***Re-membering Our Selves, Our Earth*: Engaged Buddhism and the Search for a More 'Integral' Response to the Global Environmental Crisis**

by

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Abstract

Current environmental discourse recognizes a direct relationship between the Western scientific worldview and escalating global environmental degradation. And while most environmentalists eagerly support a shift to a more holistic, earth-honouring worldview, very little attention has been given to developing effective *practical* strategies to facilitate the widespread adoption of such a view. Being grounded in a deeply ecological philosophy. the contemporary movement known as 'engaged' Buddhism may provide environmentalists with a concrete model for an 'integral' activist strategy capable of addressing both the 'inner' (worldview) and 'outer' dimensions of the global crisis. Engaged Buddhist movements in Asia and North America will be examined to determine the potential value of an *ecologically* engaged Buddhism. both as a spiritual path and as a tool for environmental healing. Although several problems will be addressed. engaged Buddhism (and engaged spirituality in general) will be shown to hold tremendous promise for the global environment.

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my parents, Janet and Bob.

Acknowledgements

Countless thanks and blessings go to my mum and dad, without whose help this little book would never have come into being. I would also like to thank Michael for all his love, kindness, and encouragement, throughout the weeks and months it took to write this thesis. Thanks also to my advisors Ian Prattis and Charles Laughlin for having faith in my abilities and inspiring me with their wonderful anthropological theories. Last but not least, I would like to thank my sister Laurie, my dear friend Bobbi, and, of course, Eleanor and Bill—for everything. SAT NAM.

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Introduction

While the main emphasis of the Buddha's teaching is on inner development, that is no reason for Buddhists not to participate in the society in which they live. We are all dependent on others and so responsible to others. The fundamental aim of Buddhist practice, to avoid harming others and if possible to help them, will not be fully achieved simply by thinking about it.

THE DALAI LAMA

He who regards worldly affairs as an obstacle to his training only knows there is no Way in worldly affairs, not knowing that there is nothing such as worldly affairs to be distinguished from the Way.

ZEN MASTER DOGEN

For most people, the word 'Buddhism' might conjure up images of monks sitting quietly in meditation, detached from the world around them. It is much more unlikely to suggest the social realm and involvement with the pressing issues of the day. Yet, this is precisely what many Buddhist communities and practitioners are leaning toward, not only in North America, but also in highly traditional Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma. While this nascent development within the Buddhist tradition, known as socially 'engaged' Buddhism,[1] is frequently described as the result of an overall

[1] The expression "engaged Buddhism" was coined in 1963 by Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh to refer to a form of Buddhist practice which encompasses meditation, mindfulness in daily life, involvement in one's family, and social responsiveness (Kraft 1992a: 18). The *practice* of socially engaged Buddhism, as we currently know it, however, can be traced as far back as 1880 in Sri Lanka (see Queen & King 1996: 21). By using the term 'engaged' Buddhism throughout this work, I do not intend to suggest that the basic goal of engaged Buddhism is somehow different from that of more 'traditional' Buddhist forms. Nor do I wish to infer that the phenomenon of social engagement is entirely new within the tradition. The term merely denotes that within this contemporary Buddhist movement, social engagement (which could range from the smallest act of kindness, to making environmentally friendly consumer choices, to the organization of peaceful political protests) is perceived to be a very powerful means (*upaya*) of growing in the Dharma and alleviating suffering for all beings.

syncretism between Buddhism and Western culture, it may simply be a deeply compassionate and creative response to the unprecedented levels of social and environmental suffering evident in the world today.

Interestingly, the engaged Buddhist movement is flourishing at a time when many North American environmental groups are seeking a more 'spiritual,' or holistic activist approach. Arne Naess, the founder of the environmental perspective known as deep ecology, encourages environmentalists to ground their activism within a deeply ecological worldview, or *ecosophy*, that cherishes nature and respects the sacredness of all existence. Although some religious writers are deeply sceptical of the relationship between Buddhism and ecology, all acknowledge that certain aspects of Buddhist philosophy resonate deeply with current ecological thought. Fundamental Buddhist teachings of interdependence and dependent co-arising very clearly describe the profound relationship between human beings and the natural world. Socially engaged Buddhism, being deeply grounded in Buddhist philosophy and practice may thus offer deep ecology and the environmental movement as a whole, a valuable model for a spiritually[2] based environmental activism.

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Throughout this work I use the terms 'spiritual,' 'spirituality,' and 'spirit' rather loosely to imply a deeper level of reality/experience which is the essence of all life and is beyond duality and suffering. At the same time, I do not wish to suggest any metaphysical assumptions concerning a separate spiritual realm that is fundamentally other than physical reality. For while 'spirit' transcends all that is physical, it also *includes* it. In the words of Ken Wilber, spirit is not the One apart from the Many, nor is it some elusive Omega point within cosmic evolution; it is in fact "the very process of the One expressing itself in successive unfoldings in and through the Many" (Wilber 1995: 486).

In the following pages I intend to evaluate the philosophy and practice of the phenomenon known as 'engaged' Buddhism, both for its spiritual integrity, and for its effectiveness as an approach to social and environmental activism and healing (Part Two). Fundamental teachings common to all schools of Buddhism will be explored to determine if the tradition as a whole can provide a philosophical foundation for a distinctively Buddhist environmental activism (Chapter 2). Contemporary engaged Buddhist movements in Asia and in North America will then be compared in order to gauge the potential *practical* value of an 'ecologically' engaged Buddhism, both as a spiritual path and, more importantly, as a tool for global environmental healing (Chapter 3). By comparing the various expressions of engaged Buddhism observed in Asia and North America, it may also be possible to uncover specific cultural and socioeconomic factors that may affect the development and success of this type of activist approach within various social and cultural settings (Chapter 4). I will begin, however, by introducing the work of two noted theorists, deep ecologist Arne Naess and transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber, in order to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between worldview, spiritual practice, environmental activism, and ecological healing. In this manner, I hope to provide a theoretical foundation for an ecologically engaged Buddhism, or more generally, for an 'integral' environmental activism, capable of addressing *all* aspects of the current global crisis—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual (Part One, Chapter 1).

PART ONE

Paving the Way for an Integral Transpersonal Ecology

Chapter 1

In Search of a Deep Response to the Global Environmental Crisis

> *It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story.*
>
> THOMAS BERRY

Current discourse within the environmental movement, particularly within the area of radical ecology (ecofeminism, deep ecology, and social ecology), focuses upon the relationship between the Western scientific worldview and escalating global environmental degradation. There is practically unanimous agreement among environmentalists that the modern mechanistic, utilitarian view of the natural world is largely responsible for the terrible ecological predicament we now are facing. A shift to a more spiritual or holistic worldview, characteristic of many indigenous cultures, is considered therefore, to be an essential first step toward environmental healing. Countless alternative worldviews have already been suggested and debated down to the smallest detail[3] (see Callicott & Ames 1989; Capra 1982; Merchant 1995; Suzuki &

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Although many of the worldviews discussed are derived from various philosophical (Spinozist, Whiteheadian, etc.) and religious traditions, a fair number, referred to as 'systems theories,' have a modern scientific origin. These systems views are derived from such diverse fields as cybernetics, nonequilibrium thermodynamics, catastrophe theory, dynamic systems theory, and chaos theory.

Knudtson 1993; Fox 1990). Unfortunately very little attention has been paid to designing appropriate practical strategies which could facilitate the widespread adoption of these ecologically sound views. Clearly a rational acceptance of even the most profoundly ecological cosmology is not enough. If it were, Buddhism would not have developed such a vast liturgy for transforming human consciousness, particularly the egotism that binds human beings to selfish behaviours and narrow utilitarian pursuits.

In the following chapter I will discuss the work of deep ecologist Arne Naess and transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber. I believe these two theorists offer the most sophisticated analyses of the current environmental crisis, and go the furthest to suggesting appropriate activist strategies that work to transform human consciousness, while simultaneously addressing manifest ecological problems. By discussing the views of Naess and Wilber, I hope to develop a conceptual framework to assist those interested in developing an 'integral' environmental activism—one capable of powerfully addressing both the *inner* (consciousness) and *outer* (pollution, species extinction etc.) dimensions of the global environmental crisis. Furthermore, I will propose that the various forms of 'engaged' Buddhism found in Asia, Europe, and North America could offer the environmental movement concrete models for developing a truly 'integral' ecology.

1.1 THE PROMISE OF NAESS' ECOPHILOSOPHY AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DEEP ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

In any discussion of deep ecology one is faced with the problem of articulating the relationship between the philosophy of deep ecology and its more concrete activist dimension. The need for such a discussion is twofold: 1) the relationship between deep ecology as a *social movement* and Arne Naess' *philosophical view*, which includes Ecosophy[4] T, is somewhat more complex than is generally understood; and 2) deep ecological activism, which frequently employs questionable tactics such as ecotage and monkeywrenching,[5] often fails to embody the high ideals expressed by the movement's leading theorists. Unfortunately deep ecology has suffered a tremendous amount of misunderstanding, and is often mistaken to be either a purely philosophical position, or a form of radical environmental activism devoted to defending wilderness against all forms of human interference (Naess 1992: 15; Naess 1984). Neither of these descriptions offer a fair portrayal of the movement.

Certainly the ideal purpose of any environmental philosophy is to provide a theoretical

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Ecosophy is the term that Naess prefers to use to describe an ecologically-sound worldview. In this way he could represent several different worldviews as Ecosophy A, Ecosophy B, Ecosophy C etc. He uses the term ecophilosophy to describe the *study* of ecological worldviews in general, or the study of the "problems common to ecology and philosophy" (Naess 1992: 36-7).

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According to American deep ecologist Bill Devall, 'monkeywrenching' " is the purposeful dismantling or disabling of artifacts used in environmentally destructive practices at a specific site—dismantling fishing gear or logging equipment" (1988: 140). The term 'ecotage' refers to activities such as spiking trees, blocking roads, or getting in the way of any activity that is viewed as ecologically destructive. Although the two terms are intended to specify different kinds of activities, they are often used interchangeably.

framework to help justify and guide environmental activism (Zimmerman 1994: 1). Thus in order to build a stronger more integrated movement, proponents of deep ecology must begin to uncover the specific problems that have so far hindered the full expression of the movement's philosophical ideals within its environmental activism. Only by striving to embody or deeply express the principles contained within their ecocentric worldviews will deep ecologists succeed in their primary goal to transform the egotism and short-sightedness imbedded within modernity's dualistic scientific worldview. What I believe is missing in the deep ecological approach is an adequate understanding of the processes that mediate the transformation of human consciousness. It is one thing to recognize the *need* to transform human consciousness, and quite another to fully understand what this entails and actually succeed in this endeavour. I will attempt to address this issue in the following discussion and within the chapter as a whole. First however, it is necessary to lay out the theoretical foundations of deep ecology as articulated by the movement's intellectual founder, Arne Naess.

Theoretical Foundations of Deep Ecology

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the term *deep ecology* in 1973 as a means to distinguish between a 'deeper,' more spiritual environmental perspective—as exemplified in the writings of Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson—and the more popular 'shallow,' or

human-centred environmentalism of the time[6] (Naess 1973: 95; Norton 1991: 81-86). More importantly, Naess called deep ecology 'deep' because it poses *deeper* questions about the fundamental assumptions (norms and hypotheses) imbedded within technological modernity, and then attempts to *address* environmental issues from this deeper perspective. Naess believes that only by asking deeper philosophical questions[7] can the roots of our current ecological predicament be unearthed. So while 'shallow' has an unfortunate defamatory ring, it was intended simply to refer to the practice of isolating and addressing the *manifest* social and environmental problems, without simultaneously confronting their deeper philosophical roots (Naess 1992: 12).

According to Naess, deep ecology "involves *both* concrete decisions in environmental conflict and abstract guidelines of philosophical character" (Naess 1992: 163; emphasis in original). Naess was very strong in his conviction that deep ecology be more than a "mere philosophy of man-nature," and put a great deal of thought and effort into developing a system that would allow environmentalists to move *from* abstract philosophical or religious norms to very specific, concrete policies and actions (ibid.). Warwick Fox (1990) has described this aspect of Naess' work as his "formal" sense of

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By 'shallow,' or 'reform' ecology, Naess was referring to the more conservative environmental movement of the 1960s and early 70s which focussed largely on the "health and affluence of people in the developed countries," and fought against pollution and resource depletion using a very piecemeal approach (1973: 95).

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The following are examples of 'deep' questioning: "Are the assumptions imbedded within modernity conducive to developing a truly satisfying life?"; "Can one's own well-being be purchased at the expense of another, whether that 'other' be human or nonhuman?" (Zimmerman 1994: 20-1).

deep ecology. In addition, Fox recognizes two other distinct 'senses' within Naess work: the "philosophical" sense, otherwise known as Ecosophy T[8]; and the "popular" sense often referred to as the Deep Ecology Platform or DEP (Zimmerman 1994: 20). While the philosophical and popular senses of deep ecology are often emphasized to the practical exclusion of the formal sense, it is the formal sense that provides the framework for Naess's entire deep ecological philosophy, within which are *contained* both the philosophical and popular senses of the movement.

Naess' formal sense of deep ecology can be understood as a practical philosophical tool, as well as a theoretical framework describing an ideal relationship between the ideological and practical components of deep ecology. His intention for developing this formal theoretical system was twofold: 1) to provide a method by which one could articulate fundamental beliefs contained implicitly within one's worldview; and 2) to enable environmentalists to design policies and forms of activism that are *consistent* with their highest philosophical ideals. Naess demonstrates the need for such a system by

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At the heart of Naess' Ecosophy T (the 'T' supposedly refers to his mountain hut Tvergastein "cross of stones" in Norway) is the process of Self-realization, which describes a natural maturation process through which we come to realize our deep inter-connectedness with all life (Naess 1992: 84-6). Although Naess never makes the connection himself, the concept of Self -realization resonates deeply with C.G. Jung's process of individuation. According to Naess, it is through a process of identification with others, including non-human others, that we move beyond the shell of our ego-self and begin to embrace, what Naess aptly calls, our *ecological self* (Seed et al. 1988: 20). As we come to realize that there are no ultimate boundaries separating 'myself' from the rest of the world, Naess believes that we will begin to care for all beings just as we instinctively care for our own ego, our own body and our own family. We will begin to engage in what Kant called 'beautiful' actions, not merely dutiful ones (ibid.: 20-21). Naess borrows the term 'self-realization' from Gandhi who claimed that "to realize God, to realize the Self, and to realize Truth, are three expressions of the same development" (quoted in Fox 1990: 109). For this reason, Naess regards deep ecology not only as a campaign to help preserve the integrity of the biosphere, but also as a movement that can help liberate humanity from enslaving attitudes and practises (Zimmerman 1994: 38).

discussing the curriculum plan for Norwegian elementary schools. The curriculum, explains Naess, "states that schools are to be the means for giving the pupils an attitude to life which revolves around truth, honesty, faithfulness, cooperation and charity." He points out, however, that no serious attempt has been made to demonstrate exactly *how* this objective could actually be obtained (Naess 1992: 77-8). According to Naess, the school board has been unable to fulfill its ideological objective because it has failed to ask deep questions such as: "Can pupils become charitable through studying isolated subjects?"; and "How do current methods of student evaluation encourage cooperation and teamwork?" (ibid.: 78). And unless a concerted effort is made to link shared philosophical and religious values to concrete policies and practices, decisions will most likely be driven much more by implicit egocentric concerns (and the almighty dollar), and far less by our more noble intentions.

Naess describes his formal sense of deep ecology as a four-level derivational model (see Figure 1) that begins with general philosophical principles and moves toward the development of specific rules and recommendations for treating all life in a respectful manner (Devall 1988: 12-13; Zimmerman 1994: 22). The first level represents one's ultimate norms and values, which may be drawn from various religious or philosophical traditions (including 'new paradigm' philosophical views which are scientifically derived). Assuming that one's worldview is ecologically sound, this first level should also express one's intuitions about the need to respect nature and all forms of life (Zimmerman 1994: 22). The ultimate norms of Self-realization and biospheric

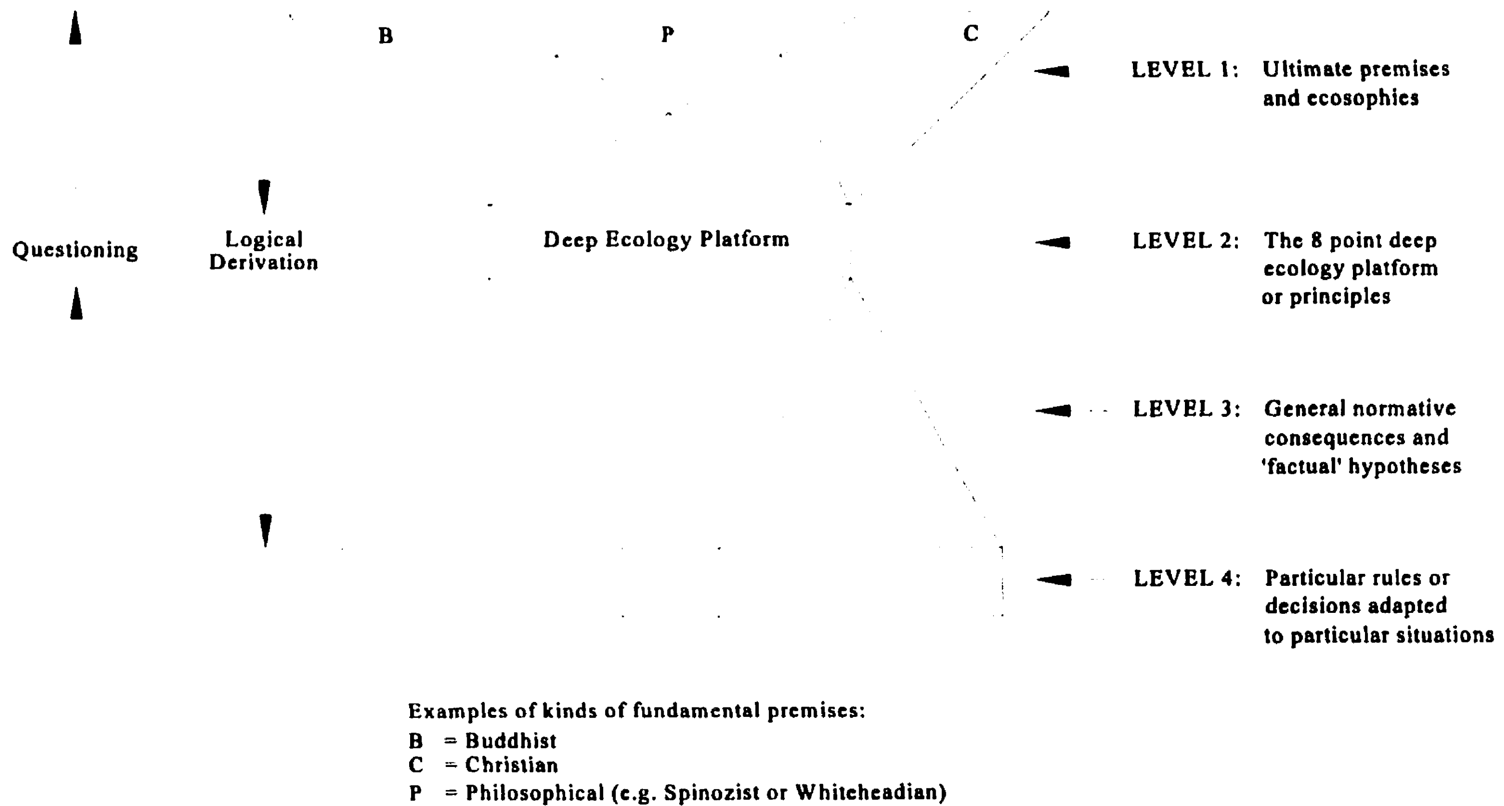

Figure 1: Naess' Formal Derivational Model

Source: Zimmerman, Michael E., *Contesting Earth's Future* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994, p. 23)

egalitarianism, which are contained within Naess' own philosophy, Ecosophy T, belong to this first level of the derivational model.

The second level, which is also Naess's popular sense of Deep Ecology—or the Deep Ecology Platform (DEP)—contains the most *general* views that are considered to be common to *all* supporters of the Deep Ecology Movement. These views are loosely derivable from the various religious or philosophical norms and theoretically represents the common ground that unites deep ecologists from a wide variety of religious and philosophical backgrounds (Fox 1990: 99). In 1984 George Sessions and Naess undertook the formidable task of designing a set of statements which they believed could represent this common ground (Devall 1988: 14). Together they developed the eight-point Deep Ecology Platform which has since been widely adopted by supporters of the movement, including the radical activist group Earth First![9] Naess insists however, that his formulation of the DEP "is 'without great pretensions' and has a limited function of stimulating dialogue—both between supporters of deep ecology and between supporters and critics of deep ecology" (Devall 1988: 14). Although others are encouraged to develop their own versions of the platform, which will be more consistent with the language of their own worldview, the Naess/Sessions formulation remains the 'official'

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Earth First! is a grassroots activist group co-founded by Dave Foreman in 1980 and is one of the foremost promoters of Naess's exposition of deep ecology. Earth First!'s approach to environmentalism is best described by their leading slogan: "No compromise in defence of Mother Earth!" (Merchant 1992: 173). Although a relatively small environmental group (compared to Greenpeace and the Sierra Club), Earth First! has attracted a considerable amount of media attention, largely as a result of their unorthodox practices, which include vandalizing equipment, driving spikes into trees, blockading roads, and performing acts of civil disobedience.

set of statements that guide the movement. The eight principles of the DEP are as follows:

1) The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy *vital*[10] needs.

4) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

5) Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

6) Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating *life quality* (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

The third level of Naess' derivational model comprises general consequences and broad policies derivable from level two statements, or the DEP. According to Devall, level three statements could theoretically "form platforms for various political movements,

10 Naess intentionally leaves the concept of 'vital needs' open to interpretation, believing that different cultural groups will necessarily disagree on the exact definition of the term. Within the specific context of the DEP, however, I believe 'vital needs' is intended to signify access to sufficient food, water, housing, and other material resources necessary to live a satisfying life.

such as the Green movement, appropriate technology, Earth First!, and various bioregional movements." (1988: 13). Finally, the fourth and most concrete level concerns specific ways to implement such policies, such as recommending particular forms of protest, or implementing environmental educational programs etc. (Zimmerman 1994: 24). Naess admits that he has neglected to sufficiently develop these last two levels within his own ecosophy, thus failing to adequately demonstrate the very *practical* potential of deep ecology (Naess 1992: 13). Unfortunately, to my knowledge, no other deep ecologist has attempted to pick up where Naess left off and apply Naess' four level derivational model to a specific environmental concern (ibid.). I agree with David Rothenberg who says: "And this is a shame, because, if there is to be any test of the worth of ecophilosophy, this is it. So here is an area where much work can be done!" (Naess 1992: 13).

I do not believe that deep ecologists need to follow the exact format used by Naess, which consists of writing a whole series of evaluative and descriptive statements, gradually moving from the abstract to the more concrete (for an example see Naess 1992: 197-207). But if deep ecology is to be truly *deep* in the manner Naess intended, then those active within the movement need to make a serious effort to develop policies, programs, and forms of activism that are consistent with the spirit of their ecocentric, liberational ideals. Dogmatically following favourite principles within the DEP, something which certain members of Earth First! could be accused of, is definitely *not* what Naess had in mind for deep ecology. Deep ecology was to be a philosophically integrated, *practical* form of

environmentalism which worked toward the healing of the biosphere *in a manner* that both alleviated existing environmental problems and helped to transform human perceptions of their relationship with the natural world. Naess was convinced that a change in consciousness (presumably achieved by asking deeper questions) was essential if we hoped to move through the current ecological crisis with any kind of intelligence and grace:

> Without a change in consciousness, the ecological movement is experienced as a never-ending list of reminders: 'shame, you mustn't do that' and 'remember, you're not allowed to...'. With a change in mentality we can say 'think how wonderful it will be, if and when...', 'look there! What a pity we haven't enjoyed that before...'. If we can clean up a little internally as well as externally, we can hope that *the ecological movement will be more of a renewing and joy-creating movement.* (Naess 1992: 91; emphasis in original)

Naess understands deep ecology as a movement *in process* (Fox 1990: 79), and subsequently views Ecosophy T, the Deep Ecology Platform, and any derived environmental policies and recommendations, as revisable and temporary. This I believe is a key function of Naess formal sense of deep ecology—to help keep the Deep Ecology Movement tolerant, culturally and situationally adaptable, and open to new information. Recent criticisms of the Deep Ecology Movement that describe it as being both dogmatic and narrow (see Skolimowski 1984; Stark 1995; Watson 1983), suggest that greater emphasis needs to be placed on encouraging diversity and flexibility within the movement. This could be achieved by emphasizing the theoretical underpinnings of Naess's formal sense of deep ecology, and by encouraging deep ecologists to articulate their own ecosophies as well as develop alternative formulations of the Deep Ecology

Platform (Zimmerman 1994:51). This is particularly important where the DEP is concerned because only by working out several versions of the DEP can the movement hope to develop a set of statements that are *truly* representative of all supporters of the movement.

From Deep Questioning to Deep *Practice*

It would be fair to say that the Deep Ecology Movement has thus far failed to live up to the expectations and standards set by its intellectual founder in the late 1970s. While the movement's intentions cannot be faulted, it currently lacks the transformative power which would be required to make deep ecology truly *deep*, both in its understanding and in its environmental activism. Current activities within the movement tend to bounce between denouncing anthropocentrism and utilitarian views of nature, and making desperate, angry, although often heroic attempts to save wilderness areas from human abuses. Unfortunately these tactics appear to have done more to create misunderstanding and divisiveness within the environmental movement, rather than encourage greater unity and a move toward greater holism and philosophical depth (Thornton 1993: 42-3). By failing to align its environmental activism with its more profound philosophical insights, the Deep Ecology Movement has been unable to adequately develop within itself the pockets of ecological consciousness required to begin establishing significant changes in the world (ibid.: 43-5). Why the movement has failed in this endeavour is the central question of this chapter, and is of pivotal importance to the Deep Ecology Movement if it

ever hopes to overcome the obstacles that continue to impede the realization of its admirable goals.

If however, like Naess (1977: 418), we trace the Deep Ecology Movement to the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, then we may be able to come up with a more optimistic conclusion. In the past few decades since Carson published her ground breaking book, not only has our scientific understanding of human/nature relations become much more sophisticated, but it is becoming practically common-place to hear mainstream environmentalists and scientists use words like 'spiritual,' 'religious,' 'love,' and 'God' in their discussions of the environmental crisis (Prattis 1997: 281; see also Al Gore 1992; Suzuki & Knudtson 1993). Depth of *understanding* certainly does seem to have increased. The environmental movement as a whole *is* asking deeper questions, which means that in this limited sense the Deep Ecology Movement may have actually been successful. Where it has failed, and where environmentalism in general continues to fail, is in its ability to establish significant concrete changes in the world. In spite of increased public awareness, and an unending supply of gloomy statistics, surprisingly little has been done to establish environmentally sustainable societies that would help to reduce pollution, resource exploitation, and biospheric destabilization. The environmental movement has hit a terrible wall, and deep ecologists seem to be just as stumped as everyone else![11]

11

Indeed the extreme strategies utilized by deep ecology's most notorious activist group, Earth First!, could be understood as an expression of the terrible despair experienced by most environmentalists in a world that seems to care less and less about the serious predicament we and the planet are currently facing

Transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (1995) and deep ecologist Joanna Macy (1988) have each attempted to explain the causes of this stalemate currently being experienced by the environmental movement. While I believe Macy and Wilber would generally support each other's positions, each emphasizes a different aspect of the obstacle they believe is responsible for undermining the efforts of well-intentioned environmentalists. As previously mentioned, Naess and other radical ecologists have identified the current utilitarian *worldview* as the main obstacle to environmental healing and the development of ecologically sound societies. While I agree with this interpretation, I believe it would be more accurate to describe the environmental crisis as one of the more negative consequences (or what Jung might call the 'shadow' side) of humanity's current level of maturity—intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual. Both Macy and Wilber identify individual and collective consciousness as the great sticking point of the environmental movement, and in their different ways attempt to address this problem.

According to Joanna Macy, the reason many people appear indifferent to current ecological problems is *not* because they lack sufficient information. Rather, Macy believes that the sheer enormity of the current crisis is so emotionally overwhelming that very few individuals are willing to seriously contemplate such information and respond appropriately to it. Not acting then is an effective way of denying the seriousness of the current environmental predicament. Macy's work both in developing countries and in the West has convinced her that it is the destabilization of the earth's life-support systems

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(Taylor 1994: 201).

that is the deepest and most pervasive source of anxiety in the modern world. "It is not a hypothetical danger like nuclear war, for it is happening now...and people, as much as they would like to deny it, sense it, feel it....The very enormity of the threat makes it harder to talk about" or confront squarely (Seed et al. 1988: 7).

In order to deal with the problem of denial and deep fear, which Macy has identified as the greatest block preventing individuals from responding powerfully to the current environmental crisis, Macy teamed up with fellow deep ecologist John Seed and developed the Council of All Beings empowerment workshops (ibid.). The Council of All Beings workshops incorporate ritual forms from a wide variety of spiritual traditions, particularly Buddhism, in order to provide a safe environment for participants to mourn the loss of life on earth, and to experience feelings of despair, sadness, and even rage (ibid.: Taylor 1994: 190-1). The rituals are intended not only as a means to *experience* repressed emotions, but also to *transform* them in a way that allows participants to reconnect with their inner wisdom, with other human beings, and with the natural world. Most importantly, the workshops have been designed to help individuals emerge from the potentially crippling emotions of fear, anger, and despair, into feelings of confidence, serenity, and even joy, thus accessing their greatest potential to act meaningfully for change in the world[12] (Thornton 1993: 44-5). According to Macy, ultimately "what we

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For the past few years, Seed and Macy have been working very closely with Earth First! with the specific intention of developing an integrated ritual life for the movement (Taylor 1994: 190). Although it is difficult to tell at this time, Earth First!'s collaboration with the Council of All Beings may be helping the movement to *deepen* its environmental activism, aligning it more fully with the non-dualistic philosophical ideals expressed by Naess, Fox, Devall and others.

want to do is turn people into activists" (in Kraft 1994: 169).

Ken Wilber would most likely agree with Macy's analysis, although he generally cautions against the use of ritual processes within the environmental movement (Zimmerman 1996: 45). According to Wilber, however, repressed emotions of fear and anger are not the only impediments the environmental movement has to contend with. Unfortunately, humanity as a whole is simply not sufficiently mature or integrated enough to be able to consistently act in an ecologically responsible manner. Wilber believes that a truly *global* ecological consciousness resides not in our pre-industrial past, but in our future with centauric (mature reason) and transpersonal stages of human development (Wilber 1995: 186-7). Repressed fear and anger certainly prevent us from moving forward and growing (ibid.: 664 n. 53; 222-3), but beyond these crippling emotions, much work still has to be done both *inwardly* and *outwardly* to secure the development of ecological consciousness and ecological societies within the world.

From this brief introduction, it is difficult to see just how Wilber's perspective differs from that of Naess and other radical ecologists. An essential difference lies in Wilber's understanding of the term 'worldview'. Unlike most radical ecologists including Naess, Wilber understands 'worldview' to be more than a mere philosophy or rational perspective, but rather a tangible world*space,* a living consciousness inhabited and expressed by individuals and communities. Worldviews cannot be tacked on like some new and more fashionable suit. According to Wilber, most radical ecologists are so

focussed on developing "reflective 'paradigms' that their understanding of *interior* dynamics and development is incredibly anemic....global [ecological] consciousness is not an *objective belief* that can be *taught* to anybody and everybody, but a *subjective transformation* in the interior structures that *can* hold the belief in the first place" (Wilber 1995: 514-515). So rather than attempting to adopt the cosmology or worldview of some New Age religion or pre-industrial culture (such as the ancient Greeks, or Native American cultures), Wilber believes we must look to the future (ibid.: 166-8). As we develop our consciousness using meditation and other spiritual disciplines[13] a new and appropriate worldview or worldspace will unfold before our eyes.

Wilber's view differs from that of Naess in at least two more important ways: 1) Wilber offers a much more sophisticated analysis of the relationship between worldviews, human consciousness, and manifest social and environmental problems; and 2) he recognizes that attaining ecological consciousness (or attaining deeper levels of Self-realization) will demand more than Naess' deep questioning, and will likely require considerable discipline in contemplative practices such as meditation (Wilber 1995: 254-258). Unfortunately, unlike Naess, Wilber does not attempt to develop a framework for, or even suggest a practical form of environmental activism based on his integral transpersonal analysis. I will take this issue up in the last part of this chapter when I suggest that current expressions of engaged Buddhism could offer a model for an 'integral'

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I use the term 'spiritual disciplines' very loosely to refer to any practice, method, or technology that provides the requisite conditions for optimizing cognitive/consciousness development within individuals.

transpersonal ecology, consistent with Wilber's "all-level, all quadrant" approach (Wilber 1998: 30). I believe Wilber's work offers an enormously valuable contribution to the current environmental discourse, and in the following section I will briefly outline his perspective, paying particular attention to those issues neglected or seriously underdeveloped within Naess' theoretical work.

1.2 Wilber's Integral Transpersonal Diagnosis of the Global Environmental Crisis

Wilber begins his analysis of the environmental crisis with a discussion of modernity's "fractured worldview" (Wilber 1995: 4). He appears sympathetic to the view held by various radical ecologists, that in order to heal both ourselves and the planet we must replace our current mechanistic, utilitarian worldview with one "that is more holistic, more relational, more integrative, more Earth-honoring, and less arrogantly human-centred" (ibid.). And yet, Wilber's understanding of what would constitute such a 'holistic' worldview goes far beyond the popular 'web of life,' or systems theory[14] approaches. In fact, he charges such 'new paradigm'[15] philosophical views as being "incredibly partial and lopsided" and far from the healing forces they pretend to be (ibid.:

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By 'systems theory,' Wilber is referring to such diverse fields as cybernetics, nonequilibrium thermodynamics, catastrophe theory, dynamic systems theory, chaos theory, etc. (Fuenzalida 1998: 13 n.12).

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By 'new paradigm' I am referring broadly to the numerous 'holistic' worldviews which have been proposed as an alternative to the current Western scientific worldview. These include, among others, Naess' Ecosophy T and the various systems theories.

80). In the following discussion I will attempt to explain how Wilber came to this unusual conclusion.

The Great Holarchy of Being

In order to clarify his theoretical perspective, Wilber begins by mapping out a view of the cosmos based on the principles of the perennial philosophy[16] (Wilber 1996b: 5). First he reintroduces the Pythagorean term *Kosmos* as a means to denote a much more complex, multidimensional view of all domains of existence. According to Wilber, the "Kosmos contains the cosmos (or the physiosphere), the bios (or biosphere), nous (the nousphere [mental domain]), and theos (the theosphere or divine domain)—none of them being foundational (even spirit shades into emptiness)" (Wilber 1995: 38). One of the central components of the perennial philosophy, and thus Wilber's view of the Kosmos, is the notion that reality manifests as Great Chain of Being, or continuum of increasingly complex dimensions, levels, or grades (Fuenzalida 1998: 9). Because Wilber's view of the Great Chain is based on the concept of hierarchy, or holarchy, Wilber prefers to use

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Leibniz coined the term *philosophia perennis* to refer to the central esoteric teachings common to all the worlds great wisdom traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism and Christian mysticism (Wilber 1996b: 5). It describes a sophisticated view of the relation of humanity and the Divine, and understands the Absolute Godhead "not as a Big Thing set apart from finite things, but rather the reality or suchness or ground of all things" (ibid.: 6). Throughout history, many of the West's most gifted intellectuals from Plato to William James to Albert Einstein, have embraced the perennial philosophy as the philosophical basis of their own thought (ibid.). With this in mind philosopher Arthur Lovejoy concluded that the perennial philosophy "has, in one form or another, been the dominant official philosophy of civilized mankind through most of history" (Lovejoy 1964: 26). Ken Wilber's work on the 'spectrum of consciousness' and the Great Holarchy of Being is an attempt to reintroduce the perennial philosophy to contemporary philosophical and scientific disciplines and establish a basis for the integration of religious and scientific thought.

the phrase, the 'Great Holarchy of Being.'

The various Great Chain theorists maintained that 1) all phenomena—whether concrete things, events, or ideas—are manifestations of Spirit, such that "the entire material and natural world was, as Plato put it, 'a visible, sensible God' "(Wilber 1995: 8); 2) that there are no gaps or 'missing links,' for everything in the Kosmos is deeply interwoven with every other aspect; and 3) that there exists a continuum of being from the most simple and least conscious, to the most complex and most conscious (ibid.). The entire chain is a seamless continuum which can be most simply represented as a movement through the following dimensions: matter, body, mind, soul, spirit. According to Wilber, Radical *Spirit*, with a capital 'S' is the nondual ground of this entire creative process. Spirit is not the One apart from the Many, nor is it some elusive Omega point within cosmic evolution, it is in fact "the *very process* of the One expressing itself in successive unfoldings in and through the Many" (ibid.: 486). It is the Alpha, the Omega, and *everything* in between.

From Wilber's perspective, reality is not composed of quarks, or subatomic exchange; nor is it composed of ideas, or symbols. It is composed of *holons* (Wilber 1995: 35). Arthur Koestler coined the term 'holon' to refer to that which is a *whole* in one context, but is simultaneously a *part* in another, broader context (ibid.: 18). Every thing, every process, every idea, is both a whole *and* a part, and the Kosmos is structured in such a way that holons exist in both communal (heterarchy) and hierarchal relationship with

each other. To convey this complex relational pattern, Wilber uses the term *holarchy*, which is intended to "mean the *balance* of normal [healthy] hierarchy and normal heterarchy" (ibid.: 24; emphasis added). For example, within a given level of reality, the level of cells for example, the various cell holons exist in a *heter*archic relationship, each cell ontologically equivalent and each presumably contributing equally to the welfare of the entire level (Zimmerman 1996: 39). However, cells that exist as part of a multicellular organism or within complex organ systems also function within a structural *hier*archy, and are organized and directed by the 'higher' order holons. And in any developmental sequence (such as from molecules, to cells, to multicellular organisms etc.), the new stage *preserves* and "*includes* the capacities and functions of the previous stage (i.e of the previous holons), and then adds its own unique (and more encompassing) capacities" (ibid.: 20).

As used in the modern disciplines of psychology, evolutionary theory, and systems theory, hierarchy should be understood merely as a "ranking of orders of events *according to their holistic capacity*" (Wilber 1995: 17; emphasis in original). And it is only in this sense that a level or stage of development can be said to be 'higher' than any other stage. Wilber is careful to point out that while higher order holons (such as living organisms) are more encompassing and complex, they are *completely* dependent on the integrity of lower holons (such as the physical environment), without which they would cease to exist (ibid.: 61-63). This is precisely why the global environmental crisis poses such a vast threat to the future of the human species, not to mention the millions of other

species currently existing on the planet.

Wilber distinguishes between *domination hierarchies* and *actualization hierarchies* in order to allay fears that he is trying to propagate an elitist, patriarchal view of the universe[17] which many believe is the root cause of the current ecological crisis. Whereas domination hierarchies are designed by higher order holons in order to control and dominate lower holons, actualization hierarchies are the result of more balanced development which works to maximize the potential of all holonic levels (Wilber 1995: 22-3). In a healthy holarchy, each higher level serves as a means to *organize* and *integrate* the various potentials and capacities of all lower holons. And it is a function of this very process that new emergent properties begin to arise within the 'higher' level. Unfortunately any holarchy has the potential to become pathological and turn into a domination hierarchy. And according to Wilber, it is "precisely *because* the world is arranged holarchically, precisely because it contains fields within fields within fields, that things can go profoundly wrong, that a disruption or pathology in one field can reverberate throughout an entire system" (ibid.: 22). From this perspective, what we call the global environmental crisis can be understood as one of the more serious consequences of human holarchic development gone terribly wrong.

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In fact, Wilber's intention for introducing the concept 'holon,' the idea that everything is simultaneously a whole and a part, is to steer clear of totalizing ideologies that attempt to justify the oppression and marginalization of the 'parts,' for the good of some mythical Whole. Holons "within holons within holons means that the world is without foundation in either wholes or parts," because any conceptualized 'whole,' is in the very next moment simply a 'part' within an even more encompassing whole (Wilber 1995: 36). And "as for any sort of 'absolute reality' in the spiritual sense...it is neither whole nor part, neither one nor many, but pure groundless Emptiness, or radical *nondual* Spirit" (ibid.).

After outlining the basic principles of holarchic development Wilber adds a further layer of complexity by introducing the four quadrants, or four corners of the Kosmos. The four quadrants are Wilber's most enduring contribution to the ongoing refinement of the perennial philosophy, particularly as it had been represented by Plotinus, Aurobindo and others. These quadrants represent the four faces of *all* phenomena (or holons): 1) intentional (subjective); 2) behavioural (objective); 3) cultural (subjective); and 4) social (objective). And because none of the quadrants can be reduced to any other, each must be studied and described in a manner appropriate to that quadrant[18] (Wilber 1998: 19). Each quadrant is also intimately related and indeed *dependent* upon all the others (Wilber 1995: 120). The Left Hand quadrants represent the inner or *subjective* dimensions of phenomena, while the Right Hand quadrants describe phenomena according to their *objective*, superficial appearance. More specifically the Upper Left quadrant represents the interior of the individual (consciousness); the Upper Right, the exterior of the individual (overt behaviour/physical structure); the Lower Left, the interior social dimension (collective consciousness/cultural worldviews); and the Lower Right, the exterior social dimension (social structure/environment) (Wilber 1996a: 21). In order to conceptualize this model, I have reproduced Wilber's diagram of the four quadrants in

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To say that no quadrant can be reduced to any other does not mean that a given quadrant cannot be described *from the perspective* of the other quadrants. For example, feelings of joy can be described objectively in the form of chemical changes in the brain. To do so, however, would strip every ounce of meaning from the *subjective* experience. The following excerpt explains this beautifully: "Albert Einstein was asked one day by a friend 'Do you believe that absolutely everything can be expressed scientifically?" "Yes, it would be possible," he replied, "but it would make no sense. It would be description without meaning—as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation in wave pressure" (quoted in Suzuki 1997: 19).

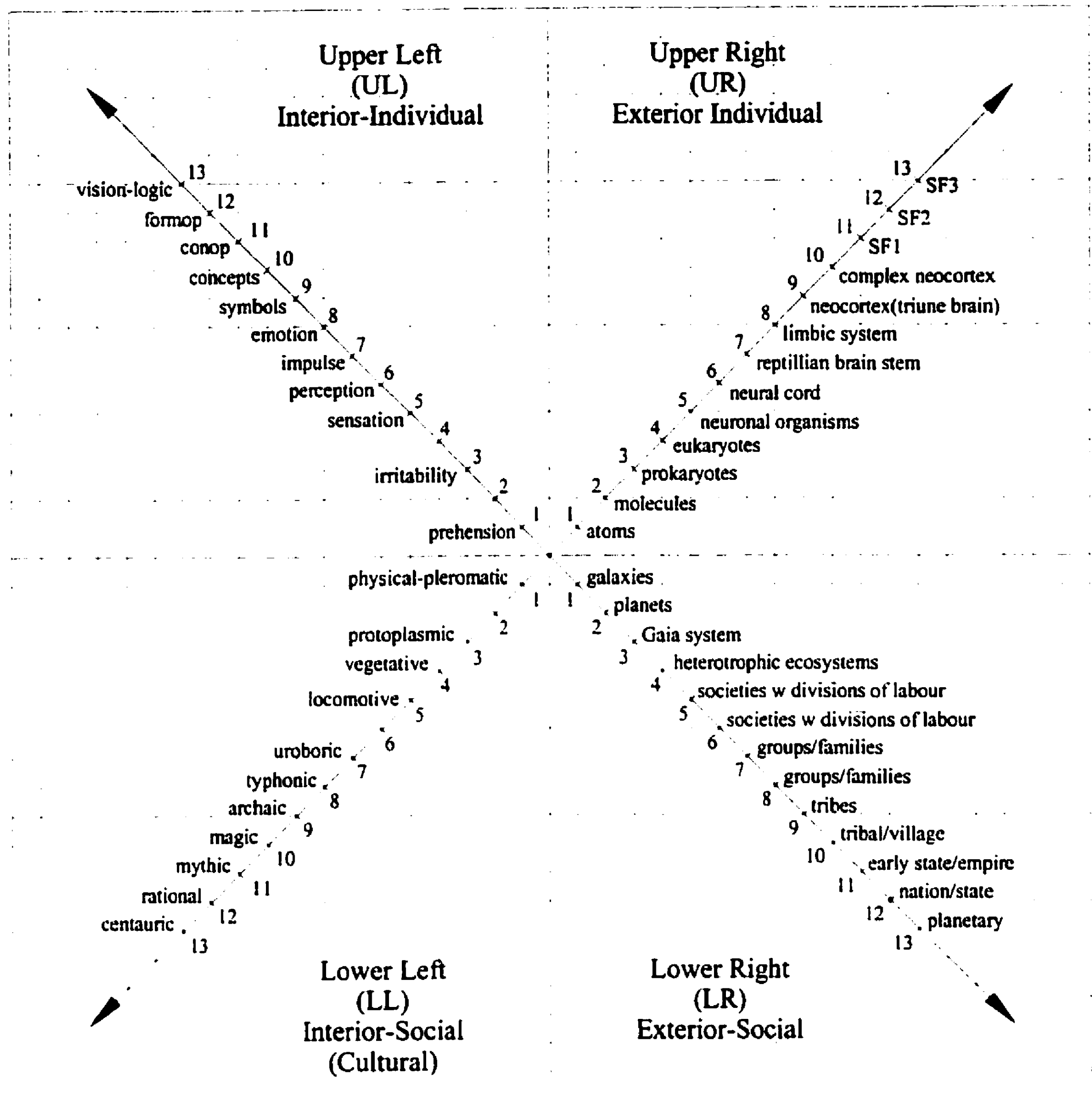

Figure 2: Wilber's Four Quadrants Model

Source: Wilber, Ken, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995, p. 193)

Figure 2 (this diagram also details a few of the more salient evolutionary milestones, up to the present, within each quadrant).

According to Wilber, exploration of the four quadrants requires proficiency in three modes of knowing and experiencing the world: 1) subjective introspection; 2) intersubjective interpretation; and 3) objective observation. Wilber identifies the first with the Upper Left quadrant, the second with the Lower Left quadrant, and the third with both Right Hand quadrants. Together Wilber describes these three domains as the I, We, and It, and points out their parallel expression as the Three Jewels of Buddhism, *Buddha*, *Sangha*, *Dharma;* Plato's *Good*, *Beautiful*, and *True*; and Habermas's three validity claims, *objective truth*, *subjective sincerity*, and *intersubjective justness* (Wilber 1998: 20).[19] The three domains of the I, We, and It, are of course merely a simplified version of the four quadrants. Here are a few of their important characteristics (ibid.:19):

I (Upper Left)—consciousness, subjective experience; self-expression (including art and aesthetics); truthfulness.
WE (Lower Left)—culture, shared worldviews; social ethics and morals; mutual understanding, justness.
IT (Right Hand)—objective knowledge, empirical science and technology; objective structure and function (including brain and social systems); observable behaviour and activity; propositional truth.

Since no dimension can be reduced to or replace any other, a truly comprehensive approach to studying phenomena must integrate knowledge from all three domains.

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The three domains of the I (subjective), We (intersubjective), and It (objective) also parallel Victor Turner's three levels of symbolic meaning, which are as follows: 1) the level of indigenous interpretation (Wilber's 'I'); 2) the operational meaning (Wilber's 'It'); and 3) the positional meaning (Wilber's 'We') (Turner 1996a: 526-529).

Unfortunately most knowledge systems tend to privilege one or two domains to the practical exclusion of the others. For example, the various proponents of the perennial philosophy, including the mystical wings of the world's great religions, have tended to focus almost exclusively on the interior dimensions of the I and We. Western science on the other hand has devoted all of its energies to studying and mapping the It. Wilber describes these two approaches, respectively, as the Left Hand[20] and Right Hand[21] paths (Wilber 1995: 126).

Through the Left Hand path humanity is able to investigate its interiority and develop methods and practices (such as yoga and contemplative practices), for developing and transforming consciousness.[22] This is a powerful path because the way in which individuals perceive 'reality' is largely a function of their current level of consciousness (Laughlin et al. 1990: 88-91). Unfortunately by ignoring the exterior, Left Hand approaches neglect to sufficiently develop the technologies, sociopolitical systems, and physical infrastructures required to support a consciously mature humanity (Laughlin &

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In psychology the Left Hand path is most clearly expressed in the various schools of depth psychology (Freud, Jung, Grof, etc.); and in social science as the various schools of hermeneutics and semiotics (Geertz, Douglas, Taylor, etc.) (Fuenzalida 1998: 33 n. 33).

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In psychology the Right Hand path is expressed in neuro-psychology and in classical and cognitive behaviourism (Watson, Skinner, Jackendoff, etc.); and in sociology as classical positivism (Comte) and structural-functualism (Parsons, Luhmann, etc.) (Fuenzalida 1998: 32 n. 32).

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It is common for those following a strongly Left Hand (Ascending) path to disengage from the world, viewing external reality as *maya* or 'illusion.' However, according to central Buddhist teachings, illusion is less a quality of manifest reality as it a problem of *perception*, and how we cognise the world. In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha clearly identified *ignorance*, not the world, as the source of human suffering (Surya Das 1997: 59).

Richardson 1986: 411; Wilber 1995: 496). Conversely, Right Hand approaches compromise inner development in order to advance new and better technologies and social systems. As the industrialized world can attest, the unfortunate result is that individuals tend to lack the appropriate emotional and moral maturity to be able to control technological development and participate effectively within democratic social systems.[23] Because the four quadrants are deeply interconnected, meaning that every interior event has an exterior correlate,[24] noticeable underdevelopment of any one quadrant actually reflects an imbalance in all others (Wilber 1998: 21). It is therefore very important to acknowledge and work on all four quadrants simultaneously, addressing those problems that enter awareness *where* and *when* they arise. Wilber is emphatic that only by uniting the Left and Right Hand approaches—other-worldly Ascent and this-worldly Descent[25]—can humanity begin the integrative process so vital to the healing of current

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Laughlin and Richardson (1986: 411) have noted that "there seems to exist a perpetual lag between humanity's technological achievements on the one hand and humanity's understanding of themselves and the world on the other." Modern technologies have become so transformative and powerful that unless humanity can evolve a "systems consciousness" which will enable it to anticipate the myriad consequences of its actions, the future could be headed for disaster. Indeed we are already beginning to experience some of the serious consequences of our actions in the form of global warming, air pollution, holes in the ozone etc. According to Laughlin and Richardson (ibid) systems consciousness will enable individuals to cognise reality as "systems within systems *ad inifinitum* with complex and mutually causal linkages between systems and between molecular and molar levels of organization within systems." This description of systems consciousness bears a remarkable resemblance to Wilber's integrative centauric consciousness, the development of which Wilber also believes is pivotal to the future of the planet.

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As Wilber points out, even if an individual were to experience an out-of-body experience, it would register in the physical brain! (Wilber 1998: 21).

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The union of other-worldly Ascent and this-worldly Descent (of the Left and Right Hand paths) corresponds to the Buddhist notion of the union between Wisdom and Compassion. As Wilber explains: "Wisdom sees through the confusion of shifting shapes and passing forms to the groundless Ground of all being...wisdom or *prajna* sees that Form is Emptiness (the 'solid' and 'substantial' world of phenomena is...'like a bubble, a dream, a shadow,' as The Diamond Sutra puts it)....But if wisdom sees the Many is

social and environmental problems, and so crucial to the future of human evolutionary development (Wilber 1995: 195-6). Anything short of an integral "all level; all quadrant" approach will prove inadequate.

The reason why Wilber calls the various 'web of life' and systems views so "partial" and "lopsided" is because they are locked into describing the universe as a great interlocking order of 'its.' It is not that Wilber entirely disagrees with this approach. In fact his own description of the Great Holarchy of Being could be understood as a type of systems theory. No, the problem is that the various new paradigm theorists, while masters at describing the Kosmos (be it in scientific or poetic language), are mute when it comes to addressing the *internal* changes necessary for humanity to *experience* the world as a living holarchy or great interconnected web[26] (Wilber 1995: 422). Laughlin et al. (1990: 227-228) have identified three stages in the process of realizing any cosmology or worldview. The first is the *belief* stage, which comprises learning and committing to memory the symbolism and basic beliefs contained within a particular view. The second stage is *understanding* and refers to the moment when the disparate pieces of knowledge

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One, *compassion* [or *karuna*] knows that the One is the Many; that One is expressed *equally* in each and every being, and so each is to be treated with compassionate care, not in any condescending fashion, but rather because each being, exactly as it is, is a perfect manifestation of Spirit" (Wilber 1995: 327).

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It may appear absurd to charge theorists such as Arne Naess, Warwick Fox, and Fritjof Capra with failing to address the issue of internal transformation. All three *explicitly* acknowledge the need to transform human consciousness. Indeed this is the whole momentum behind the development of their alternative 'web of life' worldviews. The problem is that beyond this important recognition, Naess, Fox, and Capra have surprisingly little to say about the *process* of consciousness transformation. My belief is that this 'omission' is the result of both a lack of understanding, and a desire to gain credibility within the scientific community. Either way their work loses power by failing to sufficiently address the interior.

begin to come together and "make sense" as a total system of knowledge. Finally understanding turns into *realization* when the individual begins to fully embody the consciousness described by the worldview. The worldview is no longer a strange metaphysical perspective, but a living tangible worldspace. Because a person's view of the world is limited by his or her present level of consciousness[27] (which is dependent on neural structures and patterning), the *realization* of a new and deeper worldview usually requires considerable discipline in some form of transformative practice (such as meditation or strenuous ritual activity).

Most radical ecologists and systems theorists begin with the inaccurate assumption that adopting a more 'holistic' view of the universe is enough to begin transforming humanity's relationship with the natural world.[28] While this approach is sufficient to attain what Laughlin et al. have termed 'belief' and 'understanding,' it does nothing to contribute to the deep *realization* of an ecological view. And yet, I do not really expect environmental theory to create the conditions for its own 'realization.' No philosophy or

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An individual's consciousness [Upper Left quadrant] is a direct consequence of his or her current level of cognitive development and neurophysiological organization [Upper Right quadrant]. Cognitive development is limited to a large extent by the average, or conventional level of consciousness experienced by the social group [Lower Left], which in turn is largely dependent on social and environmental constraints put on the group [Lower Right]. And on it goes, backwards and forwards around the circle. This is to give an indication of the complex set of relationships that are involved in the co-creation of any level of consciousness.

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Joanna Macy is a notable exception because much of her work, particularly with the Council of All Beings, is experientially based. While an avid supporter of systems theories (which she relates to the Buddhist insight of co-dependent origination) she understands that people need to have the *experience* of interconnection (even if only for a moment) before they can begin to deeply honour this insight in both thought and action.

theory, including Wilber's, can replace the *internal experience* of profound inter-connection with nature. To this end, the very most theories can do is point people in an appropriate direction, for example, by recommending various forms of spiritual practice. Of course, as Wilber suitably demonstrates in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (1995), theory can at least go a long way to *mapping out* the interior of phenomena through the synthesis of various psychological and spiritual developmental models.[29]

Certainly, Wilber does discuss the importance of contemplative practice as a means to attaining deeper levels of consciousness (particularly *transpersonal* levels), but he also does this within a sophisticated developmental framework. By contextualizing the issue of consciousness development, recommendations for aiding transformation will necessarily vary *depending* on one's assessment of contemporary levels of individual and group consciousness. And because Wilber's model is an "all level; all *quadrant*" approach, recommendations would not only involve the practice of stage-appropriate spiritual techniques, but also include suggestions for the improvement of physical and social conditions for the individuals involved. Wilber is just as critical of approaches that neglect the exterior by focussing almost exclusively on consciousness, as he is of those who fail to adequately address the interior (the more common problem). Wilber explains that for these purely Ascending Left Hand theorists, which could include many New Age

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Wilber's Left Hand stage model (see Figure 2), which he bases largely on the work of Plotinus, Aurobindo, and Habermas, is not as he insists merely a metaphysical postulation, but is based on substantial experiential evidence. For this reason, both the Left and Right Hand quadrants of Wilber's model are open to corroboration and refutation based on future 'empirical' or experiential evidence (Wilber 1995: 273-276).

writers,

> The idea seems to be that if I can just contact my higher Self, then everything else will take care of itself. But this fails miserably to see that Spirit manifests always and simultaneously *as* the four quadrants of the Kosmos. Spirit (at any level) manifests as a self in community with social and cultural foundations and objective correlates, and thus any *higher* Self will inextricably involve a *wider* community existing in a *deeper* objective state of affairs. Contacting the higher Self is not the end of all problems but the beginning of the immense and difficult work to be done." (Wilber 1995: 496; emphasis in original)

It is his ability to always keep an eye on manifest reality and social and environmental conditions, while simultaneously giving a sophisticated account of consciousness development, that makes Wilber's work so valuable to the current environmental discourse. And while I disagree with some of the particulars of Ken Wilber's theoretical work, and in a moment I will discuss one such disagreement, I am an avid supporter of his "all level; all quadrant" approach. I believe that anything short of such an integral approach within the environmental movement will prove largely ineffective. The environmental crisis is such that it's healing *demands* the united efforts of both the Left Hand and Right Hand camps—the cooperation of both Science and Religion.

Integrating Experiential Practices

> *For better or for worse, the world is in the midst of the tortuous birth throes of a collective emergence of an entirely new structure of consciousness, the centaur in vision-logic, the integral-aperspectival mind.*
>
> KEN WILBER

Unlike Naess and Fox, Wilber does not expect humanity to evolve stable forms of

transpersonal awareness any time soon[30] (it is the transpersonal that is the hallmark of a deeply ecological consciousness), nor does he think that such a development is entirely necessary for the development of ecological societies (Zimmerman 1996: 42). As far as Wilber is concerned, "the single greatest *world transformation* would simply be the embrace of global reasonableness and pluralistic tolerance—the global embrace of egoic-rationality [on the way to centauric vision-logic, which would finally enable the global reintegration of humankind and nature]"[31] (Wilber 1995: 201; emphasis in original).

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Wilber's holarchic model of human consciousness development is based in large part on the work of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget. According to Piaget, cognitive development proceeds through a series of four stages: 1) *sensorimotor* period (0 to 2 years); 2) *preoperational* (2 to 7 years); 3) *concrete operational* (7 to 11 years); *formal operational* (11 years and beyond) (Rothberg 1996: 26). Each stage of development "is constructed via a transformation in the neural tissue mediating thought, and each succeeding stage incorporates at a more complex level the material that made up the preceding stage" (Laughlin et al. 1986: 405). Therefore there is no skipping of stages. Stages are identified by the particular ways in which individuals categorize and cognitively construct the world around them (Rothberg 1996: 26). Wilber describes five additional stages proceeding from conventional awareness (concrete and formal operational) to radical nondual consciousness (or enlightenment). Wilber's overall developmental model contains seventeen plus levels (see Wilber 1996c), which he usually simplifies to a total of ten stages: three *prepersonal* stages (sensoriphysical, phantasmic-emotional, preoperational), followed by three *personal* stages (concrete operational, formal operational, vision-logic), and culminating in four *transpersonal* stages (psychic, subtle, causal, and nondual) (Fuenzalida 1998: 17-19). Wilber discusses most of these stages in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Wilber 1995). It is interesting to note that Piaget also recognized the existence of a *post*-formal operational stage of cognitive development.

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Wilber places his faith in the integrative power of centauric vision-logic to begin the healing process on this planet. According to Wilber, all those aspects of Being which were differentiated (and in some cases severed) in previous development—environment, body, persona, ego, and mind—can now be integrated in this final stage of personal development (See Wilber 1995: 186-192 and Wilber 1996c: 53-72 for a more detailed discussion of centauric vision-logic). It is my personal belief however (and perhaps Wilber would agree) that *any* society at *any* stage of development could *potentially* live in harmony with the surrounding environment (even if a particular society is not *truly ecological* in the sense of being able to grasp and reflect on the mutual interrelationships that constitute it's participation in the natural environment). Such harmony is possible, however, only if interior (Left Hand) development corresponds with a society's current level of social and technological development (Right Hand). But as Laughlin and Richardson (1986: 411) have pointed out (see footnote 23) contemporary societies tend to place excessive attention on social structural and technological development, and consequently neglect the moral and cognitive interior. Centauric consciousness, therefore, is pivotal to the future of this planet only because *current* social and technological development demands such a sophisticated level of consciousness. The cognitive capacity for vision-logic (which would enable individuals to fully comprehend the myriad unintended consequences of humanity's technological actions) must, however, be fully integrated within the moral interior of the

While I agree with the face of this assertion, it says nothing about the kinds of work (internal and external) that would be required to enable such a vast transformation to take place. And unfortunately this is a topic that Wilber never fully expands upon.[32]

Wilber believes that "the vast majority of the world's population does not need ways to get beyond rationality [towards the transpersonal], but ways to get up to it" (Wilber 1995: 201). This is because according to Wilber the majority of the world's social holons are still caught within what he calls magic tribalism (Piaget's preoperational stage) based on blood and ethnic lineage, and mythic empire-building (concrete operational) which aims to coerce the world into adopting some prized myth or ideology (ibid.). Laughlin and Richardson, following Dasen's cross-cultural research (1972), have made a similar claim stating that "most people in all cultures (including our own) remain at the concrete operational stage throughout their lives, and that there appear to be cultures in which, due to environmental factors, no one develops beyond this stage" (1986: 404). And if, as Wilber contends, a truly transpersonal awareness *depends* on the successful development of formal operational awareness, particularly the ability to take multiple perspectives (and eventually *integrate* those different perspectives in centauric vision-logic), then Wilber is absolutely right to insist upon the global spread of egoic-rationality.

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populace to prevent individuals from using their vast knowledge for purely selfish ends.

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Wilber's gives the distinct impression that the most useful thing one can do, as a concerned global citizen, is begin a worldwide campaign promoting personal freedom, gender equality, democratic institutions, and scientific understanding (Zimmerman 1996: 45). I believe Wilber would suggest that only *after* this important work has been accomplished should environmentalists and social activists begin to consider integrating experiential practices (such as meditation and ritual processes) within their work.

Nonetheless, many radical ecologists would find the above conclusion incomprehensible. Far from being the panacea that will help humanity to heal the environment, rationality[33] is for many the actual *cause* of the environmental crisis. Wilber insists, however, that the eco-crisis is the result not of rationality[34] *per se* but rather from a dissociated rationality that was applied *externally* to solve certain social and physical problems, but was never fully integrated within the emotional and moral *interior* of individuals and societies. Wilber explains (1995: 664 n. 46; emphasis in original):

> ...the ecological crisis of modernity could not have happened without rationality's technological power, a power that can always overrun the biosphere in dissociative ways....But the major *moral motivations* behind the eco-crisis are not due to rationality, but rationality (and its technical know-how) in service of ethnocentric dominance or tribal power ploys [characteristic of magic and mythic stages of moral development, *not* egoic-rational morality]. To pollute a common atmosphere knowing it will kill your own people is not rational in any sense of the word; it is in all ways a *failure of reason....*

Because the development of egoic-rationality enables one to take the perspective of others including non-human others, it has the potential to make individuals think twice about actions that are purely self motivated. In fact Wilber describes formal operational

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It is important to recognize that the term 'rationality' is defined very differently depending on which side of the controversy one is on. Those who criticise rationality generally equate it with the extreme form of scientific rationality prevalent in the West (see Murphy 1994: 18-42). Ken Wilber, however, offers a much broader definition which views rationality as a very basic mental capacity available (and intrinsic) to all human beings. See footnote below for Wilber's definition.

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Wilber uses the term 'rationality' very loosely, describing it simply as the capacity to take the perspective of another person. He also adds the capacity for sustained introspection, and imagining "as-if" and "what-if" possibilities (Wilber 1996a: 28). And, as Zimmerman (1996: 42) explains, unlike "death-denying, body-despising rationality, a healthy rationality would acknowledge humanity's relation to and dependence on the biosphere." Vision-logic being an extension of rationality could be described simply as the capacity to integrate or coordinate multiple perspectives. It is vision-logic which opens the way to a truly transpersonal vision of the Kosmos.

awareness as the "first truly *ecological mode of awareness*, in the sense of grasping mutual interrelationships. It is not *embedded* in ecology...it *transcends* ecology and thus can reflect on the web of relationships constituting it" (Wilber 1995: 233; emphasis in original). Thus, if formal operational awareness were to be integrated fully within individuals and society, it would theoretically go a long way to alleviating the terrible misuse of modern technology and the destruction of the global environment. This is because individuals would presumably have the emotional and moral maturity to temper self-centred drives for more things, more security, and more power.

While I support Wilber's attempt to defend rationality from those environmentalists who would do away with it altogether, I think in his zeal he neglects to adequately discuss experiential practices that could help individuals integrate formal operational awareness with those aspects of Being—nature, body, emotions—that are *non*-rational. It is one thing to develop the cognitive capacities for formal operations and vision-logic, and quite another to integrate this awareness within all levels of one's being.[35] Considering his obvious concern about the dangers of dissociated rationality, which he readily admits is largely responsible for the current environmental crisis, Wilber is surprisingly mute on the subject. I believe Wilber's silence is largely due to his belief that prior to the

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As Laughlin et al. have pointed out, when formal operational awareness (abstract thought) emerges, it usually does so only within certain domains of an individual's interaction with the world. For example, a scientist's cognised reality may be very abstract while he or she is working on a particular problem at work, but may remain very concrete in his or her family or social life. The authors point out the rarity of individuals capable of abstract thought within all domains of reality and within all states of consciousness (Laughlin et al. 1986: 405-6).

development of centauric awareness individuals are too prone to regression and ego inflation to make experiential practices beneficial and safe (Jones 1989: 362-364). Certainly there are dangers involved in the practice of meditation and the participation in healing rituals, but is this sufficient reason to avoid such practices, knowing that the failure to heal inner dissociations could prove even more dangerous to both the individual and the society? Rather than suggesting that individuals wait for some unknown future (when supposedly they will be more prepared to begin spiritual practice), Wilber would do better to recommend that all experiential work be undertaken within a supportive and conscious framework,[36] preferably with the help of experienced practitioners and teachers (Zimmerman 1996: 45).

More specifically, Wilber discourages the practice of *contemplative disciplines* (ie. meditation) prior to the development of egoic-rationality. He points out that Eastern spiritual teachings assume that one already possesses a healthy rational ego (Jones 1989: 363). Wilber explains: "We tend to overlook entirely that we cannot transcend the ego[37] until we *have* an ego in the first place; that the construction of the ego is the great and

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Within the Buddhist tradition, the *sangha* (or spiritual community), provides such a supportive and conscious framework for the individual practitioner.

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By using the phrase 'transcend the ego,' Wilber is in no way suggesting that the ego must somehow be eradicated in order for spiritual development to proceed. According to Wilber, to 'transcend' the ego simply means to no longer identify *exclusively* with that aspect of Being—it is to *transcend and include* the ego. The more "one can *go within*," explains Wilber, "or the more one can introspect and reflect on one's self [through some form of contemplative practice], then the more detached from that self one can become, the more one can rise above that self's limited perspective, and so the less narcissistic or less egocentric one becomes (or the more *decentered* one becomes)" (Wilber 1995: 256).

important task of the first half of life, at which point, and not before, its contemplative transcendence can be attempted; that the whole point of the ego is to create a self strong enough to die in nirvanic release" (Wilber quoted in Jones 1989: 362). This might be so, but Wilber is mistaken to think that spiritual disciplines are designed only with the rational ego in mind. Intense forms of contemplative practice may only be appropriate for the mature ego, but within Buddhism at least, sitting meditation is only a part of an interactive spiritual training system—including moral training, mindfulness practice, and intellectual study—that helps to *prepare* individuals for the intense transformative work to come (Jones 1989: 365; Surya Das 1997: 93-4). According to Ken Jones, "the preparatory levels of Buddhist spiritual training are designed not only to strengthen and focus the personality but also at the same time to integrate mind, feelings, and body" (Jones 1989: 368). In fact, it may even be a mistake to confine the practice of *meditation* to the late stages of consciousness development as meditation is being increasingly recognized as a powerful therapeutic tool for individuals at many levels of psychological and spiritual development[38] (Jones 1989: 365-6).

Spiritual practice cannot be reduced to a bunch of techniques to be applied only at very specific junctures within the development of an individual. The beginning, as Ken Jones

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According to the Theravadan Buddhist meditational model, the development of deep insight (*vipassana*) which can ultimately lead one to the goal of liberation, is dependent on the practice of calming meditations (*samatha*) designed to heal the psyche and clear it of energies that prevent access to deep insight (Cousins 1973: 116; Gunaratana 1985: 3). Meditation is therefore designed to be both a tool for psychological healing and a means for radically transforming consciousness. Indeed the two processes of healing and transformation are inextricably linked.

explains, actually "prefigures the end," as well as simply prepares the way for it. "A spirit of unclenching humility, for example, is cultivated from the very start, as the beginner learns to bow to the Buddha image, to the teacher, to food, and even to the meditation cushion. Spiritual practice is holistic and polychronic as much as it is sequential and linear" (Jones 1989: 369). For this reason, I believe spiritual traditions like Buddhism could offer individuals at various stages of development a very powerful means for self healing and spiritual transformation. This is assuming that one has access to highly skilled spiritual teachers, and the support of fellow spiritual practitioners. Furthermore, I believe that experientially based spiritual traditions could offer those interested in developing an 'integral' social or environmental activist approach, a very strong foundation for their work. Joanna Macy's work with the Council of All Beings demonstrates one manner in which Buddhist and Native American traditions can be skilfully incorporated in order to strengthen social and environmental activism.

1.3 TOWARDS AN ' INTEGRAL' ECOLOGY

In a more recent work, *Eye of Spirit* (1998), Wilber expands on his "all level; all quadrant" theoretical approach by attempting to show how such important fields as philosophy, art, psychology, anthropology, and feminism might look if approached from an 'integral' perspective. While I respect the value of such work, it continues to be largely speculative and theoretical in nature and fails to demonstrate the *practical* worth of integral approaches. Wilber admits, however, that it has been his intention to simply

create sufficient conceptual space for "various authentic approaches" and applications based on a more integral view. He explains: "I tend deliberately to leave the details open and fluid, so that those more competent than me can fill them in (or correct them altogether!)" (Wilber 1996a: 31).

Several transpersonalists including Michael Murphy and Donald Rothberg have devoted considerable attention to the development of integral therapies and integral spiritual practices consistent with Wilber's theoretical framework (see Murphy 1995; Rothberg 1993b; Achterberg & Rothberg 1996). To my knowledge, however, nobody has attempted to develop a practical form of *environmental activism* based on Wilber's integral transpersonal analysis. The work of Donald Rothberg does come very close however, in particular his work with the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) program. Founded in 1995 in Berkeley, California, BASE[39] currently functions as a training program for those interested in grounding their work in social service and social change within the framework of a 'socially engaged' Buddhism (Rothberg 1996: 5). Rothberg describes BASE as "representing a conscious attempt to create a space where the personal, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of our lives, so often separated, can be woven together" (ibid.). Although BASE does not address any particular social or environmental issue, preferring to focus on the *integration* of the

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The acronym BASE was deliberately chosen to make reference to the base community movement within Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere. In these areas, a base community is generally a small group lead by lay persons interested in gathering for prayer, study (including social analysis), support, personal growth, ritual, and reflection on everyday life and action (Rothberg 1996: 5).

many dimensions of people's lives, I believe it offers a potential model for those interested in developing integral environmental (or social) activist groups.[40]

The BASE program, however, is merely one development within the contemporary movement known as 'engaged' Buddhism. Proponents of engaged Buddhism come from all branches of Buddhism and many different walks of life, including monks, nuns, laypeople, Asians, North Americans, Australians, and Europeans (Kraft 1992a: 12). And while individual agendas may vary, the ideal remains the same: "to transform oneself while transforming the world, through awareness and compassionate involvement" (ibid.). This nascent movement, like other religiously based social movements,[41] is less an attempt to create an 'integral' spirituality as it is a deep response to the serious social and environmental issues plaguing our times. Nonetheless, I believe engaged Buddhism can be viewed as a concrete example of what Wilber might call 'integral' spirituality and 'integral' social activism. In Part Two I will examine both the philosophy and practice of socially engaged Buddhism, both for its religious integrity, and for its effectiveness as an approach to social/environmental activism and healing. Although most engaged Buddhist groups do not usually focus specifically on the problem of ecological degradation, most do address environmental concerns within a broader framework of social issues.

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See Chapter 3 for a more in depth discussion of the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE).

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While other religiously motivated activists share the perspective that social work entails inner spiritual work—that inner change and social change are inseparable—engaged Buddhists tend to be more committed to balancing their activism with inner transformational work. This is largely due to the considerable focus that traditional Buddhist teachings place on personal consciousness development (Kraft 1992a: 12).

PART TWO

Engaged Buddhism as Integral Ecology in Action

Chapter 2

Preparing the Ground for an Ecologically Engaged Buddhism

> *When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the tree, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its interwoven and interdependent relations in the chair. The presence of the wood reveals the presence of the tree. The presence of the leaf reveals the presence of the sun.*
>
> THICH NHAT HANH

In the above quote, Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully describes the interdependent nature of all that exists by tracing the life story of an ordinary wooden chair. According to the central Buddhist teaching of *pratitya-samutpada*, usually translated as dependent co-arising, all things, beings, realms, moments, exist *inter-dependently*.[42] It has been said that this insight, which Hanh calls *interbeing*, was one of the discoveries made by the Buddha during his enlightenment experience at Bodh-Gaya (Gross 1997a: 295). The ecological implications of this teaching are obvious. If all things exist interdependently, then every action, every event, produces effects and repercussions throughout the entire Kosmos; by harming other beings in the great 'Web of Life' you inevitably harm yourself (ibid.: 295-6).

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In a manner reminiscent of Wilber's Holarchy of Being, the Chinese Hwa Yen school describes reality, or the Totality-of-Thusness, as "the all-fusing, interpenetrating and simultaneous arising of infinite realms perceived by an omniscient and omnipresent Mind." Totality is envisioned as "a structure consisting of 'layers' extending in both directions...realms-embracing-realms ad infinitum" (Chang 1971: 14, 11).

Because the principle of *pratitya-samutpada* teaches that human beings and nature are mutually interdependent, it is not surprising that the Buddhist tradition often expresses a deep love and respect for the natural world. The *Jataka* narratives, for example, are abundant with poetic appreciation of nature, as are the great Mahayana sutras which often speak as reverently of nature as they do the Buddha (Kabilsingh 1990: 8; Badiner 1996: 137). During his lifetime the Buddha even set down rules forbidding monks from throwing waste or leftover food into rivers and lakes, and urged them to guard the lives of living beings abiding there (Kabilsingh 1990: 11). Indeed, as the following anecdote will reveal, one of the characteristics of a *bodhisattva* or enlightened being is the ability to live a life of simplicity, conservation, and self-restraint upon the earth. "A life of wisdom," explains the Venerable Sunyana Graef, Sensei, "is a life in harmony with the natural world":

> It was the custom in ancient China for Zen monks to refine and deepen their spiritual understanding by travelling throughout the country to study with respected teachers. One such monk had heard that a renowned Zen master lived in seclusion near a river, and he was determined to find him and train with him. After many weeks of travel he found the master's dwelling. Gazing at the river before the master's hut, the monk was filled with joy at the thought of soon meeting his teacher. Just then he saw a cabbage leaf slip into the water and float down stream. Disillusioned and greatly disappointed, the monk immediately turned to leave. As he did, out of the corner of his eye he saw the venerable teacher running to the river, his robe flapping wildly in the wind. The old man chased the cabbage leaf, fished it from the water, and brought it back to his hut. The monk smiled and turned back. He had found his master. (Sunyana Graef, Sensei 1990: 43)

I have already suggested that current forms of engaged Buddhism in Asia and North America could offer environmentalists a practical tool for addressing both the 'inner' and

'outer' manifestations of the global environmental crisis. And while contemporary engaged Buddhist efforts tend to focus on environmental issues only within a much broader framework of social concerns,[43] current approaches could easily be adapted to suit the priorities of environmental activists. If the development of an 'ecologically engaged' Buddhism is to constitute an authentic *Buddhist* movement, however, it cannot violate the spirit of Gautama Buddha's teachings.[44] For this reason, the present chapter will focus on a theoretical examination of the relationship between traditional Buddhist teachings, environmental theory, and the phenomenon of social engagement. In this manner it will be possible to determine if traditional teachings are able to offer a philosophical foundation supporting the development of a distinctively Buddhist environmental activism.

2.1 THE GREEN FACE OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

The relationship that has recently developed between Buddhism and ecology is an intriguing one. Buddhism certainly has a wealth of philosophical and practical resources

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According to political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994), issues such as violent conflict, poverty and over-population are so tightly inter-related with environmental scarcity, that social research and environmental assessments should, realistically, go hand in hand. While this is also true for the highly industrialized West (see Bullard 1994), developing countries, being largely rural, are most sensitive to the negative social impact of environmental degradation.

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I suggest that this 'spirit' is not to be found within any specific Buddhist school or text, such as the Pali Canon, but rather manifests as central *themes* common to all schools of Buddhism. While it is certainly important to recognize the ways in which the various cultural expressions of Buddhism are distinct, it is nonetheless possible to identify core principles which lie at the heart of the tradition, such as suffering, compassion, interdependence, the Middle Way, *karma*, impermanence, *anatman* (no-self) and others (Sponberg 1997: 353).

to offer the environmental movement.[45] Unfortunately much of value could be lost in the translation if insufficient care is taken when interpreting traditional Buddhist views for a Western environmentalist audience. While most literature supports the development of what has been termed Green Buddhism (or ecoBuddhism), a few authors including Noriaki Hakamaya, Lambert Schmithausen, and Ian Harris (Swearer 1997: 37-40; Harris 1997; 1991), are much more critical. According to these theorists, Buddhism and ecology are stranger bedfellows than many environmentalists would like to admit. Harris, who is perhaps one of the more ardent critics, points out that Buddhist canonical attitudes towards plant and animal life have not always been kind. The early Buddhists, he says, "leave one with the impression that the animal kingdom was viewed...with a mixture of fear and bewilderment" (Harris 1991: 107). For example, in the "literature of the *Vinaya*, animals are regularly classified alongside matricides, patricides, thieves, hermaphrodites and slayers of a Buddha" (Harris 1991: 105). The plant world is apparently regarded with equal disdain. The *Majjhima Nikaya* describes an incident in which "four great forests are cleared but revert to their former uncultivated state through the wickedness and ill-will of certain sages"[46] (Harris 1991: 108).

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It is my belief that at the heart of Buddhist philosophy (which includes both a philosophical view and an injunction or practice for *realizing* that view) lies a profoundly ecological position. By 'ecological' I am not referring to the science of ecology or to any specific environmental theory, such as deep ecology. Rather I use the term to refer to any philosophy and/or practice that *supports an ethic of active care and compassion* for the entire Kosmos--nature, humanity, and beyond.

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Malcolm Eckel (1997: 337-8) correctly points out that "this early strand in the Buddhist tradition is not hostile to nature as such: one does not attempt to dominate or destroy nature (in the form of either animals or plants) in order to seek a human good. But neither is the wild and untamed aspect of nature to be encouraged or cultivated. The natural world functions as a locus and an example of the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of death and rebirth. The goal to be cultivated is not wildness in its own right but a state

It is important to note, however, that such negative views tend to be limited to the Indic Buddhist tradition.[47] East Asian forms of Buddhism frequently express a profound reverence and compassion for non-human life. Harris acknowledges that, "Even today, after the traumas of Buddhism's recent past in China, ethno-botanical evidence exists to support the notion of monastery as nature reserve" (Harris 1997: 386). Whereas in the Indian tradition nature was a world to be transcended (*samsara*), in East Asia nature took on the capacity to symbolize transcendence itself (*nirvana*) (Eckel 1997: 339). Japanese Zen Master Eihei Dōgen (1200-1289 C.E.) even went so far as to describe the earth as the "true human body." "You should know," he writes, "that the Earth is not our temporary appearance, but our genuine human body" (quoted in Codiga 1990: 108). For Dōgen, the natural world is not an illusion, nor is it a mere symbol of transcendence, it is the very body of an enlightened being, and "worthy of reverence as the throne of the Buddha"[48] (Eckel 1997: 346).

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of awareness in which a practitioner can let go of the 'natural'—of all that is impermanent and unsatisfactory—and achieve the sense of peace and freedom that is represented by the state of *nirvana*. One might say that nature is not to be dominated but to be relinquished in order to become free."

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The "yoga systems of India during the medieval period," according to Chaudhuri, "were largely inspired by the ascetic ideal of transcendent liberation. They were largely life-renouncing and world-negating." Because all the evils and sufferings of life were traced to humanity's subjection to the cosmic creative principle, frequently identified as unconscious Nature, the way to eternal bliss consisted of an act of disentanglement from the cosmic drive. Renunciation of all social bonds was conceived as the one great exit from the deceptive merry-go-round of life (Chaudhuri 1974: 39-40).

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Here Dōgen is not demonstrating a naive veneration or exaltation of nature, as is the case with nature mysticism or panpsychism (Codiga 1990: 108). By calling the earth the "true" human body, Dōgen is extending the traditional Buddhist reverence for the human form (for its spiritual potential), to include the entire living earth. Given the principle of dependent co-arising this is not a particularly difficult philosophical leap to make.

Given the vastly different attitudes towards nature expressed within the Indian and East Asian Buddhist traditions, it is difficult to determine if the reverence for nature evident within East Asian Buddhism stems from Buddhism *per se* or is simply a relic of Chinese and Japanese indigenous culture. Proponents of Green Buddhism insist, however, that an ethic of care and concern for all living beings arises naturally from fundamental teachings common to all schools of Buddhism. Most often cited are the cardinal virtues of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and loving-kindness (*metta*), and the central Buddhist principle of dependent co-origination (*pratitya-samutpada*). While the critics recognize the ecological implications of these teachings, they remain suspicious of simplistic attempts to integrate classical Buddhist doctrines and concepts within contemporary environmental discourse.

One of the most obvious problems is the lack of a Buddhist equivalent for the concept 'nature'. Environmental literature generally assumes that the term 'nature' refers to "that part of the world which is neither human nor artificial. It is to quote Karl Barth '...the strange life of beasts and plants which lies around us' " (Harris 1991: 104). While terms such as *samsara*, Buddha nature, and *pratitya-samutpada* have been suggested, none of these offers a satisfactory conceptual parallel. For instance, the word *samsara*, which is the most promising of the three suggestions, usually "denotes the totality of sentient beings (*sattvaloka*) caught in the round of life after life" (Harris 1997: 381). In Buddhist cosmology, however, this includes hell-beings, ghosts, plants, animals, humans, and various more subtle beings such as gods and goddesses. *Samsara*, then, "incorporates

elements which, from a Western perspective, encompass both the natural and the supernatural"; both human and nonhuman (ibid.).

I do not believe the lack of a Buddhist equivalent for 'nature' implies some kind of fundamental incongruity between Buddhism and ecology. Rather, it does more to illustrate the extreme dualism imbedded within the conventional Western understanding of 'nature'. The main issue, then, is not really whether Buddhist terminology can be made to conform to conventional Western notions, but whether environmental theory can successfully align itself to the much more nondualistic, egalitarian Buddhist worldview. This, however, assumes that the Buddhist tradition is indeed sufficiently nondualistic and non-anthropocentric to support a viable environmental ethic. While I believe this is the case, not all canonical evidence points to this conclusion. Harris is quick to point out that while the principle of *pratitya-samutpada* might cause Buddhists to feel some solidarity with animals (and possibly even plants), the tradition views animals as particularly unfortunate (Harris 1991: 105; Swearer 1997: 38). They are considered "more violent and less wise than humans and cannot grow in the *dharma* or *vinaya*" (Harris 1997: 105). While one could argue that this view is counterbalanced by the existence of virtues such as non-injury (*ahimsa*) and loving kindness (*metta*), Harris points out that the texts concerned tend to stress the instrumentality of these observances, not the inherent value of the animals themselves. Any benefits that are deemed to arise from the practice of *metta* and *ahimsa*, "accrue to the practitioner himself and not the being to whom it is extended" (Harris 1991: 106-7). Harris concludes by saying: "Far from being concerned

to preserve endangered species, the texts regard animals [as]....an embodiment of the processes of decay at work in the world.... Our relations with them may provide contexts in which we may act virtuously [and thus advance spiritually], but beyond the fact that they appear to be beings destined for final enlightenment,[49] they have no intrinsic value in their present form" (ibid.: 107).

Could it be that the Buddhist tradition is as much compromised by an anthropocentric vision of nature as its Western counterpart?[50] (Eckel 1997: 340). If by 'anthropocentric' one means seeing animals, plants, rivers, mountains and ecosystems only for their utilitarian value or benefit to humans, the answer would have to be a qualified "no" (ibid.: 343). Certainly, as Ian Harris has amply demonstrated, the Buddhist tradition is deeply concerned with the human achievement of distinctly human goals. It is unlikely that even the Buddha set out on his quest for enlightenment with the intention of liberating *all*

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Buddhists believe that all beings will eventually attain buddhahood. However, this may take as many as three *kalpa*-s. A *kalpa* is a "countless eon" (Given 1993: 94).

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According to Stephen R. Kellert, in spite of their traditionally positive attitudes towards nature, both China and Japan "have been cited for their poor conservation record—including widespread temperate and tropical deforestation, excessive exploitation of wildlife products, and widespread pollution" (quoted in Eckel 1997: 333). This demonstrates that cultural reverence for nature does not in itself prevent countries from abusing their natural surroundings. Kellert also prepared a questionnaire to investigate and compare contemporary Japanese and American attitudes towards the natural world. He found the most common approach to wildlife in both cultures was what he called "humanistic." Both cultures, explains Kellert, showed "primary interest and strong affection for individual animals such as pets or large wild animals with strong anthropomorphic associations" (ibid.). In Japan 37 percent held this opinion and in the United States 38 percent did. Interestingly, while the second most common attitude towards animals in the United States was "moralistic" (at 27.5 percent), in Japan 31 percent expressed a "negativistic" attitude. Kellert defines this as a "primary orientation [toward] an active avoidance of animals due to dislike or fear" (ibid.). Kellert concludes that while Japanese people exhibit an appreciation and respect for nature, they "tend to place greatest emphasis on the experience and enjoyment of nature in highly structured circumstances," such as in city parks and gardens (ibid.: 334).

beings from suffering. Within the tradition, however, the achievement of *personal* spiritual goals is intricately connected to a fundamental process of *decentering* the self (ibid.: 342). Herein lies the paradox of Buddhist 'anthropocentrism'. What usually begins as a self-interested quest for personal liberation becomes, through a deepening of the practice, a path leading beyond the chains of both egotism and anthropocentrism, to what could only be described as Kosmic consciousness. In a beautiful passage describing Gautama Buddha's experience at Bodh-Gaya, Moyra Caldecott (1993: 15) goes some way to describing how such a vast consciousness might be experienced:

> At Bodh-Gaya he sat under a tree and did not move from there for forty-nine days. Time passed and did not pass. He could feel the great tree drawing nourishment and energy from the earth. He could feel it drawing nourishment and energy from the air and the sun. He began to feel the same energy pumping in his heart. He began to feel that there was no distinction between the tree and himself. He was the tree. The tree was him. The earth and the sky were also part of the tree and hence of him. When his companions came that way again, they found him so shining and radiant they could hardly look at him directly. "What has happened?" they asked. But he did not reply. How could he possibly explain in words the experience that had given the key to the questions that had troubled him so deeply for so long.

To use the language of deep ecology, the Buddhist tradition can neither be characterized as wholly anthropocentric, nor entirely ecocentric.[51] While Buddhism clearly recognizes that all beings—not just human beings—contain Buddha nature and are in this sense

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The anthropocentric/ecocentric distinction arose within a distinctly Western conceptual paradigm (specifically within the philosophical position known as deep ecology), and as such should not be expected to fit easily within the Buddhist philosophical framework.

equal,[52] the tradition also acknowledges significant differences between species and individuals (Sponberg 1997: 352). Human life in particular is considered most desirable due to the spiritual potential that is thought to be inherent in and limited to the species[53] (Gross 1997b: 337). Given the anti-anthropocentric, anti-hierarchal climate of Western environmental discourse, however, it should come as no surprise that proponents of Green Buddhism[54] tend to minimize this particular sense in which Buddhism is non-egalitarian.[55] Reacting against the Western notion of dominion over nature, many criticize the Buddhist emphasis on human beings and individual spiritual liberation, and focus instead on teachings about compassion, interdependence, and no-self. Unfortunately, by stripping Buddhism of all forms of hierarchy and human-centredness, not only do these theorists seriously misrepresent the Dharma, they also risk discarding an aspect of Buddhism that may turn out to be crucial to their environmental agenda

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While some schools of Buddhism tend to limit Buddha nature to *sentient* beings, it is commonly understood, particularly within East Asian forms of Buddhism, that *all things* including animals, plants, rivers, air, and rocks, are destined for final enlightenment (Harris 1997: 389-40).

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Although humans are situated mid-way between the gods and inanimate objects, their position is considered most favourable. While those beings below humans are too immersed within *samsara* to become enlightened, those above tend to be so free from suffering that they lack the motivation needed to continue on the path toward final liberation.

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Here I refer to individuals such as Gary Snyder, Christopher Titmuss, and Joanna Macy.

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I believe this is an attempt to make Buddhist philosophy conform to the ecological ideals embedded within deep ecology. Most deep ecologists take an extreme anti-hierarchal philosophical stance due to their insistence on the principle of 'biocentric egalitarianism'. Interestingly, Arne Naess supports a hierarchal view. All reality, he points out, consists of "subordinate gestalts" which are organized within a "vast hierarchy. We can then speak of lower- and higher-order gestalts." "This terminology" he continues, "is more useful than speaking about wholes and holism, because it induces people to think more strenuously about the relations between wholes and parts" (Naess 1992: 58; Wilber 1995: 50). Notice the similarity between Naess 'subordinate gestalts' and Ken Wilber's discussion of 'holons.'

(Sponberg 1997: 352). Ironically it is the Buddhist emphasis on *human* development that makes it such a powerful resource for the contemporary environmental movement.

The confusion lies in failing to understand that not all forms of hierarchy are alike. In an argument very similar to Ken Wilber's, Alan Sponberg explains that contrary to popular belief not all forms of hierarchy lead to domination and control. Sponberg distinguishes between two forms of hierarchy: 1) hierarchies of oppression; and 2) hierarchies of compassion.[56] In order to 'progress' within a hierarchy of oppression individuals are required to deny and suppress any feelings of empathy and relatedness to those they seek to dominate (see Figure 3) (Sponberg 1997: 365). Within a hierarchy of compassion, however, the opposite is true. "As one moves upwards," explains Sponberg, "the circle of one's interrelatedness (or rather of one's expressed interrelatedness) increases (see Figure 4). In fact, the *only way* one can move up is by actively realizing and acting on the fundamental interrelatedness of all existence" (ibid.: 366; emphasis added). It is this latter form which describes the fundamental nature of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

The Buddhist hierarchy of compassion results from the interaction of two opposing yet complimentary tendencies evident throughout the religion's 2,500 year-long history.[57] Sponberg describes these as the *developmental* (hierarchal), and *relational* (heterarchal)

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As discussed in Chapter 1, Wilber uses the terms "domination" and "actualization" to distinguish between these two hierarchal forms (see Wilber 1995: 22-24).

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The dates given for Gautama Buddha's lifetime are 563 to 483 B.C.E. (Campbell 1990: 111-127).

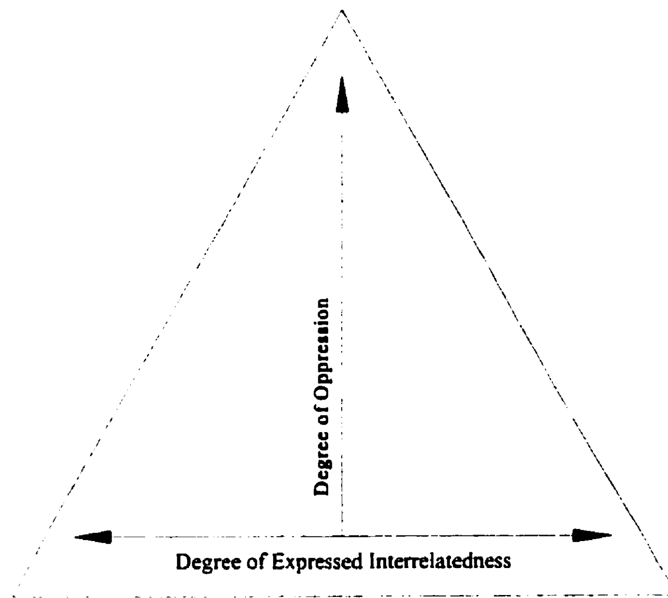

Figure 3: A Hierarchy of Oppression

Source: Alan Sponberg, "Green Buddhism and the Hierarchy of Compassion," in Tucker & Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.365)

Figure 4: A Hierarchy of Compassion

Source: Alan Sponberg, "Green Buddhism and the Hierarchy of Compassion," in Tucker & Williams (eds.) *Buddhism and Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.367)

dimensions of the tradition. The developmental dimension is that aspect of the Buddhadharma concerned specifically with the transformation of human consciousness (Wilber's 'I')—this includes the Buddhist Threefold Training (*sila*, *samadhi*, *prajna*) and the Noble Eight-Fold Path (ibid.). The relational dimension (Wilber's 'We'), which is emphasized by supporters of Green Buddhism, is much more concerned with the interconnected nature of reality itself, and the particular ways in which human destiny is tied to the fate of all living beings and Kosmic entities.[58] When the developmental dimension is emphasized, as it is in South Asian Indo-Tibetan forms, the focus is almost entirely on human beings and individual spiritual development. When the relational dimension is emphasized, however, as it is in East Asian forms, compassionate concern for *all* beings comes to the fore.[59]

While the developmental and relational dimensions are distinct, it is important to realize that each complements the other in a way that is crucial to the integrity of the tradition (Sponberg 1997: 353). This is because the truth of interdependence is not something that

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The relational aspect, which is implicit in early Theravadan teachings about impermanence and *anatman*, was given its most explicit rendering in the teachings of the Mahayana. Ethically it is expressed in the altruistic activity of the *bodhisattva*, and ontologically in the notion of interdependence derived from the doctrine of Emptiness (Sponberg 1997: 357). Through the teaching of interrelatedness or Emptiness, which is exquisitely described in the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha's enlightenment came to be recognized as a wisdom that must *be* compassion (Sponberg 1997: 357; Hanh 1992). Not surprisingly it is from the Mahayana tradition that most eco-Buddhists draw their inspiration.

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Although the relational dimension is emphasized within East Asian Buddhism, the developmental dimension is never simply discarded. For example, the path of the *bodhisattva* is believed to pass through several developmental stages (*bhumi*). Even when Zen and Pure Land schools warn of "the dangers of taking 'developmental' language in any overly literalistic way, they still maintain the crucial—and essentially vertical—distinction between the experience of enlightenment and the perpetuation of suffering" (Sponberg 1997: 357).

can simply be taught and taken on faith; it is a reality that must be cultivated through spiritual practice and experienced directly as a conscious reality. So while the relational aspect is essential in that it offers a vision of the true nature of existence, it is the developmental dimension that provides the systematic and comprehensive set of techniques by which individuals can actually realize this vision and develop a consciousness that spontaneously expresses love and compassion for all life (Sponberg 1997: 370, 368). Certainly, as Harris has amply demonstrated, the developmental dimension can give the appearance of being overly individualistic and anthropocentric, and at times this might even be a valid criticism. Yet surprisingly it is *this* aspect of the tradition that holds the key for an authentic Buddhist ecology.

It would seem from the previous discussion that the Buddhist solution to the environmental crisis is, in fact, nothing short of the basic Buddhist goal of enlightenment (Sponberg 1997: 370). While such a goal may appear unmanageably distant and lofty to many environmentalists, this is precisely the kind of radical solution that deep ecologists such as Arne Naess, Warwick Fox, and others allege is necessary for the healing of the planet. Yet, is such a goal even feasible? If we are to take an extreme position and assume that the future of the human species is dependent on our becoming fully enlightened, then I would have to say "no". If, however, as Ken Wilber suggests, the global attainment of centauric consciousness[60] is sufficient to begin healing, then I am

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This is equivalent to Laughlin and Richardson's (1986) 'systems consciousness'. See Chapter 1 for a brief description of centauric and systems consciousness.

much more optimistic. One need not be a buddha or bodhisattva to *begin* treating all life with respect and compassion. An attitude of care and concern can be cultivated from the very beginning, with the support of spiritual practices such as meditation and ethical training. For this reason, I believe that even a small shift in values and awareness can be enough to begin transforming negative lifestyle patterns and initiate the healing process for the individual and the planet as a whole.

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that the phenomenon known as engaged Buddhism could offer environmentalists a practical model for an 'integral' ecological approach capable of addressing both the 'inner' and 'outer' manifestations of the global environmental crisis. While I continue to support this claim, it remains to be shown whether the practice of *social engagement* constitutes, what Buddhists would call, a skilful means (*upaya*) for transforming the seeds of human suffering. If, as some suggest, involvement in contemporary issues is counterproductive to the Buddhist goal of spiritual liberation, then the legitimacy of an *ecologically engaged* Buddhism would have to be seriously questioned. Thus I will devote the last section of this chapter to an examination of the philosophical and historic roots of Buddhist engagement.[61] In this way I hope to determine if the phenomenon of social engagement can indeed be recognized as an authentic Dharma door within the Buddhist tradition.

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This discussion is intended merely as an introduction to the history and philosophical basis of Buddhist social engagement. For a more in depth discussion refer to Ives 1992, Queen & King 1996, Jones 1989, Eppsteiner 1988, and Kraft 1992b.

2.2 BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

I have always taught that the war in Vietnam was a big fire, and during that big fire many wonderful seeds transmitted by the Buddha were able to sprout. After the fire there is always rain, and one of the seeds that sprouted during the war in Vietnam is the seed of engaged Buddhism, Buddhism engaged in our daily lives. We bring Buddhism into the situation of utmost suffering in our lives, and we find that it works. Buddhism can relieve the suffering. Buddhism need not be only in the monastery—Buddhism can be brought into the situation of utmost suffering.

THICH NHAT HANH

The expression "engaged Buddhism" was coined by Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in the midst of the Vietnam war. His 1963 book *Engaged Buddhism*, which marked the very first use of the term,[62] advocates a form of Buddhist practice which encompasses meditation, mindfulness in daily life, involvement in one's family, and social responsiveness (Kraft 1992a: 18). In order to manifest his ideal of Buddhist engagement, Hanh founded a community of activist-practitioners in 1965, known as the Tiep Hien Order (which exists today as an international Buddhist community of laypersons, monks, and nuns), to help alleviate the suffering experienced by *everyone* during the war (King 1996: 323). Hanh described this peaceful Buddhist coalition as being "an enemy-of-neither combatant." (King 1994: 14).

At times Thich Nhat Hanh dismisses the word 'engaged' saying that "Engaged Buddhism

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62 According to Queen & King (1996: 21) the *practice* of socially engaged Buddhism, as we currently know it, can be traced as far back as 1880 in Sri Lanka. For details refer to Queen & King (1996: 1-33).

is just Buddhism. If you practice Buddhism in your family, in society, it is engaged Buddhism" (Kraft 1992a: 18). Nonetheless, his term has been picked up by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike to refer to something new that is occurring within Buddhism (King 1994: 14). Because sociopolitical involvement has not been a central theme within Buddhist history it has been suggested that engaged Buddhism may be the result of an overall syncretism between the ideologies of East and West[63] (Queen & King 1996: 23, 404; Eller 1992: 91-109). Certainly Hanh and other contemporary engaged Buddhist leaders—A. T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), Sulak Sivaraksa (Thailand), Daisaku Ikeda (Japan), Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Thailand), Dr. Ambedkar (India), and the Dalai Lama (Tibet)—vary widely in the extent to which they speak in traditional language when justifying social engagement. Nonetheless, each of these figures traces their roots to the Buddha, claiming to find within his teachings the seeds of a socially engaged Buddhism (Queen & King 1996: 404). What's more, they consistently appeal to the most basic principles enunciated by the Buddha to support their views (Queen & King 1996: 408-9). All share the view, in one form or other, that social engagement arises naturally from the aspiration to alleviate suffering (*dukkha*) in *all of its forms*[64]—be it spiritual, psychological, emotional, or physical (ibid.: 404-7). "Where there is suffering," Hanh

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Interestingly, two of the world's foremost engaged Buddhists, A.T. Ariyaratne and Sulak Sivaraksa, claim to have been at least partially inspired by the activist work of the Quakers in post-war Europe (Macy 1983: 29; Rothberg 1993a: 122).

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The first principle of Buddhism is suffering. From the perspectives of the Four Noble Truths, the entire point of Buddhism is none other than the complete eradication of suffering (King 1996: 340). This view is supported by the Buddha's saying, "I teach only *dukkha* and the utter quenching of *dukkha*" (Queen & King 1996: 404).

explains simply, "Buddhism must be there, in order to serve" (Hanh 1998: 3).

Although relatively rare, precedents for a socially and politically responsive Buddhism can be found within early Buddhist texts. For instance, numerous passages within the *Anguttara Nikaya* urge followers of the Buddha to 'live for the welfare of the many.' In the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* (of the *Digha Nikaya*), failure to provide for the poor is cited as the cause of various serious social problems: 'Thus, from provision not being made for the poor, poverty, stealing, violence, murder, lying, evil-speaking and immorality become widespread.' And in the *Kutadanta Sutta*, the Buddha is said to have advocated the improvement of social and economic conditions, rather than punishment, as a means of reducing crime within society (Jones 1989: 238-9; Ives 1992: 6-7). According to Rahula (1988: 107) the Buddha also counselled kings on the subject of ethical leadership and nonviolence and on occasion even went to the field of battle to prevent war between disputing parties.[65]

While these and other similar instances of sociopolitical concern (see King 1994; Rahula 1988; Kraft 1992a; Thurman 1988a; 1988b) are noteworthy, the clear focus of the Buddha's philosophical analysis and teachings was on the problem of individual transformation, particularly within the monastic context. And unlike the Brahmanic association of the political and religious spheres, the Buddhist monastic community was

[65] While this is true, the Buddha generally avoided involvement with kings and explicitly prohibited monks and nuns from involvement in 'political' affairs (Rothberg 1992: 44).

conceived as existing apart from (although not entirely outside of) the realm of politics (Rothberg 1992: 44). This separation and the focus on individual liberation was not, as many Western scholars claim (Kraft 1992a: 12-3), due to a lack of this-worldly concern; instead, it resulted from a radically different perspective concerning the causes and treatment of human suffering. Unlike more conventional approaches which focus on manifest issues such as violence, Apartheid, or nuclear weapons, Buddhism begins with the individual and attempts to uproot the underlying psychological afflictions (ignorance, false identification, aversion) believed to be at the root of all personal and social suffering. The tradition does not so much disapprove of more mundane approaches of alleviating suffering, such as providing assistance to the poor, as it recommends attending to one's own self-purification *before* trying to intervene in or influence society at large[66] (Gross 1997b: 347). This is because it is generally believed that prior to Awakening individuals lack sufficient insight (*prajna*) and moral integrity (*sila*) to deal effectively with complex social and ethical issues[67] (Ives 1992: 34; 103). What's more, from a strictly religious point of view, participation in 'this worldly' affairs is thought to foster

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This view is most explicit within the Mahayana tradition in the form of the bodhisattva ideal. Traditionally the bodhisattva is depicted as a *perfected* individual who 'delays' entrance into final *nirvana* in order to help liberate all beings from suffering (Govinda 1989: 27).

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According to Ives (1992: 103) the Buddhist tradition, at times, "has admonished practitioners not to get caught up in social concerns as long as the fundamental religious problem remains unsolved." Not only can social situations be made much worse by premature involvement in sociopolitical affairs (ibid.: 34), but one risks losing sight of the deeper psychological causes of suffering. As Ives explains (1992: 103), even "if the world were [somehow] free from poverty, oppression and war, humanity would,..." Buddhism claims, still experience the existential suffering underlying these manifest problems. Indeed, it would claim, that by failing to resolve the fundamental religious problem, humanity could never fully eliminate social and 'mundane' suffering from its experience.

the Buddhist 'poisons' of fear, aggression, ego-attachment and greed, all of which are said to hinder spiritual development (ibid.: 105).

Admittedly, this traditional line of thinking makes a lot of sense. However, given the serious social and environmental predicaments we are currently facing, how realistic is it to ask socially concerned Buddhists to wait until they have achieved enlightenment *before* becoming socially active? Indeed, unless concrete actions are taken immediately to control problems such as pollution, resource depletion, poverty, etc., there may soon be no human beings left to follow the Dharma, let alone achieve enlightenment. For many engaged Buddhists, the development of a socially engaged Buddhism is not only extremely pragmatic (given current social and environmental circumstances), it also serves to restore a balance which they believe is missing in current forms of Buddhist practice (Queen & King 1996: 410). Invoking the Buddhist principle of dependent co-arising, engaged Buddhists teach that physical, psychological, social, and religious forms of suffering, although distinct, are deeply interrelated, "each affecting the genesis and solution of the other" (Ives 1992: 104). As a result, Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa explains, the "Buddhist approach to world peace demands self-awareness and social awareness in equal measure" (Sivaraksa 1992: 127). And just as the Buddha put off a Dharma talk until a hungry man was fed, so engaged Buddhists believe that spiritual development is best supported through nurturance of *all* human needs, whether material,

emotional, psychological, or spiritual:

> ...*in principle*, the malnourished villager or abused woman can [attain enlightenment] and may actually do so. *In actuality*, however, the satisfaction of basic needs, a safe place to practice, and access to a qualified...teacher are crucial supports of [spiritual] practice, even though these conditions are not absolutely necessary.[68] ...[By contrast], people possessing great power and wealth may succumb to greater self-fixation than do people living with 'enough', people whose basic needs are met and who are not clinging to their wealth or craving a never-ending increase of wealth. (Ives 1992: 105).

By forging a 'middle path' between the 'religious' and 'mundane' aspects of life, engaged Buddhists hope to develop a form of practice that, while grounded in classical Buddhist teachings, also reflects the needs of contemporary peoples from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Hanh 1993b: 8-9).

As mentioned previously, the Buddhist tradition generally frowns on sociopolitical involvement, particularly prior to Awakening. This does not mean, however, that practitioners are traditionally expected to avoid *all* forms of socially relevant activity. Indeed, Buddhist practice generally influences practitioners in a number of socially significant ways. According to classical Buddhist doctrine, spiritual growth is deeply supported by the cultivation of ethical integrity (*sila*), which together with meditative calm (*samadhi* 'concentration') and wisdom (*prajna* or 'insight') forms the Buddhist

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Although Buddhism advocates a Middle Path—based on the fact that Shakyamuni did not attain enlightenment while he was starving, but after he ate—many Buddhists believe, particularly within Zen and Tibetan forms of the tradition, that human beings can awaken in any time and space, regardless of circumstances (Ives 1992: 103; Gross 1997b: 348).

trisiksa (or 'threefold training').[69] *Sila* gains expression in the Noble Eightfold Path as Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood.[70] Right Speech serves to eliminate negative forms of communication such as lying, gossip, and harshness; Right Action, which is elaborated in the Five Precepts,[71] consists of conduct aimed at protecting oneself and others from harm; and Right Livelihood refers to ethically sound occupations that aim to improve the welfare of all living beings (Ives 1992: 4-5). Ethical guidance also appears in the form of cherished Buddhist virtues such as non-violence and the Four Sublime Abodes (*brahmaviharas*): loving kindness (Pali: *metta*; Skt.: *maitri*), compassion (Pali and Skt.: *karuna*), sympathetic joy (Pali and Skt.: *mudita*), and equanimity (Pali: *upekkha*; Skt.: *upeksa*) (ibid.: 5-6).

Although ethical training is often expressed in terms of individual liberation, particularly within early Theravada Buddhism, there are clear social implications to this aspect of the

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According to traditional teachings, ethical training serves as a precondition to the development of meditative calm (*samadhi* 'concentration') and wisdom (*prajna* or 'insight'). As one scholar explains: "The ideal Buddhist way of dealing with one's karma is patterned directly on the Buddha's experience. It begins with *sila*, a set of moral rules to purify, and begin the transformation of, one's nature. *Sila* increases the individual's self-insight and mindfulness (*smrti*), essential since karma cannot be counteracted without its being brought to full consciousness. Then, *samadhi*, the cultivation of meditative calm (*samatha*), and finally one-pointedness of concentration.... Only from a state of mental control can the third step, *prajna* (wisdom), be attained" (quoted in Ives 1992: 22-3).

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In a similar manner *samadhi* is expressed in the Noble Eightfold Path as Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, and *prajna* as Right View and Right Intention (Surya Das 1997: 93).

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The Buddha's Five Precepts—no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no consumption of intoxicants—are perhaps the most well known, and widely practiced, expression of Buddhist ethics. While lay Buddhists traditionally limit their practice to the Five Precepts, monks and nuns often practice these in addition to many others (Ives 1992: 4-5).

Dharma. It would seem that traditional Buddhist training offers many valuable resources for the socially minded practitioner.[72] Given the Buddhist doctrines of dependent co-arising and no-self (*anatman*), which call into question the very notion of an independent 'self' existing apart from the 'society,' this should come as no great surprise. In Buddhism, all actions are ultimately 'social' in that they impact, however subtly, other people and other living beings—even religious transformation can never occur in isolation from one's social environment (Ives 1992: 107). As Thich Nhat Hanh explains:

> Meditation is not to get out of society, to escape from society, but to prepare for a reentry into society.... When we go to a meditation center, we may have the impression that we leave everything behind—family, society, and all the complications involved in them—and come as an individual in order to search for peace. This is already an illusion, because in Buddhism there is no such thing as an individual. (Hanh 1987: 45)

I believe that what truly distinguishes 'engaged' Buddhism from more 'traditional' Buddhist forms is not so much 'social engagement' *per se*, as it is the *degree* to which practitioners are encouraged to participate socially as part of their spiritual training.[73]

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Although social engagement is frequently described as a 'new' development within Buddhism, the practice of selfless social activity, in the form of karma yoga ('path of action'), has long been established within both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Whereas the bodhisattva, having already attained spiritual liberation, chooses to participate in the world out of compassion, the practitioner of karma yoga seeks spiritual liberation *through* properly guided action in the social realm. Although karma yoga (much like engaged Buddhism) can be practised by anyone, it is particularly suited to those with worldly commitments such as family and work. In spite of the obvious similarities between karma yoga and engaged Buddhism, traditionally, practitioners of karma yoga tended to view selfless social action simply as a means to attain individual liberation. For practitioners of engaged Buddhism, however, the goal is both the attainment of spiritual freedom and the transformation of the society as a whole (Chaudhuri 1974: 73-76).

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Ken Jones (1988: 65) gives a useful definition of 'social action' as understood within engaged Buddhist circles: "By 'social action' we mean the many different kinds of action intended to benefit humankind. These range from simple, individual acts of charity, teaching and training, organized kinds of service,

Unlike conventional Buddhist forms, engaged Buddhism advocates participation in *all* areas of secular life, including family life, work, society, ecology, and global politics.[74] However, precisely because engaged Buddhism is practised midst the complexities of daily life, practitioners continually run the risk of compromising their ethical integrity and losing their spiritual focus. While this presents a significant challenge for socially engaged practitioners, it is a challenge that millions of Buddhists around the world have willingly accepted—one can only assume because the benefits of a socially engaged practice far outweigh the difficulties. In the following chapter I will take a more precise look at the phenomenon of Buddhist engagement by examining concrete examples of engaged Buddhist practice in both Asia and North America. In this manner I hope to determine the adequacy of engaged Buddhism both as a spiritual path and, more importantly, as a tool for social transformation and environmental healing.

'Right Livelihood' in and outside the helping professions, and through various kinds of community development as well as to political activity in working for a better society."

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It is important to recognize that while engaged Buddhists generally encourage practitioners to become socially active as part of their spiritual practice, more quietistic approaches, that involve simply *being*, as opposed to always *doing*, are also supported. As Thich Nhat Hanh explains: "Sometimes if we don't do anything, we help more than if we do a lot. We call that non-action. It is like a calm person in a small boat in a storm. That person does not have to do much, just to be himself and the situation can change. This is also an aspect of Dharmakaya: not talking, not teaching, just being" (Hanh 1987: 25).

Chapter 3

Social Activism in Contemporary Engaged Buddhist Movements

It is my experience that the world itself has a role to play in our liberation. Its very pressures, pains, and risks can wake us up—release us from the bonds of ego and guide us home to our vast, true nature. For some of us, our love for the world is so passionate that we cannot ask to wait until we are enlightened.

JOANNA MACY

Engaged Buddhism is currently practised in many areas of the world including India, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, North America, and many European countries. The particular form that engagement takes is, not surprisingly, dependent on the social and economic status of the practitioners involved. In most Asian countries, for example, the focus is largely on improving economic conditions for the poorest segments of the population. In the West (and Japan), however, everyday life, and issues such as peace, war, ecology, gender, and power, tend to receive much greater attention (Rothberg 1992: 59). Due to the limitations of this research project, I will confine my discussion to engaged Buddhist movements in North America and Asia, and focus particularly on movements that have been around for quite some time and/or specifically incorporate an ecological focus. I believe it is important to show the range of engaged Buddhisms currently existing in the world, both as a means to

offset any tendency to confine Buddhist 'social engagement' to a particular kind of expression, and as a means to determine the potential value of an ecologically engaged Buddhism within various socioeconomic settings.

3.1 THE ASIAN EXPERIENCE

Given the serious social and environmental problems currently being faced by many Asian countries, most engaged Buddhist movements in the East tend to focus on immediate concerns such as poverty, political oppression, and environmental degradation. In Tibet, Vietnam, and Burma, for instance, Buddhists are fighting against the systematic destruction of their religious and cultural heritage as well as the destruction of their land's natural resources (Kraft 1992a: 25); and in Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand, they are resisting the rapid Westernization of their homelands and trying to restore pride, hope and economic well-being to poor communities. For Buddhists living in these areas, social engagement arises naturally from a desire to alleviate the terrible suffering currently being experienced within their own countries. In the following section I will discuss engaged Buddhist movements in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Japan in order to give a sense of the forms that social engagement has taken in the East. While these countries differ with respect to specific social and economic conditions, they all share strong cultural and historic ties to the Buddhist tradition. This is in marked contrast to countries in the West in which Buddhism has only very recently taken root. I will begin this section with a discussion of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, which is perhaps the

most well-known and oldest surviving engaged Buddhist movement in the world. Next I will focus on the work of 'ecology' monks in Thailand. While social engagement in Thailand is similar to that observed in Sri Lanka, Thai activism tends to place a much greater emphasis on environmental issues, which makes it a particularly useful case study for this research project. Finally, I will close this section with a discussion of the very controversial and highly political Soka Gakkai Movement in Japan.

Island of Temple and Tank: Sri Lanka and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

> *Ancient Ceylon, in the centuries before the colonial powers came, was known as the Land of Plenty and the Isle of Righteousness. Beside the vast network of irrigation canals and reservoirs (or tanks) that made the island the 'Granary of the East,' rose great temples and stupas of the Buddhist Order. These sacred edifices were constructed from the earth excavated for the canals and tanks, whose construction and maintenance were supervised by the monks. That history lives today in the minds of those Sri Lankans who speak of the inherent relationship between 'temple and tank,' or between religion and development.*
>
> JOANNA MACY

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement began in 1958 as a two-week holiday work camp for students at Nalanda College, a prestigious Buddhist high school, in Sri Lanka. The work camp was organized by the students' science teacher Ahangama Tudor Ariyaratne who wanted his students to "understand and experience the true state of affairs that prevailed in the rural and poor urban areas...(and) to develop a love for their people and utilize the education they received to find ways of building a more just and happier life for them" (quoted in Macy 1983: 24). The experience at the work camp proved so

rewarding that within a couple of years hundreds of schools joined in, and a national Shramadana Movement was under way. Ariyaratne repeatedly stresses that the theory of Sarvodaya's approach to development (ie. 'development from within'), did not *precede* but rather emerged from the movement's experiences while helping villagers. Rather than a "blueprint produced by academic research, theory followed action and is still evolving" (ibid.: 24). This type of grass roots approach is very typical of engaged Buddhist movements around the world.

By the 1970s, Sarvodaya had organized more than a hundred coordinating centres, each serving the needs of twenty to thirty nearby villages. In the 1980s the movement grew dramatically, being active in over eight thousand out of 24,000 villages in Sri Lanka. However, due to organizational restructuring and the intensification of the civil war within Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya's work has since been reduced to approximately five thousand villages (Uemura 1993: 91). With a strong emphasis on decentralization and self-reliance,[75] Sarvodaya has implemented programs in education, health care, transportation facilities, agricultural projects, and a wide range of technologically appropriate energies, such as windmills, biogas generators, and gravity-fed water systems. In one year, Sarvodaya built three times as many roads as did the Sri Lankan government, thus linking for the first time many villages which had been neglected under colonial rule

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While the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement promotes self-reliance within villages, the movement itself depends heavily on external financial assistance. About eighty percent of Sarvodaya's funds are provided by Western NGOs, the bulk of which comes from a Dutch contributor, NOVIB. Sarvodaya recognizes this situation as problematic and is working toward diversifying its financial resources (Goulet 1981: 60).

(Ariyaratne 1996: 91). The movement also publicizes the dangers of environmentally-destructive agricultural practices (Uemura 1993: 109). One unique program with ecological significance involves a method of eradicating malaria without damaging the environment. The conventional method is to bury infected ponds. Alternatively, Sarvodaya introduces special fish into the ponds, that eat the larva of the malaria mosquito (ibid.).

The name, *Sarvodaya*, signifies the 'awakening of one and all,' and represents not only complete individual awakening and village awakening, but also nation and world awakening. Significant to the movement's philosophy is the understanding that each of these 'stages' of awakening are in fact deeply inter-connected, and that the awakening of one, actually depends on the awakening of all (based on the Buddhist concepts of *anatman*, or no-self, and dependent co-arising). This is why, for Sarvodaya, individual spiritual growth must be combined with social activity and the improvement of society. The second part of the movement's name, *Shramadana*, comes from *dana* (to give) and *shrama* (labour or human energy). The term *dana*, which traditionally refers to meritorious almsgiving to the Order of Monks, has been expanded to include "the sharing of one's time, skills, goods, and energy with one's community" (Macy 1983: 38). This is one of many ways Sarvodaya has linked it's own philosophy with the Theravadan Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka.[76] According to Ariyaratne, this is done not only to help

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Although I emphasize Sarvodaya's Buddhist connection, the movement does not identify exclusively with Buddhism. In its work with non-Buddhists (a minority in Sri Lanka), Sarvodaya includes Christian, Hindu, and Muslim symbols and rituals. In the case where people of different faiths are gathered together, the

villagers understand the goals of the movement and motivate them in their work, it is done to strengthen the villagers' connection to their country's cultural and spiritual traditions, which are being continually eroded by poverty and the "itch to emulate the modern West" (ibid.: 93). "If the spiritual, moral, and cultural value systems of the people are destroyed," explains Ariyaratne, "everything is lost, and more and more coercive instruments of the State—the police, the armed forces—are needed to bring about order" (Ariyaratne 1996: 96).

With material poverty being such an issue for the Sri Lankan villagers, the movement always runs the risk of losing its spiritual or 'inner' focus as it endeavours to deal with the more 'pressing' needs of the people. In order to prevent this, Sarvodaya has identified Ten Basic Needs considered essential to human well-being. This list serves both to guide village projects, giving equal priority to non-economic 'spiritual' needs, and to help Sarvodayans put their goals into perspective (Macy 1983: 27). The Ten Basic Needs are as follows: 1) water; 2) food; 3) housing; 4) clothing; 5) health care; 6) communication; 7) fuel; 8) education; 9) a clean, safe beautiful environment; and 10) a spiritual cultural life. Again, rather than viewing these needs in a strictly hierarchal fashion, they are perceived as deeply inter-connected. From this view, spirituality is just as fundamental as food and clothing, and should in no way be considered a luxury. Sarvodaya's commitment to the integration of spiritual and social development is also evident in its teaching about the six elements of development. These six elements, which are

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prayers of the 'minority' faith are usually said first (Macy 1983: 30).

"frequently displayed on charts adorning the walls of Sarvodaya centers," are as follows (Bond 1988: 266):

1) *The Moral Element* (*sila*): for the ordinary lay Buddhist, this would entail the practice of the Buddha's Five Precepts—abstinence from killing, stealing, moral misconduct, lying, and consuming intoxicants.

2) *The Cultural Element*: whereby customs such as beliefs, traditions, art, music, song, dance, and drama, are used to help establish a feeling of community among villagers.

3) *The Spiritual Element*: this refers to the awakening of one's mind through the use of various spiritual practices.

4) *The Social Element*: transforming social structures in order to improve the quality of life for all people within a society.

5) *The Political Element*: working to build a world in which everyone can enjoy fundamental and equal rights before the law.

6) *The Economic Element*: whereby attention is given to ensuring that all villagers are provided with the most basic material needs to lead a constructive life.

Sarvodaya fulfills its commitment to the *spiritual* awakening of individuals in two ways: 1) by reinterpreting traditional Theravadan Buddhist teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths, *dana*, and the Four Divine Abodes, according to Sarvodayan development goals (to ensure that development work is approached with a spiritual reverence);[77] and 2) by including the practise of meditation within its programs. According to Ariyaratne,

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The Four Noble Truths, for example, have been reinterpreted in the following way (Macy 1983: 36-7). The *First Noble Truth*, that 'there is suffering,' is translated into 'there is a decadent village.' This is used to raise the community's consciousness concerning the practical problems experienced by the village, such as poverty and internal conflicts. The *Second Noble Truth*, that 'craving is the cause of suffering,' is translated into 'the cause of this decadence is egocentricity, greed, distrust, and competition.' These 'evils' are what prevent the village from realising its true potential. The *Third Noble Truth*, that 'there can be a cessation of this suffering,' becomes 'there is hope that the village can re-awaken to its inherent potential for co-operation based on compassionate action.' The *Fourth Noble Truth*, explains that the Noble Eightfold Path is the tried-and-true path leading to both individual liberation and the awakening of the village.

meditation is used not just to strengthen the individual, but to cleanse the mental and moral environment as well. He explains that it is not "only our physical atmosphere which becomes polluted,...the 'psychosphere' in which we live is poisoned by power struggles, by greed, and fear and hatred, and these thoughts and impulses choke the community on a subconscious level" (Macy 1983: 77; Bond 1988: 277-279). In order to dispel this psychic pollution, villagers and Sarvodayan staff gather together to meditate twice daily. Each session begins with a breath meditation, *anapanasati*, which helps to collect dispersed thoughts. The energy collected by concentration on the breath is then disseminated for the good of all beings through the *metta*, loving kindness meditation. The meditation closes with, what Ariyaratne calls a 'conscious willing,'(*prarthana* or *adhitthana*), whereby "the purified thought-force is directed toward the goal of a morally righteous and materially contented society" (quoted in Macy 1983: 78). This 'conscious willing' often takes the form of an ancient Sri Lankan invocation which is familiar to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike:

May there be rain enough
May there be prosperity
May the whole world be happy
May the rulers be righteous

A recent evaluation of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (Uemura 1993: 130), concerning its effectiveness as a *social* development strategy, concluded that the movement succeeds 1) in 'awakening people' through their participation within a decentralized system; 2) in using cooperative and nonviolent methods to attain its goals;

3) in grounding programs within Sri Lankan traditions without becoming either politically or religiously partisan; and 4) in achieving self-reliance in many villages, while conserving natural resources through the use of local materials and appropriate technology. Sarvodaya is widely acknowledged as an extremely successful grass roots movement. This, however, does not mean that problems have not arisen over the years. The most serious problems include: 1) the discrepancy between Sarvodaya's ideal of self-reliance and its own dependence on external aid; 2) discord between movement headquarters and district centres; 3) ethnic issues between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus as a result of the civil war currently being waged in Sri Lanka;[78] and 4) a steadily deteriorating relationship with the Sri Lankan government.[79] Some might consider these difficulties to be signs of failure. Joanna Macy (1983: 97), however, offers a much more forgiving perspective. Sarvodaya, like any organization, she explains, "is amply beset with human failings; it suffers, as do we all, from delusion, greed, sloth, conflict. Indeed, that makes its story more relevant, for it shows how people can work together for development despite all the obstacles of our obstinate humanity. What it shows,

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The civil war which began in July 1983 has seriously affected Sinhalese and Tamil relations in Sri Lanka, at times making development work very difficult for Sarvodaya. To Sarvodaya's credit though, it appears to have had much greater success than other groups in retaining the loyalty of its membership from various ethnic/religious minorities (O'Shea 1991: 150).

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Since its inception in 1958, Sarvodaya has enjoyed a cooperative relationship with the Sri Lankan government for two main reasons: 1) Sarvodaya has succeeded in dealing with problems that the government could not, such as rural development in remote villages, and 2) because Sarvodaya is non-partisan and is not committed to any political group. Unfortunately with the intensification of the civil war, the Sri Lankan government has become suspicious of the movement. This is mostly because Sarvodaya is much more popular among peasants than is the government. So far the government has prohibited a radio program that Sarvodaya broadcasts, threats have been made against Ariyaratne's life (even though he indicates no interest in politics), and a young Sarvodaya lawyer was killed by the government (Uemura 1993: 127-8).

particularly, is that we can learn to draw strength from each other, and especially from the religious traditions to which we are heir."

The success of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka proves hopeful for other groups and individuals who aspire to integrate social change with individual spiritual awakening. However, several issues make Sarvodaya's approach potentially less useful in the West and other industrialized areas of the world: 1) the movement focuses on *rural development* and works with small village communities; 2) most industrialized areas lack a sense of community that would encourage individuals to work together toward a common goal; and 3) Sarvodaya's success appears to be directly related to its ability to access Sri Lanka's strong Theravadan Buddhist tradition and thus motivate individuals in ways that are meaningful to them. While the specific approach taken by Sarvodaya may be incompatible with the needs of people in industrialized areas such as Japan and North America, I believe the fundamental philosophy of the movement (ie. 'social transformation from within'), can be applied to a wide variety of situations, readily adapting to the specific needs and problems of a given region. The plethora of engaged Buddhist forms, both in developing areas and in the West, would seem to corroborate this assumption.

Engaged Buddhism in Thailand and the Emergence of 'Ecology' Monks

Engaged Buddhism in Thailand is much like that observed in Sri Lanka in that it is centred around the issues of rural development and Buddhist cultural revival. In Thailand, however, both of these issues are perceived to be so intimately related to the problem of ecological degradation that environmental activism has become a central focus for many socially concerned Buddhists. In recent decades, as a result of a nearly wholesale acceptance of Western industrialism and consumerism, Thailand has become a practical environmental disaster (Sponsel & Natadecha-Sponsel 1997: 45). "For several decades," Dhira Phantumvanit and Khunying Suthawana Sathirathai explain, "Thailand has indulged in the abundance of its natural resources without considering their long-term sustainability. As a result there are now ample signs of ecological stresses facing the nation" (quoted in Sponsel et al. 1997: 45). Deforestation is perhaps Thailand's most serious ecological problem. According to one source, the rate of deforestation in Thailand is higher than in any other Asian country, except for perhaps Nepal and Borneo (Darlington 1998: 2). Prior to World War II, before the current drive toward economic development seriously began, up to 75% of Thailand was still forested (Sponsel et al. 1997: 45). By 1986 the Royal Forest Department (RFD) indicated that this figure dropped to between 25 and 29 percent. Today, Nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are now estimating a total forest coverage of around 15 per cent[80] (Darlington 1998: 2).

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Royal Forest Department (RFD) estimates are higher than those made by most NGO's due to differences in the way 'forest' is defined. The RFD includes forest reserve lands even though large areas within these

Environmental concerns in Thailand are by no means limited to engaged Buddhist circles. In 1988 residents of Kanchanaburi province, working side by side with Bangkok intellectuals, conservationists, students, and the media, forced the government to cancel the Nam Choan hydroelectric dam which would have "flooded the heart of the largest contiguous area of intact forest in mainland Southeast Asia" (Lohmann 1995: 110). One year later the Thai government implemented a nationwide ban on logging in response to widespread protests against logging-related flooding in the south and timber agreements with Burma. This was the first national ban to be instituted anywhere in Asia (ibid.). Since the late 1980s, Thai farmers have also been actively involved in demonstrations against commercial eucalyptus plantations (ibid.) which not only deplete the soil of valuable nutrients and seriously endanger the integrity of surrounding forested areas, but squeeze out other tree and plant varieties that are important sources of food and non-woody biomass, such as animal fodder (Shiva 1993: 70-3; 31-9).

When discussing Thai environmentalism, the Western distinction between *anthropocentrism* and *ecocentrism*, becomes essentially meaningless. This is because for the majority of Thais, a secure livelihood *depends* on continued access to water, forests, and nutrient-rich farm land. As Larry Lohmann puts it, the "struggle for livelihood very often *is* a struggle for the 'environment' (Lohmann 1995: 123; emphasis in original).[81]

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reserves have been cleared by poor farmers in search of land. The RDF also includes economic forests such as monocrop plantations of eucalyptus trees (Darlington 1998: 2).

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Certainly everyone in the world is dependent on the integrity of the environment, but the connection between ecological integrity and social wellbeing is often much less obvious in developed areas.

Environmentalism in Thailand, therefore, does not focus on preserving pristine natural areas, or protecting species for their own sake. Such an approach would only further marginalize rural farmers who depend on the forests for their livelihood. Instead, Thai environmentalists are much more concerned with establishing sustainable access to land and other important natural resources.[82]

Clearly, in rural Thailand, concern for the environment and concern for social welfare go hand in hand. This might explain why nature conservation has become such a widespread concern in Thailand in recent decades. The story, however, is a bit more complicated. Although environmental destruction has been a fact of life in Thailand since World War II, when the rapid industrialization of the country became a national priority, the environmental crisis did not receive much attention until the 1980s.[83] Prior to that time, the environmental movement in Thailand was generally perceived as an economic or political debate between environmentalists and developers (Darlington 1998: 11). By the 1980s, however, the destruction of the environment was beginning to be interpreted, not

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According to Lohmann (1995: 124) deep ecologists are often uneasy about the attitudes of Thai environmentalists. "While they applaud Thai villagers' activism in defense of local forests and streams and are intrigued by the Buddhist tradition of respect for the rights of animals and indeed all living things, they cannot help but look down their noses a bit at what they see as an essentially 'instrumental' attitude toward nature. Thai farmers, they feel, are regrettably 'anthropocentric', and their preoccupation with agriculture and ambivalence toward 'wild nature' suggest a lack of appreciation of the intrinsic value of plants and animals." While this might be true to some extent, these same deep ecologists could be criticized for their lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity to the needs of Thai villagers. Deep ecologists who share this criticism of Thai villagers could also be criticized for reinforcing a dualism which artificially separates humanity from the rest of the living world ('wild nature').

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Prior to the 1980s, however, environmental NGOs (such as Wildlife Fund Thailand and the Project for Ecological Recovery) did exert considerable effort to raise ecological awareness in Thailand and protect the country's forested areas.

simply as an economic or social problem, but as a *moral crisis* resulting from a decline in adherence to Buddhist values. With a growing sense of disillusionment concerning the wholesale pursuit of Westernization, environmentalism became closely tied to issues of national identity and Buddhist cultural revival (Sponsel et al. 1997: 57-8).

It was also in the late 1980s that the Thai monastic community began to seriously address the nations environmental crisis. Self-proclaimed 'ecology monks' (*phra nak anuraksa*) began to actively participate in the conservation of forests, watersheds, and wildlife, believing that environmental degradation was posing a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of the Thai people (Darlington 1998: 3). Although only a minority of monks are actively involved in the ecology movement in Thailand, the number has been growing rapidly in recent years. Still, it is estimated that of about 288,637 monks in Thailand,[84] only a few hundred may be environmentally active[85] (Sponsel et al. 1997: 55). Social engagement within the Thai monastic community first arose in the 1970s with the rise of 'development' monks (*phra nak phadthanaa*).[86] These monks, who are a loosely

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This figure was obtained by Sponsel et al. (1997: 53) from the Thai Ministry of Education, Department of Religious Affairs. It was estimated that in 1992 there were 29,002 Buddhist temples, 288,637 monks, and 123,643 novices in Thailand.

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According to Darlington (1998: 13), it is difficult to determine the number of environmentally engaged monks in Thailand because many are interested in environmental work, but do not refer to themselves as 'ecology' monks *per se*. Some sense of the scope of monastic involvement in the environmental "movement can be gained from looking at the participation in a three-day conference (held near Bangkok in July 1991) cosponsored by 23 nongovernmental environmental and development organizations. The organizers expected around 60 monks to attend; over 200 actually registered."

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Much of the theoretical foundation for Thai engaged Buddhism was laid down by the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu who began speaking widely on the subject of social engagement in the early 1940s. For an

organized group composed largely of rural, lower-ranked monks, work independently of the government and promote grassroots economic development throughout Thailand (Darlington 1998: 5). It is from these monks that the ecology monks emerged.

Consistent with Buddhist philosophy, the ecology monks believe that the destruction of the environment is the result of people acting through the evils of greed, ignorance, and hatred, in the attempt to gain the material benefits of development, industrialization, and consumerism (Darlington 1998: 1). While they are generally critical of their country's current economic policies, most ecology monks try to avoid overt political statements.[87] Nonetheless, their work is frequently criticized by the government, economic developers, and more conservative members of the monastic community, who contend that sociopolitical involvement is 'inappropriate' for Buddhist monks.[88] It is important to recognize, however, that for many of these monks, social engagement is as much about maintaining the relevance of Buddhism in contemporary Thailand as it is about social and

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excellent introduction to the life and work of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, see Bhikkhu 1996.

87

While the ecology monks do generally avoid direct political statements, many are supported or assisted by local and national NGOs, some of which are clearly at odds with the Thai government and economic developers (Darlington 1998: 4).

88

Rothberg (1992: 68) recounts a conversation he had with an elderly monk at a traditional Thai Buddhist forest monastery near the Laos border. According to Rothberg, this monk expressed a view shared by many of his contemporaries. He believed "that helping ameliorate social problems may be useful and should be encouraged for those interested *but that it should not be the work of monks*. Monks have only one goal, the uprooting of 'defilements' (such as anger, greed, ignorance, and so on)—that is, liberation—and this is not possible while socially active" (emphasis added). This view is not surprising considering that the Thai monastic community has historically been very conservative with respect to voicing political criticisms, particularly when compared with monks in Burma, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Vietnam (Darlington 1998: 5).

environmental protection. This is because, as part of the process of rapid industrialization, the Thai government has gradually taken over many activities, such as schooling and health-care, which traditionally fell into the purview of Thai village monks. By adapting traditional Buddhist rituals and teachings, ecology monks have been able to maintain their connection with the laity, at the same time raising social and ecological awareness among rural people and the Thai nation as a whole (Darlington 1998: 4).

The work of Phrakhru Pitak Nanthakhun of Nan Province offers an excellent example of the creative manner in which Thai monks have been able to apply traditional Buddhist rituals and teachings in their work. Phrakhru Pitak began to preach about environmental conservation in the mid-1970s after seeing the damage that extensive logging (both legal and illegal) had done to the watersheds surrounding his home village (Darlington 1998: 6). Although most of the deforestation was the result of commercial logging, Thai farmers were also responsible for much of the clear-cutting in the region. Villagers used the clear-cut areas to grow maize, a vital source of supplementary income. Unfortunately, because maize itself causes significant soil erosion, villagers were forced to clear more and more land for agricultural purposes. As a result Phrakhru Pitak's home region quickly became the poorest and driest in Nan Province.

For years Phrakhru Pitak preached to no avail about the responsibility of human beings to care for the environment and emphasized the interconnection between the village and the surrounding natural environment. Time and again the villagers listened to his sermons,

nodded in comprehension, and returned home to clear the land. Early in 1990, realizing that preaching was not working, Phrakhru Pitak travelled to Phayao Province to speak with another environmentally concerned monk, Phrakhru Manas. Phrakhru Manas is credited as being the first monk in Thailand to perform the symbolic ordination of a tree as a means to raise ecological awareness among villagers.[89] Today, tree ordination ceremonies (*buat ton mai*) are performed by many ecology monks in order to build a strong spiritual commitment among rural peoples to conserve local forests and watersheds (Darlington 1998: 7). After meeting with Phrakhru Manas, Phrakhru Pitak returned home to organize a tree ordination ceremony in the community forest of his home village. Shortly after, in July 1991, he performed a second ceremony to sanctify the entire forest area surrounding ten neighbouring villages (ibid.: 6).

This latter tree ordination ceremony[90] was attended by local villagers, over twenty monks from Nan and other northern provinces, and many local government officials. Phrakhru Pitak purposely involved high-ranking monks and government officials as a means to legitimize the ceremony and secure its success.[91] The ordination ceremony involved a

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In any tree ordination ceremony the monks never claim to be fully ordaining the tree. This is because traditionally, only humans can receive such an honour. The ceremony is intended simply as a *symbolic* reminder that nature should be protected and treated with reverence and respect (Darlington 1998: 9).

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Susan Darlington attended this ceremony in Nan Province and describes her experience in Darlington 1998: 7-11.

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Wildlife Fund Thailand (an affiliate of World Wildlife Fund) cosponsored Phrakhru Pitak's conservation project, thus placing his work on a national stage and giving it further legitimacy (Darlington 1998: 8). Wildlife Fund Thailand (WFT) is particularly influential because it is one of the largest environmental NGOs in Thailand and it has royal patronage. According to Darlington (1998: 8), involvement of NGOs in

day and a half of activities which included a modification of a traditional ritual, *thaut phaa paa* (the giving of the forest robes); the donation of 12,000 seedlings for planting; the performance of three skits (one containing political commentary[92]); and the symbolic ordination of the tallest remaining tree in the area. The giving of the forest robes *(thaut phaa paa)* traditionally involves the donation of robes, money, and other necessities by the Thai laity in return for religious merit. These gifts, or *dana*, are given to support the monks and for the upkeep of the temple. During the tree ordination ceremony, however, the 12,000 seedlings, which had been donated by a few wealthy patrons, replaced the traditional robes and money and were presented to the monastic community. Phrakhru Pitak and the highest-ranking monk present accepted the seedlings, thus sanctifying them and conferring merit on the donors and all ceremonial participants. Several seedlings were then ritually planted around the temple grounds and at the site of the tree ordination. Most of the seedlings used in the ceremony were later given to villagers to plant in denuded areas of the forest. The seedlings were chosen carefully and included species, such as fruit trees, which are profitable without needing to be cut down.

It is important to recognize that while the tree ordination ceremony is a central feature of Phrakhru Pitak's work, it represents only a small portion of his conservation efforts,

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the work of ecology monks has helped to secure much of their success. The relationship between NGOs and ecology monks is somewhat uneasy, however, because many NGOs are openly critical of government policy.

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Although one of the skits performed during this ceremony clearly criticized the government for failing to protect the forest, most Buddhist rituals, including tree ordination ceremonies, try to avoid any overt political commentary.

which include educating villagers about environmental issues, teaching temporary novices about the natural environment, promoting economic alternatives to growing maize, and establishing protected community forest areas (Darlington 1998: 7). Local committees have also been established to manage the sanctified forest areas and protect them from abuse. The tree ordination ceremony is vital to the success of the of entire project because it creates the emotional and spiritual energy required for the conservation work ahead and gives the projects religious and moral significance. But it is the other activities preceding and following the ceremony that provide villagers with the necessary framework for changing ecologically destructive practices and protecting natural areas (ibid.).

Although the present discussion has focussed on the work of monks, the practice of engaged Buddhism in Thailand is by no means confined to the monastic community. In fact, Thailand's most prominent engaged Buddhist, Sulak Sivaraksa, is a lay Buddhist.[93]

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Thai activist, social critic, and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Sulak Sivaraksa, co-founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in 1989—an umbrella organization based in Thailand that supports engaged Buddhist projects around the world—and is the driving force behind the recently formed (1995) Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) in Thailand. SEM is a non-profit organization aimed at providing an alternative education for the Thai people. The movement's goal is to revive the traditional spirit of Thai education which was based on the Buddhist threefold model, or "Trai Sikkha": *sila* (virtuous conduct), *samadhi* (concentration), and *panna* (wisdom) (Chinvarakorn 1998). Sivaraksa has long criticized mainstream education for producing people who are highly intellectual and competitive, but are also self-centred and unconcerned about society (ibid.). Each course held by SEM incorporates meditation practice and hands-on experience with the subject matter. Courses are held, when possible, in natural surroundings and focus on issues such as engaged Buddhism, deep ecology, conflict resolution, spiritual practice, and community building (Spirit in Education Movement 1997). Many of the courses are attended by monks and nuns who later return to their communities equipped with better leadership tools. According to Preeda Ruengwichatorn, after attending SEM courses a " few monks and nuns say they feel more confident to convey *dharma* to their people back home" (Chinvarakorn 1998). For an excellent introduction to the life and work of Sulak Sivaraksa see Swearer 1996.

Still, given the respect that the monastic community commands in a society where 95 percent of people are Theravada Buddhists, ecology monks in Thailand have a significant potential to raise ecological awareness and help create a greener society.[94] Because, as yet, relatively few monks are environmentally active, and those who are tend to work in isolation, it is difficult to ascertain the transformative impact that ecology monks have had on Thai mainstream society. Currently, it would be safe to say that ecology monks and other engaged Buddhists, including Sulak Sivaraksa, are in a rather marginal position. According to an editorial in the *Bangkok Post*, written August 4 1998, engaged Buddhism, particularly within urban centres, "seems to have an appeal to a very limited circle—those who are regarded as a little 'unusual' or even 'crazy,' " (Chinvarakorn 1998). But as engaged Buddhist and former monk Pracha Hutanuwatr[95] explains, "The process of changing people's ideas, of course, takes a long, long time. But we believe that a radical change will come to the world sooner or later, as more and more people

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Applying the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, Sponsel and Natadecha-Sponsel (1997) hypothesize that the "monastic community has extraordinary status and power to help transform Thailand into a more ecologically appropriate society by virtue of its antistructural and liminal social and moral roles" (Sponsel et al. 1997: 50-51). The authors contend the Thai monastic community is essentially an "indefinite liminality" that possesses many attributes of *communitas* and anti-structure (see Turner 1996b; 1969: 107). What's more, the monastic community exhibits many characteristics similar or identical to an ideal green society (see Sponsel et al. 1997: 49). The transformative potential of the monastic community is enhanced by the its high status in Thai society and by the relatively close relationship existing between monks and the lay community. In fact, during the rainy season, it is customary in Thailand for individuals (usually men) to become monks and novices for a temporary period of days, weeks, or months. In 1990, for example, approximately 106,500 monks and 26,800 novices were added to the temple population for the rainy season retreat (ibid.).

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Pracha Hutanuwatr has taught several courses at the Spirit in Education Movement ashram which was co-founded by Sulak Sivaraksa (see footnote 93). Some of the courses he has taught include "Religion of the Market", "Alternative Education Workshop for Teachers of Children Village School", "Social Development and Community Building", and "Conflict Resolution in Community and Negotiation" (Spirit in Education Movement 1997).

become disillusioned with the present consumeristic way of life" (ibid.).

The Soka Gakkai Movement in Japan: In Search of a Just and Peaceful World

The Japanese lay Buddhist movement, Soka Gakkai, is unlike any other engaged Buddhist movement in Asia, or anywhere else in the world for that matter. Its considerable wealth, its close affiliation with the Komeito (Japan's third-largest political party), its aggressive evangelical stance, and clear disregard for other Buddhist sects and practices, has caused critics to seriously question the compatibility of Soka Gakkai with the "rising spirit of world Buddhism" (Queen & King 1996: 4). Some Buddhist practitioners and scholars even object to the movement's designation as an exemplar of engaged Buddhism (ibid.: 3-4). Soka Gakkai is certainly no stranger to controversy. In fact, it has been described as "one of the most controversial movements in postwar Japan" (Metraux 1996: 365). Among other things, the movement has been charged with perverting basic Buddhist doctrines, it has been denounced as a false religious movement, and Gakkai leaders have repeatedly been accused of corruption by the Japanese media[96] (ibid.: 365). Yet, through all this scandal, Soka Gakkai has managed to build a strong and vital organization with an impressive and loyal following. In 1992, it claimed a membership of over eight million households in Japan and 1.26 million members in 120

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In particular, Soka Gakkai's former president and highly respected spiritual leader, Ikeda Daisaku (1928-), has received considerable criticism by the Japanese media and opponents of the movement. Ikeda "has been accused of power-seeking and some journalists have tried to link him with a number of scandals...." It is important to note that, to date, none of the charges have been proven (Metraux 1996: 372). Ikeda is currently the president of the international arm of Soka Gakkai, Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

other countries[97] (Queen & King 1996: 3-4).

Like other engaged Buddhist movements around the world, Soka Gakkai (Value Creation Society) is deeply concerned for both the spiritual and material well-being of individuals, and works tirelessly to meet those ends. The movement is energetically engaged in an impressive array of activities including education, peace activism, environmental concerns, cultural development, domestic politics, and international diplomacy (Metraux 1996: 365). Soka Gakkai sponsors an influential political party, the Komeito, an educational system which includes two high schools and a large university, two art museums and various other national and international cultural organizations, and several successful publishing companies (Metraux 1996: 365). Soka Gakkai's newspaper the *Seikyo Shimbun*, is the third-most-read daily paper in Japan (ibid.: 375).

With respect to social transformation, Soka Gakkai's goal is not so much to radically alter the existing structure of major institutions, but to improve and cleanse them of the "three great poisons—greed, anger and folly" (Metraux 1996: 375). In the words of one member: "The single most positive action we can make for society and the land is to

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Because Soka Gakkai believes that its religious teachings are applicable everywhere in the world, special attention has been placed on creating an international wing of Soka Gakkai, known as Soka Gakkai International (SGI). In the early 1960s Soka Gakkai began by building foreign branches in the United States and Europe, and has now expanded to all other parts of the world (Metraux 1996: 389). According to Metraux (1996: 388-9), "Virtually every branch of the Soka Gakkai stresses internationalism, and Gakkai publications are full of information about other countries. Gakkai leaders stress that the Japanese must move away from the chauvinism that was so predominant in Japan before 1945 and that the key to world peace is respect for and appreciation of other cultures."

transform our own lives, so that they are no longer dominated by anger, greed and fear. When we manifest wisdom, generosity and integrity we naturally make more valuable choices, and we will find that our surroundings are nurturing and supportive" (SGI 1998: 28). Most Buddhists would agree with this statement. Indeed, much of Soka Gakkai philosophy conforms to traditional Buddhist teachings. The movement differs, however, in its insistence that the "salvation of the world can *only* come through the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin" (quoted in Metraux 1996: 392; emphasis added). This exclusivism, while uncharacteristic of Buddhism as a whole, is a fundamental feature of the Nichiren tradition. And while Soka Gakkai has recently developed a much more cooperative and tolerant attitude toward non-members and other religious faiths, privately it continues to insist on the religious and moral superiority of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism (Metraux 1996: 392).

Nichiren (1222-1282), who was the founder of the only major school of Buddhism native to Japan, lived during one of the most turbulent periods of Japanese history, known as the Kamakura era (1185-1333). During his lifetime Japan was plagued by a series of terrible natural disasters, including earthquakes and mighty storms, and suffered two full-scale invasions by Mongol armies. As a result, many Japanese, including Nichiren, believed they were living in the age of *mappo* (Metraux 1996: 366). According to Buddhist tradition *mappo*, or the Latter Day of the Law, is the "last of the three periods following Shakyamuni Buddha's death when Buddhism falls into confusion and Shakyamuni's teachings lose the power to lead people to enlightenment." The *Daishitsu Sutra* predicts

that this "will be an 'age of conflict,' when monks will disregard the precepts and feud constantly among themselves, heretical views will prevail, and Shakyamuni's Buddhism will perish" (quoted in Metraux 1996: 395).

Nichiren believed the suffering in his country was due to the propagation of false Buddhist teachings and a lack of attention to the teachings in the *Lotus Sutra*. He insisted that the *Lotus Sutra*, being the last and greatest of the Buddha's teachings, was the *only* vehicle capable of saving humanity from the terrible grips of the age of *mappo* (Metraux 1996: 366-7). According to Nichiren, it is in the *Lotus Sutra* that Shakyamuni Buddha reveals that *all* people have the potential for Buddhahood (ibid.). Harsh times often call for harsh measures, which may explain why Nichiren proceeded to develop a particularly aggressive form of proselytism, called *shakubuku* ('to break and flatten'), in order to spread his message. Nichiren was also very politically oriented and felt that the Japanese government had a responsibility to lead the Japanese people to, what he described as, the True Buddhism (ibid.).

In the mid 1940s Soka Gakkai was formed as a religious movement devoted to the propagation of the doctrines of one of the smaller sects of Nichiren Buddhism, Nichiren

Shoshu,[98] which was established after Nichiren's death in 1282.[99] Up until fairly recently, Soka Gakkai maintained a reasonably harmonious relationship with the leaders of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. In 1990, however, a vicious verbal debate broke out between the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and Soka Gakkai. The verbal war escalated to such a degree that in November 1991 the head priest, Nikken Abe, excommunicated Soka Gakkai[100] and ordered the Gakkai and all its foreign chapters to disband immediately (Metraux 1996: 390). The leaders at the head temple in Taiseki-ji felt that Soka Gakkai had become too powerful and was undermining the religious authority of the priesthood, rendering it irrelevant to Japanese society. The issues are very complex, but boil down to a fundamental disagreement about the relationship between the clergy and the laity. The priesthood claims that individuals are incapable of gaining enlightenment without the assistance of a priest. Soka Gakkai, however, insists that priestly intervention is unnecessary. All that is required is a deep faith in the teachings of Nichiren, devoted religious practice in the form of prayer and chanting before a *gohonzon* (religious object), and the application of Nichiren's teachings within daily life (SGI Canada 1997b: 45;

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What separates Nichiren Shoshu from the other Nichiren sects is the controversial belief that *Nichiren*, and not Shakyamuni, is the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. Nichiren Shoshu claims that Shakyamuni was merely "a precursor, a kind of John the Baptist," who prepared the way for Nichiren's teachings (Metraux 1996: 370).

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Soka Gakkai has also adopted the eschatological view of *mappo*, asserting that humanity is still in the throes of the Latter day of the Law. As a result, the movement inherited Nichiren's missionary zeal and intolerance of other religious schools (Metraux 1996: 366; 392).

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I was informed by a member of Soka Gakkai International (USA) that Soka Gakkai's excommunication made the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest excommunication since the Protestant Reformation!

Metraux 1996: 391).

The antagonism between Nichiren Shoshu and Soka Gakkai continues to this day. Soon after the excommunication, Soka Gakkai denounced Nichiren Shoshu as a corrupt sect, and by 1992 had dropped all mention of the priesthood from its literature. The term Nichiren Daishonin[101] is now used to distinguish Soka Gakkai's belief system from that of Nichiren Shoshu (SGI Canada 1997b: 45). Soka Gakkai now considers itself to be the only true line of Nichiren Buddhism and has effectively established itself as an independent Buddhist sect.

Much of Soka Gakkai's strength and success lies in its impeccable organization and the tightness of its neighbourhood groups. The "Soka Gakkai leaders in Tokyo cannot cater to the needs of the average member in Fukuoka, but a carefully chosen chain of leaders and the loving concern of another local believer can" (Metraux 1996: 373). By encouraging its members to articulate concerns in their lives and to support each other in times of need, Soka Gakkai hopes to build a strong social ethic within its membership and establish micro-communities based on the principles of interdependence and compassion. Members generally carry on a very normal existence at home and work and, these days, rarely wear their religion on their sleeve (ibid.). The Gakkai does, however, expect members to participate in various movement-related activities. These include the

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[101] Daishonin literally means great sage. 'Dai' means great and 'shonin' is another term for the Buddha. The term is used as a honorific title to show reverence to Nichiren (SGI Canada 1997b: 45).

regular practice of *gongyo*, or daily prayer, the chanting of the Japanese title (*daimoku*) of the *Lotus Sutra*, *Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo*,[102] and the attendance of various Gakkai meetings (*zadankai*). Members are also encouraged to devote some time to proselytization (*kozen-rufu*[103]) (Metraux 1996: 373; SGI Canada 1997a: 43). Of these four activities, the practice of *gongyo* and the chanting of *Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo* are the most important.[104] *Gongyo*, literally means 'assiduous practice,' and involves the recitation of the *Hoben* (second) and *Juryo* (sixteenth) chapters of the *Lotus Sutra*, followed by the chanting of *Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo* in front of the *gohonzon*,[105] or special object of worship (SGI Canada 1997b: 45).

Social engagement manifests in quite a different manner in Japan than it does in most other parts of Asia. Whereas in Sri Lanka and Thailand the focus is on grass roots development, Soka Gakkai places a much greater emphasis on such activities as peace and environment education, charitable fund raising, domestic politics, and participation in

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Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo can be translated as 'Praise to the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra' (Metraux 1996: 367). Essentially the title represents the ultimate Law or true essence of life permeating everything in the universe. *Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo* is said to be the sound of the Buddha state (SGI Canada 1997b: 45).

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Literally, *kozen-rufu* means 'to widely declare and spread.' Members believe that in order to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind, they must 'widely declare and spread' the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin (SGI Canada 1997a: 43).

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Gongyo is performed each morning and evening and, along with chanting *Namu-myo-ho Renge-kyo*, is the most fundamental practice of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism (SGI Canada 1997b: 45).

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The *gohonzon* is a symbolic representation of the eternal Buddha, in the form of a mandala, which Gakkai members enshrine in their homes (Metraux 1996: 367; SGI Canada 1997a: 43).

UN activities[106] (Metraux 1996: 380). It should also be noted, however, that while Soka Gakkai's social involvement is impressive, the average member's participation is, in fact, quite minimal. Members tend to limit their engagement to the private realm, hoping to affect changes at the micro level at home and at work. As will be seen in the following section, Buddhist social engagement in Japan bares a close resemblance to that observed in North America. The main difference, however, is that nowhere in the West do we find an engaged Buddhist movement of equivalent size and social stature as Soka Gakkai. This difference, I believe, can be attributed in part to Japan's long historic relationship with the Buddhist religion.

Since the late 1960s Soka Gakkai has maintained a membership of between eight and ten percent of Japan's total population (Metraux 1996: 386). Given such an impressive membership, it may be surprising to learn that most Japanese are rather ignorant of Soka Gakkai's domestic and international activities. Most everyone has heard of Soka Gakkai's former president and highly respected spiritual leader, Ikeda Daisaku, and are

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Soka Gakkai is an active supporter of the United Nations and as an NGO representative, participates in many official UN activities. Working as an NGO representative of the UN Economic and Social Council, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), the international arm of the Gakkai, has carried out several environmental consciousness-raising activities around the world (Metraux 1996: 380). In 1992 this included a major conference on the environment held in London, and co-organized by SGI, the Commonwealth Human Ecology association, and UNESCO. SGI also participated at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) with an exhibition, "Toward the Century of Life: The Environment and Development" (ibid.). Soka Gakkai International continues to organize environmental symposiums and photographic exhibitions around the world (SGI 1998: 14). On account of its continual support of the UN, SGI was recently admitted (December 7, 1997) as an international associate member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). WFUNA also paid special respects to SGI president, Ikeda Daisaku, "in recognition of his invaluable services rendered in support of the United Nations and the promotion of world peace" (ibid.: 15).

aware of the media's attempt to link Soka Gakkai to various scandals, but they know little more (ibid.: 393). Few Soka Gakkai social and cultural activities are ever covered by the Japanese media in spite of the organization's persistent attempts to win public attention and respect (ibid.). Part of the problem, I believe, can be traced back to the Soka Gakkai's religious exclusivism. As Daniel Metraux explains (1996: 394), the Gakkai's "strong adherence to its own doctrines and worldview...makes it a suspect organization to most Japanese [indeed, to most people around the world], who distrust its motives." Such distrust could only diminish the power of the Gakkai to influence Japanese society in the long run. Still one should not overlook the profound impact that Soka Gakkai has had on its own membership. Members often claim that their lives have significantly changed for the better since joining Soka Gakkai. They claim to feel happier, "have a new sense of confidence, are much more successful in their jobs or careers, and enjoy a new set of friends and supporters" (Metraux 1996: 374). It is from the loyalty of its membership, coupled with its tremendous organizational capacity, that Soka Gakkai draws its strength. So while its influence may continue to be marginal, Soka Gakkai promises to have a lasting impact on Japanese society (ibid.: 395).[107]

3.2 THE NORTH AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

The global environmental crisis is an issue that strikes a deep chord with many North

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Although other Buddhist reform and lay movements do exist in Japan, such as Rissho Koseikai, Soka Gakkai has emerged as one of the most important of these movements in terms of its size and its overall impact on Japanese society (Metraux 1996: 394).

American Buddhists. As a result, many Buddhist practitioners have begun to incorporate ecological awareness exercises as part of their regular spiritual practice. A few Buddhist scholars and seasoned practitioners are concerned, however, that current 'green' trends within contemporary Buddhism may lead to an excessive dilution of the Dharma in the West (Kraft 1994: 177). In particular, they believe that comparisons between 'ecological consciousness' and the experience of true enlightenment are too facile and based on inexperience and a fundamental misunderstanding of the Buddha's teachings. Given the enthusiasm of many contemporary environmentalists to gain the support of spiritual traditions like Buddhism, it is therefore essential that special care be taken to ensure the meaningful integration of traditional Buddhist practice with ecologically oriented practices.

Buddhists in North America express ecological awareness in a multitude of ways. Some practitioners consider formal meditation to be an adequate expression of ecological engagement (Kraft 1994: 165). Other Buddhists have creatively integrated time-honoured Buddhist rituals and practices with new forms of meditation, that include environmental themes and nature imagery. For example, the Zen Center in Rochester, New York, conducts an 'earth relief ceremony' that transfers merit to the earth itself. The ceremony concludes with the following beautiful invocation (ibid.: 167):

> *Tonight we have offered candles, incense, fruit, and tea,*
> *Chanted sutras and dharani.*
> *Whatever merit comes to us from these offerings*
> *We now return to the earth, sea, and sky.*
> *May our air be left pure!*

May our waters be clean!
May our earth be restored!
May all beings attain Buddhahood!

Many practitioners integrate important environmental activities such as recycling, waste reduction, and organic gardening within their regular spiritual practice. These activities are approached with the same reverence and awareness that is applied to other, more traditional forms of practice (Kaza 1997: 231-3). A more unconventional expression of ecological engagement is offered by Zen Community in Yonkers, New York. Since the late 1980s, Zen Community has produced, in cooperation with Ben and Jerry's ice cream, cookies that specifically use nuts grown in Amazonian farming cooperatives in Brazil. A percentage of the profits of these 'Rainforest Crunch' cookies are also donated to groups like Rainforest Action Network. "With $1.6 million in annual sales (1991), the bakery has also provided employment to about two hundred local residents, some of them formerly homeless" (Kraft 1994: 171).

Many other Dharma centres in North America devote attention to raising environmental awareness. Some of the more well known centres include Green Gulch Zen Center (California), Spirit Rock Meditation Center (California), Manzanita Village (California), Karme Choling Tibetan Center (Vermont), Shambhala Center (Colorado), and Zen Mountain Center[108] (California) (Kaza 1997: 244; Yamauchi 1997: 247). Unfortunately,

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Zen Mountain Center is unusual in that it has developed a comprehensive environmental stewardship program with the intention of acting as an ecological role model for other communities. Although the program is still in its infancy, the centre hopes among other things: 1) to provide environmental educational retreats and workshops that are contemplative in approach; 2) to provide indigenous educational workshops; 3) to sponsor special events that foster environmental awareness and ecological consciousness;

space limitations prevent me from discussing the various creative ways these communities express ecological awareness.[109] Instead, I will focus on areas of discussion which I feel have particular relevance for individuals interested in establishing a socially (or ecologically) engaged spiritual practice. I will begin with a brief discussion of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's enunciation of the Five Precepts which I believe offers an excellent foundation for a socially engaged practice. Next I will elaborate on the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's innovative engaged Buddhist training program BASE, which I first introduced towards the end of Chapter 1. I believe BASE offers a very valuable model for social activists and Buddhists alike who wish to deepen their commitment to personal transformation "while responding actively to the extraordinary suffering on the planet" (Winston & Rothberg 1997: 2). Finally, I will conclude by briefly discussing the views and experiences of several North American Buddhists who communicated with me during the course of this research project. While a few of the participants maintained ongoing conversations with me via e-mail, most simply responded to the questionnaire reproduced in Appendix A.

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4) to provide an open forum on the integration of religion and ecology; and 5) to implement outreach programs that address environmental issues (Yamauchi 1997: 256).

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Stephanie Kaza (1997) offers an excellent discussion of ecological practices at Green Gulch Zen Center and Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Jeff Yamauchi's (1997) article concerning ecological activities at Zen Mountain Centre is also excellent.

Thich Nhat Hanh's Diet for a Mindful Society

Life is filled with suffering, but it is also filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. To suffer is not enough....If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace. Meditation is to be aware of what is going on—in our bodies, our feelings, our minds, and the world. Each day 40,000 children die of hunger....Yet the sunrise is beautiful, and the rose that bloomed this morning along the wall is a miracle. Life is both dreadful and wonderful. To practice meditation is to be in touch with both aspects. Don't think you have to be solemn in order to meditate. To meditate well, you have to smile a lot.

THICH NHAT HANH

Thich Nhat Hanh's[110] work for peace, both in Vietnam and internationally, has attracted the attention of many North Americans wishing to develop a socially engaged spiritual practice.[111] In fact, his teachings practically define engaged Buddhism in the West. Because Hanh believes that the source of a peaceful family and a peaceful world is a peaceful mind (Kraft 1992a" 19), he encourages his students to *begin* transforming the seeds of anger and hatred within their own hearts, before attempting to address serious social problems. Social activists often criticize Hanh's contemplative approach, calling it too simplistic. They mistakenly believe that Hanh seriously underestimates the importance of more concrete forms of social and political action. In fact, Thich Nhat Hanh is simply unwilling to compromise his principled commitment to nonviolence

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Thich is the surname given to all Vietnamese monks, and Nhat Hanh means 'one action' (Kraft 1992a: 17).

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After being refused reentry into Vietnam in 1973, Thich Nhat Hanh took up residence in a small retreat centre called Plum Village in France, where he continues to teach, write, garden, and help refugees worldwide (Hanh 1991: xii). Each year Hanh makes several appearances in North America and has designed workshops and retreats for various groups, including peace workers, environmental activists, therapists, Vietnam veterans and their families, Vietnamese refugees, and children (Kraft 1992a:15).

(Eller 1992: 105). As Hanh frequently explains, peace can never come from actions that are motivated by fear or anger. Thich Thien-Minh, a colleague of Hanh's, explains:

> The techniques of nonviolent action are not nonviolent action itself. They are merely forms of action, not the essence. The essence is love, courage, and the willingness to act. Once we are motivated by love, once we are inspired by love, and when we directly face our problems and difficulties, we shall be creative in our efforts to find forms of action appropriate to a given situation. It is necessary to discuss techniques of nonviolent action, but it is less obvious that, without the inspiration of love and sacrifice, these techniques cannot be successful. They will lack their deeper strength. (quoted in Eller 1992: 106)

Influenced by Theravada as well as Zen, Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes the practice of mindfulness in all of his teachings. Short verses (*gatha*), which are memorized or posted in appropriate locations, are used to prompt individuals to become mindful of the present moment, while cooking, eating, driving, etc. (Kraft 1994: 165). Many of these poems or 'mindfulness verses' are also used as tools for establishing a deeper awareness of our interconnection with the earth.[112] For example, when turning on a water faucet, one might recite the following verse:

Water flows from high in the mountains.
Water runs deep in the Earth.
Miraculously, water comes to us,
and sustains all life.

But perhaps Thich Nhat Hanh's most valuable contribution to engaged Buddhist practice in the West is his popularization of Buddhist ethics (*sila*), specifically the practice of the

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Another beautiful practice described by Thich Nhat Hanh, that also has ecological significance, is the Three Prostrations. I briefly describe this practice in Appendix B.

Five Precepts—no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no consumption of intoxicants. In his book *For a Future to be Possible* (1993), Hanh presents the Buddha's Five Wonderful Precepts in a form that can be practiced by Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike. Although the precepts have undergone extensive rewording, in keeping with the realities of Twentieth Century life, they retain the spirit of the original guidelines offered by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. Thich Nhat Hanh believes the precepts are "medicine for our time," and urges everyone "to practice them as they are presented" in his book, or as they are presented within one's own spiritual tradition (Hanh 1993a: 11). Hanh's enunciation of the Five Precepts follows (ibid.: 3-5):

FIRST PRECEPT
Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

SECOND PRECEPT
Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I vow to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

THIRD PRECEPT
Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I vow to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

FOURTH PRECEPT
Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

FIFTH PRECEPT
Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I vow to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practising mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practising a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

The Buddha spoke of spiritual practice as threefold, consisting of ethics (*sila*), meditation (*samadhi* or 'concentration'), and wisdom (*prajna* or 'insight'). Within this Threefold Training (*trisiksa*), proper ethical conduct is seen as a necessary precondition to the development of meditative calm and deep insight.[113] *Sila* increases one's self-insight and mindfulness (*smrti*), and assists in the purification and transformation of one's nature. In the West, it seems, this valuable aspect of the *trisiksa* has largely been overlooked in the

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While *sila* (ethical training) is frequently described as the first *phase* of spiritual practice or the necessary *pre*condition to the development of *samadhi* (meditative calm or concentration) and *prajna* (wisdom or insight), ethical training, if approached from a state of mindful awareness, can lead directly to concentration and insight, which in turn can lead to improved ethical conduct. In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, "Precepts, concentration, and insight 'inter-are.'....It is impossible to speak of one without the other two" (Hanh 1993: 8).

presence of more appealing practices such as vipassana meditation, zazen, etc. With the emergence of an engaged Buddhist movement, however, more and more North Americans are beginning to discover the value of ethical training, both as a means for cultivating mindfulness and transforming consciousness, and as a tool for social change (Batchelor 1996: 243).

The Buddhist Precepts are far from the rigid moral absolutes adhered to in the Christian tradition. This is because *sila*, which Thich Nhat Hanh frequently refers to as 'mindfulness training,' incorporates in its meaning 'training in the direction of.' According to Hanh, the precepts are actually impossible to keep. "Even if we take pride in being vegetarian," he explains, "...we have to acknowledge that the water in which we boil our vegetables contains many tiny microorganisms" (Hanh 1993: 16). Each precept is a 'north star' to which we aspire, and our task is simply to practice in the *direction* of the star (ibid.). Approaching the precepts from a state of mindful awareness, rather than dogmatically, is essential to realizing the deeper benefits of the practice. Buddhism teaches that an individual's behaviour is intricately connected to his or her level of awareness. An enlightened individual will, therefore, naturally express the precepts perfectly.[114] Thus, by cultivating mindful awareness and transforming behavioural

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Chaudhuri describes the spiritually liberated individual as "supra-ethical" in that "he is now by his nature incapable of doing anything harmful to human welfare. He serves society or humanity without any self-righteous feeling or any trace of egocentricity. Even his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing by way of helping others. He performs virtuous actions not out of any inner compulsion, nor out of any sense of moral obligation, nor out of longing for meritorious action. He performs virtue unconsciously out of the free spontaneity of his integrated nature. He does good to others, not because he has to, but because he takes pleasure in doing so. The practice of virtue is with him the free outpouring of the self, the

patterns we prepare the conditions for enlightened awareness. On a more practical level, the practice of the precepts helps us to become aware of the impact of our actions (and non-actions) on other people, other species, and our environment. We begin to see "that by refraining from doing 'this,' we prevent 'that' from happening....and we avoid doing harm to ourselves and others" (ibid.: 8).

Few would doubt the transformative potential of the Five Precepts within the life of a dedicated practitioner. But what of the society as a whole? In the face of massive violence, widespread poverty, and ecological disaster, what difference would the ethical practice of a few individuals, even a few thousand individuals, really make to the underlying social and economic structures that continually serve to entrench these existing predicaments? Current social and environmental problems are such that the very structure of society must be challenged and transformed if meaningful changes are to occur. While this is an important point, and one that many social activists would be inclined to make, I disagree with the underlying assumption that the Five Precepts have relevance only within the private sphere. I believe, like Patricia Marx Ellsberg (1996: 242) that the precepts "can be of utmost social relevance." It is not only individuals who must be held accountable for their behaviours, but entire institutions, nations, and corporations. "It is essential," explains Ellsberg, "that we end the double standard that exists between public and private morality....We must act individually and together to

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unmotivated self-giving of the inner spirit, like the shining of the sun or the blossoming of the flower" (Chaudhuri 1974: 24).

prevent the government that represents us from supporting mass murder and terrorism, stealing, lying, supporting drug traffickers, and raping the Earth" (ibid.). Individuals can begin by challenging local governments and businesses to uphold the same ethical standards that they uphold for themselves. In time, some of these institutions may even decide to adopt the Five Precepts, or some similar code, as a guide for ethical behaviour. With some consistent nudging from a few (or a few thousand) individuals, I believe significant changes could be made to underlying social structures. Perhaps, sometime in the (distant) future, even Ellsberg's musings may become a reality:

> ...imagine a world in which individuals and institutions alike act with compassion and loving kindness, where governments as well as the citizens they serve are mindful, cultivate a healthy environment, and truly protect the lives of people, animals, and plants....What if our President's policies conformed to Buddhist principles, Americans pledged allegiance to the Five Precepts as well as the flag, and we celebrated Interdependence Day along with the Fourth of July? Such thoughts inspire me a Buddha smile. (ibid.)

The Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE)

Responding to the calls of many engaged Buddhists who were seeking a more concrete expression of social engagement in their lives, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship[115] formed

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The Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), which is based in Berkeley, California, is an organization that provides an umbrella for most forms of Buddhist engagement in North America (Kraft 1992a: 23). Since its origin in 1978 the Buddhist Peace Fellowship has developed nearly 50 chapters, contact persons, and affiliates in the United States, Canada, Asia, Australia, and Europe. BPF cooperates closely with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), co-founded by Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand. Work that BPF has sponsored in the past includes: participation in vigils, demonstrations and letter writing campaigns; work with refugees from struggling countries; supporting Buddhist prisoners; developing resources and guidelines to address issues of abuse within Buddhist communities; and Buddhist social analysis, addressing questions of class, gender, and race (Buddhist Peace Fellowship 1998).

the first pilot program of the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) in the San Francisco Bay Area (Winston & Rothberg 1997: 2). The inspiration for BASE came from the existence of many faith based service communities and programs around the world, particularly the Catholic Workers movement, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and Christian base communities in Asia and Latin America. BASE provides a community structure for a group of volunteers to spend six months together, immersed in intensive Buddhist practice, while committing 15-30 hours a week to some form of social change work or community service. The program includes ongoing study, mentorship, retreat time, and dialogue around issues of socially engaged Buddhism (Buddhist Peace Fellowship 1998).

Since its emergence in 1995, BASE has expanded to include programs in several geographic locations in the United States, including Arcata and Santa Cruz (California), Durham (North Carolina), Colorado, and Massachusetts (Buddhist Peace Fellowship 1998; BASE 1998). Individuals or groups interested in forming new BASE communities are encouraged to do so with the support of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and the BASE pilot project in the San Francisco Bay Area. BPF has also published a small handbook to facilitate the formation of new groups.[116] Although each BASE community is structured somewhat differently, depending on the needs of the particular community and the type of service work members are engaged in, all are committed to creating a bridge between

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This handbook which is entitled, *A Handbook for the Creation of the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE)*, is available upon request from: Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Box 4650 Berkeley, CA 94704, USA.

formal spiritual practice and community social action. BASE has outlined five principles intended to guide the development of all BASE communities and ensure that a successful bridge is forged between social action and formal practice. The five principles, as described in the BASE handbook and brochure, are as follows (Winston et al. 1997: 4; BASE 1998):

1) *Service/Social Action* (*seva*): The heart of BASE is engaging suffering directly. BASE participants work or volunteer in social service or social action organizations including hospices, prisons, soup kitchens and environmental groups. BASE can provide volunteer placements that match a participant's background, skills, and interests with the needs of a particular organization.

2) *Wisdom/Training* (*panna*): BASE provides an opportunity to explore political, social, and environmental problems through group training in "Buddhist activism." As a group, participants explore the questions that arise from service/social action and their relation to Buddhist teachings and practice. The training program includes: monthly retreats of one to three days; mentorship with local Buddhist activists; and one or two weekly gatherings for meditation, study and discussion.

3) *Dharma Practice* (*samadhi*): In BASE there is a commitment to deepening Buddhist practice while participating in social change work. These two are not separable. The insights which arise through practice can lead to deeper understanding as one works to address the suffering of the planet. BASE participants meditate together in meetings and during longer retreat periods and examine how to bring Buddhist teachings and practice into daily life.

4) *Community* (*sangha*): Ongoing work for change cannot happen without support. BASE is rooted in a community of shared purpose. Its hope is to create a growing national and international network of Buddhist-based activists working for change who are connected with each other and with local support communities. Many BASE groups continue to meet after the initial six months. In the Bay Area monthly community retreats bring together past participants of local BASE groups. A newsletter, *Touching BASE* , also networks BASE alumni wherever they are.

5) *Commitment* (*adhitthana*): To be a part of BASE, one must take on BASE as a primary commitment for the allotted period of time, typically six months, much in the same way one commits to spiritual practice. Such a commitment of time and intention allows participants to enter deeply into service, practice, and community.

Attention to group dynamics has been key to the success of all BASE communities. Members are encouraged to approach group gatherings as a special kind of 'practice' in communication and interpersonal interaction. Maintaining mindfulness at gatherings helps to ease emotionally charged differences between participants, as well as helps improve the quality of communication. Given that social activism frequently occurs in the context of groups consumed with interpersonal conflict and dysfunctional behaviour, attention to group processes seems particularly relevant (Winston et al. 1997: 14). Having "a group that is more 'conscious' about the life of the members can provide a valuable model about what is possible in groups" (ibid.) To help foster an environment of trust and openness, BASE also recommends that group sessions begin with periods of sitting meditation (typically 20-30 minutes), followed by "check-ins" with individual participants (ibid.: 12). In addition, the BASE program has found that group participation in retreats, lasting between one and three days, is "especially precious in the development of BASE groups, providing opportunities for considerable depth, learning, and bonding of group members" (ibid.: 17).

Although many aspects of Buddhist practice are contemplated and studied during weekly group gathering, a central theme for most BASE communities is the discussion of Buddhist ethical principles. Particular attention is given to Thich Nhat Hanh's articulation of the Five Precepts, and the fourteen ethical guidelines of the Order of

Interbeing[117] (see Appendix C for a listing of the Fourteen Precepts). Participants are asked to make a commitment to following the precepts for a period of time and to record any insights, questions, or reflections that occur during their practice (Winston et al.: 25). Other themes that are frequently covered during group gatherings include: mindfulness at work and in daily life; working with anger and other difficult emotions; 'hindrances' of the socially engaged Buddhist path; attachment to results; nonviolence; transformation of institutions and social structures and the relation with Buddhist practice; and issues around race, class, gender, and other oppressions (ibid.: 13).

The BASE program offers individuals an excellent opportunity to explore new facets of Buddhist engagement and to learn how to participate effectively within a group setting. The latter is particularly important for those currently working with (or intending to work with) existing environmental and social activist organizations. When sufficient attention is given to creating a conscious environment at group meetings, more energy is freed for the important work of planning and implementing social programs and activist strategies. Individuals and groups committed to establishing their own BASE communities, and who wish to focus on a specific issue, such as environmental protection, may do so with the assistance of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Such a group may continue to meet after

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The Order of Interbeing, or Tiep Hien Order, was founded by Thich Nhat Hanh in 1965 during the Vietnam war. For years, this community of activist-practitioners worked tirelessly to help alleviate the terrible suffering experienced by everyone during the war (King 1996: 323). From its inception, the Order was comprised of all four membership categories of the original Buddhist community (*sangha*). The Order of Interbeing continues to thrive today as an international Buddhist community of laywomen, laymen, monks, and nuns (Hanh 1993b: vii).

the initial six month period and choose to establish itself as a permanent engaged Buddhist environmental group.[118] I believe BASE has succeeded in developing a very practical and elegant model for engaged Buddhism in the West. Certainly not everyone will find its emphasis on service and social activism appealing, preferring a more quietistic approach. But for those who feel compelled to respond directly to the suffering in the world, BASE can provide a solid foundation for developing a socially engaged practice and an opportunity to network with other like-minded individuals.

Personal Perspectives on Engaged Buddhist Practice

The practice of engaged Buddhism has both a public (etic) and a private (emic) face. Up to this point, I have focussed almost entirely on the public face, discussing various manifestations of engaged Buddhism in Asia and North America, and describing particular methods used by Buddhist practitioners to help integrate formal practice and social action. But how is engaged Buddhism experienced by the individual practitioner? What are the personal benefits of a socially engaged practice? Do practitioners feel that

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The recently formed (1998) Buddhist community/environmental organization, Earth Sangha, is an inspiring example of Buddhist ecological engagement. Although it was not influenced by BASE, Earth Sangha offers a potential model for others interested in forming their own Buddhist environmental organization. Earth Sangha's mission, as stated in their website, "is to encourage the practice of Buddhism as an answer to the global environmental crisis, and to do practical conservation work of a kind that expresses the Buddhist ideal of compassion for all beings." Members of the Earth Sangha spiritual community follow the teachings of Korean/Zen Master Po-Hwa Sunin and are deeply committed to their own self-awakening. In order to educate the general public about Buddhism, the Sangha offers regular meditation classes, Dharma study classes, lectures, and various demonstrations. Earth Sangha aspires to involve Buddhists, and non-Buddhists alike, in a number of environmental projects in the United States and in traditional Buddhist societies. The organization is currently involved in the protection of a large watershed which runs along the Potomac River in the United States. For more information about Earth Sangha visit their website at: www.earthsangha.org/

their practice contributes to the wellbeing of the society/world as a whole? And to what extent do engaged Buddhists feel they succeed in establishing a balance between formal practice and service in the world? These questions are particularly important when considering the adequacy of engaged Buddhism as a spiritual path, rather than simply as a means for social transformation[119] (Rothberg 1992: 68). Although it is beyond the scope of this research project to respond adequately to this issue, I hope at least to offer a small glimpse into the private dimension of North American engaged Buddhism.

To obtain information concerning personal experiences with engaged Buddhist practice, a short questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix A) was distributed to various Dharma centres, Buddhist gatherings, and individual practitioners located within the United States and Canada. During the course of my research, I was also fortunate to maintain ongoing e-mail conversations with a few Buddhist practitioners in the United States. Although the number of returned questionnaires was lower than anticipated, I believe sufficient material was assembled to make some general, if tentative, conclusions about engaged

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Donald Rothberg (1992) has outlined several pertinent questions relating to the issue of whether engaged Buddhism constitutes an authentic spiritual path. Those interested in pursuing this particular topic within their own research might find his questions useful: "Can engaged Buddhists (and those interested in socially engaged spirituality more generally) clarify not only spiritually informed social analyses and practices but also full-fledged spiritual paths?; Is 'liberation' of oneself and others still the goal in engaged Buddhism, or is liberation really only for an elite of spiritual 'professionals'?; How can individuals in a secular society, often working long periods of time in relatively non-supportive environments, develop various kinds of communities of support, to help develop and sustain spiritual intentions and practices in everyday life?; How can some of the pioneering engaged Buddhist practices be further integrated into the various forms of daily life in Western (and Westernized) societies, particularly urban and suburban settings?"; "What are the roles of retreats and periods of intensive spiritual practice in a life of social engagement?; What are the special problems for spiritual development of being socially and politically involved?" (ibid.: 69).

Buddhist practice in North America.

A total of fifteen individuals responded to the research questionnaire. Although this number is quite small, the demographic information obtained from the questionnaires indicated that a reasonably wide cross-section of the general public had been reached.[120] Of the fifteen respondents, seven were men and eight were women. Respondents came from all over North America, including two from Canada [British Columbia (1), Ontario (1)] and thirteen from the United States [California (4), Washington State (1), Idaho (1), Texas (1), Georgia (1), Ohio (1), Connecticut (1), and New York (3)]. The majority of respondents (a total of nine) were either members of the Order of Interbeing or were students of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Of the remaining six, four were students of Nichiren Buddhism and were members of the US branch of Soka Gakkai International (SGI-USA). One respondent studied an unspecified form of Zen, and the last was a practitioner of vipassana meditation. Respondents varied considerably with respect to both age and experience. Years of experience ranged from 2 to 28 years, the average being 8 years; and ages ranged between 22 and 64 years, with an average of 46.7 years.

Although each person offered a unique perspective concerning his or her personal experiences with engaged Buddhism, several underlying themes began to emerge. Everyone felt that their practice had helped them achieve positive changes in their lives.

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This, however, does not indicate that the research sample is representative of the larger population of engaged Buddhist practitioners in North America.

While the degree of change varied considerably, all discussed an improved (if imperfect) ability to respond calmly in stressful situations. As one individual shared: "it is the practice that keeps me calm, focussed, and otherwise able to deal with the vicissitudes of life. I can't imagine not practising; it is essential to my mental and emotional wellbeing." Another individual who admitted that he was usually not "very calm about most things," suspected that without his practice "things would be worse still." Another added that he is now "able to receive stimulus (traffic jams, or reviewer rejections) with more equanimity and detachment, rather than just reacting automatically without being mindful."

Several individuals expressed a deep gratitude for their spiritual practice, believing it had helped them through various personal traumas. One person shared that his practice had offered him tremendous support while dealing with his wife's recent death: "I truly experienced the loss, felt the pain without turning away. It might sound strange, but I never felt so alive as when I dealt with my wife's death." Another remarkable story was told by a practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism who experienced a profound personal healing as a result of his spiritual practice:

> *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is certainly an awesome practice that has benefited lots of people immensely. My own experience has been with a really nasty mental illness....My life has been an almost constant battle against depression including, at times, suicidal urges. Although I still have some emotional troubles, they are trivial compared with the way they used to be....In the process of healing my mental illness, I went through a period of deep grieving (it was the suppression of this grief that had made me ill in the first place). But even through this process I was able to maintain a stability and awareness that there was nothing wrong with my grief and anger. I understood them to

> be perfectly healthy responses to the suffering in the world (but I was carrying around an immense load from a lifetime of repression and denial). I take it as a benefit of my practice that I was able to honour and let myself feel my pain and anger, thus liberating my natural healing process.

Another common theme emerging from the questionnaires concerned the issue of Buddhist social engagement. Although respondent's varied considerably with respect to the level of social activity expressed, all eagerly supported direct involvement with the pressing issues of the day.[121] As one individual explained: "The first tenet of Buddhism is about suffering and the possibility of relieving suffering, and as a Buddhist, I vow daily to relieve all suffering, to heal myself and others. Though I know this is a controversial view, nothing seems more direct or relevant to me than the relationship between my own vow to relieve all suffering and the work of social engagement." Of the fifteen respondents, about half were very socially active. These individuals discussed various forms of social involvement, including: demonstrating and committing nonviolent civil disobedience to protest nuclear weapons; teaching meditation to prisoners; working with the homeless; volunteering at a rape crisis centre; involvement with various ecological, political, and animal rights groups; and educating people about organic gardening. The other respondents discussed more 'private' forms of social engagement, such as: attention to waste and recycling; becoming vegetarian; being courteous to the elderly; attention to choosing ethical employment (Right Livelihood); chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* (SGI

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I did not detect a correlation between lineage of Buddhism practised and respondents' level of social engagement.

members believe this practice helps to spread world peace); buying organic produce; and making socially responsible consumer choices.

Although a large proportion of respondents indicated that they were deeply engaged in various forms of social activity, the comments of two individuals (the first a member of SGI-USA and the second a student of Thich Nhat Hanh), suggest that social engagement is more of an *ideal* than a reality for most engaged Buddhists:

> Well I guess I should mention that I'm not your 'typical' SGI member and have...taken it upon myself to develop the engaged aspect of Nichiren Buddhism far beyond the current norm in SGI-USA. Social engagement is actually in accordance with the teachings, which state that anyone can transform her environment through determined action. I am very dissatisfied with the level of social responsibility shown by most other members and have vowed to set an example for others. The international president, Ikeda Daisaku, has written that this is the only way things will change, but not many people have caught on yet.
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> One tendency I see is to 'privatize' Thich Nhat Hanh's practice by limiting it to one's own life, family, friends, Sangha, and shying away from taking risks that could affect one's livelihood or health (ie. by confronting police brutality or doing more than writing letters etc.).

Expressing his frustration concerning the lack of social engagement within the Buddhist community as a whole, another respondent made the following comment:

> I wish more Buddhists would become socially engaged. Since the 1960s we have been living in a climate of the 'me generation' with the accent on materialism and personal happiness. These days many here in California are turning to Buddhism after discovering emptiness from self-satisfaction. Yet most continue to seek some private personal enlightenment and fail to translate their practice into social activism. The socially engaged Buddhist movement is too splintered to be effective—needs more central organization, meetings, projects, etc.

To what extent, then, do formal Buddhist teachings encourage individuals to extend their awareness to the society at large? Perhaps Buddhists who express a high level of social engagement do so only because they were socially committed prior to their contact with Buddhism. While this might be true to a certain extent, the questionnaires indicated a much more direct relationship between Buddhist practice and social engagement. Although many individuals described prior involvement with social and political issues, most maintained that their spiritual practice is what helps to sustain them in their work:

> Although I had a strong sense of justice before I started practising Buddhism (I was about sixteen at the time), I lacked strength and didn't know what to do. It is through my practice of Buddhism that I developed my activism....As my practice developed I became more immediately aware of people's suffering and especially my part in sustaining it through my participation in US culture....My Buddhist practice has been central in enabling me to develop the clarity, strength, and courage to take action based on my convictions, and to know that those whom I oppose are as human as I am—just very deeply hurt.

A few individuals explained that their spiritual practice had succeeded in rekindling an earlier interest in social activism: "For many years I felt I could no longer tolerate injustice and felt helpless in doing anything to prevent it. Consequently, I disengaged from social activism more and more....However, as a result of the greater equanimity I have gained from my practice, I eventually began to re-engage socially with a greater spirit....Now, because of my increased compassion, I can open myself to others' suffering without internalizing all of its negative aspects."

Although the current discussion has been based on the experiences of only a few individuals, the various testimonials seem to confirm the value of a socially engaged

Buddhism, both as a means for personal healing and transformation, and as a tool for social change. Critics of engaged Buddhism have frequently challenged the *spiritual* efficacy of a socially engaged spiritual path, positing that engaged Buddhists (particularly those in North America) would be likely to compromise the goal of spiritual transformation for the desire to create positive changes in the world (Eller 1992: 104). The results of the research questionnaire, however, failed to support such a premise. All participants expressed a very deep commitment to formal spiritual practices. Several of the research participants did, however, express a concern that the *social* aspect of engaged Buddhism was currently under-developed, and called for a much deeper commitment to social engagement. While such concerns may be valid, I believe it is important not to dismiss the efforts of engaged Buddhists who participate in more private forms of social action, such as recycling, making socially responsible consumer choices, even praying for world peace. Perhaps, as one research participant previously indicated, a lack of organization and central planning within the engaged Buddhist movement has left many socially concerned Buddhists without a platform for more direct forms of social engagement. If this is the case, engaged Buddhists in leadership positions may wish to organize more opportunities for group action. It is also possible, however, that for some engaged Buddhists a more quietistic approach is appropriate. Either way I believe it is important to honour the efforts of all those seeking to uplift humanity and heal the earth, regardless of how large or small each individual's contribution may at first appear.

Chapter 4

Engaged Buddhism, Integral Ecology, and the Prospect of Ecological Healing

A basic tenet of engaged Buddhism is that—whatever one's intentions—it is not possible to follow a spiritual path in a social or political or environmental vacuum. While practicing mindfulness in daily life, even while meditating in a meditation hall, one's actions and nonactions continue to have wider repercussions. Sometimes, to our dismay, we realize that we are reinforcing large systems based on privilege and ecological blindness. There is no such thing as a karma-free zone.

KENNETH KRAFT

A fundamental insight of engaged Buddhism, to repeat the words of Kenneth Kraft, is that human beings simply cannot "follow a spiritual path in a social or political or environmental vacuum" (Kraft 1997: 275). Engaged Buddhists certainly recognize that suffering is ultimately rooted in the hearts and mind of individuals, and yet they insist it is not enough to speak merely of the 'internal' causes of suffering (greed, hatred, and delusion). Socioeconomic structures that serve to perpetuate violence, poverty, and ecological degradation are also a significant source of suffering (Rothberg 1993a: 123). So while the form and intensity of sociopolitical involvement certainly varies, as we have seen, engaged Buddhists around the world all share a commitment to integrating formal spiritual practices (such as meditation and mindfulness practice), with attention to the pressing issues of the day.

In Part One of this work I suggested that current forms of engaged Buddhist practice in Asia and North America could offer environmentalists a very practical model for an 'integral' ecology, consistent with Ken Wilber's "all level; all quadrant" theoretical approach. Assuming that both the 'inner' (emotional, psychological) and 'outer' (pollution, species extinction etc.) dimensions of the global crisis can be successfully addressed, an ecologically engaged Buddhism could prove to be a very effective tool for environmental healing.[122] Indeed, I believe that anything short of such an integral approach would ultimately fail to establish lasting positive changes in the world. It is true that, historically, Buddhism has tended to favour what Ken Wilber describes as the interior ascending (Left Hand) path. But as discussed in Chapter 2, the tradition is certainly not without precedents for a socially and politically responsive spiritual practice.[123]

In this final chapter, engaged Buddhism and the 'integral' approach in general will be examined in the light of the specific issue of social and environmental healing. I will begin by briefly comparing the engaged Buddhist movements discussed in Chapter 3, in order to discern cultural and socioeconomic factors that may affect the development and

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Again, I should point out that while contemporary engaged Buddhist efforts tend to address environmental issues only within a much broader framework of social concerns, current approaches could easily be adapted to suit the priorities of environmental activists.

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The Right Hand (descending) path (or what Alan Sponberg describes as the 'relational' dimension of the teachings) is, of course, most clearly reflected in the tradition's emphasis on compassionate care for all beings (inspired by the Buddha's decision to remain in service to the world after he had attained enlightenment).

success of engaged Buddhism within various social and cultural contexts. Several issues and concerns relating to current trends within engaged Buddhist circles, which may serve to undermine the movement's potential as an agent for social change and environmental healing, will also be discussed. Finally, I will bring this work to a close by offering some general thoughts and conclusions concerning the prospects for an 'integral' ecology within the contemporary environmental movement, and the promise of global environmental healing.

4.1 A Brief Comparative Analysis of Buddhist Engagement in Asia and North America

For engaged Buddhists, and perhaps all Buddhists, compassionate action is not merely the spontaneous outpouring of a saint or bodhisattva, nor is it simply a means of attaining personal liberation (traditionally the 'path of action' or karma yoga). Compassionate action and social service are, in fact, *integral* to the highest spiritual goal, which is to liberate all beings from suffering (Chaudhuri 1974: 76). The concept of collective liberation in Buddhism is, of course, known as the bodhisattva ideal, and is the cornerstone of Mahayana Buddhism (ibid.: 44). Yet, even within Mahayana Buddhism, very little, if any, attention has been given to describing the types of technologies, sociopolitical systems and physical infrastructures required to support a consciously mature humanity. But as Ken Wilber points out, this neglect of the social dimension (Lower Right quadrant) is actually fairly common among the spiritually inclined:

> Many individuals intuit the Over-Soul (or higher) and yet unpack that intuition, interpret that intuition, in terms merely or solely of the Higher Self, the Inner Voice, ...transcendental Consciousness, or similar such Upper-Left quadrant terms. And however true that aspect of the intuition is, this unpacking leaves out, or seriously diminishes, the 'we' and the 'it' dimensions. It leaves out the social and cultural and objective manifestations: it fails to give a seamless account of the types of community and social service and cultural activity that are inherently demanded by a higher Self; it ignores or neglects the changes in the techno-economic infrastructures that support each and every type of embodied self (whether higher or lower or anything in between); it ignores the overall objective state of affairs or objective reality that does not *detract* from the Self but is an unavoidable aspect of that Self's very manifestation" (Wilber 1995: 496).

Interestingly, most engaged Buddhists see themselves as restoring a balance to a Buddhist tradition, they believe, has become over-spiritualized and world-negating (Queen & King 1996: 410). And yet, to what extent do current expressions of engaged Buddhism actually reflect a more balanced (or 'integral') form of spiritual practice which could contribute to social and environmental healing? As the previous chapter made clear, the relative balance between inner transformational work and social action within Asian and North American forms of engaged Buddhism, varies considerably. In both Sri Lanka and Thailand, the emphasis falls clearly on social action. The work of ecology monks, in particular, lacks any conscious attempt to integrate formal spiritual practices such as meditation and mindfulness practice.[124] While the monks, themselves, are undoubtedly committed to their own spiritual awakening, I am unaware of any attempt to encourage

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The tree ordination ceremony (*buat ton mai*), discussed in Chapter 3, could be understood as a form of spiritual practice. However, its intent is more to generate respect for various forested areas, than it is to initiate a transformation of consciousness in participants.

meditative practices among the lay population. This, however, is mitigated somewhat by the fact that, the majority of Thai males[125] become novices or monks for a period of up to three months, at some point in their lives (Sponsel et al. 1997: 53). Although the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement does incorporate meditation within its programs, the practice tends to play a somewhat secondary and supportive role. According to Ariyaratne, the short periods of meditation at the various *shramadana* camps are intended largely as a reminder that "this movement has a spiritual base and is not just any other rat race" (quoted in Bond 1988: 278). Individuals are certainly free to seek instruction in meditation beyond what is taught in the camps, but as Ariyaratne explains, meditation is not Sarvodaya's first priority (Bond 1988: 278).

In the more highly industrialized countries of Japan, Canada, and the United States, the situation seems to be reversed, with an emphasis instead on inner transformation and meditative practice. Although practitioners in all three countries eagerly support direct involvement with the pressing issues of the day, many seem to limit their engagement to the private realm (at home and at work), trusting that their efforts will create a snowball effect that will eventually lead to the transformation of the society as a whole. The Soka Gakkai movement is somewhat of a paradox since the organization itself is deeply committed to a variety of cultural and social endeavours, including peace and environment education, cultural enrichment activities, domestic politics, and international

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According to Sponsel et al. (1997: 56), there "is no genuine institution of the nun in Thailand, although some women (*mae chii*) renounce the world, shave their heads, wear white robes, and undertake the eight precepts."

diplomacy. Yet, the average member's participation in these activities is fairly minimal. Because engaged Buddhism in North America is not largely organized around a single movement, as it is in Japan and Sri Lanka, it is actually quite difficult to estimate the level of sociopolitical involvement within the engaged Buddhist community as a whole. Still, my own research seems to indicate that committed social involvement remains more of an ideal than a reality for many North American engaged Buddhists. Perhaps, as previously indicated, something as simple as a lack of networking and central planning is the main culprit, leaving many socially concerned Buddhists without a platform for taking more decisive forms of social action.[126]

A more precise means of describing and comparing the forms of engaged Buddhism discussed in Chapter 3, would be to note the relative emphases, given by practitioners, to each of the areas identified in Wilber's four quadrants model (see Figure 5): 1) inner consciousness (Upper Left); behaviour (Upper Right); culture (Lower Left); and social structure (Lower Right). To say, however, that a particular form of engaged Buddhism

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Of course, I do not mean to suggest that Buddhist social engagement in Canada and the United States is entirely limited to more quietistic forms, such as recycling, offering donations to charity, and choosing ethical employment. As the previous chapter should have made clear, many practitioners commit considerable time and effort to more direct forms of social action. Some of the activities mentioned in Chapter 3 include nuclear and environmental protesting, teaching meditation to prisoners, working with the homeless, volunteering at rape crisis centres, and involvement with various ecological, political, and animal rights groups. Organizations like the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the Order of Interbeing, and SGI (both the US and Canadian branches), also organize and sponsor a wide range of cultural, social outreach, and educational programs. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship (founded in 1978) has been particularly active in this regard. Projects have included conflict mediation, nonviolent eco-activist training, the development of the BASE training program, delegations to troubled areas of the world, demonstrations and letter writing campaigns, prison programs (organized through BASE), and work with refugees from struggling countries (Buddhist Peace Fellowship 1998; Kraft 1992a: 23).

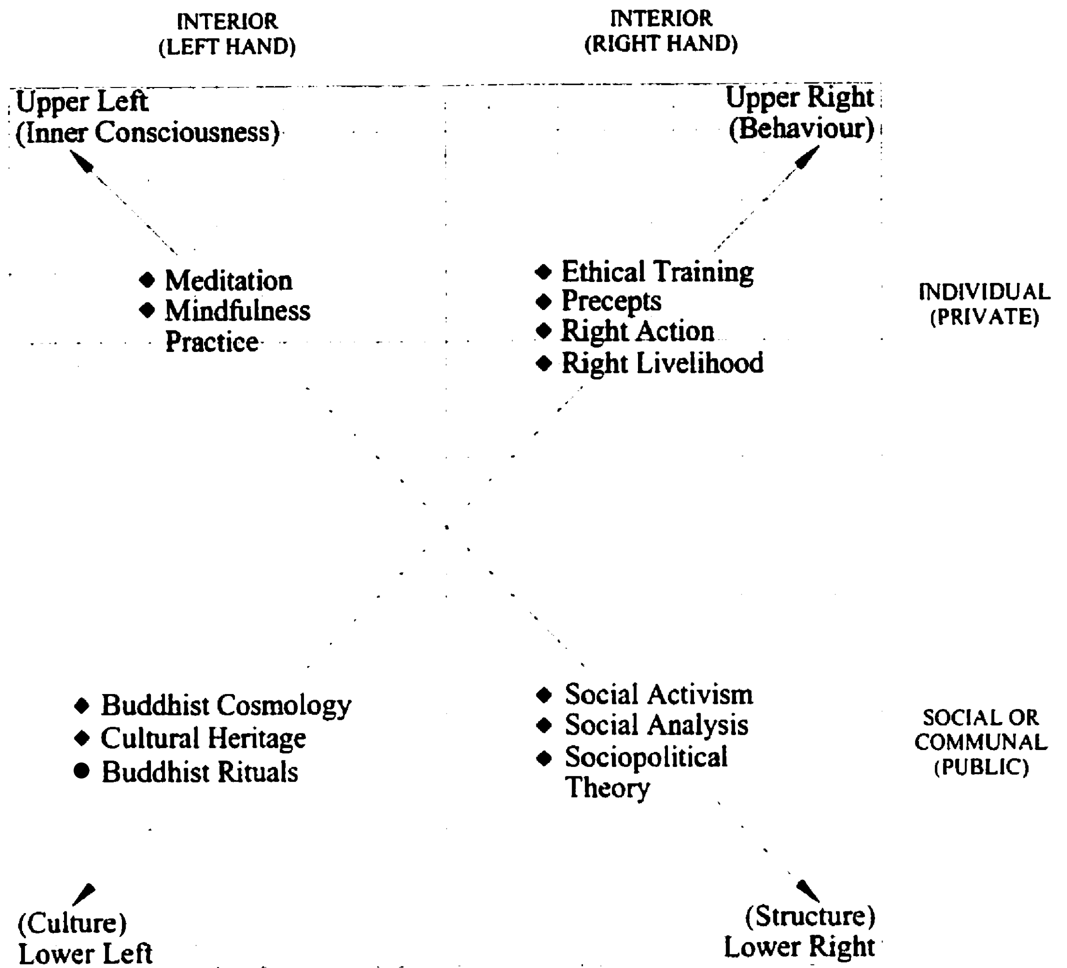

Figure 5: Engaged Buddhism and the Four Quadrants

Adapted from Wilber, Ken, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995, p. 122)

tends to emphasize one quadrant over another, is not to suggest that other quadrants are entirely neglected. Nor is it to imply that a particular form of practice is imbalanced or one sided. Clearly, the relative attention given to each quadrant will necessarily depend on the particular social and cultural context, and the physical, emotional, and psychological condition of the practitioners involved. For instance, in Thailand and Sri Lanka, where individuals are suffering from such immediate problems as poverty, environmental degradation, and the rapid disintegration of their religious and cultural heritage, one would naturally expect engaged Buddhists to focus on restoring pride in traditional values (Lower Left quadrant), and improving social and environmental conditions (Lower Right quadrant). And in Japan and North America, where issues of extreme poverty and environmental degradation are much less an *immediate* threat, it should come as no great surprise that practitioners tend to gravitate towards more private forms of practice, such as meditation (Upper Left quadrant) and ethical training (Upper Right quadrant). In a similar manner, countries with strong cultural and historic ties to the Buddhist tradition, like Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Japan,[127] would be expected to evolve much larger and more powerful engaged Buddhist movements, than would countries like Canada and the United States where Buddhism has only recently begun to

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Although Japan does have a strong historic connection with the Buddhist tradition, Buddhism, for most Japanese today, "is a fossilized and largely irrelevant religion that people turn to only at times of funerals or when they pay a high fee to visit an ancient temple in Kyoto" (Metraux 1996: 394). Many Japanese may be attracted to Buddhism as a result of their country's historic relationship with the religion, but I believe Soka Gakkai's enormous strength and success is more accurately attributed to the movement's impeccable organization and the passionate proselytization of its members (ibid.: 372).

take root.[128]

While I believe that the various patterns of emphasis observed within current forms of engaged Buddhism *are* largely reflective of the particular needs of the communities involved, several important questions and criticisms have been raised by critics who are concerned about current trends within the movement. In the following paragraphs I will address some of the more salient objections discussed within the literature, paying particular attention to the ways in which each may serve to undermine the transformative potential of engaged Buddhist movements around the world. Whether or not these concerns are entirely warranted at this time, all stand as useful reminders to engaged Buddhists everywhere of some potential pitfalls that may be encountered on the road to social and environmental healing.

Divisiveness

A few members within the Buddhist community are concerned that the development of a socially engaged Buddhism could lead to a rift among Buddhists, obscuring the shared goal of spiritual liberation (Jones 1989: 206). The primary fear seems to be that socially

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It is possible that a lack of cultural grounding in Buddhist heritage could seriously impede the development of an effective engaged Buddhist movement in the West. Perhaps, an 'engaged Christianity' would have a much larger social impact. The Christian tradition, however, currently lacks a sufficiently developed 'interior' dimension to contribute to the development of a truly 'integral' social activist movement. My sense is that in the West, engaged Buddhism will gain its strength, instead, through cooperation with many different religious faiths, particularly Christianity. Thich Nhat Hanh, in particular, encourages inter-faith communication, and to this end has established ecumenical Mindfulness Practice Centers in many North American cities.

engaged Buddhists, in their zeal to affect positive changes in the world, may begin to rebuke those who are not socially committed. Although individual engaged Buddhists may be guilty of such intolerance, I believe the movement as a whole currently exhibits both an openness and sincere respect for Buddhists who are less socially inclined. Many engaged Buddhists are, in fact, acutely aware of the dangers of this kind of intolerance[129] and take important measures to ensure that practitioners remain open to a wide range of perspectives.[130] Thich Nhat Hanh, for example, in his formulation of the fourteen ethical guidelines of the Order of Interbeing, has given considerable attention to this issue, devoting the first three precepts to the problem of intolerance to views (Hanh 1993b: 17):

THE FIRST PRECEPT
Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

THE SECOND PRECEPT
Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality

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While still a Board Member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Gary Snyder, urged that nothing "be done within any sangha to give any invidious feelings either way. Not only should it be possible for some members to be peace activists and some not to be, but there should be no feeling that one group feels superior to the other. They should be very open and accepted either way" (quoted in Jones 1989: 206).

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Although the Japanese Soka Gakkai movement does not rebuke Buddhists who are not socially involved, it does exhibit a general intolerance or disregard for other Buddhist sects and practices. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Soka Gakkai's exclusivism stems from a conviction that the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is the only vehicle capable of saving humanity from the terrible grips of *mappo*. It should be noted, however, that while Soka Gakkai continues to insist on the religious and moral superiority of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism, it is currently very open to communicating and working with other religions and other Buddhist organizations when it comes to developing social programs. Having spoken with several SGI members in Canada and the United States, my sense is that the international arm of Soka Gakkai is even more relaxed when it comes to the issue of religious exclusivism. Most members I spoke with seemed quite open to other spiritual teachings, and one even described herself as student of both Nichiren and Tibetan Buddhism.

in yourself and in the world at all times.

THE THIRD PRECEPT
Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

To further protect the integrity of the Buddhist tradition, Ken Jones recommends that engaged Buddhist communities not take up any "official position on social activism or on controversial issues, thereby formally committing" their members to a particular viewpoint (Jones 1989: 206). To do so would not only prove divisive among engaged Buddhists, but it could seriously diminish the transformative potential of the movement as a whole. One need only look to the deep ecology movement, and in particular Earth First!, to observe the dangers of becoming dogmatically bound to a particular theory or form of activism. Ironically, Arne Naess originally envisioned deep ecology as movement capable of establishing a common ground for environmentalists everywhere. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Deep Ecology Platform (DEP) was actually intended as a forum for debate and discussion for both supporters and critics of the movement (Devall 1988: 14). Unfortunately, the eight-point DEP (refer to page 14), which was developed by Naess and George Sessions in 1984, has done more to marginalize environmentalists who disagree with its current wording and content, than it has served to initiate conversation and generate shared understanding. Perhaps if the deep ecology movement, like the Order of Interbeing, had integrated a formal practice of nonattachment to views (see precepts above), Naess' vision for deep ecology may have been more closely realized.

Secularization

There is a concern that the popularization of a socially engaged Buddhism will lead to an excessive watering down of the Dharma, making Buddhism more accessible to the general public, but undermining the spiritual integrity of the tradition (Jones 1989: 207). While this is an understandable concern, it fails to acknowledge the inevitability of the secularization process. In countries, like Thailand and Sri Lanka, where the majority of people are Buddhist, there can be little doubt that much secularization has already occurred.[131] Thich Nhat Hanh discusses two kinds of practice evident within Buddhist countries—devotional and transformational (Hanh 1993a: 179). To practice devotion, what I would describe as a more 'secular' form of practice, is to "rely primarily on the power of another, who may be a buddha or god" (ibid.). In the Christian tradition, this would be likened to placing one's faith in Christ or God. According to Hanh (1993a: 181),

> Many laypeople in Buddhist countries recite, "I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha," but they rely on monks and nuns to practice for them. They support the practising Sangha by offering food, shelter, and other things that help the Sangha succeed in its practice of the Dharma. They feel that the practice of one person living in real happiness brings happiness to many people. This is devotional practice. For these people, to pronounce the words, "I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha" is already enough to have peace and joy.

To practice transformation is, instead, to rely on the fruits of one's own spiritual efforts.

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Also, in Buddhist movements as large as Soka Gakkai, any watering down of the Dharma would be more likely due to the sheer popularity of the movement, rather than be the result of a focus on social engagement.

It is to actively study and apply the Dharma within one's own life, and to commit to the radical transformation of one's own consciousness (ibid.: 179).

Concerns that a focus on *social engagement* will, somehow, contribute to a watering down of Buddhist spiritual teachings, are not only misplaced, given the inevitability of the secularization process, they are simply not supported by current trends within the engaged Buddhist movement. Certainly, there have been reports of activist monks (for instance in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Vietnam[132]), who have resorted to violent means (Rothberg 1993a: 124; King 1996: 326). But these stories are still relatively rare. Indeed, they are entirely unheard of in the West. And even in countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka, where the focus among engaged Buddhists tends to be on social action, rather than inner transformation, the emergence of a socially engaged Buddhism has done more to renew the general public's interest in Buddhist teachings, than it has served to undermine the spiritual integrity of the tradition. In fact, for many villagers living in Sri Lanka, contact with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement may have marked their very first experience with transformative practices, such as *metta* or vipassana meditation (Macy 1983: 77).

Having said this, I do not believe the fear of secularization is entirely unfounded. Indeed,

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Not all activist monks during the Vietnam war expressed the same peaceful attitude and commitment to nonviolence as Thich Nhat Hanh and the other members of the Tiep Hien Order. In fact, the most visibly active group of Buddhist monks during the Vietnam war, known as the Quang pagoda monks, exhibited a considerable amount of anger, particularly as the war progressed (King 1996: 326).

precisely because some secularization is inevitable (particularly as Buddhism gains in popularity), socially engaged Buddhists need to remain alert to its presence, resisting any temptation to minimize the importance of inner spiritual work. In the face of so much suffering, some Buddhist activists may be tempted to devote themselves entirely to service in the world. Perhaps these individuals would describe their social and political activism as a form of karma yoga, or as a "forum for observing the habitual thoughts and behaviors of the narrow self" (Eller 1992: 104). And while this might sound good on paper, it is highly unlikely that individuals who fail to integrate some form of personal meditative practice, will be able to maintain the inner strength and calm necessary to be an effective social activist. For this reason, engaged Buddhists need to be particularly careful not to fall prey to the popular (secular) notion that meditation is somehow selfish or indulgent. As Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa explains (quoted in Rothberg 1993a: 124):

> Without the spiritual dimension...those working socially will burn out. We must have joy, peace, and rest for ourselves, in our families, among our neighbors. If we are to connect ethical norms and social justice, we must have time for spiritual development, time to meditate, time to integrate head and heart, and then time for renewal and retreat several weeks a year, sometimes with teachers who help us and question us. This is why centers of renewal like...Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village, or the centre I myself started, the ecumenical Wongsanit Ashram, are so important.
>
> Without this kind of inquiry and practice, those trying to transform society will be more likely to be greedy, wanting to be big shots, or full of hate, wanting power, or deluded, wanting an impossibly ideal society or being a naive do-gooder. Meditation and critical self-awareness help one to see these questionable motivations or at least to ask oneself: "Am I doing that out of greed or hatred?" even if there is no clear answer.

The Abyss of Tranquillity

Most critics are quick to point out the potential dangers of social engagement, of becoming enmeshed in the world and losing one's spiritual focus. And yet, far fewer warnings have been issued concerning the no less serious danger of spiritual self absorption, what Zen Master Rinzai has described as the "darkest abyss of tranquillity, purity, serenity—this is indeed what one has to shudder at" (quoted in Jones 1989: 203). Like Ken Jones, I believe that for the majority of Buddhists, "the possible seductions of, say, working in the peace movement are surely less than the dangers of becoming spiritually self-obsessed" (Jones 1989: 203). This may be particularly true for Buddhists in North America, given the intense individualism and poor sense of community endemic in the West. Still, in an increasingly violent and confusing world, Buddhists everywhere need to guard against the tendency to use meditation as a form of self medication, as a way of remaining neutral in a world gone slightly mad. Committing to some form of social activity, whether volunteering at a soup kitchen or mowing an elderly neighbour's lawn, may actually serve to safeguard practitioners against such extreme quietistic tendencies, helping them to face the suffering in the world (and in their own hearts) with greater courage and compassion (ibid.).

I do not mean to suggest, however, that more quietistic spiritual approaches are necessarily imbalanced or escapist. Not at all. In fact, socially concerned Buddhists could make a very convincing case for devoting themselves entirely to meditation and the task of personal transformation. When we lament the destruction of our old growth

forests, or see the emaciated body of child, should we assume that the solution lies in producing more food or in finding a suitable substitute for wood? No, not really. There is, in fact, plenty of food in the world to go around, and substitutes for wood already abound. It is our own fear, greed, and prejudice that keep us from finding real solutions to these problems. We know this, and yet we continue to invest most of our hope and energy in external solutions and the technology of tomorrow. What the world *really* needs is not more technology, or resources, but "more love and generosity, more kindness and understanding" (Kornfield 1993: 84). Perhaps, as Jack Kornfield explains, the most valuable "thing we can do to help this war-torn and suffering world is to genuinely free ourselves from the greed and fear and divisive views in our own minds, *and then help others to do the same*" (ibid; emphasis added).

For most engaged Buddhists, however, meditation alone is not sufficient. While they agree that the world's tragedies are ultimately rooted in the individual and the energies of attachment, ignorance and fear, they recognize that the violence and greed embedded within modern socioeconomic structures are also a source of tremendous suffering. The very structure of modern institutions needs to be *directly* challenged and transformed for meaningful changes to occur. Ideally, then, meditation and social action need to go hand in hand. In the previous chapter I discussed some of the creative ways engaged Buddhists have attempted to integrate personal and social transformation within their spiritual practice. In spite of such efforts, however, many engaged Buddhists continue to voice frustration with current levels of sociopolitical involvement. In particular, practitioners

have been calling for the development of more effective social analyses and activist strategies capable of addressing the structural causes of social and environmental suffering (Woods 1998: 37). While I support the development of Buddhist social analyses,[133] I believe that current calls for their development are somewhat premature. Appropriate analyses and strategies, I believe, will arise over time from the *experiences* of engaged Buddhists working within various social and cultural contexts. And because the sociopolitical dimension of Buddhism is still in its infancy, a comprehensive Buddhist social teaching is unlikely to emerge for several decades. Even still, contrary to the hopes of many socially engaged Buddhists, social analysis and transformation may continue to be only of secondary importance within the Buddhist tradition *as a whole*. Spiritual liberation through the radical transformation of human consciousness, has been, and probably always will be, Buddhism's *primary* concern (Jones 1989: 208).

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Donald Rothberg (1992:71), among others, has suggested that engaged Buddhists reexamine and expand upon "some of the traditional psychological systemic analyses, such as those of the Four Noble Truths and Dependent Arising." How, for example, "are desires and aversions, anger and hatred, grasping and greed, violence and fear, and ignorance..., all daily developed, manipulated and exploited within contemporary Western economic, political, and ideological systems?" And in what ways do these systems instead, "promote loving-kindness, openness, generosity, awareness, and wisdom?" (ibid.). See note 77, Chapter 3, for the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement's reinterpretation of the Four Noble Truths.

4.2 CONCLUSION: INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND ITS PROMISE FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

> *Realizing that an enlightened being would be the most skilful in relieving suffering, I was for a time tempted to refrain from serving others until I had attained spiritual freedom. But whether that state would be reached in this life or many down the road was uncertain. Furthermore, I had to admit that it is really impossible to stop acting. As long as we are incarnates, we must act, and our actions will always affect others. Recognizing this, we can, as best as we are able, act for the benefit of all beings, knowing full well that our actions, not being those of a fully enlightened being, are a mixed blessing for others.*
>
> RAM DASS

Like many who feel compelled to participate actively in the healing of the world, Ram Dass (Dass & Mirabai 1992: 135), on occasion, has seriously questioned the extent to which his actions have contributed to the wellbeing of others. If we care deeply for the world, perhaps the most valuable thing we can do is minimize our impact on others until we have developed sufficient insight to anticipate the myriad consequences of our actions. Perhaps, but as Ram Dass accurately points out, it is actually impossible for human beings to stop acting. Whatever our intentions, our actions and *nonactions* continue to have wider repercussions for those around us. Recognizing this, we can begin to use the light of awareness to help transform behaviours that fail to support life and which serve to reinforce socioeconomic systems based on greed, fear, and ecological blindness (Kraft 1997: 275). Using the precepts (or a similar code of ethics) as a guide for appropriate behaviour and as a tool for cultivating mindful awareness, we can begin to care for the world, even if our actions, "not being those of a fully enlightened being, are a mixed blessing for others" (Dass et al. 1992: 135).

Clearly, even those deeply committed to a spiritual path are not immune to experiencing negative emotions which may cloud one's judgement and cause one to act out of fear or anger, rather than out of compassion for others. This is true even for those who have access to the highest spiritual teachings and practices, and the most qualified spiritual teachers. Similarly, a spiritually based 'integral' ecology will be amply beset with human failings such as delusion, greed, carelessness, conflict, and poor judgement, and will likely encounter many of the same problems (conflict, burnout, violence) experienced by the deep ecology movement and more mainstream environmental groups (Macy 1983: 97). It would be naive to assume that an integral ecology would be somehow free of these very human problems. But by having access to tools such as yoga, meditation, and the Five Precepts, an integral ecology would have the resources to help individuals manage, or overcome, any difficulties or obstacles. Much like the BASE communities discussed in Chapter 3, an 'integral' environmental activist group would also be more inclined to focus on interpersonal issues and develop methods of facilitating and improving communication among its members. Assuming that group meetings do not degenerate into lengthy counselling sessions, attention to group dynamics could free up a considerable amount of energy (usually tied up in conflict and dysfunctional behaviour) for the important work of planning and implementing environmental programs and activist strategies.

Certainly, as the various testimonials discussed in Chapter 3 seem to indicate, a personal spiritual practice can be of tremendous value to social and environmental activists,

sustaining them during times of great stress, and helping them cultivate sufficient clarity and inner strength to take appropriate forms of action. For an integral ecology to be truly *integral*, however, spiritual practice cannot be viewed simply as a practical resource for environmental activists. Meditation and other forms of spiritual practice are also the means by which individuals can begin to inhabit a more compassionate and more earth-honouring worldspace or consciousness. If, as Ken Wilber argues, humanity is simply not sufficiently mature, emotionally and spiritually, to be able to consistently act in an ecologically responsible manner, then a fundamental goal of environmental activism must be to *directly* support the transformation of global consciousness (specifically from preoperational and concrete operational levels of cognitive development to the levels of formal operational and vision-logic consciousness). Certainly, environmental activists need to continue working to change social structures and political policy (Lower Right quadrant). But unless some attention is given to transforming the collective consciousness (Lower Left quadrant), most individuals will lack the appropriate emotional and moral maturity to be able to participate effectively within a more just and ecologically conscious world. It is, therefore, vital that advocates of an integral "all level; all quadrant" approach, find ways to support *others* who wish to commit to their own spiritual development, perhaps by establishing community centres for teaching yoga and meditation (along with environmental workshops) to the public at large.[134]

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It is very important, however, that the teaching of spiritual disciplines (meditation, shamanic activity, yoga, etc.) be undertaken within a safe and supportive environment, by experienced and knowledgeable spiritual teachers. In order to develop a truly 'integral' environmental activism, one must do more than simply dabble in the spiritual arts. Proper guidance, support from fellow practitioners (*sangha*), inner discipline, and commitment to a regular practice, are all necessary ingredients for a successful spiritual practice.

While I wholeheartedly support the development of an integral ecology and believe such an approach could have a powerful healing impact on the global environment, I recognize that it could still take a number of years (even decades) before we begin to see real improvements in such problems as global warming, species extinction, air and water pollution, etc. What this means is that even if the environmental movement were to adopt an integral approach *tomorrow*, we may still have to contend with a number of serious environmental disasters (mass flooding, tornados, drought, etc.), as well as an increased incidence, throughout the world, of environmentally related health problems. While this is hardly encouraging for those seeking to develop a more integral form of environmental activism, it is a potential reality that cannot be overlooked or ignored.[135] And yet, precisely because the future is so uncertain, it is important that environmentalists come prepared with spiritual tools to help themselves and others respond to crises with greater calm, clarity, and compassion. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a regular meditative practice can have a tremendous healing effect, helping individuals to safely release years of repressed anger, fear, and grief, which may be keeping them from responding powerfully to the terrible suffering on the planet.[136] The importance of attending to the inner

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According to a group of American and Russian scientists known as the Millennium Group, dramatic changes in the earth's geophysical environment are already underway. These scientists have reported a change in the location of the magnetic poles, rapid melting of polar ice concentrations, an increase in global volcanic activity, and large scale weather and climactic alterations (Prattis 1999). These changes, they contend, are not reversible and signify that the earth's biosphere is currently adjusting to a new state of equilibrium. If this is true, we can expect to see many dramatic and potentially catastrophic environmental changes in the years and decades to come (ibid.).

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Joanna Macy's (1998) recent book *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (co-authored with Molly Young Brown), provides a practical resource for environmentalists who wish to help others move beyond the pain, grief, and fear which keeps them from dealing realistically with the

dimensions of the global environmental crisis cannot be stressed enough. Indeed, it is only by cleaning up our own inner ecology—cleaning out the mental, emotional, and physical garbage within our own minds and bodies—that we can begin to access our true potential to act meaningfully and courageously for change in the world.

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destruction of the earth's life-support system. The book offers easy-to-use methods for working with groups in ways that could profoundly affect people's outlook and ability to act in the world. Those interested in developing an integral environmental activism may find this book particularly useful and inspiring.

Appendix A

Information and Consent Form for Questionnaire Respondents

I am a graduate student pursuing a masters degree in Anthropology (MA) at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. I am in the process of gathering information about engaged Buddhist practice, particularly as it affects environmental activism and/or the development of ecological awareness. This questionnaire will focus on your thoughts and experiences concerning your current spiritual practice and how it influences and guides your life in general and your involvement in social and environmental issues.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Your choice to participate will require the completion of the attached questionnaire. Please respond only to those questions you feel comfortable answering.

The information you give me will be used solely for the purposes of my research, and will be held in strict confidence. Completed questionnaires will be read only by myself and I will not give out your name or address to anyone, for any reason. I will eliminate any identifying information from my thesis product, and from any research, articles, or books not yet written or published. To further ensure anonymity you may sign this letter of consent with an "X".

This consent form clarifies the nature of my research, your rights as a research participant, and my responsibilities to you as a researcher. Any complaints relating to the nature of the questionnaire and the research process may be communicated to Jacques Chevalier, Chair of the Anthropology and Sociology Department, Carleton University. He can be reached at the following number: (613) 520-2585. The supervisor for this MA thesis is Ian Prattis, Department of Anthropology, Carleton University.

Thank you very much for your time and input.

Kyla J. Stewart
3-591 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1S 3R2

Phone: (613) 237-3034
Email: kstewart@chat.carleton.ca
Send Attachments to: kylajane2@yahoo.com

I ______________________________ agree to participate in Kyla Stewart's study as described to me. I understand that I am free to respond to only those questions I feel comfortable answering, and that I may withdraw from this study at any time. I understand that Kyla Stewart may quote parts of my questionnaire responses in any written material resulting from this study, but that she will do so in a manner that fully conceals my identity.

Signature of Interviewee ____

Signature of Researcher ____

Date: ______________________________

Personal Information

NAME (FOR CORRESPONDENCE PURPOSES)

____

MAILING ADDRESS

____
(Street Address)

____
(Town/City) (Province/State)

____
(Country) (Postal/Zip Code)

PHONE NUMBER (INCLUDE AREA CODE)

____

EMAIL ADDRESS

____

DATE OF BIRTH **GENDER**

______________________________ ______________

PROFESSION

____

YEARS AS A PRACTISING BUDDHIST

____

FORM OF BUDDHISM PRACTISED

____

____

General Questionnaire

1) Please describe your regular spiritual practice (meditation, yoga, chanting, etc).

2) Do you consider yourself an 'engaged' Buddhist? If so, how do you see your personal practice as 'engaged'?

3) What are your beliefs concerning social engagement within the Buddhist tradition? Is it 'inherently' Buddhist to be socially aware or concerned, in your opinion? To what degree do you believe a Buddhist should be socially engaged?

4) If you have been socially active much of your life, and only recently developed an interest in Buddhism, how do you think your approach to social/environmental activism has changed as a result of your spiritual learning and personal practice?

4) If you have been a practising Buddhist for many years and only recently became interested or involved in social and/or environmental issues, could you explain why you decided to become socially involved?

6) Please discuss any social or environmental activity you have been (or currently are) involved in? What type of groups do you work with? How does your spiritual practice affect the kinds of projects you become involved in and the ways in which you approach social and environmental problems?

7) In what ways do you believe your personal spiritual practice affects your approach to your work, your home life, your sanity?

8) Do you think your practice has had an impact on your behaviour? Has it made you more environmentally aware and thus helped you to change environmentally or socially destructive habits?

9) Does your spiritual practice give you greater calm and/or clarity in your daily life? If so, do you think this helps your decision making process during times of crisis or great stress? Please explain.

10) Please discuss any opinions and experiences that were not expressed in response to the above questions, but which you believe could enhance my understanding of *your* personal experience and understanding of engaged Buddhism and Buddhism in general.

Appendix B

The Three Prostrations[*]

"When we feel disconnected with our source of life, with our ancestors, with our traditional values, we begin to wither and become a hungry ghost, going around and looking for something to help us revive, looking for a source of vitality again. Someone who is alienated feels that he or she is a separate entity that has no connection with anyone. There is no real communication between him or her with the sky, with the earth, with other human beings, including his father, her mother, brother, sister and so on. Those who feel cut off like that have to learn how to practise so that they will feel connected again with life, with the source of life that has brought him or her there. The practice of the three prostrations helps you to dissipate that feeling of being cut off. That practice by itself can help bring you into the heart of life and remove all kinds of fear. That practice will help you to see that you are closely connected with everything and everyone" (Hanh 1996a: 1-2).

Contemplate the following while touching the earth with your knees and forehead:

THE FIRST PROSTRATION

The Stream of Life
Touching the earth, I connect with ancestors and descendants of both my spiritual and blood families. My spiritual ancestors include the Buddha, the bodhisattvas, the noble Sangha of the Buddha's disciples, and my own spiritual teachers still alive or already passed away. They are present in me, because they have transmitted to me seeds of peace, wisdom, love, and happiness. They have awakened in me my resource of understanding, and compassion. When I look at my spiritual ancestors, I see those who are perfect in the practice of the precepts, understanding, and compassion, and those who are still imperfect. I accept them all, because I also see shortcomings and weaknesses within myself. Aware that my practice of the precepts is not always perfect, that I am not always understanding and compassionate, I open my

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[*] Text for the Three Prostrations was taken from Thich Nhat Hanh's article, "Loving the Unlovable," printed in *The Mindfulness Bell*, Spring 1996, Issue No. 16, pp. 4-7.

heart and accept all my spiritual descendants. Some of my descendants practice the precepts, understanding, and compassion in ways that invite confidence and respect, but there are others who come across many difficulties and are constantly subject to ups and downs in their practice. In the same way, I accept all my blood ancestors on my mother's and father's sides. I accept their good qualities and virtuous actions, and also their weaknesses. I open my heart and accept all my blood descendants with their good qualities, their talents, and also their weaknesses. My spiritual ancestors and my blood ancestors, my spiritual descendants and my blood descendants are all part of me. I am them and they are me. I do not have a separate self. All of us are part of a wonderful stream of life.

THE SECOND PROSTRATION

The Wonderful Pattern of Life
Touching the earth, I connect with all people and species that are alive at this moment. I am one with the wonderful pattern of life that radiates out in all directions. I see the close connection between myself and others—how we share our happiness and our suffering. I am one with those who are caught in war or oppression. I am one with those who find no happiness in their families, who have no roots or peace of mind, who are hungry for understanding and love and who are looking for something beautiful, wholesome, and true to embrace and believe in. I am someone at the point of death who is very afraid, not knowing what will happen. I am a child who lives in poverty and disease, whose arms and legs are like sticks. I am the manufacturer of bombs that are sold to poor countries. I am the frog swimming in the pond, and I am also the snake that needs the body of the frog to nourish itself. I am the caterpillar or the ant that the bird is looking for to eat, but I am also the bird that is looking for the caterpillar or the ant. I am the forest that is being cut down. I am the river and air that are being polluted, and I am also the one who cuts down the forest and pollutes the river and the air. I see myself in all species, and I see all species in me.

THE THIRD PROSTRATION

Limitless Time and Space
Touching the earth, I let go of my idea that I am this body with a limited life span. I see that this body, made up of the four elements, is not me, and I am not limited by this body. I am part of a stream of life of spiritual and blood ancestors that for thousands of years has been flowing into the present and flows on for thousands of years into the future. I am one with my ancestors. I am one with all people and all species, whether they are peaceful and fearless or suffering and afraid. At this very moment, I am present everywhere on this planet. I am also present in the past and in the future. The disintegration of this body does not touch me, just as when the plum blossom falls, it is not the end of the plum tree. I see myself as a wave on the surface of the ocean. I am in all the other waves, and all the other waves are in me. My nature is water. The appearance and disappearance of my form as a wave does not affect the ocean. My Dharma body and wisdom life are not subject to birth and death. I see myself before my body manifested and after my body disintegrates. I see how I exist everywhere. Seventy or eighty years is not my life span. My life span, like that of a leaf or a Buddha, is limitless. I have gone beyond the idea that I am a body that is separated in space and time from all other forms of life.

Appendix C

The Fourteen Precepts of the Order of Interbeing[**]

THE FIRST PRECEPT

Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

THE SECOND PRECEPT

Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

THE THIRD PRECEPT

Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

THE FOURTH PRECEPT

Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering, including personal contacts, visits, images, and sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.

THE FIFTH PRECEPT

Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.

THE SIXTH PRECEPT

Do not maintain anger or hatred. Learn to penetrate and transform them when they are still seeds in your consciousness. As soon as they arise, turn your attention to your breath in order to see and understand the nature of your anger and hatred and the nature of the persons who have caused you anger and hatred.

[**] Taken from Thich Nhat Hanh's book, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1993: 17-20.

The Seventh Precept

Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. Be in touch with what is wondrous, refreshing, and healing both inside and around you. Plant seeds of joy, peace, and understanding in yourself in order to facilitate the work of transformation in the depths of your consciousness.

The Eighth Precept

Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Ninth Precept

Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things of which you are not sure. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.

The Tenth Precept

Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

The Eleventh Precept

Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Select a vocation that helps realize your ideal of compassion.

The Twelfth Precept

Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and prevent war.

The Thirteenth Precept

Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others, but prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

The Fourteenth Precept

Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. (For brothers and sisters who are not monks and nuns:) Sexual expression should not take place without love and commitment. In sexual relationships, be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.

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