



ABSTRACTS

Manifesting the Buddha Dharma in a Secular Age

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My presentation will unfold in three parts. The *first* will examine the process by which Buddhism came to be appropriated by many Westerners beginning in the middle of the twentieth century. I will not be discussing the historical specifics, which are already well documented. Rather, I want to treat this issue from the standpoint of the changes in consciousness—in modes of self-understanding, value systems, and cultural attitudes—that opened many Westerners to the Dharma and eventually led them to take up Buddhist practices and in many cases to adopt a Buddhist identity.

While there is a wide range of views and approaches among Westerners who engage in Buddhist practices, these can be seen as ranging along a spectrum between, at one end, a modified traditional approach and, at the other, a predominantly secular approach. The first prevails among those who acutely felt the loss of meaning that the Judeo-Christian worldview provided, the pain of living in the confines of a purely secular order without any deeper springs of meaning and value. The second is taken largely by people who engage in Buddhist practices against the background of the dominant secular narrative of our age, without subscribing to the classical Buddhist worldview and without aspiring for the ultimate goal of the Dharma as defined by traditional Buddhist tenets. These people constitute the fold of what is now called “secular Buddhism,” which is not at all homogeneous but includes adherents with a wide diversity of interests and belief commitments.

The distinction I have just drawn will lead into *the second part of my paper*, in which I will attempt to sketch the main differences between “classical Buddhism” and “secular Buddhism.” In this part I will also contend (i) that Buddhism has certain features that naturally lend itself to a secular appropriation, which blurs too sharp a distinction between the two main types; and (ii) that in a sense *all modern Buddhists are secular*, in that even formulations of the teaching by traditionalist teachers often display a secular favor without devoid of a soteriological orientation.

In the *third part* of the presentation I will raise a question: Given that we are inevitably circumscribed by the boundaries of our secular age, how can we construct expressions of Buddhist spirituality that rise to the most exigent demands of our time? In particular, I will explore two crucial demands that I believe Buddhism must meet if it is to unfold its full relevance today. One is to become a voice for social and economic justice. The other is to stand up against the escalating climate crisis, which threatens the very fabric of human civilization. If Buddhism is to avoid becoming the enclave of a purely persona, inward spirituality, it has to effectively address these momentous challenges, and do so by drawing upon its own heritage for principles, values, and ideals that can help it meet these new imperatives.



Dialogue or Communion?
What Buddhists and Christians Can Contribute
in Responding to the Crisis of Humankind

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The present crisis of humankind has different aspects. Depending on focus even more aspects can be distinguished. However, the following seem to be the most striking ones: ecological exploitation, economical injustice, cultural devastation, political segregation, psychological frustration. Each one is to be analyzed differently, and there seem to be only partial and most difficult concrete steps for solving the respective problems. However, it needs to be asked whether these aspects might be symptoms of a deeper crisis that can be identified as a general human problem. My thesis is that this is the case. It is human greed and ego-centredness based on a fundamental ignorance that has not yet been overcome in the human evolution. Humans, however, do not (yet) exhaust their potentials. It might be possible to change mind and life if there is really a will to do so. The potentials of Buddhist analysis and practice and Christian hope and mental conversion are not yet exhausted. They might be implemented by a new understanding of communion and cooperation in developing human life in such a way that a sustainable future is possible.



Otherness as a Challenge to Buddhism

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This paper will examine some of the challenges for contemporary Buddhist social thought around otherness.

Buddhism embraces a worldview that portrays people as closely inter-related by means of conditioned origination and interdependence. These notions have the admirable effects in practical ethics of promoting compassion, social harmony and mindfulness of the common good. This is a strong sentiment in much contemporary Engaged Buddhism. For example, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, in citing the dependence of every child upon his/her mother, says, “Everyone is indebted to society and is bound by the social contract from the moment one was born from one’s mother’s womb, or even from the time one was in the womb.” And Thich Nhat Hanh says, “[T]he individual is made of non-individual elements. How do you expect to leave everything behind when you enter a meditation center? ... We are all children of society, but we are also mothers. We have to nourish society.”

In Emmanuel Levinas’ philosophy, however, it is in the encounter with otherness that ethics is rooted. The other is fundamentally a mystery and always transcends one in his/her alterity. The other thus exists at some distance from the self. How might Buddhist thought and ethical practice relate to the challenge of otherness?

We may begin by asking what is lost if there is little recognition of otherness or its importance. Here are some of the reasons—mostly, but not entirely, within the domain of social ethics—why it is important not to lose sight of otherness as real, important and valuable:

Without recognition of otherness, one may wrongly take the dominant group to be the entire group.

Without recognition of otherness, a dominant group may take their own views and concerns as normative, or as the only valid views and concerns.

Without recognition of the value of otherness, a society may wish for, and possibly enforce, conformity, and mistrust criticism.

Without recognition of the value of otherness, individuals in the dominant group may resent or despise those who cannot or will not assimilate into the dominant group. They may wish to ensure that the latter lack access to power and public voice.

A state that does not recognize the value of otherness may develop into a majoritarian state, one in which the majority feels that it is preeminent and entitled to make the rules for everyone in that society. There may be no place in their thinking for minority rights.

Turning to spirituality, without appreciation of otherness, a religion’s members may fail to be alerted to the religion’s blind spots and imperfections.

With recognition of the value of otherness, one may be properly open to the uniqueness of what the other knows, and the possibility of learning from it.

This talk will examine the challenge to Buddhism of otherness and discuss resources within Buddhism for addressing that challenge.



The Arts of Buddhist-Christian-Encounter

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The presentation introduces a typology of Interreligious Encounter through the (Visual) Arts. Drawing on terminologies and theories from Intercultural Theology and Comparative Religion it distinguishes between syncretism and fundamentalism as the two extreme positions of interreligious encounter. In the arts syncretism finds its expression in iconographic exchange, often referred to as accommodation, inculturation or contextualization. This process knows three phases or forms: translation, questioning and exchange. Yet due to fundamentalism it can also come to internal and external iconoclasm. Finally art creates a third space for dialogue. This applies to religious art as well as to religiously autonomous artists.



Philosophical Positions, Identity Formations, and Responses to Religions Diversity in the East Asian Traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism

Prof. Dr. Mario Poceski
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The paper explores the intersections and mutual influences among three major areas of Buddhist thought and practice: philosophical reflection on the nature of reality and the meaning of life, the formation of distinct religious identity, and the pattern of understanding and engagement with other spiritual traditions. The main focus of the paper is on East Asian forms of Buddhism, especially the canonical and Chan traditions, but its contents are also relevant to understanding other strains of contemporary Buddhism, as they chart new developmental trajectories in a global landscape marked by remarkable religious diversity. Like the followers of most other religions, ordinary Buddhists tend to be ignorant of the finer points of Buddhist doctrine, or be “theologically” illiterate. Nonetheless, I argue that key Mahāyāna concepts and theories, such as emptiness, detachment, skillful means, and the ineffability of ultimate reality can exert notable influences on the manner in which Buddhists understand the tradition and construct their identity. These in turn shape their engagement with the teachings and followers of other religions. While it is possible to find examples of Buddhist exclusivism, there is a notable tendency within the tradition to warn of the dangers of rigid dogmatism and absolutism. Specifically, all soteriological systems and philosophical templates are characterized as being provisional constructs empty of self-nature, merely pointing to a higher reality that cannot be captured by conceptual thought, theoretical rumination, or religious creed. Consequently, Buddhist teachings offer the promise of not only challenging conventional values and ordinary patterns of thinking, but also deconstructing themselves and offering a critique of attachment to the whole edifice of Buddhism. That points to a nuanced but pragmatic understanding of religious beliefs and practices. In the end, they primarily are purportedly meant to function as practical tools for orienting individuals and groups towards a more wholesome and meaningful existence, rather than as inviolable blueprints for organizing society or divinely ordained representations of reality.

Mario Poceski, a professor of Buddhist studies and Chinese religions at the Religion Department, University of Florida, received a PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures, with specialization in Buddhist studies, from the University of California, Los Angeles (2000). He has spent extended periods as a visiting researcher at Komazawa University (Japan), Stanford University, the National University of Singapore, the University of Hamburg (Germany), and Fudan University (China), and has received several prestigious fellowships, including an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship. Most recent books: *Communities of Memory and Interpretation: Reimagining and Reinventing the Past in East Asian Buddhism* (Hamburg 2017, ed.), *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature* (Oxford 2015), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism* (Blackwell 2014, ed.), *Introducing Chinese Religions* (Routledge 2009), and *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford 2007).



Experience & Epistemology of the Present Moment: The Early Buddhist Perspective

Ven. Dr. Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā
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The Buddha's awakening (bodhi) constitutes the human experience that historically and philosophically stands at the foundation of all practices and ideals throughout Buddhist history. The Buddha awakened to reality as it is, and went on to communicate his 'experiential knowledge' or 'direct experiential truth' to others.

This paper presents the early Buddhist approach to valid means of knowledge and truth. It first positions them in relation to the relevant criteria recognised in ancient India before and during the Buddha's time:

- (1) oral tradition (the ancient sayings handed down by oral transmission),
- (2) logic (philosophical analysis, reasoning and inference),
- (3) direct knowledge (extrasensory and meditative perception, intuitive knowledge).

After showing how the Buddha relates to and re-qualifies such principles, the presentation will then focus in particular on (3) and discuss how 'experience' is implicitly and explicitly understood in the early Buddhist texts. In particular, the epistemic status, limits and potentials of 'experience' as the beginning and the end of the Buddhist path to liberation will be explored.

Next, the question will be pursued as to whether or not the texts do actually embed a 'rhetoric of experience'. Epistemology being the study of the foundations of truth and science, the paper will conclude by questioning opposing yet mutually interrelated 'rhetorics of experience' that are being debated in contemporary Buddhist academia or else are emerging in Buddhist and Buddhist-inspired writings, teachings and practices:

- (1) Is the Buddhist emphasis on 'inner experience' in large part a product of modern and open lay-oriented reform movements, as some academic scholars of Buddhism conclude?
- (2) How do the standing of and authority accorded to the 'inner experience' of the individual and the training aimed at experience of 'being in the present' or 'being with the present' advocated in the mainstream reception of the Buddhist teachings actually relate to direct knowledge of and emancipation from the conditioned nature of present experience and existence described in the early texts?
- (3) Do some of the contemporary popularised notions of 'the present moment' and its en-static (inner-world experience) and ec-static (outer-world experience) celebration amount to the construction of an 'ideology of the present moment' that significantly departs from the Buddhist model?



Buddhist Contributions to Contemporary Moral Reflection:
Selflessness and Moral Responsiveness

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We expect our partners in dialogue to share our broad concerns but to bring distinctive insights to the conversation. Without a shared purpose there is no motivation for dialogue; without differences in perspective, there is no value in dialogue. When the topic is ethics, we will find that the Western and Buddhist traditions are excellent dialogical partners. Scholars of each community and members of respective communities informed by their reflection are concerned to understand what it is to lead a good human life, to understand the relationship is between individual and community, and to articulate the conditions for human flourishing. And each can recognize the importance of the moral values emphasized by the other. Nonetheless, there are significant differences between the ways that Buddhist and Western ethicists and moral psychologists have approached these issues, differences that transcend the considerable variety of approaches within each tradition. And so they can enrich one another's reflection. I will address three aspects of ethical thought regarding which such dialogue can be expected to be beneficial. First, with few exceptions, Western moral philosophers—whether deontological, consequentialist or areteic in their approach—focus on the cultivation of what we might call the “output side” of ethics. That is, they focus on the principles or motives that guide action. Buddhist philosophers, on the other hand—regardless of the particular Buddhist tradition in which they work—focus on what we might call the “input side” of ethics. They are concerned not so much with what we do, but with how we experience ourselves and others, pursuing ethics as moral phenomenology. This approach encourages us to think that ethical cultivation begins with the cultivation of perceptual skills, not with the adoption of principles or of habits.

Second, Western ethical thought is generally grounded in the view that we are relatively autonomous moral agents with some kind of agent freedom grounding moral responsibility. This gives ethical thought a rather individualistic cast, and suggests that moral agency and autonomy go hand in hand. Buddhists reject the idea that we are autonomous, or that we are agents in the sense assumed by most Western theorists. This suggests grounding ethics in interdependence rather than autonomy, and in a more naturalistic framework than those that dominate Western moral theory.

Finally, as a consequence of this individualism, most Western ethical theorists take egoism to be a *prima facie* rational default position, and take the moralist to bear the burden of proof in convincing us that it is in fact rational to be good. Buddhist moral theorists think that egoism is clearly irrational, and that moral persuasion begins by showing the egoist that her position has nothing to recommend it, and that it is in fact irrational on its face.

In this talk, I will focus on what Buddhist moral reflection can contribute to the West. There is much to say about what the West can contribute to Buddhist moral thought, but that is for another day.



Words Like Gold: Traditional Buddhism in Dialogue with Contemporary Societies

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O bhikshus and wise men, just as a goldsmith would test his gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing it, so you must examine my words and accept them, but not merely out of reverence for me.

–Ghanavyuha Sutra (Sutra of Dense Array)

This quote by Buddha Shakyamuni inspires the traditional Buddhist method, particularly refined in the Tibetan tradition, of using reason and logic in the context of basic understanding of cause and effect to move forward on the spiritual path. This method is an important common locus between traditional Buddhism and Contemporary Society.

This paper will explore the textual and traditional origins of this method as it was developed from India into the Tibetan Buddhist monastic system, and explore some of the many ways this method is being adapted across cultures, as Buddhism spreads outside of Asian societies. This exploration will detail a traditional understanding of the origins of this method, how it came to flourish in Buddhist educational systems of Tibet, and how it is presently working in the non-Asian world, both in the “center” environments in the United States and Europe and in Western academic contexts.



Cross-cultural Communication Conflicts Between Traditional Buddhism in Asia and Modern Western Buddhism (Buddhist Cross-cultural Communications and Conflicts)

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Whether at home or abroad, communicating across cultures can be challenging. The process requires understanding and interpreting the world in new ways. When conflicts arise across cultures, things can become confusing. Without a good understanding of how different cultures handle conflicts, even with the best intentions, we may just make matters worse.

Conflicts may arise due to competition between groups or individuals over incompatible goals, scarce resources, or the sources of authority needed to acquire them. This competition is the result of individuals' different perceptions and invisible, culture-specific boundaries that are intrinsically linked with one's identity. These boundaries are imbibed while growing up, going through school, and observing the behavior of those around one, and they are uncomfortable to cross. Culture includes the socially inherited, learned, and shared ways of living of individuals, based on their membership in social groups. Conflicts that occur across cultures involve crossing cognitive and perceptual boundaries and are therefore prone to misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Conflicts that appear to be about material resources or national interests may in fact be rooted in cultural conflicts. In addition to framing the context of the conflict, culture also links individual identities to collective identities. Complicating the matter, since the nineteenth century, the concept of "culture" has been understood in different ways. Everyone "has" culture; in fact, everyone potentially has several cultures, complicating the matter even further.

Conflicts not only occur across cultural boundaries, but also occur among individuals in the same society based on differences of language, religion, ethnicity, nationality, class, political interests, economic interests, and so on. The more complex and differentiated the society, the more numerous and complex the potential misunderstandings. Conflicts involving differences among cultures or subcultures may occur simultaneously at many different levels. An example is the perceived divide between Asian Buddhist cultures and Western cultures.

From the sixth century BCE, Buddhism spread to many Asian countries and cultures. During the twentieth century especially, Buddhist teachings also attracted interest in Western countries and cultures, resulting in several cross-cultural movements. An outstanding example is Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, founded in 1987. In the three decades of its development, the Sakyadhita movement has faced and resolved numerous cross-cultural conflicts. Understanding these challenges and the approaches used to resolve them may help us understand other cross-cultural conflicts.



Designing Sustainable Economic Systems—a Contribution from Buddhism

Sander Tideman

Managing Director Mind & Life Europe, Faculty Member Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University and Co-founder of Flow Foundation & Impact Fund

Both economics and Buddhism are intellectual systems designed to improve the well-being of people. However, these systems employ different definitions and methods to achieve their goals. In the current state of the world, it is increasingly evident that conventional economic thinking falls short in dealing with the multiple challenges facing society, such as digitalization / robotization, sustainability / climate change, inequality and the resulting socio-political instability. This is manifest at macro-economic (nations) and micro-economic (business) levels. While ideas behind classical economics are receiving growing criticism from many corners, it is not yet clear where the new thinking that will actually create sustainable economics will come from. This paper, therefore, will explore what ideas and principles of Buddhism – however different in scope and appearance than economic ideas – can be of benefit in the quest to design truly sustainable economic systems. It will conclude with a few suggestions as to how the leadership of economic institutions can contribute to this change by employing Buddhist views and practices.



Restoring a Spirit of Radical Empiricism in Science and Religion: A Buddhist View

Dr. B. Alan Wallace
Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies

Much of the strife between science and religion in the modern world stems from allegiance to the dogmatic beliefs of scientific materialism and of religious fundamentalism. Following the ideal of radical empiricism as proposed by the pioneering psychologist William James, this paper explores avenues for restoring open-minded, experiential inquiry into the fields of science and religion, while focusing on Buddhism, and the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition in particular as a bridge between the two.

While the natural sciences at their best idealize rationality and empiricism, together with the principle of skepticism toward one's own beliefs, since the mid-nineteenth century, the ontological and methodological principles of scientific materialism have come to limit the scope of scientific inquiry by de-emphasizing the role of the subjective observer in understanding human nature and the universe at large. This tendency has been called into question since the rise of quantum theory in the early nineteenth century, and the role of the observer-participant has become increasingly prominent in cutting-edge interpretations of quantum physics today, which may shed new light on the unsolved measurement problem.

Within the mind sciences in particular, the role of introspection has been marginalized or neglected entirely since the rise of behaviorism in the early nineteenth century, and this has severely impaired scientific progress in solving the age-old mind-body problem and understanding the nature of consciousness. But in recent years this tendency has been challenged by a growing number of psychologists, neuroscientists, and philosophers.

Prior to the rise of Buddhism, a wide range of dogmatic worldviews were promoted in India, including versions of materialism, but the Buddha himself countered these with his emphasis on empiricism and pragmatism, as evidenced, for example, in his famous *Kalama-sutta*. The empiricist theme of “*ehi-passiko*,” or “come and see,” has provided a strong antidote to dogmatism within Buddhism since its inception, but in modern Indo-Tibetan Buddhism it is often obscured by an overwhelming emphasis on maintaining the academic heritage of Buddhism at the cost of open-minded, critical, contemplative inquiry, exemplified by the cultivation of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. This tendency may be contributing to the fact that a decreasing number of Tibetans in Tibet and in diaspora are drawn to the monastic way of life, and the general population of Tibetans, while claiming to be Buddhist, have little knowledge or experience of Buddhist theory and practice.

Dzogchen, or “Great Perfection” school of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, has long been known for its emphasis on practice, and this paper will conclude with an examination of some of its methods for developing *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* with the specific aim of fathoming the nature of the mind and consciousness. This points to a great potential for collaboration between mind scientists and Buddhist contemplatives, integrating the third-person methods of the former and the first-person methods of the latter for revealing the role of consciousness in human existence and the universe at large.



The End of Violence is the Path of the Bodhisattvas
Potential Contributions of Mahayana Buddhism to Modern Politics

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We live in difficult times. We must deal with conflicts on many different levels, in small groups, in countries and in the world as a whole. People fight violently over natural resources, against overpopulation and hunger, climate changes etc., and they do this in declared and undeclared wars. Even in prosperous areas like Europe and Northern America some groups push their issues without regard of others in the same country. In Western democratic societies it rarely happens that members of parliament and government are discussing in a respectful way about different opinions. Peace on earth is far away if even so called democrats seem unable to take different perspectives and prefer to hold to their views as truths. Who can keep up good humor and high spirits, courage and endurance to work for the benefit of all in difficult times?

Maybe bodhisattvas can? They promise to work for the benefit of all and not to give up any single being. They will stop others as much possible from doing harm, without hating them, understanding that they are in the grip of greed, hate and delusion. And they will inspire them to do good things as much possible. Their attitude is expressed by four promises: 1. To save all beings, 2. To overcome all greed, hate and delusion, 3. To study and understand different views, and 4. To walk the path of the Buddhas. No matter how impossible it seems and how long it may take. With this attitude they try to do their best with the help of five trainings: 1. Not to talk about the faults of others, 2. Not to praise themselves by putting down others, 3. To be generous, 4. Not to act out anger, 5. To take refuge and deepen this attitude again and again. Both versions are taken from the Japanese Zen tradition, here rendered in my words.

The bodhisattva path is my guiding inspiration since I first met Buddhism in the summer of 1977 in Dharamsala, North India. I was in my late twenties and not in search of a new ideology. I liked the Catholic Church as a child, and as a student was first part of the socialist and then of the feminist movement. It did not feel right to me that despite all the good ideas there was always the split amongst "us and them". I was so happy to hear that bodhisattvas work for the benefit of all beings, not just of humans, but for all of all of nature, seen and unseen.

We all can become modern bodhisattvas, it does not matter if we are Buddhists or not. People of good heart from all walks of life can try ourselves and inspire others to overcome the attitude of "us and them" and adopt the all embracing attitude of "we all", even and especially in conflicts and seemingly irresolvable situations. We can do this with the fourfold attitude and the five trainings as effective methods to pacify greed, hate and delusion in ourselves and others, day by day, with patience and a lot of good humor.



Reimagining Zen in a Secular Age:
Zen Buddhism in Charles Taylor's Immanent Frame

Prof. Dr. André van der Braak
Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

This lecture aims to enquire into the possibilities for reimagining the Buddhist Zen tradition for our Western secular age. Such an inquiry presupposes studying the pre-understandings in Western culture about what it means to be religious and to be a spiritual seeker. Such pre-understandings have been thoroughly explored by Charles Taylor. In his influential book *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that today we live in an 'immanent frame': a seemingly self-evident background picture of a self-sufficient immanent natural order, against which our thinking about religion takes place. The transcendent domain that comes with religious belief is optional but not mandatory. Within such an immanent frame, Taylor has suggested a new roadmap of today's religious landscape. Rather than the opposition between believers and unbelievers, he describes a three-cornered battle between the secular and the sacred: (1) exclusive humanists, who deny all transcendence, (2) anti-humanists, who criticize the naïve optimism of exclusive humanism, but also criticize naïve belief in transcendence, and (3) believers in transcendence. This lecture uses Taylor's three-way roadmap to describe three imaginings of Zen in the West today.

(1) *Secular Zen*. Some Western Buddhists such as Stephen Batchelor attempt to create a secular form of Zen that is compatible with secular humanism. Batchelor argues that Zen should present itself to the West as not a religion, but as a secular way of life that offers a way to deal with dukkha. He claims that Buddhism should not be conceived as a set of metaphysical truth-claims which will inevitably conflict with other truth claims. Rather, the Buddhist dharma consists of a number of principles, perspectives and values that allow the practitioner to respond appropriately to everyday situations in a non-reactive way. Batchelor describes this as the shift from a belief-based Buddhism 1.0 to a praxis-based Buddhism 2.0.

(2) *Existentialist Zen*. A substantial part of the meeting of Zen with the West has taken place through the thinkers of the Japanese Kyoto School, who brought Zen in dialogue with Western immanent counter-enlightenment thinkers such as Dostojevski, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sjestov. They reject exclusive humanism as ultimate leading to nihilism, but also reject notions of ontological transcendence. Especially Nishitani has attempted to rethink Buddhist transcendence as trans-descendence, which could be categorized as "transcendence as alterity ("radical otherness").

(3) *Religious Zen*. Contemporary Chinese Buddhism can be seen as a form of ceremonial Buddhism that rejects the psychologization and expressive individualism of Buddhist modernism. Meditation is less important than ritual and liturgic activity. Individual experiences are less important than collective practices. Realizing personal enlightenment is less important than worshipping the bodhisattvas. Therefore, we could speak of a re-embedding of Buddhism, and of a process of re-enchantment. This can be seen as part of a process of retraditionalization that is taking place with regard to ancestral Buddhist traditions.



Cultivating Good Habits (śīla) and Resetting the Mindset (śamatha, vipaśyanā)
in this Era of Disruptions: the Mind-life (āśraya) & Environment (ā lambana)
Curriculum in Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts

Ven. Prof. em. Dr. Huimin Bhikshu

President, Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts, Taiwan, ROC
Emeritus Professor, Taipei National University of the Arts

Based on years of research by the directors of the McKinsey Global Institute, *No Ordinary Disruption: The Four Forces Breaking All the Trends* (2015) is a timely and important analysis of how we need to **reset our intuition** as a result of four forces colliding and transforming the global economy: (1) the rise of emerging markets, (2) the accelerating impact of technology on the natural forces of market competition, (3) an aging world population, and (4) accelerating flows of trade, capital, people, and data. Some long-term trends are speculated on the 'new normal' of shifts by breaking the assumptions and experiences on which the past was based.

Therefore, We suggests “**cultivating good habits (śīla) and resetting the mindset (śamatha, vipaśyanā)**” can help us to face the era of disruptions and the “environmental problem”.

They come from the Buddhist thought and practice “**Skillful good habits** have freedom from remorse as their purpose, and freedom from remorse as their reward. In this way, lead step-by-step (joy→ rapture→ tranquility→ pleasure→ concentration→ the knowledge and vision of things as they really are→ disenchantment and dispassion→ the knowledge and vision of liberation) to the consummation of arahantship (*AN 11.1; MA 42* etc.)” and these sequences can be considered to be core teachings or practices of Buddhism.

In the *Śravakabhūmi* (the stage of distinguished disciples of the Buddha, the thirteenth stage in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the encyclopedic text of the Yogācāra school of Buddhism), the above sequences are classified into four kinds of the **universal meditative object**, and the meditative object in fruitional stage, the meditator is freed from badness/defilement, and the **basis-of-personal-existence (āśraya, i.e. the body, or body-and-mind) was transmuted** at the time of attaining four contemplations and the four concentrations on the formless realms.

These also can be integrated in the skillful interaction and **purification of the mind-life (āśraya-pariśuddhi) & environment (ā lambana-pariśuddhi)**, and adapted as a curriculum (2015-2017, in Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts, Taiwan) and we also introduce the “**community based social marketing (CBSM, McKenzie-Mohr 2012)**”, a five-step community-level approach that matches appropriate tools of change to the exact barriers, both physical and psychological, that inhibit a specific sustainable action in order to make those contributions in new contexts.

Finally, we introduce the “**Natural Burial**” in the Memorial Garden of Dharma Drum Mountain as a case that might reflect caring for the environment, and allows future generations to enjoy a sustainable environment. There are no tomb plaques or name plaques, ashes are buried in separation, it also brings the Buddhist meaning of life education to today’s world.



Social Dharma: How Buddhist Principles Radically Alter our Understanding of Self and Society

Prof. Dr. Janine Schipper
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This paper explores the “big story” of how self and society is conceived in the West, the challenges this orientation gives rise to, and the possibilities Buddhism offers for a radical shift in understanding self and society.

The West maintains a materialist orientation based on Cartesian Dualism and Christian ideas of separation among body, mind, and soul. This orientation of separation gives rise to the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion both at the levels of self and society.

Buddhism’s major contribution and challenge to the Western materialist orientation is the recognition that there is no self. Consciousness is all, the Absolute. This is embodied in the Heart Sutra’s famous dictum: Form is emptiness; emptiness is form and conveyed by teachings on Dependent Co-Arising. When we see the separate self as an illusion and see into the nature of reality, we experience a radical reorientation. The self gets experienced as awake infinite presence and society is recognized as the play of form.

This paper explores how Buddhist notions of no self and dependent co-arising challenge Western ways of organizing: their rules, laws, norms, values, and institutions. It raises key questions about Western Buddhist practice, organization of sanghas (Buddhist monastic and lay communities), and how we may continue to unravel the story of separation throughout our institutional structures.



How to Study Buddhism: Content, Scope and Function of the Study of Buddhism at Universities in Europe

Prof. Dr. Michael Zimmermann
Numata Center for Buddhist Studies, Universität Hamburg

During the last 50 years the study of Buddhism has become a more identifiable part of the academic curriculum at several universities in Europe. The paper will discuss the main features of how Buddhist Studies present themselves and their institutional embedding in the regional philological disciplines on the one hand and as part of religious studies on the other. It will raise the issues of how Buddhist Studies can respond to new academic challenges and contribute to the creation of a university within a society where ignorance and stereotypes about foreign people, cultures and religions remain to be serious obstacles hindering cross-cultural understanding and peace.

At the same time, Buddhist Studies as a field or discipline is often in contact with the living community of Buddhist followers, sangha representatives and leaders of Buddhist groups. Many of our students are Buddhist themselves. Whereas in most countries the “theological” branch of religious studies is positioned in Divinity Schools or Theological Schools outside national universities, the situation in Germany and some other European countries is different. Theological units are an integrated part within the national university system. Whether or not “Buddhist theology” is something which should be taught within the regular university curriculum and the question by whom it should be taught are other urgent topics which will be raised in the paper.



Chinese Buddhism in Contemporary Society: Revitalization and Innovation

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This paper aims to examine the changes in the interpretations of core Buddhist concepts and their relevance to modern day issues. From passive and negative definitions of other-worldly, conventional Buddhist teachings to positive, optimistic and joyful manners of modern day, this-worldly Humanistic Buddhist outlooks of the Dharma, a clear shift from Buddhism that used to restrict, intimidate, and cause a pessimistic outlook on life, to a hopeful, fearless, and proactive attitude towards Humanistic Buddhism's presentation of a life lived under the guidance of Dharma with joy will be examined.

Keywords:

Humanistic Buddhism, core teachings, this-worldly, other-worldly, Fo Guang Shan, Hsing Yun



The art of not taking yourSelf too serious

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The path of Dharma was, according to the Buddha's own words, discovered by him like a lost and forgotten path in the jungle. Despite this and other attempts to depersonalize the teaching, however, in the 19th century Dharma became "Buddhism" in the Christian West, following, no doubt, linguistic usage like "Mohammedanism" and "Zoroastrianism." Can we imagine today a Dharma practice without being a "Buddhist?" Moreover, the Buddha and many later teachers have called for a critically assessment of the teachings, disregarding conventional ascriptions of authority and personal embodiment of the Dharma. If such an assessment is not to be a mere intellectual rationalization or an adherence to traditional authority, self-acquired empirical evidence is called for. Can we, then, imagine an examination of Dharma completely without an immersing into some form of meditative practice? The Buddha has also pointed out that in the end, even the Dharma must be abandoned, or else one is "only bound by golden fetters" (as the Tibetan master Phag mo gru pa formulated it). Thus, for a practitioner on the path of Dharma, transcendence is impossible without abandonment of the vehicle that has carried him or her to the threshold of the absolute. In my paper, I will substantiate these points with teachings from Pāli, Mahāyāna, and Tibetan canons. I will conclude that a fixation on a "great founder," a mere intellectual or rational approach to the Dharma, and a grasping of all kinds of views, experiences, and traditions is only leading to "I am" and "my" and that the most serious challenge of the Dharma seems to be not to take oneSelf too serious.



All Conditioned Things are Impermanent, Except for Buddhism?

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Impermanence and essencelessness belong to the central teachings of Buddhism. But in the Buddhist traditions themselves there is a strong tendency to preserve their status quo: scientific insights are neglected, political achievements such as democracy and emancipation of women are overlooked, ancient metaphysical concepts and social norms are understood as indispensable principles of the dharma, ignoring their dependence on their cultural and historic context. If there are core messages in the Buddhist tradition to become relevant in the West, they must prove effective in today's world. This will only be possible if Buddhist communities are ready to basic reforms and integration of their teachings into modern understanding of human life (Menschenbild). The key factor is a basic courage and readiness to question traditional views and social practices and to engage in an open dialogue that embraces practicing Buddhists, scientific research and representatives of modern society alike. Substantial changes will not be initiated if such a discourse takes place only within the framework of the Buddhist tradition itself.



Matching Concepts, Transgressing Boundaries:
Buddhist Transmission Strategies in the International Buddhist Women's Movement

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Globally and locally, one of the most striking features of the contemporary transmission and transformation of Buddhism is the prominent roles that women are playing. Since 1987, Buddhist women from around the world have been uniting on a grassroots level and taking more active roles in working for the welfare of human society. Today, the Buddhist women's movement has become a highly dynamic forum representing the interests of over 300 million women worldwide. This movement is transgressive by its very nature, breaking through social, cultural, and conceptual boundaries and barriers in ways that were unimaginable just a few decades ago. Emerging from the margins to which women have historically been relegated, into the global spotlight, Buddhist women have become a powerful force for social change. Against all odds, they have demonstrated how human beings can unite their talents, resources, and efforts to help change attitudes toward a frequently disparaged social category and help reconfigure social and religious structures that disadvantage women.

This loosely organized, multi-cultural movement, which focuses on Buddhist women's issues and perspectives but embraces all living beings, is innovative in integrating scholarly perspectives, spiritual practices, grassroots activism, and the arts as equally valid dimensions of human experience. Creating a forum that unites women from a vast range of backgrounds and experiences is extremely challenging and yet, in attempting to implement Buddhist ideals of loving kindness and understanding, along with liberal doses of respect and mutual appreciation, it has exceeded all expectations to become a successful example of women's enormous potential for global transformation. This paper seeks to identify the key strategies that Buddhist women have developed and deployed to achieve their goal of an enlightened society.