

Social and Cultural Rights in Buddhism

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WE CANNOT ISOLATE THE legal/political/economic level of human rights discourse from the metaphysical level and the sociocultural level.¹ A particular culture's notion of rights is not understandable without understanding what it thinks an individual is, what a society is, in what sort of universe. And it is not evaluable without knowing their social "habits of the heart," in Bellah's nice phrase.² So, I begin with the Buddhist universe, and I will try to convey the essence of Buddhist habits of behavior; only then will I summarize some Buddhist teachings on human society.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that Buddhist elements never had much success in affecting the political/legal/economic level in the highly stratified, hierarchical, premodern Asian civilizations. The principles of human rights were all there in the Buddha's earliest teachings, and he embodied them in the constitution of his *Aryasamgha* "Holy Community" within the society. These principles often influenced the good among monarchs and other individuals to moderate or even temporarily suspend the oppressiveness of existing social practices, but they never led to any sort of institutional democracy until modern times, which only happened then with outside help. Though my scholarship focuses on the Buddhist traditions, I want to avoid the danger of romanticizing the social realities of ancient times, and I do not agree with those advocates of traditional cultures who in my opinion underestimate the unprecedented value of the modern human rights tradition. However, the Western revolutionary trumpeting

of the "rights of man" is not merely the discovery of human dignity, as if no one had ever thought of it before. It can also be seen as a desperate, perhaps ultimately ineffective, band-aid that we moderns, self-styled "homo rationalis," try to plaster over the mortal wound to human dignity inflicted by modernity's metaphysical materialism, psychological reductionism, and nihilistic ethical relativism. From this point of view I can definitely sympathize with those advocates of traditional cultures who feel that modern liberal human rights pietists are missing many important things in their missionary zeal for modernity.

The Buddhist vision of reality in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*³ is supposedly that closest to the Buddhas' own vision. In it there are innumerable, incalculable universes in infinite expanse, all filled with sentient beings, hellions, hungry ghosts, beasts, humans, titans, and the many gods in the desire, form, and formless realm heavens. The Buddhas' opening into omniscient awareness of all this somehow turns into a power of love which becomes light which then solidifies into living bodies which teach — turn the wheel of truth — in whatever way is appropriate to the beings in each realm. Thus, although the Buddhas do not themselves create these universes, they enter all of them in this transforming way, turning them into environments perfectly adapted to the cultivation of sentient beings' evolution, liberation, and enlightenment. The inconceivability is that the Buddhas simultaneously perceive both the ultimate reality of pure bliss, light, emptiness, and freedom and the historical reality of living beings caught in delusion and suffering. The Buddhas' calm and blissful knowledge is thus simultaneously limitlessly energetic interaction with these worlds through appropriate incarnations.

Thus our world is uniquely itself at any moment in history, yet the Buddha-force is omnicompetently present, engaged in our history to see that it becomes our ideal opportunity to develop and to become free. The "turning of the wheel of truth"—teaching—indicates, of course, the limits of the power of that Buddha-force. As the Buddhas are not creator-gods, are not omnipotent in a theistic sense, they cannot simply propel beings into bliss and freedom, like machines. Each being has to earn its own perfection and realize its own bliss by its own merit and its own understanding.

Within the matrix of this optimistic vision, let us turn to our

critical questions. What is an individual being in the Buddhist view? Based on that, what is a society? What is a culture? Based on what these are, what are the individual's rights and responsibilities? And what are the ways of trying to secure them or achieve them?

THE BUDDHIST INDIVIDUAL

A. *Selflessness and Individualism*

The Buddhist "individual," as a living, relative, social, conventional being emerges as the center of the Buddha's Teaching since there is no such thing as an unchanging, ultimate, isolated, intrinsically identifiable "individual." The realization of the ultimate insubstantiality of all possible things coincides with the understanding of all relative things as conditional constructions. According to Buddhist psychology the individual who truly confronts his or her intrinsic lack of identity thereby takes full responsibility for creating his or her living individuality and manifesting it in the interactions of relativity.

Absolute individualism was rejected by the Buddha, and its absence was presented as the ground of a powerful claim of social individualism.⁴ On the social level the doctrine of "selflessness" (*anatmata*) was a powerful critical tool that enabled many persons in those role-ridden, hierarchical ancient societies to awaken to their unique individualities beyond social, cultural, and religious stereotypes. It was also the cornerstone for the society-transforming institutional innovation of monasticism, which effectively created a free space beyond role requirements and social obligations wherein individuals might pursue their self-realization.

The source of the common misunderstanding of this crucial doctrine, and the key to its accurate understanding, lies in the distinction between the "empirical self" (*vyavahārikatma*) and the "absolute self" (*paramarthikatma*). Thus, *selflessness* refers only to the absence of an absolute self in the empirical self. Never and in no way does it deny the existence of empirical selves. Empirical selves change, grow, decay, perfect themselves and destroy themselves, do good and do evil. *Absolute self* is merely an incoherent notion, a misuse of language, that nevertheless is often used to re-

inforce the false idea that growth, change, and transcendence are either impossible or unnecessary. Thus empirical selves become liberated when they critically transcend habitual adherence to their hypothetical absolute selves. And that liberation is simultaneously an assumption of responsibility for their presence in relativity.

B. The Relative, Biological Individual

The Buddha taught that the causality which produced human beings is a process of evolution (karma) from a beginningless past. This evolution is quite mechanical, just like modern biological evolution. Thus, a human being, just as in biology, is the product of an inconceivably long process of evolutionary action and represents an amazing achievement due to a process of successful adaptations.

But there is an immense difference between the Buddhist and the Darwinian evolutionary theory. The Buddhist evolution is not only a physical process. It is also linguistic and mental. Therefore a human being is not just the product of countless previous generations. We are the product of countless previous generations *of our own selfhood*. Therefore the magnificent evolutionary achievement of human embodiment is the individual human being's own personal achievement. Every person has earned his or her own humanity.

The Buddhist "inner scientists" adapted the Indian lineage concept *gotra* to capture this sense of the individual's being literally "self-created" in part.⁵ They described the act of conception of a living being as involving three sets of genes: those of the mother, those of the father, and those of the person being born. This is symbolically expressed in the tantric literature by the image of conception as the union of three drops (*bindu*): the red drop of the mother mingles with the white drop of the father and then the blue drop of the child unites with them both.⁶

By the same token, according to the theory, the mental, verbal, and physical actions committed by a human being shape the spiritual gene they take with them through death into their own next individual generation. No god or nation can damn or save them, and they cannot count on an automatic anesthesia after death. They are thoroughly embedded in an endless relativity of

causes and effects, and they must take responsibility first of all for their own destinies.

This biological theory of the Buddha's, while hotly disputed by both theists and atheists, provides a metaphysical base for a responsible individualism. One cannot belong totally to one's parents, tribe, nation, or even culture. One must evaluate every compulsion from family or priest or king in terms of what the actions they demand of him or her will produce by way of effects he or she alone must experience in the future. Not even a god can change those effects.

Hence if the orders of the god through the priest, or of the king through the general, conflict with my own understanding of what I should do, I am rationally serving my self-interest by obeying the evolutionary causal (karmic) law, expressed as moral injunctions, instead of the social or political regulations. The theory describes in great detail how one comes to be human, rising up from the wretched states of hells, the grotesque limbo hunger realms of the *pretas*, the vicious realms of the beasts, the realms of power, jealousy, and violence of the titans, and realms of corrupting pleasures in the lavishly manifold heavens. One's human state was slowly evolved, through transcending aggression by expressing love, transcending greed by expressing generosity, and transcending delusive stupidity by expressing intelligence and wisdom. These are called the three positive mental evolutionary paths. This whole theory is replete with dreadfully vivid depictions of actual results of actions in experiential states which, if contemplated by the imaginative, generate a healthy terror that energizes compliance with these evolutionary laws.⁷ This terror and this ambition become the motivating drives for enlightenment, which itself is actually the tenth positive path, that of cultivating intelligence or wisdom to the transcendent degree. And one finds that the Buddha's *dharma* teaches that the supreme value of the human life lies in its closeness to enlightenment; hence its supreme use is in the quest of enlightenment. Evolution can be negative as well as positive, descent as well as ascent, so human life can be wasted by living for the aims of this life only, as one can throw away a diamond. The terror of experiencing another hellish devolution thus becomes a powerful motive for self-transcendence.

In sum, the individual human who possesses rights is pre-

sented as a spiritual as well as physical being of unique accomplishments and valuable opportunities. We have earned our rights through suffering and transcending egotism in the sea of evolution, and no one can deprive us of them, since no one conferred them upon us. Societies cease to be truly human when they cease to acknowledge that each individual's fulfillment is the purpose of the whole. And humans are free also to give away their rights in furtherance of the fulfillment of others. Indeed it is by the supreme generosity of giving even one's life that one evolved into a human out of lower forms. Thus talk of rights quickly passes over into talk of responsibilities, as the self-fulfilled (that is, enlightened as to selflessness) individual automatically wills to share that happiness of release with others by aiding them in their own quest of enlightenment. Morality becomes a matter of evolutionary causality, reason and enlightened will having come into harmony, and there is no longer need of unreasoned obedience or rational expedience.

THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

The Buddha was clearly rejecting his own society when he renounced his family and throne and departed to attain enlightenment. The society that places its collective interest ahead of the interests of its individuals is considered not helpful to human beings in achieving their real purposes. But the Buddha, after enlightenment, returned to his society and instituted key changes that made it truly beneficial to its members, making it recognize their individual interests as its paramount concern. Therefore, there are societies that are worthwhile from a Buddhist perspective.

The major change here was the Buddha's introduction of the institution of monasticism, the transcendentalist, educational institution *par excellence*. Monasticism institutionalizes the development of individuals toward freedom and enlightenment. Production or service for the good of society on whatever level is secondary. The jewel of a Buddhist society's institutions therefore is one which serves no utilitarian purpose for the collective as a whole.⁸ Thus, in theory, a society wherein all lay men and women were ordained in the Buddhist precepts would itself become an

instance of the Community Jewel, an object of worship of humans and gods. Such has never been the case throughout the history of Buddhism in Asia, however. So the Buddhist community and the larger society were always in tension, sometimes creative and balanced, sometimes out of balance and destructive.

In considering the problem of culture in Asia there is a similar dualism from the Buddhist perspective. From the most general point of view human culture is an essential attribute of humanity, a great karmic evolutionary good which sentient beings gain along with their human embodiment. Combining ideologies, languages, habitual forms of perception and behavior, culture allows individual humans to interact much more intimately and widely than other animals. Language is especially valued, in that it enables communication and sharing of understanding over space and through generations in time.

In a sense, Sanskrit *dharma* can be translated "culture," as it can mean "that which holds" ideas or actions in meaningful patterns. The pre-Buddhist meaning of *dharma* was along those lines, conveyed as "pattern of being — phenomenon," "thing," "law," "tradition," "duty," "custom," "principle," "religion," and so forth. Actually, Buddha was radical in his rebellion against the *dharma* of his day, the *dharma* of his race, class, ritual duties, ideologies. Therefore, a "culture" that holds humans in patterns of ignorance, conflict, harmful behavior, is rejected from the Buddhist perspective. However, after his enlightenment, the Buddha redefined *dharma* as "teaching," "truth," even "nirvana," the reality that makes freedom and enlightenment possible, that "holds" one safe from suffering. Under this definition, a "culture" that encourages humans to transcend egotism, greed, and harmfulness, and achieve insight and liberation, is itself a primary technique of the Buddha work. Again, in actual Buddhist history, no Asian culture ever became a fully "Buddhist culture." Of all of them, Tibet perhaps came closest, but even it failed, so far — though it was a very instructive failure.

The *Theravada Discipline (Vinaya)* of the monastic orders contains the blueprint of this new transcultural culture. It contains hundreds of rules, moral as well as social, practical rules about economic interactions and rules of etiquette. These rules are designed to restrain by deconditioning negative habits of behavior

and speech, and to encourage transcendence-oriented behavior and speech. Important here were the democratic authority and decision-making structures the Buddha designed, based on his admiration for the republican governing customs of the Shakyas, Vajjians, Licchavis, and other preimperial Indian peoples. As in philosophy, so in legislation for the community, the Buddha elevated reason over authority and individual freedom over hierarchy. In a culture where this institution thrives, the lay society's behavior is automatically affected by the presence of such orders of systematic self-transcenders in its midst. This is where the "habits of the heart," as well as habits of body and tongue, are cultivated.

As for habits of mind, the monastic institution from the beginning focused on intellectual education as well as meditation. The study and recitation of the *Sutras* were major activities of the monks and nuns, which spilled out into the larger society. The monasteries became the first schools open to students from all castes and both sexes. Finally, the intellectual cultivation of *prajñā* ("genius" or "wisdom" or "insight") through systematic education in the *Abhidharma* sciences became central to the monasteries' function.

The Buddha's enlightenment awakened him to the discrepancy between his metaphysical view of the individual and the social capacity of human beings on the one hand, and the ideological confusions and political habits of his contemporaries on the other. Correspondingly, his teachings aimed not only to help the individual transform him- or herself but also were concerned with the methods of the transformation of societies of such individuals. He led a nonviolent revolution by founding his "Holy Community" (*Aryasamgha*) as a distinct social world within the larger society. And he planted other seeds of social evolution through his direct instructions to the laity, inciting trends in ideology, religion, literature, art, and, most importantly, personal "habits of the heart."

ELEMENTS OF A BUDDHIST SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Buddhists never challenged the institution of kingship. Aryasanga, in the *Stages of the Bodhisattva*,⁹ sanctions revolution against a miserly and oppressive king, stating as an exception to the precept

of "not taking the not given" (not stealing) that a bodhisattva must revolt against such a king, deprive him of his hoarded treasury, and share it back out among the people. Yet even here, Aryasanga seems to assume that eventually a just and generous king will take over rule. That the system itself is wrong, as our American founders insisted, never occurs in Buddhist literature, even though the monastic community is structured democratically and the Buddha himself conspicuously praised the parliamentary decision making of the Vajjians.

Having accepted the inevitability of kings and emperors, Buddhists did not stint in giving them advice. The Buddha himself gave advice to Bimbisara, Prasenajit, his father Suddhodhana, Ajatasatru, and other kings of his era. The stone-carved edicts of Emperor Ashoka (third century B.C.E.) reflect extensive advice under the headings of five principles of Buddhist politics: (1) individualistic transcendentalism, (2) nonviolent pacifism, (3) religious pluralism with an educational emphasis, (4) compassionate welfare paternalism, and (5) reliance on a powerful central authority to affirm the rights of individuals over claims of intermediate groups.¹⁰

The next important source of royal advice is the sage Nāgārjuna, whose *Friendly Epistle* and *Jewel Rosary of Royal Advice*, written to the Satavahana King Udayi (second century C.E.) contain far-reaching prescriptions for running the kingdom according to Buddhist principles.¹¹

The fact that the majority of the *Garland* is devoted to transcendent selflessness, the door of the liberation and enlightenment of the individual, is clear evidence that the heart of Buddhist social activism is individualistic transcendentalism. The attainment of nirvana is everyone's ultimate good, and the good of each single person is always more important than any good of any putative whole or collective. Thus, the Individual Vehicle, the Buddha's "original" teaching, remains indispensable, the essence of the Universal Vehicle as well.

The second major strand in Nāgārjuna's *Counsels* is that of self-restraint, which he analyzes as detachment and pacifism. The king will not be able to act selflessly without a basis of intuitive wisdom which understands the critique of the "I" and the "objective self," realizing their ultimate nonexistence and conventional

relativity. Likewise, he will not be able to resist the temptations of consumption, food, possessions, sex, if he does not understand the reality of the objects of his passions. Therefore Nāgārjuna dwells extensively on the timeworn and effective meditation on “unloveliness” (*asubhatva*) to help the king free himself from passion. The themes collected under this principle of *pacifism* — namely, revulsion from lusts, restraint of aggressions, vanity of possessions and power — may seem to lead to a drab puritanism, but here is where Buddhist social action shows its realism, its hard-nosed acceptance of the facts of life, grounding the heroism of transcendent virtue in the effective calmness of a deglamorized awareness.

Next Nāgārjuna turns to the third principle of Buddhist social activism, that of transformative universalism. This is expressed specifically in the complete commitment to a pluralistic, enlightenment-oriented educational effort, considered the major business of the whole nation. The Buddha image is not, as Westerners have assumed, merely an object of devotion. Its main function is inspirational. The Buddha is the image of each individual’s own perfection. Once the image of perfection is everywhere to act as inspiration, there are the actual teachings themselves (*dharma*), the teachings individuals may use to develop and liberate themselves. Finally, to put these teachings into practice, teachers are required, who must also be exemplary practitioners, both of which functions were fulfilled by the monastic communities (*Samgha*).

The fourth principle of Buddhist activism, compassionate socialism, concerns the economic and legal administration of society. Here Nāgārjuna describes a welfare state, millennia ahead of its time, a rule of compassionate socialism based on a psychology of abundance, achieved by generosity. “To dispel the sufferings of children, the elderly, and the sick, please fix farm revenues for doctors and barbers throughout the land” (Nāgārjuna, *Friendly Epistle and Jewel Rosary of Royal Advice*, v. 240). This is a concise description of a socially supported universal health care delivery system. “Please have a kind intelligence and set up hostels, parks, canals, irrigation ponds, rest houses, wells, beds, food, grass, and firewood” (Nāgārjuna, *Friendly Epistle and Jewel Rosary of Royal Advice*, v. 241). A policy of total care of all citizens is plainly recommended, including care for travelers, even strangers passing through, and special shelters for beggars, cripples, and wandering ascetics. He

even recommends that a special custodian be appointed to provide food, water, sugar, and piles of grain to all anthills, caring also for dogs and birds, showing that his ecological concern is wider than just for human society.

These general counsels to the king just give him the broad outlines of an individualistic, transcendentalist, pacifist, universalist, socialist society. The emphasis throughout is on the king's own self-cultivation. We have very little physical evidence as to how successful King Udayi was in enacting these counsels, although the picture of the Southern kingdoms that emerges from sources like the *Gandavyuha* section of the *Flower Ornament*, the non-Sanskrit literatures of South India, the art of Ajanta and Amara-vati, the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, and the Tibetan histories is certainly idyllic. They depict a civilization of wealthy cities, luxurious courts of great sensuous refinement, widespread scholarship and intense asceticism, prosperous farmers and peasants, relatively long-lasting peace and political stability. This picture represents a considerable advance over the India of the Mauryas, reflected in Megasthenes' accounts or in the *Arthaśāstra*.

A third source of Buddhist social thought is a Mahāyāna Scripture called *The Teaching of the Manifestations of Liberative Strategies in the Repertoire of the Bodhisattvas*, a Scripture dating from around the time of Nāgārjuna.¹² This Scripture survives only in Tibetan and Chinese translations.¹³ It develops a fairly thorough picture of good government in the teachings of the sage Satyavadi. Satyavadi's discourse on society begins with a critique of any excessively unequal distribution of wealth as the source of much strife and suffering. Interestingly, the state's right to intervene in the realm of private affairs to forestall bankruptcy or mismanagement is outlined. Most surprising is Satyavadi's discussion of the proper method of conducting a war, most unusual in the Buddhist literature. War should only be for self-defence. There are three stages: before, during, and after. In the first, all diplomatic efforts must be made to avoid bloodshed, through compromises, compensations, even threats and demonstrations. If all fails, then preparations should be made as for an act of self-sacrifice. One should not wage war if the outcome seems hopeless, and one should plan so as to minimize loss of lives on both sides. In the third stage one seeks a swift

resolution, with minimal destruction, and one does not seek to punish the enemy vindictively after victory.

Another Scripture, the *Universal Vehicle Scripture of Kshiti-garbha Bodhisattva, the Ten Wheels of Government*,¹⁴ describes a whole society from the Buddhist point of view. In this Scripture, which some scholars think of as much later in date, the Buddha himself speaks, beginning with the statement that the state is essential to the welfare of individuals, as without it there is chaos. This fits with the well-known myth of origin given in the *Aggannya Sutta*, already so aptly elucidated by Tambiah,¹⁵ where the first king is elected (he is called *Mahasammata*, the "Great Elected One") by popular demand to protect the citizens from one another, from a war of all against all.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that human rights in theory and reality must be investigated in the metaphysical and social realms, as well as in the political. I have sketched the Buddhist vision of reality and the concomitant institutional strategy of addressing the social "habits of the heart." I have acknowledged the failure of either the Buddhist theory or the Buddhist practices of individual and social transformation to transform the political reality of any Asian society in a structural way. And finally I have sketched the social philosophy of the Buddhists, used as principles of counseling rulers in order to make the best of the autocratic systems of government accepted as inevitable. Finally I want to refer to the one nation where Buddhist principles seemed to dominate the ideology, society, and politics up until the modern period, namely, the presently "lost" nation of Tibet.

I have written previously about what I called the "interior modernity" of Tibet.¹⁶ I consider that achievement to have resulted from the application of three out of four of the Buddhist principles for organizing a society. Only the universalism became stunted, due to Tibet's isolation and consequent internal ossification. However, some elements of what Tibet achieved still recommend its case to our attention, since our "exterior modernity" stands in grave

need of balance from an interiority that we could employ without having to succumb wholesale to some kind of traditionalist atavistic worldview.

During the seventh century Tibet emerged as a powerful nation, feared by the T'ang emperors, Bengali and Nepali kings, and other Inner Asian princes. Tibet was the only nation with which the Caliph Harun al-Rashid ever made peace on equal terms, when he was unable to defeat the Tibetan armies in Khotan along the silk route. In the seventh century Songzen Gampo introduced Buddhism over the strenuous objections of his feudal vassals, and it took his dynasty almost two hundred years to build the first monastery. The *dharma* of nonviolence, renunciation, love, and wisdom does not sit well right away with bloodthirsty, tribal warriors. And a nation's support of a monastery, a nonutilitarian sacred space for the individual, is the threshold of its entry into the sphere of Buddhism as a way to enlightenment.

In the tenth through the fourteenth centuries Tibet was slowly monasticized, as the nation's warrior energies turned more and more inward to the conquest of ignorance, lust, and hate. The power of the feudal nobles still remained great, however, and the fortunes of the monastic orders teetered in a precarious balance during conflict with various dynasties and foreign powers, especially the as-yet-untamed Mongols.¹⁷

Then in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries something remarkable happened that did not happen anywhere else on the planet. The monastic, spiritually centered institutions became the secular power. They gradually assumed responsibility for government, took over management of resources, and developed a skillful bureaucracy. During these same centuries in northern Europe, the merchant classes backed secular kings to suppress the feudal nobles; the Protestant ideology destroyed the role of the monasteries by making "interior industry" irrelevant to a predetermined salvation by faith alone and hence irrational; and the unification of the sacred/secular duality was accomplished by the collapse of the sacred into the secular. Max Weber has analyzed this process of "exterior" modernization in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). In Tibet the monastic orders employed Messianic and Apocalyptic Buddhist ideas to produce a Sacred King to control the feudal nobles, depriving them of

much of their land and of all feudal claims over their serfs. The new monastic government absorbed their power into a bureaucratic state under which serfs became "commoners" (*mi ser*), that is, free agents with only economic obligations to other individuals and taxpaying obligations to the state. The monasteries became the seats of the national industry, the inner perfection of minds and souls through education and contemplation. And the Apocalyptic Buddhist ideology encouraged a sense of millennial immediacy of ultimate spiritual fruition that led to the sacred/secular nonduality being focused on the sacred, the exact reverse of the Western secularistic "nonduality." Although rough and tough individuals still roamed free, especially in the east of Tibet, the national policy was nonviolence. There was no army and few police. There was total access to learning and wide social mobility through the universal monastic education system. The central government protected the lower classes from the greatly weakened nobility, whose landholding was now dependent on their service to the government; and there was a new avenue of ennoblement through having the merit or good fortune to receive a reincarnate saint in the family by birth. Above all, the whole nation lived for the enlightenment of each individual, within a multilife time frame, with a messianic and apocalyptic sense of the immanence of the divine benefactors of the world. It is impossible to describe in more detail here this unheard-of emergence of a more-than-half Buddhicized culture.¹⁸ As a Buddhist effort in furthering human social and cultural rights it is an example of what one long-term Buddhist experiment actually did produce.

I want to see more thinking and discussion about Tibet's unique "interior modernity," its "conquest" of the realms of the individual mind through a refined technology of spiritual education, and its "industrial revolution" of producing powerful and beautiful enlightened human beings. I mean to open a path of insight toward this social possibility, to bring us to conceive of something as important, useful, essential to us as an alternative modernity: a way of becoming modern which is equal and yet opposite to the one Europe chose; a way of modernity that may complement our own in such a way as to help us stay modern and also stay alive, enjoying the comforts of environmental technology while recovering inner spiritual values.

NOTES

1. In my essay "Human Rights and Responsibilities in the Buddhist Civilizations," in *Human Rights and the World Religions*, ed. I. Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming), I developed a scheme of the interconnectedness of worldview, political rights, and social habits. As a precursor to the present effort, that essay was my first formulation of many of the arguments addressed here from a new angle.

2. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

3. *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), pp. 55-56.

4. See my essay, "Buddhist Ethics: Whose Essence Is Emptiness and Compassion?" *Religious Traditions*, November 1981.

5. We translate *gotra* in the Mahāyāna context as "spiritual gene."

6. For a vivid description of these biological notions, see Lati Rinbochay and Jeffrey Hopkins, trans., *Death, Intermediate State, and Rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1979).

7. For example, the malicious liar eventually ends up in a hell for liars, in which he or she is born as a small bulbous globe of consciousness attached to a giant tongue of great sensitivity, spread over many acres of burning iron ground, with little horned devils merrily running red-hot iron plows back and forth through its nerves from dawn to dusk of a multimillion-year day. Or on a less fantastic note, one who kills other beings, especially human beings, will be killed one time in a future life in a similar way, one for each being one kills.

8. Actually the "Community Jewel" (*Samgharatna*) includes ordained lay men and women with monks and nuns, so it is a little larger than just the monastic orders themselves.

9. Aryasanga, *The Stages of the Bodhisattva*, trans. Jampel Thardod et al. (American Institute of Buddhist Studies, manuscript translation), chap. 10, pp. 84ff.

10. See Robert A. F. Thurman, "The Politics of Enlightenment," *Lindisfarne Letter* (1975).

11. See Robert A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Social Activism," *Eastern Buddhist* (1983).

12. The date is controversial. My colleague, the Ven. Losang Jampal, is doing a study of this text, and he claims that by evidence of its mode of reference to the Buddha Bodies it should be dated close to the *Lotus Scripture*.

13. My account comes from the Tibetan version, Kanjur, Ladakh Tog Palace edition, *mdo sna tsogs*, la 77:2-166; reprinted Delhi, 1980. I am also indebted to the Ven. Samdong Rinpoche, for his article "Social and Political Strata in Buddhist Thought," in Samdong Rinpoche, *Social Philosophy of Buddhism* (Sarnath, 1972).

14. Also mentioned in Rinpoche, "Social and Political Strata in Buddhist Thought."

15. S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1976).

16. Robert A. F. Thurman, "Tibet: Mystic Nation in Exile," *Parabola, Exile* (1985).

17. This was the period of the "feudal, medieval Tibetan society" so many think still existed until recently, due to the combination of Tibet's lack of "exterior modernity," Chinese propaganda, ignorance, and a lack of even a concept for a form of personality and society that existed nowhere else, a form we call "interior modernity."

18. The best recent source on the innovative government formed by the Dalai Lamas is Franz Michael, *Rule by Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and Its Role in Society and State* (Boulder: Westview, 1982).