaning. If one has accepted that premise, however, it makes sense—it has the appearance of meaning—within that discursive realm to think that the character of the Dharmakāya Buddha Mahāvairocana can be explained by reference to Vedāntic terms—or, more accurately, to Schuon's own interpretations of those Vedāntic terms.

Another instance of such overcoding of Buddhist concepts by Traditionalist ones is in Schuon's treatment of the concept of emptiness. Here, in the course of defending Buddhism from its critics—those who blame Buddhists for "denying the soul"—in what is almost an aside Schuon asserts that nirvana is "the prototype of the soul and its summit."[43] Here again, we see the function of overcoding in the way in which Schuon re-presents Buddhist thought in a fashion amenable to Traditionalism. While it is quite correct that familiar Western rejections of Buddhism based on its supposed "denial of the soul" are fundamentally flawed because of a misunderstanding of the concept of emptiness, an explanation of the Buddhist idea of emptiness should draw on Buddhist explanations. Instead, Schuon explains Buddhism by asserting that his ideas about the relation between the particular constrained by time and the eternal cosmos are those not only of Buddhism, but also of Vedānta and Sufism.[44]

Schuon's Perennialism depends for at least some of its rhetorical efficacy on the covert repetition of ethnic stereotypes. In attempting to explicate his own view as a synthetic one, he employs a metaphor of radii and concentric circles as representing

> the Universe under the twofold representation of essential identity and existential separation; the synthesis of these two relationships will be indicated by the spiral.... Grosso modo it can be said that the West—namely European philosophy and Semitic exotericism—is rather attached to the second relationship, that of concentric circles and of existential discontinuity or separation, whereas the East—namely Semitic esotericism and Asian metaphysics—will prefer the first relationship, that of radii and identity of essence.[45]

Setting aside the implicit Neoplatonism, the vestigial Hegelianism, the metaphoric and florid language, we are left with nothing more than the shopworn stereotypes of the Western mind as narrowly empirical, rational, and materialistic, and the Eastern mind as expansively mys-

tical, intuitive, and spiritual. The implicit racism here is rather more explicitly expressed in Huston Smith's introduction to Schuon's *Transcendent Unity of Religions*. In addressing the rejection of other religions by those committed to one, Smith asserts that

> The epithet "false" is also appropriate when a faith that is valid in its own sphere bids to extend beyond that sphere into territory it could not incorporate salvifically; for the esoteric, it is in this light that Koranic objections to Judaism and Christianity are to be read. According to that perspective, the Koran does not deny the validity of these religions for their own adherents; it denies only that they were intended for—could save—the Arab world.[46]

We find here a particular version of what should honestly be called racism. The ideas promoted by the Traditionalists, such as Schuon and here his commentator Huston Smith, recycle as a form of what might be called "ethno-mysticism," old Romantic ideas of "blood and soil" (Ger. "Blut und Boden") that assert some mystical ethnic coherence based on descent (blood) and homeland (soil). The indefinite malleability of doctrine is viciously evident in ideas that have been employed for the promotion of a compensatory sense of pride in one's own ethnicity, and for the expulsion or attempted genocidal extermination of ethnic groups. That the Traditionalists dress these ideas in spiritual robes makes them no less dangerous. While the specific religio-political issues here are clearly important, there is a more general point that extends to all doctrinal claims and ideological positions—doctrine is indefinitely malleable.[47]

Julius Evola (1898–1974)

Julius Evola's contribution to the Traditionalist literature on Buddhism is known in English translation as *The Doctrine of Awakening: The Attainment of Self-Mastery According to the Earliest Buddhist Texts*. The original Italian was published under the title *La dottrine del risveglio* in 1943. The translation, by H. E. Musson, appeared in 1948.

Much of what Evola writes appears—at least initially—as simply derivative of what we might call the standard Buddhist modernist rhetoric: the Buddha was strictly human, though exceptional in that he attained an extraordinary level of awareness, insight, and freedom through his own efforts; the doctrine he taught was a practical, individual, and heroic path of rational, moral self-improvement—free from superstition.[48] But, as with the rest of the Traditionalists, there is more

at work than simply the standard Buddhist modernist rhetoric. In the case of Evola, there is a consistent appeal to an Aryan superiority:

> A particular characteristic of the Aryan-ness of the original Buddhist teaching is the absence of those proselytizing manias that exist, almost without exception, in direct proportion to the plebeian and anti-aristocratic character of a belief. An Aryan mind has too much respect for other people, and its sense of its own dignity is too pronounced to allow it to impose its own ideas upon others, even when it knows that its ideas are correct.[49]

Evola asserts that the "so-called salvationist religions" appear in both Europe and Asia after "the original cycle of Aryan civilizations" when there is "a lessening of the preceding spiritual tension, with a fall from Olympian consciousness and, not least, with influxes of inferior ethnic and social elements."[50]

A related rhetorical structure that Evola employs is that of purity versus impurity, impurity being the product of outside pollution—a rhetoric very familiar from Nazi descriptions of the pollution of the body politic by the Jews. In discussing the pre-Buddhist history of Indian religions, Evola describes the Vedic origins as being based on an "original cosmic and uranic consciousness."[51] The rhetoric of decadence is deployed as an explanatory device, such that in what Evola identifies as the post-Vedic period "the germs of decadence...were already showing themselves [and] were to become quite evident in the Buddha's day."[52] Evola identifies six of these "germs of decadence": "a stereotyped ritualism," "the demon of speculation," a "'religious' transformation of many divinities who, in the Vedic period were...simply cosmically transfigured states of consciousness," pantheism, and "foreign, non-Aryan influences, to which we believe are attributable... the formation and diffusion of the theory of reincarnation."[53]

Running through all of Evola's speculative history is a fundamental opposition that serves as an explanatory device, a racial theory that he sees as having causal efficacy in history. This is the division between what he refers to as the uranic and the telluric races.[54] The uranic are heroic and masculine, Olympian in nature, while the telluric are feminine, oriented toward the mother, and have "no knowledge of a reality transcending the naturalistic order."[55] These latter are the common characteristics of all "telluric" races, in which the individual is bound "to a female-maternal divinity found alike in the pre-Aryan Mediterranean world, and in the pre-Aryan Hindu civilization, such as the Dravid-

ian and Kosalian."[56] It is this last characteristic that explains, according to Evola, the origin of the doctrine of reincarnation, for in a maternal, earth-bound telluric civilization, one feels bound to return to the earth upon death, rather than ascending heroically. Written to a European audience in the early 1940s, one can easily imagine Evola's categories being "decoded" to mean Germanic–Aryan and Jewish–Semitic.

When written in the early 1940s, by someone who had actively solicited support from both the Italian Fascist regime and the German Nazi regime, as well as having written a work entitled *A Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race* (*Sintesi della Dottrina della Razza*, 1941), use of the term "Aryan" would unavoidably have explicitly racist resonances. No amount of *ex post facto* apologia[57] that Evola's use of the Sanskrit term Aryan ("noble") in relation to Buddhism is referring to a spiritual status can obscure the racist, aristocratic, and elitist connotations that become evident when seen in its proper historical context.[58] As with other Traditionalist authors, there is a continuity between ideas of a spiritual elite and metaphysical hierarchy on the one hand and a racial elite and socio-political hierarchy on the other.

Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947)

During the course of his career, Coomaraswamy frequently wrote on the topic of Buddhism. Indeed, one of his earliest books is *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* from 1916. This predates his encounter with Traditionalist thought, for Sedgwick tells us that Coomaraswamy "was already a distinguished art historian when he encountered the work of Guénon in the late 1920's."[59] Even so, in this early work we can discern traces of Romantic, Perennialist, and anti-modernist views that seem indicative of Coomaraswamy's readiness to accept Traditionalism when he did hear its call.

Some of Coomaraswamy's comparisons between Buddhism and other forms of thought appear to constitute little more than a literary flourish, a simple attempt to connect something the reader may already feel familiar with to this new and unfamiliar subject. For example, in a discussion of Buddhist cosmology, he draws a rhetorical analogy between yogic ascent to the form realms (*rupadhātu*) and a phrase from Goethe's *Faust* to the effect that in aesthetic contemplation one is carried away from oneself ("*aus sich selbst entrückt*").[60] Here we see, however, the Romantic equation of aesthetic contemplation and mystical experience.[61] Additionally, the equation of mystical expe-

rience and Buddhist yogic ascension is itself based on the Perennialist presumption of the universality of a singular mystical core common to all religions. This part of the Traditionalist hegemonic metanarrative is itself problematic.[62]

That Coomaraswamy is also inclined toward anti-modernism is indicated by his approving (and lengthy) quotation of a letter from the Japan *Daily Mail* of 1890, written by the Viscount Torio.[63] Identifying the Viscount as both a high-ranking Army officer and someone well-versed in Buddhist thought, the letter is an example of what Löwy and Sayre identify as fascist Romanticism. According to these authors, fascist Romanticism is characterized by an opposition to both capitalism and to parliamentary democracy,[64] by anti-Semitism (identifying "capitalists, the wealthy, and those who represent the spirit of cities and modern life" as Jews), by a glorification of irrationality, and by the attenuation or suppression of individualism: "in the fascist movement and the fascist state the unhappy romantic self disappears."[65]

Although Viscount Torio replaces anti-Semitism with an anti-Westernism, the basic dynamic of an appeal to a putatively superior ethnic identity in opposition to some decadent, inferior, corrupting ethnicity serves the same purpose. According to Torio, in contrast to the social organization of the "Orient," which is characterized as a benevolent authoritarianism continuous from ancient times, the social system of the "Occident" is characterized as "gravely disturbing to the order and peace of a country." The Viscount's anti-capitalist attitude is evidenced by his totalitarian assertion that "If the people be influenced chiefly by public considerations, order is assured; if by private, disorder is inevitable."[66] At the same time he gives a negative valuation to private concerns as selfishness. Upon a closer reading, the letter approvingly quoted by Coomaraswamy is more Japanese totalitarian neo-Confucian than Buddhist, and evidence of a particular kind of anti-modernism. In the case of Viscount Torio we may perhaps safely assume that his anti-modernism is an instance of fascist Romanticism, though in Coomaraswamy's use of the text, it may indicate nothing more than his own anti-modernism and an anti-Western sympathy for the Viscount's rejection of the West based in his own sense of a nationalism resistant to British rule.[67]

After encountering the works of Guénon in the late 1920s, however, Coomaraswamy's thought becomes much more focused by the Traditionalist view of religion. As Sedgwick says, "Coomaraswamy was the

first of many scholars to become dedicated, 'hard' Traditionalists."[68] The Traditionalist transformation of Coomaraswamy's work is reflected in the difference between his early work on Buddhism, the *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916) referred to *supra*, and his later *Hinduism and Buddhism* (1943).[69] For *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, his goal "is to set forth as simply as possible the Gospel of Buddhism according to the Buddhist scriptures, and to consider the Buddhist systems in relation, on the one hand, to the Brāhmanical systems in which they originate, and, on the other hand, to those systems of Christian mysticism which afford the nearest analogies."[70] In contrast, to an exposition of "analogies," in *Hinduism and Buddhism* "Coomaraswamy's basic thesis is, of course, one of Perennial unity—that Hinduism and Buddhism were both expressions of the original Perennial Philosophy."[71]

As with other Traditionalists, Coomaraswamy constructs a semiotic opposition between traditional and modern. Given the importance of this issue for an understanding of the rhetorical dynamics of Traditionalism, we quote Roger Lipsey, Coomaraswamy's biographer, *in extenso*:

> "Traditional" described cultures which, whatever their historical faults, were founded on an understanding of the spiritual nature of man and the world; "modern" described cultures that have forgotten many truths of the spirit, no matter how brilliantly they exercise particular faculties of the spirit. "Modern" cultures were described as antitraditional: they emerged by rejecting and forgetting tradition, and they tend to destroy traditional cultures around them both by competition and attraction. "Traditional" became a word of praise, guaranteeing that a given entity (an idea, a social form, a practice) was true or fitting in itself and related to a larger whole. What was not "traditional" had deviated from the only real *norm*; it was antitraditional, that is modern, and either evil or only accidentally good. This concept of Tradition was presented dogmatically and soon became a rigid means of parting the Cursed from the Blessed.[72]

In the trajectory of Coomaraswamy's life from art historian to Traditionalist thinker, we can see the connections between Romanticism—as expressed in the Arts and Crafts Movement with its emphasis on an anti-modernist opposition to industrialism, and a sense of the inherently ennobling character of handicrafts—and Traditionalism.[73]

Marco Pallis (1895–1989)

Marco Pallis is another adherent to the Traditionalist perspective who wrote on Buddhism. He was a follower of Rene Guénon, and it appears that Pallis was himself a member of the Maryamiyya, the secret Sufi order deriving from Frithjof Schuon's contacts with al-Alawi.[74]

Marco Pallis wrote rather extensively on Buddhism, a travelogue entitled *Peaks and Lamas* about his travels in Tibet and several essays now collected under the title *A Buddhist Spectrum*. One of these essays evidences what may be called the Traditionalist style, a way of writing that makes a seemingly-plausible argument, but only by presuming the Traditionalist understanding of religions as all manifestations of the same underlying unitary truth. From such a perspective concepts from one religion can be freely introduced into discussions of another, not simply as passing literary flourishes and minor explanatory analogies, but without even identifying that these concepts are drawn from different traditions. Employing religious concepts from one religious context in a different context involves a reinterpretation of those concepts, since they take on new meanings in their current juxtaposition.[75]

In his essay, "Dharma and the Dharmas as Principle of Inter-religious Communication,"[76] Pallis not only makes reference to the works of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, but in the midst of a discussion of the idea of dharma in Buddhism, introduces the concept of *svadharma* as one's own personal vocation. The *locus classicus* for the concept of *svadharma* is, of course, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, not usually considered a Buddhist text, and the idea of *svadharma* plays no particular role in Buddhist thought at all. The point that Pallis is making here is the ethno-mystical one discussed above—there are certain religious traditions that are effective for some race or ethnicity, and they are not to be used by others. This is one of the rationales for the cautions regarding the impropriety of Westerners undertaking Asian religious practices that one finds in various strains of literature discussing the active participation by Westerners in the religious practices of Asia.[77] Pallis, referring to Guénon's commentaries on Hindu thought, asserts that

> there was no question of merely trying to copy Eastern ways; to transfer a few eclectically favored features from one traditional form to another can do more harm than good…. What Guénon hoped for was that an intelligent study of the Eastern religions would act as a catalyst of a metaphysical awareness to which Western minds had long

been strangers, but he was also careful to point out that the forms in which that awareness would need to be clothed for the purpose of its wider dissemination would still have to be Western in character and in all probability Christian.[78]

Pallis's attitude toward Guénon is informative about the issues of hierarchy and authority in Traditionalist circles. In discussing the concept of *anattā*, Pallis tells us that Guénon dismissed the concept "and the whole of Buddhism with it, as little more than a heretical ripple on the ocean of Hindu intellectuality."[79] Supported by Coomaraswamy, Pallis appealed to Guénon to reconsider his hostility toward Buddhism. The outcome was that "he agreed to eliminate from his published works the offending anti-Buddhist passages, a decision for which one will never cease to be grateful."[80]

One of the issues that Traditionalist thinkers seem to constantly struggle with is the Buddhist doctrine of *anātman* and its later correlate emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Evola, for example, asserts that the doctrine really means that in what is normally

> considered as "I," it is impossible to recognize the true self, the supersensible *ātmā* of the preceding Upaniṣadic speculation; this true self is considered as practically nonexistent for the common man. Buddhism does not say: the "I" does not exist—but rather: one thing only is certain, that nothing belonging to saṃsāric existence and personality has the nature of "I."[81]

This interpretation might be called the "Big Self/little self" strategy. It manages to claim that Buddhism is right, but doesn't really mean what it appears to: "Buddhism is only denying the reality of the little self, as a means of revealing the Big Self." This reinterpretation of *anātman* allows the Traditionalists to integrate Buddhism, despite the radically distinct character that the doctrine indicates, into their vision of all religions as ultimately the same. This is an instance of the harmonizing of differences by reinterpretation according to their own preconceptions.[82]

Pallis notes that Coomaraswamy had attempted to deal with this issue "by employing the two forms 'self' and 'Self' in order to distinguish automatically between the empirical self or ego, seat of illusory thinking, and the true or transcendent principle of selfhood towards which all contemplative experience tends."[83] Although critical of Coomaraswamy's solution as "technically improper and misleading in the long run,"[84] Pallis is in agreement with the interpretation. As with Evola,

Pallis claims that "our customary consciousness of self is itself deceptive and that it is through its divestment that a real something can be discovered, one which cannot be named as such lest this should start a new chain of illusory attributions in its turn."[85]

The tendency of Traditionalist authors to deal with lacunae in their knowledge by creating authoritative "explanations" based on their own Perennialist presumptions is evidenced by two errors of Pallis's. He claims that the term *kōan* can be rendered as "'mysteries,' a matter of sense, not of etymology, since the syllabic structure of the word itself, as a Japanese expert has informed me, affords no clue as to how it became applied to its eventual use as a support for Zen meditation."[86] The history of the term and the practice have been understood for a long time, but simply looking at the two characters would reveal nothing of that history.

Pallis then goes on to discuss *dhāraṇī*, saying that

> such a formula usually consists of a number of syllables strung together in apparently haphazard fashion, though without displaying the whimsicality of many Zen *koans*. Some of the syllables figuring in a *dhârani* come from the common vocabulary of the mystical tradition while others, as they stand, often seem barely intelligible.[87]

The explanation here assumes that there is some "common vocabulary of the mystical tradition," as if there is a single mystical tradition that can be referred to no matter which religious tradition is being studied. Just as in his discussion of *kōans* he would have been well-advised to consult an expert on Chinese Buddhism, so in attempting to explain *dhāraṇī* he would have been better off consulting not the unitary mystical tradition of Perennialist imagining, but rather someone familiar with Sanskrit and Indian Buddhism. Again, however, the issue is not that there were gaps in the knowledge of various Traditionalists, some of which may be explained by the limitations of the scholarship of their day, but that they attempted to resolve these difficulties by resorting to the Perennialist presumption that there is a single, unitary mystical tradition at the core of all religious traditions.

Mircea Eliade (1907–1986)

Mircea Eliade's theories of religion have been critically examined by many scholars, repeatedly and in great depth. But because Eliade was perhaps the paradigmatic case of Sedgwick's "soft Traditionalist,"[88] that is, someone who employs Traditionalist ideas without ac-

knowledging their provenance, this aspect of his work has hardly been noted. Eliade's involvement with Traditionalism began while still a student in Romania, and he continued to be part of an active Traditionalist group founded in 1933 in Bucharest. While the thought of Guénon was important to this group, Evola was more directly influential.[89] It was during this period that he also became involved with Romanian versions of fascism.[90]

Sedgwick notes that Eliade was more oriented toward established academia than other Traditionalists, and that this was a factor in his concealing his Traditionalist sources. Specifically, Eliade expresses concern that Traditionalists were known to deny historical evidence and factual data.[91] This concern remains as relevant today as in 1943 when Eliade expressed it.[92]

The academic study of religion in the United States was greatly stimulated by the work of Eliade and his presence at the University of Chicago. This influence, however, introduced many Traditionalist themes, particularly its Perennialism and esotericism, into the American study of religions. As Sedgwick summarizes,

> Eliade's general model of human religiosity is in effect the Perennial Philosophy dressed up in secular clothes.... What Eliade did over his entire career was to pursue the standard Traditionalist research project of "reassembl[ing]...debris" under other names and by more scholarly methods.... A regular Traditionalist would study various traditions as a believer in them all as expressions of the Perennial Philosophy; Eliade instead studied archaic religions *as if* a believer, "on their own plane of reference." To what extent Eliade actually believed that the "archaic religions" he worked on were aspects of a Perennial Philosophy is impossible to say, but to the extent that he did believe this, it must have made it easier for him to place himself in the position of a believer in one religion after another.[93]

Although not informed by an awareness of the Traditionalist roots of Eliade's thought, Richard Gombrich's 1974 review of Eliade's *Yoga* provides an excellent perspective on the way in which Traditionalist authors reinterpret religious traditions in a fashion to make them fit into their own preconceptions. In some cases there are assertions made that, lacking historical nuance, are simply false as generalizations. An example is when Eliade's claim, "without reference or substantiation, 'The importance of the *guru* as initiatory master is no less great in Buddhism than in any other Indian soteriology.'" Gombrich corrects this, stating that "So far as concerns pre-Tantric Buddhism, we emphati-

cally disagree; early Buddhism was unusually exoteric, and in most strains of the Theravādin tradition to this day the importance of the *guru* has been radically de-emphasised, compared with other Indian traditions."[94]

There are also interpretations that force Buddhism to fit into Traditionalist preconceptions. Specifically in this case Eliade's apparent determination to fit Buddhism into his conception of shamanism leads him to misrepresent the Buddhist understanding of the path as leading through shamanic rebirth. "To obtain the state of the unconditioned—in other words to die completely to this profane, painful, illusory life and to be reborn (in another "body"! [Gombrich]) to the mystical life that will make it possible to attain *nirvāṇa*—the Buddha employs the traditional yogic techniques...."[95] As Gombrich points out, however, "'to attain the state of the unconditioned' *is* 'to attain *nirvāṇa*'; it is not just an intermediate state which 'makes it possible.' In fact the Buddhist who attains *nirvāṇa* does so in his own body."[96] Gombrich characterizes the role of selectivity in creating a misleading representation of Buddhism by analogy with the hallmark of Indian magic. "By quoting passages from the *Sāmañña-phala-sutta* out of sequence, mostly under other names, Eliade has performed a variant of the rope trick: plucking the dismembered pieces of the text out of the air, he has 'before the spectators' wondering eyes' reconstituted them into something rich but strange."[97]

Huston Smith (1919–)

While Mircea Eliade may have introduced Traditionalist ideas to the academic study of religion, Huston Smith is perhaps most responsible for introducing Traditionalist ideas into American popular religious culture. Like Eliade, Smith—at least for most of his career—acted as a soft Traditionalist, and one will not find overt reference to figures such as Guénon or Schuon in his most widely read works.[98] Their ideas are certainly central to his work, however, including his representations of Buddhism. As with Coomaraswamy, he leaned toward a Perennialist understanding even prior to his encounter with Traditionalism. In addition to this Perennialist influence, his understanding of Buddhism is clearly formed by Buddhist modernist representations of Buddhism as a reform movement opposing a decaying Vedic sacramentalism, emphasizing rational self-control, and established by an extraordinary, but still fully human founder. His most recent work on

Buddhism per se is entitled *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction*, and dates from 2003. It repeats with only minor editorial revisions material that originally appeared as the Buddhism chapter of his 1958 *Religions of Man*.[99] Thus, any detailed study of Smith's representations of Buddhism would need to stratify his work around the date 1969 when Smith read Frithjof Schuon's *In the Tracks of Buddhism* (discussed *supra* under its new title *Treasures of Buddhism*). For our purposes here, however, we will look at aspects more specifically Traditionalist in character.

We can gain a sense of the way in which Traditionalist thought contributed to Smith's representation of Buddhism by examining two aspects of his religious thought. First is his promotion of the idea of hierarchy as not only universally held by all religions, but also as a metaphysical principle with beneficial consequences. Second is the aestheticization of religion—the Romantic conflation of aesthetic and religious experiences as unique, spontaneous, individual, veridical, and irreducible. Beyond the intellectual consequences for the understanding of Buddhism, both of these factors also serve to mask the political consequences of Traditionalist religious belief.

Smith objects to what he considers the "post-modern" suspicion of hierarchies. He claims that this post-modern suspicion involves a fundamental confusion regarding metaphysics and politics. Whether it is his conscious intent or not, the effect of this is to draw a distinction that makes the discussion of the political (and economic, and psychopathological) consequences of religion appear incoherent. He seems to think that because *he* means "good" hierarchies, like those of a well-ordered family or classroom, abstracting this to a metaphysical principle does not open the door to the abusive exploitation of hierarchical relations. He wants to separate out "empowering" hierarchies—most importantly the metaphysical hierarchy—from socially and politically oppressive hierarchies—by claiming that the former are not political in nature.

The commitment to a metaphysics of hierarchy is an expression of the historical sources that feed from Neoplatonic thought into Romanticism and then forward into Traditionalism. This is one of the issues that becomes particularly problematic when Traditionalist interpretations of Buddhism are created, since the Buddhist commitment to an ontology of impermanence mitigates against any idea of an absolute, eternal, unchanging, or permanent reality. The imposition of a Neoplatonic metaphysics onto the two truths is an instance of overcoding. In

some Traditionalist interpretations, a Neoplatonic metaphysics that is fundamentally dualist and hierarchical is read onto the Buddhist conception of *śūnyatā* in such a fashion as to make *śūnyatā* the transcendent source of being. Presuming the universality of the Traditionalist system of thought, Buddhist thought is assumed to be simply another instance of that view, and is thus made to fit into that scheme, whether that is an accurate representation of Buddhist thought or not.

TRADITIONALISM VERSUS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Perverted Comparisons: Comparison as Method versus Comparison as Ideology

From a superficial view, Traditionalists seem to be engaged in the same project as others pursuing the comparative study of religion—that is, the determination of characteristics common to the various religions. Indeed, Smith's works are still frequently used in introductory courses in the comparative study of religion, and are shelved under that category in bookstores. There is a radically different epistemology at work in these two approaches to that goal, however.

For the academic study of religion comparison is a method, a tool, a technique that allows an understanding of other people's religions as objective entities—that is, as social practices, cultural patterns, and historical institutions.[100] The academic enterprise of the study of religion is known under a variety of names, but is perhaps most commonly referred to as "comparative religions." As the name of the academic study of religion, this has certain problems attached to it, but it is so widely used that we will retain it here—especially as we are discussing popular perceptions. As an academic field of study, comparative religions was initiated in Europe in the nineteenth century and gradually spread, becoming increasingly instantiated in American universities from the middle of the twentieth century forward. Its credibility as an academic enterprise depended upon the important pedagogical distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion made in the 1960s.[101] Teaching religion is understood as the promotion of a religious agenda of one kind or another, while teaching about religion is represented as the examination of a social phenomenon, one on a par in terms of its importance with economics.[102]

When Comparison Isn't

The references and allusions to other religions found in the works of the Traditionalists are not simply a matter of literary style—of embellishing a discussion of some aspect of Buddhism through a throwaway comparison, a sort of "Oh, isn't this interesting, X looks like Y." Nor is it a principled comparative project, identifying similarities and differences against a theoretically based hypothesis regarding how to explain the similarities and differences. Nor is it a matter of an explanatory analogy—asserting a similarity between something familiar and something unfamiliar in order to help someone to understand the unfamiliar, something like "Buddhist meditation is just like Christian prayer, only they don't say anything and they don't believe in God."

The comparisons made in Traditionalist works instead reflect a core doctrinal claim of Traditionalism, that is, the Perennialist claim that all religions are basically or ultimately the same. It is in other words a dogmatic core belief that provides a systematic hermeneutic. Thus, the anonymous "Publishers Preface" to Frithjof Schuon's *Treasures of Buddhism* explains that

> The leitmotif of Frithjof Schuon's entire corpus of writings is the *philosophia perennis*, the timeless metaphysical truth underlying the diverse religions, whose written sources are the revealed Scriptures as well as the writings of the great spiritual masters. Readers familiar with Schuon's works will therefore not be surprised to find here references to the spiritual worlds of Hinduism, Christianity, and others as well.[103]

As indicated in this quote, it is a fundamentally metaphysical claim, a claim regarding absolute reality—eternal and unchanging, and which Schuon identifies with "the Void"—and the transitory world of mundane phenomena. This is, of course, a fundamentally Neoplatonic metaphysics. Despite their appearances, then, these are not comparisons, but interpretations.

Fetishizing Tradition

Since the term "tradition" does not signify any one thing, it serves for the Traditionalists both as a slogan, and as a value judgment. In other words, it serves a rhetorical function as a strategic claim about particular beliefs and social practices as simply and undeniably ancient and venerable. As Sedgwick has pointed out in relation to several

Traditionalist publications, "Traditionalist interpretations are never presented as such, but rather are given as the simple truth."[104] In doing so it conceals the fact that the beliefs and social practices identified as "traditional" are a construct, have been selected, and, by asserting their status as simply given, avoids the question of their consequences. This rhetoric effectively claims that "it is simply the tradition, one cannot question it any further"—such questioning becomes itself a symptom of the corrupting effects of tradition's semiotic opposites, the modern and post-modern.

In other words, when Traditionalists speak of "traditional religion" they do not actually mean any specific religion. Rather, this is their own religious worldview which they have cloaked under the raiment of traditionality, and which by doing so conceal its modern origins and constructed character.[105]

It seems that the Traditionalist's relation to Tradition is not simply a matter of being disingenuous. It is not that they simply present something that they know is a modern construction as if it were traditional, but rather that they actually believe the traditional character of their own belief system. In other words, they are not simply lying, but rather participate in "bad faith" as described by Jean-Paul Sartre.

We can briefly characterize Sartre's notion of bad faith as a common human condition in which one is simultaneously two different things, but by identifying with one, denies the other. As Sartre explains it, this is not simple duplicity—saying one thing while believing something different—but rather the construction of identity through the denial of aspects of oneself by consciously keeping them out of conscious awareness. In this case, it is the claim that the belief-system is tradition that conceals from the Traditionalists' conscious awareness the fact that it is they themselves who have constructed this belief-system.

Indeed, Kierkegaard addressed this issue in relation to religion specifically, discussing the denial of personal responsibility that belief in an all-powerful creator allows. "The Bible is the word of God, therefore I believe it," conceals responsibility for the decision to believe that the Bible is the word of God. It is perhaps, then, no surprise that modern thinkers such as the existentialists—Kierkegaard, Sartre, and their colleagues—are held in such special contempt by many Traditionalists. Such a deferring of responsibility is perhaps the most directly personal way in which the Traditionalist belief-system takes on political consequences. In order to be free, one must acknowledge one's personal

responsibility. Like many other belief-systems that are based on an act of bad faith, and which promote bad faith in adherents, Traditionalism relieves adherents of this burden of responsibility. Such systems are basically infantilizing and authoritarian.

Likewise, there is little clarity about when the transition from traditional society to modern occurred, no clearly identified markers—thus leaving "modernity" an empty signifier only connoting opprobrium. In one place, for example, Smith writes as if modernity begins with the French Revolution. One could, however, just as well choose a technological advance such as the mechanical clock, or an economic one such as the invention of banking as marking the change from traditional to modern. However, as we have seen, for example, with Coomaraswamy, modernity is not in fact either an historical or a sociological category for the Traditionalists. It is rather a moral category—what is modern is corrupt and decadent, mechanistic and dehumanizing, the realm of Ortega y Gassett's masses and Heidegger's das Mann.

Political Ramifications and Their Obscurations: "The Religious Is the Political"

The intellectual separation of religion from politics obscures the ease with which ideas propagated as religious become converted into agendas for social and political action. One example of this obscuration that we have already encountered is Huston Smith's attempted distinction between metaphysical and socio-political hierarchies. Another way in which the relation between religion and politics is obscured is the aestheticization of religion by defining religion as individual, subjective experience. Like so many other aspects of Traditionalism, the aestheticization of religion derives from Romanticism. One of the consequences of its emphasis on individual, subjective experience was to valorize aesthetic experience, and to equate aesthetic experience with religious, especially mystical, experience. By defining religion in terms of individual, subjective, aesthetic experience, the social, political, and economic aspects of religion can be dismissed from consideration—those aspects are simply considered unimportant, peripheral to the real essence of religion, and therefore not in need of consideration.

The aestheticization of religion is also dialectically related to the Perennialist conception of a common core of experientially realizable insight found in all religions. While some Perennialist interpretations see this common core as publicly accessible, Traditionalists more gen-

erally focus on the mystical or initiatory elite as the ones having the capacity to access these "metaphysical" realities.

The aestheticization of religion and the attempt to distinguishing between metaphysical and socio-political hierarchies all *implicitly* obscure the relation between religion and politics. However, the denial of any relation between the two is sometimes made explicit. Discussing the fact that some critics have dismissed Evola's religious works because of his associations with Fascism and Nazism, H. T. Hansen claims that "This has affected his purely esoteric writings, which have nothing to do with political questions."[106]

Traditionalism is, by its very nature, necessarily not only religiously but also politically and socially conservative. Anti-modernist nostalgia can very easily become a reason for rejecting the democratic institutions of modern society, leading to authoritarianism. This can be seen, for example, in the work of the early-twentieth century political philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset.[107] The Traditionalists generally presume a Neoplatonic cosmology, which is of course hierarchical in nature. A metaphysical hierarchy very easily translates into a socio-political hierarchy leading to authoritarianism.

The political commitments of leading Traditionalists to totalitarian and fascist regimes have been discussed by several authors.[108] Julius Evola, for example, attempted to interest both Italian Fascists and German Nazis in his own brand of spiritualized aristocratic racism.[109] Despite the importance that such religio-racist ideologies have clearly had in modern history, the relation between politics and religion has largely been ignored in the academic study of religion. This may be in part the consequence of two dynamics in the study of religion. First, the principle of separation of church and state as fundamental to liberal democracy has promoted an active ignoring of political consequences of religion in order to protect the teaching about religion from criticism by what is perceived—accurately or not—as an anti-religion, secular, academic establishment. Second, those academics sympathetic to the study of religion may also associate any discussion of the political ramifications of religion with Marxist social critique, and desire to distance the study of religion from an overtly hostile attitude toward religion. Usually such resistance to an examination of the social, political, psychological, or economic consequences of religious belief and religious institutions is cloaked in the language of a resistance to "re-

ductionism," and a commitment to the *sui generis* nature of religion or religious experience.[110]

If one is interested in preserving and promoting traditional beliefs and social practices, then one is of necessity opposed to innovation, change, and the active questioning of authority. This conservative emphasis would seem to apply especially when the "traditional beliefs and social practices" are themselves a contemporary construct, and constitute therefore simply one form of resistance to modernity, a form entailing bad faith.[111]

The Chimaera of Liberality

Because of their putative religious pluralism, many people have the impression that the Traditionalist's position is a liberal one.[112] This is, however, far from being the case. The Traditionalist view is two-fold—anti-modernist and Perennialist. The reason that their position is not follows directly from the Perennialist dimension of their system of thought. As already discussed above, they claim that they are simply representing the traditional core of all religions—that which existed prior to the modern onslaught of secularism, relativism, and science and technology that obscured, destroyed, or pushed aside the traditional core. In its turn, the traditional core is conceived as singular and universal—there is one religious truth and it is found in all traditional religions.[113]

Out of this rhetoric Traditionalists have undertaken the representation of many different religions, and in doing so appear to validate the plurality of religions. It is this apparently positive attitude toward the plurality of religions that many find appealing and which may then lead them to accept the Traditionalist representations uncritically.

Far from being an acceptance of variety, however, what the Traditionalists have done is select and interpret so as to create a representation that fits into the Traditionalist preconceptions—what is "best about religion" as Smith puts it. Having thus imposed uniformity by selection and interpretation, the Traditionalists have successfully set up their own views as a hegemonic metanarrative. There is a difference between accepting diversity and imposing uniformity.

Traditionalism versus Buddhist Studies

Although, as the perceptive reader can tell, I believe that there is much to be critical of regarding the Traditionalist representations of Buddhism, it is important to avoid judging these authors in terms of our own current knowledge.[114] In some cases at least they were working with the best scholarship available to them at the time. That their representations of Buddhism are, therefore, dated and inadequate in terms of more recent scholarship is in a sense simply given.[115] There are two other issues that are more important. First, given the information available to them, how do they go on to represent Buddhism in terms of their own preconceptions (about religion, the cosmos, the nature of human existence, etc.), and second, how do their representations continue to shape the understanding of Buddhism today?

Despite the possibility of understanding the socially created nature of imaginal objects such as Buddhism in a radically relativist fashion, that is not the understanding intended here. It is the task of scholarship to attempt to assure that cultural representations are increasingly accurate, which is why scholarship necessarily involves an ongoing process of self-critical reflection. Although sometimes flippantly dismissed with a reference to the Freudian concept of the killing of the father, such self-critical reflection is the difference between scholarly debate and the dueling ideologies that appear to be the dominant mode of discourse in our own society today.

CONCLUSION

It would be very easy to dismiss the Traditionalist view simply on the basis of its being based on claims that are not subject to either verification or falsification, and which are therefore only faith-claims and cannot be a basis for an academic study of either religion as a whole or Buddhism in particular. The depth of influence of the Traditionalist understandings of religion and of Buddhism mitigate against an overly facile dismissal, however.

There are two important aspects of Buddhist doctrine that the Traditionalist interpretations overcode, recreating Buddhism in the model of Traditionalist presumptions regarding the nature of human existence, the world, and the path/goal. One is the interpretation of Buddhist ontology within a Neoplatonic framework as simply another instance of a hierarchy of truths. The other is the interpretation of awakening within a Perennialist framework as simply another instance

of a single and universal category of mystical experience. Because both Neoplatonism and Perennialism function almost pre-reflectively in American popular religious culture these two acts of overcoding Buddhist doctrines are usually invisible.

In addition to the overcoding of these two doctrines, Traditionalism consistently utilizes various rhetorical strategies to create a compelling interpretation of religion and of Buddhism. One such strategy is the use of context, in its most literal meaning of what is around a text.[116] For example, juxtaposing a Japanese Buddhist figure such as Hōnen with a Christian figure such as Luther creates a radically different understanding from juxtaposing Hōnen with an Indian Buddhist figure such as Bhāvaviveka or a Chinese Buddhist figure such as Xuanzang. Another is by selecting what fits into a predetermined understanding and then presenting that selection as if it were actually representative. Because of the distorting quality of such overcoding, it needs to be critically resisted. Fredric Jameson, discussing Deleuze and Guattari's engaging of Freud, describes the dynamics of resistance to such overcoding: "What is denounced is therefore a system of allegorical interpretation in which the data of one narrative line are radically impoverished by their rewriting according to the paradigm of another narrative, which is taken as the former's master code or Ur-narrative and proposed as the ultimate hidden or unconscious *meaning* of the first one."[117]

The Traditionalist decrying of modernity—blaming the modern world for fragmentation and alienation of our lives—is a theme that has become a staple for many religious thinkers in the present.[118] In 1948, at the close of his public lectures broadcast on French national radio, Maurice Merleau-Ponty directly confronted this claim. Speaking in terms of the "classical," rather than the traditional, but a world portrayed as one in which life was orderly and complete, he says,

> We have to wonder whether the image of the classical world with which we are often presented is any more than a legend. Was that world also acquainted with the lack of completion and the ambiguity in which we live? Was it merely content to refuse official recognition to their existence? If so, then far from being evidence of decline, would not the uncertainty of our culture rather be the most acute and honest awareness of something that has always been true and accordingly something we have gained?[119]

The voice of one of the leading twentieth-century philosophers here points us toward seeing that our awareness of the incomplete, fragmented, and alienated character of human existence is itself an accomplishment, and we may say, an act of bravery. It is certainly a perspective consonant with the Buddhist understanding of existence as being characterized by impermanence (*anitya*), essencelessness (*anātma*), and dysfunctionality (*dukkha*).

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. Derek Bickerton, *Language and Species* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 233.

2. Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

3. One might, on the basis of this difference, distinguish between "occult Traditionalists" and "evangelical Traditionalists." This distinction is not to be confused with Sedgwick's distinction between "hard" and "soft" Traditionalists. This latter focuses on whether or not the Traditionalism is overt (hard) or concealed (soft). See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 111. Soft Traditionalism avoids mention, for example, of the effective founder of Traditionalism, René Guénon. This concealment is itself strategic, however, as it allows Traditionalist concepts much wider dissemination and acceptance.

4. The genesis of my interest in this particular dimension of the modern representations of Buddhism occurred when I was teaching a course on Buddhist tantra three or four years ago. As an introduction to the course I had the students read Hugh Urban's *Tantra* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), which though in large part concerned with the Hindu forms of tantra, provides an excellent overview of the ideas that inform the modern Western discourse on tantra generally. Urban briefly mentions Julius Evola, an Italian esotericist with Fascist political associations who had written a book entitled *Yoga of Power* (repr., Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1993). Very shortly thereafter, I was in the bookstore at the Graduate Theological Union looking for something else, when I noticed this same work, Evola's *Yoga of Power*, being used as a textbook in another course being taught that same semester. I suddenly became confronted with the reality that the representations of tantra and, as I would soon learn also of Buddhism, which had been formulated by Evola, together with their implicit quasi-fascist political and racist ramifications, were not something safely confined to a past now gone and unmourned, but were alive, well, and living in Berkeley. Indeed, some relatively casual searching on the Web was even more disturbing as I learned not only that the publisher reprinting Evola's works was an American one, but that sites with information about Evola opened up to a neo-Fascist world that is very much alive and very active.

    The next step for me was a kind of "Ah-ha" moment, one of those times when something you have been struggling with suddenly constellates in such a fashion as to be from then on self-evidently obvious. This shift in *Gestalts* was eventuated by Mark Sedgwick's work, *Against the Modern World*. For many years I have been bothered by some aspects of the comparative study of religion. The best that I could do was to try to distinguish between comparison as a method (discussed perhaps most lucidly in some of Jonathan Z. Smith's essays) and the fact that some people seemed to turn comparison into something

more—an argument that somehow all religions are ultimately the same.

I had, of course, been long familiar with the New-Age commonplace that there is only one mountain and that all religions are simply different paths to its peak (a metaphor I now know from the side of a box of herbal tea has been attributed to Ananda Coomaraswamy). And I was of course familiar with Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* (orig. pub. 1945; repr., New York: Harper Colophon, Harper and Row, 1970), which I'd read as an undergraduate close on the heels of reading his two essays on drugs and his utopian fiction, *Island* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), in which psychedelics play a major and positive social role. But suddenly Sedgwick's naming of Traditionalism as an identifiable, coherent, and largely unrecognized ideological stream within modern Western religious culture—both popular and academic—acted as a catalyst. All of these things, from vague discomforts to adolescent enthusiasms, formed themselves into a pattern, crystallized, and, falling out of solution, became visible as part of a common phenomenon. Not only, then, was it clear that there was indeed something there, but that it had ramifications for the project of critical self-reflection within Buddhist studies as well.

5. For an instance of a Romantic idealization of the Paleolithic, see Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

6. See Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (orig. pub. 1957; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

7. I am adapting the concept of "overcoding" from Umberto Eco's semiotics. Nöth explains Eco's concept, saying "Overcoding is the interpretative process of modifying a preestablished code by proposing a new rule which governs a rarer application of the previous rule. Stylistic and ideological conventions are examples of such rules used in overcoding." Winfried Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 212. Another definition is given by Bruce Caron, http://junana.com/CDP/corpus/GLOSSARY20.html: "'Overcoding' is the practice of applying meaning/values from one discursive field to others. This is where power connects with knowledge to create codes that dominate not only their own discursive field, but others as well. This may occur through active institutional programs which insist that their scope is universal. Religions, such as Christianity or Islam, may be promoted in this fashion, overcoding discourses of diseases, of sexuality, of economies, and political behaviors, etc." The concept seems to have its earliest expression in the work of Umberto Eco, and has also been used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

8. The literature on the creation of the category "religion" is extensive. See particularly Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

9. This is done by means of a circular argument, a *petitio principii* fallacy—traditional peoples hold such and such a worldview, if a people doesn't then they are not traditional. And indeed, one contemporary Traditionalist, Huston Smith, has claimed that the categories of traditional and religious are coterminous, thus creating a semiotic dichotomous pairing by means of which modern is definitionally identified as irreligious. According to this semiotic structuring of the concepts, "modern religion" would be oxymoronic.

10. See Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 74. Hewitt is here discussing the thought of Georg Lukács.

11. The opposition between reflective rationality and spontaneous experience is rhetorically supported by many other related dualisms in Western thought, such as reason and emotion, mind and body, and so on. The oppositional character of these dualities is, of course, to be found in the Platonic heritage, which was itself given new caché among the Romantics. It now appears, however, that these dualisms are themselves artificial cultural constructs. See, for example, the works of Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994), and Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

12. Isaiah Berlin, "Counter-Enlightenment," quoted in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (orig. pub. 1996; repr., Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 415.

13. This is, of course, now a commonplace of contemporary Western popularized Buddhism. In keeping with the American tradition of anti-intellectualism, many contemporary Western Buddhists presume that meditation can be separated from doctrine, and that while the former is the sole essential for awakening the latter is an obstacle. Although this is contrary to such fundamental Buddhist conceptions as the eightfold path, this modern, Western, Romanticized view is presented as "authentic" Buddhism.

14. Quoted in Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 41.

15. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, vii.

16. That this past nostalgically longed for is both imaginal and idealized is evident in consideration of the works of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, such as *Carnival in Romans* (English trans., New York: G. Brazziler, 1979), and *Montaillou* (English trans., London: Scholar Press, 1979) as well as Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (English trans., London: Routledge, 1980). For a more extended critique of this issue in relation to one particular contemporary Tradi-

tionalist, see Richard K. Payne, "How Not to Talk about Pure Land Buddhism: A Critique of Huston Smith's (Mis)Representations," in Richard K. Payne, ed., *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger Corless* (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2008).

17. Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 52.

18. Ibid., 28.

19. See Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 18.

20. See Aidan Day, *Romanticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

21. This is also evident in Buddhist modernism's treatment of individual, silent, seated meditation not simply as paradigmatic for Buddhist practice, but also as the single valid defining characteristic of Buddhist identity.

22. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (orig. pub. 1996; repr., Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 423.

23. It is perhaps one of the most touching bits of irony that the Scottish highlands—a supposedly eternal landscape quaintly punctuated by isolated shepherds tending their flocks—so highly valorized by the Romantics were in fact depopulated by the same modern economic forces that created the urban slums they found so horrific.

24. Löwy and Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, 57.

25. Ibid., 58.

26. Ibid., 59.

27. Post-modern thought is perhaps the only thing more offensive to contemporary Traditionalists than modernity itself, and consequently there are several polemical representations of post-modernism in contemporary Traditionalist literature. One example of the polemical character of the representations of post-modernism is provided by Huston Smith: "Whereas the Modern Mind assumed that it knew more than its predecessors because the natural and historical sciences were flooding it with new knowledge about nature and history, the Postmodern Mind argues (paradoxically) that it knows more than others because it has discovered how little the human mind *can* know." Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, rev. ed. (Wheaton and Madras: Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), xiii. Not only is this an abusive representation of post-modernism, but by creating a vague generalization— the "Postmodern Mind"—it becomes virtually impossible to refute, and is

therefore itself if not an outright fallacy (i.e., an unfalsifiable claim), at least highly suspicious. It points, however, to a key issue in the Traditionalist debate with both modernity and post-modernist thought, which is fundamentally epistemological. True knowledge for them is absolute and revealed by direct intuition, regarding which see the section on Schuon below. Expressed differently, as with Platonic thought generally, absolute knowledge is knowledge of the absolute. Anything less is not truly knowledge. It seems to me that this link between the epistemological object and the character of knowledge does not hold for Buddhist epistemology, where absolute knowledge is knowledge of the impermanent.

28. Löwy and Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, 59.

29. Ibid., 63. One thinks here, for example, of Huston Smith's work with Native Americans.

30. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); also, Heather Pringle, *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), especially regarding Himmler's idea of constructing SS villages in Eastern Europe that would recreate the imaginal ancient German society.

31. Charles Upton, *The System of the Antichrist: Truth and Falsehood in Postmodernism and the New Age* (Ghent, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 3. Upton is explicitly following Huston Smith's understanding of post-modernism, which is itself a rhetorically slanted "straw man."

32. Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, 1.

33. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature: The 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

34. Ibid. His solution to this is classically Traditionalist—"the reformulation of the traditional cosmologies and views of nature held by various religions throughout history." Ibid., 287. The plausibility of this suggestion is itself evidence of the wide influence of Traditionalist views.

35. Anonymous, "Editorial Note," in René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, trans. Lord Northbourne, 4th rev. ed. (orig. pub. in French, 1945; English 1953; repr., Hillsdale, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001), xi.

36. It is obvious that this rhetorical strategy works for political motivation as well, as for example, when the number of immigrants in the U.S. is defined as a crisis, around which then all kinds of other anxieties and dissatisfactions can be constellated. The politician then offers his/her election as the solution to the crisis.

37. Although René Guénon is considered to be the founder of Traditionalism, he himself did not write extensively on Buddhism—there are only some passing references, rather than any sustained treatment to be found in his writings. Not only does it seem to be the case that Guénon was largely hostile toward Buddhism, but that because of the intervention of Marco Pallis and Ananda Coomarswamy, he eliminated passages that were critical of Buddhism from later editions of his works. For more on this see below in the discussion of Marco Pallis.

38. Frithjof Schuon*, The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, 2nd ed., with new introduction by Huston Smith (orig. pub. *De l'unité transcendante des religions*, 1957; Wheaton and Chennai: Quest Books, 1993).

39. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern* World, 87.

40. Schuon, *Transcendent Unity*, xxx.

41. Ibid., xxxii.

42. Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1993), 34.

43. Ibid., 37.

44. Ibid., 39, and 39 n. 1.

45. Ibid., 34–35.

46. Huston Smith, introduction to Frithjof Schuon*, The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, xix. Marco Pallis makes the same kind of claim (see below).

47. This is why religious attempts to solve social problems on the basis of a doctrinal or theological basis will, I believe, only prove to be at best temporary.

48. Note that the rhetorical stance of "freedom from superstition" allows selective de-contextualization.

49. Julius Evola, *Doctrine of Awakening: The Attainment of Self-Mastery according to the Earliest Buddhist Texts* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1996), 17.

50. Ibid., 17.

51. Ibid., 25.

52. Ibid., 26.

53. Ibid., 26.

54. The racist quality of Evola's thought is evidenced in his *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (orig. pub. 1934; English ed., *Revolt against the Modern World*, trans. Guido Stucco; Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1995). He employs there the dubious (even then) fantasy of a "Northern primordial race," or "Hyperboreans carrying the same spirit, the same blood, and the same body of

symbols, signs, and languages" in a great migration from north to south. Employing the same kind of racist theories as those being promoted by the Nazi Ahnenerbe, he suggests, for example, that the civilization of the Hyperboreans "is found even in the vestiges of the people of the Far North (civilization of the reindeer)" (195–196). For a fuller sense of this, we quote at some length:

> Anthropologically speaking, we must consider a first major group that became differentiated through idio-variation, or variation without mixing: this group was mainly composed of the migratory waves of a more immediate Arctic derivation and made its last appearance in the various strains of the pure Aryan race. A second large group became differentiated through miscegenation with the aboriginal Southern races, with proto-Mongoloid and Negroid races, and with other races that probably represented the degenerated residues of the inhabitants of a second prehistoric continent, now lost, which was located in the South, and which some designated as Lemuria. (197)

The first "prehistoric continent" is, of course, Atlantis. It is also worth adding that at this point Evola adds a note, which reads, "See the works of H. Wirth for the attempt to utilize the researches on blood types in order to define the two races that emerged from the original stock" (197 n. 4). Wirth's work was part of an attempt to establish "scientific" means of distinguishing Aryans and Jews. See Pringle, *Master Plan*, for example, chap. 18, "Searching for the Star of David."

55. Evola, *Doctrine*, 26.

56. Ibid., 26.

57. See for example, "Evola's *Autodifesa* (Self-Defense Statement)" written after his arrest in 1951. Julius Evola, *Men among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist*, trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), appendix, trans. Joscelyn Godwin. Evola further individualizes his rhetoric in *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin and Constance Fontana (*Cavalcare la Tigre*, orig. pub. 1961; Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2003).

58. An explication of Evola's use of the term "Aryan" as more than simply racist is to be found in H. T. Hansen, "Introduction: Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," in Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, 75.

59. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 34.

60. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 112.

61. Bruce Sullivan has suggested that additional sources evidencing Coomaraswamy's Traditionalist attitudes are his *Yaksas: Essays in the Water Cosmology*

(orig. pub., Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1928–1931), and *Dance of Shiva* (orig. pub., Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1948). Sullivan also suggests that Theosophy's influence in Sri Lanka, Coomaraswamy's home, may have directly contributed to his acceptance of Traditionalist thought when he encountered it later. Bruce Sullivan, personal communication (e-mail), November 13, 2007.

62. A further indication of a Perennialist orientation is found in Coomaraswamy's discussion of *nibbāna* in *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, 115–126.

63. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, 134–137. Coomaraswamy is actually in turn citing Lafcadio Hearn's *Japan,* 241.

64. And also to Communism, though 1890 is a bit early for such sentiments to surface in Japan.

65. Löwy and Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, 68.

66. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, 134.

67. Roger Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, 3: His Life and Work*, 3 vols., Bollingen Series, 89 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3:77.

68. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 34.

69. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943).

70. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism,* v.

71. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World,* 35, citing a letter from Coomaraswamy to Marco Pallis.

72. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy*, 3:266.

73. On the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement on Coomaraswamy, see Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), 196. It is not inappropriate to note that while Oldmeadow's own orientation is itself Traditionalist, he seems in this work to have attempted a balanced presentation.

74. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 162–165. Pallis also corresponded with the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, and he seems to have acted as the agent who made it possible for Merton to be invited to join the Maryamiyya. Apparently, however, Merton's sudden death in Bangkok happened before the invitation could be acted on.

75. One is reminded in this regard of a Brazilian modernist group who called themselves "the cannibals" because they consumed everything from all cultures to feed their own creative process. See Jackson, Kenneth David, "Three Glad Races: Primitivism and Ethnicity in Brazilian Modernist Literature," *Modernism/modernity* 1, no. 2 (April 1994): 89–112.

76. Marco Pallis, *A Buddhist Spectrum: Contributions to Buddhist–Christian Dialogue* (repr., Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003), 125–147. Although these essays are republished from the Traditionalist journal *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Oldmeadow, *Journeys East*, 140), the publisher gives no indication of their provenance.

77. The ethno-mystical rationales which argue that Westerners cannot benefit from the practice of Asian religions are to be distinguished from the psycho-social rationale behind Carl Jung's cautionary notes. Casual readings of Jung's cautions have often led to him to being simply lumped together with others whose thinking is more ethnically or racially motivated. A closer reading of Jung shows that he is concerned with issues of individual psychological orientation and the possibilities of misusing Asian religious practices to reinforce psychological dysfunctions. Specifically, such practices can be used to absolutize the common Western stance of heroic individualism, which is appropriate to late adolescence and early adulthood, creating the possibility of a person remaining "stuck" at that developmental stage.

78. Pallis, *Buddhist Spectrum*, 141–142.

79. Ibid., 162.

80. Ibid., 162–163.

81. Evola, *Doctrine*, 77.

82. This "Big Self/little self" strategy also appears in Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*. While it is outside the scope of this essay to deal with the issues of *anātman*, we can simply say that untangling this interpretation is made more difficult by being half true. The first part, that Buddhism denies the self or essence any metaphysically absolute status, is correct; the second step, that Buddhism only does this to reveal the actual metaphysical absolute, is mistaken.

83. Pallis, *Buddhist Spectrum,* 163.

84. Ibid., 163.

85. Ibid., 164.

86. Ibid., 173.

87. Ibid., 173.

88. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 111.

89. Ibid., 110–111.

90. Ibid., 114. See also Oldmeadow, *Journeys East*, 369–370.

91. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 111.

92. For example, Huston Smith's recent publication on Buddhism—Huston

Smith and Philip Novak, *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction* (New York: Harper-One, 2004)—repeats without any significant updating the Buddhism section of his 1958 *Religions of Man*, ignoring five decades of scholarship.

93. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 112–113.

94. Richard Gombrich, "Eliade on Buddhism," *Religious Studies* 10 (1974): 228.

95. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 2nd English ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 167, cited in Gombrich, "Eliade on Buddhism," 229.

96. Gombrich, "Eliade on Buddhism," 229.

97. Ibid., 229.

98. See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 165–167. For a brief biography of H. Smith, see also Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East*, 58–62.

99. Huston Smith and Philip Novak, *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003); Huston Smith, *Religions of Man* (New York: Harper, 1958).

100. See the important essays by Jonathan Z. Smith on this issue, most particularly "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" in Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), also reprinted in Kimberly C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

101. Central to establishing the distinction between teaching religion (religious indoctrination) and teaching about religion is the United States Supreme Court case Abington Township School District v. Schempp (1963). See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abington_School_District_v._Schempp.

102. One way in which the goal of comparative religions used to be expressed is the understanding of the phenomenon of religion itself, in any form, in any society, in any historical period. This goal may be described as the global goal of comparative religions. This goal is itself hotly contested in the field, there being those for example who claim that there is no such thing as "religion in general," only specific religions. Or, even more radically, there are those who claim that the very category of religion is itself a construct of Western societies, and therefore it is inappropriate to extend it to other societies. Clearly this is another instance in which the epistemological issues are closely related to metaphysical ones, and one in which the claim that "Buddhism is an instance of a more general category, i.e., religion," entails certain consequences that need to be problematized.

103. Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism*, v.

104. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern* World, 169. Sedgwick goes on to point out that "There need be no dishonesty in this practice: we all present things in the way we see them, without feeling obliged to explain precisely how we have come to see them in that way." Perhaps I am less kind than Sedgwick in this, as I see the Traditionalists actively engaging in Sartrean bad faith. It is, however, at least necessary for readers to be critical even of the assertions of simple truth.

105. One contemporary Traditionalist, Charles Upton, argues at some great length in attempting to distinguish Traditionalism from New Age religion (see *System of the Antichrist*). Yet from outside the rhetorical system of traditionality, both are equally constructed by selection from various actual religions and the result of the secularization of society in the nineteenth century, which allowed for the acknowledgment of religions other than Christianity as having any interest other than as false religions needing to be overcome by missionary activity.

106. Hansen, "Introduction," 1.

107. See in particular, José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (orig. pub. 1930; trans. 1932; repr., New York: W.W. Norton, 1964).

108. See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, esp. chap. 5, "Fascism" (pp. 95–117); Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. part 3, "Politics" (pp. 125–156); and Robert S. Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C.G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

109. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 98–109. Some contemporary apologists for Evola (see for example Hansen, "Introduction," 1–104), have called attention to the fact that he was never a member of the Italian Fascist Party. This hardly negates, however, the active engagement he had with both Fascist and Nazi movements, the racist dimension of his esotericism, and his ongoing political commitments as evidenced in his post-war writings. While he may not have been a Fascist, narrowly understood as being committed to the ideological program of the party, his aristocratic orientation is part of a reactionary, anti-modernist opposition to the Enlightenment principles of humanism and democracy, fully in keeping with the Romantic notions of the heroic and aristocratic individual striving for self-fulfillment in opposition to stultifying values encouraged by "the masses," and the "mob-rule" of modern democratic institutions.

By focusing on the issue of party membership, such apologia offer an apparently more precise understanding of the idea of fascism, a move appealing to the semi-intellectual. Similarly, in contemporary political discourse, the demand for precision about what "fascism" means seems often to serve

simply as a distraction and an obscuration of the point. Javier Marías, a Spanish author writing about the contemporary social situation in Spain, notes that "It isn't easy anymore to define what fascist meant, it's becoming an old-fashioned adjective and is often used incorrectly or, of course, imprecisely, although I tend to use it in a colloquial and doubtless analogical sense, and in that sense and usage I know exactly what it means and know that I'm using it properly." Javier Marías, *Fever and Spear*, vol. 1 of *Your Face Tomorrow*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa (New York: New Directions, 2005), 56. Umberto Eco has in fact dealt with this issue of the amorphous quality of fascism, employing a kind of Wittgensteinian analysis of its characteristics as constituting a family resemblance. See Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, 22 June 1995.

110. That the issue of "reductionism" and the passions raised against it is a burning one is evident from June 2008 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2, which features two opposing articles, together with responses and refutations on the issue of reductionism.

111. Although a full discussion of this issue would take us too far afield from the main topics of this essay, reflection on the political implications of the Traditionalist metanarrative of religion should be of consequence to contemporary engaged Buddhism. Adoption of the rhetoric that all religions share a core set of beliefs that lead to the same concern with contemporary issues may seem to be an empowering one. It may, however, come at the price of a restitutionist, conservative or fascist representation of Buddhism as one of many "ancient wisdom teachings" entailing a hierarchical, Neoplatonic metaphysics that leans toward an authoritarian social organization.

112. H. Smith has, for example, been quite active in promoting the religious rights of Native Americans, including the cultic use of peyote.

113. The argument for this singular and universal religious truth can be understood as starting from an unproblematic claim that there is only one way in which a statement can be true, but many by which it can be false. But "Truth" is then converted into its Neoplatonic function as identical with Being itself, and this Truth is then asserted to be singular in the same way that the truth of a statement is singular. Additionally then, if there is only one Truth, it must be the same Truth that all religions point toward. If they did not point toward that whatever-it-is, then they would not be pointing toward the Truth. Hopefully the metaphysical muddle created by this argument is obvious to the reader.

114. A very important exception to this qualification is when authors have simply ignored the ongoing scholarship, as is the case with Huston Smith's *Buddhism.* See Payne, "How Not to Talk about Pure Land Buddhism."

115. One example of this is that in his discussion of the ideas of karma and

rebirth dating from 1916 Coomaraswamy asserts that Buddhism "does not explain in what way a continuity of cause and effect is maintained between one life *A* and a subsequent life *B*, which are separated by the fact of physical death; the thing is taken for granted" (*Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, 109). He supports this claim with a reference to the work of Rhys-Davids, which is itself constrained by the latter's exclusive focus on the early Pāli canon. Since 1916, however, we now know a great deal more about the idea of the *alayavijñāna* and its function as an explanatory device for just this issue. That a work shows its age, however, is no more than an ordinary function of the expansion of scholarship and is not, therefore, anything more than an ordinary mistake. What this does indicate, however, is the fragility of the Traditionalist claim to represent some kind of "timeless wisdom."

116. For example, Harry Oldmeadow, a contemporary Traditionalist author, has done this in two recent collections of essays that he has edited—*Light from the East: Eastern Wisdom for the Modern West* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2007) and *The Betrayal of Tradition: Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005). In each of these collections, essays by Buddhist authors are placed in relation to explicitly Traditionalist works in such a fashion that they seem to present a single unified front. *Light from the East*: the Dalai Lama, John Paraskevopoulos, Anagarika Govinda, and Gary Snyder; *Betrayal of Tradition*: Robert Aitken and Anagarika Govinda.

117. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (1981; repr., London and New York: Routledge, 1983), 6.

118. Hans Blumenberg has given us one of the most nuanced examinations of these themes in his *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983). Rather than a simplistic dualism between "tradition" and "modernity," Blumenberg notes that:

> We would not be able to accept the formulas of "secularization" as so much a matter of course if we did not find ourselves still within the horizon of the operation of the process: We are describing something that would not even exist for us if we were not still in a position to understand what had to precede it, what the hope of salvation, what the next world, transcendence, divine judgment, refraining from involvement in the world and falling under the influence of the world once meant—that is to understand the elements of that "unworldliness" that must after all be implied as a point of departure if we are to be able to speak of "secularization." (p. 3)

119. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (orig. French pub. *Causeries*, 1948; London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 111.

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Multiple Buddhist Modernisms:
Jhāna in Convert Theravāda

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THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES on the meditative *jhānas* as they are encountered by Western, English-speaking Buddhists in popular Buddhist writings and teachings available in the United States. I ask: how do the most popular teachers frame *jhāna* meditation? Do their teachings and writings reveal "traditional" or "modernist" ways of understanding? Are there significant differences between the various *jhāna* teachers' presentations, particularly in their constructions of authority in the Buddhist tradition? Do they display the qualities of "Buddhist modernism" cited in the Buddhist studies literature?[1]

Given the tendency of Western Buddhists to cleanse Buddhism of beliefs and practices that they perceive as "irrational," I wondered how *jhāna*—which is deeply connected to cosmology and various superhuman powers (such as levitation and telepathy)—might be popularized among Western convert Theravādin or Insight Meditation-oriented Buddhists. The fact that the so-called "dry-insight" model of meditation is followed by the bulk of convert Theravādin Buddhists[2] in the United States led me to wonder if there would be any interest in *jhāna* meditation, or if those who are interested in the *jhānas* would be attracted to the magical powers (Pāli *abhiññā*) attained through meditation.[3] Such interest would complicate our models of "convert" Buddhism because this orientation is so different from the highly rationalized Insight Meditation movement.[4] As it turns out, the academic literature on Western *jhāna* practice is remarkably bare.[5]

While some academics have been busy decrying the "colonization" of Buddhism by Westerners, convert Buddhists in the United States have been busy discovering and studying Buddhist traditions. These

Buddhists have been described as rather "rationalist" in their selective appropriation.[6] Despite this, and quite to my surprise, the *jhānas* (the meditative absorptions described in the suttas and especially in Buddhaghosa's famous treatise, the *Visuddhimagga*), though until recently largely ignored by convert Insight Meditation Buddhists in the United States, have been increasing in popularity in the past several years. One lay convert *jhāna* teacher commented to me in an interview that there has in fact been a great increase in interest in the *jhānas* over the last few years. She commented that there have been more retreats on *jhānas* offered recently and that *jhāna* "has become kind of a buzzword" among American convert Buddhists in Insight Meditation circles.[7]

In this paper I will examine the teachings of some of the most popular Western *jhāna* teachers whose writings and teachings are readily available to English-speaking American converts and are likely influencing the practice and interpretation of *jhānas* among these converts. My main interest in this endeavor is to analyze the kinds of Buddhist modernism that their *jhāna* teachings reflect. After talking to lay convert teachers, searching in vain for scholarly literature on *jhāna* practice in America, and surveying the popular writings in magazines, books, and on the Internet, I focused my attention on a few key individuals who are the most visible and widely known among American convert Buddhists pursuing *jhāna* practice. My findings regarding these teachers' understandings of *jhāna* suggest certain similarities and differences that warrant a more careful label than simply "Buddhist modernism." Each of these teachers is, to be sure, a "modernist" by conventional Buddhist studies standards, but their approaches, as well as what they consider reliable sources of authority, are quite different from one another. These orientations, in turn, have an effect on the way that *jhāna* practice is presented by these teachers.

Before delving into the details of these Buddhist modernists' teachings, I would like to clearly explain what I mean by "Buddhist modernism." As has been detailed quite extensively elsewhere, the concept of Buddhist modernism was developed by Heinz Bechert in describing changes around the globe in Buddhist practices and beliefs in the last two hundred years or so as a result of Buddhist interactions with Western missionaries, colonialism, and modernity.[8] Gombrich and Obeyesekere similarly noted changes in Sri Lankan Theravāda, though they used the term "Protestant Buddhism" rather than "Buddhist modernism" to describe these changes.[9] The most comprehensive definition

of Buddhist modernism that I know of comes from Donald Lopez, who provides a rather lengthy list of qualities and orientations that comprise it.[10] Other studies have focused on Japanese Zen and Tibetan Buddhism to describe similar processes of rationalization and modernization.[11]

Based on the widespread use of the term in recent Buddhist studies literature and upon the definitions imparted by the researchers mentioned above, Buddhist modernists can be described as having an orientation towards Buddhism that entails a number of features, many of which are interrelated. I offer the following as a brief list of descriptive features:

- the extolling of reason and rationality;
- a rejection of ritual, "superstition," and cosmology;
- the understanding of doctrine and text as more authentically Buddhist than ritual practices such as relic veneration or Buddha-name recitation;
- an ecumenical attitude toward other sects;
- an increase in the status of women;
- an interest in social engagement;
- the tendency to define Buddhism as a philosophy rather than as a religion;
- a belief in the compatibility of Buddhism and modern science;
- an emphasis on meditation, including the hitherto unprecedented widespread practice of meditation among the laity;
- a desire to return to the "original" teachings of the Buddha, particularly as ascribed to the Pāli canon;
- the conviction that nirvana can be obtained in this very life, hence downgrading the importance of karma, merit, and rebirth;
- the rejection of "spirit" or "folk" religion (Spiro's "little tradition"[12]) as mere cultural accretions to be separated from the rational core of Buddhism; and
- democratization and laicization.

This is only a partial list, but it is one that I hope draws a basic outline of Buddhist modernism for the purpose of describing the *jhāna* teachers in this study, to which we will now turn.

AYYA KHEMA

The Western nun Ayya Khema, beloved by many convert Buddhists in the Western world, was born in Germany in 1923 and ordained a Buddhist nun in Sri Lanka in 1979. She taught for many years internationally and in the United States before her death in 1997. Among her more interesting writings are those concerned with the *jhānas*. Khema learned the *jhānas* not from a teacher but from reading the suttas and the *Visuddhimagga*. While in Sri Lanka, she sought a *jhāna* master and was introduced to Mātara Ñānarama Mahāthera, a monk who confirmed that she was doing the *jhānas* correctly and suggested that she begin teaching them. According to him, the *jhānas* were becoming a lost art.[13]

Her most in-depth consideration of the *jhānas* is made in her book *Who Is My Self? A Guide to Buddhist Meditation*.[14] In this work, she takes the reader on a tour of each of the eight *jhānas*. Though she clearly uses the *Visuddhimagga* in her explanation of the various *jhānas*, she places its authority as secondary to the suttas, drawing heavily on the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* and the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*. In one case where the *Visuddhimagga*'s instructions differ from her understanding of attachment in the first *jhāna*, she returns to the suttas, reminding the reader that "the Buddha never said so" in the suttas, and argues that the later commentaries added this idea. So while the *Visuddhimagga* remains an important work for Ayya Khema, it does not hold the same primacy as the suttas.

Unlike Buddhaghosa, who says that among those who attempt the *jhānas* only a very small fraction will reach them, Ayya Khema insists that they are not difficult to achieve.[15] Citing the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* in which the Buddha remembers entering *jhāna* as a child during the annual plowing festival, she insists that children often spontaneously enter the *jhānas* and that "Everyone who possesses patience and perseverance can get to the jhānas."[16] This attitude toward the achievability of the *jhānas* leads her to believe that Buddhists who attained the *jhānas* had the same experience as those reported by Christian mystics; the experience of *jhāna* is a universally human one. According to Ayya Khema, Buddhist meditation, which she equates with the *jhānas*, is the "science of mind" because the *jhānas* are "explainable and repeatable."[17]

But lest we are led to believe that Ayya Khema falls into the "Buddhism without beliefs" category of converts, we should also consider

her understanding and teachings regarding karma and rebirth. She is unwavering in her acceptance of rebirth and suggests that practicing right concentration (*jhāna*) will decrease craving and eventually eradicate it, removing one from the wheel of samsara. Karma is of course important in the endeavor to exit samsara, as it leads to better circumstances for practice; for example, Khema notes that it is good karma that brings people to meditation retreats.[18] But, she insists, making good karma for the purpose of experiencing a pleasant next life is "commercial," as she puts it, and in so doing suggests a modernist view of the rebirth goals among many traditional Theravādins.[19]

Other, more traditional beliefs she expresses include the conviction that higher realms, such as the Brahma realm, really do exist. She also argues that the "Buddha used his clairvoyance to 'catch' anyone who might be ready" to enter the path.[20] However, in addressing the magical powers (*abhiñña*) that are said to arise as a result of advanced *jhāna* practice, Khema omits a description of clairaudience and so on, and suggests to the reader that these powers are simply seeing the pleasant in unpleasantness and vice versa.[21] Whether she made this statement to discourage attachment to magical powers or to show the teachings are "rational" and consistent with modern science is unclear.

HENEPOLA GUNARATANA

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana is a Sri Lankan American monk who arrived in the United States in 1968 at the behest of the Sasana Sevaka Society after working in India for the Maha Bodhi Society and in Malaysia as a missionary.[22] He now spends much of his time at his Bhavana Center in West Virginia. He teaches *vipassanā* meditation to both lay and monastic practitioners and insists that "You could attain enlightenment right now, if you are ready."[23] Though his *Mindfulness in Plain English* is probably the most well-known of his writings, his dissertation from American University, "A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas in Theravada Buddhist Meditation," has enjoyed wide circulation.[24]

Gunaratana makes extensive references to the commentaries, the suttas, and the *abhidhamma* in his explanation of the *jhānas.* For example, he teaches both access concentration and single-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), both of which become suspect in the hands of *jhāna* teachers who rely on the suttas alone (see Vimalaramsi and Thanissaro, below).[25]

Gunaratana clearly accepts the doctrines of rebirth and karma, stating that *jhāna* can serve as wholesome karma leading to improved circumstances in one's next life.[26] He espouses a number of traditional beliefs, such as the importance of monasticism. In addition, he argues that each one of the four levels of awakening (stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and *arhat*) "always arise as states of jhanic consciousness." In other words, *jhāna* is absolutely necessary for nirvana.[27] He praises the *abhiññas* and accepts them as very real, noting that the Buddha in one sutta declares those possessing *abhiññas* as worthy of offerings and reverence and that they are a "supreme field of merit."[28]

PA-AUK SAYĀDAW

Pa-Auk Sayādaw runs a meditation center in Burma. He is cited by many of the convert practitioners as an important *jhāna* teacher, some of whom have traveled to Burma to study with him.[29] He considers the canon, commentaries, and sub-commentaries authoritative, particularly the *Visuddhimagga*. Like Khema and Gunaratana, Pa-Auk Sayādaw believes people can obtain nirvana in this very life, and that is the stated goal of the center he runs.[30] He insists that meditation is the only way to end the cycle of rebirth.[31] He teaches both pure *vipassanā* (dry-insight) and *jhāna*. For most students, he suggests first practicing *jhāna*, after which *vipassanā* meditation should be introduced.[32]

Pa-Auk Sayādaw also advocates using *jhāna* to examine past lives, and further suggests that one can look into the future to see one's *parinibbāna*.[33] Like more traditional Buddhists, he believes in *devas* and other realms of existence, and suggests that being reborn in a *deva* realm is a desirable goal.[34] He also recommends developing the *abhiññas* by practicing particular meditations mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*, such as *kasiṇa*-based *jhāna* meditation.[35] He advocates certain practices that many modernists would consider "superstitious," such as the use of the *Khandha Paritta* to heal and ward off snake bites, which he contends is quite effective.[36]

AJAHN BRAHMAVAṂSO

Another somewhat controversial Western *jhāna* teacher is Ajahn Brahmavaṃso, whose book *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond* is likely on the bookshelf of every serious American convert *jhāna* practitioner. A theoretical physicist before ordaining under the Thai *bhikkhu* Ajahn Chah, he was born in the UK and now runs a monastery in Australia.

Not surprisingly given his background, he uses science as proof for various Buddhist teachings, suggesting that "Buddhism is not a belief system. It is a science founded on objective observation, i.e. meditation...and it is evidently repeatable."[37] He even goes so far as to state that the Buddha, when he mentions "wheel systems" in the suttas, is talking about different galaxies, which he was able to see without a telescope.[38] Brahmavaṃso suggests that levitation is not only possible but may even be occurring at his monastery in Perth.[39] He speaks matter-of-factly about the development of psychic powers, the reality of ghosts and *devas*, and the very real existence of different *jhāna* realms without a hint of the agnostic skepticism common among lay convert practitioners in the United States.

According to Brahmavaṃso, science has proven that rebirth is a fact.[40] He states definitively, "rebirth is not a cultural addition but a central pillar of the teaching."[41] Elsewhere he argues that all stream-enterers believe in rebirth and karma. In fact, the issue of rebirth is central in his book, where he offers multiple sutta citations to "prove" rebirth and offers practical suggestions for the reader to use *jhāna* practice to remember past lives.[42]

According to Brahmavaṃso, the goal of *jhāna* is nirvana, and "data obtained from reviewing jhāna form the basis of insight that leads to nibbāna."[43] He argues against the so-called "dumbing down of nibbāna" in modern interpretations of Buddhism, insisting that nirvana is the highest happiness and that "you deserve to bliss out."[44]

Although Brahmavaṃso teaches laity (including through his books), he asserts that "if you get a few of these jhānas, you'll probably want to become a monk or nun."[45] If one is to reach stream-entry, Brahmavaṃso maintains he or she must hear the dharma from a stream-enterer or above; these enlightened ones are found only in monastic centers.[46] A sign that one's teacher is not enlightened is that they don't have unshakeable faith in the monastic sangha. Likewise, if one does not believe in the suttas, one is not enlightened.[47]

Some of Brahmavaṃso's ideas are a bit controversial. For example, he makes the rather surprising contention that the *jhānas* are original to Buddhism, that is, that the Buddha discovered *jhānas* rather than learning them from his teachers.[48] Brahmavaṃso is also unabashedly sectarian, calling certain Zen ideas "foolish," saying it is impossible to postpone enlightenment out of compassion, and contending that *jhāna* practice is the one and only path to nirvana.[49] This last remark seems

to have made popular Insight Meditation teacher Jack Kornfield, who trained under the same teacher as Brahmavaṃso, a bit uncomfortable; he states in the foreword to Brahmavaṃso's book that *jhāna* is only one of a number of legitimate spiritual paths.[50]

Brahmavaṃso argues for a very deep level of concentration—*ekaggatā*—that other teachers often criticize. He states that in *jhāna* the body disappears, so that one can no longer see or hear.[51] He also states bluntly that *jhāna* is not possible during walking meditation, perhaps a statement made in reference to Vimalaramsi's light, sutta-based *jhānas*, discussed below.[52] Finally, he argues that "some teachers today present a level of meditation and call it *jhāna* when it is clearly less than the real thing."[53] Among the sources Brahmavaṃso reveres and cites throughout his work are the *Vinaya*, the *Visuddhimagga*, and even the *jātakas*—which are very rarely mentioned by Western Insight Meditation teachers.

BHANTE VIMALARAMSI

Another Westerner popular in American convert *jhāna* circles is the American Theravāda monk Bhante Vimalaramsi, who runs the Dhamma Sukka monastery/meditation center in Missouri. Vimalaramsi is particularly interesting in his strong desire to return to the "original" teachings of the Buddha, a phrase he uses often in his talks and writings. Part of this effort to return to the origin of Buddhism has led Vimalaramsi to revere the suttas and *Vinaya* but reject the later commentaries and the *Abhidhamma*. He is particularly critical of the *Visuddhimagga*. For example, he notes:

> So you have the Visuddhimagga teaching one kind of meditation, that doesn't lead to nibbāna, and you have the sutta, that teaches another kind of meditation, and it leads directly to nibbāna. And now, because we're so far away from the time of the Buddha, there's a lot of monks that take the Visuddhimagga as the same as the teaching of the Buddha, and then there's other monks that don't take that as the teaching of the Buddha, they take the suttas as the true teaching.[54]

Though Vimalaramsi initially studied in the *vipassanā* centers in Burma, he became convinced that this style of meditation was not authentic because it was based on commentaries rather than the suttas.[55]

In fact, this sutta-based interpretation of meditation has led him to teaching what he calls "tranquil-wisdom meditation," a joint *samatha/vipassanā* meditation. He teaches mainly from the *Anapanasati-sutta*

and the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, and maintains that *jhāna* should not be considered ecstatic or one-pointed (*ekaggatā*). Rather, it is a light, relaxed state in which various Buddhist insights are examined. He maintains that (1) those who follow the commentaries' descriptions of *jhāna* are practicing a non-Buddhist meditation that does not lead to nirvana and (2) those who follow the commentaries in practicing a separate *vipassanā* practice are mistaken in following a non-canonical authority.

Vimalaramsi maintains more traditional beliefs as well, such as rebirth and supernormal powers. However, he cautions against trying to remember past lives (an ability that the commentaries suggest results from *jhānic* powers). He notes, "I've been asked by people if I would teach them how to remember past lifetimes.... These people that are doing hypnosis [*Visuddhimagga jhānas*] and fooling around with past lifetimes—it's really dangerous...."[56] Superhuman powers are possible as a result of sustained practice according to Vimalaramsi, including "psychic abilities—like the Divine Eye, or the Divine Ear, or flying in the air, reading other people's minds."[57] In this sense we can see that he has not rationalized or explained away Buddhist ideas that many Westerners might find "superstitious."

THANISSARO BHIKKHU

The American monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu was trained in a Thai monastery and is currently abbot of the Metta Forest Monastery near San Diego. He is very well-known in the United States through the popular Web site AccessToInsight.org. His teacher, Ajahn Fuang, emphasized that concentration is essential for developing insight.[58]

Thanissaro Bhikkhu teaches *jhāna* exclusively from the suttas and not from the commentaries. After noting that the *jhānas* as taught in the *Visuddhimagga* include elements not mentioned in the suttas, Thanissaro Bhikkhu notes, "Some Theravadins insist that questioning the commentaries is a sign of disrespect for the tradition, but it seems to be a sign of greater disrespect for the Buddha—or the compilers of the Canon—to assume that he or they would have left out something absolutely essential to the practice."[59] He concludes that *jhāna* in the commentaries is "something quite different" than *jhāna* in the canon.[60]

Unlike others who advocate the "deeper" states described in the *Visuddhimagga*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu argues that extremely deep states of meditation are "wrong concentration."[61] One must be fully aware of the body; powerful *ekaggatā*, as discussed in the *Visuddhimagga*, can

lead to one losing a sense of sounds, thoughts, or perceptions, which is not ideal for insight in his opinion. People who advocate such deep meditation are, according to Thanissaro Bhikkhu, blocking out certain areas of awareness and are "psychologically adept at dissociation and denial."[62]

In what sounds like a Protestant American version of *jhāna* practice, Thanissaro Bhikkhu suggests that one has to look to oneself and not to an outside authority when it comes to the *jhānas*; he clearly valued his teacher's hands-off instructional approach to *jhāna*, which cultivated in his students a sense of what Thanissaro Bhikkhu calls "self-reliance," a theme that runs through much of Thanissaro Bhikkhu's teachings.[63]

LEIGH BRASINGTON

Leigh Brasington is an American student of Ayya Khema who now teaches regularly on the *jhānas* across the United States, mainly to students at Insight Meditation centers. Like his teacher, Brasington suggests that the *jhānas* are not difficult to learn or practice.[64] He notes that "The jhānas as discussed in the suttas are accessible to many people" but maintains that the *jhānas* presented in the *Visuddhimagga* are actually qualitatively different from those described in the suttas; he speculates that the *Visuddhimagga jhānas* were developed during a later period and are more difficult to achieve.[65] In fact, Brasington has suggested that we distinguish between "sutta *jhānas*" and "*Visuddhimagga jhānas*," which he considers quite different from one another. Brasington favors the lighter sutta *jhānas*.[66]

When I asked him about his opinion of the authority of the written tradition, including the canon and commentaries, he stated that he reads the texts often and tries to understand "the main strands" of the teachings and "let the rest go." His approach is in many ways very pragmatic, a difference that distinguishes his interpretation from more traditional Buddhists. In noting that debate continues over the nature and interpretation of *jhānas*, he contends that rather than trying to determine the most authentic form of *jhāna*, a more fruitful line of inquiry is, "Is there some level of jhāna that people can actually learn and will help them in their spiritual growth?"[67] Given this very practical approach, I wondered what his attitude toward rebirth is. When I prodded him, he smiled and said simply that he doesn't know what happens after death.[68] The goal of *jhāna*, he said, was developing

insight that leads to nirvana—given his view of rebirth, I think it is safe to assume that he considers nirvana possible in this very life.

SHAILA CATHERINE

The second lay American of the *jhāna* teachers presented here, Shaila Catherine is the founder and head teacher of Insight Meditation South Bay in the Palo Alto area of Northern California. Her book, *Focused and Fearless* (forthcoming), is a manual dedicated to teaching the *jhānas* to a Western, English-speaking audience, and it assumes a background in Insight Meditation on behalf of the reader.[69] Her work appears to be directed to a lay audience, whom she insists are perfectly legitimate in practicing the *jhānas*—"traditionally this practice was not reserved for special people nor restricted to the monastic order."[70] Throughout the book, Catherine cites various authorities, teachers, and inspirations, ranging from the Buddha of the Pāli canon to contemporary *vipassanā* teachers like Ajahn Chah, a variety of Tibetan teachers such as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Tenzin Palmo, Kalu Rinpoche, and Longchepa, and non-Buddhists such as the Advaita teacher Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and her own teacher, H. W. L. Poonja. Expressing this spirit of ecumenicalism, she notes, "there is no single right way to experience the truth of the present."[71]

The textual authorities she uses to support her assertions about *jhāna* practice include the Pāli canon and the *Visuddhimagga.* Although she concedes that access concentration is not mentioned in the suttas and is found only in the commentarial tradition, she nevertheless teaches access concentration in her book.[72]

Like Brasington (whom she later cites), Catherine suggests there are two different *jhāna* traditions being promulgated, each requiring different levels of absorption. She asks, are these "two valid but different jhanic systems within the Buddhist tradition?" and goes on to dispassionately describe the two approaches.[73] Later, she notes that "some teachers in Asia and the West recognize fairly light levels of natural samadhi (unified concentration)...they liberally apply the term jhana to any arising of the designated configuration of jhanic factors. Other teachers reserve the term jhana for a depth of seclusion that permits no sensory impressions whatsoever. Most teachers fall somewhere between the two extremes."[74] Hesitant to be pinned down to a correct interpretation, Catherine instead suggests that the "academic debate" be sidelined in favor of a "practical attainment of jhana," but at the

same time suggests that the two approaches are simply different experiences of the same jhanic states.[75] In her book she notes Brasington's interpretation approvingly, namely, that one can swim deeply in a pool of water (a deep *ekaggatā* interpretation of *jhāna*) or merely swim at the surface (the light sutta *jhāna* approach of Vimalaramsi and Thanissaro), but the pool remains the same.[76] Having skillfully addressed the question of authentic versus inauthentic *jhāna*, Catherine is free to express her trust in the *ekaggatā* approach, choosing to define *jhāna* in her book as referring to "a traditional sequence of specific states of absorption where the mind is secluded from sensory impingement and deeply unified with a chosen object."[77] Still, she prefers "to let the individual practitioner determine this for her- or himself," coaxing the reader, "you can gauge for yourself...."[78]

This last theme runs throughout the book. Where debate muddies the water, Catherine prefers to allow *experience* to operate as the ultimate authority, suggesting to the reader again and again that he or she is the final judge of truth, and that one can trust—a word used copiously throughout the work—one's own experience.[79] "In the absence of authoritarian requirements," she comments, "we must each discover for ourselves the tender discipline that sustains us."[80]

In terms of expressing the sort of belief-free agnosticism often attributed to Western convert Buddhists,[81] Catherine expresses a clear belief in the attainability of nirvana, suggesting that while *jhāna* meditation itself cannot produce enlightenment, it can support liberative wisdom.[82] But elsewhere she is more guarded and ambiguous about traditional Buddhist teachings. She mentions karma only once, and even then only in passing.[83] Perhaps most significantly, she completely (and rather diplomatically) avoids the question of the supernatural powers traditionally attributed to the practice of the *jhānas*: "The ancient discourses present the possibility of using the fourth jhana as a springboard for 'wielding the various kinds of spiritual power,' such as mind-reading, seeing into the future, or recollecting past lives—even duplicating the body, or flying through the air. Although these possibilities are interesting, this book limits itself to a discussion of the two other traditional options [the four formless *jhānas* and *vipassanā*]."[84]

MANY MODERNISMS

We would benefit from developing a less monolithic understanding of contemporary Buddhisms than "Buddhist modernism" to describe what is, in my estimation, a very wide range of beliefs and practices. For example, like the other teachers mentioned in this study, Ayya Khema's interpretations of Buddhism and the *jhānas* offer a mishmash of modernist and traditional qualities. In some areas, her perspectives clearly fit the ideal type of "modernist": she focused on meditation in her Buddhist practice, was rather ecumenical, and considered Buddhism consonant with science. On the other hand, she believed in the supernatural powers of the Buddha and retained many traditional beliefs regarding karma and rebirth.

On the whole, Ayya Khema, Bhante Gunaratana, and Pa-Auk Sayādaw share much in their orientations to Buddhism. Like the other *jhāna* teachers in this study, they share the largely modernist emphasis on meditation and the belief that the laity can and in fact should practice meditation. Each of the teachers in this study expresses what Bond has described as "optimism," that is, the belief that nirvana is still reachable in our time so far removed from the Buddha.[85] For all of these reasons, and a host of others, all of the teachers in this study can be described as modernists. Ayya Khema, Bhante Gunaratana, and Pa-Auk Sayādaw are traditional, however, in other ways, and it is this particular mix of modern and traditional orientations that I would like to call here a "mainstream" modernism. Unlike the American convert monastics Vimalaramsi and Thanissaro, these mainstream modernists teach from the entire canon as well as from extra-canonical works such as the *Visuddhimagga* and see the entire written tradition as a valuable guide to *jhāna* and Buddhist practice. They share an emphasis on rebirth and karma as essential Buddhist doctrines, and at least acknowledge the reality of *abhiñña*, with each teacher placing more or less emphasis on these powers. Neither Khema, Gunaratana, nor Pa-Auk shy away from traditional Buddhist cosmology regarding various realms of existence and the beings who reside there, ideas that in the hands of lay American converts are often rationalized or discarded as superstitious. These teachers acknowledge that the *vipassanā* movement's methods are useful, and some of them recommend either *vipassanā* or *jhāna* for students on a case-by-case basis. In other words, they see multiple paths to awakening existing in the Buddhist tradition. This shines through in their willingness to acknowledge the authenticity

of other traditions. For example, Pa-Auk Sayādaw is more than willing to teach to Mahāyāna monastics without trying to convert them, and Ayya Khema suggests that the mystics of the Christian tradition discovered and practiced *jhāna*.[86]

Overall, Ajahn Brahmavaṃso shares much in common with Khema, Gunaratana, and Pa-Auk: he cites the suttas, the *Abhidhamma*, the commentaries, and the *jātakas* as authoritative and appears to accept the authority of the entire written tradition. He also teaches the doctrines of rebirth and karma, in many ways more forcefully than the other teachers in this study. He insists that one necessarily believes in these things if one is on the path to awakening. In fact, with his background as a physicist, it is not entirely surprising that he asserts science *proves* these doctrines; the above teachers are not particularly concerned with confirming Buddhist teachings through Western science. He likewise emphasizes *abhiñña*, teaches past-life recall,[87] and emphasizes levitation and other superpowers in a vigorous way that the other teachers do not. But perhaps the most important distinction between Brahmavaṃso's style of modernism and those of the other teachers in this study is that he does not view *vipassanā* meditation as a legitimate path to awakening. In fact, Brahmavaṃso makes it very clear that there is only one possible way to awaken, and that is through *jhāna*.[88] His emphasis on *jhāna* as the one true way, as the only legitimate Buddhist path, leads him to criticize other traditions with a certain freeness that one rarely associates with Buddhist modernists. Although his particular blend of modernist and traditional orientations brings him quite close to the "mainstream modernists," his unique anti-ecumenical approach and fervent claims of the "proof" of Buddhist belief through scientific means is a unique blend of traditional and modernist Buddhism.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu and Bhante Vimalaramsi, both of whom trained in meditation centers in Southeast Asia, show some striking similarities in their contextualization of *jhāna* and overall approach to Theravāda. What is particularly salient to me is that each suggests returning to "original" Buddhism, that is, the Buddhism of the Buddha as preserved in the Pāli canon, and therefore relies almost exclusively on the suttas and *Vinaya* rather than the commentaries, *Abhidhamma*, or any other writings that appear to have been composed at a later time. The two trained in different centers, one in Burma and the other Thailand. Though Vimalaramsi studied in the *vipassanā* centers in Burma in

the 1980s, he became convinced that this style of meditation was not authentic because it was based on the commentaries rather than the suttas and decided to stop giving any authority to the commentaries.[89] Likewise, Thai-trained Thanissaro Bhikkhu completely rejects the authority of the commentaries in terms of *jhāna* practice. Both of these teachers agree that the *jhānas* are a light state of meditation because *ekaggatā*, deep one-pointedness, is mentioned only in the commentaries. Thanissaro argues that the deep state of meditation advocated by some Buddhist teachers is "wrong concentration,"[90] while Vimalaramsi suggests that the *jhāna* practices endorsed by *Visuddhimagga* followers is "hypnosis," not *jhāna*.[91] To me this orientation suggests a more Protestant, or at least American, attitude in which religious specialists, like those monastics who wrote commentaries, are seen as fallible and not particularly trustworthy.[92] The Theravāda tradition in Asia in the post-Buddha era is looked on with a critical eye, and the only source of true authority is the Buddha himself—and the words of the Buddha are found only in the earliest suttas and the *Vinaya*. It suggests to me a more text-centric orientation, perhaps fed by the work of early Orientalists who sought "true" Buddhism in the early Buddhist writings rather than in traditional practices, and in fact Paul Numrich in his study of Theravāda Buddhism in the United States suggests that American converts to the more traditional Theravāda (in contrast to the Insight Meditation movement) frequently appear to come from fundamentalist Christian backgrounds.[93] Indeed, he notes that "American-convert Theravāda *bhikkhus* have uncovered a clear strain of conservatism on *vinaya*,"[94] and Thanissaro Bhikkhu has in fact been branded elsewhere as a "*Vinaya* fundamentalist."[95] What is most interesting to me about these two *jhāna* teachers is that while they diverge in teaching lineage, they nevertheless share a strong suspicion of the commentaries (and hence teach "light" *jhānas*) and other items not "original" to the Buddhism of the Buddha as presented in the Pāli canon; they also became monastics rather than practiced as laypeople (suggesting a more "traditional" approach to Buddhism). Their similarities lead me to describe them as "original Buddhism" modernists.

Brasington and Catherine—the last of the teachers discussed here—share a more pragmatic, lay-centric approach that places the authority to interpret the Buddhist tradition firmly in the self (and I suspect a great deal of lay convert practitioners in the United States have a similar orientation).[96] In other words, competing truth claims are set-

tled not by appealing to the authority of text, tradition, doctrine, or science, but through experience or "inner wisdom." This leaves the practitioner with the ability to pick and choose among the teachings in the entire written and living tradition, and even from beyond the Buddhist religion altogether. For example, though Brasington tends to reject the authority of the Buddhist tradition in the post-Buddha era, he still draws on ideas such as access concentration and *vipassanā* as a separate practice, which are only mentioned in the commentaries. Such an orientation leaves considerable space for interpretation, reinterpretation, and even creative invention. I would like to call these two Buddhist teachers "pragmatic modernists."

My analysis revealed that divergent interpretations of authority among these teachers affect their *jhāna* teachings and practices, and in some cases there is significant overlap in distinct orientations, such as the commonalities shown in Vimalaramsi and Thanissaro's "original Buddhism" approach and the "experience as authority" of Brasington and Catherine. Is this related to distinct modernist lineages? This question would be less complicated if we were comparing, for example, the so-called "modernism" of the Thai forest tradition versus the modernist Burmese or Sri Lankan traditions. But each of these teachers has been affected not only by their birth region's norms but also by the global flow of culture and religion, and in the contemporary period it becomes near impossible to untangle distinct lineages of modernism in a manner such that we could then identify various unique modernities. For example, is Thanissaro's orientation due to his training in the Thai forest tradition, or to the legacy of the "original" Buddhism espoused by the Western Orientalists that informed so much of America's understanding of Buddhism, or perhaps to his own religious upbringing? Likewise, is Gunaratana's modernism the result of Burmese influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism, more "traditional" Sri Lankan Buddhism (or even a distinct brand of Sri Lankan "Protestant" Buddhism), his residence in the United States, or something else? Furthermore, all the various Buddhist modernisms described here display only some "modernist" traits in conjunction with other, more "traditional" traits. This makes it very worrisome to place all of these teachers under the simple rubric of "Buddhist modernism" generally, or even within specific "lineages" of nationally-circumscribed modernisms (i.e., "Sri Lankan Buddhist modernism"). And given the simultaneous flow of multiple Buddhist traditions not only into Western cultures, but across Asian

national borders as well, tracing specific Buddhist modernist "lineages" is likely to become increasingly difficult if not impossible in some cases.

Both Bechert and Lopez have cautioned that the label "Buddhist modernism" purports to describe what is in fact a very diverse group of people; Bechert notes that "Buddhist modernism is by no means a uniform movement," but to date no researcher that I know of has taken on the task of untangling the many different orientations subsumed under this very general term.[97] Complicating matters further is the fact that many of the people we call "Buddhist modernists" retain very traditional practices and/or beliefs in addition to more modernist ones. Our definition of Buddhist modernism needs to become more nuanced and plural in nature; we need to avoid lumping together into a single undifferentiated category ("Buddhist modernism") such a wide variety of orientations, many of which are antagonistic to one another.

We would benefit greatly from a model that recognizes multiple modernities, such as I have tried to suggest. As Rofel noted over ten years ago, "That which has been taken as homogenous and called 'modernity'...obscures a range of diverse practices."[98] How have various modernist notions been adopted, transformed, and localized, even among so-called "traditional" Buddhists? Eisenstadt notes:

> The idea of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world—indeed to explain the history of modernity—is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programs of modernity, holding very different views on what makes societies modern.[99]

This study has indeed demonstrated that different sorts of modernity underlie the *jhāna* teachings being presented to the West, with some teachers emphasizing the authority that tradition (esp. the commentaries) carries, some rejecting anything not said by the "Buddha himself" in textual accounts, and some locating authority in the de-traditionalized self.

As I have demonstrated, distinct strands of modernism may exist even in one nation. The modernism of what I called here the "original Buddhism" converts differs considerably from that of the "pragmatic"

modernists not just in their *jhāna* practices, but more fundamentally in their vision of Buddhism in the contemporary period. While the proponents of "original" Buddhism envision a religion led by monastics and relying exclusively on the textual works directly attributable to the Buddha, the more "pragmatic" Buddhists seem to reject traditional authority altogether and espouse a more "spiritual but not religious" Buddhism that relies on the self as the ultimate arbiter of truth. This difference in orientation reveals two rival interpretations about the proper boundaries of religious authority in the contemporary period, particularly as related to the lay/monastic distinction and who can claim a legitimate interpretation of the Buddhist tradition, as well as differing conceptions regarding the authority of text. That both of these strands exist in the United States suggests that we reconsider not only the homogenizing term "Buddhist modernism," but even nationally-derived descriptors such as "Sri Lankan Buddhist modernism" or "Vietnamese Buddhist modernism." The flow of cultural and religious capital across national boundaries in the emerging global ecumene demands that we reconsider such narrow methods of categorization, particularly in places such as the United States where a wealth of different Buddhist traditions are practiced side by side.

NOTES

1. I'd like to express my appreciation to Shaila Catherine and Leigh Brasington for taking the time to grant me interviews regarding *jhāna* meditation in the American Insight Meditation context, including their own understandings of *jhāna.*

2. Some colleagues may challenge my choice to describe these Buddhists under the rubric of "Theravāda," particularly given Peter Skilling's objection to the use of the term based on its modern history and scarcity of use in Pāli sources (see "Ubiquitous and Elusive: In Quest of Theravāda," unpublished paper presented at the conference "Exploring Theravāda Studies: Intellectual Trends and the Future of a Field of Study," National University of Singapore, August 12–14, 2004). However, my intent here is not to point toward a historic continuity of a particular ordination lineage, nor to suggest that "Theravāda" as a term is appropriate for discussing ancient or pre-modern Buddhisms in South and Southeast Asia, nor even to determine whether convert Buddhists who claim to be Theravādin are *really* Theravādin or even Buddhist. Rather, I employ the term in describing a group of persons who self-consciously use it to describe themselves. I will therefore leave questions of authenticity to those better suited for Buddhist "theology" and the discernment between heresy and orthodoxy. However, I should like to mention that my own field research in Sri Lankan American Buddhist communities revealed that many of these Asian American Buddhists are perfectly content to call the Insight Meditation movement a "Theravādin" group.

3. There are such individuals, though my research indicates they are considered heterodox in the Insight Meditation and Theravāda communities. See, for example, the self-ordained (and self-declared "stream-winner") Sotapanna Jhanananda's writings at http://www.greatwesternvehicle.org.

4. For a good introduction to the Insight Meditation movement in the United States, see Gil Fronsdal, "Insight Meditation in the United States: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, ed. Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 163–180.

5. In examining the literature, I found no academic treatments of the topic of *jhāna* in Western Buddhism. The dearth of research on this topic is likely related to the reluctance of many scholars to treat Western Buddhists as worthy of study. Furthermore, when the concepts of modernity and Westernization are collapsed into one, scholars decry the tainting of Asian Buddhism with Western influences, producing an attitude toward Buddhist modernism that views it as nothing more than an Orientalist product leading to the demise of so-called "traditional" Buddhism, rather than as a way for *Buddhists themselves* to keep Buddhism applicable to their contemporary lives. For more on

this see Natalie Quli, "Western Self, Asian Other: Modernity, Authenticity, and Nostalgia for 'Tradition' in Buddhist Studies," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (forthcoming).

6. See, for example, Martin Baumann, "Protective Amulets and Awareness Techniques, or How to Make Sense of Buddhism in the West," in *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*, ed. Charles S. Prebish and Martin Bauman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

7. Interview with Shaila Catherine, September 2007.

8. See Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Landern des Theravada-Buddhismus*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1973); and for an English discussion see his "Buddhist Revival in East and West," in *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture,* ed. Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 273–285.

9. Gananath Obeyesekere and Richard Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

10. Donald Lopez, introduction to *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), vii–xli. See also David McMahan's *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (forthcoming).

11. See, for example, Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (October 1995): 228–283. Other fine studies include George Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988); and Elizabeth Harris, *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

12. Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

13. Mary Talbot, "A Mind Pure, Concentrated, and Bright: An Interview with Meditation Teacher Leigh Brasington," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 14, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 67.

14. Ayya Khema, *Who Is My Self? A Guide to Buddhist Meditation* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997).

15. See *Visuddhimagga* XII.8, where Buddhaghosa states that only one in one hundred million reach absorption.

16. Khema, *Who Is My Self*, 47.

17. Ibid., 50.

18. Ayya Khema, *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere: Meditations on the Buddhist Path*

(Somersville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 18.

19. Ibid., 78.

20. Ibid., 54.

21. Ibid., 68.

22. Henepola Gunaratana, *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: Walking the Buddha's Path* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 267.

23. Henepola Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in Plain English*, rev. and updated ed. (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 168.

24. A revised version of this work was published under the title *The Path of Serenity and Insight: An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhanas* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1985).

25. Many examples of his reliance on these works can be found in the titles above (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*, *Mindfulness in Plain English*, and *The Path of Serenity and Insight*), as well as in his many other published and unpublished works. *Ekagattā* and access concentration in particular are discussed throughout *The Path of Serenity and Insight*, his most complete work on the *jhāna* system of meditation.

26. Ibid., 139.

27. Ibid., 175; see also 213.

28. Ibid., 206.

29. For more on Pa-Auk Sayādaw in the context of Burmese political culture, see Gustaaf Houtman, *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1999), 134, 272, and 323.

30. Pa-Auk Sayādaw, *Knowing and Seeing: Talks and Questions-and-Answers at a Meditation Retreat in Taiwan*, 2nd ed. (Tullera, Australia: Buddha Dharma Education Association, Inc., 2000), 8–9.

31. Ibid., 15.

32. Ibid., 36.

33. Ibid., 196.

34. Ibid., 108.

35. Ibid., 175–176.

36. Ibid., 256.

37. Ajahn Brahmavaṃso Mahathera, "Buddhism, the Only Real Science," *Lanka Daily News* (Colombo), March 28, 2007. Available online at http://www.dailynews.lk/2007/03/28/fea04.asp.

38. Ibid.

39. Ajahn Brahmavaṃso, "Buddhism and Science," dharma talk presented at the Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre, Nollamara, Western Australia, 19 October 2001. It is available online at http://www.bswa.org/audio/mp3/Brahmavamso_2001_10_19.mp3.

40. Brahmavaṃso, "Buddhism, the Only Real Science."

41. Ajahn Brahm, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond: A Meditator's Handbook* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 185.

42. Ibid., 250; 187.

43. Ibid., 154.

44. Ibid., 212; 132.

45. Ibid., 98.

46. Ibid., 211.

47. Ibid., 249–250.

48. Ibid., 127–130.

49. Ibid., 257, 229, and 129.

50. Jack Kornfield, foreword to *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, ix.

51. Brahm, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, scattered references throughout.

52. Ibid., 75.

53. Ibid., 128–129.

54. Bhante Vimalaramsi, "Factors of Enlightenment," http://www.dhammasukha.org/Study/Talks/Transcripts/factors-aug00-ts.htm. His critique of the *Visuddhimagga* is significantly more biting in "The Noble Eightfold Path," http://www.dhammasukha.org/Study/Talks/Transcripts/8-fold-path-mar02-t.htm.

55. "The Teachers [*sic*] Background," http://www.dhammasukha.org/About/teacher_background.htm.

56. "Anuruddha—Master of the Divine Eye," http://www.dhammasukha.org/Study/Talks/Transcripts/ANURUDDHA-OCT06-TS.htm.

57. Ibid.

58. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Seeing for Yourself," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* 14, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 74–76.

59. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Wings to Awakening* (1996), 287. Available online at http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings.pdf.

60. Ibid., 287.

61. Ibid., 261.

62. Thanissaro, "Seeing for Yourself," 76.

63. However, compare this with his statement that "the determining factor in deciding a correct understanding is not personal authority but consistency. Only if a statement stands up under comparison with what is known of the Canon should it be accepted as true Dhamma or Vinaya." Thanissaro, "Buddhist Monastic Code I," http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/bmc1/bmc1.intro.html.

64. Leigh Brasington, "A Mind Pure, Concentrated, and Bright: An Interview with Leigh Brasington," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Winter 2004): 66–71.

65. Leigh Brasington, "Interpretations of the Jhānas," http://www.leighb.com/jhanantp.htm; interview with the author, August 2007.

66. Personal interview with the author; see also Brasington, "Interpretations of the Jhānas."

67. Brasington, "A Mind Pure, Concentrated, and Bright," 67.

68. Interview with the author, August 2007.

69. Shaila Catherine, *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, forthcoming).

70. Catherine bases this assertion on the *Pīti-sutta.* Ibid., xii.

71. Ibid., 187.

72. Ibid., 6–7, 113, 117.

73. Ibid., 127.

74. Ibid., 153.

75. Ibid., 128.

76. Ibid., 154.

77. Ibid., xii.

78. Ibid., 154.

79. She notes, "you need to trust mindfulness as your mind's guard" (ibid., 62) and "Trust the capacity of the heart" (ibid., 65), just two of many possible examples found in this book.

80. Ibid., 79.

81. See Baumann, "Protective Amulets," 58.

82. Ibid., 64, 142–143, 163, 176, 181, 182, 219.

83. Ibid., 74.

84. Ibid., 151.

85. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka.*

86. Pa-Auk Sayādaw, *Knowing and Seeing*; Khema, *Who Is My Self*, 50.

87. Brahm, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, 185–188.

88. Ibid*.,* 129.

89. See Vimalaramsi, "The Teachers Background" (n.p.): "I had the opportunity to meet many Sri Lankan monks and, after long conversations with them, I realized that many of the writings I had been studying in Burma were actually commentaries on the Pali texts, rather than the original texts themselves. The monks said that, upon close examination, some of the ideas conveyed in these commentaries are somewhat different from those contained in the original suttas. Surprisingly, one monk even suggested that I disregard the commentaries and go straight to the Pali texts for the best teachings. Another teacher showed me how to meditate as described in the suttas—a method remarkably different from the forms I had learned." Note that here the conflict is between a Burmese modernist movement's interpretation and a Sri Lankan modernist one, which then plays out in the interpretation of scripture by an American Buddhist modernist. Once again, this suggests that we need better descriptive models for understanding the multiplicity of Buddhist reactions to modernity.

90. Thanissaro, "Seeing for Yourself," 76.

91. Vimalaramsi, "Anuruddha: Master of the Divine Eye."

92. This is *not* to say that these venerable monks do not have a deep respect for tradition or love for their teachers. Both Vimalaramsi and Thanissaro regularly express profound and clearly heartfelt appreciation for their teachers.

93. Paul Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 119.

94. Paul Numrich, "*Vinaya* in Theravāda Temples in the United States," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 1 (1994): 26–27.

95. See, for example, Sravasti Dhammika, *The Broken Buddha: Critical Reflections on Theravada and a Plea for a New Buddhism* (Singapore: Nimmala Group, 2006). I refer here to the online version, available at http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf, 15.

96. For more on the authority of the inner self in American religiosity, see Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998). Thanissaro Bhikkhu also appears to embrace this approach, at least in part, when he emphasizes self-reliance, as noted above.

97. Bechert, "Buddhist Revival in East and West," 276.

98. Lisa Rofel, "Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, ed. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 160.

99. S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," in *Multiple Modernities*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 2.

BOOK REVIEW

No Time to Lose: A Timely Guide to the Way of the Bodhisattva. By Pema Chödrön. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005. 408 pages. Hardcover, $24.05.

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PEMA CHÖDRÖN'S ABILITY to make Buddhist teachings available and relevant to a varied audience is widely known and respected. In *No Time to Lose: A Timely Guide to the Way of the Bodhisattva* she turns her attention to Śāntideva's classic *The Way of the Bodhisattva* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*). What makes this commentary particularly significant is Chödrön's ability to combine an intelligent and nuanced investigation of the text, in translation, with the sensibility and perspective of a dedicated, mature, contemporary Western teacher. Śāntideva and Chödrön are, in a way, both speaking from the same dharma seat with the intention of reducing suffering and supporting awakening. Chödrön's voice and contemporary examples make Śāntideva's often challenging teaching accessible and provide a foundation for further investigation.

Starting with a clear statement about the relevance of Śāntideva's teaching for her own life and Buddhist practice, Chödrön lays out a compelling basis for engaging in the study of this text. Following these teachings, she says, shows that "ordinary people like us can make a difference in a world desperately in need of help." She then proceeds to carefully articulate Śāntideva's key points chapter by chapter. Chödrön chose to omit chapter 9, the chapter in which Śāntideva presents teachings on the *pāramitā* of wisdom and a complex philosophical debate on the emptiness doctrine. As I discuss below, this places certain limitations on Chödrön's commentary but does not undermine its relevance or usefulness.

No Time to Lose follows Śāntideva's text, verse by verse, interspersing a collection of verses with commentary. This breaks up their overall flow but allows for careful examination of related verses. Chapter 1 introduces *bodhicitta* ("awakened mind/heart") as the basis for the Mahāyāna path of the bodhisattva and includes Śāntideva's poetic and

expressive statements of gratitude, humility, commitment, and confidence. Chödrön's discussion of this chapter highlights the importance of these qualities for the development of practices recommended later in the text. Her commentary addresses misinterpretations that commonly occur in the lives of contemporary practitioners, for example mistaking self-contempt, a manifestation of fixed view, for humility. She relates Śāntideva's discussion of *bodhicitta* to the cultivation of happiness, joy, and peace and, ultimately, to the understanding that "selfless action liberates us from fear and sorrow" (13). In this way she establishes the perspective she maintains throughout the commentary—that careful and dedicated cultivation of the recommended practices brings relief from suffering for ourselves and others. She states: "For endless lifetimes we've been falling into this crevasse [samsara/ the world of suffering]. Let's finally get smart and not fall in anymore. And should we stumble now and then, let's catch ourselves and climb back out. That's the message" (49).

In chapter 2 Śāntideva moves from the practice of offering to a forceful presentation of the need to confess ones "sins" and face the immanence of death. Chödrön acknowledges the difficulty such language can pose for many contemporary readers and successfully reframes it in a way that is more accessible. She notes that Western practitioners tend to interpret "shortcomings not as proof of our humanity but of our unworthiness" (52). With her reminder that compassion for oneself, along with others, is essential, she undercuts such misinterpretations and sets a context for later chapters.

The bodhisattva vow is the focus of chapter 3. In it Śāntideva presents some of his most beautiful and his most challenging verses. Selfless devotion to all beings in every way possible is the fulfillment of the bodhisattva vow. He recommends, for example, that the body be given "to serve all beings/let them kill and beat and slander it/and do to it whatever they desire...whatever does not bring them injury" (63). Chödrön successfully contextualizes these verses using the example of civil rights workers who "were willing to put their bodies and feelings on the line," and enter into dangerous circumstances where they might be "beaten, insulted, and perhaps killed" so that others might have greater freedom. This, she reminds us, is "bodhisattva wisdom and courage" and it includes the wish that those who perpetrate violence also be relieved of suffering (64).

Chapters 4 through 8 present specific methods for deepening and expressing *bodhicitta* while covering chapters 4 through 6 in the original work. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 we are introduced to the *pāramitās*. Usually translated as "perfection" or the "virtuous quality of a bodhisattva," Chödrön describes the *pāramitās* in language that points to their relevance to a practitioner's ordinary life, describing them as the "six basic ways to go beyond the false security of habitual patterns and relax with the fundamental groundlessness and unpredictability of our lives" (xv).

In chapter 4 Śāntideva's teachings on attentiveness and working with emotions and their impact is presented. Of particular note is Chödrön's discussion of the nature and consequences of making a commitment to the bodhisattva path. She notes that taking this vow is "just asking for trouble" and requires the practitioner to "face the fact that this includes working with the unreasonableness of sentient beings like you and me" (80). She echoes the challenge posed by Śāntideva, making clear the difficulties and also reminding the reader that it is both possible and liberating to follow the bodhisattva path. In taking up the topic of "negative emotions" (*kleśas*), Chödrön addresses a central teaching of Śāntideva's and a central difficulty for many practitioners. The tenacity and habitual nature of afflictive emotional states, as well as their power and subtlety, is countered, as she puts it, by our "clear determination, intelligent awareness, and compassion." With attentiveness and the disciplined practice of mindfulness, the "seductiveness and power" as well as the impact of negative emotions is diminished (96).

The focus of chapter 5 is the *pāramitā* of discipline, "taming the mind," as well as the connection between the practice of mediation and the cultivation of the "three disciplines of not causing harm, gathering virtue, and benefiting others" (104). With meditation, the cultivation of awareness, devotion, and gratitude, that which harms us becomes apparent and we are able to "see what needs to be done and act accordingly" (122). In this effort, Chödrön reminds us, the "best advice for a new bodhisattva is to tame your mind without losing your sense of humor" (124).

Chapter 6 continues a discussion of the three virtues listed above, with detailed descriptions and practices meant to interrupt habitual tendencies. These include learning to be silent rather than give in to impulsive negative speech, cultivating the faith that these practices are

possible, steadfastness in the daily effort, the need to "pace ourselves and relax" (135), non-attachment to the body, honesty and kindness in speech, study, and the need to remain close to elders and teachers.

In chapters 7 and 8, Chödrön presents Śāntideva's well-known teachings on patience and working with anger. She frames the practice of patience as courageous and carefully presents the practice of transforming aggressive emotional states. She describes, in detail, awareness practices to be done in meditation, that is, paying attention to the sensations, thoughts, and feelings associated with anger as well as attending to the "soft spot" that she describes as underlying anger and rage. She effectively clarifies the meaning of the term evil— "intentionally causing harm" (161). She sets in context Śāntideva's instruction to understand pain and difficulty as a means by which we deepen our realization of the teachings.

In chapter 8 we are introduced to the joys of practicing patience as well as the importance of learning that the desire for gratification and praise and the "childish craving for validation" (208) is a mistaken search for lasting happiness. Chödrön challenges us to follow Śāntideva's injunction to cultivate gratitude toward those who insult or provoke us. She tells us that, in determining "what is worthy of your gratitude, look to the final result" (214), and recommends that we cultivate the same attitude to those who cause us pain as we would toward a doctor using painful methods that will ultimately cure us.

In chapter 9 Chödrön takes up Śāntideva's discussion of enthusiasm, what she terms "heroic perseverance," and the factors that support the flourishing of *bodhicitta*. Her commentary, again, includes an appreciation for pitfalls common to contemporary practitioners, such as a habit of self-denigration, but she does not shy away from Śāntideva's urgency in describing the need to directly confront those factors, such as laziness, that obstruct the development of enthusiasm. Her description of the need to bring balance and wisdom to the effort undercuts any tendency to use Śāntideva's teaching as fuel for self-contempt or understanding practice as an "endurance test" (240). She clearly states that the practice "introduces us to unshakable confidence: a lionlike pride that refuses to buy into any negative or limiting story lines" (259).

Chapters 10 and 11 discuss the verses on the practice of meditation, beginning with a discussion of the circumstances that support or distract from meditation practice. In chapter 10, Chödrön inter-

prets Śāntideva's teachings in such a way that they become relevant for those not living lives in solitary retreat. For example, she discusses Śāntideva's statement that we should leave "worldly life" in terms of the need to "find time to be free of outer distractions" and "take time to meditate" (271). She encourages everyone to find time for the practice of meditation and solitude. "The main point is to make solitude a part of your life" (277). Chödrön interprets Śāntideva's strong language on sexual desire and craving as being not about "sexual passion itself, but how obsessed we become and the crazy things we do to satisfy our desires" (286). In both these cases, there is a clear effort on Chödrön's part to make the teachings of an eighth-century celibate monk relevant to twenty-first-century householders, without diluting the original teachings.

Chapter 11 focuses on specific practices aimed at dissolving the illusory designation of self and other and the cultivation of compassion and open-heartedness. Undermining the "relentless sense" of self and other, me and mine, through practices such as exchanging self and other, is the antidote to self-cherishing, a "way out of the pain of self-absorption" (314) and the expression of the vow to benefit others. Chödrön notes that "[l]oving ourselves provides the foundation for cherishing others" and in this way undercuts any tendency toward self-denigration. At the same time, she states clearly that it is important that "we don't sweeten the message too much. Indulging in self-absorption is dangerous to our health" (334).

In the final chapter Chödrön advises us to read Śāntideva's verses of dedication in order to "use his expert help to voice our own deepest wishes" (341). Through dedicating the merit of an activity to the benefit of all beings, without exception, our attitude is shifted, we are "softened" and reminded of the interconnected nature of our lives. In concluding this chapter, Chödrön recommends these teachings as a support for becoming "peacemakers: effective, responsible, and compassionate citizens of the world" (360). She asks us to consider whether we believe these teachings to be valid and, if so, whether we can commit to them. She challenges us, saying, "In these times, do we really have a choice? Do we have the option of living in unconscious self-absorption? When the stakes are so high, do we have the luxury of dragging our feet?" She adds her own wish that these teachings "help each of us to make a difference."

No Time to Lose presents an intelligent investigation of Śāntideva's work with philosophical precision and the sensibility of a seasoned practitioner and teacher dedicated to making this important text accessible and available to a wide audience. As such, it provides a perspective useful to both scholars and practitioners. Including the voice of an educated and committed practitioner and teacher in scholarly investigations supports a deeper understanding of the content and relevance of the text. For practitioners, such a commentary supports the integration and practice of these teachings and opens up the possibility of further investigation into scholarly commentaries and the original text.

Chödrön has chosen not to include chapter 9 of the original text in this volume. Chapter 9 does include many difficult and challenging passages requiring the careful investigation of a variety of Buddhist philosophical positions. However, the fundamental focus of the chapter is the Buddha's teaching on lack of inherent existence, emptiness, dependent co-arising. Including a discussion of this chapter would provide a fuller understanding of Śāntideva's teaching and provide an essential link to understanding how it expresses the Mahāyāna view of self, other, and reality. Śāntideva's presentation of the relationship between himself and *bodhicitta* in chapter 1 also has interesting implications for the context of this work. *Bodhicitta* is the "source of happiness/that brings its very enemies to perfect bliss," and Śāntideva states that "this, and only this, will save the boundless multitudes and bring them easily to supreme joy" (6). This and other statements in chapter 1 give rise to speculation about Śāntideva's understanding of individual effort and the activity of *bodhicitta* itself.

In combination, chapters 1 and 9 bring interesting questions to light about the author of the actions described in chapters 2 through 8. I found myself pondering the relationship between emptiness, subjectivity, and action as I read this volume. Śāntideva emphasizes the need for sustained personal effort and describes this in great detail. Yet his first chapter is a humble prostration to "precious *bodhicitta*" and the ninth chapter centers on the empty nature of the self. Is boundless *bodhicitta* acting in the world? Is the deluded self struggling to free itself from the world of delusion? How does Śāntideva understand the effort of the bodhisattva? Chödrön's important contribution to our understanding of this central Mahāyāna text would be enriched by the addition of her reflection on, interpretation of, and discussion of questions

such as these. Her commentary on chapter 9 will, I hope, be presented "separately and at a different time," along with a discussion of that chapter's relationship to the whole of Śāntideva's teaching.

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The *Pacific World*—Its History

Throughout my life, I have sincerely believed that Buddhism is a religion of peace and compassion, a teaching which will bring spiritual tranquillity to the individual, and contribute to the promotion of harmony and peace in society. My efforts to spread the Buddha's teachings began in 1925, while I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. This beginning took the form of publishing the *Pacific World*, on a bi-monthly basis in 1925 and 1926, and then on a monthly basis in 1927 and 1928. Articles in the early issues concerned not only Buddhism, but also other cultural subjects such as art, poetry, and education, and then by 1928, the articles became primarily Buddhistic. Included in the mailing list of the early issues were such addressees as the Cabinet members of the U.S. Government, Chambers of Commerce, political leaders, libraries, publishing houses, labor unions, and foreign cultural institutions.

After four years, we had to cease publication, primarily due to lack of funds. It was then that I vowed to become independently wealthy so that socially beneficial projects could be undertaken without financial dependence on others. After founding the privately held company, Mitutoyo Corporation, I was able to continue my lifelong commitment to disseminate the teachings of Buddha through various means.

As one of the vehicles, the *Pacific World* was again reactivated, this time in 1982, as the annual journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. For the opportunity to be able to contribute to the propagation of Buddhism and the betterment of humankind, I am eternally grateful. I also wish to thank the staff of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for helping me to advance my dream to spread the spirit of compassion among the peoples of the world through the publication of the *Pacific World*.

Yehan Numata
Founder, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai

In Remembrance

In May of 1994, my father, Yehan Numata, aged 97 years, returned to the Pure Land after earnestly serving Buddhism throughout his lifetime. I pay homage to the fact that the *Pacific World* is again being printed and published, for in my father's youth, it was the passion to which he was wholeheartedly devoted.

I, too, share my father's dream of world peace and happiness for all peoples. It is my heartfelt desire that the *Pacific World* helps to promote spiritual culture throughout all humanity, and that the publication of the *Pacific World* be continued.

Toshihide Numata
Chairman, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai

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