Engaged Buddhism: Past, Present, Future

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THE TERM "engaged Buddhism," i.e., socially engaged Buddhism, was first used by the Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hahn in 1963 in his book by that name. It was written during the Vietnamese War and expressed the spirit of his attempt to form a non-aligned, non-belligerent Buddhist coalition that he described as "an enemy-of-neither combatant." Later he would say that indeed Buddhism has *always* been (socially) engaged. Yet his term has been picked up by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Europe and the United States as a designation of something new that is occurring in Buddhism. And books, articles and presentations on the subject have multiplied.

We must ask: Why should this be the case? *Why* should Buddhists be, have been, considered socially inactive, either by themselves or by others? And what is new about today's "engaged" Buddhism that has not been characteristic of Buddhism in the past?

BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY IN THE PAST

Of course when we speak of Buddhism of the past, we are on the whole speaking of Asian Buddhism; and when we speak of the Buddhism of the present, we are including Western (European and American) expressions of it, a factor of prime importance for this discussion, whose significance will appear later. First then we must ask: What were the social attitudes and complexion of Asian Buddhist teaching presented in its scriptures? Were there no notes of social activism sounded?

The Pali Canon gives us a mixed picture. Certainly there are *many* passages that present the meaning of the Buddhist way of life as one of fleeing *from* the world (society) and its concerns and activities, and

almost nothing about its change or renewal. These were left to the impersonal forces of cyclically conceived history. And society was but the expanded form of the basic human bondage to greed, hatred, and delusion, its structures reinforcing that bondage. The truly "Buddhist" way to deal with the world was to form a society of monks and nuns, a society within but apart from the larger framework, in which the pure life could be led without compromise, and final nirvanic freedom be found. The life here would be one of secluded meditation and minimal food and clothing.

In the course of time this situation was somewhat modified by practical necessities. It became obvious that even nirvana seekers needed food, clothing, and shelter, best provided by a body of supportive lay (still-in-the-world) people. These too must be given *some* part in the good life and *some* salvational (nirvanic) prospects, even though they remained in the secular world.

The monk/nun body (*sangha*) did have an important social significance, to be noted later. Here we may observe that the Pali Canon records many encounters of the Buddha with persons of all classes and varieties of belief, some of which had societal significance; in his discourses to them some statements about social vices and virtues do appear. The *Sigālovāda Sutra* sets forth a pattern of social relations and obligations to be observed by lay people, though it is quite conformitarian to Indian social patterns. As I have summarized it elsewhere (in *In the Hope of Nibbana,* Open Court, LaSalle, 1964):

> [T]he Sutta divides human relationships into six basic types and prescribes their respective duties. In respect to the first three—child-parent, pupil-teacher, wife-husband—it is counseled that child, pupil, and wife should give respect, loyalty, and faithful service. . . . The latter [parent, teacher, husband] in turn should provide guidance, loving concern, and material necessities. The fourth relation, clansman to clansman . . . . calls for man to man equity of treatment. In the fifth the servant gives zealous and contented service to his master; and the master [including kings] with paternal solicitude . . . . suits the servant's work to his capacity and cares for him in sickness and trouble. (p. 203)

In summary:

> So far as the social situation itself is concerned, there is no prescription for a good society, nor the ideal structuring of human relationships. There is here no possible doctrine of social revolution or change of any sort. All that is called for is that each man do his duty in the place or relation where his [karmic] destiny has placed him. (p. 204)

Yet if not revolutionary, it did provide some Buddhist guidance for good societal conduct.

Of course such developments did not end here. During the more than two millennia of the spread of Buddhism to Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan, there was a vast body of new (Mahāyāna) literature produced, containing societal ideals. Here we shall briefly note three outstanding examples of what may be called social idealism.

Key to much of this aspect of the Mahāyāna literature and tradition was the magnification of the concept of the bodhisattva, and the resulting importance given to the role and significance of the layman. To put it briefly: The bodhisattva, a Buddha in the making, became *everyman's* ideal and possibility. No longer was it the secluded, monkish arahat alone aiming for nirvanic salvation *out* of life's hurly-burly; it was both Buddhist monk and laity who through endless deeds of bodhisattvic compassion strove for Buddhahood by helping *others* attain it, that set the pattern of the good life. An eloquent statement of the Mahāyānic ideal of bodhisattvahood is to be found in Śāntideva's *The Path of Light:*

> I would fain become a soother of all sorrows of all creatures. May I be a balm for the sick, a healer and servitor. . . . My own being and my pleasures, all my righteousness in the past, present and future, I surrender indifferently that all creatures may win to their end [Nirvāna or Buddhahood]. . . . I would be a protector of the unprotected, a guide to wayfarers, a ship, a dyke. . . . a lamp for them that need a lamp. . . . a slave for them who need a slave. . . . (J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism,* Macmillan, New York, 1928, p. 219)

Another example of the projection of the ideal of social activism is found in *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti,* a Mahāyāna scripture

that came into use sometime early in the Common Era. It might be termed the apotheosis of the ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhist sainthood. Vimalakīrti (supposedly described by Gotama Buddha himself) was a super-saint, surpassing even the traditionally revered major disciples of the Buddha in virtue and wisdom. He was fully enlightened, yet paradoxically he was a layman who was maximally active in society, i.e., a socially engaged Buddhist. He is described thus:

> At that time there lived in the city of Vaisāli a certain Licchavi, Vimalakīrti by name. . . . He wore the white clothes of a layman, yet lived impeccably like a religious devotee. He lived at home, but remained aloof from the realm of desire. . . . He had a son, a wife, and female attendants, yet always maintained continence. . . . He seemed to eat and drink, yet always took nourishment from meditation. He made his appearance in the fields of sports and the casinos, yet his aim was always to mature those people who were attached to games and gambling. (Tr. Robert Thurman, Pennsylvania State Press, University Park, 1976, p. 20)

And so on and on. He was in business, in government offices, visited schools, was equally at home with warriors, aristocrats, and common people—but all without spiritual or moral compromise. How could any one ask for a greater or more complete ideal of social concern and involvement than this?

One other instance of the societal application of Buddhist values is to be found in one of the works of Nāgārjuna (circa 150–250 CE), the propounder of the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and considered to be one of the major Mahāyāna philosophers. In a surprisingly concrete, down-to-earth manner he advised King Udayi about the conduct of his domain. The substance of the advice was presented in these pages (Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1983) by Robert Thurman.

According to Thurman there were four strands to Nāgārjuna's recommendations: (1) individualistic transcendentalism (attainment of Nirvāna); (2) "self-restraint, unpacked as detachment and pacifism;" (3) "[t]ransformative universalism . . . . [that is] complete commitment to a pluralistic, enlightenment-oriented education;" (4) "compassionate socialism." Among the specific items recommended by Nāgārjuna were those of a welfare-state of "compassionate socialism,"

including: fixed charges for doctors and barbers; "a socially-supported health-care delivery system." In an Aśokan manner he suggests "hostels, parks, canals, irrigation ponds, rest houses, wells, beds, food, grass and firewood." Further measures were: park-fountains where there would also be "shoes, umbrellas, water filters, tweezers for removing thorns, needles, thread, and fans," plus food for ants, animals, and birds! Finally there were practical recommendations for a regulated economy, including low taxes, a royal granary of seed grains, a police force, etc.

It would seem then that the Buddhism of the past did not lack for either inspirational idealism or practical counsel for social involvement.

There are also concrete examples of Buddhist influence, involvement, and action in the social area. We may note the influence of the order of monks (*sangha*) in Southeastern Asian Theravāda countries. Though monks and nuns lived a physically segregated life and were not directly involved in the social-political life of their surrounding communities, their social involvement and influence has always been considerable: village headmen often consulted with the head of the local monastery about social problems; nationally, the ranking patriarch often had substantial influence at court; and upon occasion, as a rebuke to some public officials for their actions, the monks might turn their begging bowls upside down, thus cutting off the flow of merit to the laity, a much dreaded measure capable of changing the current of political affairs. There was besides what has been called the "republican" character of the *sangha*. Wrote Schway Yoe in 1882 in his *The Burman and his Notions* (Macmillan, New York, 1882), II, 132:

> It is this republican tendency of Buddhism that gives it such a wonderful hold on the people. Rank does not confer on the mendicant greater honour, nor release him from any of his obligations. The most learned and famous Sadaw must go forth every morning to beg his food. His dress is the same as that of the most recently admitted koyin.

It must be added, however, that reverence for support of the *sangha* tends to absorb most of the philanthropic energy and resources of Theravāda communities.

The list of Buddhist "social action" honorees cannot of course omit

Aśoka (270–230 BCE) the Mauryan ruler of northeastern and central India. His story is well-known: revolted by the blood and cruelty of the last of his conquests he is said to have converted to Buddhism and thereafter ordered his kingdom as nearly along Buddhist lines as he could—a kind of welfare state in which religious tolerance and his subjects' economic and social well-being were main concerns. (Perhaps Nāgārjuna took some inspiration from Aśoka in his letter of counsel to King Udayi!) Numbers of scholars have cast doubt upon the sheerly Buddhist nature of Aśoka's welfare regime, seeing in it rather, a kind of generic Indian political tolerance.

Whatever the historical truth of the matter, the Aśokan tradition of politically-oriented Buddhism has been tremendously influential in the Asian Buddhist world. It brought Buddhism out of the monastery into society and statecraft, providing it with a high moral-social ideal. It inspired much imitation—at least on the surface—in Southeast Asia regimes, for centuries. Even today it is frequently appealed to as an example of Buddhist statecraft.

We shall note one further example of concrete Buddhist social action, one not very well known. In the 1992 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* (Honolulu) Whalen Lai has written of an epoch of significant Buddhist social action in China, a country that never fully accepted Buddhism as a major cultural element. In a Chinese-produced sutra entitled *Aid to the Widowed and the Orphaned,* we read:

> I have repeatedly taught in the various sutras that in donating, so that both the monk and the householder may cultivate the mind of compassion, give [first] to the poor, the singled, the old, even unto the hungry dog. But my disciples, not understanding my intention, donate only to the "field of reverence" [monks, stupas, temples] and not to the "field of compassion" [all those in need]. Of these two fields, the field of compassion is far superior. (p. 12)

And in accordance with this new interpretation, the monks of the Three Periods sect were "dedicated to such care [of the needy] and of hospital wards being set up at the various temples."

But in 845 there began a period of the persecution of Chinese Buddhism by the imperial state and so this budding Buddhist social service was soon destroyed; the imperial government, Confucian-oriented,

saw such Buddhist efforts as an infringement of its prerogatives and responsibilities, and moved to take over all such charitable enterprises. Buddhist "social concern" perforce disappeared from the Chinese scene. So it was that when Christian missionaries appeared on the scene they found Buddhism socially disengaged, confined largely to the search for personal enlightenment in the monasteries.

Our question then is: With such a wealth of social idealism as one finds in the Mahāyāna scriptures, plus the Aśokan model, as well as other "social action" attempts through the centuries as concrete efforts and accomplishments in this area, why has there been the strong impression that Buddhism is perhaps *incapable* of significant social interest and action? There are several relevant factors here. One is the nature of Asian history and political/social/economic life. As Ken Jones puts it in his *The Social Face of Buddhism* (Wisdom Publications, London, 1989, p. 208):

> Until the nineteenth century the social order in the Orient evidently presented for many people much the same kind of inevitability as the natural order. Oppressive rulers and their wars and exactions together with periodic flood, pestilence and famine were experienced as all a part of the same inevitable order of things within which good and bad fortune alternated.

Perhaps Tibet, with its Buddhist-based socio-religious order, was the only exception to this general rule.

There were other cultural factors involved. There was the Buddhist/oriental conception of the cyclic nature of time and history. In the Buddhist tradition this was given form in the doctrine of the samsāric nature of life. Life had neither beginning nor ending; human destinies played a sort of obligato to the cyclic rhythms of world existence, interweaving with them at a much faster pace. Hence in Buddhism the "course of history" is much more like the spinning of a top, spinning in place, than like time's speeding arrow, the image of time dominant in the modern West. Indeed some modern Buddhists (e.g., Masao Abe) maintain that time is reversible, history can be unmade so to speak, and that the Western notion of the linear progression of historically successive events, is somehow imposed on reality (Eastern-perceived reality) from outside its lived experiencing. (See *Buddhist-Christian*

Studies, Honolulu, 1987, pp. 7–46.)

Be this as it may, the dominant Western Christian-humanist-scientific sense of history is that of a non-cyclical, non-repetitive, dynamically on-rushing progression of events whose shape and outcome can in part be determined by human attitudes and actions. Precisely what the future holds for us we cannot be certain, only that it will be uniquely different from the past. No inevitably recurring cyclism here! It is quite obvious of course that Asian-nourished Buddhism will have to greatly adapt its traditional mode of conceiving history to make its influence felt in the socio-political hurly-burly of the West—perhaps even in the new East!

There is also the karmic tradition germane to Asian Buddhism. In its original Pali Canon form there are two features relevant here. The first is that one's present state and character are solely his/her own responsibility. Every one is the result of one's own past deeds. This tends to produce a certain fatalism so far as one's present life is concerned.

The second result flows from the first. Society is only the theatre in which somewhat pre-determined individual destinies are worked out. As Ken Jones puts it in his *The Social Face of Buddhism,* "Society is assumed to be no more than the aggregate of the individuals composing it" (p. 202). (He, a Britisher, brackets individual karma and opts for a societal form, that of present society inheriting and projecting its own traits.) Again the result here in Asian Buddhism has been a certain degree of social apathy; focus on individual destiny and its improvement, and society will take care of itself.

Finally, as part of the Asian Buddhist heritage there is the view that the way to change the world is not by "social action" but changing the individual. It is not quite "Let everyone become a Buddhist and then we will have a good world;" it is rather that one who is oneself subject to greed, hatred, or delusion cannot really change the world for the better. All his/her actions will be tainted and the supposedly righteous deeds that are done for the good of the world will rather harm it. Jones quotes eleventh century Milarepa to this effect:

> One should not be over-anxious and hasty in setting out to help serve others before one has oneself realized Truth in its fullness. (p. 202)

And when will one realize Truth in its fullness? Perhaps never—or

hopefully in the *next* life. It would seem that if only the fully enlightened Buddhist can deal with social problems, the day of full-scale Buddhist social engagement will never come.

ENGAGED BUDDHISM OF THE PRESENT

But there are those who, though not claiming to be perfected saints, believe that appropriate Buddhist social engagement can and should be undertaken, here and now. Recently there has appeared an abundance of books dealing with the possibility and nature of *Buddhist* social action. Here I shall deal with only two of these.

The first one to be noted is *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Non-Violence,* Kenneth Kraft, editor (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992). It consists of eight essays, including an introductory one by Kraft. Though this book is keyed to a relatively narrow part of the total Buddhist spectrum, non-violence, non-violence *is* an important Buddhist value and violence of all sorts and degrees is a central world-problem today. Further, other important matters inevitably come to our attention here.

Kraft's introductory essay is well done. It calls attention to the diversity of views within Buddhist circles about the authentic Buddhist role in the social-activist modern world. But it may be said to begin with that they all agree on one basic point. The book's title itself gives us the key: *Inner Peace, World Peace.* That is, individual greed, hatred, and delusion are the basic human problems. As Kraft puts it: Social work entails inner work. "A reform that is pursued only from a socio-political standpoint they [Buddhists] assert will at best provide [only] temporary solutions, and at the worst it will perpetuate the very ills it aims to cure" (p. 12). This can be taken as a basic Buddhist principle of all Buddhist social activism: the inner motivations of reformers and would-be reformers must always kept under close scrutiny.

The degree to which this is to be done, and perhaps more importantly in Buddhist eyes, the order in which self-scrutiny and activity are to be undertaken, is a matter of varied opinion. Though he has no essay in this volume, Thich Nhat Hahn is quoted as voicing in his many works something of a "quietist" view. "If *your* steps are peaceful the world will have peace" (p. 20, emphasis added). Sometimes he says that being conscious of one's breathing continually, or kissing and hug-

ging friends and family, have their strong influence. Does this represent his basic view, or is it something of a reaction to the limited success, and some failures, of his earlier Vietnamese "engaged Buddhism"?

In the second essay Luis Gómez recognizes that there are cases in which "avoiding violence may lead to the suffering of others. . . . where justice seems to require violence" (p. 45). (Justice is a Western rather than a Buddhist word.) This requires a difficult decision for the Buddhist. But in every case what *should* distinguish Buddhist advocates of non-violence is "a recognition of an indispensable link between non-violence and self-cultivation" (p. 46).

In the next essay Christopher Chappell presents a brief survey of Buddhist and Jain attitudes of disapproval of violence toward animals. Applying this principle to the present situation, Chappell sees two relevant applications: Buddhists may wish to adopt a vegetarian diet and there should be a study of and emphasis on a more careful "humane" assessment of the use of animals in laboratories, perhaps limiting it to genuine medical research on a high level.

Donald Swearer outlines the main features of the classic example of Buddhistic statecraft, that of Aśoka. Then he describes a modern Thai exponent of this philosophy, the monk Buddhadassa, who has established a model community—harmonious, non-competitive—in up-country Thailand where he carries on his "Buddha-dharma" community that emphasizes interdependence, restraint, and generosity. Buddhadassa propounds a "dharmic socialism" for the world at large.

Robert Thurman takes Tibetan Buddhism, in its ideals *and* practice, as a truly Buddhist social order. He sees in the Dalai Lama's philosophy an outstanding exemplification of the true Buddhist attitude toward the world. He prays for the Chinese because "violent oppressors are also worthy of compassion" (p. 89). Thurman ends his essay with these words: "From this [classic Buddhist] perspective the planet is perfectly arranged to facilitate our development" (pp. 89–90). Is this last sentence ironic, since the world today is full of violent oppressors, toward whom there is ample opportunity to exercise compassion? Seemingly not. The Tibetan model, expressed by the Dalai Lama's quoted words, represents for Thurman the Buddhist mode of "social action" *par excellence*.

Gene Sharp sees non-violent resistance (Ghandian and other types) as a valid, effective, and fully Buddhist social-action method. He

believes that the non-violent method can achieve the desired effect in four ways: (1) Conversion of one's opponents; (2) achieving accommodation of practices and policies by the opposition group; (3) the non-violent coercion of one's opponents into the desired course of action; (4) successful undermining of the opponent's power-base.

Sulak Sivaraksa is perhaps the most activist of our group of authors, both by virtue of his Buddhist-based socio-political activities in his native Thailand (at considerable and growing personal risk), and because his suggestions here are the most ambitiously vigorous and political in nature. They are not confined narrowly to the non-violence theme, but cover a broad range of topics. He writes: "The Buddhist approach to peace demands self-awareness and social awareness in equal measure" (p. 127). Meditation will loosen the hold of personal and social prejudices; but the Five Precepts—not to kill, not to steal, to abstain from illicit (non-marital) sexuality, to speak the truth, and not to use intoxicants, need to be interpreted in broad realistic terms. For example, not-killing should mean to remedy a world situation in which some live in rich abundance while others starve. Truth refers to false ideologies as well as personal truthfulness. Avoidance of intoxicants means also dealing with social and economic conditions that make drug-dealing profitable. He finds some sort of *world* government consonant with Buddhist principles.

The other essay, by Cynthia Eller, entitled "The Impact of Christianity on Buddhist Non-violence" is more analytic than prescriptive and is one of the most stimulating of the whole group. She sets forth some of the differences of basic viewpoint regarding social action between Buddhist East and Christian West, with the implication that these will in time modify the traditional Asian Buddhist perspective in a Western Christian direction—or at least lead to some new emphases. For example, she notes that the Westerner, following the Christian ethical model, "identifies morality by the one necessary and sufficient criterion of *other*-regardingness" (p. 94) (emphasis added), whereas the Buddhist pattern, as we have seen, is to first attend to (modify, purify) one's *own* self by meditation and self-discipline before moving to improve the conduct of others. In Eller's words, "Seeking enlightenment is a process of stripping away this illusion of separateness [from others] and correctly perceiving reality, in which self and other do not compete because they are not differentiated" (p. 95). Hence there is no "social

gospel" as such in Buddhism. And Buddhists find it strange and jarring that "Christian ethics begins by promoting the *other's* well-being in the conviction that this act of selflessness will, paradoxically, lead to the *self's* well-being" (p. 97, emphases added).

Thus, as earlier suggested, even though this volume seems to have a narrow focus on non-violence, it makes an excellent introduction to the whole subject of the adaptation of Buddhism, as an essentially Asian-oriented culture and religion, to a Western (European-American) Christian/humanist context; from a basically traditional, conservative milieu to a dynamic, "progress"-oriented, "forward-looking" society, in which all of the road-signs are different. It suggests that by increasing contact with and growth in the West, Buddhism will find itself changing and becoming more socially conscious and active.

The other volume to be considered here is *Zen Awakening and Society,* by Christopher Ives (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992). The first thing to be said about this volume is that Ives is scrupulously forthright and honest. Though committed to Zen personally, he neither attempts to whitewash Zen's past record nor gild the lily of its truth till it is unrecognizable as what the outsider sees as "Zen." He seeks to set forth the basic Zen viewpoint/experience of awakening (*satori*) and develop from its character and implications a philosophy and program of Zen-inspired socially-conscious action. In attempting this he fully and frankly acknowledges the Zen tendency to cluster its concerns about the enlightenment experience as such, its historic isolation in the monastery, and its societal inaction and easy accommodation to the politics and religion of the time. In conclusion he deals with a number of attempts to "re-form" the Zen record and provide a social agendum adequate to the modern world, and to these adds some concrete suggestions of his own.

Why *has* Zen on the whole been socially inactive? Ives' answer is this:

> [D]oes Zen practice bear ethical fruits only upon Awakening? Or do such fruits emerge on "this side" of Awakening as well? And if such fruits emerge in the process of Zen practice, how do they extend beyond personal transformation and facilitate social transformation as well? In general Zen authors have not addressed these questions primarily because

> of the focus on monastic attempts to lead people to Awakening and this emphasis on Awakening as the starting point of a truly ethical life. (34)

Resultingly, Zen in general has been on the whole very conformitarian to political and cultural forces during its Japanese historical career. For example, in the Tokugawa era, "monks gave Buddhist precepts and Confucian values a popular expression. This guidance, however, did not call into question the social structures of the time. In short it [Zen] exhibited a conservative stance, despite images of Zen as iconoclastic" (p. 66). Zen could/did not translate its quest for and claim to enlightenment into ethical or societal values.

Is Zen then only geared to a highly individualistic spiritual attainment which, when realized, results in a free, spontaneous personal life but does not concern itself with any social consequences, or formulate any principles of ethical action? As Ives puts it: *Can* Zen be productive of more than a "tradition for the few, a type of spiritual elitism with a 'trickle down' ethic?" (p. 35). Ives is convinced that the intrinsic Zen view and practice of life *do* have wider dimensions than this. He realizes the dangers of such statements as D. T. Suzuki's that "the satori experience . . . . is essentially an affirmative attitude toward all things that exist; it accepts them as they come regardless of their moral values" (p. 44). Ives comments that the Zen experience of "seeing things in their suchness [as-they-areness] is neither a monistic 'unity experience' in which all distinctions disappear nor an advanced case of ethical relativism" (p. 44).

Rather he sees Zen as an effort to escape the rigid absolutist distinctions that cut the individual off from genuinely creative relationships with others and open one up to a fully dynamic awareness of the integral *interrelatedness* of all beings and situations to each other. This will not blot out awareness, a keen, perceptive awareness, of the differences of personal-social-historical identities and relationships, but will enable compassion to flow more freely in creative interaction with others who, no matter how "different," are yet bound tightly together with us. It should enable individuals to "uncover and criticize blind spots in individuals and institutions" (p. 42) and not flatly claim that "there is 'nothing sacred' with simultaneous piety toward Zen personages, lineages, and property" (p. 42). Zen ethics sees "good and

evil, and right and wrong as pragmatically important but not indicative of essences" (p. 50). He does not say clearly, however, whether certain *attitudes*, say of hatred, are *always* wrong, as Buddhism usually maintains. Or would that depend pragmatically on *what* was hated?

In Chapter 4 "Recent Critiques and Developments" Ives deals with the work of three individuals, the first two of whom have been his spiritual mentors. The late Shin'ichi Hisamatsu found the historically venerable monastic form of Zen too narrow and called for a layman's Zen in which there would be the realization of the Formless Self (through a Zen-type awakening), by whose realization in groups of individuals, history can be created from a "suprahistorical" dimension of living. Writes Ives: "Although Hisamatsu provides a new form of practice for the laity, does he not end up offering another ethic for the awakened few [new style]?" (p. 83). Masao Abe calls for the realization of Original Awakening (the fundamental condition of all human beings) which will awaken individuals to their "suchness and interdependence with other things" and emancipate "sentient beings from transmigration." Writes Ives of Abe's work:

> In his writings Abe grants more concreteness and specificity to the framework offered by his teacher Hisamatsu, [but] his largely philosophical approach does not provide treatment of ethical issues in concrete historical situations. (p. 94)

Ives likewise summarizes at some length the late Ichikawa Hakugen's sharp criticism of Japanese Zen as meek and conformist, coming through as "a detached subjective harmony with things rather than a dynamic theoretical framework from which to confront actuality." But again Ichikawa offers only a general framework and some guiding principles (p. 94).

In Part II "Toward a Zen Social Ethic" Ives offers his own suggestions which he hopes will more adequately, than heretofore, provide some important principles and concrete measures for the construction of a Zen social ethic. For him the *core* Zen position remains the same as always: A strong sense of the intimate, organic interrelatedness of all beings, the Mahāyāna sense of the "emptiness" of sharply defined distinctions. This, as already noted, avoids sharp, hard, absolute principles and judgments; there is a strong flavor of practical pragmatism as to judgments and means to ends. The general sense of Zen freedom

from absolutes should not be a peaceful meditational vacuum; the Buddhist goal should be to save one *to* the world in compassionate service not *from* it in isolated superiority. Ives suggests that individual social situations should be viewed as kōans. "What does my, or our, present situation demand by way of wise/compassionate response and policy? What is the Buddhist way to deal with it?" might be forms this kōan would take.

The last pages are filled with concrete suggestions for appropriate Zen social attitudes and actions. Zen should cultivate the awareness of the organic interrelation of mankind and its environment, which legitimates an ecological concern and working with other environmentalists. Ives finds the Western humanistic principle of the inalienable rights of the individual too narrow and "fixatedly subjective" but Zen can/should call for full participation in one's society and for such "rights" as universal suffrage, education, etc. He advocates a sustainable economics, an economy of "enoughness" a la Shumacher's *Small is Beautiful*. The world economy should not be organized as it is at present, with 7% of the population using 40% of its resources.

Buddhists should generally be opposed to violence; though Ives does not rigidly demand vegetarianism, he does suggest that Buddhists should work out a "calculus of suffering" to indicate which animal sources of human food suffer least upon death, to govern their dietary practices.

Perhaps it may be said that the importance and viability of the measures and attitudes proposed here as Zen-agreeable are less important than the fact of their designation, something new in traditional Zen circles. Hopefully Ives is here beginning a growing movement in Zen.

SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISM IN THE FUTURE

What can one say of the future of socially engaged Buddhism? Two things seem safe to say in general. First there will indeed be a continuation of socially engaged Buddhism. Given the continuing penetration of the West (Europe and America) by Buddhism, it will continuingly be faced with the necessity of speaking out on social issues, which are ingrained in the very nature of the dynamic, time-conscious West of which Buddhism seeks to become an integral part. Indeed *some* Buddhists in the West may elect to follow what Ken Jones terms the

"quietist" pattern of meditation and self-awakening/perfection only. But others will feel the need and obligation to become more actively involved in their environing social life.

The second thing that seems relatively certain is that in the process of working with/in its Western environment (and perhaps also in the Western-influenced East) the Buddhist presentation will itself develop new facets. But the form of these facets remains the secret of the future.

We may note in conclusion some interesting features of Buddhism-come-West. Both Theravādin and Tibetan Buddhist groups have solidly established themselves in communities and meditation centers in the West. But their basic approach seems to be a minimalist one: Their main, almost exclusive, agendum is that of personal transformation, the overcoming of greed, hatred, and delusion in the individual. That this will have some effect upon the social world about them is seemingly taken for granted. Whether this emphasis will continue unchanged remains uncertain.

Some other groups, mainly Japanese-oriented, such as the Nichiren Shōshū and the Jōdo Shinshū, have established sizeable, missionary-minded groups in the United States, though their social-action pattern remains minimal. It seems that at present most of their energy goes into "legitimizing" themselves in the Western world, though they too are beginning "social work."

Rather surprisingly, considering the ingrown individualism and subjectivity of the classical pattern of Zen enlightenment, it is from Zen individuals in the West that much of Buddhist "engagement" has been initiated. One thinks of Robert Aitken, Ken Jones, Gary Snyder, Rōshi Glassman (of Greystone Family Inn), for instance. What are the underlying factors here? It is perhaps that Zen has less doctrinal fixity and the possibility of more freedom of action, and hence can more readily adapt to new conditions once it escapes its Japanese institutional shell.

A second factor is that most of these Zen activists are Western-born, nurtured in the Western-world atmosphere of Christian-humanist oriented culture in which socio-political expression and action are second nature. It seems safe to predict that this will increasingly be the case in Western Buddhism and *may* be increasingly reflected in Asian Buddhism as well.