

and, in reiterating their tropes about, for instance, the West's "analytic mind" (thereby neglecting not only the mainstream religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also modern secular streams like Romanticism), ultimately falls back into their stifling embrace. As John Maraldo has put it in his critique of Suzuki: "We look for diversity and historical conditioning in religious expressions, not for a privileged experience that might be the unchanging core of a tradition. The attempt to express a core in 'Western' as well as 'Eastern' terms finds sympathy no longer" (John C. Maraldo, "Questioning Nationalism Now and Then: A Critical Approach to Zen and the Kyoto School," in Heisig and Maraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings*, p. 340).

For all Carter's well-intentioned caveats, it would seem better, at this stage in the game, for comparativists to drop the whole 'East-West' construction altogether, as being a) an outdated product of colonialism and orientalism, b) methodologically geared towards oversimplification and c) deeply infused with ideological and ethnocentric if not racist assumptions (witness Yuasa's remark about the "deep structure of the Japan's [sic] ethnic collective unconscious," p. xv). Carter himself admits that there are in fact "many Easts and many Wests" (p. 5). Why then not simply speak of 'Japanese ideals' and, if necessary, compare and contrast these with, for instance, 'modern Euro-American ideals' (or better, 'post-Enlightenment Euro-American rationalist ideals')? Maybe because doing so would water down the rhetorical-polemical force that has been a prop for East-West studies for over a century. Carter's work would stand much taller without the prop.

MINDFULNESS IN THE MARKETPLACE: COMPASSIONATE RESPONSES TO CONSUMERISM. Edited by Allan Hunt Badiner, with a foreword by Julia Butterfly Hill. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2002. Pp. xvi + 310, with endnotes, list of contributors and credits. ISBN 1-888375-24-8

SEAN DUKE

Is there any connection between increasing meat production, drought and international starvation? How might we view the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and our own lifestyle in light of the Buddhist precepts? What does Buddhism have to do with the end of the world and "B movies"? In *Mindfulness in the Marketplace*, we can find the answers to these questions and much more.

BOOK REVIEWS

In all seriousness, *Mindfulness in the Marketplace* is a compelling book composed by earnest people. It is a collection of thirty-five essays from a wide variety of contributors: Buddhist monks as renowned as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, scholars, and other socially concerned individuals working outside the academy. Their chorus of voices serves as a collective “katz!” for consumers. With essays such as “A New Economics to Save the Earth: A Buddhist Perspective,” “Zen and Money,” “Right Livelihood, Spirituality and Business,” “Is There Slavery in Your Chocolate?” and “What Then Must We Do?”, surely this book can serve as the wake-up call it is intended to be.

In 1973, the economist E.F. Schumacher was one of the first to place this wake-up call by publishing his book, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. Based upon his experience working in Myanmar (then Burma), Schumacher wrote an essay entitled “Buddhist Economics”. It was a pioneering effort from within mainstream economics to suggest a rational alternative to consumerism. An excerpt appears in Part Five of *Mindfulness*: “Buddhist economics must be very different from the economics of modern materialism, since the Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants, but in the purification of the human character” (p. 298). Acknowledging their “debt” to Schumacher, the contributors to *Mindfulness* cite him repeatedly. Since it confronts the same issues he called attention to decades earlier, *Mindfulness in the Marketplace* might be considered a tribute to Schumacher.

Some essays in *Mindfulness* refer more explicitly to Buddha’s teachings than others, but all of them rely upon the same fundamental pillars of the Buddhist worldview to criticize consumerism: interdependence and the elimination of suffering; one’s own, others’ and even that of the planet itself. In addition to the overtly Buddhist essays, there are others that are anthropological, economic and socially activist in nature. Some writings are even anecdotal in that they describe efforts by Buddhists to reform the economic relations of their own local communities.

Although divided into five sections, the structure of the book is a reflection of Buddha’s first sermon, which became the foundation of Buddhism itself: the Four Noble Truths. Part One, “The All-Consuming Problem,” contains essays that explain how, contrary to what we may think, consumerism can cause suffering. Part Two, “Self as Consumer,” explains the root causes of the suffering, which exist within us. Parts Three and Four, “In the Market for Dharma” and “Market as Nature,” explain that there is a way out of this suffering, particularly if we do not “buy into” Buddhism packaged as a commodity. Finally, Part Five, “The Path of Mindful Consumption,” is equal to the fourth Noble Truth, the Eightfold Path, in that it offers concrete steps that anyone can take to end this suffering.

According to *Mindfulness*, the marketplace is precisely suffering’s origin. Calling to mind one of Buddha’s famous descriptions of *samsāra* as a burning house, there

is a quote on page thirty-five: “The reality is that the world is on fire, that the natural systems of life are collapsing beneath the weight of the industrial killing machine. After only fifty years of total industrial war against the needs of humanity and the environment, both are starting to show signs of collapse.”

Part One contains bleak assessments of globalization. In “Buddhism in the Global Economy,” Helena Norberg-Hodge defines it as the “eradication of the diversity of life through ‘free-trade’ treaties . . . the destruction of cultural diversity. It means monoculture” (pp. 16–17). Indeed, scientific studies as well as uncertified observations by ordinary people who live and work directly with the oceans and the land have revealed an extraordinary rate of extinction (some statistics appear in L.D. Ness’s essay on p. 35) for not only plants, animals and natural resources, but also of languages and cultures. In fact, as much as 90% of Earth’s five to seven thousand languages may disappear within one hundred years.¹ This is a crucial point because these are humanity’s most vital survival technologies, which could be used to defend against the monoculture that globalization is creating by imposing the same consumerist ideals upon people around the world.

As *Mindfulness* points out, Buddhism is one such spiritual technology which is still active within several cultures, including the industrialized west or northern hemisphere. In fact, *Mindfulness* attributes a special responsibility to Buddhists from those industrialized, democratic countries whose lifestyle and international economic influence are the driving forces behind globalization. Such Buddhists are given examples of how their nations’ and their own personal economic activities affect the rest of the world. Most consumers are ignorant of this impact because “the ever-expanding scope and scale of the global economy obscures the consequences of our actions: in effect, our arms have been so lengthened that we no longer know what our hands are doing” (p. 22). By describing the ecological interdependence of human societies and the natural world, this book sheds light upon that obscurity and strives to de-mystify consumerism.

The way *Mindfulness* dispels some of the mystique of consumerism is by examining two assumptions that are basic to modern economics and industrialized society in general: “1) growth and enhanced world trade will benefit everyone, and 2) growth will not be constrained by the inherent limits of a finite planet” (p. 4). This growth, which, in fact, is shrinkage due to the depletion of natural and spiritual resources, requires continuous and ever-increasing consumption. Due to the physical reality that Earth’s resources are limited, this socio-economic model for organizing human society is shown to be not only irrational, but also destructive by its very design. As Inoue Shinichi points out, “an economics which focuses almost exclu-

¹ Maffi, Luisa (1998). Linguistic and Biological Diversity: The Inextricable Link. Terralingua Discussion Paper #3. Available from the World Wide Web: (<http://www.terralingua.org/TLPublications/DiscussionPapers/DiscPaper3.html>)

sively on quantitative analysis cannot possibly reveal to us a way to develop a more sustainable culture” (p. 54).

In other words, an economic system that organizes society to maximize Gross National Product is not necessarily related to maximizing what might be called Gross National Well-Being. When a GNP is calculated, labor such as housework or care-giving, which is essential to human life, goes unvalued because they “produce” nothing. In fact, like “growth,” the very notion of “production” should be understood as its opposite. The Ven. P. A. Payutto points out in “Buddhist Perspectives on Economic Concepts”: “production is always accompanied by destruction” because it entails the “creation of a new state [of matter or energy] by the destruction of an old one” (p. 87). Therefore, he goes on to say, we must distinguish between “production that enhances well-being and that which destroys it” (p. 87).

In his discussion of becoming a “Zen cook,” Duncan Williams suggests a way to empower ourselves to make that type of distinction. He explains that it is necessary to “shed light on the ‘ingredients’ that exist in one’s life, which includes everything from one’s personal character traits to the social environment in which one lives” (p. 230). Only in this way, he says, can we “engage the world in a spiritual manner” (p. 230). If we “take stock” in what Buddha said, that we have no distinct ego-self separate from our natural and social community, then it is incumbent upon us to observe how consumerism causes us to see ourselves as separate individuals infused with a variety of false needs. Tremendous effort is spent to generate a feeling of lack in consumers in order to force them to purchase things that they think will give them satisfaction. Since an excess of desires is precisely what Buddha identified as the root of all suffering, Buddhist economics requires that we find ways to moderate the flames of our desires rather than fan them with billions of advertising dollars.

Clearly, *Mindfulness in the Marketplace* aims to influence what we might call “industrialized Buddhists,” as well as other thoughtful readers. In fact, the intended audience seems to be entirely European and North American. However, as Stephen Batchelor states: “It would be arrogant to claim that the views expressed here would be shared by all people who call themselves Buddhist” (p. 66). Therefore, precisely for that reason, we might ask why voices from a greater variety of cultures and schools of Buddhism were not included. Given the book’s subtitle, we might also ask why a monk who is considered the living incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, the Dalai Lama, appears at the head of Part Three rather than at the head of the entire book.

For readers in search of a systematic correlation of Buddhist doctrine with a critique of modern economics, this is not the right book. Some specialists may even feel inclined to debate certain depictions of what a Buddhist society was like in past eras. However, as the Dalai Lama said: “I am confident that the readers of this book will be inspired to take useful and practical steps” (p. 134). Indeed, those steps can only

be taken in daily life, which is the ultimate concern of *Mindfulness*. Recognizing that *nirvāna* is not separate from *samsāra*, we are encouraged to engage the marketplace in ways that will transform it from a source of suffering to a vehicle of enlightenment.