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Review

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The book's nineteen essays, covering many different aspects of Buddhist history and thought, are carefully organized by the editors into the categories of Overview (one essay), Theravāda Buddhism (two), Mahāyāna Buddhism (three), Buddhism and Animals (two), Zen Buddhism (two), American Buddhism (three), Applications (three), and Theoretical and Methodological Issues (three). Another way of classifying the various contributions is to group them into three categories. The first group includes essays focusing on traditional Buddhist doctrines, literature, or rituals that deal with nature and may express an incipient ecological worldview. Some examples of this category include Steve Odin's discussion of Kūkai's philosophy of nature in comparison with Aldo Leopold, Christopher Chapple's analysis of *jātaka* tales, and Duncan Williams' examination of the medieval Japanese Buddhist ritual of releasing animals (*hōjō-e*). The second category is the largest group and contains essays dealing with modern interpretations and appropriations of Buddhist environmentalist strategies, ranging from the thought of the Thai monk Buddhadasa, as discussed by Don Swearer, to the creation of utopian Zen centers in America like Green Gulch, as analyzed by Stephanie Kaza and Jeff Yamauchi, to the interpretation of Gary Snyder's poetry by David Barnhill.

The third group has the fewest contributions and takes a critical approach to the whole question of whether traditional Buddhism is really environmentalist. In a thoughtful essay based on an interpretation of Ito Jakuchu's painting "Yasai Nehan" (Vegetable *nirvāṇa*), Ian Harris challenges most of the rest of the book but in a very evenhanded fashion. His "central contention [is that], with one or two notable exceptions . . . , supporters of an authentic Buddhist environmental ethic have tended toward a positive indifference to the history and complexity of the Buddhist tradition." He points out, for example, how ninth-century Chinese temples contributed to deforestation campaigns in the hopes of salvaging patronage during a time of political turmoil. This commentator feels that the counterpoint offered by Harris must be heeded and addressed so that green Buddhists do not end in a kind of triumphalism about the tradition they feel that they inherit, in a way that stymies rather than abets the appropriation of Buddhism from an ecological standpoint.

Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness. By Robert Thurman. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998. Pp. xiv + 322. \$24.95.

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Can the Buddhist culture of Tibet—until the middle of the twentieth century a medieval theocracy almost completely isolated from the rest of the world—point the way to the fulfillment of the American dream? In his extraordinary book, *Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness*, Robert Thurman, a distinguished Buddhist scholar, argues that it can.

Inner Revolution is a significant reconstruction of the basic teachings of Buddhism from a Tibetan perspective that shows the important sociopolitical di-

mensions of Buddhism, arguing convincingly that mental transformation based on deep understanding of self and reality is the basis for far-reaching peaceful social and political revolution. The energizing vision behind this book is summed up on page 221, in the concluding paragraph of chapter 7, “The World-taming Adepts”:

To finish building the free society dreamed of by Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, we must draw upon the resources of the enlightened imagination, which can be systematically developed by the spiritual sciences of India and Tibet. We have not yet tamed our own demons of racism, nationalism, sexism, and materialism. We have not yet made peace with a land we took by force and have only partly paid for. We are a teeming conglomeration of people from different tribes who have yet to embrace fully the humanness in one another. And none of us can be really free until all of us are.

This is the vision of “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness” announced in the book’s title. The means to the realization of this vision, the “cool revolution” that Thurman describes, is captured in the first words of the title, “Inner Revolution.” This inner revolution is a transformation of the mind, a transformation effected by the deep understanding praised as *prajñā* or insight in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is the deep understanding to which Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha of our era, awakened, making him a Buddha. It is the understanding that the truth of existence, the *Dharma*, is that things exist in dynamic interdependence. Nothing—persons or things—exists permanently or separately. The fundamental insight of the Buddha, *pratītyasamutpāda*, is that, in the felicitous words of the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nat Hanh, things *inter-are*, in dynamic interdependence. It is because of the dynamic interbeing of things that genuine social and political freedoms are impossible without inner freedom. It was in his awakening to the truth of dynamic interbeing that, as Thurman describes it, “The Buddha found that inner freedom—freedom from our negative emotions and obsessive self-concern—is the essential precondition for goodness and social liberty” (p. 30).

There is a tendency among Buddhist scholars to ignore or slight the social and political implications of wisdom and compassion. This is partly the result of reading modern Western individualism into Buddhist teaching and consequently focusing exclusively on how the individual person is transformed by wisdom and compassion, ignoring the social transformation inherent in the transformation of individuals. It is also partly the result of a failure to understand that compassionate action is as central to Buddhism as enlightened understanding. But Thurman clearly understands that the fundamental aim of Buddhist teaching and practice is to become a Buddha. And to become a Buddha, as Śāntideva says in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a text that has inspired Tibetan Buddhists for over a thousand years, one takes the Bodhisattva vow to work tirelessly and unceasingly to bring happiness to all beings. In Śāntideva’s own words: “As long as space abides and as long as the world abides, so long may I abide, destroying the sufferings of the world” (10.55). Compassion is inseparable from wisdom. When one awakens the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*), compassion arises, leading one to take the Bodhisattva vow that Śāntideva expresses in 3.7 :

"I am medicine for the sick. May I be both the doctor and their nurse, until the sickness does not recur."

Because people's suffering is due, in part, to social and political conditions, one cannot remove the illness of their suffering without working to overcome social and political evils. Thus, social and political engagement is implicit in wisdom and compassion, the primary characteristics of Buddhahood. One of Thurman's primary objectives in this book is to make explicit the social and political engagement that is implicit in enlightenment. The task of transforming the external environment in accordance with the inner transformation achieved through awakening to the truth of interdependent arising might be called "the politics of enlightenment."

According to Thurman, The modern West experienced a rational enlightenment that revolutionized its worldview and social institutions, creating a new *materialistic* culture. Tibet, on the other hand, experienced a spiritual revolution that also revolutionized its worldview and social institutions—but because Tibet's revolution was based on a spiritual enlightenment, it led to a new *spiritual* culture. In both revolutions the individual person became the supreme value, with individual freedom valued above all else. In Tibetan Buddhist understanding, however, the human individual was seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, interconnected with all other individuals, whereas in Western understanding the individual was seen as a separate, self-existing person, essentially alienated from other persons and from the rest of reality.

Inner Revolution unfolds in eight chapters, following an autobiographical preface in which Thurman briefly describes his own discovery of Tibetan Buddhism (and of himself) and an introductory chapter in which he outlines how, following the Buddha's teachings, the Tibetan people peacefully transformed their society, achieving an inner modernity quite as amazing as the West's externally focused modernity. Chapters 1 and 2, "Awakening" and "Searching for the Self," describe the Buddha's awakening and his basic teachings. They constitute a concise and insightful introduction to Buddhism.

Chapter 3, "The Cool Revolution," describes the social and political implications of the Buddha's revolutionary teachings. Explaining what he means by a "cool revolution," Thurman says: "A Revolution that transforms the outlook and behavior of many individuals and thereby slowly transforms a society can be called a 'cool' revolution" (p. 95). What is the Buddha's revolutionary teaching? Thurman summarizes it as follows: "The experience of selflessness as freedom from alienated ego-addiction is a revolution in the deepest heart of the individual. It is a turn from pained and fearful self-centeredness to joyful, loving relatedness. This inner experience is the indispensable pivot of the cool revolution that Buddha started in order to gradually transform world civilization over the last 2,500 years" (p. 98).

Chapter 4, "A Kingly Revolution," explores the social and political transformation of India effected by King Ashoka's adoption of basic Buddhist principles, while chapter 5, "The Soul of Enlightenment," describes the practice and power of mindfulness, or deep awareness. Thurman describes this practice as "a conscious act of making one's own life purposeful and by experiencing unconditional love and

compassion, of easing the suffering of others everywhere" (p. 160). Chapter 6, "The Power of Cool Heroism," explores the contemporary relevance of the advice that India's most famous Buddhist thinker, Nāgārjuna, gave to King Udayi, as recorded in the *Jewel Garland*. Nāgārjuna's emphasis on developing critical understanding and compassion point the way, according to Thurman, "to an individualistic, nonviolent, education-oriented, altruistic society, decentralized, yet global" (p. 192).

Chapter 7, "The World-taming Adepts," explores the spiritual technologies of great Buddhist heroes like Ghanṭapa and Padma Sambhava, who, by the power of their lives and actions, exerted incredible transforming power on their societies. The lesson Thurman wants us to learn from this chapter is that to overcome the evil forces of collectivism, militarism, utilitarianism, stinginess, materialism, and fanaticism, we must become heroes, having the strength and compassion to work unceasingly for the true happiness of all beings. Chapter 8, "Inner Modernity," claims that the last thousand years of Tibetan history reveal that through a "continuous process of inner revolution and cool evolution . . . Tibet has been the secret dynamo . . . that has turned the outer world toward enlightenment" (p. 225). Interesting as this chapter is, it most clearly reveals Thurman as an unabashed, though critical, apologist for Tibetan culture, particularly in his eulogizing of the Fifth Dalai Lama (p. 253).

Inner Revolution is filled with many helpful analogies and useful metaphors, frequently engaging and insightful. For example, on page 278 Thurman quotes Śāntideva: "Who doesn't want to hurt his feet when he walks the rough and brambly earth has two choices; either cover the earth with leather or make himself a pair of sandals." Interpreting the metaphor as an insight into the difference between the project of transforming ourselves, the interior environment, and the project of transforming nature, the external environment, Thurman says: "We in the West have been trying vainly to make the earth into a perfect softball, sewing it up in the leather of protective material smoothness, trying to save human sensitivity by changing and rearranging the outer environment. The Indian and Tibetan enlightenment took the other turn. It decided that the "foot" of the sensitive human mentality should learn to protect itself with the "sandal" of self-mastery, that internal understanding and control are more practically achievable than total control of the infinite external."

This is an important book about Buddhism by one of the most insightful Buddhist scholars of our time. But perhaps its greatest value lies in its application of a deep understanding of both Buddhist and Western cultures to the creation of the conditions in tomorrow's world that might enable us to achieve meaningful freedom, peace, and real happiness. My main criticism derives from my skepticism about all attempts to revolutionize or transform one culture by means of ideas imported from another. But Thurman makes a convincing case for the importance of trying to incorporate Buddhist ideas into our attempts to engage in social and political reform. I would recommend this book to all students of Buddhism and to all students of history and politics.